



HAL
open science

The good, the bad and the ugly: the circumscription of saintly evil in Tibetan biography

Charles Ramble

► To cite this version:

Charles Ramble. The good, the bad and the ugly: the circumscription of saintly evil in Tibetan biography. Lives Lived, Lives Imagined: Biography in the Buddhist Traditions, 2010. <hal-01629627>

HAL Id: hal-01629627

<https://hal.science/hal-01629627v1>

Submitted on 6 Nov 2017

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



HAL Authorization



*Lives
Lived,
Lives
Imagined*

Biography in the Buddhist Traditions

edited by LINDA COVILL
ULRIKE ROESLER
SARAH SHAW

Lives Lived, Lives Imagined
Biography in the Buddhist Traditions

edited by
Linda Covill, Ulrike Roesler and Sarah Shaw

Contents

Preface

Note on the Transliteration

Introduction

I. The Buddha: a life lived, imagined and living still

And that was I: How the Buddha Himself Creates a Path between Biography and Autobiography

by Sarah Shaw (Oxford)

Chips from a Biographical Workshop—Early Chinese Biographies of the Buddha: The Late Birth of Rāhula and Yaśodharā’s Extended Pregnancy by Max Deeg (Cardiff)

Truth under the Guise of Poetry: Aśvagoṣa’s “Life of the Buddha” by Roland Steiner (Marburg)

Handsome Is as Handsome Does: Aśvagoṣa’s story of the Buddha’s younger brother by Linda Covill (Oxford)

II. Theravāda Biographies in the Twentieth Century

Seeing Myself as Another Person: The Autobiography of a Burmese Monastic Thinker of the Twentieth Century by Ven. Khammai Dhammasami (Oxford)

Learning, Living, Spreading the dharma. A post-modern journey from Uku Baha, Lalitpur to Hsilai Monastery, Hacienda Heights, CA: How Ganesh Kumari Shakya became Bhikkhunī Dhammavati by Sarah LeVine (Harvard)

III. Tibet Re-narrated: Biographies of Tibetan Masters

The Evolution of the Biography of Mi-la ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa by Peter Alan Roberts (Hollywood, CA)

Tibetan Sources on the Life of gSer-mdog Paṅ-chen Shākya mchog-ldan (1428–1507) by Volker Caumanns (München)

Narratives of Reincarnation, Politics of Power and the Emergence of a Scholar: The Very Early Years of Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje and its Sources by Jim Rheingans (Bath Spa)

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: The Circumscription of Saintly Evil in Tibetan Biography by Charles Ramble (Oxford)

Abbreviations

Glossary

Index

List of Contributors

**The Good, the Bad and the Ugly:
The Circumscription of Sainly Evil in Tibetan Biography**

Charles Ramble

Biography and Evil

The word “biography” in English means two different things. On the one hand, it refers to the series of events that take place in, or in relation to, the life of an individual; and on the other, it denotes the category of literature, or an example of that category, that relates such events. In Tibet, the nearest equivalent to the latter is the literary genre known as *rnam thar* (“namthar”). Corresponding to the Sanskrit term *vimokṣa*, the name derives from the ostensible purpose of such works: to recount an exemplary life that passes through various trials to achieve “complete liberation” (*rnam [par] thar [pa]*). An indication of how widely the generic application of the term has come to prevail over its literal meaning is to be seen in its current use to designate the libretti of the so-called “Tibetan opera” (*A lce lha mo*).

Namthar vary greatly in the degree to which they are truly biographical in the conventional Western sense. At one end of this spectrum they are regarded by scholars (Tibetan and non-Tibetan alike) as being among the most reliable sources of historical information, especially with respect to the local perspective and the minutiae of daily life that are typically passed over in “official” historical literature. At the other extreme, namthar may be wholly occupied with the inner, visionary world of an individual’s spiritual endeavor, or else they may be formulaic to such a degree that they transcend and efface the particularities of their subjects’ lives. A hypothetical instance of such a narrative could typically be reduced to the following sequence of literary formulae:

- Miraculous signs before the birth of the subject, such as unseasonable good weather, as well as portentous dreams on the part of the mother.
- Extraordinary neonatal gestures, precocious learning abilities, and a strong attraction to religious figures and institutions.
- A highly charged meeting with the “root lama,” who may well have had a prophetic dream about the disciple’s advent.

- Stock tribulations through which cumbersome karmic traces are patiently sloughed off.
- Missionary activities in the course of which the hero converts savages in inhospitable regions, causing them to give up hunting and animal sacrifice; he receives honor and reverence from local potentates.
- The hero's passing away, attended by various miraculous phenomena; these include unusual transformations of the body as well as instances of pathetic fallacy, such as clouds of rainbow light and rain of flowers.

In view of the overwhelming preoccupation of such literature with the lives of saints and other spiritual giants, the term *namthar* is therefore generally glossed as “hagiography.” Biographies—especially autobiographies—of secular figures in Tibet are to be found, but these are rather rare, and cannot be said to constitute a well-developed biographical genre. There were no professional writers in Tibetan and it would not have happened, for example, that someone might set out to write the life story of a reprobate or fiend on the grounds of public or literary interest.

This does not mean that Tibetans have never written unkind things about one another, only that sustained critical appraisals are never applied to the protagonists of *namthar*. This uniformly affirmative feature of the Tibetan case is therefore quite unlike, say, the dual character of biographical writing in Classical Greek, where the laudatory genre of encomium is opposed to the invective's elegant demolition of its chosen subject (Pelling 1990).

A few words of explanation are in order here about the eye-catching term “evil” that features in the title. Above all, this article is *not* an exploration of the nature of evil in Buddhism or in Tibetan society, nor is “evil” meant to correspond to any Tibetan term. I have chosen the word simply because it is the most versatile available in the English language to cover the wide range of behaviors, acts and characters that I wish to explore in this study. The implications of the term and its referents over an extended historical period and across a wide range of cultures are admirably explored in David Parkin's *The Anthropology of Evil* (Parkin 1985). For comparative perspectives on the subject of evil, the present article will draw principally on articles contained in that collection. Paradoxically, the milder terms “wrongdoing” or “badness,” while less immediately dramatic than “evil,” trap us, by their narrower semantic range, into implicit value-judgments that the context may not

warrant. “Evil” had both a weak and a strong sense. The current predominance of the strong sense—Macfarlane (1985) suggests that it may have originated as late as the Industrial Revolution—has largely overshadowed the more casual tones of the older usage, which does, nevertheless, survive in stock expressions such as “evil necessity” and “lesser of two evils.” (This weak sense has been resurrected in some modern sociolects, where it even acquires a complimentary character as a quasi-synonym for “magnificent.”)

Following a discussion of the way in which evil is understood in certain African contexts, David Parkin observes that:

...we can see at a glance why the English word “evil’ has been so useful to social anthropologists. It can refer to extreme fear, death and destruction, but also to lesser misfortunes. It may denote an agent’s firm intention to harm, or instead may be seen as originating in an unintended human or non-human condition. Evil agents may be abhorrent, but they may also be admired for their cleverness. While people may be terrified of the deadly effects of the worst kinds of evil, they can at other times joke about it and make humorous parallels. Talk about evil thus ranges over the terrible and serious as well as the playful and creative. (Parkin 1985: 1)

Etymologically, “evil’ is related to the word “over’ (an association that is more obvious in the corresponding German words *Übel* and *über*), and may originally have had the sense of “excessive’ (Pocock 1985). Another band in the spectrum of connotations the word may have is provided by the Hebrew word *ra* that it translates in the King James version of the Bible: “*Ra* meant primarily worthlessness or uselessness, and by extension it came to mean bad, ugly or even sad. Thus *ra* originally meant evil in a weak sense...” (Taylor 1985: 27).

