Organizing Religion
Situating the Three-Vow Texts of the Tibetan Buddhist Renaissance

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If one summarizes as practice the content or sense expressed by the completely perfected Buddha, the Exalted One through his turning the wheel of dharma, it is the three vows.

Dorjé Shérap, *The Same Intention* (Sobisch 2002, 363)

The vehicles from which the vows come forth are different,
The sections of the cannon in which they are taught, too, are different,
The people from whom they are taken are different too,
And also the rituals that cause their obtaining are different.
The durations for which they are taken, the volitional impulses with which they are taken,
And the productions of the resolve, too, with which they are taken are different.
And that the causes for their loss, the times of their loss, and the persons who are the support are also different is stated in the individual basic scriptures.

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This thesis situates the three-vow texts written by the founders of the new (sarma) schools within the broader processes of school-formation during the “Tibetan Renaissance” (950 to 1250 CE). The texts of focus are authored by Atiśa, Gampopa, Drakpa Gyeltsen, and Drigung Jikten Gönpo. In order to expand our understanding of these under-studied texts I examine them from three perspectives, with each perspective defined by a different set of goals that guided the authors. First, I explain how these texts describe and arrange the three sets of vows (the prātimokṣa, bodhisattva, and tantric vows) in order to clarify the commitments of a vow holder. Second, I show how the positions taken in these texts are connected to the process of monastic institutionalization. Third, I show how some of the texts engaged in public polemics in order to assert the supremacy of the author and his school.

Ce mémoire situe les textes sur les trois voeux composés par les fondateurs des nouvelles (sarma) écoles comme faisant partie du processus plus large de la formation des écoles durant la "renaissance tibétaine" (950 à 1250). Les textes examinés ont été composés par Atiśa, Gampopa, Drakpa Gyeltsen et Drigung Jikten Gönpo. Afin d'étendre notre compréhension de ces textes négligés, je les examine selon trois perspectives, dont chacune est définie par les objectifs différents que visaient les auteurs. Premièrement, j'explique comment ces textes décrivent et organisent les trois types de voeux (du prātimokṣa, bodhisattva, et tantrique) afin de clarifier les engagements du détenteur des voeux. Deuxièmement, je démontre comment les positions défendues dans ces textes sont reliées au processus d'ordination monastique. Troisièmement, je démontre de quelle façon certains des textes prenaient part à des polémiques publiques afin de promouvoir la supériorité de l'auteur et de son école.
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INTRODUCTION

During the period of 950 to 1250 CE, a period described by Ronald Davidson as the “Tibetan Renaissance” (2005) Buddhist monastic centers rose from the ashes of a dark age of social, political, and religious turmoil to become the center of Tibet’s newfound social and political success. To effect this rejuvenation Tibetans sought training in India and returned with a wide swath of texts and practices that would become the raw material for the new Buddhist schools of the period. This material was massive in both quantity and scope, and the Indian sources provided little guidance for organizing it into a single, unified, consistent religious system. The onus was thus on the Tibetans to accomplish this task, and as different individuals began to organize and prioritize the elements in different ways, various new (sarma)\(^1\) schools emerged. The three-vow texts written by the early founders of these schools were part of their effort to systematize Buddhist practice and thus reflect their values and their challenges.

The goal of this thesis is to expand our understanding of the three-vow texts written during this period by showing how their composition was influenced by the larger concerns of the sarma schools. This will involve placing them in the context of three broad goals that guided the positions of the authors: to delineate a consistent system of

\(^1\) Throughout this thesis I have rendered Tibetan words phonetically. Here I have applied Ronald Davidson’s strategy, using the vowel “é” (pronounced “ay”) as well as the umlaut for nasalized vowels. For those that wish to look up the Wylie transliteration, I have included an appendix which lists the Wylie transliteration for all the Tibetan words and names I have used in this thesis.
practice, to stabilize their newly established schools, and to assert and defend the authority of their school.

In order to fully understand the tensions between the vows, and how these tensions were relevant to these goals, it is necessary to briefly introduce the nature of the three vows individually. This introduction will outline the origins and commitments of each of the vows as well as some of the tensions that existed between them. With this background information covered, the introduction will conclude with an expanded explanation of the goal and methodology of my analysis.

THE PRĀTIMOKṢA VOWS

The prātimokṣa vows involve a commitment to a list of rules and regulations that govern the conduct of vowed Buddhist practitioners. There are seven different prātimokṣa codes, each of which differs depending on the sex of the practitioner and the level of his or her commitment: 1) layman, 2) laywoman, 3) male novice, 4) female novice, 5) probationer nun, 6) full nun, and 7) full monk. Whereas the most basic prātimokṣa of the lay practitioner contains only five rules, the monastic prātimokṣa is

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2 “The Prātimokṣa is essentially a code of monastic discipline concentrating on the avoidance of immoral deeds, misbehavior or impropriety. Punishment for the offences ranges from expulsion to sanctions of probation, penance, forfeiture, repentance or confession. The aim of the Code is the preservation of spiritual purity and harmony in the Sangha” (Pachow 1999, 229).

3 The five rules are:

1. Not to destroy life.
2. Not to steal.
3. Abstain from committing adultery.
4. Not to tell lies.
much larger. The *Mūlasarvāstivādin Prātimokṣa* of Tibet, for example, contains a list of over 250 rules with over 100 more added to the nuns’ text.

The prātimokṣa code contained in the *Prātimokṣa Sūtra* is itself part of a larger body of literature concerned with the elements of monastic life, including both the canonical and noncanonical Vinaya literature (Prebish 1975, 10). Most of these texts supplement the core rules of the prātimokṣa code by providing extended explanations and interpretations. The *Sūtravibhanga*, for example, illustrates the individual rules with their stories of origin, giving the impression that the rules were established on an ad hoc basis as required.⁴

The purpose of the prātimokṣa extends beyond the basic regulation of monastic life. To begin with, a commitment to the prātimokṣa entails a commitment to act well in the most general sense. The earliest mention of the term “prātimokṣa” is contained in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* where seven verses, each attributed to one of the past seven Buddhas, are referred to as “prātimokṣas.” One of these verses is appended to the end of the *Mūlasarvāstivādin Prātimokṣa Sūtra*, the prātimokṣa that would become the standard monastic code of Tibet:

From the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*:

Not to do any evil, to attain good,

5. Abstain from intoxications, such as liquor.

⁴“In this work the Code of *Pātimokkha* (Sanskrit: *Prātimokṣa*) is accompanied by an ancient word for word commentary. For each rule a story explains the circumstances under which it was originated. It also includes amplifications, exceptions and modifications concerning a particular rule” (Pachow 1999, 229).
To purify one’s own mind; this is the Teaching Of the Buddhas. (Prebish 1975, 19)

From the conclusion of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Śūtra:

Not to do any evil, to attain good, to completely subdue one’s own mind; this is the Teaching of the Buddhas (Prebish 1975, 113)

The etymology of the term also indicates its broad role. Prebish agrees with Sukumar Dutt (1960) that the term originally meant “bond,” a meaning inferred from interpreting “prati” to mean “against” and “mokṣa” to mean “scattering.” In this sense, the prātimokṣa provides the role of keeping the community together. As time went on and the prātimokṣa evolved into a larger set of rules, its function came to more closely resemble the meaning inferred by Pachow and others:

In the Chinese and Tibetan translations, this is interpreted as: ‘Deliverance, liberation, or emancipation for each and every one’ and at all occasions, that is, ‘prāti’ stands for ‘each’, every and ‘mokṣa’ for ‘Deliverance’… The Tibetan So-sor-thar-pa, literally signifies: ‘Disburdenment of each individual’s sins.’ (Pachow 1999, 5)

This is reflected in the opening verses of the Mūlasarvāstivādin Prātimokṣa Śūtra:

3. This Prātimokṣa is called the essence, the heart and foundation of the limitless and unfathomable water of the ocean of Vinaya of the Buddha.

…

7. This stands like a ladder for ascending the city of release. It has been proclaimed, “When I enter Nirvāṇa, this [Prātimokṣa] will be your teacher.” (Prebish 1975, 43)

5 “Pātimokkha, however, can be equated to Sk. Prātimokṣa, which from its etymological parts lends itself to interpretation as something serving for a bond, the prefix Prati meaning ‘against’ and the root Mokṣa meaning ‘scattering’ (kṣepaṇe iti kavikalpadrumah), though I have not been able to discover any instance of the use of the word precisely in this sense in Sanskrit. I should prefer to take the etymological interpretation of the word as bond” (Dutt 1960 72-73, quoted by Prebish 1975, 18)
INTRODUCTION

It is a long-held Buddhist belief that to act morally on the basis of a vow is better than to act morally without a vow, since a vow entails the aspiration of Buddhahood. Thus, the prātimokṣa vows were not appended to practice to merely maintain order. They were considered to be fundamental component of the path to towards Buddhahood.

MAHĀYĀNA AND THE BODHISATTVA VOWS

The development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in first centuries of the Common Era brought a new vow and a new set of ethics to go with it. Two developments exerted a particularly important influence on Buddhist ethics. The first was development of the bodhisattva vow, which entailed a commitment to strive for the welfare of all sentient beings. The second was the loosening of the earlier prātimokṣa code, which was partly enabled by the skeptical philosophy of emptiness developed by early Mahāyāna writers. Let us look at each in turn.

In Asaṅga’s Bodhisattva-Bhūmi (Bbh), Asaṅga presents the ceremony for taking the bodhisattva vow. First, the aspirant must confirm that he or she firmly possesses the thought of awakening (bodhicitta) and will therefore help all sentient beings achieve liberation. The official then confirms that the aspirant desires to receive full training in the ethics (śīla) of the bodhisattva:

6 “Self-restraint is formalized by making a vow (saṃvara). The act of vow-making creates its own instinct. To act morally in accordance with a vow is considered more beneficial than to act morally without one, because the moral conduct is associated with progress toward a higher goal” (Tatz 1986, 13).
“Will you, kulaputra so-and-so, receive from me all the bodhisattva bases of training all the bodhisattva ethics—[1] the ethics of the vow [samvaraśīla], [2] the ethics of collecting wholesome factors [kuśaladharmaśīla], and [3] the ethics of accomplishing the welfare of sentient beings [sattvānugrāhakaśīla]?” (Tatz 1986, 61)

These three bases of bodhisattva ethics (śīla), listed in order of importance, describe the full commitment of someone who has taken the bodhisattva vow.⁷ Taken together, these three bases of bodhisattva ethics represent adopted morality (samātta), which Asaṅga distinguishes from the three other kinds of morality: natural (prakṛti), habituated (abhyasta) and morality conjoined with means (upāyayukta).

The breadth and diversity of the expanded threefold ethics of the bodhisattva vow meant that it was possible for the various obligations to come into conflict. It could be the case, for example, that in order for one to help others own must break the rules of the prātimokṣa, or even natural morality. In such situations, Asaṅga unequivocally recommends that one should break the rules for the greater good, specifically stating that even the seven acts that are reprehensible by nature may be committed.⁸ This means that in cases of conflict, one’s commitment to the welfare of living beings trumps all other ethical guidelines. As Tatz has noted, the bodhisattva’s compassion “leaves him free to

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⁷ Asaṅga explains each of them earlier on in the Bbh. The ethics of the vow refers to all of the seven levels of commitment in the prātimokṣa code. Tsongkhapa later summarizes Asaṅga, writing that the goal of vowed morality is “to stabilize the mind in undefiled well-being” (Tatz 1986, 260). The restraint instilled by the prātimokṣa code is one reason why it has from the beginning been considered the basis for subsequent training in concentration and insight. The ethics of collecting wholesome factors refers to the aspirant’s personal spiritual development (i.e. the six perfections of giving, morality, patience, vigor, meditation, and wisdom), and the ethics of accomplishing the welfare of sentient beings refers to aspirant’s obligation to assist others.

⁸ The seven acts are murder, stealing, uncelibacy, lying, creating discord, harsh speech, and idle chatter. Asaṅga provides examples of situations where one ought to commit each of these acts for the greater good (Tatz 1986, 70-72).
act with defilement” (Tatz 1986, 24), providing that the bodhisattva possesses the requisite compassion and insight to break the rules skillfully. This ethics of the greater good is also present in Śāntideva’s Śikṣā-Samuccaya, although to a lesser extent.\footnote{See, for example: If he sees the greater advantage for beings let him transgress the rule…Again in the same place he says: “If the Bodhisatta should produce a root of good in one being, and should fall into such a sin as would cause him to fry in hell for a hundred thousand ages, he must endure to fall into that sin and bear that hellish pain rather than to omit the good of that one being.”… In the holy Ratnamegha the slaying of a man who was intending to commit a deadly sin, is allowed. (Bendall and Rouse 163-164)}

Scholars such as Pagel have documented how this ethical development was assisted by the metaphysical skepticism of Mahāyāna philosophy, which claimed that everything ultimately lacks an “own-being” (svabhāva). Fundamental categories of pure and impure, good and bad, were thrown into question, loosening the hold of the prātimokṣa. The following verse by Candrakīrti is indicative of the application of cognitive skepticism to the realm of ethics:

If [a bodhisattva] sees in moral purity an own-being
By that very reason, his morality is not pure. (Pagel 1995, 166)

Likewise, the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra goes so far as to state:

Virtue and non-virtue are two. [A bodhisattva who] does not seek after either virtue or non-virtue, and does not discern the sign and the signless as two, penetrates non-duality… To say, ‘this is impure and that is pure’ [implies] duality. (Pagel 1995, 167, f. 222; TTP, 34, p. 92.5.3-6)

At the same time, the conventional world of duality is not entirely denied and the welfare of sentient beings remains a guiding principle in the Bodhisattva’s action. As Pagel
writes, the “convergence of these two visions of dependent co-origination constitutes a pivotal point in the bodhisattva’s cognitive attainments and establishes him in the pāramitā practice proper” (Pagel 1995, 164). It is in this convergence that the bodhisattva must negotiate the relative value of vowed morality and his or her commitment to the welfare of other sentient beings, applying his or her skill in means (upāya) to break the rules of the prātimokṣa out of compassion.¹⁰

MONKS, SIDDHAS, AND THE TANTRIC VOWS IN INDIA

Buddhist tantra began to emerge in the seventh century. From this point until the tenth century, when the translators of the Tibetan renaissance began their pilgrimages, the Buddhist communities of India were principally populated by two groups of practitioners: “the monastic community, on the one hand, and the increasingly radical siddhas at the margins of Buddhist society on the other” (Davidson 2002, 76). Both groups incorporated new tantric material, but in different ways and to different extents.

Taken as a whole, the Buddhist tantric material of the period presents a wide spectrum of concepts and practices. In the case of the monastic community, those tantras that were integrated into the institutionalized canon were mostly what would eventually

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¹⁰ “It was from this kind of changes in perception that there eventually emerged a new type of ethics—the bodhisattva morality (bodhisattvaśīla). Based on the amalgamation of the vastly expanded mission and the new vision of reality, Mahāyāna sūtras came to propose a moral ideal that was tailored to the spiritual aspiration of the bodhisattva morality superseded the ancient conventions and replaced them with a scheme that allowed for a free interplay between cognitive realization and the religious obligation of universal liberation” (Pagel 1995, 164).
be classified as the *kriyā*, *caryā*, or *yoga* tantras in the tenth century. Such tantras contain some rather violent imagery that was characteristic of this period in India’s history, such as the image of a warlord (literally) squashing his enemies (such as Śiva). However, the more overtly sexual and heterodox tantras, such as the *mahāyoga* or *yoginī* tantras, were at this point the domain of the lay siddhas. Their ritualized eroticism was understandably alarming to the monastic community, where the monastic vows “remained an expectation if not a reality” (Davidson 2002, 322). The monks thus attempted “to frame their ritual narrative, deny their necessity, or extract their physicality,” using a hermeneutic that “framed [the consecrations] with the imperial rituals at the beginning and Buddhist philosophical thought at the end” (Davidson 2002, 199). The heterogeneity of the different texts accepted by the monks and siddhas was further compounded by diversity within the siddha literature itself. The siddhas’ tantras drew on a plethora of sources and were composed by groups, sometimes representing

11 See Davidson 2002, 152.
12 Ibid.
13 This new eroticism can be seen in the three new consecrations present in *anuttarayoga* tantras such as the *Guhyasamāja*, the *Sarvabuddhasamāyoga* and the *Laghusaṃvara*, all of which were formed during the eighth century (Davidson 2002, 198). These tantras added to the original rituals of consecration, which were together grouped in the “pot consecration” (*kalaśābhīṣeka*), three additional levels of consecration: the “secrete consecration” (*guhyābhīṣeka*), the “insight consecration” (*prajñājñānābhīṣeka*), and the “fourth consecration” (*caturthābhīṣeka*) (Davidson 2002, 197). The secret consecration involved the disciple providing a sexual partner for the teacher, and then ingesting the combination of “ejaculated fluids, termed the ‘thought of awakening’ (bodhicitta)” (Davidson 2002, 197). In the insight consecration, the disciple himself “copulated with the female partner under the master’s tutelage” (Davidson 2002, 198).
collections of individual works loosely stitched together. This latent diversity was not stabilized by a subsequent hermeneutic. In fact, each tantra had widely divergent commentarial tracts, and even within an individual work the commentator’s position was not always consistent. When all of this is taken together, one can understand the daunting spectrum of material encountered by the Tibetan translators.

With the addition of the tantras to the Buddhist cannon came the addition of another set of vows. In the case of the monastic community, these vows were taken during tantric initiations. As these initiations took place in the context of monastic life, the vows were relatively light. Davidson quotes the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* as a typical example of “a rather lackluster statement of guidance to candidates after their coronation”:

So! [1] The secrecy of the pledge of the Great Bodhisattva, the True Prince Mañjuśri, is never to be transgressed. [2] You are never to produce great demerit. [3] Nor are any of his mantras to be repudiated. [4] No Buddha or Bodhisattva is to be contradicted and [5] your master is to be propitiated. Otherwise, there will be a transgression against the pledge, and the mantras will not lead to accomplishment. (Davidson 2002, 165, numbers added)

14 “Their own scriptures had evolved in ways that did not admit of the grand synthetic visions of reality that the institutional systems erected… Instead, we find a preference for the individual expressions about the teaching of each tantra and a privileging of the local account of the transmission of its consecrations and other rites” (Davidson 2002, 241) “Because of a consistent pattern of population dislocation and the influx of newly proselytized tribal and village peoples, Buddhism developed new constituencies. In the process they drew from a much broader spectrum of social backgrounds, linguistic bases, and performative sensibilities… Siddhas affirmed the importance of local culture with tribal-related rituals, the naturalness of the jungle, the perimeter, the mountain, and the edge of the field” (Davidson 2002, 291)
Since these were monks taking the initiations, guidelines of restraint were already in place in the prātimokṣa code and few additions were required. As we have already noted, the monastic tantras did not involve sexual acts, and as Davidson remarks, “Buddhist monastic culture had erected an institutional dynamic that spoke of the need for restrain from erotic behavior and aggression, and all the monks would have received instruction to that effect” (Davidson 2002, 166). Although the Tantric system as a whole was considered the epitome of Buddhist practice, the explicit rules of the monastic Tantric practice were only “supplemental to both the monastic and Mahayanist rules (prātimokṣasamvara, bodhisattvasamvara)” (Davidson 2002, 322).

The siddha communities, on the other hand, lacked the ballast of the monastic vows, and thus the explicit rules of the siddhas were more formalized than those of the esoteric monastics. Different tantras often have different lists of vows which are usually associated with the consecration rituals, and even within a single tantra there can be more than one list of rules.\textsuperscript{15} Nonetheless, among the siddha communities two lists of rules became important: I) \textit{The Fourteen Root Transgressions} and II) \textit{The Eight Gross Transgressions}:

\textbf{I: The Fourteen Root Transgressions} \hspace{2cm} \textbf{II: The Eight Gross Transgressions}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Contempt for the teacher.
\item Transgressing the message of the Tathāgata.
\item Anger at members of the feast family
\item Abandoning loving kindness.
\item Rejecting the thought of awakening
\item Abusing the three vehicles
\item Seeking to take a consort who is without sacramental preparation.
\item Relying on unauthorized sacraments.
\item Arguing in the tantric feast.
\item Showing the secret Dharma.
\item Teaching another Dharma
\item Staying with Śrāvakas for seven
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{15} See Davidson 2002, 322.
7. Revealing secrets to unprepared people.
8. Disparaging the Victor’s body of instruction.
9. Doubt about the pure-natured Dharma.
10. [Improper] love or dispassion toward evil people.
11. Imposition of other than non-duality upon reality.
12. Disparaging those with faith.
13. Not relying on the sacraments and vows.

These vows share some of the characteristics of the rules of the prātimokṣa. Like the rules of the prātimokṣa, they are specific deontological rules largely focusing on particular kinds of outward behavior, as opposed to the Bodhisattva vows which are more general and psychological, focusing on the internal intentions of the agent.\footnote{“Only within the list of fourteen root transgressions are there three rules that appear intellectual or psychological: not to abandon loving kindness (I.4), not to give in to doubt (I.9), and not to consider the elements of reality to be pluralistic” (Davidson 2002, 325).} According to the Sūtravibhanga many of the rules of the prātimokṣa were formed on an \textit{ad hoc} basis. Although some of the Tantric rules have some precedent in Buddhist literature, there is no known scripture from which these may have been straightforwardly derived,\footnote{Davidson notes that Mañjuśrīkīrti, in his \textit{Vajrayānamūlāpattīṭīkā-mārgapradīpa}, attempts to find scriptural sources for each of the rules. According to Davidson, this work “makes the comparative study of these rules actually possible and constitutes a remarkable work of traditional scholarship. Concomitant with his analysis, however, is the rather basic observation that neither list of faults appears intact in any single scripture. Both agendas therefore seem to have been synthesized outside the basic scriptural context” (Davidson 2002, 324).} and it is possible that they are similarly the result of both a proactive articulation of the path as well as a reaction to damaging behavior. For examples of the former, there are rules regarding the standard Tantric pillars of respecting one’s teacher (I.1) and maintaining secrecy (I.7, II.4, II.8). Other rules, such as I.3 and II.3 which instruct practitioners not to
argue at the feast, or II.1 which specifies some limit to the who or what is a suitable sexual partner,\textsuperscript{18} may be evidence that there existed some problematic behavior that needed to be curbed.

The self-critical literature that emerged provides further evidence of such behavior.\textsuperscript{19} Two common critiques were that the practice led to egotism and that the path involved dangerous or artificial practices.\textsuperscript{20} Such critiques were directed toward the troubling behavior that could result from a practitioner’s presumed divinity, which in turn could be interpreted to entail exemption from the conventional realm of ethics. A representative textual example of such a critique is contained in the late-eighth or early ninth-century expansion of the *Guhyasamāja*, entitled the *Sandhivyākaraṇa-tantra*. A portion of this text is translated by Davidson, and is interesting in that it mentions some of the same issues contained in the lists of transgressions:

\begin{quote}
O, Lord of Secrets! The scholars, having encountered this excellent method, and having correctly grasped its clear significance, will immediately fall into arrogance.

\ldots
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{18} “The first gross transgression may simply depict the unseemly circumstance of yogins searching for sexual conquests of any variety—yakṣīs, rākṣasīs, animals, or whatever... These faults are framed in order to deter potential (and probably actual) sexual predation, misogyny, and sectarian conversion to the path of early Buddhist monasticism” (Davidson 2002, 324).

\textsuperscript{19} “Even thought this facet is sometimes overlooked in modern literature, it is certainly evident to readers of siddha documents that each succeeding tangent in the tradition met with a critical response almost as soon as the new direction was expressed” (Davidson 2002, 327).

\textsuperscript{20} “In the first, Buddhist yogins are critiqued for exhibiting a level of egotism appropriate to Brahmans, for they have both come to consider themselves divine. In the second, the criticism is voiced that siddhas have become deluded in their obsession with artificial means of meditation, breath control, visualization of letters, or psychic heat, and by the siddha’s search for nubile consorts” (Davidson 2002, 327-8)
They will fight in the tantric gathering [ganacakra] and will act like dogs toward the food in the feast. They just harm the benefit that has resulted from their previous positive karma. They will say, “Both virtuous and nonvirtuous actions, they are our powers!” Slander ing the teacher, who is like the Buddha in person, they will offer him no consideration. In a second they are angry. In a moment they are greedy. They simply exhibit the behavior of dogs, pigs, and ravens! (Davidson 2002, 328)

Davidson concludes that when widespread critiques such as this one are considered along with the lists of tantric transgressions, it suggests “that the explicit egotism of the esoteric meditative program was a consistent problem” (Davidson 2002, 238).

The tensions between the siddha and monastic communities extended beyond the antinomian practices of the siddha community. The literature of the siddhas occasionally pokes fun of the monastic community, with the theme of the parody being that “the approved system of Indian Buddhist religiosity is a masquerade, a well-dressed imitation of spirituality, and the tantras easily question whether the costume is supported by anything other than air” (Davidson 2002, 279). Some of the hagiographical representations of the siddhas, such as Virūpa and Naropa (two key siddha figures in the lineage of the Tibetan Sakya and Kagyu schools respectively), reveal a marked dissatisfaction with the orthodox monastic institutions. Other literature (e.g. the Guhyasāmatantra) even puts into question the knowledge of the Buddhas. In response, monastic commentators were forced apply hermeneutic strategies that fixed the prima facie meaning of the text, thereby restoring their own legitimacy.21

21 “The tantras self-consciously laugh at the prior experience of their audience—showing the Buddha sowing doubt in the mind of his listeners and letting them know that everything they know is wrong, since even the Buddhas themselves do not know this
The tension between the communities of the siddhas and monks was mitigated by their social, geographical and religious separation, but this separation was not absolute. They remained in a state of continual interaction and mutual refinement over the centuries leading up to the reintroduction of this material in Tibet:

Ultimately, both monks and siddhas developed a symbiotic relationship in the small regional monasteries located in the regional centers, towns, and at the edge of the forest, with the two estates eventually sharing a common syllabus, ritual vocabulary, and a grudging respect for each other’s scriptural compositions and spirituality... By the time the first wave of Tibetans in the new translation period came to India, toward the end of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh centuries, their [the siddha’s yogini tantras] complete incorporation into the monastic regimen had already been largely effected. (Davidson 2002, 338)

Despite this, no single interpretive system emerged that encompassed the variety of practices and beliefs. When Tantric Buddhism was transported from India to Tibet for the second time, the Tibetans were shouldered with an immense amount of textual and ritual material and the onus was on them to construct a unified interpretive system.

**THE TIBETAN ENCOUNTER AND THE EARLY THREE-VOW TEXTS**

The texts and practices of both communities were transported en masse to Tibet by tenth- and eleventh-century Tibetan translators. The incredible diversity of the raw material allowed for a broad spectrum of interpretation. As we will see, some Tibetans capitalized on the license provided by a surface-reading of the more antinomian tantric texts, going so far as to justify mass murder on the grounds of tantric non-dual awareness. Conversely, the goal of many commentators is to assure the institutional communities that everything they know is not wrong. They are there to bring the extreme scriptures back into the fold, to revisit the standards of scriptural authenticity that had heretofore served the Buddhist community so well” (Davidson 2002, 292).
Others would take a more conservative approach, selectively integrating and interpreting the siddha material while emphasizing the virtues of monastic conduct. In Tibet, unlike in India, there was no cultural separation between those who prioritized monasticism and those who did not. This increased the pressure on Tibetans to develop a comprehensive religious system that could incorporate both the tantric material of the Indian siddhas and the orthodox values of the monks. By the early twelfth century, as the sarma schools began to coalesce, the development of comprehensive and indigenous Tibetan Buddhist systems began in earnest.

The issues addressed within the three-vow texts are directly connected to the larger challenges of this broader project. The texts were composed by the early founders of these sarma schools, and their authors’ attempts to reconcile commitments of the three vows within the texts were influenced by the broader tensions they faced as they attempted to establish successful schools. The aim of this thesis is to situate these texts within these tensions and challenges in order to expand our understanding of the texts’ origin, import, and meaning. I hope to provide at least a partial answer to the interrelated questions of why these texts were written, who these texts were written for, and why these texts took the positions that they did. In order to accomplish this I will examine them from three different perspectives, with each perspective defined by a different set of objectives that guided their authors.

