PADMA BKA’I THANG YIG
The history of Padmasambhava

INTRODUCTION
The Pema Katang (Padma bka’i thang yig) was created by the treasure-revealer Urgyan Lingpa (Orgyan gling pa, born c. 1323). He is said to have been the seventh incarnation of a Lhase Muruk Tsenpo (Lha sras mu rug btsan po), a son of King Tri Song Detsen (Khri Srong Ide btsan). At the age of twenty-three he discovered an extensive treasure inventory at Samye Monastery (bSam yas). He revealed twenty-eight different treasure troves, amounting to over one hundred volumes.

The Pema Katang, also known as rNam thar shel brag ma, was created in around 1352. The work purports to be authored by Yeshe Tsogyel (Ye shes mtsho rgyal), the Tibetan princess consort to Padmasambhava. It was among the earliest biographies of Padmasambhava, contributing significantly to the development of the legend.

Sources
The text exists in many block print editions (for more information, see Martin 1997: 56).

Modern edition:

TBRC: W17320

Xylograph:

TBRC: W1KG16912

Translations


References

OUTLINE
The text is divided into one hundred and eight chapters (le’u).

Chapters 1 –53: The emergence and development of the Buddhist doctrine in India in terms of ‘emanations of Buddha Amitabha’, with a focus on Padmasambhava’s previous lives; the conversion of different regions and their rulers (including Emperor Aśoka).

Chapter 54–59: The birth of Tri Song Detsen (Khri Srong lde btsan) and activities of his early reign, leading to the deputations he sends to Padmasambhava in India.

Chapter 60–65: Padmasambhava’s travels to Tibet and his activities there; the completion of Samye Monastery.

Chapter 66: The king, Tri Song Detsen, persuades Padmasambhava to stay in Tibet.

Chapter 67: The introduction of laws by the king.

Chapter 68: Padmasambhava’s prediction of three lo tsa wa (translators).

Chapter 69–88: Vairocana and his activities in Tibet, the activities and translations of other religious teachers, the suppression of Bön, the establishment of sacred texts and temples, and commentaries on the doctrine.

Chapter 89–90: Predictions of a degenerate age, including conquest by the Mongols, ending with the re-emergence of Tibetan power.

Chapter 91–95: The treasures and their concealment.

Chapter 96: Further prediction of the decline of the doctrine, leading to conflict, epidemics and famine, followed by the re-birth of Maitreya and adoption of the ten virtues.

Chapter 97–106: Death of Tri Song Detsen and the activities of his son, Mutig Tsenpo (Mu tig btsan po).

Chapter 107–108: Departure of Padmasambhava from Tibet.
Chapter 67

[p. 397, f. 243v]

Then the king was happy and made many prostrations;
He established the religious law, like a silken knot.
The royal law, like a heavy and bulky golden yoke,
And the religious law, [like] a soft silken knot; he bound the two together.

From the four horns of Tibet, he gathered together all the people under his power;
And he promulgated the terms of a law code, mother and son, white and black.
There were three types of law: religious law, royal law, and *thang khrims* (general laws).

‘I, Khri Srong De’u btsan, king of Tibet;
I am now a religious king (*chos rgyal*).
All the people who are subject to my power,
Their good deeds and bad deeds should come to fruition.’

[p. 397, ff. 243v–244r]

Since acting well is [a requirement of] the sacred doctrine,
[There shall be] an established community of fully ordained monks, and an established community of tantric practitioners (*sngags pa*).
Let people choose whichever they prefer of these two systems.

[pp. 397-8, f. 244r]
All men and women should learn letters and numbers (reading and arithmetic). They should write, recite, train in, and explain the doctrine, [And] children should learn how to understand, write, and read. Tantric practitioners should attend at birth rituals. Nurses should give assistance and medical treatment to the sick. Do not allow old people to become sad, but treat them with respect. Religious and tantric ceremonies should be performed at death rituals (shi bar bum chog). Those who have [wealth] should give loans on interest to those who do not. The latter should repay the money gratefully. Reduce the amount by half for those who [cannot] repay. 

Be careful about enemies and create a good household for relatives. The young and inexperienced should listen to the advice of the old. If there are several sons, the elder should marry and the younger should go into religion. If there are no sons, whoever is to be the husband for their daughter Should not promise to become a husband [without] consulting the parents. If the man and woman are not happy, reject the bride-price.¹

¹ ‘Reject’ implies that the marriage will not occur. Bor could also be read as ‘return’, implying a divorce.
Rise early, go to sleep late, and be assiduous in what you do.

A husband should not rely on control and coercion without consulting his wife.

After consulting: the childless, those borne by the wind, those who have not preserved their wealth,

Those banished to the borders, do not abandon them [but] be a good friend.

The modest\(^3\) and the shameless, these two are straightened out.

Common people\(^4\) should conduct their lives wisely.

Noble men and women should be restrained and balanced.

Do not steal, do not rob, do not strike, and do not kill.

\(^2\) Read as ‘then. Roughly half the editions have this; the others have ‘theb’. ‘thib in the 1987 edition appears to be an abberation.

\(^3\) Literally, ‘the shame-faced’, but the concept has positive moral connotations.