Examples of invective: Karu Drupwang and Pema Lingpa

Attacks on the character or scholarship of a rival are not confined to any one genre of writing in Tibetan. I shall give just two examples here. The first is an assault by a nineteenth-century Bonpo on the figure of the well-known—perhaps even the best-known—Buddhist saint and poet, Milarepa (Mi la ras pa, 1040–1123). The passage appears in the *Gangs ti se dkar chag*, a Bonpo pilgrimage guide to Mt. Kailash that was written in 1844 by Karu Drupwang Tenzin Rinchen (dKar ru grub dbang bsTan

'dzin rin chen, 1801–1862). To judge from his autobiography, the author was keenly sensitive to what he perceived as the Buddhist appropriation of sites that had originally been associated with Bon. The most widely read biography of Milarepa, compiled by Tsangnyon Heruka (gTsang smyon He ru ka, 1452–1507) contains a section in which the hero of the work engages a Bonpo named Naro Bonchung (Na ro Bon chung) in a series of magical contests. The issue at stake is the ownership of Mt. Kailash itself, hitherto the territory of the Bon religion. The series of engagements—each of which is won by Milarepa—culminates in the fall and humiliation of Naro and his relegation to a nearby minor mountain. Karu's dismissal of these stories is not limited to a scornful rejection of the historicity of the conflicts—which he catalogues and dismisses as “a small part of a fabricated, revisionist account” (*Gangs ti se dkar chag*: 92)—but extends to the person of Milarepa himself:

Ordinary Buddhists say that this is a place that was won by that man called Milarepa, and this is what they preach to credulous people. For a start, [Tise] appeared at the origin of this world age—Milarepa certainly did not create it; and later in the good days, at the time when the Victorious Shen[rab] was promulgating his teachings and bestowing his blessings, even the name “Milarepa” was not around; and in a still later age, when the senior disciples were visiting the holy place and knowledge-holding yogis were meditating there, at the time when the lands of the eighteen royal lines of Shangshung were being founded, there was no one called Milarepa... (*ibid.*: 99)¹

This passage is followed by a contemptuous summary of his life story and a stinging critique of the insipidity of his celebrated songs:

He was born in Tsalung, in Gungthang, to a father named Milay shegyal and a mother named Nyangtsa Kargyanma, and he was called Milarepa. Early in his life he had a falling-out with his neighbors, and killed around thirty people and horses by means of a magic spell. In remorse, he wandered about Tibet until he met someone called Uncle Marpa the Translator in Lhodrag. He worked for him as a servant for several years, and received some so-called Indian religious teachings from him. He then returned to his village, but the masters of the people and the owners of the horses he had killed said, “Here comes that

destructive demon!” and assaulted him with blows and with firebrands. Saddened by this, he spent a long time in the place known as Drakar Taso. Then, after wandering around for a lengthy period in the area of Nyanam, Dingri, Lapchi and Kyirong he managed to secure a couple of patrons and even made something of a name for himself, and, like the proverbial beggar talking idly in the sunshine in his cave, he prattled his views and sang about his understanding, and to ordinary people he passed off his arrogant babble and his moronic words from the lesser vehicle as his “achievement”... (*ibid.*: 99–100)²

A defensive procedure that is commonly used by targets of criticism (if, unlike Milarepa, they happen still to be alive) is to cite the accusation, dismiss it as nonsense, and attribute it to the malice or stupidity of the accuser. One figure who has generated more controversy than most is the treasure-discoverer Pema Lingpa (Padma gling pa, 1450–1521). In recent times, Michael Aris’s study of his biography has acted as a lightning-rod for reciprocal attacks on Pema Lingpa’s detractors by his modern-day devotees, but the biography leaves us in no doubt that he was fully capable of dealing sharply with his contemporary critics. Among the prophecies he revealed there is an allusion to one of his greatest critics, a certain Lama Namkha:

A holder of a tantric lineage,
the rebirth of the Bönpo minister Takna,
Will appear from the direction of Shang
With the name of Namkha.
This vow-breaker will reverberate in all directions
The dharma-sound of the Five Poisons.
White without and black within,
The seed of hell will issue forth.
Whoever has contact with him
Will be led to the lower conditions of life. (Aris 1988: 64)

The karmic retribution Lama Namkha and his supporters suffer is sure and terrible: the lama himself dies of leprosy, while the crops of the communities that supported this malefactor are devastated by hail (*ibid.*: 66). Pema Lingpa even parodies his critics by means of the bold device of a polemic against Padmasambhava: the

implication is that if he, Pema Lingpa, is to be the object of people's doubt, then Padmasambhava himself should also be.

Does this mean that the subjects of biographies are never portrayed as being in any way less than perfect? Not at all. But in the same way as there are official ways of being good, there are conventionally sanctioned ways of being evil. As far as the *namthar* (*rnam thar*) as a literary genre is concerned, the necessary excellence of the subjects raises the problem of the devices whereby a degree of narrative tension can be salvaged from the sterile environment of perfection.

Forms of acceptable evil seem to fall into three broad categories:

1. Trifling misdemeanors.
2. Youthful errors for which the hero later atones (sometimes with dreadful penances).
3. Acts of destruction that are justified by reference to a higher moral order.

These are all conventionally acceptable forms of evil. The last part of this article will deal with the matter of unacceptable conduct, but for now I wish to examine examples of necessary—that is to say, doctrinally or theatrically necessary—evil.

Youthful Error and Expiation

A good example of a minor misdemeanor in an otherwise saintly life is found in the biographies of Yangton Sherab Gyaltzen (Yang ston Shes rab rgyal mtshan), an eleventh-century Bonpo master of the spiritual system known as the Dzogchen Shangshung Nyengyü (*rdzogs chen zhang zhung snyan rgyud*). The transmission of this system belongs to the category known as “single line” (*chig rgyud*), according to which a master may pass on the teaching to only one disciple. Sherab Gyaltzen was asked by a widow (in one version, a widower), to transmit the teachings to her (or him), but could not do so because he had already given the instructions to one of his followers. Apparently unwilling to disappoint his petitioner, he adhered to the single line restriction by not bestowing the teaching orally, but instead transmitted it in writing. The ruse did not work: he quickly fell ill, and died shortly afterwards (Ramble 1985: 65). Within the arena of the Bonpo and Buddhist esoteric traditions the consequences are unsurprising, but to the ordinary reader (or listener) the fate of Sherab Gyaltzen might seem a little harsh: after all, his only crime was an over-zealous commitment to the edification of his disciples. This was hardly a heinous sin:

generosity killed the cat. The message to the lay reader is: such are the uncompromising standards of integrity expected of the great teachers.

More commonly, the badness of saints is confined to the early part of their lives. Indeed, the worse they are, the better. It is as if the degree of badness they manifest in the early part of their lives is commensurate with the magnitude of the goodness they will display following their conversion. Here is the case of Togden Önpö (rTogs ldan dbon po), another adept of the Dzogchen Shangshung Nyengyü.

