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00:00:03,030 --> 00:00:22,970

It is now my great pleasure to introduce Dr. Robert Mayer, the convenor of this Treasure Seminar Series.

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00:00:22,970 --> 00:00:25,790

Of course, Rob hardly needs any introduction.

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00:00:25,790 --> 00:00:33,800

He is well known as an expert in the Tibetan tantric traditions, with a particular focus on the Nyingma tantras, and on Buddhism.

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00:00:33,800 --> 00:00:37,140

During the time of the Tibetan Empire.

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00:00:37,140 --> 00:00:46,140

This academic education started with a BA at Bristol, where he studied with such well-known authorities as Paul Williams and Stephen Collins.

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00:00:46,140 --> 00:00:50,760

He completed a Ph.D. at Leiden, for which his main influences, as you wrote to me,

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00:00:50,760 --> 00:00:58,910

included Tilman Fitter, Alexis Sanderson, Dan Martin, Gyurme Dorje and Cathy Cantwell.

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00:00:58,910 --> 00:01:07,490

Rob Mayer has spent most of his academic career at Oxford with shorter periods in the School of Anthropology at the University of Kent,

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00:01:07,490 --> 00:01:17,980

as a visiting professor at Humboldt University in Berlin and as a fellow of the Käte Humburger Kolleg at Ruhr University Bochum in Germany.

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00:01:17,980 --> 00:01:27,620

Most of his research focuses on the early Nyingma tradition, and he has collaborated with his wife, Catherine Cantwell, both on many publications.

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00:01:27,620 --> 00:01:29,240

Their books include, amongst others,

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00:01:29,240 --> 00:01:40,840

the publication of early Tibetan documents on phur pa from Dunhuang and the Noble Noose of Methods a Mahāyoga Tantra and its commentary.

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00:01:40,840 --> 00:01:47,000

Together with Anna Sehnalova, Yegor Grebnev, Robert Mayer is a convenor of the Oxford Treasure

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00:01:47,000 --> 00:01:53,590

Seminar Series. Previous seminar series held at Merton and Wolfson College in Oxford,

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00:01:53,590 --> 00:02:00,010

looked at Tibetan and other Asian treasure traditions in a comparative perspective.

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00:02:00,010 --> 00:02:07,030

This year's Treasure Series is the first to focus on Indian Buddhist traditions.

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00:02:07,030 --> 00:02:12,830

The series will now be rounded off by Robert Mayer's talk, which is titled dharmabhāṅakas,

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00:02:12,830 --> 00:02:20,890

Siddhas, Avatāraśiddhas, and gTer stons. We look very much forward.

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00:02:20,890 --> 00:02:30,130

Few would argue with the proposition that Mahāyāna Buddhism and its tantric offshoots were religions based on the revelation of scriptures.

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00:02:30,130 --> 00:02:33,730

Even the most conservative traditional Buddhist masters will often concede

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00:02:33,730 --> 00:02:37,690

that while sūtras, dhāraṇīs and tantras generally purport ultimately to be

22

00:02:37,690 --> 00:02:42,010
taught by the historical Buddha, they had to reach as far as
circuitous route that

23

00:02:42,010 --> 00:02:47,280
require an additional and subsequent act revelation into our
Jambudvīpa.

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00:02:47,280 --> 00:02:56,480
Perhaps I should share my screen, actually. I think we're still on.

25

00:02:56,480 --> 00:03:13,740
For the sake of the recording, we I think we're going to have to
start again. Because I can't share my screen, I can only share your
screen.

26

00:03:13,740 --> 00:03:23,700
That's more like it. Okay, I'm going to go back to the beginning.

27

00:03:23,700 --> 00:03:31,370
No, I still can't reach my. I can't reach my, I've only got your.

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00:03:31,370 --> 00:03:39,760
Screen Ulrike. Let me try again.

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00:03:39,760 --> 00:03:52,810
We've got this. I don't think there's anything I can do about it.

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00:03:52,810 --> 00:04:03,160
So let's see. OK, now we can do something about it.