First, the broadest goal of the early founders of the sarma schools was to integrate the manifold Indian source material into a unified and consistent path of practice. The three vow texts, which define and organize the three vows, were part of this larger project. The most basic and explicit goal of the texts is to clarify the commitments of a
vow holder who holds all three sets of vows. In order to do so, these texts describe and arrange the vows in such a way that the various commitments they entail can be consistently maintained. We have already seen how a commitment to the bodhisattva vow may entail that the vow holder ought to break the prātimokṣa vows when they conflict with the greater good. A commitment to the tantric vows may again entail that the vow holder break the prātimokṣa vows in rituals that involve consuming alcohol or engaging in ritual sexual acts, as instructed by their tantric teacher to whom they have a vowed commitment. Likewise, a lack of commitment to either the prātimokṣa or bodhisattva vows could lead to interpretations of tantric material that strayed from the standards of conduct established by the lower vows and their respective ethical systems. The three-vow texts respond to this potential for conflict by defining the boundaries of each individual vow and providing a rubric to address confusion. In each chapter of this thesis I will begin looking at the text from this perspective, explaining how each text describes the nature of each vow individually and how it prioritizes each vow in relation to the others in order to develop an overarching normative framework. This element of the thesis will be largely informed by the translation and analysis of the three-vow texts by Jan-Ulrich Sobisch, whose 2002 work *Three-Vow Theories in Tibetan Buddhism* is the only monograph of western scholarship devoted to the subject.²²

²² This source will occasionally be supplemented by the translation of Jamgön Kongtrul’s nineteenth century three-vow compendium *The Treasury of Knowledge, Book 5: Buddhist Ethics* (2003).
wonder why each author took the position that they did. In order to provide a partial answer this question, I will focus on two factors that influenced the composition of their texts. The first is the process of institutionalization that took place as the new schools of the Tibetan Renaissance coalesced. With the exception of Vibhūticandra, all of the authors that we will look at were concerned with establishing monastic institutions that provided their schools with stability and longevity. We can remember that the prātimokṣa vows assist in maintaining order within monastic institutions by delineating the boundaries of acceptable behaviour of individuals who are members of this community. Texts that prioritized the prātimokṣa vows endorsed the value of monastic institutions and the importance of an individual’s commitment to this community, whereas texts that prioritized the tantric vows did so at the expense of such institutions.23 In order to better

23 Richardson and Snellgrove describe the two trends as follows:

The study of Tibetan Buddhist developments is complicated by the haphazard manner in which Tibetans collected over a period of several centuries whatever Buddhist teachings they could gain from Indian and Nepalese teachers, and by the fact that these teachings were themselves the heterodox accumulation of centuries of Indian religious and philosophical speculation. However, one can usually distinguish two main trends, the one conservative (or at least comparatively so) in that it is based upon an ordered monastic life, and the other free and unorthodox in that it is based upon the experiments and experiences of non-monastic yogins, who practiced and developed new styles of Buddhism, untrammeled by the conventions of an ordered monastic life. (Richardson and Snellgrove 2003, 114-115)

Snellgrove would later describe this tension as one between “the way of the Sūtras” and “the way of the Tantras,” observing that the life of a tantric yogin was clearly in conflict with the ordered religious life of a celibate religious community. The Tibetans were now [during the eleventh century] realizing that there were two main paths toward enlightenment, as represented by the vast variety of late Indian Buddhist traditions, where were now flooding their country, and these two they refer to as the saw of the Sūtras and the way of the Tantras—namely that of ordered monastic life and that of the free-roving tantric practitioner, who is bound only to the word of his chosen religious master. The so-called way of the Sūtras certainly did not neglect the tantras, but these
understand the rationale behind each of the texts I will situate the three-vow position of each author within the context of their larger strategy of establishing stable institutions. This will provide us with a partial answer to the question of why the authors took the positions that they did.

The agenda of establishing stable institutions was not the only factor that influenced the composition of these texts. The intended audience of the three-vow texts often extended beyond author’s own students, and many of these texts engaged in public debate by presenting and defending their own position while critiquing the position of others. In so doing, they engaged in a debate that adhered to public standards established by the polemic trends of their time. In Unearthing Bon Treasures Martin describes polemic as follows:

Polemic does its best to undo the background and authority of a tradition as it understands itself, and in various ways remake that background into something disreputable and unworthy of further interest. (Martin 2002b, 106)

The polemics of the three-vow texts certainly involved issues of legitimate authority. As India was considered the source of authentic Buddhism, a polemic critique would often invoke allegations that the opponent’s ideas lacked a proper Indian pedigree. This was not the only strategy for the polemics of the texts, for as we will see, some of the three-vow texts directly criticized other schools for promoting ideas that led practitioners to stray from monastic values. This sort of critique appears closer to the description of polemics referred to in Donald Lopez’s article on the genre of gak len (dgag lan), where

could only be practiced within the limits permitted by the overriding vow of monastic celibacy. (Snellgrove 1987, 485)
he describes a polemic as that which attempts to expose “diseased deviations within the community” (Lopez 1996, 223, ff. 2).²⁴ Often, the dual standards of Indian pedigree and monastic virtue would be used in conjunction, as authors tended to label texts or practices that were non-monastic as un-Indian, despite the precedent set in India by the siddha communities. In order to better understand the three-vow texts, this thesis will thus look at how some of the three-vow authors distinguished the superiority of their school using these polemic standards to critique the three-vow positions of others.

Each chapter of this thesis will focus on a particular three-vow text written by a founding member of one of the new schools of the Tibetan Renaissance. I will begin by placing the text in the historical context of its author, using historical surveys written by Ronald Davidson (2005) and Matthew Kapstein (2000; 2006).²⁵ I will then provide a brief outline of the author’s position on the three-vows. With this information in hand, I will then situate the texts within the contexts of institutionalization and polemics.²⁶ As the thesis progresses, each new text will be compared to the previous texts in order to distinguish its unique position. I must note that my research is limited to works that have already been translated into English, as my skills in reading Tibetan are not sufficiently developed to work with the original texts. Nonetheless, I hope that I will be able make an

²⁴ Here he is quoting from Schleiermacher’s discussion of polemics in his Brief Outline on the Study of Theology (1977, 31-38).
²⁵ These two recent surveys will occasionally be supplemented with references to Hugh Richardson and David Snellgrove (2003) and David Snellgrove (1987).
²⁶ There has not been an extensive amount of research completed in the role of polemics in the renaissance period. For this topic I will draw on Samtem Karmay’s work on the ordinances of the Western vinaya monks (1980) and Dan Martin’s work on polemics of the Drigung and Sakya schools (2001b), as well as various sections of the broader historical surveys listed above.
original contribution to the field of Tibetan studies by looking at these under-studied texts from new perspectives.

The first chapter will begin with Atiśa (982-1054) of the Kadampa and his Lamp for the Path.\textsuperscript{27} Although technically not a three-vow text, it is an influential text that has much to say regarding the nature and priority of the vows. This chapter will also provide an introduction to the some of the historical factors of the renaissance that will remain relevant subsequent chapters, including the polemics of the monastic conservatives and the work of the early translators. The second chapter will focus on a three-vow text by Gampopa (1079-1153) of the Dakpo Kagyupa, the earliest three-vow text proper.\textsuperscript{28} The third chapter will look at the three-vow work of Jétsün Drakpa Gyeltsen (1174-1216) of the Sakyapa\textsuperscript{29} as well as an influential critique of this work written by his Indian contemporary Vibhūticandra.\textsuperscript{30} The final chapter will consider the Same Intention, a three-vow text associated with Jikten Gönpo (1143-1217), Shérap Chungé (1143-1171), and Dorjé Shérap (1187-1241) of the Drigung Kagyupa. By the end of this thesis I hope to have traced some of the mutual influences of the texts, their authors, and their goals.

\textsuperscript{27} My primary source here will be Richard Sherburne’s translation of Atiśa’s text (2000).
\textsuperscript{28} There has been a lot of research on Gampopa (and his students) in the last fifteen years. For reference to his religious philosophies, particularly his theories regarding Mahāmudrā, I will draw on the work of David Jackson (1994), Ulrich Kragh (1998), and Klaus-Dieter Mathes (2006). For reference regarding his student Lama Zhang, I will refer to Dan Martin (2001a).
\textsuperscript{29} I have chosen not to include a focused analysis of Sakya Paṇḍita’s A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes (sDom gsum rab dbye). In its place I used the earlier three-vow work of Drakpa Gyeltsen. I feel that it would have unnecessarily broadened the scope of the thesis to have included an additional chapter on Sakya Paṇḍita, especially since Sakya Paṇḍita and Drakpa Gyeltsen hold such a similar position on the three-vows.
\textsuperscript{30} For the historical background of Vibhūticandra I will refer to Cyrus Stearns (1996).
The text of focus for this chapter is Atiśa’s *Lamp for the Path*. This text is not technically a three-vow text nor is it written by a Tibetan. Nonetheless, it is relevant to the three issues of this thesis insofar as it focuses on the tensions of the three-vow system, it is deeply embedded in the process of monastic institutionalization in Tibet, and it participates in the polemic debate regarding the importance of monastic values. This chapter will also introduce the main social and religious factors that affected the composition of all the three-vow texts. The first section will explain some of the challenges that faced Tibetans in the ninth and tenth centuries. I will introduce the Eastern Vinaya monks who worked to overcome these challenges by founding and revitalizing monasteries in Central Tibet. The subsequent section will situate Atiśa and the Kadampa school within the context of these monks as well as the Western Vinaya monks who invited him into the country. With this background material covered, I will present an analysis of Atiśa’s text, focusing on his presentation of the three vows. This presentation will conclude by connecting the attitudes expressed in the texts with the larger trajectory of monastic growth as well as the polemics that played a role in guiding the text. Finally, the chapter will conclude by looking at the translators, who were important players in the formation of the Kagyu and Sakya schools but who held different priorities than those of the monastic conservatives.

Information regarding the condition of Tibet, its politics, its people, and its religion from the time of the old dynasty’s collapse in 842 CE to the rekindling of Buddhism at the end of the tenth century is difficult to procure due to the paucity of
potential historical sources.\textsuperscript{31} We know that Darma assassinated the pro-Buddhist leader Relpachen around 840/841 CE and subsequently executed a campaign against Buddhist institutions that led to violence between pro-Buddhist and anti-Buddhist clans. After Darma’s assassination by a Buddhist monk, issues arose surrounding succession and the empire of Tibet became divided, resulting in a series of revolts and uprisings which lasted until 910. The consequences of this instability were not restricted to the fall of the central government, but involved “the collapse of civil and social institutions as well” (Davidson 2005, 70). Later Tibetan historians “acknowledge that the rule of law, known as the ‘golden yoke, the order of the king’ (rgyal khrims), and the rule of religious obligations, known as the ‘silk protective cord, the order of the Dharma’ (chos khrims), unraveled without any fail-safe system of checks or appeal to a court of last resort” (Davidson 2005, 71).\textsuperscript{32}

During this period of fragmentation, Buddhism survived chiefly in two different domains: that of the aristocratic clans of the Nyingma\textsuperscript{33} and that of the loose groups

\textsuperscript{31} “After the breakup of the kingdom the owners of such estates would have become self-declared chieftains, as must have happened elsewhere, and their many contentions and conflicts were the cause of the generally unhappy states of the whole country, resulting in the absence of all historical records” (Snellgrove 1987, 470).

\textsuperscript{32} Both of these have Buddhist roots. French provides the following distinction: “[chos khrims] represent[s] the word of the Buddha in its purest form, including the rules of the monast community; [rgyal khrims] the rules of the historic kings based on the foundation of the teaching of the Buddha” (French 1996, 453, ff. 3). Elsewhere in her article she lists three sets of rules found in texts of the early empire and notes that they “are strongly rooted in Buddhist doctrine” (French 1996, 443).

\textsuperscript{33} “For the members of the royal house and for those following in their fragmentary footsteps, Buddhism was very much a religion in aristocratic keeping, and they expanded on the received rituals and meditations, developing the new rites and literature that were eventually classified as Nyingma” (Davidson 2005, 76).
“temple wardens” who blended Buddhist practice with other local religious practices and services. The lack of a centralized government empowered the various local clans, whose leaders “became the centers for both political power and religious authority, sometimes vested in the same person” (Davidson 2005, 80). Both groups are described by later Tibetan historians as straying from legitimate Buddhist practices and engaging in behavior that broke with the prātimokṣa code, such as animal sacrifices and erotic rituals. As a result, the consequence was a general sense of a religious tradition out of control, with the monastic clothing and outward forms being maintained even while the actual behavior of Tibetan religious was slowly being accommodated to Tibetan village rites of blood sacrifice to mountain gods and to the marked Tibetan proclivity toward a greater sense of sexual license. (Davidson 2005, 79).

Orthodox monastic practice waned without centralized institutions and Tibetans began to “search for monastic vitality” (Davidson 2005, 83).

In the period just prior to the collapse of the dynasty, Relpachen had constructed temples in the two eastern centers of Amdo and Kham, both of which were economically

“One of the great puzzles in the study of Tibetan history, however, remains the ‘dark age’ of a century or so intervening between the [fall and revival Buddhism]. Because only a small number of documents can be assigned with reasonable certainty to this period, for the most part our conclusions about it must of necessity be derived indirectly” (Kapstein 2000, 10)

34 “While some people used the designation ‘Arhats with hair knots’ (dgra bcom gtsug phud can), others called themselves elder Arhats (gnas brtan dgra bcom), elders (gnas brtan), religious (ban de), or ‘absorbed in religious conduct’ (‘ban ‘dzi ba)” (Davidson 2005, 78).

35 “The practices observed by these groups were those of the occasional monk, their Buddhist practices interspersed with liturgies for the dead, charismatic rituals, and attention to householders’ duties” (Davidson 2005, 78).

36 “The old royal commitment to Buddhism had by no means disappeared. What had been lost was the continuous transmission of the Vinaya, the code of monastic discipline and the basis for ordination in the Buddhist order” (Kapstein 2006, 86).
sound areas lying on the silk route. Amdo in particular became an area that monks retreated to during the persecution of Buddhism, bringing their Abhidharma and Vinaya texts with them (Davidson 2005, 89). It is for this reason that, “after hearing of the thriving monasteries, the many temples, [and] the important monks in Tsong-kha, they went there for the spark of their religious revival” (Davidson 2005, 92). A relatively small group of monks associated with the lineage of Drum Yéshé Gyeltser were led by Lumé and Lotön to the thriving Silk Road juncture of Amdo in north-eastern Tibet in order to secure the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya. They returned to Central Tibet sometime between 978 and 988 to begin the process of restoring old monasteries as well as establishing new ones. The resulting network of temples in central Tibet laid the groundwork for both the institutionalization of a relatively stable Buddhism as well as the political aristocracies of the various clans.

Davidson calls this intrepid group the “Eastern Vinaya Monks” because it was the Vinaya that proved to be “their most important contribution, with its preestablished institutional structure, system of relations, rules of order, procedures for the adjudication of disputes, and so forth” (Davidson 2005, 104). Along with the Vinaya, their doctrinal focus included the scholasticism of the Mahāyāna Abhidharma (e.g. the

37 As we will see, many of the founders of the various Kagyupa branches will come from Kham.
38 These monks, according to Davidson, included Lumé Shérap Tsültrim, Tsongstün Shérap Sangyé, Lotön Dorjé Wangchuk, Dring Yéshé Yönten, Ba Tsültrim Lotró, and Sumpa Yéshé Lotró (Davidson 2005, 92).
39 To give an idea of the prevalence of the Eastern Vinaya temples in Ü-Tsang, “the number of temples constructed by the time of Atiśa’s arrival in Ü would have been between two hundred and three hundred or perhaps a few more” (Davidson 2005, 102).
Abhidharmasamuccaya, Prajñāpāramitā scriptures, as well as various Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra treatises (e.g. the Yogācāra-bhūmi). These sources were later fused with the fresh tantric materials of the Kadampa in the late eleventh century. There is also some evidence of the integration of the older Nyingma tantric rituals and practices, although the diverging interests of the two groups occasionally led to conflict (Davidson 2005, 104-105).

The process of restoration relied in part on the existing members of the clan system who were originally responsible for the temples. Although the interests of the Eastern Vinaya monks occasionally clashed with the established aristocracy, their eventual cooperation ensured financial support and the institutional/cultural legitimacy for the new temple system. In fact, it is difficult to separate the reconstruction of stable Buddhist institutions from the reconstruction of a stable political and economic system, as the religious institutions were so closely tied to the clan aristocracy. Furthermore, since the government of the country continued to be fragmented until the unification under the Mongol rule, the monastic establishment of religious law (chos khrims) acted as a supplement to provide peace and stability. As Davidson states,

By the eleventh century, Central Tibetan monks were classed among the ‘important men’ (mi chen po), and their efforts at spreading the message were understood as contributing to social cohesiveness and organization, a trend in Tibetan public life that continues to the present. (Davidson 2005, 102)

“...The temples and clans supporting the temples’ reconstruction provided legitimacy for these new monks, so that other areas could respond to the opportunity and become the source for the formation of entirely new institutions. Accordingly, the temples became the starting point but not the end strategy for the missionaries, and they began the process of community formation and the institutionalization of their Vinaya systems” (Davidson 2005, 96).
ATIŚA’S INVITATION

In his preface to the translation of *The Lamp for the Path*, Sherburne describes Atiśa as “the central figure of the revival of Buddhist monastic life” (Sherburne 2000, vii), a view shared by many Tibetan and Western historians. Although his work would eventually become quite influential and the Kadampa curriculum would become an important model for training Buddhist monks, it is best to remember that he was one figure among many who were working towards monastic restoration. Atiśa’s work lies at the crossroads of two established interests: the Eastern Vinaya monks’ project of monastic restoration and the Western monastic tradition of Yéshé-Ö.

Atiśa was invited to Tibet by the Western monastics of the kingdom of Gugé. This kingdom was founded by King Trashigön, a descendent of the royal dynasty.⁴¹ According to Kapstein,

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\text{Gugé’s rulers sought to reinstitute the Tibetan empire within their own domains, and to do this they emulated the excellence of the empire’s monarchs in the symbolic terms afforded by religion: they founded temples and sponsored the translation of Buddhist scriptures. (Kapstein 2006, 91)}^{42}
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Trashigön’s son, Yéshé-Ö, was the leader of religious developments in the area and is remembered as “the very ideal of the royal monk” (*ibid.*). The Sakya Sölam Tsémo would later write that “the advent of this king was even prophesized by the Buddha in the

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⁴¹ Trashigön was the third son of Kyidé Nyimagön. Kyidé Nyimagön was himself the grandson of the infamous Darma. Having been displaced due to a controversy over succession, legend reports that Kyidé conquered Western Tibet with an army of 300, where his three sons each established their own kingdoms.

⁴² Davidson similarly reports that Jangchub-Ö was “very concerned with legitimacy in monastic life…perhaps anxious that the growing movement in Central Tibet was appropriating all the royal dynastic sites” (Davidson 2005, 115).
Mahākarunāsūtra and the Mañjuśrimūlatantra” (Karmay 2003, 135). Yéshé-Ö displayed a strong personal commitment to monastic values and was openly critical of tantric practice that caused monks to stray from their monastic commitments. We will look at his public ordinance (bka’ shog) against such practices in the next section. Yéshé-Ö’s two grand-nephews, Jangchup-Ö and Shiwa-Ö, took up Yéshé-Ö’s mission of re-establishing monastic values, and it was with this aim in mind that Jangchup-Ö sent the monk Nagtso Tsültrim Gyalwa to India to retrieve Atiśa. The two returned to Gugé in 1042. Atiśa subsequently travelled to Tsang in 1046, and spent the remainder of his life travelling around Central Tibet, mainly in the area surrounding Lhasa, passing away in 1054.

By the time Atiśa arrived in Central Tibet, many monasteries had already been established by the Eastern Vinaya monks. The temples that he became associated with did not form an institutionally independent network, and “the great Kadampa monasteries—like the new temple at Nyéütang (1055), or Sangpu Néütok (1073) by Ngok Lekpé Shérap—were founded mainly in the Eastern Vinaya tradition” (Davidson 2005, 111). Even after Atiśa, the monasteries of the later Kadampa monks followed the lineages of the Eastern Vinaya monks despite the Kadampa curriculum (Davidson 2005, 111). Furthermore, the content of his teachings was in a large part influenced by the preexisting curriculum of these monks, which as we have already seen focused on the

43 As Davidson points out, Atiśa’s influence was limited because he was ordained into the Mahāsāṃghika-vinaya lineage (Davidson 2005, 110). He was prohibited from teaching this lineage due to a law established by Relpachen that banned the teaching of any Vinaya other than the Mūlasarvāstivada, and thus it was difficult for him to establish temples that were independent of the Eastern Vinaya monks.
classics of Indian Mahāyāna scholastic philosophy and the monastic conduct of the Vinaya.  

Atiśa’s background was well-matched with the values of the Western monastics who invited him to Tibet and the Eastern Vinaya tradition with whom he worked. Although he was initiated into some Tantric practice when he was young, he took the monastic vows at the age of twenty-nine and spent the remainder of his time in south and south-east Asia (both in India and in Sumatra) studying and practicing in monasteries. This combination of a well-trained Indian monk and a conservative-minded network of monasteries in Central Tibet contributed to the eventual success of the Kadampa school, nominally founded by Atiśa’s disciple Dromtön. By the early twelfth century, the period of time when Gampopa received his training from the Kadampa, “the Kadampa curriculum had become part of a mainstream Buddhist study in Central Tibet”

44 “The early textual record actually depicts Atiśa as something of a pawn in the hands of Tibetan teachers, acting according to their desires as he traveled through their domains and stayed in their temples… When he arrived in Tsang, Sumpa Yéshé Lotrō (who, if actually alive, must have been very old) reputedly invited Atiśa to come to Gyasar-gang, his institution. In Ü, Lümé’s disciple Khutön Tsöndrü Yungdrung was considered the Biggest Man… Such invitations placed curricular burdens on Atiśa, as they frequently established the texts that he was to teach. When he stayed at Khutön’s flagship monastery, Sölnak Tangpoché, for example, much of what he taught fit into the curriculum already developed in the Eastern Vinaya system… When he resided in Samyê, Atiśa was asked to maintain a similar teaching schedule” (Davidson 2005, 111).

45 Snellgrove relates this element of Atiśa’s hagiography: “He continued to move in the circles of tantric yogins, until Śākyamuni himself, surrounded by a vast retinue of monks, urged him in a dream to take monastic vows” (Snellgrove 1987, 479).

46 “At the age of twenty-nine he took the vows and ordination of the Buddhist monk, continuing his Mahāyāna studies for ten years in far-off Sumatra, then a great monastic centre with close ties to Pāla Bengal. When he returned to India it was to the great monastery at Vikramaśīla, a Pāla foundation, where, then in his prime, he held the post of respected Elder (sthavira) and became a popular teacher (ācārya)” (Sherburne 2000, xvi)
This curriculum, which incorporated the scholastic and monastic traditions of both Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism and the reforms of the Eastern Vinaya monks of Tibet, would provide “a kind of monastic model, which all other Tibetan religious orders (even the Bonpos) have emulated” (Snellgrove 1987, 479).

**ATIŠA’S LAMP FOR THE PATH**

Atiśa’s *Lamp for the Path* attempts to organize the three vehicles into one consistent path of practice. Although not technically a three-vow text, it repeatedly returns to three-vow issues, with a particular focus on the importance of the monastic prātimokṣa. The text reads as a conscious response to exactly the sort of problems which were said to have provoked Jangchub-Ö to invite him to Tibet in the first place: heterodox practices and the perceived lack authentic monasticism (presumably amongst the incumbent imperial monks). This section will begin by presenting Atiśa’s views on

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47 Kapstein likewise writes that

The Kadampa came to be distinguished by their ascetic and moral rigor in pursuit of the bodhisattva’s path… During the next three centuries the legacy of the Kadampa was very great in this respect and cam to form part of the common inheritance of all Tibetan Buddhist orders. Throughout this period, and even long after, almost all figures note spent at least part of their education at Sangpu. (Kapstein 2006, 99)

48 “The uniqueness of Atiśa’s contribution—and what made his reform viable—is his unifying of Buddhism’s three vehicles (Hinayana, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna) into a harmonious and coherent spiritual development of ascent” (Sherburne 2000, ix).

49 “Of special importance to the modern schools of Tibet, especially that of Tsong-kha-pa, is the *Lamp of the Path* by Atiśa, composed in Tibet to reform Buddhism of indulgence in tantric practices performed without a proper grounding in the lower vows” (Tatz 1986, 31)

50 In his introduction to the text, Atiśa writes that Jangchub-Ö said to him

In this area of Tibet there are persons who misinterpret the Mahāyāna path of the Buddha’s teaching. Gurus and Spiritual Friends are arguing back and forth about things
the nature of the vows and the relationship between them. It will then look at some of the ways in which the text criticizes behaviour considered by the contemporary monastic conservatives to be problematic. It will conclude by situating this criticism alongside the polemic proclamations of those same monastic conservatives who invited him to the country.

Atiśa’s text considers the vows to be a necessary component of Buddhist practices. Early on in the text, Atiśa begins his explanation of the stages of the path with the following admonition:

A resolve will not be furthered
Without vows that have progress in mind;
Therefore he who seeks growth in the resolve for
Perfect Enlightenment, earnestly takes them. [Verse 19] (Sherburne 2009, 9)

This emphasis on the importance of the vows is reiterated in each of the sections on the prātimokṣa, the bodhisattva vow, and the Tantric initiations. At the same time, he also recognizes that the different vehicles present different paths of practice. In his section on Tantra he writes,

The Paths on which one progresses are each different, and the [methods of] liberation of the particular Vehicles should not be mixed up. The Blessed One preached the various paths of the Vehicles because He knew the capability of persons, their potential and disposition. (Sherburne 2000, 291)

Since the vehicles demand different paths of practice, vow-holders must find a way to resolve potential conflict.

they themselves do not comprehend. They all have their own logic to analyze their suppositions about the Profound View and Broad Practice. With so much disagreement on all sides, I beg you to clear up these doubts for us. (Sherburne 2000, 27)
The text repeatedly emphasizes the importance of adhering first and foremost to the monastic prātimokṣa. It is clear from his sections on the prātimokṣa and bodhisattva vows that Atiśa sees no conflict between the two, but at the same time he takes pains to express the importance of the prātimokṣa vows and deny the claim that the bodhisattva vows are enough on their own. Quoting his Guru Bodhibhadra, his rationale seems to be that the prātimokṣa vows are necessary in order to provide the concrete details of acceptable behavior:

There is simply no other [Buddhist] rule [that binds one] to refrain from killing, stealing, unchastity and so on. Even the fit vessel for taking the Bodhisattva Vow adds no [new rules] of refraining from these [unvirtuous deeds]. (Sherburne 115)

Moreover, of the seven levels of prātimokṣa vows Atiśa insists that the monastic vows are “the highest,” and are “pure” because they involve “renunciation in the matter of liquor and of women” (Sherburne 2000, 125), two elements which factor highly in the esoteric literature of the siddhas and their yoginī tantras. Atiśa goes so far as to say that whoever thinks that the lay vows are sufficient for a bodhisattva is “a hypocrite, and like a thief and robber” (Sherburne 2000, 137).

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51 See, for example, Verse 20:

A right resolve will not be furthered
Without vows that have progress in mind;
Therefore he who seeks growth in the resolve for
Perfect Enlightenment, earnestly takes them. (Sherburne 2000, 9)

See, also, his commentary:

If it is not the Prātimokṣa vow [that binds one to refrain from basic sins], then where can you possibly look for another? …It is the Buddha’s teaching that we refrain from sins of killing, stealing, unchastity and the rest, and since his Teaching endures only as long as the Prātimokṣa vows remain – and depends on them – we teach that the vows of the Prātimokṣa alone come first. (Sherburne 2000, 115-119)
In Atiśa’s section on tantric practice he emphasizes the importance of the tantric vows which are taken in the context of tantric initiations. Here he states that “if you wish to practice Mantra … then you must request the Flask Initiation [that is essential to] the ‘preceptor-initiation’” (Sherburne 2000, 291-293). The initiations of the three lower tantras (ritual, practice, and yoga tantras) were grouped into this category. Although the Flask Initiation is considered mandatory, the subsequent Initiations of the higher yoga tantras (“Secret” and “Insight” Initiations) are cautioned against, primarily because they involve breaking the vows of celibacy entailed in the monastic prātimokṣa. He again quotes Pāṇḍapātika Avadhūtipa, who states that since monks have no need of the Secret and Insight Initiations, “there is no need of the Secret and Insight Initiations even for laymen” (Sherburne 2000, 303). Thus, even in a tantric context the monastic vows remain one’s primary commitment.

It must be noted that the text contains some ambiguous remarks that may lead the reader to believe that Atiśa provides some license to tantric practitioners. For example, he states that once the flask initiation has been observed, “one is purified of all sin, and / becomes fit to exercise the Powers” (Sherburne 2000, 19). Later on in the text Atiśa claims “wrong does not exist even for one who is at the very start of the Beginner’s Level” (Sherburne 2000, 305). At one point he seems to defend the more unorthodox

52 For some details on these latter consecrations, see the earlier discussion of the siddhas (ff. 13, p. 8) as well as Davidson 2002, 197-199.
53 Snellgrove remarks that “the whole treatise raises so many questions that one may wonder if Byang-chub-'od, who requested it, was satisfied with the results.” (Snellgrove 1987, 483).
violent or sexual elements of Tantric texts and rituals,\textsuperscript{54} stating that one cannot criticize one element of Buddhist doctrine without criticizing all of it.\textsuperscript{55} It is possible that these ambiguities result from a conflict between Atiśa’s own views on the value of tantric practice and the agenda that was impressed on him by his conservative-minded associates. We’ve already seen how his teachings were directed by the curriculum of the Eastern Vinaya monasteries, and there is further evidence that his chief disciple Dromtön may have pressured him to tow the conservative line and avoid emphasizing esoteric tantric practice.\textsuperscript{56}.