While he was a youth he followed in the footsteps of his father, who was a brigand. He engaged in fighting and banditry over a number of years. ...As he and his companions were returning [from a raid] they were ambushed by a party who hurled spears at them, killing his father and many of the bandits. He himself was stabbed with a sword and his intestines spilled out onto the ground. One of [the attackers] said, "Judging from the prominence of the veins in this one's eyes, he could be the son of Ogye Rogpo. Stab him again!" "There's no need to stab him," said another, "he is sufficiently wounded." And they went away. He had lain there for a while protecting his innards from the crows with his hands, when two servants who had escaped arrived. They pushed his intestines into his body and sewed him up with silken thread so that he did not die. Later he cremated his father's body and took revenge for his death. (*Bon-po Niṣpanna-Yoga*: 88–89)³

In particular, we should note the reference to his Togden Önpö's piety, which implicitly entails the killing of his father's assassins. He then sought to atone for his wrongs by turning to the religious life. However, his chosen teacher angrily dismissed him because of his inability to learn to read. He then turned to his celebrated maternal uncle, Tashi Gyaltsen:

"O Lama, I have studied letters but I cannot learn them. Even though I do not know my letters, if you have a teaching for attainment of enlightenment, fix it in my mind, otherwise I shall become a bandit again." The lama replied, "I have certain precepts known as the Dzogchen Shangshung Nyengyü, which make manifest the mind of Samantabhadra without depending on a piece of paper so much as a dog's tongue in size." (*ibid.*: 89–90)⁴

Togden Önpö's salvation was assured, and he himself went on to become an adept.

The *locus classicus* in Tibetan literature for the malefactor who renounces his evil ways and turns to the religious life is the biography of Milarepa, a sixteenth-century work that has already been mentioned above. Following the death of Milarepa's father, the family estate was given to the boy's uncle and aunt to be held in trust until he was old enough to take charge. However, the uncle and aunt simply appropriated the inheritance and reduced Milarepa and his mother to penury. The despairing widow turned to her son for help:

“I wish you were dressed in the mantle of a man and mounted on a horse, so that your stirrups would rip the necks of our detested enemies. That is not possible. But you could do them harm by guileful means. I would that, having thoroughly learned magic together with the destructive spell, you first destroy your uncle and aunt, then the villagers and the neighbors who have treated us so cruelly. I want you to curse them and their descendants down to the ninth generation. ...If you return without having shown signs of your magic in our village, I, your old mother, will kill myself before your eyes.” (Lhalungpa 1977: 23)

Milarepa duly took up the study of dark arts and, in time, returned to his native village with his arsenal of spells. While his uncle and aunt were hosting a large gathering he performed a ritual that induced the horses to kick down the pillars supporting the house. The ritual resulted in the deaths of thirty-five people. He then went on to raise a hailstorm that wiped out the entire harvest of the community that had offended him. His mother was delighted by the outcome; indeed, the reader feels that she is just a little too gleeful about the obliteration of her oppressors. Tormented by remorse for his actions, Milarepa then set off to find a spiritual master who would enable him to expiate his sins. The penances endured under the brutal tutelage of his chosen master, Marpa the Translator, eventually rid him of the burden of his wickedness, and paved the way for a life of mystic devotion.

How wicked was Milarepa? To be sure, he killed a large number of people and destroyed the crops of the survivors; and where karma is concerned, the law is the law and the author is intractable in his didactic insistence that the debt had to be paid. But

it is equally clear that Milarepa acted out of devotion to his wronged mother (who, moreover, put him in a decidedly awkward position by threatening suicide in the event that he should fail her). We, the ordinary reader, dutifully accept the tenets of the Buddhist doctrine but secretly admire Milarepa's championing of the human over the dogmatic. He is like Albert Camus, who earned the opprobrium of the right-thinking intellectuals in 1956 by disengaging from active support of Algerian independence, on the grounds of the difficulties this might create for his mother, a cleaning woman in Algiers: "*Entre ma mère et la justice, je préfère ma mère.*" In truth, no reader in the world is going to think the worse of Milarepa for despatching thirty-five wealthy and arrogant oppressors of a cheated widow.

Justifiable Homicide: The Case of Ra Lotsawa

The same ordinary reader's sympathy with the disproportionate exaction of justice is tested by the biography of one of Milarepa's earlier contemporaries, Ra Lotsawa Dorje Drak (Rwa lo tsa ba rDo rje grags, b. 1016). For the purposes of the present article, there are three episodes in this work that I would like to examine: one because it presents us with a caricatural image of an enemy of the Buddhist doctrine, and the two others because they push the limits of what we might see as the acceptability of saintly violence. Ra Lo made several visits to the Kathmandu Valley, where he was the disciple of a tantric master named Baro. It was from this teacher that he received the cycle of Vajrabhairava (Dorje Jigche, rDo rje 'jigs byed), which he subsequently introduced to Tibet. The setting for the first encounter is the sacred site of Swayambhunath, where we find Ra Lo (who is referred to here as Rwa chen, the "Great Ra [Lo])," circumambulating the famous stupa:

On one road he met a certain [Hindu] Heretic named Pūrṇa the Black, who said, "You should be my disciple."

"Who are you?" asked Rachen. "What do you know by way of dharma?"

"I am the [Hindu] Heretic Pūrṇa the Black, and I know such things as the Four Vedas."

Rachen took an aversion to him. "I'm not going to dismount from a horse just to mount a donkey," he replied. "After entering the Buddhist path it wouldn't be on for me to adopt an alien faith."

“You’re a wilful idiot. If we were to debate the merits of Buddhism and Hinduism the issue would be resolved,” he said. They duly had a debate and the lama won.

“You may be a smooth talker,” he said, “but just see what happens in seven days,” and he went on his way. Then Rachen stayed at Swayambhunath, performing circumambulations and prostrations.

The Heretic performed a ritual of sending darts and arrows. For five days Rachen experienced strange apparitions. He repelled them by means of Vajravārāhī, but then they returned. Rachen became uneasy and consulted his lama. He decided that, since these disturbing things had been happening, he should go and ask his teacher for a ritual repulsion technique that he possessed. When he arrived, the Lama said, “Boy, have you by any chance provoked some fierce god or demon? Or been cursed by some Heretic? Or violated your vows to your lama and the doctrine? Last night I dreamed that a golden stupa had been turned upside-down, and that the sun and moon had fallen to earth. Your turning up here this morning is a very bad omen!” When Ra Lo subsequently told him about his brush with the Heretic, he said,

“Not good! This is not good! Pūrṇa the Black is the most powerful of 300 Heretics. He has killed several Indian and Nepalese Buddhists. Profound techniques are required to reverse this spell; nothing will work except for an Ushni repulsion technique that I shall give you.” Rachen gave him a *srang* of gold, and the lama bestowed on him the Ushni precepts and the technique for using them.

Rachen attached a thangka of Vajravārāhī to the side of his bed. He climbed into an earthenware jar and after drawing the “circle of repulsion” on the rim he closed it and sat there reciting the mantras. At dusk he heard a rushing sound and, on looking, saw a catch-wood dart with a red cloth attached flying through the air and hitting the door, splitting it open. In the middle of the night he heard another whoosh, and saw a dart strike the thangka, reducing it to dust. At dawn a third dart struck the capital of the pillar, transforming it to sawdust. But when day broke, the lama was unharmed.