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00:04:03,160 --> 00:04:11,500
So few would argue with the proposition that Mahāyāna Buddhism and
its tantric offshoots were religions based on the revelation of
scriptures,

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00:04:11,500 --> 00:04:16,090
even the most conservative traditional Buddhist masters will often
concede that while sūtras,

33

00:04:16,090 --> 00:04:21,820
dhāraṇīs and tantras generally purport ultimately to have been
taught by the historical Buddha,

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00:04:21,820 --> 00:04:36,300

they had to reach us via circuitous routes that required an additional and subsequent act of revelation into our Jambudvīpa.

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00:04:36,300 --> 00:04:47,670

Oh. Is it recording?

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00:04:47,670 --> 00:04:54,280

I do wish Daniel was here. It is recording, Rob, it says it is recording.

37

00:04:54,280 --> 00:04:59,270

OK, good. The recording button is on. OK, good. We can all see you and we can see your slides.

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00:04:59,270 --> 00:05:06,830

OK. Mahāyāna history in South Asia was therefore the history of more than a thousand years of continuous,

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00:05:06,830 --> 00:05:09,830

ongoing revelation of scriptures previously unheard by humans,

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00:05:09,830 --> 00:05:16,400

beginning with the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras up to the final revelations of the late tantric period.

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00:05:16,400 --> 00:05:22,070

The ongoing revelation of scriptures is surely amongst the most definitive and significant features of South Asian Buddhism,

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00:05:22,070 --> 00:05:25,130

without which it would have been a very different religion.

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00:05:25,130 --> 00:05:33,720

If you want to understand South Asian Buddhism at all, understanding its processes of ongoing scriptural revelation is surely indispensable.

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00:05:33,720 --> 00:05:37,770

Because ongoing revelation of scriptures was so integral to Indian Mahāyāna,

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00:05:37,770 --> 00:05:44,280

it's hard to imagine how it could have failed to impact on Tibetan Buddhism, too, like their counterparts in China,

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00:05:44,280 --> 00:05:48,000

Tibetan Buddhists must immediately have been confronted in the Mahāyāna scriptures.

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00:05:48,000 --> 00:05:50,760

They translated with numerous narratives,

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00:05:50,760 --> 00:05:56,940

describing prophetic declarations made by the Buddha about the future propagation to the sūtras by reincarnation

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00:05:56,940 --> 00:06:03,390

dharmabhāṅakas who would appear after his parinirvāṇa more frequently than their Chinese counterparts,

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00:06:03,390 --> 00:06:07,410

especially through the first few centuries of Tibetan Buddhism.

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00:06:07,410 --> 00:06:15,510

Numerous Tibetan scholars and translators visiting South Asia must also have encountered actual practises of ongoing tantric revelation,

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00:06:15,510 --> 00:06:23,870

which continue to pace at notably and holy places geographically proximate to Tibet, such as Oḍḍiyāna and Bengal.

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00:06:23,870 --> 00:06:29,840

The prolific nature of such revelations in Sanskrit Buddhism should not be underestimated.

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00:06:29,840 --> 00:06:37,910

Excluding dhāraṇīs and later Nepali revelations, Isaacson and Sferra estimate around 5000 original tantric scriptures.

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00:06:37,910 --> 00:06:40,580

With South Asian origins remain extant.

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00:06:40,580 --> 00:06:50,240

Some in Sanskrit, others only in Tibetan and Chinese translations produced over the roughly 500 years from the 6th to the 11th centuries.

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00:06:50,240 --> 00:06:53,500

This gives a very approximate,

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00:06:53,500 --> 00:07:02,230

Average frequency of around one script revelation, every event, one scriptural revelation event per annum through five centuries.

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00:07:02,230 --> 00:07:07,480

The real figure was probably higher since more texts were revealed than the 500 which survive.

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00:07:07,480 --> 00:07:17,500

And because the Sanskrit tradition resembled its Tibetan successors in re-repeating the same scripture to different persons on different occasions.

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00:07:17,500 --> 00:07:23,620

Scripture revelations continues in Nepal after the decline of Buddhism in the Indian heartlands,

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00:07:23,620 --> 00:07:31,360

Isaacson and Sferra observe the compilation of tantric scriptures seems to have continued in Nepal, almost up to modern times.