Nonetheless, these comments regarding tantric license represent a small part of a text that by and large supports the agenda of the monastic reformers. We have already

\textsuperscript{54} He responds to those unnamed detractors of Tantric Buddhism who wonder, “If expulsion offenses against religious celibacy and against the taking of life come from [the Mantrist’s use of women and the Harsh Destruction [Powers], then that [Vehicle] should not be entered” (Sherburne 2000, 297).

\textsuperscript{55} “In so saying these persons are defaming [Mantra] without knowing its [true] intent. It is wide and deep, a sphere of action for those of keen powers, and the [very] heart of the Buddha’s teaching. And he who condemns it as a field of activity for those who have the capacity, disposition, and development for it is going to hell – have no doubt about it – because he is belittling the word of the Tathāgata and rejecting His profound Doctrine. Here is what the hold Finely Woven Sūtra says about the [karmic] maturation of an act of rejecting the Doctrine: ‘If anyone says, ‘Some of the Doctrine is good; some of it is bad’, he is rejecting the doctrine’” (Sherburne 2000, 297-299).

\textsuperscript{56} See, for example, Richardson and Snellgrove:

[H]e seems to have been much influenced by his chosen disciple ‘Brom-ston, who was six years his senior. It was mainly on his account that he stayed on in Tibet, and the austere, almost puritanical, attitude of his chief disciple seems to have retrained the master from laying too much stress on mystical and tantric teachings. (Richardson and Snellgrove 1968, 130)

Davidson points out that Dromtön “curtly requested Atiśa not to discuss the siddhas’ dohā verses, for they might corrupt Tibetan morals, and the same argument is encountered almost half a century later with Shiwa-Ö” (Davidson 2005, 154).
seen that Atiśa gives priority to the monastic prātimokṣa when discussing the bodhisattva and tantric vows. With regard to celibacy in general, Atiśa again summarizes Paiṇḍapātika Avadhūtipa:

All the many virtues that have come about in consequence of the Buddha’s Doctrine have happened because His teaching has continued. But the continuation of His teaching depends solely on the celibate religious life..., and when religious celibacy perishes the teaching of the Buddha will decline. (Sherburne 2000, 301)

Atiśa’s also criticizes unnamed contemporaries who flaunt their supposed Tantric prowess:

Those who continue in this bragging are heading for evil destinies. They heap contempt on the word of the Tathāgata, and, by their defiling religious celibacy, they cause the Teaching of the Buddha to decline. They exercise their Harsh Destruction [Powers to harm others], and by their keeping women, Expulsion offences are committed. (Sherburne 2000, 295)

The use of alcohol, sexual acts, and destructive magic are all condemned throughout the text.

Atiśa’s critiques of those who use the tantras to justify transgressive behaviour bear a particular similarity to the polemics of Yéshé-Ō and Shiwa-Ō, who wrote important works delineating what texts and practices should be considered authentic. Such polemics use the monastic system as the normative measure of what counts as an appropriate text or behavior. Often, transgressive texts or practices are deemed un-Indian, and therefore inauthentic, regardless of whether or not there was actually precedent in India. Yéshé-Ō’s eleventh-century ordinance (bka’ shog) critiques the practices of bajiwa
CHAPTER I: ATĪŚA AND THE REKINDLING OF BUDDHISM IN TIBET

(‘ba’-ji-ba), 57 “village specialists” (grong-gi-mkhan-po) and “tantrics” (sngags-pa), three terms that Martin believes Yēshé-Ö considered synonymous (Martin 2001b, 109, ff. 8). Yēshé-Ö may also have been motivated by the activities of the more notorious tantric translators, such as Ralo, who we will look at in the next section. 58 Although later writers would see this text as a critique of specific tantric practices, 59 Martin points out that the text appears to contest the authenticity of tantra as a whole (Martin 2001b, 109-110).

Indeed, the text upholds Mahāyāna practice as the epitome of the Buddha’s teachings:

Are these the practices of Mahāyāna?
O village specialists, your tantric kind of practice,
If heard in other countries would be the cause for shame.
You say ‘we are Buddhists,’ but your practices
Show less compassion than an ogre
You are more greedy for meat than a hawk or wolf.
You are more lusty than a donkey or an ox.
You are more intent on sour drinks than the shur gog insects in a rotten house.
You make less distinction between pure and impure than a dog or a pig.

…
Ignorant of enigmatic terminology you practice the rite literally,
A Mahāyānist such as this, will surely be reborn as a demon.
What a strange Buddhist adhering to such practices!
If these practices, like yours, bring about Buddhahood,
Then hunters, fisherman, butchers and prostitutes,
Would all surely have attained enlightenment by now.
All of you tantrists, village specialists, must not say ‘We are Mahāyānist!’
And must reject the erroneous views. Practice what is taught in the

57 There is some confusion regarding the translation of the term ‘ba’-ji-ba. Martin refers to Karmay’s research, which suggests a connection to the Nepalese word bijuwa, a term that can be translated as “sorcerer” (Martin 2001b, 109, ff. 8).
58 Karmay specifically refers to the figures “Sham-thabs sngon-po-can and the ācārya dMar-po” (Karmay 2003, 136). We will look briefly at the latter figure in the chapter on Drakpa Gyeltsen and Vibhūticandra.
59 Snellgrove concurs with this reading, drawing attention to Yēshé-Ö’s objections against “sexual yoga if performed by those who had taken monastic vows, rites of slaying or otherwise harming living beings, and religious offerings consisting of animal flesh or other impure substances” (Snellgrove 1987, 474). Shiwa-Ö’s eulogy of Yēshé-Ö supports this, writing that “the hidden meaning of the secret mantra was vitiated, and it was further corrupted by the practices of the rites of ‘sexual union’ [sbyor]; ‘deliverance’ [sgrol] and the ‘tshogs’ offering’” (Karmay 2003, 136).
Threefold Scriptures and that which is correct and pure! (Karmay 2003, 139)

Although Yéshé-Ö did appear to exhibit a particular disdain for transgressive practices, there is nothing in his ordinance to indicate that he had any sympathies with tantra in the larger sense.

Whereas Yéshé-Ö’s ordinance focuses transgressive practices, the ordinance of Shiwa-Ö reorients the discussion by focusing on texts and their authenticity. His ordinance lists texts that Shiwa-Ö believes to have been ‘corrupted’ (‘dres-ma) or even entirely authored by Tibetans, thereby rendering them inauthentic and illegitimate (Martin 2001b, 110). Interestingly, the list “indiscriminately mixes treatises that no one ever denied were written by Tibetans…together with commentaries by Indian authors…and tantras” (ibid.). The scope of his critique includes some of the yoginī-tantras imported by the translators such as the ‘red master’ (ācārya dMar-po), who we will look at in a subsequent chapter. It also identified Mahāmudrā texts that were the taught by Marpa and would become foundational for the Kagyu school. Shiwa-Ö appears to be motivated to delegitimize texts that he sees as transgressive, and in order to accomplish this he articulates a polemic against their origin. Unlike Yéshé-Ö, he accepts the supremacy of tantra, but maligns those monks who break their vows because they “do not know the meaning of the ‘intentional terms’ (dgongs-pa-can-gyi tshig)” (Martin

60 The polemic text by Gō-lotsāwa Khukpa Lhétsé, Disputing Perverse Mantric Texts (sNgags log sun ‘byin), similarly “condemned, as many of the later neo-conservatives did, authentically Indic works along with those certainly Tibetan in origin” (Davidson 2005, 153).
2001b, 111), and he therefore recommends that monks avoid practicing the yoganī tantras entirely.

The bulk of Atiśa’s *Lamp for the Path* echoes the concerns of these ordinances by emphasizing the importance of the monastic vows and critiquing tantric practice that leads monks away from their commitments. By insisting that the monastic vows are a Buddhist’s primary commitment, his text supports the project of monastic restoration in Central Tibet. It would in fact become a cornerstone of the Kadampa training curriculum. At the same time, it articulates a polemic against those who would use the tantras to justify breaking the monastic code, thereby participating in the polemic of the Western Vinaya monks against those who seek to subvert monastic Buddhism.

**THE TRANSLATORS**

This chapter will conclude by introducing the translators of the eleventh century, whose contributions were essential to the rebirth of Tibetan Buddhist civilization. Like

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61 “Intentional terms” are ordinary words employed in tantras and in the poetry of the siddhas that act as substitutes for technical tantric terms.

62 Snellgrove includes a translation of the end of Shiwa-Ō’s work:

None of these [texts] represent the true path, and since they do not result in the achieving of supreme enlightenment no one should resort to them or accept them as a path. Also those who have taken vows as monks must keep to the monastic rule, and those who have taken up the practice of Secret Mantras must not be in conflict with adherence to the rule, for in the case of (tantras of the) Kriyā, Upa, Yoga, class and even the Guhyasamāja and others, one should strive to practice without breaking one’s vows. Although the Wisdom (= Yoganī) tantras are excellent, there has been much neglect of the teachings proper for a monk owing to ignorance concerning the true meaning of the terminology, and for this reason there is nothing averse, if one does not practice them. (Snellgrove 1987, 475)
the monastic reformers, the translators were motivated by a perceived degradation in the quality of Buddhism being practiced in Tibet. However, whereas the monastic reform movement responded by reinstating orthodox monastic practice, the translators responded by traveling to India to seek texts and training. They were less concerned with whether or not this material cohered with the monastic code and were instead primarily motivated to acquire authentically Indian texts and practices. This section will look at the goals, training, and achievements of a few of these translators. The biographies of Drokmi (of the Sakya), Marpa (of the Kagyu), and Ralo will be presented in order to introduce some of the key figures in the establishment of the Kagyu and Sakya schools and to compare this group with that of the monastic reformers.

The most frequent reason given for the new translation movement was to “resolve doubts” (Davidson 2005, 120). By the eleventh century there were a plethora of competing interests and traditions, including the Vinaya monks, the older esoteric systems, as well as various local groups and individuals who practiced antinomian tantric rituals involving sexual yoga or violent behavior. Davidson believes that individual transgressions were perceived to be part of a collective transgression, precipitated by Darma. Normally, if one transgresses against the vows of a consecration one must take the consecration again. In this context, the translators were returning to India in a collective re-consecration thereby reestablishing Buddhism with legitimate authority (Davidson 2005, 121). The irony here is that the manifold diversity that the translators

63 “It is scarcely conceivable that at any other time in the history of human civilizations such a wholesale importation of so vast a foreign religious culture was achieved in so short a time at such extraordinarily high scholastic standards” (Snellgrove 1987, 477).
encountered in India was even more dizzying than the situation in their Tibetan homeland.⁶⁴

This diversity was reflected in the training these translators received in India, which can be divided into two. A more traditional education program existed in the large Indian monasteries and universities, where the first object of study was the Abhidharma and Vinaya via Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* and Guṇaprabha’s *Vinayasūtra*. From here the translator would move on to the study of the Mahāyāna philosophies of Dharmakīrti, Candrakīrti, Bhāvaviveka, and Śāntideva. For tantric texts and teachers, on the other hand, the translators looked to the smaller monasteries, hermitages, and siddha communities which were located on the social and geographical periphery.⁶⁵ Tibetan histories and hagiographies reflect this reality, as we most often “learn that a Tibetan found his master through a chance encounter or in a jungle environment, although this ‘jungle’ may have been a village outside the major supply routes” (Davidson 2005, 126). The content of this tantric training most often focused on the higher yogas and their associated texts.⁶⁶

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⁶⁴ “The Tibetans’ faith in the Indians’ capacity to resolve their doubts was sadly misplaced, for the Indic system happily tolerated the chaos of far more voices than these... The multiplicity of claims and standards of behavior were sustainable only in the complex and highly diversified communities found in and around the large population centers of India and, to a lesser extent, in the mediating Himalayan kingdoms” (Davidson 2005, 122).

⁶⁵ “The centers of siddha spirituality remained at the margins” (Davidson 2005, 126).

⁶⁶ “The content of their studies was most frequently the yogic and ritual systems found in the *mahāyoga* and *yoginī-tantras*, associated instructional manuals (*upadeśa*), and analogous yogic texts” (Davidson 2005, 119).
The tantric teachings of the translators possessed many characteristics that appealed to the local aristocratic clans, and the translators soon found themselves in positions of secular and sacred authority. First, the vast cosmology of the tantras was flexible enough to incorporate local deities.\(^{67}\) At the same time, the public authority that the translators obtained in virtue of their pilgrimages was global, and thus “the translators could claim all of Tibet as their range in their propagation of the Dharma” (Davidson 2005, 129). This allowed them capitalize on the strengths of the old aristocracy without having to worry about being charged with spiritual illegitimacy or being faced with the geographical restrictions of the specialization in local rituals. Another reason that tantric Buddhism was particularly appealing to the Tibetan aristocracy was that its vows were well-suited to the preexisting feudal political system:

Tantric Buddhism, in particular, was readily harmonized with feudal institutions. The lama was revered as a lord, to whom devoted disciples pledged even body and life. The formal vows of allegiance (\textit{damtsik}, Skt. \textit{samaya}) that this entailed paralleled sworn fealty. When lama and lord were actually united in the same person, as was increasingly the case from the eleventh century on, the hierarchy in effect became charged with spiritual power so brilliant that the dynamics of the underlying worldly power were often altogether obscured. (Kapstein 2006, 103)

Furthermore, the tantric vows (unlike the monastic vows) did not entail celibacy, which allowed the clans to maintain their system of heredity.\(^{68}\) All of these factors helped the

\(^{67}\) “Only the tantric system validated the indigenous gods as important in their own rights, and the maṇḍalas of the tantras proved expansive enough to integrate every little sprite and local demon somewhere in the spiritual landscape” (Davidson 2005, 59).

\(^{68}\) “[T]he clear enactment of sexual yoga by select translators reinforced the drift from celibacy, and the resultant progeny among aristocratic clansmen...buttressed the Tibetan predisposition to unify religious, social, and political lines of descent, so that charisma, domain, authority, and dominion were seen as being on a continuum” (Davidson 2005, 158).
translators rise to positions of social authority, and the religious success of the translators often entailed a parallel degree of political and economic success. The lineage of tantric texts and practices that in India existed largely on the periphery of Buddhist monastic institutions and society came to the fore in Tibet, both religiously and politically.

Marpa Chöki Lodrö (c. 1021-1097) and Drokmi Shākya Yéshé (c. 993 –1064) are of particular importance to us, as they are acknowledged as two of the early founders of the Kagyu and Sakya schools respectively. Both translators accumulated wealth, power, and prestige as a result of their religious work. Furthermore, neither appears to have been particularly preoccupied with the monastic vows.

Drokmi was ordained at Drompa-gyang, an Eastern Vinaya monastery. He was given some gold and told by Sé Yéshé Tsöndrü to travel to India and obtain texts:

“The root of the dispensation is the Vinaya. The heart of the dispensation is the Prajñāpāramitā. The semen of the dispensation is the [texts of] mantra. Go and listen to them!” (from Drakpa Gyeltsen’s Chronicle of the Indic Masters, translated in Davidson 2005, 166)

Drokmi travelled to Nepal, and then into India to study at Vikramaśīla and follow the standard monastic curriculum. However, he eventually became dissatisfied with the scholastic program and left the monastery, never to translate or teach the texts he studied there. From the monastery he travelled to the siddha community of Khasarpaṇa in

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69 Davidson disputes the received dates of 1021-1097, giving evidence that these early dates “are almost certainly incorrect” (Davidson 2005, 142).
70 The precise dates for Drokmi are not known. We know that he was born a couple decades before Marpa, and Davidson believes him to have been born sometime between 990 and 1000 (Davidson 2005, 164). The dates of 993 – 1064 are from Kapstein 2006, 100.
Bengal, where he received the “rootless Lamdré” from Prajñendraruci, who was also known by later Sakyapas as Vīravajra (Davidson 2005, 173). He then returned to Tibet, establishing his center at Mugulung in Drompa, where he attracted both Tibetans and Indian paṇḍitas. The most important Indian paṇḍita to work with Drokmi was Gayādhara, who Davidson reports was “clearly depicted as a dubious figure who retained his lay status and apparently influenced Drokmi in this direction” (Davidson 2005, 178).

Although Drokmi spent most of his life as a monk, he eventually renounced his monastic vows and married an aristocratic woman. It was from Gayādhara that Drokmi received the Root Text of the Mārgaphala, “the most important, the most secret, and the most closely guarded” (Davidson 2005, 13) text of the Sakya tradition. This text organizes all elements of the esoteric path according the various consecrations, an emphasis that would become characteristic of the Lamdré system and the Sakya school:

The path in the Lamdré is entirely configured through the ritual authorization of the four consecrations (abhiṣeka) so that each consecration allows the yogin to practice a meditation: deity yoga, internal heat, and two different forms of sexual yoga… This overwhelming emphasis on consecration as a defining structure for all aspects of the path is without close parallel in any other esoteric Buddhist tradition known to me. (Davidson 2005, 191)

Drokmi asked that Gayādhara not transmit the text to anyone else, and thus maintained a monopoly on the teaching. In order to further cement the authority of his position, he refused to teach both the texts and the practices to the same person, thus in a sense dividing and conquering disciples who could potentially unseat him. 71 He is often

71 “[Drokmi] handled his legacy by determining that if he taught a disciple one of these two traditions, the method of the instruction (upadeśanaya) or the exegetical method (*vyākhyānaya), he would not teach the other. Drokmi also specialized in an exclusive
represented as a rather greedy teacher, demanding exorbitant sums in return for his teachings.\textsuperscript{72} Nonetheless, he found a willing sponsor in the aristocratic Khön clan who were attracted to the secrecy of his teachings.\textsuperscript{73} Khön Könchok Gyelpo (1034-1102) became his disciple, and in 1071 he founded Sakya monastery. We will look at his progeny in some detail in the later on in the chapter on Drakpa Gyeltsen.

Marpa began his religious education under the tutelage of Drokmi, but became dissatisfied with his teacher's exorbitant fees. He decided to set out on his own, and travelled to Nepal and then to North-Western India, focusing his attention on the marginal siddha communities.\textsuperscript{74} It was in these communities that he received training in the tantric teachings of Naropa and Maitrīpa that would become foundational to the Kagyu school.\textsuperscript{75} When he returned to his home valley of Lho-drak, he was well received,
and after being given land he became a wealthy chieftain (gtso bo) of the area.\textsuperscript{76} His later life in Tibet exemplifies some of the dichotomies of the translators, whose lives blended the religious and the secular. At the end of his biography in the Blue Annals it is written that

[Marpa] appears to have continuously meditated on the Ultimate Essence, but in the eyes of ordinary people, he reared a family, quarreled with his countrymen and only occupied himself with agriculture and building. (Translated in Wylie 1964, 282)

Marpa was never a monk, and his students (like him) were “lay adepts that belonged to the prominent local families” (Kapstein 2006, 104).\textsuperscript{77} Kapstein further notes that elements of Marpa’s biographies occasionally display his “aspirations as a local strongman” (Kapstein 2006, 105). Some of the stories regarding Marpa and his famous student Milarepa reflect this side of his character. For example, Marpa asked Milarepa to employ his skills in black magic to kill some of Marpa’s enemies. Furthermore, Turrell Wylie points out that the purpose of the tower that Marpa asked Milarepa to build was likely defensive as well as religious, and the outcome of its construction reflects this:

Faced with a superior armed force defending a fortified tower, the advancing ‘lords’ were unable to withstand Mar-pa in battle. Surreptitiously, each of them offered presents and evidence that the Marpa actually arrived in India after Naropa’s death (see Davidson 2005, 142-147).

\textsuperscript{76} Wylie draws particular attention to the material wealth Marpa accumulated as a result of his acumen:

[Marpa] obtained large amounts of gold from a man named Mar-pa Mgo-yags, and others, who lived near a gold mine. And, on one occasion, Mar-pa’s disciple Rngog presented him with “seventy black female yaks, a black tent (sbra), a dog, a butter churn, and a pitcher.” (Wylie 1964, 281-282)

\textsuperscript{77} Marpa had several wives. His family situation has been derisively described by Davidson as a, “Mormon-like harem of nice sexual consorts” (Davidson 2005, 147).
petitions to Mar-pa, and all were forced to become his subjects ('bangs) and 'tributaries' (yon-bdag). (Wylie 1964, 286).

When the religious and secular authority of the translators was combined the results were not always perfect. Some of the translators clearly abused their power by capitalizing on the tantric license provided by a surface reading of the more antinomian tantric texts. The story of Ra-lotsāwa Dorjé-drak, one of the most notorious translators, serves as a good example of how this conjunction could go wrong, as his hagiography presents a catalogue of violent and sexual behaviour. Ralo violently defended the Dharma against its so-called enemies, often employing black magic to kill or conquer other major figures, such as Marpa’s son Darma Dodé. In the case of some of his enemies, such as Khön Shākya Lotrö (the founder of the Sakya monastery) and Gō-lotsāwa Khukpa Lhêtsé (a student of Drokmi, the translator of the Guhyasamāja, and the author of monastic-minded polemic text78), Ralo’s victory entailed the capture and control of both land and villagers.79 If the villagers failed to acquiesce, Ralo convinced them “with magic so that they vomited blood, and he rolled their armor and weapons into a ball” (Davidson 2005, 140). Ralo’s pursuits involved sex as well as violence. Even though Ralo was nominally a monk and continued to ordain new monks, he claimed to have taken five consorts “including the eleven-year-old daughter of Kongpo Agyel” (Davidson 2005, 138). There

78 This text, Disputing Perverse Mantric Texts (sNgags log sun 'byin), was similar to the ordinance of Shiwa-Ö insofar as it deemed certain texts to be inauthentic. For a larger discussion of the text, see Martin 2001b, 110-111 and Davidson 2005, 152-154.
79 “The defeat of Gō-lotsāwa demonstrates that lotsāwas exercised a degree of political authority over the valleys in which they settled, and the death of Khukpa Lhêtsé left the village of Tanak-pu without a center of secular or religious authority” (Davidson 2005, 140)
is little evidence of any Indian precedent for such behaviour, for when Indian monks
transgressed their vows (as in the case of Virūpa), they were expelled from the monastery
and then travelled to the Siddha communities, where monastic standards of behaviour did
not apply. When his morality was challenged Ralo defended his scurrilous activity with
reference to “a literal reading of sections of the mahāyoga-tantras, in which no evil is a
sin for the awakened master” (Davidson 2005, 140):

Toward the end of the hagiography, Ralo is challenged (as he had been by others) by
Géshé Tréü-chock. ‘If,’ the Géshé asked, ‘you hold the discipline of a bhikṣu, aren’t you
afraid that your pursuit of killing and sex (sbyor sgrol) will land you in hell?’ [Ralo]
claimed he was unrepentant… Nothing that was termed ‘perverted’ by others caused him
doubt because of his propitiation of Vajrabhairava. (Davidson 2005, 138)

The wide-spread Tibetan perception of a Buddhist tradition gone awry appears to
have guided much of the social and religious developments of the late tenth and eleventh
centuries. The monastic reformers responded to this challenge by founding monasteries
that reinstated orthodox monastic values. The translators responded by travelling directly
to the Buddhist fountainhead, bringing back texts and practices from India and its
adjacent territories. Often these translators were trained by the siddha communities who
had eschewed the limits of the monasticism, and it appears that the translators adopted
some of their values. We have seen three examples of prominent translators who paid
little heed to the monastic vows: Drokmi gave up his vows, Marpa never took them, and
Ralo openly broke them. As far as I know, none of the translators wrote a three-vow text,
and I feel that this absence is telling. It is possible that they never attempted to reconcile
tantric practice with the monastic vows because these vows were not their concern.
In India the tension between the siddhas and monks was mitigated by a cultural separation, with the siddhas relegated to the margins. This situation was not repeated in Tibet. Instead, the translators became favored by the clan-based aristocracies and quickly rose to positions of prominence. As the power and influence of the monastic reformers and the translators grew, their religious tensions began to be exacerbated by social tensions. To portray them as entirely distinct groups that were locked in competition would be to exaggerate the situation. Monasteries had begun to integrate the new tantric material and there were translators who maintained monastic vows. Nonetheless, we have seen evidence that monastic reformers were openly critical of some of the tantric practices being promoted by the translators. Atiśa’s Lamp for the Path not only emphasizes the virtues of monastic commitments, it also issues a corrective critique against the tantric practices that lead monks to break their vows of celibacy and criticizes unnamed opponents for using their “Harsh Destruction Powers to harm others” (Sherburne 2000, 295). The polemic texts of Yéshé-Ö, Shiwa-Ö, and Gō-lotsāwa Khukpa Lhétsé appear to be fighting on two fronts, critiquing both the lax practices of the older temple wardens as well as some of the new tantric texts imported by translators like Marpa.

Although the authority obtained by the translators led to their short-term success, their texts and practices needed to be popularized and institutionalized in order to ensure their longevity. Long-term stability was one of the strengths of monasticism, and the Tibetans of the twelfth century began the work of combining the best of the reformers’ monasticism and the translators’ tantra into a stable system of popular practice, community, and lineage. In order for this to happen, the disciples of the translators would
have to find a way to structure the vows of the three vehicles in such a way that the tantric system could remain preeminent without neglecting the virtues of a monastic structure. The next three chapters will follow this endeavor of reconciliation.
CHAPTER II: GAMPOPA

By the end of the eleventh century, with the spread of monastic reform and the importation of texts well underway, Tibetans had done enough work to begin to regain their own sense of indigenous authenticity. This provided the mandate for indigenous religious innovation, and work began towards the project of creating order out of the new mass of material. As we have already seen, the material brought over to Tibet by the translators did not contain a consistent hermeneutic that could successfully encapsulate its manifold diversity. The social and religious tensions of the eleventh century were coming to a head: monasteries were growing in size and number, the translators were becoming more powerful, and polemics were bringing into question the authenticity of texts and practices.

The project of integrating tantra and monasticism was further motivated by the students of the translators, who sought to stabilize the tantric teachings of their teachers within the aegis of monastic institutions. An improvised institutional system based on the celebrity of charismatic individuals was not enough to support the long term success of the translators’ work. As already mentioned, their lives blended religious and temporal success and their disciple-system lacked institutional stability. Furthermore, longevity

80 “The new tantric lineages were experiencing a degree of institutional instability… Two reasons for this became apparent in the late eleventh century. First, the institutions had been founded with divided purposes, so that religious avocation was not separated from tangible worldly success. Second, the tantric paradigm did not simply inhibit political unification but diminished the stature of the followers and successors of the various paradigmatic leaders, so that the tantric teachers—Nyingma or Sarma—continued to occupy the position of quasi-feudal chieftains” (Davidson 2005, 245).
would require the support of the larger population.\textsuperscript{81} By the end of the eleventh century, Tibetans turned inward to begin a process of indigenization, building on the fruits of the travelling translators and the hard work of the Vinaya monks, and the new schools of the Kagyu and the Sakya began to coalesce.\textsuperscript{82}

Gampopa’s efforts to organize the three vows lie at the intersection of doctrinal organization and monastic integration. He was loyal to both the supremacy of the tantric teachings he had learned from Milarepa and the value of the monastic commitments he had made during his training with the Kadampa. His three-vow text exhibits some of the tensions he felt between these two paths of practice, and it I think that it is only when his text is considered in the more general context of his philosophy of Buddhist practice that we can fully appreciate his attempt to maintain his loyalty to both. This chapter will begin by introducing the life and training of Gampopa before moving on to an analysis of his three-vow text, the earliest work of the genre (Sobisch 2002, 177). The text prioritizes tantric practice, and we will look at how his student Lama Zhang appears to have used tantric philosophy to justify the large-scale violence of his personal pursuits, in much the same way as Ralo. The final section will look at how the tantric emphasis of Gampopa’s

\textsuperscript{81} “Strong institutions require a broad popular base of support, from which the next generation may be drawn, and indications are that the clerical support of a popular Buddhism really came of age in the latter half of the eleventh century, in the interaction of Tibetans with other Tibetans.” (Davidson 2005, 249).

\textsuperscript{82} “As the Kadampa and Eastern Vinaya nontantric traditions and the Nyingma tantric systems had done in the eleventh century, in the twelfth century the tantric Kagyupa and Sakyapa lineages evolved from small sectarian centers to regional denominations, with multiple institutions and an articulated sense of identity” (Davidson 2005, 276).
text is balanced by the nature of his tantric practice, which was adjusted to better fit within the rules of the monasteries.