The story spread until it reached the ears of the Heretic Pūrṇa the Black, who fell into deep despair and killed himself. (*Rwa lo rnam thar*: 15–17)⁵

There is nothing in this episode of the saintly evil with which we are concerned here: Ra Lo is guilty, at worst, of an injudicious slight. It is the figure of Pūrṇa the Black that is interesting, and we shall come back to this fiendish character presently.

When he returned to Tibet, Ra Lo was greeted with the news that his consort had been abducted by a neighboring community:

She had been sought as a bride by the Drikhyimpa of Nyenam, but [the family] would not give her. Drikhyim raised a force of 300 people and captured the nun, looted property, and beat the lama's parents nearly to death and imprisoned his siblings. His parents said:

“Son, if you have magical powers you should show them to Drikhyim, Otherwise what difference does it make whether you have received teachings or not?

Even though we have practiced the dharma for the sake of karma,
And have harmed no one,
We have been made to suffer this without justification.”

So they said, and wept. Rachen said, “Don't worry, my parents; resolving the matter presents no difficulties.” He meditated on Vajrabhairava and adopted the gesture of “Striking with the Buffalo's Horn,” and the village was immediately reduced to dust. The bodies of those wicked people were ground to powder; they were “liberated,” such that nothing was left of them, and they were led to the heavenly realm of Mañjuśrī. Everyone else, young and old alike, begged him, bowing to his feet in terror, to forgive the injuries they had committed. His siblings were released from their prison, while his consort and all the property—and more besides—were returned. They all became his patrons and subjects, irrespective of whether they had been his enemies or supporters. (*ibid.*: 41–42)⁶

As in the case of Milarepa, Ra Lo visited a terrible punishment on the persecutors of his family. The principal difference here is that the massacre was not the occasion for a salutary period of expiation: justice had been done, and that was that. The third episode recounts an act of magical violence that is even more startling, not just

because it entails a higher body count but because the principal victim is a very prominent Buddhist hierarch: Khön Shakya Lodrö ('Khon Shākya blo gros), the father of Khön Konchog Gyalpo ('Khon dKon mchog rgyal po), who founded Sakya monastery.

Khön Shākya Lodrö, who was very skilled in the rituals of Vajraheruka and Vajrakīla, became jealous. He invoked the twenty-eight forms of Durgā and produced many magical manifestations. Lama Ra Lo arose in the form of Pal Dorje Jigche, and through his mantras and mudras the manifestations of Durgā became stiff and senseless. “If you do not submit to an oath I shall incinerate you,” he said. The manifestations ceased, and they swore an oath to do whatever he said. When Khön heard this he became exceedingly displeased. “This Ra Lo started out as the son of a [mere] tantrist; he received from a Heretical lama called Bharo [the cult of] a divinity of the Heretics with the head of a beast, and by practicing it, he deceives all the people. Whoever meets him will go to hell,” he said in denigration.

Rachen’s disciples said to him, “He has harmed us for no reason; please destroy him!”

“Whatever happens,” he replied, “I shall never be an enemy to someone who is a holder of the doctrine. I would rather go and visit Lama Bharo in Nepal.” At this, Ārya Avalokiteśvara, surrounded by a vast entourage, appeared in the sky in shining light, saying,

“In this degenerate age,

Since it is difficult to convert savage sentient beings,

I, too, tend to manifest the great treasure of my compassion

In wrathful forms such as Hayagrīva;

But especially, the benighted land of Tibet

Is accumulating bad karma because of misconceptions

Concerning the dharma, eminent [Buddhist] figures, and the great philosophical positions,

And should be the object of wrathful action;

...in the case of the truly savage and ferocious,

A peaceful approach is of no use.” (*ibid.*: 47–49)⁷

Khön Shākya Lodrö launches the first attack—a rain of rocks and earth—but Ra Lo repels this and responds with a fire ritual. Khön is killed—the first of about a dozen eminent Buddhist figures (among them the son of Marpa the Translator) to fall victim to Ra Lo’s lethal powers. The retaliatory force that is launched against Ra Lo is scattered, two hundred villages are destroyed and their inhabitants killed or dispersed (*ibid.*: 50). The late Khön’s surviving followers then accept Ra Lo as their master.

Heroes and Villains

Pūrṇa the Black is a stage villain, the epitome of evil. He is the most powerful of the Heretics, responsible for the deaths of numerous Buddhist masters: in word, deed and appearance he resonates with similar figures in our own, Western popular and classical imagery: dark lords such as Darth Vader, Sauron, and their seventeenth-century propotype, the Satan of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

Here is an eminent contemporary lama in defense of Ra Lo’s actions:

The great translator Ra Lotsawa, one of the main Yamantaka lineage holders, is supposed to have killed many people through his tantric power, but *nobody regards Ra Lotsawa as bad*. Tantric powers are attained on the basis of bodhicitta, the realization of emptiness and the generation and completion stages of Highest Yoga Tantra, and when you gain the powers that come with the clear light and the illusory body and do wrathful actions—for example, separating evil beings’ consciousness from their body—the main point is to transfer their consciousness to the pure land. That’s the end result of wrathful tantric actions. Wrathful actions like that are done to benefit other sentient beings. When dealing with evil beings through peaceful actions doesn’t benefit them the only way left to benefit them is through wrathful actions. If you possess the necessary powers and qualities you can benefit others in that way with no danger to yourself. Not only can you but you are supposed to. It’s part of your samaya. (Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche 2000; my emphasis)

Why would no one think that Ra Lo was bad? For the Buddhist (that is to say, Vajrayana Buddhist) savant, the reason is given in the apologia cited above: as a realized master, Ra Lo was exercising his powers for the greater good of sentient beings. For the ordinary reader, the reason he is not bad is that his violence is magnificent and unapologetic.

Ra Lo and his principal adversaries belong to the same order of character: dangerous magi who command respect. Pūrṇa and Khön happen to be on the wrong side, but we could easily wish them on ours. (For many Tibetan Buddhists Khön *is* of course on the right side.)⁸ It is likewise impossible not to feel sympathy with the Satan of *Paradise Lost*—the fault of Milton himself who was, as Blake famously remarked, “a true Poet, and of the Devil’s party without knowing it” (Blake 1975: xvii). But this tragic hero is the culmination of two thousand years of literary evolution. The earliest Satan, featured in the Torah, was something of a legal opponent (the name derives from a Hebrew verb meaning “to accuse”), and the character bifurcates in later Judaism and early Christianity. In the latter he becomes the antithesis to all God’s creation, whereas in the former his significance dwindles to the point where he becomes otiose. He originates as the Adversary, often called upon by God to do His work by testing the devotion of His servants, and reaches his apotheosis with Milton. But he was at times a most inglorious figure, the object of demeaning titles—often the distortion of the names of pagan gods—intended to match his base character: the Father of Lies; Belial, the Worthless One; Beelzebub, Lord of the Flies. This is not the fallen Lucifer, the worthy opponent of the archangel Michael, but some vile creature, given to mean and base acts (Taylor 1985).