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00:07:31,360 --> 00:07:38,290

Some were influential, such as

the 15th century revelations of the Svayambhū Purāṇa and the Gunakāraṇḍavyūha

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00:07:38,290 --> 00:07:47,990

The former remains the basis for all the extensive vajra practises in contemporary Newari Buddhism and the latter for the important cult of Lokeśvara.

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00:07:47,990 --> 00:07:53,540

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Dunhuang's sources witness a number of indigenous Tibetan tantric scriptures appearing

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00:07:53,540 --> 00:07:59,120

by the 10th century showing that Tibetan soon produce their own revelations.

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00:07:59,120 --> 00:08:06,620

It's likely they began by adapting the methods of the Indian teachers since at least one or two centuries Tibetan scriptural revelation was

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00:08:06,620 --> 00:08:14,360

contemporaneous with tantric revelation still occurring in India and early Tibetan scriptures were closely modelled on Sanskrit tantra,

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00:08:14,360 --> 00:08:31,230

albeit with some degree of localisation. Robert, have you deliberately stopped screen sharing?

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00:08:31,230 --> 00:08:38,440

Yeah, I'll come to another slide later.

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00:08:38,440 --> 00:08:46,420

Perhaps unsurprisingly, more surprisingly, little study has yet been made of the impacts of Sanskrit revelatory practises on Tibet.

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00:08:46,420 --> 00:08:52,630

The first phase of Tibetan revelation was characterised by the anonymous production of tantric scriptures in genres.

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00:08:52,630 --> 00:08:56,080

First witnessed at Dunhuang, later preserved in the rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum canon

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00:08:56,080 --> 00:09:04,310

Little has been written about this early phase, although it surely, surely influenced later developments.

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00:09:04,310 --> 00:09:10,000

There is also clear overlap of style and content between the earlier anonymous rNying ma tantras and the later gter ma texts

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00:09:10,000 --> 00:09:16,610

It is even claimed that the rNying ma rGyud 'bum unimaginable and provides the measure by which the validity of gter ma is assessed.

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00:09:16,610 --> 00:09:23,960

Any gter ma diverging too far from the Nyingma rgyud 'bum's doctrinal, ritual, and iconographic norms might not be deemed valid.

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00:09:23,960 --> 00:09:28,160

Likewise, some new MEGABOOM texts can simultaneously be classified as gter ma.

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00:09:28,160 --> 00:09:37,800

For example, the root tantras of Myang ral Nyi ma 'Od zer's bka' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa. And gter stons are still revealing and gter stons are still revealing tantras in the genre of the rNying ma rGyud 'bum texts.

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00:09:37,800 --> 00:09:41,850

Yet all we currently know about this first key phase of Tibetan revelations is

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00:09:41,850 --> 00:09:45,960

that they resemble their South Asian counterparts in being largely anonymous,

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00:09:45,960 --> 00:09:50,370

but in the similar styles and contents of their output.

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00:09:50,370 --> 00:09:58,110

The second phase of revelation, known as gter ma, was no longer anonymous in this, it differed from most Indian Buddhist revelation,

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00:09:58,110 --> 00:10:07,020

but resembles a contemporaneous revelatory practise of nearby Kashmir, where many Tibetans were studying in its Buddhist monasteries.

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00:10:07,020 --> 00:10:13,200

In this Kashmiri tradition of revelation, chiefly associated with the nondual Shaiva traditions like the kaula,

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00:10:13,200 --> 00:10:19,480

but also, with some Buddhist examples publicly named scripture revealers became the new norm.

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00:10:19,480 --> 00:10:25,330

Typically, the Śaivas revealed new tantric scriptures in their holy place of Uḍḍiyāna.

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00:10:25,330 --> 00:10:30,850

The nascent Tibetan gter ma system likewise prominently referenced Uḍḍiyāna, citing Uḍḍiyāna.

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00:10:30,850 --> 00:10:36,880

dakinis as agents of revelation and Padmasambhava of Uḍḍiyāna as the patron of revelation.

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00:10:36,880 --> 00:10:41,590

But differed by developing other, more specifically Buddhist narratives too.