THE LIFE AND TRAINING OF GAMPOPA

Gampopa was born into the Nyiwa clan in the Nyel valley in 1079. The dynastic pedigree of his clan was rather modest but at the time it was politically powerful, and Gampopa was able to marry a daughter of the high-status Chim clan. His first vocation was medicine. At the age of twenty five a plague hit the region killing his wife and children, and he subsequently took the monastic vows at Rongkar in Dakpo. Soon he travelled to Pen-Yül, receiving training from Kadampa monks, completing about five years of study in the Kadampa exoteric and esoteric curriculum.83 The Kadampa had by this point begun to supplant the Eastern Vinaya monks as the keepers of orthodox monasticism.84 Although their training incorporated tantric material, they emphasized the “Mahāyānist ideologies of purity of mind and karma” (Davidson 245). Many of the

83 “All told, Gampopa spent about five years studying the Kadampa exoteric and esoteric materials, becoming well versed in the Stages of the Path genre but specializing in the Kadampa version of the Mahāyānist contemplative system” (Davidson 2005, 285).
84 The “three brothers” (mched gsum), Puchungwa Zhönu Gyeltser (1031-1109), Chenga Tsültrim-bar (1038-1103), and Potoba Rinchen-sel (1027-1105), were principally involved in actualizing Atiśa’s command that monks, “from this day forward, pay no attention to names, pay no attention to clans, but with compassion and loving kindness always meditate on the thought of awakening (bodhicitta)” (Davidson 2005, 251). This was accomplished by spreading out through Central Tibet and teaching Buddhism using “popular images and anecdotes” (Davidson 2005, 251).
founding members of the other sarma schools would similarly receive training in the Kadampa curriculum.85

When Gampopa heard of Milarepa in the spring of 1109 he convinced his rather skeptical preceptor to allow him to learn from the saint. Gampopa studied with Milarepa for thirteen months, after which his realization was affirmed by Milarepa and he returned to his Kadampa monastery, where the monks were not entirely pleased with his esoteric teachings.86 He soon returned home to Nyel, where his father had constructed a temple for him. After six years of meditation and study he left to found his own monastery, Dakla Gampo, in 1120. He met Milarepa again briefly, just before the latter’s death around 1123. At Dakla Gampo he attracted many students, and before passing away in 1153 he had trained the four disciples who would go on to form the four major Kagyu schools.

Gampopa’s efforts to synthesize the two traditions at the level of doctrine had mixed results. Subsequent writers would critique Gampopa’s methods, and we will look at Sakya Paṇḍita’s critique in the final section of this chapter. One problem was that he lacked sufficient scholastic training: he had only spent five years working with the

85 These include Gampopa (founder of the Dakpo Kagyu), Dakpo Gomstül (who continued Gampopa’s Dakpo Kagyu and trained Drigung Jikten Gönpo), Pagmo Drupa (founder of the Pakdru Kagyu), the first Karmapa Dūsum Khyenpa (founder of the Karma Kagyu), and Sōnam Tsemo (the third of the five great founders of Sakya).
86 “It became clear that the esoteric teaching he had received did not entirely accord well with the Kadampa Mahāyānist perspective, and Gampopa would struggle with the tension between tantric perspectives and Mahāyānist insight for some time” (Davidson 2005, 285)
monastic Kadampa, and these were spent focused on esoteric practice and meditation.\textsuperscript{87} His own interpretations of the tantric system were rather loose and occasionally inconsistent,\textsuperscript{88} he rarely quoted tantras directly, and he generally avoided engaging in the contemporary polemic debates concerning their interpretation.\textsuperscript{89} According to Davidson, Gampopa’s greatest misstep in the eyes of his contemporaries was to employ esoteric literature in explanations of exoteric subjects, a strategy which had been previously established as a faux pas in the scholasticism of the Indian monasteries.\textsuperscript{90} This sort of experimentation could perhaps be expected of someone with rich yogic training but who lacked a thorough scholastic education. As we will see, his three-vow text is somewhat ambiguous: on the one hand, it prioritizes tantric practice over and above monastic commitments, something that could lead the reader to believe that he did not value the lower vows; on the other hand, there are indications that Gampopa’s tantric practice had itself been adjusted so as not to break the rules of the prātimokṣa.

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87 “His other study of esoteric literature emphasized its meditative practices rather than its exegetical system, and…Gampopa assumed that a great meditator would intuitively know everything necessary, which actually was an ancient Buddhist idea” (Davidson 2005, 287).
88 “Consequently, there are may inconsistencies throughout Gampopa’s received writings, and the reader may sometimes sense that Gampopa was trying to find his way through the dense labyrinth of Buddhist texts and ideas” (Davidson 2005, 288).
89 “Gampopa’s received writings seldom quoted the tantras and almost never made reference to the normative points of controversy in the tantric commentaries” (Davidson 2005, 287).
90 “What Gampopa does do is violate some unwritten rules that were drawn up in later Indian Buddhist doctrinal systems, by employing esoteric literature to describe conceptual fields appropriate to exoteric study” (Davidson 2005, 286).
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GAMPOPA’S THREE-VOW TEXT

There are four short treatises on the three-vows in the “Teachings to the Assembly” (*Tshogs chos bkra shis phun tshogs*) section of Gampopa’s *Collected Works*. I will focus my analysis on the largest treatise, labeled by Sobisch as *Work A*, since the other three texts largely repeat the same points.\(^{91}\) This work was not actually written by Gampopa, but was rather the result of “notes from the memory of [his] students” (Sobisch 2002, 181). *Work A* can be divided in half, with the first half (sections 1-3) providing a brief introduction to the three vows individually, and the second half (sections 4-10) focusing on the three vows taken together. The following is a brief topic summary of the ten sections:

1. Stresses that possessing the vows is necessary
2. Explains the practices of vows individually
3. Explains the nature of the vows individually

4. Introduces the topics of the following six sections
5. Why “the natures of the three vows do not exist as one”
6. How the natures can be in “admixture”
7. The vows should be “observed as entrusted”
8. The three vows should be “possessed upwardly”
9. The vows should be repaired according to their respective traditions

\(^{91}\) With regard to the other three works, Sobisch writes that they “so similar in content and wording that I consider them to be the same teaching (recorded by different persons or revealing different stages of editorial activity)” (Sobisch 2002, 184), and he thus groups them together as *Work B1, B2, and B3* and focusses on *Work B2*. He further points out that *Work A* and *Work B2* are consistent:

Nothing is really contradictory between the two teachings [*Work A* and *Work B2*]; for example, even though *A*-5 insists that the vows do ‘not persist as one’ (*cig tu gnas pa ma yin*), *B2*-2 and 4 teach that they exist as one cycle, but as different sections. In the same way, even though the statement in *B2*-5 that the vows are observed according to the different teachings is not taught in *A*, nothing in *A* really contradicts that. It might, therefore, well be that these are teachings by the same master taught at different occasions, perhaps with different purposes in mind. (Sobisch 2002, 198)
10. Explains in more detail the possibility of conflicts with regard to six
criteria: a) time of day, b) association, c) physical conditions (e.g. illness),
d) intention, and e) the spiritual level of the practitioner

Early on in the text he defines the natures of the three vows independently. With
regard to the nature of the prātimokṣa and Bodhisattva vows, he quotes the *Awakening of
Vairocana*:

The nature of the prātimokṣa vows is to be completely adverse to harming others together
with the [mental]basis [for that], and the nature of the bodhisattva [vows] is, in addition
to that, to benefit sentient beings. (Sobisch 2002, 203)

Gampopa then explains the nature of the Tantric Vows to be “the inseparability of…form
manifested as deities, of experience that arises as bliss, and nature that consists in mental
non-construction” (Sobisch 2002, 303). This is a rather obscure definition, especially
when compared to his straightforward presentation of the prātimokṣa and bodhisattva
vows. I will return to it in my discussion of tantric license, but for now it is interesting to
note that Gampopa’s conception of the tantric vows appears to extend beyond the
traditional lists of Root or Gross Transgressions, or even the various pledges included in
tantric initiations. Instead, he seems to conceive of the nature of the tantric vows in more
general terms, as a commitment to the path and goal of tantric practice.

In the fifth section of the text Gampopa explicitly associates each of the vows
with the paths and goals of their respective systems. Here he makes it clear that due to
their association with the three different vehicles each vow possesses a different set
characteristics. Karma Drinlépa’s *Replies to Ngo-gro* summarizes this section as follows:

In short, the meaning of [the statement] “the three vows are different” is [this]:
The vehicles from which [the vows] come forth are different,
The sections [of the cannon] in which they are taught, too, are different,
The objects [i.e. person] from which they are taken are different, too,
And also the rituals that cause their obtaining are different. The durations for which they are taken, the volitional impulses with which they are taken, And the productions of the resolve, too, with which they are taken are different. And that the causes for their loss, the times of their loss, and the persons who are the support are also different is stated in the individual basic scriptures. (Sobisch 2002, 309-310)

With regard to taking the vows, Gampopa writes that “they must be obtained in succession” (Sobisch 2002, 203), implying one does not automatically receive the lower vows if one takes the tantric vows (a point that will later be disputed by Drakpa Gyeltsen). Likewise, the ninth section explains that each vow is “repaired according to the respective doctrinal tenets” (Sobisch 2002, 209) of the vehicle to which it belongs. Following standard doctrine, Gampopa states that

if one transgresses against the prātimokṣa, that is repaired through intention and preparation, if one transgresses against the bodhisattva vows, that is repaired through the four powers, and if one transgresses against the Mantra vows, that is repaired through confession of the fault and binding henceforth, and through the different kinds of initiation. (Sobisch 2002, 209)

Although Gampopa is clearly of the opinion that the three vows are different, he must be able to account for the possibility of all three existing simultaneously in a single consciousness. In order to do this he offers a metaphor: if one were to mix water and milk they become one unified substance, but a goose is still able to drink the milk and leave the water. Gampopa concludes that “similarly these three vows, too, which are of a different nature because one is able to continue the other two vows also after any one of the three vows has been lost, exist in the manner of an admixture on occasion” (Sobisch 2002, 203)

92 In reference to this problem, Gampopa writes that “it is also not acceptable that the natures of the vows [exist] as different [things] on all occasions” (Sobisch 2002, 205).
2002, 205). This explanation for their existence in “admixture” only serves to underline the larger point: for Gampopa the three vows have different natures and are to be gained and lost independently.

When Gampopa explains the commitments of each vow it becomes clear that the three can come into conflict:

In the prātimokṣa, if the four fundaments (i.e. to abandon killing, etc.) are deteriorating, one loses the vows, whereas in the scope of the bodhisattvas, from among the ten non-virtuous—except the three non-virtuous of the mind—the seven of the body are permitted if performed for the benefit of sentient beings, and in the Mantra one takes these as the path. (Sobisch 2002, 205)

His explanation of the relationship between the prātimokṣa and bodhisattva vows is standard: one can commit the seven non-virtues of the body so long as one does so for the greater good. What is interesting here is that Gampopa writes that tantric practice requires one to take the seven non-virtues of the body as the path. Unfortunately, he doesn’t specify exactly what this entails. It could be interpreted to mean that tantric practice inverts the conventional morality of the Mahāyāna, but I am not certain that Gampopa maintains such an extreme view. Nonetheless, as the rest of the text makes clear, Gampopa believes that tantric practice can involve breaking the moral standards established by the seven virtues of the body (and entailed in the prātimokṣa and the

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93 This is a repetition of a comment made in the previous section: “The natures of the vows exist as [something] incompatible. And furthermore, even though the two higher vows may be lost, the prātimokṣa is taught to continue, and even though the prātimokṣa may be lost, the two higher vows, it is taught, are not lost. Therefore, too, it is impossible that the vows are the same” (Sobisch 2002, 205).

94 Presumably Gampopa is here grouping together the three non-virtues of the body (killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct) and the four non-virtues of speech (lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, and gossip) under a single heading.
bodhisattva vows) in the pursuit of personal religious practice. The above statement is particularly interesting, for as we will see, Drigung Jikten Gönpo (Gampopa’s grand-student) disagrees entirely.

Unlike more conservative writers, Gampopa builds a lot of flexibility into his three-vow system. Ever the doctor, Gampopa believes that one should abandon one’s vows if one’s life is threatened by illness. At times this flexibility appears almost haphazard, as when he recommends that one follow whatever vow system is being followed by one’s peers. The bulk of the text, however, recommends two general strategies for dealing with conflict between the vows.

First, he repeatedly emphasises that the higher vows should trump the lower vows. I will quote at length here, because this point sharply distinguishes Gampopa’s position from that of other three-vow writers:

[Work A 7:] If...there arises a conflict between the three vows, there is no moral fault even if that which becomes the obstruction is not observed. (Sobisch 2002, 207)

[Work A 8:] The greater is not to be abandoned for the smaller. If an internal conflict arises between the prātimokṣa and the bodhisattva vows, one practices like the bodhisattva, and there is no moral fault in ignoring the prātimokṣa. If there arises a conflict between the bodhisattva vows and the Mantra vows, one should practice

95 See Work A 10:

If a vow-activity becomes an obstacle for one’s life, such as illness, and if it becomes an obstacle for the higher path, one should not perform it. There is no contravening even though the vow is not observed. (Sobisch 2002, 211)

96 See Work A 10:

Among auditors, one should not contravene the prātimokṣa, among those who are endowed with the Mahāyāna-family, one should not contravene the bodhisattva vows, and among those who possess a ripened and liberated mental stream of consciousness, one should not contravene the pledges of Mantra. (Sobisch 2002, 209)
according to the Mantra, and there is no moral fault in ignoring the bodhisattva vows. Why? There is no moral fault because the higher is observed. There is no moral fault because the lower is not continued. That which is the absence of the two moral faults is taught to be the function of the powerful rituals, the excellent means, the hierarchy of the vehicles, and thus it is the Buddha’s intention.

Otherwise, if the lower is observed after the higher has been abandoned, a moral fault is produced because the lower is observed, [and] moral fault is produced because the higher is abandoned. The two moral faults that are produced are having entered into the lower ritual and the lower means, mistaking the hierarchy of vehicles, and not realizing the Buddha’s intention, because the greater has been abandoned for the smaller. Therefore, if the vows are possessed, they are ‗possessed upwardly.’ (Sobisch 2002, 207)

[Work A 10:] Even if one performs sins such as killing, one does not contravene if one does it for the sake of others and based on the arising of the higher path in one’s mental stream of consciousness…

Because one is able to revive beings killed, to summon tantric consorts, and to cause things to disappear, there is no contravening even if one performs sins in that way….

Also, to summarize this through that which is permitted and that which is prohibited, the smallest activity contravening the vows is permitted in order to abandon the greatest. There is no moral fault because the greatest sin is abandoned, and there is no moral fault because only the smallest is permitted. (Sobisch 2002, 211)

These selections present no ambiguity: the lower vows should be abandoned when they conflict with the commitments of the higher vows, and furthermore there is no fault in breaking the lower vows in such situations. We already know that this position differs from that of Atiśa, who held the commitments of the higher vows to the standards established by the prātimokṣa. We will see that Jikten Gönpo also disagrees with Gampopa on this point.

A second strategy that Gampopa recommends in the case of conflict is to weigh up the situation using insight (prajñā). This strategy is introduced in the tenth section, close to the end of the text:

At the time when there arises a conflict also between the three vows in that way, it is non-contravening because one acts only after having weighed up the conflict through insight. (Sobisch 2002, 211)
To tell a vow-holder to weigh up a conflict using insight is to provide standard but ambiguous advice.\textsuperscript{97} It certainly places a lot of onus on the individual, especially since Gampopa provides little information (in this text at least) about the nature of insight itself. There is potential for this to lead to problematic behaviour if the vow-holder is overconfident and his or her insight is misguided. This advice does not necessarily lead to corruption, but there is little in Gampopa’s text to prevent that possibility. This is not the only statement of the text that could be used to support tantric license.

We already know that Gampopa believes that a vow-holder’s commitment to the tantric path trumps his or her commitments to the ethical standards of the two lower vows. In order to better understand what this might entail, we need to take a closer look at what Gampopa saw as the pinnacle of tantric practice: Mahāmudrā. Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā practice eschewed some of the tantric rituals, including the tantric initiations, in favour of a direct student-teacher relationship.\textsuperscript{98} Gampopa describes the achievement of Mahāmudrā as “the innately and simultaneously arising luminosity of mind, which

\textsuperscript{97} There is an interesting similarity between this strategy and the character of the law codes of Tibet. French’s article on Tibetan codes of law describes them as follows:

Their style, at times, is profoundly precatory and hortatory instead of definitive; it is suggestive and admonitory instead of commanding. For example, the entire dGa’ ldan pho brang Law Code of Twelve Sections (DGPB 12) is strewn with statements that decision-makers should, after investigating and weighing the evidence, decide for themselves according to the truth. (French 1996, 441)

\textsuperscript{98} “[Gampopa] taught the highest level of Tantra, Mahāmudrā, without giving tantric initiation and without teaching the usual preceding steps of tantric yoga. Instead, to gain the necessary first-hand experience of Mahāmudrā that would enable the student to enter the actual Mahāmudrā meditation, Gampopa instructed his students to practice meditation on the teacher (Tib. bla ma’i rnal ’byor). By making strong wishes to the teacher, one is introduced to his realization” (Kragh 1998, 36).
takes direct perception for its path” (Jackson 1994, 26). In this three-vow text he describes the tantric vows as “innate simultaneously arisen gnosis (lhan cig skyes pa‘i ye shes)” (Sobisch 2002, 205), leading me to believe that he conceives of the tantric vows as a commitment not only to tantric practice in general, but also Mahāmudrā practice in particular. In these descriptions, the word “innate” (Skt. sahaja, Tib. lhan cig skyes pa) connotes “the perfection present within every experience, i.e. dharmakāya” (Kragh 1998, 31). One’s experience of the innate “is said to be free of conceptuality (Tib. spros bral)” (Kragh 1998, 33). This accords with Gampopa’s other description of the tantric vows, as “nature [that consists in] mental non-construction” (Sobisch 2002, 303). The set of conceptual categories that is to be removed by this practice includes the ethical categories of right and wrong entailed by the lower vows. Indeed, Gampopa specifically states that commonly held standards of behaviour are ultimately “illusory”:

Now, for one who realized these three and all phenomena as being like an illusion, there is no difficulty with regard to confessing, as it is said: “When that, which is to be confessed, the confessor, the confession / is not perceived by the yogic, / then this perfect perception of reality because of the purity of own-nature, / is the discipline of confession.” (Sobisch 2002, 209)

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99 Jackson points out that “the key difference that sets it apart here and makes it supreme is what it uses as its special cognitive method, namely, direct non-conceptual perception” (Jackson 1994, 16). This was contrasted with both the Mahāyāna approach and even other tantric approaches:

The special doctrine [of the Mahāmudrā] was characterized as not relying upon words and concepts or upon special yogic practices or attainments, but as consisting of the disciple’s being introduced directly to the nature of his mind by an accomplished, awakened master. The ordinary general Māhāyāna approach, by contrast, relied on scripture and reasoning, and therefore it was automatically suspect because of the inadequacies of the word- and concept-based salvific approaches and cognitive means that such scriptural and rational studies utilized. sGam-po-pa in fact sometimes verges on criticizing even the ‘ordinary’ Vajrayāna along the same lines. (Jackson 1994, 33-34)
By first prioritizing tantric practice and then describing tantric practice as that which removes illusory categories of the mind, Gampopa is effectively opening the door to those who would want to use tantric doctrine to justify behaviour that breaks the standards established by the lower vows. It would be wrong to think that Gampopa intended to support malicious behaviour, especially given Milarepa’s emphasis on compassion. Nonetheless, there is little in this text that would speak against the nefarious claims of corrupted siddhas. The final section of the text provides more fuel for wayward siddhas who claim to “abide on higher spiritual levels”:

…because one is able to revive [beings] killed, to summon [Tantric] consorts, [and] to cause things to disappear, there is no contravening even if one performs [sins] in that way. (Sobisch 2002, 211)

Four of Gampopa’s students would go on to found their own particular branch of the Kagyu school. Each school drew on Gampopa’s work in order to create its own interpretations of the tantric material. It would be the Karma Kagyu in particular that would come to be most closely associated with Gampopa’s three-vow theories. Later Karma Kagyu writers, such as Karma Drinlépa (1455-1539) and Karma Ngélek Tenzin (18th Century), wrote positive commentaries explaining and endorsing the text. Like

100 Jackson draws attention to this point in comparison to the actions of Lama Zhang, who we will look at in the next section: “Zhang’s violent approach during that late period of his life contrasted markedly with the pacific and strongly ethical teachings that Mi-la ras-pa is recorded to have given sGam-po-pa. These included the instruction to continue to train oneself in serving the guru…and to continue to observe even small meritorious and moral matters, even through ultimately there is nothing to be cultivated or purified and one has understood that the connection of moral causation is from the ultimate point of view empty like space” (Jackson 1994, 64-65)
101 “It appears that sGam-po-pa’s Work A was an authentic teaching of sGam-po-pa, though with some minor later accretions. Furthermore the subsequent teachings by the
Gampopa, their texts emphasize the priority of the tantric vows over the lower vows. For example, Karma Drinlépa explains the meaning of “possessing the vows upwardly” as follows:

The meaning of possessing qualities ‘upwardly’ (yon tan yar ldan) is also [that] infractions entailing expulsion of lower [vows] are outshone by higher [vows]. Thus, since even such acts as killing become the cause for complete Buddhahood, [this is] called possessing qualities ‘upwardly,’ or [in other words], The qualities of prātimokṣa alone may be great, but The qualities of the bodhisattva are greater than that, [and the qualities of the] Mantra vows are much greater than that. Therefore [sGam-po-pa] taught that the three vows possess qualities ‘upwardly’. (Sobisch 2002, 322)

Karma Drinlépa would also agree with Gampopa that ultimately conflicts between the vows are only apparent, since for an accomplished tantric practitioner the vows themselves are illusions. Interestingly, Karma Chakmé would later comment that this emphasis on Tantric practice led monastic practice to suffer:

If one is able, one should maintain all [vows];
But if one is not able [to do so], one [should] adhere to the higher Mantra vows as preeminent ones. Since the Kagyu practice this system,
They are a little lax with the Vinaya rules. (Sobisch 2002, 325)

three great masters of the Karma bKa’-brgyud-pa tradition, namely Karma-‘phrin-las-pa, Karma-ngo-slegs, and Kong-sprul, represent a progressive systematization of the teachings and delimitation of their own doctrine from those of other traditions” (Sobisch 2002, 305).

102 “According to Karma-‘phrin-las-pa’s Replies to rGya-ston 5 (and also sGam-po-pa’s Work A 10), the internal contradiction between higher and lower vows is, in any case, only an apparent one. Since the vows as such are held to be consciousness, the systems of the vows are in reality ‘differentiated through means and volitional impulse.’….This is not explained in detail here, but since reference has been made to the means, one may assume it to mean that through the ‘excellent means of Mantra’ the yogī does not perceive himself as an ordinary person and the substances of the pledges as ordinary food, etc. In other words, according to Karma-‘phrin-las-pa, in reality there is no transgression against the rules of the prātimokṣa, even when practicing the Tantric rituals such as the Tantric feast in the evening” (Sobisch 2002, 320).
The ambiguities of Gampopa’s three-vow theory allowed his students a lot of leeway, and they displayed a correspondingly broad spectrum of values. Pagmo Drupa (1110-1170), and later Jikten Gönpo (1143-1217), would place a decisive emphasis on monastic practice and adherence to the Vinaya. Lama Zhang Yu-drak-pa (1123-1193), on the other hand, would emphasize the direct experience of Mahāmudrā practice. He was in some ways similar to the translators we looked at in the last section. His religious and secular successes were closely intertwined, and like Ralo, his ascent to power involved acts of large-scale violence. Also like Ralo, he used claims of nondual tantric awareness to justify his actions. Although Lama Zhang founded and maintained monasteries, there is little evidence to suggest that he saw any inherent value in the monastic vows.

While still in his early teens, Lama Zhang acted as an attendant to a Ngok tantric master. His responsibilities prevented him from attending the initiations, but he found that he ended up receiving the blessings anyway. This early observation would have a lasting impact, and he would agree with Gampopa that the rituals of initiation were not important in and of themselves. His final years as a teenager were ones of strife:

> After a difficult period in his late teens in which he resorted to destructive magical rites employing goat sacrifices, his parents died and, in his depression which would sometimes verge on the suicidal, he wandered off to eastern Tibet, to Khams province. (Martin 2001a, 47)

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103 “In his early teens, he attended on a tantric master who belonged to the Rngog clan. Since he had been placed in charge of provisions, he was unable to attend the ritual initiations, but received the blessing anyway. He came to believe that receiving or not receiving initiations in their full ritual forms was not in and of itself important, a view that he would later express in his Path of Ultimate Profundity” (Martin 2001a, 47).
Lama Zhang eventually came to study under Gampopa’s nephew, Dakpo Gomstül, taking his monastic vows in 1148. Although he met Gampopa on a number of occasions, it was under Dakpo Gomstül that he was said to have achieved his decisive awakening, sometime around 1153. Seven years later Lama Zhang entered the public spotlight. The four most successful Eastern Vinaya groups, the factions of Lumé, Ba, Rag, and Dring, were engaging in violent warfare for control of Jokhang, one of the most religiously important centers of Lhasa. Some of the five-hundred year old monastery was burned and destroyed before Dakpo Gomstül was invited to intervene. Dakpo Gomstül successfully restored order and then placed his student Lama Zhang in charge. Lama Zhang took this opportunity to begin acquiring disciples and build the monastery of Yu-drak in the 1160s and the monastery of Tsel in 1175. As Lama Zhang’s sphere of control swelled, his style of administration became increasingly bloody and bloody.

104 “In 1148 he took his final monastic vows and continued his studies in the yogic systems and the Mahāmudrā” (Davidson 2005, 328).
105 “He met the great Gampopa before the contemplative master died in 1153 but was said to have obtained decisive awakening from Gampopa’s successor, Dakpo Gomstül, around this time” (Davidson 2005, 328).
106 “Around 1160...the Eastern Vinaya monks again were locked in a struggle for dominance, but this time for control over Jokhang... At this point, four groups were on a collision course: the factions of the Lumé, Ba, Rag, and Dring groups, these four having become the most powerful of the Eastern Vinaya sects They had come together for some instruction, but the groups swiftly descended into open warfare, and the Jokhang itself and some surrounding buildings were burned” (Davidson 2005, 327).
107 “In 1160, fighting broke out between the Rba and ‘Bring factions. The battles continued for a few years until the most holy sanctuaries of Lhasa, the Jo-khang and Ra-mo-che (by then about 500 years old), were very seriously damaged. At this point, Zhang’s already mentioned teacher sgom-tshul (who had been, since 1150, prominent as the head of the monastic ‘headquarters’ [gdan-sa] of the Bka-‘brgyud school) was invited to come to Lhasa to mediate between the warring factions. Sgom-tshul stayed in Lhasa long enough to restore the circumambulation routes and wall paintings of the two temples, and then entrusted their protection to his student Zhang” (Martin 2001a, 48).
violent. Like Ralo before him, he began to set up road blocks and tariffs thereby controlling access and securing funds for his projects.\textsuperscript{108} Furthermore, in an effort to forcibly seize building materials and workers he formed militant forces which contained some of his disciples.\textsuperscript{109} Such forces engaged with the lords of other districts, including that of Drigung (the home of Jikten Gönpo), and through this belligerent behaviour Lama Zhang “became, in effect, the most powerful warlord in central Tibet” (Jackson 1994, 62).

Understandably, this “brought charges of worldly entanglement and hypocrisy” (Martin 2001a, 49), with one contemporary writing the following critical verses:

\begin{quote}
To mislead the faithful you have your own interpretive devices,  
Resorting to the scriptures with scant knowledge of the words,  
But then pretentious about the meanings, contemptuous of the methods.  
Shame on you, you fine-speaking scholar,  
Because the words have nothing to do with your meanings…  
Beggar-mönk Zhang, what haven’t you done?  
When you first started meditating you practiced renunciation,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{108} “It was during this time, and in the development of institutional administration, that Lama Zhang’s behavior eventually changed from somewhat eccentric to brutal and bloody. As had Ra-lotsäwa in the previous century, Lama Zhang decided to administer his growing domains by setting up roadblocks to restrict movements on roads, mountains, and rivers, perhaps to collect tariffs but definitely to control access. He also ordered his monks and hired thugs to seize building materials and laborers. Such restrictions and aggressive displays of muscle did not occur without a fight, and the resulting strife with local feudal lords evidently prompted Lama Zhang to form and equip militias or paramilitary forces, some of which were evidently composed of his monastic disciples. Certainly, such irregular paramilitary forces had been assembled before, but Lama Zhang employed them to appropriate domains in Central Tibet from feudal lords in such areas as Lhokha, Drigung, and Ölkha” (Davidson 2005, 329).