There are certain types of evil that are not only acceptable in Tibetan literature, but actually to the credit of the perpetrator, especially if they entail spectacular demonstrations of power. The same goes for the figures of teachers. No lama ever lost credibility for his predilection towards irrational behavior and even psychotic violence: the savage treatment meted out by their respective teachers to Naropa, Milarepa and Ani Lochen, and even Shardzawa Tashi Gyaltzen (Shar rdza ba bKra shis rgyal mtshan), whose master at one point shot him with a portable cannon, do not cast the perpetrators in an unfavorable light.⁹

There are some manifestations of evil that are *not* acceptable. Buddhism has sets of the greatest possible wrongs, notably the “five heinous sins.” If there are examples of such acts being perpetrated by the subjects of biographies, I am not familiar with them, but in his assassination of numerous religious figures Ra Lo is certainly sailing very close to the wind, and although he may be excessive, he is still in the right. The manifestation of unacceptable evil to which I am referring has nothing to do with scale. On the contrary; as said earlier, these give an indication of power, and the potential of this power when it is turned to good. We do not hold it

against Aśoka that the proximate cause for his conversion to Buddhism was the annihilation of Kalinga. We would look at him much more circumspectly if his greatest crime had been, say, the mutilation of small animals.¹⁰

The gravity of transgressions is culturally contingent. In Europe, pride of place for centuries was the Blood Libel, the accusation (first by Romans against Christians, later by Christians against Jews) of killing people, especially children, and consuming their flesh or blood. But as a source of visceral public horror this crime is largely a spent force in the Western public imagination, and can even be comfortably parodied in certain countries.¹¹

In the film *The Silence of the Lambs*, the arch-villain is Hannibal Lecter, a serial murderer who eats his victims. And yet we, the audience, are on his side. The real object of our loathing is the pusillanimous psychiatrist Frederick Chilton, a minnow tormenting his captive whale with petty acts of deprivation. In the sequel, *Hannibal*, the true villain is Mason Verger, a vengeful patient of Lecter whom the latter has earlier induced to grotesque self-mutilation. He is eventually eaten alive by pigs. But we feel comfortable with the fate that the arbiter of moral justice, Hannibal Lecter, inflicts on him, because Verger has a record of sexual child abuse: he is guilty of the crime that has replaced cannibalism as the one inexpiable transgression in Western consciousness.

Murder on a massive scale, and even the murder of eminent Buddhist teachers, is justifiable, as long as the perpetrator is acting in the interests of the doctrine or out of filial piety. It does not matter if the punishment meted out by the lama in question is disproportionate to the crimes of which his opponents have been found guilty. But the acts of destruction should be conspicuous and magnificent: there should be no shabbiness or ugliness about them. Karu Drupwang's damning indictment of Milarepa was not primarily that he was a murderer, but that he was worthless as both a poet and a magus.

This manifestation of evil, behavior that is marked by worthlessness and ugliness, seems never to be associated with the protagonists of Tibetan biographies. Dereliction of filial duty, oppression of the weak and guiltless, and general spiritual impotence rarely, if ever, feature even as youthful peccadilloes for which the subject might then seek absolution. They are, by implication, inexpiable.

In Search of the Ugly

To return to a point that was made at the beginning of this article: “biography” might refer either to the content of a person’s life or else to the literary genre that purports to present a life. So far, we have explored the phenomenon of saintly evil only as it appears in the Tibetan biographical genre. But if the conventions of this genre deprive us of the full spectrum of evil that lamas’ lives might boast, we would do well to extend our search further into other literary domains.

The life I propose to examine briefly as an example is that of a certain Ösel Dorje (’Od gsal rdo rje), a nineteenth-century Nyingmapa lama from Mustang, in Nepal. All the information we have on this individual’s life comes from the family’s archives, which I was able to photograph in 1993. The background in brief: Ösel Dorje was the natural son of a woman named Purpa Wangmo (Phur pa dbang mo). Because he was illegitimate, he inherited nothing from his errant father or two maternal uncles, who were also lineage lamas. The mother and son lived in a small house that one of the uncles had grudgingly allotted them.

There is no biography of Ösel Dorje, but we do find a short eulogy of his and his forebears’ priestly qualities in a document drawn up to resolve a dispute he had had with his patrons in a neighboring village.

Now you lamas and patrons have had a slight disagreement. But from the time of [the lamas’ ancestor] Chönyi Rangdrol down to the present day, the lamas have served to the best of their ability and their patrons have revered them as the Buddha himself, accepting their words and marvelling at their deeds, and were in a state of beatitude. The harvest was good, and there was more than enough to eat.¹²

Ösel Dorje was born into relative poverty, but thanks to astute money lending he was able to acquire a good deal of land from the forfeited securities of his debtors. He showed himself to be capable of acquiring land. Even if he did generally manage to stay on the right side of the law, his acquisitiveness was sometimes on the very edge of decency. A document from 1909 records his dealings with an impoverished blacksmith to whom he once lent 10 rupees. To summarize the content of the document: the blacksmith Kunga Hrithar (Kun dga’ srid thar) of Tserog asked Lama Ösel Dorje of Tsognam Gompa to lend him 10 rupees. He gave the date of repayment as fifteen days thence, and the blacksmith’s mother, Singha Ram, gave the lama

seventeen coral beads and a rosary of black crystal as security. When the time came for the blacksmith to repay the debt, the lama denied that he had ever been given the coral beads or the rosary. The blacksmith brought a case (*bha sti*, Nep. *bhati*) against him, and the lama made a formal response (*spar sti*, Nep. *prati*) to the effect that he had not been given the missing items, and his son Tenpa Gyaltzen (bsTan pa rgyal mtshan) confirmed that there were no such corals in the house. The matter was sorted out by an intermediary. The lama paid the blacksmith 18 rupees, and the blacksmith agreed to the arrangement. This document was written “so that, if the jewelry is found in the future, nothing so much as the buzzing of a fly (*rang kad = sbrang skad*) should be said about it in dispute.” (HMA/UTshognam/Tib/22)¹³

If the lama had not been in possession of the blacksmith’s mother’s jewelry as a security for the loan, why did he consequently pay him 18 rupees? Is it possible that Ösel Dorje took advantage of an indigent outcaste’s fragile legal status to lie in court, appropriate the valuable deposit that his debtor’s mother had made, and to silence the pair with a meagre out-of-court settlement?

Two years earlier, in 1907, the lama had been involved in a more serious disagreement. A certain Trogyal accused Ösel Dorje, his son Namkha and two nuns of giving him a severe beating in the village of Tsognam. This is the accusation that Trogyal submitted:

The lama’s son Namkha grabbed me by the hair. Some of them seized me by the head and others by my legs and forced me to the ground. They pulled my hair and kicked me repeatedly and for a short time I lost consciousness. In the folds of my garment I had twenty-two corals of varying size and five rupees. These they stole from me, and left. I thought that, since they were many people against one, I should bring a case against them, and went to my sister’s house. But in the evening lama Ösel Dorje and his son came, as before, and accused me of poisoning someone. I have witnesses who heard him say that. And on the matter [mentioned earlier in this petition] of them saying to me that, between seven days and seven months from that moment my family, my property and my cattle would be wiped out: they’d pulled out some of my hair and taken it, and the four of them said that they would kill us all with the magical spell called “The Evil Warrior-support of the Fierce Silken Cloth.”