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00:10:41,590 --> 00:10:49,900

Above all, Tibetan gter stons adapted the aforementioned Mahāyāna literary device of prophetic declarations made by the Buddha regarding the future

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00:10:49,900 --> 00:10:56,270

propagations of the sūtras by reincarnated dharmabhāṅakas as appearing after his parinirvāṇa.

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00:10:56,270 --> 00:11:00,860

Localising this Mahāyāna trip to Tibet and spun narratives of prophesied,

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00:11:00,860 --> 00:11:07,730

reincarnated gter stons discovering sacred texts hidden for later recovery by major Buddhist missionaries to Tibet.

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00:11:07,730 --> 00:11:12,830

Notably Vimalamitra and above all, Padmasambhava who now stood in for the Buddha.

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00:11:12,830 --> 00:11:30,950

Similarly, Atiśa was said to have discovered such texts in Tibet. Fortunately, the major scholar of gter ma's origins, Ronald Davidson,

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00:11:30,950 --> 00:11:36,630

has consistently understood it as a product of both Indian and

Tibetan influences.

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00:11:36,630 --> 00:11:45,600

Less fortunate. Perhaps he never found much time to enlarge of the Indian aspects, mainly focussing on the non-Buddhist indigenous aspects.

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00:11:45,600 --> 00:11:54,480

This is understandable. First, it continues the conversation begun by Erik Haarh in the 1960s and continued by Michael Aris in the 1980s.

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00:11:54,480 --> 00:12:00,720

Secondly, the Tibetan aspects are more elusive than the Indian ones because little textual evidence for them survives.

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00:12:00,720 --> 00:12:06,870

Exploring them has thus become an intriguing intellectual challenge that few authors can resist.

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00:12:06,870 --> 00:12:15,660

I confess to being no exception, and I'm developing a major collaborative work on the vital non-Buddhist indigenous influences on the gter ma tradition.

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00:12:15,660 --> 00:12:23,030

However, a discussion that merely acknowledges Indian influences without actually examining them is manifestly incomplete.

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00:12:23,030 --> 00:12:26,690

So far, insufficient studies have tackled the Indian influences.

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00:12:26,690 --> 00:12:33,470

And despite Davidson's and Janet Gyatso's assertions of their importance, most authors still overlook them.

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00:12:33,470 --> 00:12:42,110

Obviously, it would be retrograde in the extreme to try to reduce Tibetology to an appendage of Indology, as it sometimes was in its early days.

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00:12:42,110 --> 00:12:46,790

But to ignore the extraordinarily creative civilizational exchanges that occurred

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00:12:46,790 --> 00:12:54,190

between Tibet and South Asia over many centuries would equally be a missed opportunity.

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00:12:54,190 --> 00:13:01,540

This was a rare interaction between two exceptionally vibrant cultural spheres, the study of which offers numerous insights.

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00:13:01,540 --> 00:13:05,320

We will therefore invest a proportionate effort into researching South Asian

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00:13:05,320 --> 00:13:10,210

influences on gter ma, too, for if we don't know what came with Sanskrit Buddhism.

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00:13:10,210 --> 00:13:17,920

How can we differentiate what was indigenous and Tibetan? Moreover, South Asian and indigenous elements tended to merge,

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00:13:17,920 --> 00:13:25,150

like the ingredients of a cake after baking, and they've proven very difficult to reverse engineer.

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00:13:25,150 --> 00:13:31,420

Our efforts should therefore not attempt the impossible by presuming to isolate indigenous aspects from the outset.

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00:13:31,420 --> 00:13:41,030

Rather, we should adopt a more holistic perspective that accepts the admixture of South Asian and indigenous cultures as our point of departure.

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00:13:41,030 --> 00:13:44,510

Fortunately, restoring this perspective should not prove difficult,

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00:13:44,510 --> 00:13:50,420

since the thus far ignored South Asian influences on gter ma appear easy to access from a plethora of excellent

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00:13:50,420 --> 00:13:58,130

textual sources in both Sanskrit and Tibetan translation in

Indologists might even find them obvious.