\textsuperscript{109} In fact, the 16\textsuperscript{th} century scholar/historian Pawo Tsuglak Drengwa would note that some of his disciples would have a realization of Mahāmudrā in battle:

\begin{quote}
Among his [Zhang’s] disciples there were many in whom the realization of the Great Seal was born in the front-line of battle, and the nobleman Dar-ma-gzhon-nu beheld the countenance of Cakrasaṃvara while at the front line. (Jackson 1994, 63) 
\end{quote}
But in your old age you had to give that up to make a living
And openly sought to create wealth, field work and agriculture, battles and
Various other means you seek shelter for your old age.
You are certainly deeply misguided
And these battles on the empty fields and meadows
Have brought all sorts of grief to countless living things:
To worms, lizards, mice, ants, and so forth.
For a religious person, doing such sinful deeds, shame on you.
Scripture, reason and precepts of the Lama all
Say to give up worldly business.
You conduct business even more than a householder.
You need everything and use everything;
All kinds of things you need.
Contemplative with so many needs and necessities, shame on you. (Martin 2001a, 49)

Again, a high-ranking Kagyupa was called upon to quell the growing violence. Around 1189 the first Karmapa Düsum Khyenpa convinced Lama Zhang to cease his bloody activity. Lama Zhang responded by “[grabbing] the Karmapa’s finger and [doing] a little dance celebrating the moment of resolution before ceasing his criminal behavior” (Davidson 2005, 329).

For us, what is most important here is that Lama Zhang used Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā teachings to justify his behaviour. Like Gampopa, Lama Zhang believed that a full realization of ultimate reality was devoid of words and concepts. By claiming

110 Jackson quotes Lama Zhang’s opinions on the problems of words and conceptual attachment:

An assemblage of words—no matter how profoundly expressed, and even though expressed numerous times—cannot possibly alight upon the ultimate reality [inherent in] the mind. Critical investigation—however skillful and profound it may be, even though expressed for many limitless aeons—cannot possibly understand the ultimate reality [inherent] in mind because the original nature is not an object for investigative thought… For however long there is bifurcation into ‘thing to be viewed’ and ‘viewer,’ you will not understand the non-dual ultimate reality. In brief, all thoughts of ‘It is’ are the roots of conceptual attachment… Those ‘great meditators’ who utilize theories that have been fashioned by intellect are afflicted by the chronic disease of conceptual attachment that postulates positions [through partiality]… Do not employ words and critical
such a realization, Lama Zhang exited the world of conventional standards and was hence able to do as he pleased.\textsuperscript{111} We must admit that there is little to contradict this possibility in Gampopa’s three-vow text, which states that transgressions are illusions and “because one is able to revive [beings] killed…there is no contravening even if one performs [sins] in that way” (Sobisch 2002, 211). Some of Lama Zhang’s verses, written shortly before he had assumed his position of power, display a similarly non-dualist attitude towards ethics:

\begin{quote}
When this freedom of the six heaps [i.e the six senses] to act on their own
Takes over with non-dual realization,
They must lead life as they will
Without dos and don’ts. (Martin 2001, 52)

But when realization has dawned in the mind,
It needs to be considered whether bad circumstances have an effect on it or not.
On your right stands somebody chopping with an axe
saying all sorts of cruel things.
On your left stands another making offerings of sandalwood incense,
Respectfully proclaiming all kinds of nice things.
In times of undergoing such good and bad things,
If they can, without getting distressed on their account,
Accept them without pleasure or displeasure,
Then even if they do crazy things in public, it is fine. (Martin 2001, 55)
\end{quote}

investigation, and don’t have attachment through falsely imagining [them] to be the point! (Jackson 1994, 45-46)

\textsuperscript{111} Jackson quotes Lama Zhang from a text by Gö-lotsāwa Khukpa Lhétsé:

I have abandoned the world. Many years have passed since the link with the world has been completely severed and I have entirely gone beyond into unborn space. Reckoning by these outer activities of men, many others cannot comprehend [or accept my behavior], except for my stout-hearted disciples. Taken as objects within a worldly value system, these things are all seen to be nothing but apparently worldly activities such as metal casting, residence-bases, the closing off and controlling of roads, [enforcing] secular law, theft, and fighting. But if there fundamental exists any connection with this world, it has died, sir. (Jackson 1994, 62)
Later on, Lama Zhang would refer directly to the license implicit in the realization of Mahāmudrā, teaching his student Tishri Répa that “However you may do [or act], that is the Great Seal!” (Jackson 1994, 63).

By endorsing the preeminence of the tantric vows and describing the categories of right and wrong as “illusory,” Gampopa’s three-vow text opened the door to the possibility of tantric justification. Lama Zhang, like Ralo before him, appears to have capitalized on this possibility by justifying the violence of his personal pursuits using the terms of tantric realization.

GAMPOPA’S CONTRIBUTION TO MONASTICISM

If we were to consider the actions of Gampopa’s student Lama Zhang to be the exclusive result of Gampopa’s three-vow text, it would seem that Gampopa did little to advance the integration of tantric and monastic practice. This, however, is only one side of the story. In order to better understand how Gampopa integrated monastic values into tantric practice we have to look outside of his three-vow text and past the tribulations of Lama Zhang. This section will conclude the chapter by looking at how Gampopa was able to integrate tantric practice into a monastic framework. It will also look briefly at how the very strategy that allowed him to accord with the priorities of the monastic conservatives attracted their polemics one century later.

Tibetan historians describe Gampopa’s most important gift as the successful combination of the monastic Mahāyāna tradition of the Kadampa and the more esoteric yogic lineage of Marpa and Milarepa. It was this synthesis that allowed the Kagyu school to transform from a small yogic lineage into “an organized monastic denomination with
multiple institutions possessing a common identity” (Davidson 2005, 283). Yet, having looked at the tantric emphasis of his three-vow text, it is difficult to see how he successfully integrated monasticism into his system of practice. The text does not appear to stress the virtues of monasticism, and one of his students used Gampopa’s theories to justify large-scale violence. Nonetheless, Gampopa was a monk trained by the Kadampa, and his teachings reflect his desire to incorporate the tantras without compromising a monk’s commitments.

One of the central challenges of integrating tantric practice into the monastic context was the transgressive nature of some of the tantric rituals, and we may recall that Atiśa prohibited the initiations of the highest anuttarayoga tantras for this reason. By prohibiting these initiations, Atiśa had “deadlocked tantric practice” (Kragh 1998, 67). The yogic lineage of Gampopa, however, had the advantage of eschewing these rituals, thereby circumventing the problematic initiations that led the anuttarayoga tantras to be prohibited by Atiśa in the first place. This eschewal of initiation rituals was part of his general religious philosophy concerning Mahāmudrā, which focused on direct perception.

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112 Kragh describes Gampopa’s synthesis of his yogic and monastic lineage as follows: On the one hand, the tāntrika tradition of mi la ras pa thus became institutionalized as a monastic tradition under Gampopa. On the other hand, the bka’ gdam pa monks following Gampopa adopted his new teaching style, which made wider use of tantric teachings than had been the case with the original bka’ gdam pa tradition founded by Atiśa. The outcome was the bka’ brgyud lineage, as Gampopa’s followers came to be styled, whose teachings offered a union of Tantrism and conventional Mahāyāna. (Kragh 1998, 68)

113 See page 31.
rather than the inferential reasoning of Mahāyāna or the ritual blessings of Vajrayāna.\textsuperscript{114}

It should be noted that his synthesis of Mahāyāna philosophy and the anuttarayoga tantras was not entirely novel, as it had its roots in the siddha communities of Saraha and Maitrīpa.\textsuperscript{115} By adopting this position on tantric rituals Gampopa was able to integrate the anuttarayoga tantras into the monastic context while at the same time adhering to the values established by Atiśa and the Kadampa and encouraging the growth of the monastic system.\textsuperscript{116} Thus, although it is clear that Gampopa’s three-vow text prioritized the tantric

\textsuperscript{114} Mathes translates a passage by Gampopa that describes this practice:

As to taking direct perceptions for [one’s] path, the right guru teaches one’s co-emergent mind-essence to be the dharmakāya in terms of luminosity. Having thus been given an accurate pith-instruction of definitive meaning, one takes, with regard to this ‘co-emergent mind’ (she pa lhan cig skyes pa) which has been ascertained in oneself, the natural mind as the path, without being separated from any of the three: view, conduct, and meditation. (Mathes 2006, 203).

\textsuperscript{115} Marpa was a student of Maitrīpa who wrote the Tattvādaśaka, which according to Mathes “propagates a direct approach to reality which is in accordance with Vajrayāna, but mainly made possible through pith-instructions” (Mathes 2006, 212). The text denies the importance of tantric rituals, stating that accomplished adepts are “adorned with the ‘blessing from within’ (svādhiṣṭhāna)” (Mathes 2006, 211). Maitrīpa thoughts may in turn be influenced by Saraha, who also criticized the rituals of tantra:

No tantra, no mantra, nothing to meditate on, no meditative concentration—These are all causes which confuse one’s mind. (Mathes 2007, 207)

Kragh singles out the Ratnagotravibhāga text, “rediscovered” and propagated by Maitrīpa, as a particularly good example of the tradition of linking Mahāyāna philosophy with the anuttarayoga tantras. Gampopa endorsed this text wholeheartedly, saying to Pagmo Drupa that “the basic text of our Mahāmudrā doctrine is the Ratnagotravibhāga composed by the Bhagavat Maitreya” (Kragh 1998, 59).

\textsuperscript{116} “Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā approach thus offered a way to practice the Tantras while bypassing the more controversial parts of its practice. In this way, Gampopa managed to follow Atiśa’s view at least partly, but at the same time to break the deadlock on tantric practice that Atiśa had caused. Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā thus served to unravel the division between conventional Mahāyāna and Tantra, and offered an alternative for anyone wanting to practice on the basis of both. This Mahāmudrā doctrine became the
vows, this was not necessarily at the expense of monastic values. Likewise, not all of Gampopa’s students followed the route of Lama Zhang. Düsum Khyenpa, Pagmo Drupa, and Dakpo Gomstül—all of whom had Kadampa training—would continue Gampopa’s endeavor of grounding the teachings of the higher tantras in the stability of the monastic institution.

There is evidence of some conflict between the Kadampa and the Kagyu, despite Gampopa’s efforts to conform to the commitments of monasticism. Many of the monks who would train under Gampopa and form their own branches of the Kagyu had, in effect, defected from the Kadampa. Kragh quotes from the Blue Annals (Deb sngon), which relates a dialogue between Gampopa and Milarepa wherein Milarepa criticizes the Kadampa for their limited scope. On the other hand, Potoba (one of the three brothers who popularized the Kadampa teachings) cautioned against Kagyu Mahāmudrā practice cornerstone of the bka’ brgyud lineage as it allowed the practitioners to integrate Tantrism into the monastic life. The bka’ brgyud tradition subsequently developed primarily as a monastic tradition” (Kragh 1998, 69).

117 Kragh’s translation from the Deb sngon:

[Gampopa] requested: “Please, give me the profound instructions”, [to which mi la ras pa] responded, “Have you received initiation?” [Gampopa] answered: “I have received many initiations, such as the rin chen rgyan drug, bde mchog, and others, from mar yul blo ldan. I also listened to many expositions of the bka’ gdams instructions in Northern dbu ru. I have stayed in samādhi for thirteen consecutive days.” [Mi la ras pa] emitted a loud laugh “Ha, ha!” and said: “The samādhi of the gods of the form and formless realms, who are able to meditate throughout an entire aeon, is better than your samādhi, but it is of no benefit to enlightenment. It is similar to sand, which will never become oil when pounded. The bka’ gdams pas have instructions (Tib. gdams ngag), but they have no personal advises (man ngag). Because a demon penetrated the heart of Tibet, Atiśa was not allowed to explain the secret Mantrayāna. If he would have been allowed to do so, by now Tibet would have been filled by siddhas! The bka’ gdams pa’s developing stage consists only of lone male deities and their completion stage is only a dissolving of the world and its inhabitants into clear light. Now you should meditate on my gtum mo a thung. (Kragh 1998, 66-67)
while at the same associating it with the Samādhirājasūtra. It seems that the Kagyu capitalized on this association, since a story emerged that Gampopa was in fact a reincarnation of Candraprabha, the protagonist of this sūtra. Kragh suggests that the Kagyu could have been attempting to reinforce the association between Gampopa, Mahāmudrā, and the Samādhirājasūtra, which in turn provided the Kagyu with Indian precedent, the gold standard against potential polemic attacks by the Kadampa.

Although this appears to have provided a successful defense against the Kadampa, it was not enough for Sakya Paṇḍita, who articulated a lengthy critique of Gampopa. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve too deeply into this complicated issue, but it is interesting to note that Sapaṇ’s critique was directed towards the very aspect of Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā practice that allowed it to enter the monastic institution in the first place: its eschewal of tantric initiations. This criticism is contained in Sapaṇ’s *Clear Differentiation of the Three Vows*, itself one of the most well known works of the three-vow genre:

‘Even if one has not received initiation,’ it might be supposed, ‘one will attain Buddhahood if one but meditates on the profound path.’ Without initiation, however, meditation on the profound path is said to be a cause of rebirth in unhappy destinies. / The *Mahāmudrātilaka[tantra]* says: ‘No realization is attained if initiation is lacking, just as, even by squeezing, butter is not gotten from sand. Whosoever, out of pride, explains tantras and precepts to the uninitiated. / Causes both master and pupil to be reborn in hell

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118 “‘The so-called Mahāmudrā agrees in meaning with the Samādhirājasūtra, but we should neither deprecate nor practice it’ (Kragh 1998, 73, quoting Potoba).

119 See the following quote, which is attributed by the Kagyu tradition to Gampopa:

Many births ago we had a profound karmic connection. In the presence of the Lord Sambuddha, the Bhagavat, the protector Śākyamuni, when I was the ever youthful Candraprabha, I requested and was granted the Samādhirājasūtra. (Kragh 1998, 71)

120 See Kragh 1998, 73.
immediately upon their deaths, even though realizations may have been attained. Therefore, make every effort to request initiation of a master.  

As other tantras say the same, be very diligent about this. (III.38-40, translated in Rhoton 2002, 98) 

Sapaṇ uses the standard of Indian authenticity to challenge Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā, which he associates with Chinese Ch’an, a charge that is tantamount to that of heresy. 

We know that there were Indian precedents for Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā in the teachings of Maitrīpa, and possibly also in the teachings of the later Indian visitor Śākyaśrībhadra (teacher of Vibhūticandra, a central figure of the next chapter). However, the Mahāmudrā teachings that Sapaṇ had inherited from Drokmi were brought to Tibet prior to the enterprise of tantric integration undertaken by Maitrīpa. Kragh suggests that this may partially explain why Sapaṇ rejected Gampopa’s teachings. Another factor likely contributed as well: at that time the Kagyu were vying with the Sakya for the endorsement of the Mongols. 

This issue, however, lies outside the scope of this thesis. 

121 That this is directed towards the Kagyu is later confirmed by the Sakya commentator Gorampa (who also wrote a three-vow text), who “relates (DSNSh, fol 88a-b) that the custom of granting uninitiated beginners access to tantric praxis by conferring the Vajra Sow (Vajravārāhī) blessing ‘originated in the time of Gampopa Dakpo Lhaje Sōnam Rinchen [1079-1153]’” (Rhoton 2002, 184). 

122 Kragh quotes Sapaṇ as follows:

There is, in fact, no difference between the present-day Mahāmudrā and the Chinese tradition of Great Perfection. Only the expressions ‘landing from above’ and ‘climbing from below’ have been changed to ‘instantaneous’ and ‘gradual.’ (Kragh 1998, 47)

123 See Kragh 1998, 56. 

124 See Kragh 1998, 76-77. 

125 “In fact, the bka’ brgyud monasteries, e.g. the bri gung and tshal pa traditions, were competing with the sa skya pa for the favor of the Mongols.” (Kragh 1998, 42).
Gampopa’s efforts to merge tantric training with the monastic code were largely successful despite his relatively brief training in the scholastic system. Although some of his ideas would attract the attention of critics and polemicists, his students would continue his tradition and form stable schools that continue today. The tantric emphasis of his three-vow text stands out as an anomaly of the genre, and it appears to have fueled Lama Zhang’s sense of entitlement, with violent repercussions. Nonetheless, Gampopa’s tantric emphasis is balanced by the nature of his tantric practice, which was adjusted to better fit within the rules of the monasteries and thereby accord with the priorities of Atiśa and the Kadampa. Subsequent three-vow theorists would not be so ambiguous about the importance of the monastic system, and the next two chapters will look at two authors who placed explicit and significant priority on the commitments of the prātimokṣa vows.
This chapter focuses on the three-vow works of two very different individuals: Jétsün Drakpa Gyeltsen (1147-1216) and Vibhūticandra. Drakpa struggled with the task of integrating tantric material while at the same time maintaining the stability of the Sakya’s monastic institution, and the three-vow text reflects the tensions of this goal. Vibhūticandra, on the other hand, was not committed to any particular school and his text displays a consequent lack of concern with the commitments of the monastic vows. The first section will situate Drakpa’s work alongside the work of his father, Sachen Kunga Nying Po (1092-1158), and his brother, Sönam Tsémo (1142-1182). The subsequent section will look at his three-vow work in detail, placing it within the larger trajectories of the Sakya school as well as comparing it to the work of Gampopa. Next we will turn to Vibhūticandra, who wrote a focused critique of Drakpa’s three-vow theory. The final section will conclude by assessing the impact of Vibhūticandra’s three-vow theory in comparison with other three-vow theories and in the context of the larger Tibetan project of monastic stability.

In the introduction to the last chapter I drew attention to some of the motivations behind the twelfth-century effort to stabilize the teachings of the translators by integrating their tantric material into the monastic context. One of the leaders in this transition was the Sakya school. Drokmi’s teachings were adopted by the dynastic Khön clan of the

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126 See page 46.
Tsang region. His student Khön Könchok Gyelpo (1034-1102) founded the Sakya monastery and fathered Sachen Kunga Nying Po (1092-1158),\(^{127}\) the first of the five great Sakyapas and a contemporary of Gampopa.\(^{128}\) Könchok died when Sachen was still young, so Sachen travelled to learn from a number of other teachers while Bari-lotsāwa (1040-1112) managed control of the Sakya monastery. Eventually Sachen was ordered to return Sakya where he continued his education through Bari-lotsāwa, who had travelled to India and received teachings on a variety of exoteric and esoteric texts.\(^{129}\)

Having received such a diverse education, Sachen tackled the relationship between the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna paths. In his work *Short General Principles of the Tantric Canon*, he asked, “What are the fundamental differences between the two vehicles (Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna) in terms of their starting positions, their paths, and their goals?” (Davidson 2005, 315). His answer was that whereas “the Mahāyānist adherent rejects the basic stuff of life, so that desire for the objects of the senses is restricted and they are considered poisonous, like the leaves of poisonous plants…the mantrin employs desire for the objects of the senses, not rejecting the ground of the

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\(^{127}\) According to legend, Khön Könchok Gyelpo conceived Sachen under rather interesting circumstances. While visiting a local visionary, Könchok was plied with alcohol and became too inebriated to travel home. The only bed available was that of a local woman, and Sachen was the result of their one night together (Davidson 2005, 294).

\(^{128}\) Sachen was trained by a number of Drokmi’s Lamdré students, including Sétön Kunrik (ca. 1026-1112) and Zhang Gönpawa.

\(^{129}\) “The list of Sachen’s textual and ritual studies with Bari is a snapshot of important twelfth-century Buddhist works. In an apparent effort to provide Sachen with the background esteemed in India, Bari tossed the young scholar into the same chaotic sea of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna scriptures in which he himself had swum, including the ritually important *kriyā-tantra* and *caryā-tantra* corpus, and then into the highest yoga class, especially the *yogini-tantra* materials. This ritual feast was rounded out with Bari’s own translation of the *One Hundred Esoteric Rites*” (Davidson 2005, 298).
human condition, but cultivating it correctly” (Davidson 2005, 315). The reason that both are “Buddhist” is that they both lead to the same result.

Sachen also firmly established the Lamdré as the central system of the Sakya school. A fundamental quality of Lamdré as a religious system was its emphasis on consecrations. Davidson observes that

they ordered all other practices and procedures in reference to one or another of the consecrations… The consecrations not only are taken at the advent of entrance into the esoteric path but also are visualized daily in the course of its practice, and the fruits of the path are conceived as the fruitional consecrations, so that consecration becomes the central metaphor for the system. (Davidson 2005, 309)

This emphasis on consecrations was one way in which the Sakyapa were able to ground esoteric practices in their monastic institutions. All progress takes place within the institutionalized rituals of consecration, and thus individuals are intertwined within the larger community of religious practitioners. Individualistic religious endeavors are out of place here, and thus antinomian behaviour was not as present within the Sakya school as it was within the Kagyu.

Late in life Sachen had two sons: Sönam Tsémo (1142-1182) and Jétsün Drakpa Gyeltsen (1147-1216). Sönam originally focused on esoteric Vajrayāna texts, but at the age of 16 when his father died he travelled to study with Chapa Chökyi Sengé at Sangpu Monastery, south of Lhasa. Sangpu monastery possessed “the Kadampa reformist zeal that resulted in their castigation of the tantric lapses attributed to many Indians and Tibetans” (Davidson 2005, 340), and likewise focused on Mahāyāna texts rather than the tantras. While at Sangpu, Sönam applied a rigorous hermeneutic to esoteric works, thereby defending Vajrayāna to “monks devoted to Buddhist philosophical exegesis and scandalized by the tantric vocabulary” (Davidson 2005, 340). In so doing, Sönam was
able to continue his father’s tradition of integrating esoteric texts and practices into mainstream Sakyapa monastic practice. In his *General Principles of the Tantric Canon*, for example, Sönam presents one contemporary criticism Tantric practice, the objection that it legitimizes lethal violence:

Even more, the ‘many means’ for ordinary siddhi, such as the means for killing beings and attracting consorts, these just represent animosity towards sentient beings. How could you see supreme awakening in them when even passage to the heaven realms is very far from one behaving in that manner? With respect to your ‘path without difficulties,’ you are claiming that the accomplishment of awakening is by means of bliss. Now if awakening is achieved by a lack of hesitation toward desires, then every ordinary being in the universe has achieved it. (Davidson 2005, 363)

This objection is not as hypothetical as it might sound, especially given Sönam’s proximity in both time and place to Lama Zhang and the violence surrounding him. Sönam points out that Asaṅga had already legitimized such behaviour in his *Bodhisattvabhumi*, and that therefore there is no fundamental contradiction between the two vehicles.

If we could say that Sönam’s central contribution was to help integrate esoteric texts into the monastic system, we might say that Drakpa Gyeltsen’s central contribution was to integrate monastic values into the Vajrayāna system. At the age of seven he took the vow of the celibate layman from Jangchub Sempah Dawa Gyeltsen, a Lamdré scholar “who was noted for spreading the message of Buddhist fundamental ethics” (Davidson

130 “All told, the few available hints in the compositions of Sōnam Tsémo point to his increasing involvement with the esoteric corpus, identifying its central themes, surrounding it with the appropriate ritual expressions that had been missing his father’s work, and bringing it into the mainstream of Sakyapa monastic practice” (Davidson 2005, 342).
2005, 344). At about the same time, Drakpa Gyeltsen “also decided to forswear the drinking of alcohol or the eating of meat, except as intermittently required in the tantric practice” (Davidson 2005, 344). While he was still young he studied Candragomin’s *Twenty Verses on the Bodhisattva Vow*, a text that he would write a commentary on (Tatz 1982).131 Whereas his brother Sönam travelled to Sangpu, Drakpa Gyeltse remained in Sakya, later devoting himself to the education of his nephew Sakya Paṇḍita.

Drakpa Gyeltse’s literary output furthered his goal of integrating of monastic values into the esoteric system. One genre that received his attention was that of the hagiography. Hagiographies, which draw the fascination of practitioners, also serve an

131 Candragomin’s *Twenty Verses on the Bodhisattva Vow* is itself a summary of Asaṅga’s chapter on ethics in his *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*, which we already looked at. Drakpa Gyeltse’s commentary agrees with Asaṅga that the prātimokṣa vows, and even “natural morality” may be transgressed with the skillful means of the Bodhisattva:

11c With mercy there is no [deed] without virtue.

When the welfare of others is at stake, the bodhisattva will approach what is naturally reprehensible as well as what is reprehensible by precept with skill in means.

In this way there will be no transgression, but rather, a spread of much merit… (Tatz 1982 47-48)

Tatz explains further, that the bodhisattva can transgress the seven virtues of body and speech, as articulated in Gampopa’s three-vow text:

The bodhisattva may also transgress the precepts of natural morality in order to accomplish the welfare of others, provided that his intention be purely compassionate and he be acting with skill in means. So the bodhisattva has permission to commit the seven unvirtuous courses of action that are done with body and speech. (The three of mind—covetousness, ill will, and false view—are not of course at issue, since they exclude compassion.) He will commit murder, overthrow (steal the power of) a government, commit adultery (provided that he is not a monastic), and the rest. (Tatz 1986, 24)
important role in legitimizing lineage. Drakpa Gyeltsen’s lineage was traced back to the Indian Siddha Virūpa, and was in fact short-circuited as a result of one of Drakpa Gyeltsen’s dreams to be Virūpa → Sachen → Drakpa Gyeltsen → Sakya Paṇḍita. Virūpa’s story, in a manner typical of the genre, rejected the monastic institution as inferior to personal yogic practice. Thus, it had to be adjusted, and “the process of domestication required that behaviors promoting institutional instability be tamed, thwarted, subverted, interpreted, or just plain denied” (Davidson 2005, 354). In Drakpa Gyeltsen’s revisioning of Virūpa’s hagiography “Virūpa, notoriously destructive of Hindu sites, was reined in by Avalokiteśvara and made to cease his destructive activity” (Davidson 2005, 354-5). According to Davidson, this is typical of Sakya hagiographies, where “civic virtues eventually had to triumph” (Davidson 2005, 354).

Drakpa Gyeltsen composed other texts that continued his father’s tradition of integrating the esoteric Lamdré system into the monastic institution. One example is his Yellow Book, which is the earliest surviving compilation of Lamdré material (Davidson 2005, 356). This manual bundled together shorter works according to a larger plan, formalizing the consecration rituals along a set path. Furthermore, his Jeweled Tree for the Realization of Tantra includes a description of the contemporary abhiṣeka ritual which indicates the substitution of a visualized female partner in place of a real one (Davidson 2005, 366).

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132 “The benefits of yogic systems for the clans were enormous, in prestige, charismatic complexity, and the image of power and authority that accrued to religious clansmen. Moreover, Tibetans have consistently been fascinated with wild behavior and miracle tales, so that the magical component of religious life stood as a insistent beggar at the door of Sakya.” (Davidson 2005, 354)
The material mentioned above indicates that Darkpa Gyelston believed the monastic system was an indispensable support structure for the esoteric path. His three-vow text, *Removing Errors Regarding the Fundamental Transgressions* (*Rtsa ltung ‘khrul spong*), attempts to integrate the commitments of the lower vows into the higher vows while at the same time recognizing the priority of tantric practice. This section will look at how Drakpa’s position on the three vows negotiates this tension.

Unfortunately, there is no English translation of Drakpa’s text. However, some summaries and excerpts are available. Jamgön Kongtrül provides the following synopsis in his nineteenth-century compendium of three-vow teachings (*Pervading All Objects of Knowledge* 5.4.2.2.2.2.(b)):

rJe-bstun Grags-pa-[rgyal-]mtshan…taught that [the three vows] are (1) unmixed [with respect to their] distinctive aspects, (2) [their practice] is perfectly complete [through that which is to be] prevented [and through] the purpose, (3) the nature is transformed [and] (4) the qualities are possessed ‘upwardly.’ Therefore (5) [they] are not incompatible through the vital points, [and] (6) what is preeminent is practiced according to the occasion.

…uncle and nephew [i.e. rJe-bstun Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan and Sa-pan] of Sa-skya…taught:

(1) The three vows are unmixed [with respect to their] respective distinctive aspects, because the objects [i.e. persons] from which the three vows are taken, etc., are different.

(2) [Their practice] is perfectly complete [through that which is to be] prevented [and through] the purpose, because that which is to be prevented, i.e. the concrete defilement is abandoned, and the purpose, i.e. not to be bound by the defilements, is the same vital point.

(3) Their nature transforms, because as shown through the example of copper coming from the copper ore and again its transformation into gold through the elixir that turns [metals] into gold, if the prātimokṣa vow is endowed with the production of [the bodhisattva’s] resolve, it transforms into that [bodhisattva] vow, and when that, again, is
endowed with special means and insight, it is transformed into the Mantra vows. (Sobisch 2002, 301)

[Translation continued…]

Therefore, although certain [higher] vows may seem to be incompatible [with lower ones], such is not the case by virtue of their view and special conduct of skill in means. (Kongtrül 2003, 305).