(HMA/UTshognam/Tib/18)¹⁴

Ösel Dorje and the other four responded to the accusation with a strong denial. Trogyal had accosted a woman from the De-Tangya area, they said, and she had taken refuge with the lama in Tsognam. They had not, contrary to the accusation, beaten and kicked Trogyal until he was unconscious. They had been unable to get the better of him—*he* was the one who had done the hitting and hair-pulling. They had not taken his jewelry, and furthermore:

We never accused him of poisoning anyone. It is not true that we took some of his hair or said that his family, his property and his livestock would be wiped out after seven days; and as for the magical spell called the All-Killing Evil Warrior, I've never done it and I don't even know how to do it, and I haven't had the instructions with which to perform it.¹⁵

The witnesses produced by Trogyal, the response continued, were personal enemies of the lama, liars who had perjured themselves in supporting the accusation (HMA/UTshognam/Tib/20).

This is a far cry from the epic mayhem wrought by the magical spells of Pema Lingpa, Milarepa and Ra Lo. Ösel Dorje cannot be held guilty of using destructive magic (something for which, if we follow Zopa Rinpoche, nobody would have thought him bad anyway); but he is guilty of the far greater transgression of impotence; of thaumaturgic worthlessness.

And what of his filial piety, the quality of bedrock decency that is exhibited by the most ruthless of the avengers we have encountered above? In 1890 Purpa Wangmo gave the house and property she had inherited to her son, Ösel Dorje. However, she did not take it for granted that he would take care of her in her waning years, and drew up a deed in which she bequeathed to her son “the Lower House, from its foundations to the prayer flag standing on top of it, together with the interior and exterior property attached to it, its land, and whatever credit and debts are accruing to it.” She gave him the house on the condition that he provide her with a maintenance until her death. Along with the house he received two cattle pens; one big and one small field; one female donkey; one teapot; one frying pan; one small copper vessel; one bronze beer-cup; two boxes; one iron tripod; four earthenware jars, and one small rake.

The fields that Rigden and Rangrol had given their sister were intended for her use until her death. Even after her death, however, Ösel Dorje continued surreptitiously to harvest the crops, even though the fields should properly have reverted to the main house. In 1908, Tsewang Wangyal, the legitimate son of Lama Rigden, made a complaint to the district court that Ösel Dorje and his son had been harvesting—stealing, as he put it—the crop on land that was not theirs. According to a Nepali document from the case, the plaintiff, Tsewang Wangyal, had deeds to show that this field had been given to Purpa Wangmo by her brother Rigden as lifelong maintenance (*jivanbirta*) “because her son had not looked after her properly” (emphasis added: Karmacharya n.d. 3.49).

Conclusion

Tibetan biographies do sometimes present their subjects as being unequivocally good. Unfortunately, perfection and dullness are not incompatible qualities, and the characters of most saints and lamas are rounded out by a leaven of minor wrongdoing, token acts of evil that are tortuously expunged later in their lives. In addition to making the characters more interesting, this kind of evil, as well as its karmic consequences, serves the didactic function of showing us the terrifyingly high standards expected of aspirant saints. In extreme cases—and there are probably few biographies as extreme as that of Ra Lotsawa—evil deeds provide a justification for the infallibility of their saintly perpetrators: however extravagant, the acts of violence are justifiable because of the intention of the agents, who see the bigger picture where we do not. Reinforcing our belief in saintly infallibility entails a test of our commitment to the principle that the end justifies the means, *upāya*: It tests this commitment to the limit, but not to destruction. In all probability, our faith would not be shaken however massive and ruthless the murderous devastation wrought by a trusted lama, because the difference in the evil exhibited is merely one of degree, not of kind. Since numbers of casualties become meaningless after a point, the evil remains cosmetic, and our acceptance of its rightness is in any case preferable to the spectre of loss of faith. Heroes of such namthar may not be as two-dimensional as those who are irredeemably good, but [—to take up an image used by Sarah Shaw in this volume—] their characters are not fully rounded, just slightly curved. This is the outstanding deficiency of namthar as biography. To find truly three-dimensional characters we must look outside the genre, beyond mere badness, into other literary repositories of lives. The protagonists may not survive the test of sainthood, but they

are likely to emerge as fully-rounded human beings: something that is arguably far more interesting than saintliness—even if the revelation is an ugly business.

Bibliography

Works in Tibetan

Autobiography of dKar-ru

The Autobiography of dKar-ru Grub-dbang bsTan-'dzin rin-chen. (dPal snya chen rig 'dzin mchog gi rnam sprul bāi'u ldong btsun grub pa'i dbang phyug bstan 'dzin rin chen rgyal mtshan bde chen snying po can gyi rnam par thar pa rmad 'byung yon tan yid bzhin nor bu'i gter). Dolanji: Tibetan Bönpo Monastic Centre, 1974.

Gangs ti se dkar chag:

Gans-ti-se'i dkar-chag: a Bon-po Story of the Sacred Mountain Ti-se and the Blue Lake Ma-pañ. N. Norbu and R. Prats (eds.), Roma: IsMEO, 1989.

Ya ngal

Yang sgom Mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan. Sixteenth century. *Kun kyis nang nas dbang po'i dangs ma mig ltar sngon du byung ya ngal bka' rgyud kyis gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs so.* Manuscript of 54 folios kept in the village of Lubra, Mustang District, Nepal.

Rwa lo rnam thar

mThu stobs dbang phyug rje btsun rwa lo tsā ba'i rnam par thar pa kun khyab snyan pa'i rnga sgra zhes bya ba bzhugs so. Xining: mTsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989.

Bon-po Niṣpanna-Yoga

Lokesh Chandra and Tenzin Namdak, eds 1968. *History and Doctrine of Bon-po Niṣpanna-Yoga.* Śata-piṭaka series, vol. 73. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture.

Works in English

Aris, Michael V. (1988). *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives: a Study of Pemalingpa, 1450–1521, and the Sixth Dalai Lama, 1683–1706.* Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

- Blake, William (1975 [1790–1795]). *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. London: Oxford University Press in association with the Trianon Press.
- Gyatso, Janet (2001 [1998]). *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Havnevik, Hanna (1999). “The Life of Jetsun Lochen Rinpoche (1865–1951) as Told in Her Autobiography.” Acta Humaniora, Faculty of Arts, University of Oslo. Dissertation for the degree Dr. philos.
- Karmacharya, M.K. (n.d.) *Mustang Documents in the Nepali Language (1667–1975 AD)*.
- Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche (2000). “Practice Advice: Dorje Shugden.” (Talk given at Pomaia, Italy, October 2000.) Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Online Advice Book. <http://www.lamayeshe.com/index.php?sect=article&id=455>
- Lhalungpa, Lobsang P. (1977). *The Life of Milarepa*. London: Granada.
- Macfarlane, Alan (1985). “The seeds of evil within.” In *The Anthropology of Evil*, ed. by David Parkin. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 57–76.
- Parkin, David. (1985). “Introduction.” In *The Anthropology of Evil*, ed. by David Parkin. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 1–25.
- Pelling, Christopher (1990). “Childhood and Personality in Greek Biography.” In *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature*, ed. by Christopher Pelling. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 213–44.
- Pocock, David (1985). “Unruly evil.” In *The Anthropology of Evil*, ed. by David Parkin. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 42–56.
- Ramble, Charles (1984). “The Lamas of Lubra: Tibetan Bönpo Householder Priests in Western Nepal” Unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford.
- Ramble, Charles, in collaboration with Nyima Drandul (forthcoming). *Tibetan Sources for a Social History of Mustang (Nepal)*, Volume 2, *The Archives of Tshognam*. Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag.
- Taylor, Donald (1985). “Theological thoughts about evil.” In *The Anthropology of Evil*, ed. by David Parkin. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 26–41.