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00:13:58,130 --> 00:14:06,800

Certainly, my undemanding and simple efforts cannot be compared with the brilliance and virtuosity demanded of scholars like Davidson and Guntram Hazod,

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00:14:06,800 --> 00:14:10,970

who have done so much to infer the altogether more elusive non-Buddhist indigenous

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00:14:10,970 --> 00:14:18,850

influences on gter ma from sometimes little more than circumstantial evidence.

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00:14:18,850 --> 00:14:28,080

But in a paper in press, I start by reflecting on the translation of the Indian term nidhi into the Tibetan word gter.

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00:14:28,080 --> 00:14:34,000

The word gter is not evident in old Tibetan before its usage in Buddhist translations.

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00:14:34,000 --> 00:14:42,390

Joanna Bialek therefor speculates it might have been a Buddhist neologism specifically created to translate the Sanskrit term dGe bshes Po to ba.

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00:14:42,390 --> 00:14:49,860

I continued by looking at Guru Chos dbang's comprehensive explorations of the full range of meanings of this translational term gter and

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00:14:49,860 --> 00:14:58,770

how he seeks to understand it in the light of the complex Indian understandings which Sanskrit original nidhi being Buddhist, Chos dbang,

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00:14:58,770 --> 00:15:06,600

like his successors Ratna gling pa and Ugyen Lingpa upholds the old Indian Buddhist enumeration of nidhi as fourfold,

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00:15:06,600 --> 00:15:11,940

distinct from the ninefold enumerations favourite by Brahmans and

Jains.

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00:15:11,940 --> 00:15:14,310

The Buddhist fourfold enumeration is very old,

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00:15:14,310 --> 00:15:21,450

described in such varied texts as the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya, the Divyāvadāna, Mahāvastu, Pali commentaries,

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00:15:21,450 --> 00:15:26,610

the Khotanese book of Zambasta, the Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa sūtra, Maitreyavyākaraṇa,

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00:15:26,610 --> 00:15:33,000

the karmaśataka, and plenty more. But the inquisitive Chos dbang went much further.

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00:15:33,000 --> 00:15:38,280

I think it seems consulting the Tibetan translation of the Amarakoṣa lexicon,

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00:15:38,280 --> 00:15:44,460

since his exhaustive analysis also subsumes popular Indian understandings of the famous nine nidis,

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00:15:44,460 --> 00:15:54,470

as found in such texts as the Amarakoṣa, or the 12th century Jain Hemachandra's Triṣaṣṭiśālākāpuruṣacaritra.

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00:15:54,470 --> 00:16:03,590

I also translate 16 pages from the Indian Buddhist Āryavidyottamamahātantra on the finding and opening of treasure doors or gter sgo,

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00:16:03,590 --> 00:16:09,460

one among dozens of passages on nidhi and Buddhist kriyātantras.

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00:16:09,460 --> 00:16:14,230

It describes gter sgo as complex and varied magical portals whose hidden

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00:16:14,230 --> 00:16:20,080

location is disclosed to yogins in dreams by treasure deities.

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00:16:20,080 --> 00:16:27,730

Although guarded by dangerous spirits, great yogis can nevertheless magically open and reclose to access their treasures.

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00:16:27,730 --> 00:16:32,530

Such material was very influential in the Tibetan gterma tradition.

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00:16:32,530 --> 00:16:38,620

This particular passage has also extensive parallels with the nidhi śāstras, the manuals of the nidhivādas,

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00:16:38,620 --> 00:16:43,330

the typically tantric treasure hunters of mediaeval India who recovered hidden

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00:16:43,330 --> 00:16:48,070

treasures caused by territorial deities from the landscape and the elements,

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00:16:48,070 --> 00:16:52,930

as well as from old temples, lingas, religious statues and the like.

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00:16:52,930 --> 00:17:04,200

Although often typified as Pāśupata, Nalini Balbir reports that their śāstras very prominently reference the Buddhist figure Nāgārjuna.

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00:17:04,200 --> 00:17:09,420

In a further paper in press, I evaluate Padmasambhava as a siddha, some within the tantric

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00:17:09,420 --> 00:17:14,410

culture of his native Uḍḍiyāna, a task never previously attempted.