This presents a rather dense summary of Drakpa Gyeltsen’s position that we can now unpack. First, we can see that he agrees with Gampopa that the three vows are different, at least insofar as they each have their own “distinctive aspects.” For Drakpa Gyeltsen, these differences are the result of a transformation that takes place during the rituals of taking the vows. The alchemy metaphor that is summarized by Kongtrül is quoted in full by Karma Drinlépa (1455-1539) and translated by Sobisch:

At the time the monks produce the resolve for awakening,  
All [their] prātimokṣa [vows] turn into the vows of a bodhisattva  
At the time they enter into the māṇḍala [through Tantric initiation],  
All vows [become] vows of the Tantric adept.  
In the Hundred-Thousand Tantra[s] [Treatise]\(^{133}\) it is taught: ‘By smelting, iron, copper and silver appears, through the particularities of ores.  
Through applying the elixir that turns [metals] into gold,  
All of these are transformed into gold.  
Similarly, through the particularities of mind,  
The vows of the three families [i.e. auditors, solitary Buddhas, and bodhisattvas] also [exist].  
If [holders of the two lower vows] enter into this great māṇḍala,  
They are called ‘Tantric adepts’  
Thus the ores that are mentioned in the example  
[Refer to] ordinary people. With the example of iron,  
The training of the auditors [is referred to] Copper is the training of the solitary Buddhas.  
Silver is the training of the bodhisattvas.  
The elixir that turns [metals] into gold [refers to] the training of the Vajra Vehicle.  
(Drakpa Gyeltsen quoted by Karma Drinlépa in Sobisch 2002, 251)

\(^{133}\) The source for this quote has not been located. It is quoted in many three-vow texts, but there is some inconsistency with regard to the actual title of the Tantra. See Sobisch 2002, 237, for details.
According to this explanation, the vow rituals transform both the nature of the vows and the vow-holder. Here we should note a difference between Gampopa and Drakpa. Drakpa’s concept of transformation hinges on the power of the consecration rituals, a cornerstone of the Sakyapa esoteric Lamdré system. For Drakpa, the lower vows transform into the tantric vows only when monks “enter into the maṇḍala [through Tantric initiation]” (Sobsich 2002, 251). We saw that one reason Gampopa was able to integrate tantric practice into the monastic context was that he eliminated the necessity of transgressive initiation rituals. Drakpa was able to integrate these initiations because his tradition substituted a visualized female partner in place of a real one.

Kongtrül wrote that Drakpa believed that “the qualities of the vows are possessed ‘upwardly.’” In the last chapter I quoted Karma Drinlépa’s explanation of what Gampopa had meant when he used the same phrase: “the meaning of possessing qualities ‘upwardly’ (yon tan yar ldan) is also [that] infractions entailing expulsion of lower [vows] are outshone by higher [vows]” (Sobisch 2002, 322). We could apply this interpretation to Drakpa as well, which makes sense in the context of Drakpa’s idea of transformation. Since the lower vows are transformed into the higher vows, the vow-holder would be committed solely to the higher vow. Under this interpretation, Drakpa would be in agreement with Gampopa that one’s commitments to the higher vows trump one’s commitments to the lower vows.

At the same time, there is an important element of Drakpa’s three-vow theory that differentiates him from Gampopa, and this element may lead us to a different interpretation of the statement that the qualities of the vows are possessed upwardly. Drakpa believes that despite the superficial transformations of the nature of the vows, all
the vows share “a single essence” (Stearns 1996, 154) described by Kongtrül as the “vital point” of all three vows: the goal of eliminating the defilements. This has two related implications, one that is more theoretical and one that is more practical. On the theoretical side, it allows Drakpa Gyeltsen to maintain the position that all three vehicles are part of a single Buddhist system, a position that aligns with his school’s commitment to integrate the Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna paths. His father, Sachen, had tackled this problem before him and came to the conclusion that Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna are both part of the same system (i.e. “Buddhism”) because they both have the same goal. Drakpa GyeltSEN applies the same strategy to the three vows, stating that they possess the same “vital point,” i.e. they exist for the purpose of preventing and abandoning defilements.

The practical import of Drakpa’s claim takes us back to the issue of the vows possessing their qualities upwardly. It is possible that Drakpa could have meant that the qualities of the lower vows that lead to the prevention of defilements are entailed in the higher vows. This would have an entirely different meaning to the one explained by Karma Drinlépa, since it would imply that one’s commitment to the lower vows is maintained even when one has taken the higher vows.134 Indeed, there is some evidence that Drakpa endorsed this position. Gorampa (1429-1489)135 states that Drakpa believed

134 This is how 2003 translators of Kongtrül’s Buddhist Ethics translated the text: “The essence of one vow changes into the next; thus, the qualities of the higher contain the lower” (Kongtrul 2003, 304).
135 “In the view of later Sa-skya commentators, such as Go-ram-pa, Grags-pa rgyalmtshan’s intention was to show that the lower vows are sequentially transformed into the higher ones as those vows are later taken. When one is thus endowed with all three vows, they may be said to have a single essence” (Stearns 1996, 154).
that when one took the tantric vows one was also committed to the two lower vows, regardless of whether or not one had taken them in the past:

This necessity for the three vows to be possessed when Mantra vows are taken is seen to be purely the tradition explicated by rJe-btsun Sa-skya-pa and his sons, the infallible intention of Sūtra and Tantra because...whether the two lower vows of this [i.e. our] system precede or not, it is ascertained that the three vows are possessed when the Mantra vows are possessed, [while] it can be seen that other systems have not engaged in even a trifling analysis [of the matter]. (Gorampa, General Topics, p. 236, fol. 74r, 1.4, translated in Sobisch 2002, f. 260, 94)

Here Drakpa is diverging from Gampopa, who believed that each vow needed to be obtained “in succession” (Sobisch 2002, 203). From this perspective, the question of whether or not the tantric vows trump the lower vows becomes moot. Since the tantric vows share the same vital point as the lower vows, they entail a similar commitment. Drakpa’s three-vow strategy allows him to prioritize the tantric vows without neglecting the importance of the lower vows, in much the same way that his modification of tantric initiations allowed them to be practiced in a monastic context.

At the same time, there remains some ambiguity when we consider the case of potential conflict. His belief that they share the same vital point effectively implies that they have the same spirit, but this does not explain what to do when the letter of the law conflicts. According to Kongtrül, Drakpa believed that “what is preeminent is practiced according to the occasion” (Sobisch 2002, 301) implying that there are no hard and fast rules. Instead, one must weigh up each situation individually, a strategy reminiscent of
Gampopa.\textsuperscript{136} At the end of Kongtrül’s summary of Drakpa’s position he states that that the vows are not incompatible “by virtue of [1] their view and [2] special conduct of skill in means” (Kongtrül 2003, 305). In the case of the bodhisattva vow, it may overrule the prātimokṣa rules with skillful means, as expressed earlier by Asaṅga, Candragomin and others. Similarly, the tantric vows may overrule the others so long as one has the correct “view.” Stearns’ writes that according to Drakpa “the vīdyādhara vow is to carry out the former vows while sustaining the pristine awareness of oneself as a deity” (Stearns 1996, 153-154).\textsuperscript{137} We know that Drakpa refrained from meat and alcohol, except in the context of tantric rituals, so it is plausible that he believes that at least on the occasion of tantric rituals the monastic code can be broken. Ultimately, with so little text to work

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\textsuperscript{136} Kongtrül writes that according to Drakpa, “one should observe the vow that is most significant in any given situation,” and then quotes Pema Wangyal’s Treatise that Ascertains the Three Vows (sDom gsum rnam par nges pa’i bstan bcos), NKG, vol. 37, f. 39a5:

The wise give this advice: when amid a group of people, or when a deed would be naturally unvirtuous,

The lower vows [of the proclaimers] should have precedence. When no selfish desire is involved, [physical and verbal unvirtuous acts are permitted].

When engaged in tantric activities, or living in solitude, mantric vows [are most important].

If there is no dilemma about which one to follow, guard all without mixing them.

Faced with a dilemma, weigh the act in terms of restraint and requirement. (Kongtrül 2003, 305)

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\textsuperscript{137} The idea that one could transgress the rules of the two lower vows so long as one possesses “the pristine awareness of oneself as a deity” is again reminiscent of Gampopa, who described the tantric vows as “form manifested as deities” (Sobisch 2002, 303). Likewise, Drakpa’s idea that the lower vows can be transgressed if one possesses the correct “view” is akin to Gampopa’s statement that the lower vows can be broken by those who “abide on higher spiritual levels” (Sobsich 2002, 211), a state that for Gampopa was fundamentally connected to perception.

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with, it is difficult to ascertain the specifics of Drakpa’s position on how and when someone could legitimately transgress the lower vows.

Our analysis of Drakpa’s position on the three vows reveals some tensions. On the one hand, he agrees with Gampopa that there are differences between the vows. He may also agree with Gampopa that the higher vows tend to trump the lower vows. On the other hand, he takes pains to emphasize that all the vows share the same essential goal of removing the defilements, a position which sets him apart from Gampopa. This indicates that the tantric vows entail, to some extent, a commitment to the lower vows. His description of the transformation of the vows encapsulates the ambiguity of his position, since the very notion of transformation implies both continuity and difference. Using the metaphor of alchemy, he endorses the value of the tantric vows and tantric practice without neglecting the value of the lower vows and their conventional morality.

VIBHŪTICANDRA’S RESPONSE

The first attempt to refute Drakpa Gyeltsen’s text was made by Vibhūticandra, one of his contemporaries. This section will begin by introducing the life of Vibhūticandra and his interactions with the Sakya and Drigung Kagyu schools. It will then take a close look at the criticisms leveled by Vibhūticandra against Drakpa in his

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138 “Drakpa Gyeltsen’s discussion of the esoteric vows also created quite a stir, for he affirmed that the three vows of the śrāvaka, bodhisattva, and vidyādhara have a single essence, much as early Buddhism affirmed that all Dharma has the single taste, that of liberation. The famous Kālacakra scholar Vibhūticandra felt called on to refute Drakpa Gyeltsen’s position, even though this did not diminish regard for the text, which is still maintained as the standard today” (Davidson 2005, 369-370)
three-vow text, entitled *The Garland of Rays of the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum ‘od kyi phreng ba*).

Vibhūticandra was one of many Indian monks who fled to Tibet when much of North India, as well as parts of Bihar and Bengal, were conquered by the Turks and Afghans.\(^{139}\) There are no firm dates for his life, but we know that he was born in Eastern India in the second half of the twelfth century and died sometime during the first half of the thirteenth century. He originally received initiation and training at the monastic institution of Vikramaśīla in central India,\(^{140}\) but he met his principal guru, Śākyaśrībhadra, either in Vikramaśīla or in Jagaddala in Bengal. While “at Jagaddala he became an expert in the traditional fields of *sūtra*, *vinaya*, and *abhidharma*” (Stearns 1996, 129). In 1206 he travelled with Śākyśrī to Tibet, staying for eleven years and focusing his studies on Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna works.\(^{141}\) It was during this first visit to Tibet that Vibhūticandra met with both Drigung Jikten Gönpo (1143-1217) at Drigung monastery and then Drakpa Gyeltsen at Sakya. Both meetings were controversial.

In the summer of 1206 Vibhūticandra and his guru were invited to see Drigung Jikten Gönpo, when according to a text by Śākyaśrī’s interpreter Tropu Lotsāwa

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\(^{139}\) “Tsang province was overrun with Indian monks in the last quarter of the twelfth and first quarter of the thirteenth century” (Davidson 2005, 348).

\(^{140}\) “Born in the latter half of the 12th century, in the region of Varendra in East India. He received full monastic ordination in the *mahāsammiti*ya (*mang-*pos *bkur-*ba*) tradition, and studied at such monastic universities as Vikramaśīla in the central Indian region of Magadha, and also in other areas such as Orissa during the final years before the total destruction of those institutions by Muslim invaders” (Stearns 1996, 128-129).

\(^{141}\) “Vibhūticandra took Śākyśrī as his main *guru*, and stayed with him for eleven years in Tibet, learning innumerable topics of secret *mantra*, as well as *Mahāyāna* subjects such as the *Five Bhūmi Treatises* of Asaṅga” (Stearns 1996, 130).
Champépal (1172-1236) Vibhūticandra said “The ‘Bring-gung-pa is said to have more wealth, but is also said that this mahāmudrā adept is a great liar” (Stearns 1996, 130). Tropu Lotsāwa Champépal got upset because he considered Jikten to be a rebirth of Nāgārjuna, and Śākyaśrī reprimanded him, telling him to go and obtain teachings from Jikten Gönpo:

[Śākyaśrī said,] “Paṇḍita, you must go there and confess your sin [sgrib sbyong]. Build a temple for [a deity] to whom you have devotion.”

So the master Vibhūticandra also went to ‘Bri-gung, confessed his sin to Rin-po-che [‘Jig-rten mgon-po] himself, and offered a eulogy. Later he built a temple on Srin-po-ri. (Stearns 1996, 131)

In 1209 he left the Drigung monastery and travelled with Śākyaśrī to the Sakya monastery in Tsang, where he met Drakpa Gyeltsen and taught Sakya Paṇḍita. Historical records of the meeting between Vibhūticandra and Drakpa Gyeltsen diverge. Tāranātha’s (1575-1634) popular account states that Vibhūticandra refused to prostrate himself in from of Drakpa Gyeltsen, but there is no mention of this in earlier historical records. According to Stearns, this story may have been invented “in order to establish Vibhūticandra’s estrangement from the Sa-skya family, and thus by extension his disagreement with Sa-skya doctrinal positions, the only textual evidence for which is Sdom gsum ‘od kyi phreng ba” (Stearns 1996, 134). It is also possible that “this version

142 This comes from a “versified biography-cum-eulogy in thirty-eight verses” of Śākyaśrī written by Tropu Lotsāwa Champépal along with a commentary by Sōnam Nampal Changpo.

143 “Historical records of the Sa-skya tradition mention several meetings between Śākyaśrī and Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan, during some of which Sa-paṅ and the other paṇḍitas were also present… No mention is made in the various Sa-skya chronicles of a refusal by any of the paṇḍitas to prostrate to Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan, but Tāranātha records an account in which Vibhūticandra refused to prostrate, although the other eight junior paṇḍitas did so” (Stearns 1996, 133).
of the events may have been used by ‘Bri-gung-pa sympathizers for the purpose of placing Vibhūticandra in opposition to the Sa-skya-pa’ (Stearns 1996, 134-5), since in the fourteenth century the Drigung Kagyu and the Sakya would compete for control of the country.

Vibhūticandra travelled back and forth between Tibet and Nepal twice more. It was during his second visit to Tibet that he wrote The Garland of Rays, which attempts to refute Drakpa directly. The key point that Vibhūticandra takes issue with is Drakpa’s claim that the three vows have the same essence. Vibhūticandra construes Drakpa to imply that the vows are “of one single entity” (cf. Garland of Rays 24, Sobisch 2002, 113),¹⁴⁴ which is in fairness an exaggeration of Drakpa’s position. Nonetheless, all points of divergence can be traced back to this key dispute.

Vibhūticandra believes that each vow has a different nature, and that each vow is obtained and lost in a different way. This puts him at odds with Drakpa, who believed that one who has obtained the Tantric vows has automatically committed oneself to the lower vows. Vibhūticandra sees no scriptural basis for such a claim:

It is not acceptable to apply the possession of the three [vows]
To a single Tantric adept.
If that would be acceptable, the two lower [vows]
Would arise without the need of any specific ritual.
There is no [passage where] the rituals of the three vows were taught
By the [Great Sage] as existing in common [for all three]. (Verse 34, Sobisch 2002, 127)

¹⁴⁴ “Vibhūticandra, for whom the vows are three distinct entities of their own (Garland of Rays 23), evidently understood Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan’s example as advocating the transformation of one vow-entity into another one, and he understood the ‘same nature of the vows’ as ‘being of one single entity’ (cf. Garland of Rays 24)” (Sobisch 2002, 75).
Likewise, Vibhūticandra believes that the vows are lost independently of each other, according to their own respective transgressions, using an example for support:

Let us examine this a bit.
The intended meaning of “possessing the three [vows]”
Is not that [the three vows] are lost [all at once because they] have the same [nature].
This is also completely disproven by [the following] reasoning: (Verse 19, Sobisch 2002, 109)

How could it be that the [prātimokṣa] vow of [abandoning] tactile contact [with women] is lost
By a [fundamental] transgression [against the fourteenth Tantric pledge that forbids] abusing women?
If that were a loss [of the vows], that would be an overextension [of the term “loss”].
It would be like arguing by analogy:
“By the gathering of the [rain] clouds in the sky, the crops of the earth wither.” (Verse 20, Sobisch 2002, 109)

This seems to be an odd example, since—as the Sakya commentator Gorampa (1429-1489) would later point out—it is entirely possible that abuse could involve physical contact, in which case it makes sense that the practitioner would violate both the prātimokṣa and tantric vows simultaneously. Nonetheless, Vibhūticandra’s point is clear: the vows have different natures, they are obtained through separate rituals, and they are lost for different reasons. He goes so far as to describe them as “diametrically incompatible,” and on this basis states that Drakpa's conception of transformation is impossible:

Furthermore, the consideration [of] a transformation
Between [things] diametrically incompatible is impossible.
If it were possible, then one might argue by analogy that this sun
Could transform itself into the water of the river Ganga. (Verse 22, Sobisch 2002, 111)

Once it is established that they are of different natures, Vibhūticandra must explain how one person can assume all three. He enters this discussion via a theoretical problem: How can a single stream of consciousness possess three vows with distinct
Vibhūticandra’s solution to this problem is that when one takes a higher vow, the lower vows become “dormant”:

After one takes [the vow of] the resolve for supreme awakening,  
With possession of the prātimokṣa vows  
The first [vow, i.e. the prātimokṣa vow], remains in the basic consciousness  
In a dormant way.  
If one takes the vows of a Tantric adept,  
Both former [vows] will [remain] dormant. (Verse 25, Sobisch 2002, 115)

To explain what this means, he uses what would come to be a famous metaphor:

For example, the arising [of] stars in the sky  
May illuminate [the world] a little bit.  
But if the moon arises,  
The light of stars vanishes [and] it illuminates the world.  
When the sun shines forth,  
The moonlight vanishes [and] they illuminate the world. (Verse 26, Sobisch 2002, 117)

Thus, according to Vibhūticandra the prātimokṣa vows are like the stars which “illuminate the world a little bit,” the bodhisattva vows are like the moon, and the Tantric vows are like the sun which illuminates the world and makes the stars (prātimokṣa vows) vanish.

Vibhūticandra’s verse reads as follows:

If you consider that the [Buddha’s] mentioning of “possessing the three vows” [Was meant] for a single mental stream of consciousness,  
Even though you hold that [the mental stream] is a single one, it will become three [separate ones],  
Because the properties possessed are distinct entities of their own. (Verse 23, Sobisch 2002, 113)

This problem was also raised by Gampopa:

It is also not acceptable that the Natures of the vows exist as different things on all occasions, because if they were different, they would be perceived to appear as three different consciousnesses through self-cognizing direct perception, namely ‘these are the ‘prātimokṣa vows,’ ‘these are the bodhisattva vows,’ and ‘these are the Mantra vows,’ but there is no more than just one consciousness. Therefore it is also not acceptable that the nature of the vows are always different. (Sobisch 2002, 205)
and the moon (bodhisattva vows) “vanish.” This conception of the vows conflicts with Drakpa’s idea of a single essence. Drakpa’s “vital point” theory implies a similar essence between the vows and a continued commitment to the lower vows. For Vibhūticandra, the tantric vows are entirely distinct and cause the lower vows to vanish.

This metaphor not only explains how one can possess all three vows, but also implicitly states that the tantric vows are of ultimate importance whereas the lower vows are of relatively little value. This belief is repeated in different ways throughout the text. For example, when Vibhūticandra combines his outshining metaphor with the idea that the vows are lost individually, he comes to the conclusion that loosing the lower vows is of little consequence, whereas loosing the higher vow leaves one in the relative “darkness” of the lower vows:

If a transgression against a lower [vow] occurs,
The higher [vows] will not be stained by the karmic result [of that transgression]
As long as [they] continue to exist.
For example, the moon and stars may go down,
But as long as the sun remains in the sky
Its light is not the least obscured. (Verse 28, Sobisch 2002, 121)

When a transgression against a higher [vow] occurs,
The lower [vows] may continue [intact],
But through [that] slight benefit they cannot protect [one].
When the sun sets,
The moon and stars [might] remain, but their nature is darkness. (Verse 29, Sobisch 2002, 123)

Stearns points out that “another early commentator upon the Sdom gsum rab dbye, Kun-mkhyen Dga’-gdon-pa, identified the specific use of the examples of sun, moon, and stars by Vibhūticandra to be a refutation of the position that the three vows possess a single essence (ngo—bo gcig), which has been stated in the Rtsa ltung ‘khrul spong of Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan” (Stearns 1996, 153).
At this point one may begin to wonder if the lower vows serve any purpose at all. In fact, Vibhūticandra writes that possessing the lower vows has no effect on the “fruit” of practice (Verse 36, Sobisch 2002, 129). Rather, the lower vows are only useful as a teaching aid, a kind of skillful means that only has an indirect value. In Verse 37 Vibhūticandra states that “the difference between [possessing] one and three [vows]/is for the sake of the trainees at the time of the path” (Sobisch 2002, 129).

Vibhūticandra also takes issue with those who would claim that the lower vows act as a “support” for the higher vows:

Furthermore, it is an error to proclaim as some do
That they hold the three vows
To be a basis [or] support like earth, water and a ship… (Verse 31, Sobisch 2002, 125)

In this case the identity of Vibhūticandra’s opponent is plausibly the Kadampa school. Sobisch was unable to trace this theory of “support” to a particular Kadampa text, but it bears a close resemblance to Atiśa’s position in his Lamp for the Path, where he writes that

the Prātimokṣa vow is necessary first of all, and is the very prerequisite for the Bodhisattva Vow… Those previously undisposed toward Mahāyāna have as their preparation the vows of whichever of the seven Prātimokṣa ranks they find suitable. (Sherburne 2000, 115)
Future commentators would attribute this theory to Tsong-kha-pa and the Géluk, who adopted much of Atiśa and the Kadampa’s philosophy.\(^\text{147}\) Jamgön Kongtrül, for example, summarizes the Géluk position as follows:

> The dGe-lidan-pas [Gelug] maintain the three vows to be different and with support. The respective quotations and logical proofs are many. The Ri-bo dGe-lidan-pas [Gelug] maintain that the ways of the three vows are different, since the ways of obtaining and the causes for losing them are ascertained as higher, namely that the colour of the water, too, turns into the colour of jewel if one places an indranīla jewel in a very clean container in which pure water has been filled, they maintain through that example in fact (don gyis) also that the higher has the support of the lower. (Kongtrül’s Pervading All Objects of Knowledge 5.4.2.2.2.2.(c), in Sobisch 2002, 303)

Again, the underlying issue here seems to be the relative importance of the lower vows.

For Atiśa and the Kadampa (and the Eastern and Western Vinaya monks who supported them), a commitment to the monastic vows are essential to a proper Buddhist training. Vibhūticandra disagrees.

**SITUATING THE DEBATE**

Vibhūticandra was not a member of any particular school and thus monastic stability was not his priority. This would explain why his three-vow position differs so dramatically from that of Drakpa Gyeltsen and the other three-vow writers, who were all committed to grounding tantric practice in a monastic context. *The Garland of Rays* was

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\(^{147}\) “The same example is used to illustrate an (unspecified) theory by Lo-chen Dharma-shrī (fol. 299v), and one also finds it in the writings of Karma-‘phrin-las-pa (1456-1539), where it is attributed to the dGe-lidan-pas [Gelug].… Karma-chags-med (1613-1678) ascribes a similar system to Tsong-kha-pa and mentions as its main feature only ‘the support and the supported’.” (Sobisch 2002, 86)
a controversial text, and Vibhūticandra’s position on the three vows was never fully adopted or endorsed by any major Tibetan school. We have already seen that his later biographies describe him having a falling out with both the Drigung Kagyu and the Sakya, which would indicate that neither school wished to accept him unequivocally. His denigration of the lower vows puts him at odds with both the Sakya and the Kadam, who emphasized monastic values and institutional involvement in the path of practice, and he would also be criticized by later Nyingma commentators.

It is likely that Vibhūticandra’s position was never adopted wholesale by any Tibetan school because it fails to accord any real value to the monastic vows. It was this aspect of his theory that set it apart from other three-vow texts. Of those who addressed tensions between the commitments of the vows, his position is closest to that of the infamous “Red Master” (ācārya dmar-po), also known under the Sanskrit name

\begin{quote}
The example [of the sun, moon, and stars] is also not acceptable. It would follow that there would exist under the light of the sun a specific, uncommon darkness which obscures the light of the moon and stars, because when there is no internal contradiction between the three vows, there are possible a great number of specific, uncommon transgressions against the rules of the lower vows, as distinct from the rules of the higher vows. (Lo-chen Dharma-shri’s sDom gsum rnam nges ‘grel pa, in Sobisch 2002, 413)
\end{quote}

\begin{enumerate}
\item It is described by Sobisch as “one of the most controversial treatments of the matter” (Sobisch 2002, 35).
\item See Nyingma scholar Lo-chen Dharma-shri’s (1654-1717) sDom gsum rnam nges ‘grel pa:
\begin{quote}
The example [of the sun, moon, and stars] is also not acceptable. It would follow that there would exist under the light of the sun a specific, uncommon darkness which obscures the light of the moon and stars, because when there is no internal contradiction between the three vows, there are possible a great number of specific, uncommon transgressions against the rules of the lower vows, as distinct from the rules of the higher vows. (Lo-chen Dharma-shri’s sDom gsum rnam nges ‘grel pa, in Sobisch 2002, 413)
\end{quote}
\item Sobisch observed that Vibhūticandra’s theory “is in a sharp contrast to all other still-current theories of the three vows that teach with the greatest care the maintaining and continuing of the lower vows” (Sobisch 2002, 81)
\end{enumerate}
According to Stearns, the Red Master “was widely accused of spreading evil and perverted tantric sexual practices in Tibet and causing the ruin of many monks and nuns” (Stearns 2001, 52) The following is Karma Chakmé’s (1613-1678) description of the “perverted doctrine of the Red Master”:

[According to] his religious system, [all the vows were] taken [successively],
Beginning with the vows of refuge, up to those of a monk.
Each [set of vows] were maintained for some years [or] months according to the authoritative scriptures.
Thereafter, by receiving the [rituals of] the production of the resolve for awakening,
The prātimokṣa vows turned into the bodhisattva vows.
After that, none of the Vinaya rules had to be maintained.
The training of the resolve for awakening, the meditative exchange of oneself and others, was cultivated for some years.
Thereafter, by receiving the four initiations of the Mantra,
These bodhisattva vows, too, turned into the vows of Mantra.
After that, the training of the bodhisattva vows did not have to be maintained.
Because one was a practitioner of Mantra, one was even allowed to take a wife,
[And] even though one took one, the defect of having lost the [monastic] vows did not occur.
Because his followers increased greatly,
Householder monks (lit. “yellow householders”) spread everywhere in mNga’-ris, dBus and gTsang.
All learned ones censure and refute [this doctrine], calling it
The “perverted doctrine of the Red Master.” (Sobisch 2002, 324-5)

The Red Master’s theory that the three vows are different and that the higher vows supplant the lower vows bears obvious similarities to Vibhūticandra’s theory. Both were rejected by the sarma schools.

Before concluding the chapter, I should note that although Vibhūticandra was at odds with the Sakya, Kadampa, Nyingma, and Drigung Kagyu, his text was not ignored. Later writers would use it as a foil by which to clarify their own positions. The

151 Because this was a pseudonym was shared with Gayādhara and others, there is some confusion over the precise identity of the Red Master, but Stearns believes that he was a teacher of both Drokmi Lotsāwa and Khön Könchok Gyelpo (Stearns 2001, 52), placing him in the mid-eleventh century.
eighteenth-century scholar Karma Ngélek would list Vibhūticandra’s position as one of six common opinions on the three vows held by the majority of his fellow Tibetans (Karma Ngélek Good Vase 6.3, in Sobisch 2002, 289) and Jamgön Kongtrül (1813-1899) would again confirm that his three-vow theory was “widely known” in Tibet (Kongtrül 2003, 302). Neither scholar implies any association between Vibhūticandra and a Tibetan lineage, but there are some Karma Kagyu who writers have selectively taken up elements of Vibhūticandra’s text and used them to criticize the position of the Sakya. Karma Drinlépa, for example, uses the concept of “outshining” in a similar manner to Vibhūticandra, describing how the moral faults of breaking the lower vows are “outshone” if they are broken because of one’s commitment to the higher vows. He

152 Sobisch points out that Karma Drinlépa’s use of the concept differs slightly from Vibhūticandra’s. Whereas Vibhūticandra believed that “the lower vows are outshone in such a way that they become entirely unmanifested in a dormant way (bag la nyal ba’i tshul du),” later Karma Kagyu writers “omitted such a ‘substantialistic’ connotation and limited its functioning to the outshining of the moral faults, thus leaving the lower vows intact and functioning” (Sobisch 2002, 323). For example, see above, where Karma Drinlépa explains the meaning of the vows being possessed “upwardly.” See also Replies to Ngo-gro (20):

[The meaning of the statement] “If a conflict appears, the higher [vow] is the preeminent one” [is this]:
A Mahāyānist engages in the benefit of others. Therefore
Such actions as killing another [person, i.e. a sinner] out of compassion,
Stealing the wealth of misers and giving it to the poor,
Uniting with a thousand ladies in the manner of a cakravartin,
And telling lies for the sake of others are necessary.
And if he [actually] performs such [activities],
He must observe [his vows], having made the higher training the preeminent one,
Even though it has been taught [in the scriptures] that the prātimokṣa vows will be lost.
When a Tantric adept who possesses the three [vows] performs those [activities],
It is taught that he should return the lower vows
If others will denigrate him saying: “[You] have committed an infraction entailing expulsion.”
If there is no [such] denigration, he does not return the discipline—instead
also quotes Vibhūticandra (Garland of Rays 20) in support of the idea that the vows are not lost simultaneously. Nonetheless, Karma Drinlépa distinguishes himself from Vibhūticandra by placing value on the monastic vows and “carefully avoids giving either direct support or criticism to Vibhūticandra’s arguementation” (Sobisch 2002, 308). The use of Vibhūticandra’s text by the Karma Kagyu could be explained in light of their conflict with the Sakyapa. Since Vibhūticandra’s text critiques a foundational Sakya texts, its ideas would be useful to Karma Kagyu writers who wish to do the same. Also, it was the Karma Kagyupa in particular who adopted and refined Gampopa’s three-vow text, and Gampopa’s text bears the closest resemblance to Vibhūticandra’s insofar as it views the vows as distinct entities and subsequently prioritizes the tantric vows (albeit without eliminating the importance of the lower vows).