¹ *chos pa phal gyis kho mi la ras pa zer ba'i mi des [grub pa] thob pa'i gnas yin zer zhing khas len pa rnams la bshad bkrol / de ci ltar na'ang gangs rin po che 'di ni dang po srid pa 'di srid / bskal pa 'di chags pa'i dus der byung ba ma gtogs / kho bo mi la ras pas kyang gangs ri 'di ma bzos / bar du skal bzang rgyal ba gshen gyis lung bstan cing byin gyis brlabs pa'i dus der / kho mi la ras pa zer ba'i ming yang med / de 'og dus kyi bskal pa la 'phags pa'i gnas brtan rnams kyis gnas brten cing rig 'dzin grub thob rnams kyis sgrub pa mdzad / zhang zhung rgyal rabs bco bryad kyi yul chags pa'i dus su yang / kho mi la ras pa zer ba zhig med /*

² gung thang tsa lung gi yul du pha mi las shes rgyal dang / ma mnyang tsha dkar rgyan ma bya ba gnyis la / bu mi la ras pa bya ba skyes te / der kho tshe stod du yang khyim mtshes dang ma 'cham nas / mi rta sum cu tsam mthu btang ste bsad / de la 'gyod pa skyes nas bod yul du 'khyams tshe / lho brag a khu mar lo zer ba zhig dang 'phrad nas / der lo mang tsam du bran g.yog tu rgyugs / rgya gar gyi chos zer ba zhig zhus / de nas rang yul du log pa la mi rta bsad pa'i bdag po rnam kyis yul gyi phung 'dre bsleb 'dug zer nas rdung rdeg 'bar gsum byas pas kho de la skyo ba skyes te / brag dkar rta so zer ba la mang du bsdad / de mthar snya nam ding ri la phyi skyid grong sogs la yar 'gro mar 'gro mang du byas pa'i mthar / yon bdag re gnyis shig kyang 'byor / ming yang chen po tsam byung ba la / brag phug gi nyi ma dang sprang po'i kha dal gyi dpe bzhin / lta ba kha ru khyer rtogs pa glu ru blang zhing / theg pa dman pa'i glen tshig dang / nga rgyal che ba'i 'chal tshig dang / tha mal pa la grub tshul du bstan... /

³ gzhon dus yab ar ba yin pa'i rjes su 'brenng nas / dmag chus dang jag rkun kyang lo 'ga' byas res shig na mo mas ra re / da res rta sngon po snying dom dmar po yod pa khugs par 'dug gis / de khug na nga la blang zer tsam na / khong rang la tshur la mal mdung rgyab ste / yab dang ar ba mang du bsad khong pa rang la yang ral gri brgyabs rgyu ma thad la blug / cig gi na re 'di'i mig rtsa mtho lugs kyis / 'o brgyad rog po'i bu ma yin nam / da rung gcig rgyobs zer bas / gcig na re brgyab mi dgos non nas 'dug zer nas song ngo / der rgyu ma la bya rog phyag gis bsrungs shing yod tsam na / g.yog po gnyis rta dang rkya bros byas pas thar nas 'ong ste / rgyu ma nang du bcug dar skud kyis btsem pas ma grongs so / phyis pha'i ro bsregs sha yang lon par byas so /

⁴ bla ma lags / ngas yi ge bsleb pas ni mi shes par 'dug / yi ge mi shes kyang sangs rgyas pa'i gdams pa zhig yod na ni thugs la thog / de min na da rung nga ar ba la 'gro zhus pas / bla ma'i zhal nas / 'o bu nga la shog gu khyi lce tsam la rag ma lus par / kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa mngon du 'char ba'i gdams pa / rdzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan rgyud bya ba yod...

⁵ lam kha gcig na mu stegs purṇa nag po bya ba gcig dang 'phrad / kho na re / khyod nga'i slob ma byas na 'ong zer ba la rwa chen gyis khyod su yin / chos ci shes gsungs pas / kho na re / nga mu stegs purṇa nag po yin / chos rig byed bzhi la sogs pa shes zer bas / rwa chen thugs log nas / nga rta las babs nas bong bu zhon pa mi 'ong / sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la zhugs nas phyi rol pa'i chos sgor 'jug pa mi 'ong gsungs pas / kho khros te khyod glen pa u tshugs can zhig 'dug / phyi nang gi chos gang bzang rtsod pa byas na mngon zer nas / der rtsod pa byas pas bla ma rgyal / kho na re / khyod tshig la mkhas par 'dug ste / zhag bdun na ltos shig zer nas log ste song / der rwa chen ni 'phags pa shing kun la phyag dang bskor ba mdzad cing bzhugs / mu stegs de ni phur bu mda' 'phen gyi sgrub pa byed cing gnas pa las / zhag lnga na rwa chen la cho 'phrul sna tshogs pa byung nas / bla mas phag mo'i sgo nas phyir bzlog mdzad pas / re zhig zlog kyang slar sngar ltar byung ngo / der rwa chen thugs ma bde ste / nga la 'di lta bu 'ongs ma thad pa la byung bas / da bla ma chen po la bzlog pa'i thabs yod de 'ong bas zhu dgos snyam ste yar byon pa dang / bla ma'i zhal nas / bu khyod kyis lha 'dre drag po la ma bdos sam / mu stegs pa'i ngan sngags ma byung nam / bla ma dang chos kyi dam tshig ma nyams sam / mdang rmi lam na gser gyi mchod rten zhig mgo mjug ldog pa rmis / nyi zla gnyis pa thang la lung ba rmis / da nangs khyod byon pas rtags ngan gsungs / der mu stegs pa dang 'gras tshul zhus pas / bla ma'i zhal nas / ma bzang / ma bzang / purṇa nag po de mu stegs sum brgya'i nang nas mthu che ba yin / rgya bal gyi chos pa mang po'ang des bkrong / da mthu bzlog la zab dgos / de yang gzhan gyis mi phan te / nga la ushni'i bzlog pa zab mo zhig yod pas de sbyin no gsungs / der gser srang gang phul nas ushni'i gdams pa phyag len dang bcas pa rdzogs par zhus / de nas rwa chen gyis mal sa'i logs la phag mo'i thang ka bkram / rang nyid rdza ma'i nang du zhugs phyir bzlog gi 'khor lo g.yam pa la bris pas kha bcad / sngags bzlas shing bzhugs pas / srod la 'ur sgra chen po zhig byung ba bltas pas seng ldeng gi phur bu dar dmar gyi cod paṅ btags pa zhig 'ur gyis byung nas sgo la phog pas sgo tshal par gshags / nam phyed na yang sgra sngar ltar byung zhing bltas pas / phur bu gcig mal sa'i thang sku la phog nas thang ka thal bar btang / tho rangs kyi tshe sgra dang phur bu sogs sngar ltar byung nas khang pa'i ka gzhu la phog nas ka gzhu phyed mar gas / de nas nam yang langs te bla ma la ni gnod pa ma byung ngo / gtam de gcig nas gcig tu brgyud de mu stegs kyi rna bar thos pas mu stegs purṇa nag po yi mug nas lcebs te shi'o /