\(^4\) Kha nyen could mean ‘inarticulate’ or ‘those who labour’. It seems to contrast with the nobility of the following line.
Renunciates and religious scholars should act according to the rules of their vows
And according to the explanations given in the three classes of scripture (pitaka).
Members of the sangha should quench their thirst with milk and tea.
For food, they should eat the best barley, honey, and soft cheese.
For clothing, they should wear saffron lower garments.
They should live in monastic communities.
They should avoid alcohol (chang nag) and adulterated food.

[p. 399, f. 245r]
The tantric masters should act according to their proclaimed vows,
And the explanations of the tantras.
They should quench their thirst with chang and not misappropriate the property of the sangha.
For food, they can enjoy whatever pleases them, as long as it is not poisonous.
For clothing, their tantric garments should be white, red, and black.
They should live in places of meditation, in order to increase their good qualities.
In order to protect the teachings, they should make time for spiritual accomplishments.
The golden sutras should be taught to virtuous monks.

The mandalas and mantras (dkyil 'khor sngags) should be taught to virtuous tantric practitioners.

Virtuous laymen should be directed to collections of the two teachings.

Be kind to those who are incapable.

Give sufficient to the poor.

Protect common people (kha nyen mi) and let the waste of words be stopped.

Be even-minded about the many things that are said and those that happen.

Seek doctrinal teachings from afar, wherever they may be, with respectful reverence.

Do not mix the doctrines, but act according to your own dharma tradition.
Do not act like a Bönpo or a heretic.
The Bönpos will not see *bsam yas*; they have been banished.
The Bönpos who have come to Skyid shod, have withdrawn to Yog thang (the lower plains);
They have gone to gTsang, to the place known as the dBen tsa kha.\(^5\)

\(^5\) Jackson (1979) suggests this is an alternative spelling for dBan sa kha, which is an old Bönpo monastery.
[There are] three, five, seven, nine, eleven, thirteen laws,
Fifteen, seventeen, nineteen, twenty-one laws,
Twenty-three, twenty-five, twenty-seven, twenty-nine laws,
Thirty-one, thirty-three, thirty-five, thirty-seven and -nine,
Forty-one, forty-three, forty-five, forty-seven and -nine,
Fifty-one, fifty-three, fifty-five, fifty-seven and -nine,
Sixty-one, sixty-three, sixty-five, sixty-seven and -nine.

[There are] four laws of fire, wind, water, and iron,
Laws of wood, earth, and sky, making seven.
Let the consequences weigh on the mind.
Those who kill are to pay compensation (stong); those who rob are to have eyes and knees removed;
Those who steal are to pay compensation ('jal); those who commit adultery are to pay compensation (byi rin);
On liars (khra) an amount ('bor) is to be imposed; those who fight are to be imprisoned;
The violent are to have reciprocal punishment (gses 'ded); the disobedient are to have their ears removed;
Those who do not act in accordance with the religion (chos lugs) are to be expelled from the community;
Those who lie are to be driven away; pledges are to be taken from those who do not repay;
Those who are not truthful are everywhere to be turned from deceit.
Let the intransigent (mi chod) be seized with fear. Thus [Padmasambhava] proclaimed.

[ff. 246v–247r]
Barley is to be sold by the *bre* and a monetary equivalent should be established according to the weight;
Fix the prices for merchandise and let gold not be adulterated;
Let dogs guard against thieves throughout the night.
Keep the body bowed, and bring the heads together [with other] people.
Political decisions should be made according to the domains of religion (*chos srid*), tantrism (*sngags srid*), and ministerial government (*blon srid*).
Pronounce them once to each person, and repeat them to the non-virtuous.
There should be no wicked people in the mountains, on the paths, or on the plains.
The ten non-virtues are to be rejected and the ten virtues disseminated.
Let the desires of the weak be satisfied, and make a broad yoke for animals.
Let those who have be content and those who do not get what they seek.

[pp. 401–02, f. 247r]

From the expansively arranged biography of the lifetimes of the Urgyan guru Padmasambhava,
The 67th chapter, on Tibetan king Khri Srong Ide’u btsan’s establishment of the religious law.

**Chapter 92**

This chapter concerns the hiding of treasure and the later treasure-revealers.

[pp. 564–65, ff. 355r–355v]
Even those who have not been to India will be called *lotsāwa*.
All the learned Tibetan monks will be dispatched to distant places.
The new laws of the Mongols and of the donor-priest relations (*yon mchod*) will be bound
together.
They will resemble a conch shell or an ear of grain, black on the inside and white on the outside.
It will be a time in which merit will diminish in Tibet.
This treasure has been hidden in the crystal cave, Padma shel phug;
When a sign appears that it should be extracted,
The treasure-revealer called Ra mo shel sman will come.
Then, after his nirvana,
A nose-robe was made by the Sa [skya] so the Mongolian army arrived in Tibet.
Even [compared to] the lower realms, such sufferings have never been seen;
For men, society was destroyed, and there were [too] many protectors of society;
It was a time in which sentient beings in the lower world were oppressed.
This treasure has been hidden by the river at the castle of gNam skos;
When a sign appears that it should be extracted,
The treasure-revealer Chos kyi dbang phyug will come.

[p. 565, f. 356r]

Then, after his nirvana,
The army will beat the drum of the law (khrims rnga) at Bya rog fortress;
Faint-hearted men will throw gold dust into the river.
This treasure has been hidden in the rock of Zang yag;
When a sign appears that it should be extracted,
The treasure-revealer Gu ru jo tshe will come.

The chapter continues with further verses about the hiding of other treasures.