153 In this case, Karma Drinlépa is trying to resolve what he sees as “apparent” conflicts that might occur if one possessed all three vows simultaneously:

All defeats such as the occurrence of an infraction entailing expulsion through damaged lower [vows]
Are outshone [through] the higher [vow]. Therefore
One will not be afflicted [with] infractions entailing expulsion,
Even though one has, for the sake of others, committed such acts as killing.
Therefore these [explanations] are the meaning of “higher vows being the preeminent ones.” (Karma Drinlépa Replies to Ngo-gro 20, in Sobisch 2002, 267-9)

154 When Karma Drinlépa criticizes the Sakya he does not contest the idea that the vows have the same nature (as Vibhūticandra did), but rather he contests “a theory that maintains both a transformation and a same nature of the vows” (Sobisch 2002, 308).
Insofar as we are concerned with situating the early three-vow texts within the manifold challenges facing the founders of the *sarma* schools, Drakpa’s text is relevant. It was written by an early member of a *sarma* school who was wrestling with the task of establishing a stable monastic system while at the same time integrating tantra as the pinnacle of practice. The tensions within his text, and specifically within his concept of transformation, reflect the tensions of his larger project. Without fully eliminating these tensions, Drakpa presents the vows in a way that a) maintains one’s commitments to the lower vows, b) incorporates the importance of institutionalized rituals, c) recognizes the supremacy of the tantric path, and d) unites the paths of practice via an explanation of their shared goal. Vibhūticandra would not come to be associated with any school and he was relatively unconcerned with legitimizing monastic practice. The Sakya scholar Gorampa would later object that Vibhūticandra’s characterization of the vows implies that the ethics of the lower vows is also “unmanifested,” but it is not obvious that Vibhūticandra would recognize this as a serious issue, since his priorities lie elsewhere. Yet, his text is also relevant because it represents an alternative position that was available to the other three-vow writers. They too could have used the wealth of tantric material—material imported by the translators from India’s siddha communities—to support a theory that exalted tantric practice and denigrated monasticism. Instead, they

155 “If [you hold that] the prātimokṣa vows are unmanifested in someone who possesses the bodhisattva vows, [you] have to accept that the morality of abandoning [morally] wrong behavior would also be unmanifested [in him], because the morality of avoiding [morally] wrong behavior was taught by Asaṅga, Dipaṅkara and the elder Bodhibhadra as the seven classes of prātimokṣa” (Gorampa, quoted in Sobisch 2002, 117).
created three-vow theories that incorporated monastic commitments (to varying degrees) and rejected the theories of those (like Vibhūticandra and the “Red Master”) who would have it otherwise.
This final chapter will consider the three vow theory of the Drigung Kagyu school, a branch of the Kagyu school founded by Drigung Jikten Gönpo at the end of the twelfth century. The first section will present the biographies of the central figures surrounding the birth of the school and the composition of its first three-vow text, *The Same Intention*. Although the lineage of the Drigung Kagyu is traced back to Gampopa, the early founders of the school maintained strong relationships with both the Kadampa and the Sakya. The following section will provide a brief analysis of *The Same Intention*. Their three-vow theory will then be compared to that of Gampopa and Drakpa, situating the text in the context of the three-vow theories we have already looked at. The final section of the chapter will consider the three-vow position of the Drigung Kagyu in the context of the monastic conservatives in order to better understand the pressures that guided the text and its relationship to both the Sakyapa and the Kadampa.

**JIKTEN GÖNPO (1143-1217) AND THE DRIGUNG KAGYU**

Drigung Jikten Gönpo was a student of Pagmo Drupa Dorjé Gyelpo (1110-1170), who in turn was a student of Gampopa. Pagmo, like the first Karmapa Düsum Khyenpa, was born in Eastern Tibet in the Kham region. At the age of eighteen Pagmo travelled to Central Tibet and was “principally consumed with studying the Kadampa and related systems” (Davidson 2005, 333). It was during this time that he first met Düsum Khyenpa, who was also engaged in Kadampa study. A few years after taking his full monastic ordination at the age of 28 he travelled to Sakya, receiving teachings related to the Lamdré system directly from Sachen. Later in life Pagmo would exchange presents with Sachen, who labeled him “king of the Dharma” (Davidson 2005, 337). Eventually Pagmo
founded his own tradition of Lamdré. In 1151 he met Gampopa, who gave him instruction in Mahāmudrā. Following the death of Gampopa in 1153, Pagmo left to meditate in what would become a famous grass hut, where he stayed until his death in 1170. It was there that he founded the school of the Pakdru Kagyu, which would end up spawning the eight “lesser” schools of the Kagyu tradition.

Drigung Jikten Gönpo was also born in the Eastern Tibetan region of Kham. Like his teacher, his early life was spent training in the Kadampa tradition. He did not meet Pagmo until 1167, when Pagmo was fifty-seven. At the time of the meeting Jikten only possessed the householder vows, but quickly took the bodhisattva vow under Pagmo. As a member of Pagmo’s retinue he received training in the Lamdré tradition that was passed from Sachen, through Pagmo, to Tsilungpa. Furthermore, he received Mahāmudrā instruction from various teachers including Dakpo Gumstül (who himself taught Pagmo), Düsum Khyenpa, and even Lama Zhang.

After seven years spent meditating in a cave he took his full monastic ordination and received the teachings of the Vinaya (Sobisch 2002, 332). Shortly thereafter he became the abbot of Pagmodru, but here he came into conflict with the monks who were upset that he insisted on strictly following the Vinaya code. Sobisch remarks that “it is especially mentioned that he did not allow the use of alcohol” (Sobisch 2002, 351 ff. 748), a policy that was in keeping with that of his teacher Pagmo, who did not even allow the consumption of alcohol in Tantric rituals. Jikten’s commitment to monastic virtues

\[156\] He received “from Rwa-sgreng sGom-chen the ‘Stages of the Doctrine’ (bstan rim) [and] the ‘Stages of the Path’ (lam rim)” (Sobisch 2002, 330).
extended beyond his dry-monastery policy. He also prohibited the eating of meat, and “even though he became a full monk only after his thirty-fifth year, he said that he had spent his whole life in perfect celibacy and that the only woman who ever touched him was his mother” (ibid.). Abandoning Phag-mo-gru in 1179, he established his own monastery in Drigung, later travelling to Gampopa’s monastery of Dakpo to “help in a famine” (Sobisch 2002, 333) and eventually transferring Pagmo’s religious texts there as well. Notably, it was during this time that Lama Zhang and his militia appropriated control in the area of Drigung as well as Ölkha, which neighbours Pakdru monastery, although I am unaware of whether or not this influenced Jikten’s decision to leave Drigung. Before he died in 1217, he was recognized by Düsum Khyenpa as an incarnation of Nāgārjuna.

Doctrinally, Jikten is most famous for “propagating a unique cycle of teachings, the Same Intention (Dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa), which was recorded by his nephew and chief disciple Shes-rab-‘byung-gnas” (Sobisch 2002, 329). Shérap Jungné, also from Kham, met Jikten in 1207 when he was twenty-one. For four years he completed intensive study with Jikten, eventually becoming his “most intimate disciple” (Sobisch 2002, 335) and giving instructions in place of Jikten, who remained behind drawn curtains. Following his master’s death, Shérap Jungné travelled around Tibet composing texts, erecting statues, and passing on his teachings. In 1225 he travelled with fourteen of

157 “Lama Zhang employed [paramilitary forces] to appropriate domains in Central Tibet from feudal lords in such areas as Lhokha, Drigung, and Ülkha” (Davidson 2005, 329).
158 As we have already seen, this recognition was repeated by Vibhūticandra’s teacher, Śākyaśrībhadra (Sobisch 2002, 333).
his students to Samyé, meeting Sakya Paṇḍita. One year later he would compose the

*Same Intention*, whose title comes from the belief that the text expresses the same

intention as the Buddha’s. The work is a collection of 150 “vajra utterances” that contain

teachings given to him from Jikten, divided into seven chapters (Sobisch 2002, 339-340):

1. Summary of the Vital Points of the Wheels of Dharma in General
2. Summary of the Vital Points of Dependent Origination, [which] is of Benefit for all
3. Summary of the Vital Points of the Vinaya Prātimokṣa
4. Summary of the Vital Points of the Bodhisattva Training
5. The Vows of the Tantric Adepts
6. The Special View, Practice, and Conduct
7. The Resultant Buddha-bhūmi

This work would attract the attention of many contemporary and subsequent Tibetan

scholars, including Sakya Paṇḍita, who criticized it in his *Clear Differentiation of the Three Vows* (Sobisch 2002, 340 ff. 717). Many commentaries have been written to this
text, including that of Dorjé Shérap, who was a close disciple of Shérap Jungné. For his

analysis of the text, Sobisch selected a pair of verses from the first chapter (I.24 and I.25)
and a pair of verses from the fifth (V.23 and V.24) along with their corresponding

commentary by Dorjé Shérap. He believes these excerpts to contain “the most important

principles of Jikten Gönpo’s teachings on the three vows” (Sobisch 2002, 341). In fact,

there is some evidence that the three-vow theory expressed in this text may be traced

back as far as Jikten’s teacher, Pagmo, who is credited with the idea that “the three vows

have the same vital point, which is [also] possessed ‘upwardly’” (Sobisch 2002, 342, ff.

721).

Before entering into the examination of the text, it is worth noting the strong

continuity of Pagmo, Jikten, and Shérap, whose lives and philosophical approaches are
very similar. All three came from Kham, began their studies in the Kadampa tradition, and maintained a close relationship with the Sakya school. Although Pagmo received teachings from Gampopa, and is of course officially recognized as a continuation of the Kagyu lineage, the conservative bent of his writing bears the influence of the Kadam and Sakya. His monastic values were likewise observed by his student Jikten, and in turn by Jikten’s student Shérap. As we will see, the three-vow theory of the *Same Intention* is much closer to the Sakya approach than it is to either Gampopa’s or that of the Karma Kagyu who would follow him.

**THE SAME INTENTION**

In this section I will focus on presenting the basic ideas of the text, while the subsequent section will compare these ideas to those of Gampopa and Drakpa. Dorjé Shérap presents a commentary to each verse of *The Same Intention*. The commentary to each verse begins with the presentation of a counter-position that is then rebutted. This format allows Dorjé Shérap to explain how the meaning of the vajra utterance differs from the opinions of others. My presentation will follow the form of the text, introducing each explanation with the vajra utterance in bold.

*Regarding all three vows, the thing to be abandoned is the same vital point as in abandoning the ten non-virtues.* *(I.24, Sobisch 2002, 355)*

Dorjé Shérap begins by presenting the following counter-position, attributed to an unidentified opponent: each of the vows is different insofar as it requires the abandonment of different sets of the ten non-virtues and three poisons. The counter-position that he outlines can be summarized in a chart:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vows</th>
<th>What is Abandoned</th>
<th>What Non-Virtues Are Permitted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prātimokṣa</td>
<td>The Three Non-Virtues of the Body(^{159})</td>
<td>Desire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Four Non-Virtues of Speech(^{160})</td>
<td>[No exceptions.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodhisattva</td>
<td>The Three Non-Virtues of the Mind.(^{161})</td>
<td>Hatred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The non-virtues of body and speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tantric</td>
<td>The non-virtue of wrong-views.</td>
<td>Ignorance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Everything except wrong-views.(^{162})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jitken and his disciples strongly disagree with this position. Instead, they believe that each of the three vows require one to abandon “the same vital point,” i.e. the ten non-virtues and the three defilements. Dorjé Shérap quotes Jikten as follows:

> All three vows remove the ten non-virtues together with anything of their kind, and they achieve the ten virtues together with anything of their kind. And therefore the nature of the three vows is not to be even slightly differentiated. (Sobisch 2002, 363)

Dorjé Shérap uses a number of different strategies to support this idea. First he quotes scripture, and then he appeals to logic, arguing that it is impossible for one thing to possess two contradictory qualities. The non-virtues cannot “become for some people obstacles and for some people supramundane achievement (siddhis)” (Sobisch 2002, 357). He argues that the laws of karma are universal, and likewise so is the truth that the ten non-virtues “are the producers of all samsāric suffering” (Sobisch 2002, 359). They must therefore be abandoned without qualification.

\(^{159}\) Killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct.
\(^{160}\) Lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, gossip.
\(^{161}\) Covetousness, ill will, wrong views.
\(^{162}\) “Since everything one does after that is purely virtuous, it is taught that with the exception of wrong views, all the other nine non-virtuous deeds are, generally speaking, permitted, and, in particular, the four fundamental infractions entailing expulsion are permitted” (Sobisch 2002, 357).
The Vows become three because the possessor has changed. (I.25, Sobisch 2002, 363)

At this point one may wonder, if “the nature of the three vows is not to be even slightly differentiated,” is there anything at all that distinguishes them? This vajra utterance summarizes Jikten’s response. Again, Dorjé Shérap begins by presenting the counter-position. In this case, the counter-position is that there are many fundamental differences between the vows:

Some say: “The three vows arise for the three incompatible things to be abandoned.’
Some say: “The three vows arise for the three different things to be achieved, namely practices.” Some say: “The three vows arise for the three incompatible things to be obtained, namely the spiritual results.” Such people say that since the incompatible things to be observed [i.e. the things to be abandoned, practices, and results] are thus different, the specifics of the three vows are differentiated. Therefore, if the three vows are taken, they are to be taken individually, if they continue, they continue individually, and if they are observed, they are to be observed as entrusted. (Sobisch 2002, 363)

Jikten’s position, as we have already seen, is that there is no difference whatsoever between the three vows themselves. What distinguishes the vows, according to Dorjé Shérap, are the qualities possessed by the vow-holder. Dorjé Shérap illustrates this with two metaphors. First, he explains that the vows are like “a piece of turquoise or a gold amulet” (Sobisch 2002, 365). If it is hung on the neck of a common person, anyone can touch it; if it is hung on a minister, the common people can’t touch it; and if it is hung on a king no one can touch it. The second metaphor concerns the eating of food. A normal person will eat food and then be able to collect firewood; a minister will eat food and then be able to “perform the action of sustaining life or subduing enemies” (Sobisch 2002, 365); and a king will eat food and then be able to “establish benefits and happiness for the country or kingdom” (ibid.). The sameness of the amulet or the act of eating is like the sameness of abandoning the ten non-virtues, whereas the different qualities of the
person are like the “different systems of abandoning and establishing for the three persons who practice the three vows” (Sobisch 2002, 365).

There exists no occasion where a non-virtue of the Mantra becomes virtue. (V.23, Sobisch 2002, 367)

The fifth chapter of the Same Intention focuses on the vows of the Tantric adept, and in vajra utterances 23 and 24 the text clarifies the Drigung position on what is and is not a virtue. In the commentary to V.23, the counter-position initially presented claims that Tantra “transforms the basis through skill in means,” essentially transforming the three poisons, the five kinds of flesh and fluids, and mental constructions in general into good things:

Some say that...Mantra belongs to the path that transforms the basis through skill in means. The transformation of desire into the path is the samādhi of bliss, of which the result is the sambhogakāya. The transformation of hatred into the path is the samādhi of clarity, whose result is the nirmanakāya. The transformation of ignorance into the path is the samādhi of mental non-construction, of which the result is transformation into the dharmakāya; and the five kinds of flesh and the five kinds of fluids and alcohol are transformed into nectar. Therefore the more mental constructions arise, the more opportunity exists that the play of gnosis arises. (Sobisch 2002, 367)

From this perspective, the Tantric practice transforms what is normally considered non-virtuous or otherwise bad into something that is virtuous or otherwise good.

This idea offends Dorjé Shérap on two counts. First, he argues that the practice of tantra, like the practice of the Mahāyāna and the Vinaya, purifies the basis by removing the defilements such as the three poisons and mental constructions. For support he quotes the Hevajratantra (2.IV.69):

Sentient beings are the Buddha.
They are, however, obscured by adventitious defilements.
If these are removed, they are Buddhas. (Sobisch 2002, 269)

Second, Dorjé Shérap again takes issue with the idea that something can transform into its opposite. Just as it is impossible for barley to grow from a seed of buckwheat, it is impossible for a non-virtue to be transformed into a virtue:

If [the three poisons] would change through transformation, non-virtue would transform into virtue, but there is no transformation since that would be incompatible with the nature of cause and effect. (Sobisch 2002, 373)

The position of the text is clear: what is bad cannot be transformed into something good.

That which is virtue in the Vinaya is virtue also in the Mantra, and that which is non-virtue in the Vinaya is non-virtue also in the Mantra. (V.24, Sobisch 2002, 373)

Vajra utterance V.24 clarifies the content of what is good, namely, that activity that is delineated by the Vinaya as virtuous. The counter-position in this case is the idea that Tantric practice endorses a) the practice of non-virtue, b) the four fundamental infractions, and/or c) the consumption of meat and alcohol (Sobisch 2002, 373-375). In each case, Dorjé Shérap provides a scriptural example that appears to endorse the counter-position.\(^{163}\) In defense of monastic values, Dorjé Shérap explains that such texts

\(^{163}\) With regard to the non-virtues an unidentified tantra is quoted:

One should not abandon desire, hatred, ignorance, pride, and jealousy. (Sobisch 2002, 373)

With regard to the four fundamental infractions the *Guhyasamājatantra* is quoted:

You should kill living beings!
You should tell lies!
are not meant to be taken literally and instead possess hidden, intentional meanings. To support this he provides examples of Tantric commentaries which explain the code, such as the *gTan la phab pa*, where it written that

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Just as they very much follow their father and mother,} \\
\text{By paying respect to them,} \\
\text{Those who practice in that way} \\
\text{Will proceed immediately to hell. (Sobisch 2002, 377)}
\end{align*}
\]

The intentional meaning is revealed later on in the same text:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Following ignorance, i.e. the } \text{‘father,’} \\
\text{And desire, i.e. the } \text{‘mother,’} \\
\text{By paying respect to them} \\
\text{One will proceed immediately to hell. (ibid.)}
\end{align*}
\]

Dorjé Shérap pays special attention to the claim that Tantra permits the consumption of alcohol. We have already seen that both Pagmo and Jikten held a

You should also steal!
You should also resort to women! (Sobisch 2002, 375)

With regard to the consumption of alcohol two unidentified texts are quoted:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{How could supramundane achievements be possible for someone who has no alcohol?} \\
\text{And the same applies also for gnosis. (ibid.)}
\end{align*}
\]

The Tantric adept, in order to produce the bodily radiance,
Being a hero, he should drink alcohol, too. (ibid.)

\[\text{164} \quad \text{―Regarding the Mantra teachings for the most part, the great Buddha Vajradhara has disordered the tantras, has turned around the authoritative statements, and has hidden the pitch instructions. And with regard to the six positions he [taught through the intentional and non-literal expression, and from among the four ways he explained mainly with the hidden meaning, and from among the four hidden intentions he taught mainly with hidden intention alluding to transformation, and he taught through the symbolic language of Mantra.” (Sobisch 2002, 375)}\]

\[\text{165} \quad \text{Sobisch identifies this text as the *dPal gsang ba ‘dus pa’i ‘grel pa man ngag gtan la dbab pa* (Sobisch 2002, 375 ff. 800).}\]
particular disdain for the practice. The position taken in the *Same Intention* is that the consumption of alcohol is indeed permissible, but only for those (like Saraha and Virūpa) who are fully accomplished adepts that are truly able to turn it into nectar:

This is the practice of those yogīs who are like a lion, who have power over appearances, meditators who possess the ability to remain in both stages of production and perfection and whose mind cannot be overpowered by the outer objects of the senses through the sense organs engaging in the impure sense objects such as the pleasing forms. (Sobisch 2002, 385)

Such a person is contrasted with common monks who want to drink alcohol in evening feasts but are “without power like an old donkey, [and] will wound and hurt themselves” (*ibid.*). If a monk is unsure of the extent of his powers he can take simple test, helpfully described by Dorjé Shérap and attributed to Jikten:

One should know that it was taught in all tantras without any distinction of new and old that this very excrement is the greatest of the five nectars. With regard to alcohol, it is not taught that much as being nectar. However, since oneself desires to drink alcohol, one should equalize the two substances, and having mixed as much alcohol as one will drink with the great nectar [i.e. excrement], one should drink it. If one cannot bear that because of its bad smell, the nectar does not exist anywhere within the three objects. (Sobisch 2002, 381)

Finally, one may object that since Tantra allows fully accomplished adepts to drink alcohol, it conflicts with the Vinaya, but Dorjé Shérap offers examples from both Vinaya and Mahāyāna texts that describe holy characters manipulating appearances and becoming immersed in sense-objects.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ In reference to the Vinaya:

In the *Avadāna of Sumagadha*, the Tathāgata’s direct command to the arhats was such that intending to tame the householder Sthapati in the town Bu-ram-shing-‘phel, Buddha’s son Rāhulabhadra magically manifested himself in the dress of a universal emperor whereby the benefitting immeasurable beings came to pass… Furthermore in the...
COMPARING THE SAME INTENTION TO DRAKPA AND GAMPOPA

This is clearly a very conservative text that prioritizes a vow-holder’s monastic commitments. It follows the trajectory established by Drakpa, who placed a more explicit emphasis on the prātimokṣa vows than Gampopa. Drakpa, like Gampopa, accepted that there were differences between the vows, but unlike Gampopa, Drakpa insisted that the higher vows possessed the same vital point as the lower vows: the commitment to abandon the defilements. Jikten’s position denies any difference at all between the natures of the vows and declares that all three vows entail the same commitment to maintain the basic virtues established by the Vinaya. What is particularly interesting here is that Jikten’s position differs so greatly from that of his grand-teacher Gampopa. This section will take a closer look at the similarities between Gampopa’s ideas and those of the counter-positions Dorjé Shérap argues against. I will then look at how Jikten’s position can be differentiated from that of Drakpa.

In Dorjé Shérap’s commentary to vajra utterance I.24 the counter-position is that the Bodhisattva vows permit one to violate the non-virtues of body and speech if doing so “will benefit beings” (Sobisch 2002, 355). Likewise, once one has taken the Tantric Vinaya there also exist persons who through their beings a specific type of person are not harmed by the sense-objects; thus the Exalted One said: “My auditors obtain complete liberation through meditating on disgusting things, but the monk Śiṃha obtained complete liberation through beautiful things.” (Sobisch 2002, 385-387).

In reference to the Mahāyāna:

For the Perfections Tradition with the Non-Tantric doctrinal systems, too, it is said in the Asṭasāhasrikā (Prajñāpāramitā) that even though the bodhisattva Dharmodgata was a full monk, he amused himself with the sense-objects remaining in the midst of eighty-thousand ladies, and he benefitted immeasurable sentient beings. (Sobisch 2002, 385)
vows, abandoned the wrong views of ignorance, and realized the nature of emptiness,\textsuperscript{167} the other nine non-virtues and the four fundamental infractions are permitted since “everything one does after that is purely virtuous” (Sobisch 2002, 257). This counter-position is markedly similar to that of Gampopa, who specifically states that “in the scope of the bodhisattvas, from among the ten non-virtuous—except the three non-virtuous of the mind—the seven of the body are permitted if performed for the benefit of sentient beings” (Sobisch 2002, 2005). Furthermore, we can recall that Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā practice was oriented towards achieving a direct perception of ultimate reality. Those who have achieved this “perfect perception of nature” realize “all phenomena as being like an illusion” (Sobisch 2002, 209), and thus do not perceive moral qualities of right and wrong. Thus it appears that from Gampopa’s position is similar to the counter-position of I.24, in which a tantric practitioner is otherwise permitted to perform the non-virtues once he or she has removed the defilement of ignorance and achieved the virtue of right-views.

The counter position of the next vajra utterance (I.25) again appears to be very similar to the position taken by Gampopa. Dorjé Shérap explains that some people believe that the vows are different because they a) require one to abandon incompatible things, b) commit one to different practices, and c) lead to different achievements, and that therefore they are taken and maintained individually and “observed as entrusted” (Sobisch 2002, 363). We can recall that Gampopa listed many differences between the

\textsuperscript{167} “The sense of the primordial complete purity of the ultimate reality of all phenomena” (Sobisch 2002, 257).
vows and their respective systems, and that he wrote that the three vows “are to be observed as entrusted” (Sobisch 2002, 207). Whereas Jikten took pains to emphasize the fundamental similarity of the three vows, Gampopa emphasized their differences.

In the commentary to V.23 Dorjé Shérap argues against the idea that the path of practice transforms the basis. Such a method involves transforming one’s perception such that negative qualities like the non-virtues, the four fundamental infractions, and mental constructions become positive qualities. Sobisch notes that Gampopa endorsed the idea that whereas “the Perfections Vehicle is a path that eliminates the basis (gzhi spong ba’i lam)...the Mantra Vehicle is a path that transforms the basis (gzhi sgyur ba)” (Sobisch 2002, 347). This idea is from Gampopa’s writings, Vol. 1, p. 268.6, which is explained in greater detail by Jackson (1994):

Here the Great Seal practitioner is asserted to have a special relationship with the spiritual ground or basis (gzhi), which in this context refers to the affliction- (kleśa-) ridden ordinary personality. According to this scheme, the normal Perfections-Vehicle or general Mahāyāna approach is to get rid of this basis through the arising of its antidote, Gnosis, while the Mantra vehicle seeks to transform it through an altered vision which sees the divine nature of things. (Jackson 1994, 27)

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168 See, for example, Karma Drinlépa’s summary of Gampopa’s position in section 5 of Work A:

The durations for which they are taken, the volitional impulses which they are taken, And the productions of the resolve, too, with which they are taken are different. And that the causes for their loss, the times of their loss, and the persons who are the support are also different is stated in the individual basic scriptures. (Sobisch 2002, 309-310)

169 In his three-vow text, Gampopa appears to state that the tantric path takes one takes the seven non-virtues of the body “as the path” (Sobisch 2002, 205). This is a rather ambiguous statement, but it could support the notion of transforming the basis rather than eliminating its defilements.
Again, Dorjé Shérap is describing a counter-position that is markedly similar to the ideas of Gampopa.

Finally, V.24 clarifies the scope of what counts as virtuous behavior, stating that what is a virtue in the Vinaya is always virtue, even if one is a Tantric practitioner. Gampopa never makes any absolute claims regarding what is or isn’t a virtue, but he makes it clear that in the case of conflict between the vows one ought to follow the higher vow and that there is no fault in doing so. This implies that there are situations in which the vow-holder ought to transgress the prātimokṣa vows, something that is clearly against the opinions of Jikten and Dorjé Shérap.

We thus have two very different positions on the vows from these early Kagyu writers. Jikten and his students believe that a) all three vows entail an identical commitment, b) this single commitment is to adhere to virtuous behaviour, c) non-virtuous behaviour can never become virtuous, and d) virtuous behaviour is delineated by the vinaya. Gampopa, on the other hand, seems to believe that a) all three vows entail different sets of commitments, b) each set of commitments describes a different set of right behaviour, c) the pinnacle of practice transforms the basis and removes the conceptual category of wrong action, and d) the behavior delineated by the vinaya is only to be followed so long as it doesn’t conflict with one’s Mahāyāna or Tantric commitments. How does this compare with the Sakya position of Drakpa Gyeltsen?

Drakpa was more explicit about the importance of the lower vows than Gampopa. He believed that all three vows possessed the “same vital point” of abandoning the defilements. Jikten uses the same phrase to describe the similarity between the vows in
I.24: “Regarding all three vows the thing to be abandoned is the same vital point as in abandoning the ten non-virtues.” Thus, they both agree that the vows have something in common: the resolution to abandon. These positions sound quite similar, and indeed both of them use this idea of some sort of shared essence to emphasize the relevance of the monastic code to tantric practice.