⁶ snye nam 'bri khyim pa'i chung mar dgos zer ba la ma gtad pas / 'bri khyim grong khyer sum brgyas dmag drangs nas / jo mo 'phrog nor rdzas rnam khyer / bla ma'i yab yum gnyis ma shi tsam du brdungs / sku mched rnam bison du bzung 'dug pa dang 'grigs / de'i tshe yab yum gnyis na re / bu gcig khyod la mthu yod na / 'bri khyim 'di la ston dgos te / gzhan du grub pa thob gyur kyang / ma thob pa dang khyad par ci / bdag cag las su chos byas shing / su la'ang gnod 'tshe ma byas kyang / don med sdug la 'di ltar sbyar / sdig can 'di rnam sgrol re ran / zhes mchi ma 'don bzhin smra bar byed / bla ma rwa chen gyi zhal nas / yab yum thugs khral mi 'tshal / 'di tsam sgrol ba la dka' tshegs ma mchis

gsungs te / dpal rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi ting 'dzin du bzhugs nas / ma he'i rwas brdung ba'i stangs ka mdzad pas / grong khyer de thal ba bun gyis song / mi ngan de dag gi lus kyang phye mar 'thag ste gcig kyang ma lus par sgral nas 'jam dpal gyi zhing du drangs / mi rgan gzhon med pa thams cad skrag nas nyes pa bzod par gsol zhing zhabs la btud / sku mched btson du bzung ba rnams kyang btang / jo mo yang sngar gyi 'byor pa lhag dang bcas pa phyr gtad de / thams cad yon bdag dang 'bangs su gyur nas dgra gnyen med par byas so /

⁷ 'khon bal po'i sras 'khon shakya blo gros bya ba yang phur la mkhas shing nus pa thon pa zhig yod pas phrag dog byas te / dbang phyug nyer brgyad rbad nas cho 'phrul cher bstan byung ba la / bla ma rwa los dpal rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi skur bzhengs nas sngags dang phyag rgyas gzir bas dbang phyug ma rnams rengs shing brgyal / da dam 'og tu mi 'jug na bsreg go gsungs pas / der cho 'phrul zhi zhing ci gsung gi bka' sgrub pa dam bcas / de 'khon gyis gsan pas lhag par ma dgyes te / rwa lo bya ba 'di dang por sngags pa gcig gi bu yin pa la / khos bha ro bya ba'i mu stegs pa gcig la mu stegs lha dud 'gro'i mgo can zhig zhus nas sgrub pas mi thams cad mgo 'khor nas 'dug ste / kho dang 'phrad tshad dmyal bar 'gro gsungs nas skur ba btab / der rwa chen la bu slob rnams na re / khong gis nged rnams la don med du 'tshar bar byas pas bla mas tshar gcad pa zhu zer ba la / bla ma'i zhal nas / nged ci la thug kyang bstan 'dzin gyi skyes bu la dgra mi byed / de bas lho bal du bla ma bha ro'i sphyan sngar 'gro ba dga' gsungs pas 'phags pa sphyan ras gzigs 'od zer dpag med 'phro ba zhig 'khor mang pos bskor ba nam mkha' la byon nas 'di skad ces gsungs so / spyir na bskal pa snyigs ma'i dus / dmu rgod sems can 'dul dka' bas / thugs rje'i gter chen bdag gis kyang / rta mgrin la sogs khro bor sprul / khyad par bod yul mun pa'i gling / chos dang gang zag grub mtha' che / sgro skur mang pos las ngan bsog / 'di dag mngon spyod bya ba'i yul / ...shin tu gdug cing gtum pa la / zhi bas phan par mi 'gyur.../

⁸ Darth Vader and the Terminator incidentally did switch their allegiances in the sequels.

⁹ For the life of Ani Lochen (rJe-btsun Lo-chen rin-chen), see Havnevik 1999.

¹⁰ The torture of fishes and insects does, however, feature among the early activities of Zhang Rinpoche (1123–93). These juvenile transgressions, as well as the childhood peccadilloes of other lamas, are cited in Janet Gyatso's celebrated study of Tibetan autobiography (Gyatso 2001: 112).

¹¹ Notably in the British television series *Blackadder*, which featured the character of the Baby-eating Bishop of Bath and Wells.

¹² Ramble forthcoming: HMA/LTshognam/Tib/10. The references to the documents cited in this section correspond to those used in Ramble (forthcoming), where photographic reproductions are provided and “improved” readings suggested.

¹³ The unedited text of this document reads as follows: *tshog sgon bla ming bten bha rgyal tshen la tshe rog zo bha sku ka srid dar nas phyi su ur blang med pa'i yi ge bris nas phul snying don tsha tshog snam bla ming 'od gsal rdo rje nas dngul 10 dkar kyi zhu nas zhag 15 bha ka byi nas byu ru krug ma 17 dang stag bha shel nag 1 a ma shing ka dbram nas bha rtar zhag bdug zer zhin ngos bu mo sna ma sku ka srid dar bhi khu 100 mdzin nas bla ma'i ming su bha sti rgyabs nas bla ming ten bha rgyal tshen nas byu ru ngos nang med dgrang bha kyang med zer nas spar sti phul dkar ka zhin zhabs dar zhin mdzad ngang bha bla ha rti mi nang grig zhus nas bar dum nas zos bha sku ka srid dar la dngul 18 cod nas nang bha la ha sgos nas phyi su byu ru dang phrang bha byor zer nas ur blang rang skad tsam yang med bi yi ge bris nas phul.../*

¹⁴ *kho bo nam kha'i ngos kyi kyis skra nas bzung ste spi res kas mgo nas [...] res ka skang pa nas bzung rte gang kyel du g.yug nas skra spi u kri zhur dog ste zhur grang mang byas ste ngos dran med la yud rtsam song ba dang ngos kyis a bhag bug na byi ru dog che chung sdom nyi shu rtsa gnyis dang dngul lnga yod pa bcas khyer nas song gdug pas ngos kyang mi mang mi gcig yong bstabs bka' khrim zhu gro bsam nas / a ci nang na log nas dad pas yang kho bo 'od gsal rdo rje pha bu rnams sgong star yong nas khyod kyi mi la gdug gter nas bsad yod zer mi 'od gsal rdo rje yin 'di dus kyis phya dpang yang yod lags.../ zhag bdun nas zla bdun kyi bar la mi rgyu phyug gsum med bar zos brgyu skor ngos kyi skra bcas spi nas khyer pas bzhi pas mthu gtad dar dug po'i dmag brten ngan pas rkun gsod ji bgyi yod pa.../*

¹⁵ *dug gter mi bsad zer pa yang med zla dun zhag dun nang mi nor phyug gsum med pa zos rgyu zer...thu gtad dmag ngan skun gsod nga nas byas nus pa dang byas pa med byas rgyu bka' lung shes pa yang med.../*