Yet, whereas Jikten took this idea of a shared vital point to imply that all three vows were identical, Drakpa believed that each vow possessed its own “distinctive aspects.” This led to other related differences between the two theories. On the one hand, Jikten’s position that the three vows are identical allowed him to amplify the importance of the monastic vows. Jikten did not allow the consumption of meat and alcohol, unlike Drakpa, who believed that “what is preeminent is practiced according to the occasion.” On the other hand, Jikten’s position allowed him to eliminate the conceptual problems surrounding Drakpa’s notion of vow-transformation. Drakpa begins with the assumption that the vows are different and then works to explain how they are ultimately compatible. This leads him to his theory of transformation, which is in turn explained using the

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170 This similarity was later recognized by Karma Drinlépa (Replies to Ng-gro 7, Sobisch 2002, 255):

Even though at this occasion their way of explaining is different, The Sa-kyā-pas and the ‘Bri-gung-pas agree that the nature of the vows is the same.

171 “The nature of the three vows is not to be even slightly differentiated” (Sobisch 2002, 363).

172 Martin notes that The Single Intention goes further than Sapaṇ, who was continuing the Sakya tradition of Drakpa: “The Single Intentionists go further than Sakya Paṇḍita in this respect, in making moral discipline the point on which they develop their complex Buddhist system and to which they keep returning” (Martin 1997, 285-286).
alchemy metaphor. We have already noted that his theory retains the latent tension of the continuity and difference between the vows, and indeed, it is telling that Drakpa resorts to a supernatural metaphor in order to justify the possibility of such a transformation. By stating that the nature each of the three vows is identical, Jikten eliminates the tension. He no longer needs to come up with a theory that would reconcile the idea that the three vows are different with the idea that they have the same essence. Moreover, he no longer needs to elaborate a practical metric for resolving conflicts between the vows. Whereas Drakpa refers to the concepts of “skilful means” and “correct view” in order to explain how a commitment to the higher vows may allow the transgression of the lower vows, Jikten states that the Vinaya delineates what is virtuous, and this always applies equally to everybody.

At the same time, Jikten’s position leaves him with a new challenge: he has to account for the apparent differences between the vows and their systems of practice. For example, once he allows that alcohol can be consumed by accomplished yogīs (in the

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173 Like Vibhūticandra, Dorjé Shérap scoffs at the idea of transformation. Whereas Vibhūticandra was critiquing Drakpa’s concept of transformation (“if it were possible, then one might argue by analogy that this sun could transform itself into the water of the river Ganga” (Verse 22)) Dorjé Shérap was critiquing Gampopa’s the idea that one could transform the basis, (which would be “like getting barley as fruit from a seed of buckwheat”).

Karma Drinlépa, too, would critique Drakpa’s notion of transformation, referring to the seventh Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso, who pointed out that if they have the same nature already such a transformation would be unnecessary (see Karma Drinlépa’s *Replies to Ngo-gro* 5 in Sobisch 2002, 229). Like Jikten, he would advocate the idea that the vows have the same nature and it is the person that transforms (Sobisch 2002, 309).

174 Although Jikten emphasizes that it is the person rather than the vows that is transformed, he still accepts that this leads to “different systems of abandoning and establishing for the three persons who practice the three vows” (Sobisch 2002, 365).
examples of Saraha and Virūpa), he is compelled to provide examples from the other two vehicles where accomplished practitioners similarly indulge in sense-objects using skillful means.\footnote{See the commentary to V.24:}

To fully reconcile the identity of the three vehicles would have been a large and challenging task, and it would be interesting to see what other strategies Jikten employed to this end. Unfortunately, there is no English translation of the entire text.

CONSERVATISM IN THE LATE RENAISSANCE PERIOD

The final section of this chapter will consider these texts in the context of the larger pressures and polemics of monastic conservatism in the early thirteenth century. By this time both the Drigung Kagyupa and the Sakyapa had begun to outnumber the Kadampa in Central Tibet,\footnote{“It seems that the Sa-skya-pa and 'Bri-gung-pa in those times were beginning to achieve numerical parity, or perhaps even superiority, to the Bka’-gdamgs-pa school” (Martin 1997, 285-286).} and this compelled them to distinguish themselves from their peers. It appears to me this was one goal of the three-vow texts of the Drigung Kagyupa and the Sakyapa. In order to accomplish this goal the texts engaged in polemics that accorded with the values established by monastic conservatism. This section will

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\footnote{Therefore, the controlling of appearances and revealing of many means of training living beings by a person who has obtained firmness, is not prohibited even in the Vinaya. In the \textit{Avadāna of Sumagadha}, the Tathāgata’s direct command to the arhats was such that intending to tame the householder Sthapati in the town Bu-ram-shing-’phel, Buddha’s son Rāhulabhadra magically manifested himself in the dress of a universal emperor whereby the benefitting immeasurable beings came to pass… For the Perfections Tradition with the Non-Tantric doctrinal systems, too, it is said in the \textit{Aṣṭaśāhasrikā (Prajñāpāramitā)} that even though the bodhisattva Dharmodgata was a full monk, he amused himself with the sense-objects remaining in the midst of eighty-thousand ladies, and he benefitted immeasurable sentient beings. (Sobisch 2002, 385).}
trace the continuity between the Eastern and Western Vinaya monks of the tenth and early eleventh centuries and the Sakyapa and Dringung Kagyupa of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It will begin by looking at how Sapaṇ used the standards established by the earlier conservatives to criticize Gampopa. It will then look at how the Sakya appear to have influenced the direction of the Drigung Kagyupa, who adopted similar standards and thereby distanced themselves from Gampopa’s more controversial teachings.

The Tibetan renaissance began with conservative monastics who wished to reinstate the values of the Vinaya. In the first chapter we looked at how this trend affected the tenth- and eleventh-century polemics of the Eastern and Western Vinaya monks associated with Atiśa and the Kadampa. These monks defined the boundaries of what was to be considered authentic Buddhism, first by requiring that texts and practices have Indian pedigree, and second, by holding tantric texts and practices to the standards of the Vinaya. Often these two requirements were blended, and we have seen that authentically Indian sources were rejected as un-Indian because they conflicted with the monastic values. The early founders of the Sakya school—Sachen and his sons, Sōnam Tsémo and Jétsün Drakpa Gyeltsen—were enmeshed in the values of the conservative monastics and received training in the Kadampa curriculum. They devoted energy to

177 “With Indian literary principles assuming the central position, Tibetans found their institutions being judged on the same standards. Consequently, the ‘monasteries’ that had sometimes been founded and controlled by nonmonastics—Dromton for the Kadampa, Marpa for the Kagyupa, and Konchok Gyelpo for the Sakya—became increasingly brought under the aegis of the Vinaya and the authority of Indian models of decorum” (Davidson 2005, 369).
domesticating their siddha heritage and integrating tantric practice into the monastic institution, all while maintaining their Indian roots.\(^{178}\) It was their success in this endeavor made their school attractive to the Mongols who left the administration of the country to Drakpa’s student, Sakya Paṇḍita.\(^{179}\)

At the same time, the Sakyapa used the standards established by the conservatives to publically criticize the Kagyupa. We have already seen how Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā teachings came under attack by Sakya Paṇḍita because they “seemed aligned with the old eighth-century Chinese position” (Davidson 2005, 334). Members of the Sakyapa used this association to attribute “a poisonous combination of heresy, personal ambition, political power, and stark greed” (ibid.) to the Kagyupa. Gampopa’s student, Lama Zhang, was also criticized by Sakya Paṇḍita for his belief that personal meditative realization was sufficient\(^{180}\) and that institutionalized initiations were unnecessary.\(^{181}\)

\(^{178}\) “The Khön invested more than a century of hard work to domesticate the antinomian systems of Indian esoteric Buddhism and bring them into line with the aristocratic values espoused by houses of merit in eleventh- and twelfth-century U-Tsang…The dozens of figures who served the Khön…did so to contribute to an institution larger than themselves, and they must have understood the consequences of institutional instability in Central Tibet” (Davidson 2005, 370).

\(^{179}\) “The emergent form was that of the mystic hierophant, a successor to Indian monks and siddhas, skillful in the world, spiritually mature, with magical and administrative ability, possessed of internal divinities and external alliances—powerful in every sense of the word. The Khön success at this endeavor became a great part of the ground from which the seeds for the association of the Sakya patriarchs with Khubilai Khan would eventually be grown” (Davidson 2005, 374).

\(^{180}\) “The Savant rejected the idea of the self-sufficiency of meditative realization of the nature of the mind, calling this by the metaphor that Zhang, among others (Sgam-po-pa and possibly the 8th-century Chinese Ch’an teacher Ho-shang Mahāyāna), occasionally used for this, the ‘Singly Sufficient White [Medicine]’” (Martin 2001a, 50).

\(^{181}\) “Among the things the Savant chose to criticize were specific statements in Zhang’s work about the possible non-necessity of tantric initiations for approaching Great Seal
From the perspective of the conservatives from Tsang (the Sakya) and Western Tibet (the Kadampa), “the Kagyüpa erosion of the orthodox view (lta ba) and correct meditation (sgom pa) of Buddhism appeared to be harbingers of an erosion in actual behaviour (spyod pa)” (Davidson 2005, 334). That is to say, the accusation that the Kagyu teachings were un-Indian and inauthentic was connected to the claim that these practices led students to stray from the values of the Vinaya.

One fascinating aspect of the conservatism of the Sakya is that it spread into the Kagyu lineage even as it critiqued it. Pagmo Drupa received teachings from both Gampopa and Sachen. Pagmo passed on Sachen’s teachings to Jikten. Jikten’s star pupil, Shérap Chungé, would inherit these teachings and furthermore maintain a student-teacher relationship with Sachen’s grand-student, Sakya Paṇḍita. In fact, shortly before either Distinguishing the Three Vows or The Same Intention were written, Shérap spent some time with Sakya Paṇḍita at Samyé monastery.¹⁸² Martin’s analysis reveals five points of similarity between the two texts that indicate that they share a neoconservative agenda.¹⁸³

¹⁸² “It is interesting to note that, in 1225, before either work had been written, Sherap Chunge and Sakya Pandita had a meeting of a few days’ duration at Bsam-yas Monestary” (Martin 2001b, 154)

¹⁸³ From Martin 2001b:

1. “Both works counter ideas and practices that had been held by other, primarily New Translations, teachers without naming names” (Martin 2001b, 154)
2. “Both works represent a significant effort to tighten the riggings of the ship of Buddhist Doctrine in a comprehensive way” (Martin 2001b, 154)
3. “Both concern the three vows: “Both the Single Intention and the Distinguishing the Three Vows were probably written with one motive, among others, to counter some ideas espoused by Vibhuticandra just a decade or so before on the
From our perspective, what is most important is that both texts take a conservative stance on the three vows and both works appear to criticize some of Gampopa’s theories. Furthermore the *Single Intention*, like *Distinguishing the Three Vows*, criticizes Lama Zhang’s open acceptance of a variety of paths of practice (see Martin 1997, 283-284). Davidson, agreeing with Martin, has also noted similarities between *Distinguishing the Three Vows* and the *Single Intention*, writing that the latter “attempted to paper over some differences between the Sakyapa, on one hand, and the Mahāmudrā, on the other” (Davidson 2005, 335).  

4. “Both works are opposed…to further revelations, in particular to *gter-ma*” (Martin 2001b, 156)  
5. “Both works are quite concerned to locate, to identify, the true and authoritative sources of Buddhist teaching” (Martin 2001b, 157)  

184 The later Karma Kagyupa also seem to have been influenced by the work of the Sakya. Karma Drinlépa would take pains to emphasize that although his tradition (which was explicitly associated with Gampopa’s three-vow theory) believes there are many differences between the vows, all three vows all possess the resolution to abandon

Some ask: Is it not the case that the three vows
Have the same nature, since the three vows of not taking life…
Have the same nature in their resolution to abandon?
Even though the resolution to abandon killing and avoid stealing, etc.,
Is the same in their capacity merely as the resolution to abandon…
The three resolutions to abandon of the three vows, too,
Are—even though they are the same in their capacity merely as resolutions to abandon—
Different with regard to their rituals, their ways of obtaining them, the duration for which they are obtained,
And their ways of being lost, too. Thus
It does not follow that they are of the same nature. (*Replies to Ng-gro* 13, Sobisch 263)
The similarities we have observed between the Jikten’s *Same Intention* and Drakpa Gyeltse’s *Removing Errors* may be thus seen as part of the larger conservative trend that spurred the Tibetan Renaissance in the first place. This trend was in part motivated by the large growth of the Drigung and Sakya. On the one hand, the size of their schools required them to instill monastic values in order to maintain stability. On the other hand, the contemporaneous growth of the Drigung Kagyu and the Sakyapa, two schools which shared a similar niche, put pressure on both schools to publically distinguish themselves as superior and in order to do so they appealed the standards of the monastic conservatives. The way in which Jikten’s *Same Intention* appears to implicitly criticize Gampopa’s teachings indicates a desire on the part of Jikten and his students to distance themselves from some of the more liberal theories and teachers of their school (such as Gampopa and Lama Zhang) and re-associate themselves with the values of the conservative movement exemplified by the Sakyapa. From this perspective,

185 “The large numbers of monasteries built in the last half of the twelfth century now, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, entered into a phase that required consolidation and maintenance to a degree not even considered in the relatively free-floating doctrinal situation at the beginning of the twelfth” (Martin 1997, 285-286).
186 Martin notes that both the *Single Intention* and *Distinguishing the Three Vows* were partially aimed at publically distinguishing their schools as favoring basic social virtues:

My impression, which isn’t exactly a conclusion since it is still in the process of formation, is that the *Single Intention*, like the near contemporaneous *Distinguishing the Three Vows*, represents a particular point in Tibetan Buddhist history in which there was a strongly emerging concern for sectarian self-identification. In part this involved pointing out what was ‘different’ about one’s own tradition against the others, while reserving the claim to possess the total picture. The earlier diversity of views about how the three vows fit together had to be self-consciously resolved, and generally in favor of an interpretation that insisted on the maintenance of the basic social virtues even in the course of bodhisattva and tantric Vehicles (involving a rejection of interpretations that emphasize the creative stratagems of the Bodhisattva, and the ‘activities’ of tantra). (Martin 1997, 285-286)
Jikten’s *Same Intention*, Drakpa’s *Removing Errors*, and Sapaṇḍa’s *Distinguishing the Three Vows* are, in part, public declarations that distinguish their respective schools using the standards established by conservative polemicists. These authors present themselves to be upholders of the core monastic virtues and validate the authenticity of their perspective via Indian sources. At the same time, they embed a polemic against other schools which are accused of basing their teachings on illegitimate texts and straying from their monastic commitments.

None of this indicates that Drakpa, Sapaṇḍa and Jikten were not primarily motivated by the altruistic goal of combining tantra and monasticism into a stable Buddhism for the benefit of their students. Like the Kadampa before them, they understood that an emphasis on monastic and civic virtues led to institutional health and social stability. All three schools adopted this emphasis with significant success. In the short term, the Sakyapa would win the favor of Kublai Khan and the Mongols. Just over a century later, Pagmo Drupa Janchub Gyeltsen of the Drigung Kagyu would take over control of the country. The Géluk, who adopted the teachings of Atiśa and the Kadampa, would

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187 “Tibetans began to see that their social health rested in greater part with the institutional health of the large, well-run monasteries, which had by then completely embodied the symbiosis between aristocratic clan and late Indian Buddhism” (Davidson 2005, 375).

188 “The Mongols realized that the neo-conservative vision would be good for Mongolia, so Khubilai Khan institutionalized the identity of Sakya Paṇḍita as the paragon of Tibetan religion” (Davidson 2005, 375).

189 “In the thirteenth century there can be little doubt that similar factors were at work with the success of the Sakyapas of Tsang and even contributed to the resurgence of
in turn take over from the Drigung Kagyu the end of the sixteenth century. There should be little doubt that the success of these three schools is in part due to the efforts of their founders to integrate the new tantric texts and practices into a path of practice that upheld the importance of the monastic values, as demonstrated in their three-vow texts.

Central Tibetan Kagyüpas with the victory of Pagmo Drupa Janchub Gyeltsen in 1358 and the dethronement of the Sakyapa hedgemony” (Davidson 2005, 335).
To conclude, I would like to take a step back to consider all of the three-vow texts together, looking at three of the goals that influenced their composition and guided my analysis of the texts: the desire to create an overarching normative framework, the project of establishing stable monastic institutions, and the endeavor to distinguish the superiority of the author’s position.

The first aim of the thesis was to determine how each author described and ordered the vows. It seems that by and large all of the authors accepted similar premises regarding the differences between the systems of practice, but each addressed these differences in a distinct manner. Atiśa, Gampopa, and Vibhūticandra all stressed that the vows themselves possessed different qualities. Drakpa and Jikten, on the other hand, emphasized a continuity between the vows while at the same time accepting differences between their corresponding systems of practice. Drakpa insisted that the vows shared a “single essence,” but nonetheless endorsed the idea of transformation which entailed the notion of difference, even if he saw these differences as superficial. Jikten stands out as the only author to fully endorse the identity of the three vows, but even Jikten accepts that there are differences in the systems of practice, which he attributes to the practitioner rather than the vows themselves. The difference between these theories of the nature of the vows may be thus seen as one of emphasis. Atiśa, Gampopa, and Vibhūticandra all
emphasize distinctions between the vows, whereas Jikten and Drakpa emphasize their similarities.¹⁹⁰

The authors also prioritize the vows in different ways. Of those who emphasized the difference between the vows, Atiśa stressed that the lower vows should be maintained whereas Gampopa and Vibhūticandra believed that one’s commitment to the higher vows took priority. From what we know about Drakpa, his position is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, he stressed that a commitment to the tantric vows entails a commitment to the lower vows, thus leading us to believe that the lower vows remain a priority. At the same time, it is the spirit of abandoning the defilements rather than the letter of the Vinaya that is to be maintained by the tantric practitioner, and thus there remains the possibility of breaking the lower vows if one possesses the appropriate “view” (e.g. during tantric feasts). Jikten similarly emphasizes that a commitment to the tantric vows entails a commitment to the lower vows, but he enforces this more explicitly. The letter of the lower vows can only be broken by those who have achieved truly exceptional accomplishments. He forbade monks from consuming meat or alcohol, even in the context of tantric rituals. In general, then, there is a correspondence between those

¹⁹⁰ “The difference between these doctrines is rather one of emphasis: The Sa-skya-pas stress the sameness of the abandoning in all three vows and call this the nature of the vows, i.e. their ‘unifying factor,’ while sGam-po-pa emphasizes the differences, i.e. their ‘distinctive factors,’ and identifies these as their respective natures. The same applies to the ‘Bri-gung-pas,’ too. The ‘vital point’ of abandoning the ten non-virtues is, as we have observed, very similar to the Sa-skya-pas’ abandoning as explained by Go-rams-pa, and on the other hand ‘Bri-gung-pas, too, acknowledge the difference of the vows, as can be seen in the illustration of their three-vow doctrine, according to which, for example, an ornament has different functions when worn by different people” (Sobisch 2002, 313).
authors who emphasize continuity between the vows and those authors who explicitly prioritize the commitments of the lower vows.¹⁹¹

How are positions of the three vows situated in relation to the project of developing of stable monastic institutions? Every writer accepted that tantric practice was the pinnacle of the path, but at the same time all of these authors (with the exception of Vibhūticandra) were committed to the goal of establishing stable schools. Atiśa, who was wrapped up in the agenda of the Western and Eastern Vinaya monks, issued his text as a corrective to wayward behaviour and insisted that Buddhists adhere to their monastic vows. This text was embedded in the larger goal of the movement, namely, re-establishing monasteries throughout Central Tibet that adhered to orthodox monastic values. Although Gampopa’s text prioritized the tantric vows, he adjusted tantric practice so that it conformed to monastic commitments. On the one hand, this allowed him to prioritize tantric practice without devaluing the lower vows, and he was subsequently credited with helping to stabilize the yogic elements of the Kagyu lineage by integrating them into the monastic framework of his Kadampa training. On the other hand, his position was open to abuse, and his student Lama Zhang justified violence and self-aggrandizement in terms of tantric license. Drakpa also recognized that tantric practice was paramount, but his three-vow position made the monastic commitments of tantric practitioners more explicit. This allowed him to continue the project of his father and

¹⁹¹ Atiśa is the exception here, but he was in a unique position insofar as he did not appear to view tantric practice with the same awe and respect as the other three-vow authors. He could agree that the three vows are different and that the lower vows took priority because he was willing to subordinate tantric practice.
brother, which involved integrating the esoteric Lamdré teachings of Drokmi into a monastic framework. Jikten, having witnessed troubles of tantric license within his own school, followed the lead of the Sakya school by emphasizing the relevance of the lower vows to tantric practice. By adopting this position, both the Sakyapa and Drigung Kagyupa were able to successfully ground their teachings in stable monastic institutions. Vibhūticandra’s position stands out insofar as it prioritizes the tantric vows while at the same time it devalues the lower vows. The wealth of tantric material that was imported from the siddha communities of India, where monastic institutions were openly criticized as hypocritical, made this position a viable option. However, it is telling that only Vibhūticandra, a character unconcerned with establishing his own school, would take this position. All of the three-vow texts written by the founders of the *sarma* schools either emphasized the commitments of the lower vows or, as in the case of Gampopa, adjusted tantric practice to conform to monastic standards.

Finally, we can ask how the three-vow texts engaged in the polemics of the period. We have seen that polemic critiques were most often directed toward texts and practices that led students to stray from their monastic commitments, and are thus connected to the broader endeavor to establish stable monastic institutions. However, most of the three-vow texts not only encouraged their own students to abide by the monastic vows, but went further by critiquing the views of others in order to distinguishing their own position as superior to that of their opponents. We have also seen that such critiques frequently appeal to Indian precedent as a means for delegitimizing the authority of the opponent. Atiśa’s text was written in the period when these standards were established and his text echoed the polemics of his hosts. Indeed, the
fact that these conservative monastics invited Atiśa, himself an Indian, to act as a spokesperson is itself indicative of their strategy to use the authority of India to justify their conservative position. There is little evidence that Gampopa engaged in polemic debates, and his three-vow texts avoids criticizing the positions of other schools, perhaps because his text was derived from private lectures to his own students. Nonetheless, his teachings would become caught up in polemic debates posthumously. Sapaṇ used his own three-vow text as an opportunity to accuse Gampopa and his student Lama Zhang of heresy and malpractice on the basis of the supposed influence of Chinese Buddhism, thereby elevating the status of his own school in relation to the Kagyupa. The Drigung Kagyupa were heavily influenced by the Sakyapa, and Dorjé Shérap engaged in a similar polemic attack against counter-positions that bear a marked similarity to those held by Gampopa, thereby distinguishing his own school from the troubles of the early Kagyupa and putting his school in a position to directly compete with the Sakyapa on their own terms. The three-vow texts of the Kadampa, the Sakyapa and the Drigung Kagyu all appear have used the polemic standards of monastic values and Indian pedigree in order to distinguish the superiority of their own position.

We thus arrive at a somewhat complicated picture of the three-vow texts. The authors’ goals of providing an overarching normative framework, establishing stable schools, and publically distinguishing the virtues of their own position were fundamentally intertwined. Certainly, none of these goals are mutually exclusive, and it is difficult to fully understand any of these perspectives without the context of the others. Furthermore, there appears to have been complex interaction and influence between the schools, their founders, and their three-vow texts. There were, certainly, other influences
on the texts that I have failed to integrate. One aspect that I have neglected to include in this survey is the economic relationship between monasteries and patronage. Another is the co-evolution of state law (*rygal khrims*) and religious law (*chos khrims*). Likewise, there are other ways of reading these texts that could give us new perspectives on their meaning. By building on the philological work of Sobisch, I only hope to have taken one step towards arriving at a broader understanding of these texts and the social and religious contexts that shaped them.

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192 Other scholars have begun to look at the symbiotic relationship between monasteries and economic growth. See, for example, Kapstein:

The activities of commerce and religion tended to complement one another in traditional Buddhist societies, for the profit gained through trade could be directly converted into the symbolic wealth of religious merit by supporting monastic communities, while monasteries, as relatively stable institutions and centers of learning, provided clerical skills and basic banking facilities, in addition to the prestige value attached to them… The circulation of monks seeking teachings, engaging in missionary activities, and raising funds for their monasteries thus went hand in hand with the growth of trade. (Kapstein 2006, 88)
Amdo = A-mdo
Ba Tsültrim Lotrö = sBa Tshul-khrims blo-gros
Bari-lotsāwa = Ba-ri lo-tsā-ba
Chapa Chóbkyi Sengé = Cha-pa Chos-kyi seng-ge
Chenga Tsültrim-bar = sPyan-snga Tshul-khrim-'bar
Dakla Gampo = Dwags-la sgam-po
Dakpo Gomstül = Dwags-po sGom-tslul
Dakpo Kagyu = Dwags-po bKa’-brgyud
Darma Dodé = Dar-ma mdo-sde
Dorjé Shérap = rDo-rje-shes-rab
Drigung = ’Bri-gung
Drigung Jikten Gönpo = ’Bri-gung ’Jig-rten mgon-po
Dring Yéshé Yönten = ’Bring Ye-shes yon-tan
Drokmi Shákya Yéshé = ’Brog-mi Shákya ye-shes
Drompa-gyang = Grom-pa-rgyang
Dromtön = ’Brom-ston
Drum Yéshé Gyeltser = Grum Yeshes rgyal-mtshan
Dusum Khyen Pa = Dus-gsum mkhyen-pa
Gampopa = sGam-po-pa
Géluk = dGe-lugs
Gnok = Rngog
Gö-lotsāwa Khukpa Lhétsé = ’Gos lot-tsā-ba Khug-pa lhās-brtsas
Gorampa = Go-rams-pa
Gugé = Gu-ge
Jamgön Kongtrül = ’Jam-dbyangs Kong-sprul
Jangchub Sempah Dawa = Byang-chub sens-dpa’ Zla-ba
Jangchup-'Od = Byang-chub-'od
Jétsün Drakpa Gyeltser = rJe-btsun Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan
Jikten Gönpo = ’Jig-rten-mgon-po
Jokhang = Jo-khang
Kadam = bKa’-gdams
Karma Chakmé = Karma-chags-med
Karma Drinlépa = Karma-’phrin-las-pa
Karma Kagyu = Karma bKa’-brgyud
Karma Ngéluk Tenzin = Karma-nes-legs-bstan-’dzin
Kham = Kham
Khön = ’Khon
Khön Könchok Gyelpo = ’Khon bKon-mchog rgyal-po
Khön Shákya Lotrö = ’Khon Shákya bLo-gros
Kongpo Agyel = Kong-po A-rgyal
Lamdré = Lam ‘bras
Lho-drak = Lho-brag
Lotön Dorjé Wangchuk = Lo-ston rDo-rje dbang-phug
Lumé Shérap Tsültrim = kLu-mes Shes-rap tshul-khrims
Marpa Chöki Lodrö = Mar-pa Chos-kyi blo-gros
Milarépa = Mi-la-ras-pa
Mugulung = Myu-gu-lung
Nagsto Tsültrim Gyelwa = Nag-tsho Tshul-khrims rgyal-ba
Ngok Lékpé Shérap = rNgog Byang-chub ‘bryung-gnas
Nyel = gNyal
Nyéütang = Ne’u-thang
Nyingma = rNying-ma
Ölkha = ‘ol-kha
Pagmo Drupa = Phag-mo gru-pa
Pagmodru = Phag-mo-gru
Pawo Tsuglak Drengwa = dPa’-bo
 gTsong-lag-phreng-ba
Podrang Shiwa-Ō = Pho-brang Zhi-ba-‘od
Potoba Rinchen-sel = Po-to-ba Rinchen-gsal
Puchungwa Zhön Gyeltsen = Phuchung-ba gZhon-nu rgyal-mtshan
Ra-lotsāwa Dorje-drak = Rwa lo-tsā-ba rDo-rje-grags
Relpachen = Ral-pa-can
Sachen Kunga Nying Po = Sa-chen Kun-dga’ snying-po
Sakya = Sa-skya
Sakya Paṇḍita = Sa-skya Paṇḍita
Samyé = bSam-yas
Sangpu = gSang-phu
Sangpu Néutok = gSang-phu ne’u-thog
Sarma = Gsar ma
Sé Yéshé Tsöndrü = Se Ye-shes brston-’grus
Sétön Kunrik = Se-ston Kun-rig
Shérap Chungé = Shes-rab-’byung-gnas
Sönam Nampal Changpo = Bsod nams dpal bzang po
Sönam Tsemo = bSod-nams rtse-mo
Sumpa Yéshé Lotrō = Sum-pa Ye-shes blo-gros
Tishri Répa = Ti-shri Ras-pa
Trashigön = bKra-shis mgon
Tropu Lotsāwa Champépal = Khro-phu Lotsā-ba Byams-pa’i dpal
Tsang = gTsang
Tselpa = Tshal-pa
Tsilungpa = rTsi-lung-pa
Tsongkha = gTsong-kha
Tsongstün Shérap Sangyé = Tshong-bstun She-rab seng-ge
Ü = dBus
Yéshé-Ō = Ye-shes-‘od
Yu-drak = g.Yu-brag
Zhang Gönpawa = Zhang dGon-pa-ba
Zhang Yu-drak-pa = Zhang g.Yu-brag-pa
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