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00:17:14,410 --> 00:17:19,510

Although the term "siddha" might seem familiar, as we learned from John Nemeč last month.

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00:17:19,510 --> 00:17:26,660

Appearances can be deceptive because "siddha" had rather differing implications in different genres of Sanskrit literature.

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00:17:26,660 --> 00:17:27,510

In earlier texts,

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00:17:27,510 --> 00:17:34,580

such as the Epics, Purāṇa, and in Kāvya siddhas were mythic semi-divine beings who lived in the sky comparable to ghandharvas

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00:17:34,580 --> 00:17:44,170

yakṣas, and devas. In later centuries, Buddhas understood siddhas mainly as human beings who achieved realisation through tantric practise.

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00:17:44,170 --> 00:17:48,370

But in Kashmir's nondual Shaiva traditions, the term was more complex.

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00:17:48,370 --> 00:17:57,610

While some siddhas could approximately resemble the Buddhist definition, others were much more, divine non-humans primordially realised from the start.

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00:17:57,610 --> 00:18:05,680

They merely adopted the guise of human siddhas to descend from an exalted spiritual plane to specific geographical locations in the Kashmir region,

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00:18:05,680 --> 00:18:12,390

notably with Uḍḍiyāna. for the express purpose of disseminating previously unheard tantric scriptures.

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00:18:12,390 --> 00:18:19,290

The term applied to such primordially realised siddhas descended from on high to disseminate tantric scriptures was avatāraka,

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00:18:19,290 --> 00:18:24,540

which Sanderson translates as promulgator and Williams as agent of Revelation.

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00:18:24,540 --> 00:18:30,750

Another term used was avatīrṇa implying Siva descended to Earth.

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00:18:30,750 --> 00:18:37,140

Some avatāraka siddhas were hugely important as sources of entire

tantric dispensations. Jayaratha

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00:18:37,140 --> 00:18:43,110

for example, described Matsyendranātha also as the sole source of revelation of the entire kaula tradition.

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00:18:43,110 --> 00:18:45,900

While Abhinavagupta described Tryambaka,

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00:18:45,900 --> 00:18:55,920

Āmardaka, and Śrinātha as the respective founders of the nondual, dual, and non-dual-cum-dual teachings of Śiva.

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00:18:55,920 --> 00:18:58,440

Despite being heavily mythologised,

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00:18:58,440 --> 00:19:05,110

most modern scholars believe the avatāraka siddhas were historical persons and Kalhaṇa's 12th century history of Kashmir.

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00:19:05,110 --> 00:19:08,400

The Rājatarāṅgiṇī, mentions them.

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00:19:08,400 --> 00:19:17,970

It's still not clear to me if some version of the avatāraka siddha trope already accompanied Padmasambhava when he came to Tibet,

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00:19:17,970 --> 00:19:26,220

or if it was retrospectively applied to him in later years. But the more I reflect, the more confident I am that the mythology of Padmasambhava,

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00:19:26,220 --> 00:19:32,600

as preserved in Tibet reflects the cultural backdrop of the Kashmiri avatāraka siddha.

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00:19:32,600 --> 00:19:37,520

It's equally striking how the first emergence of named avatāraka siddhas in Kashmir

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00:19:37,520 --> 00:19:42,740

and of name gter stons in nearby Tibet were historically near contemporaneous,

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00:19:42,740 --> 00:19:48,390

and that the mythology of the Tibetan gter stons refers so repeatedly to Uḍḍiyāna.

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00:19:48,390 --> 00:19:55,380

Again, Tibetology has sought for many years, but without complete success to understand the Padmasambhava and related gter ma

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00:19:55,380 --> 00:20:00,870

mythology exclusively through the prism of Tibetan history and Tibetan culture.

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00:20:00,870 --> 00:20:09,710

Again, these tasks might have been eased a bit by considering from the outset the distinctive Kashmiri cultural background as well.

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00:20:09,710 --> 00:20:16,130

Still awaiting my attention is a comparison of the constant reference, references to dakinis in the Tibetan gter ma,

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00:20:16,130 --> 00:20:23,920

tradition with a prominent role of dakinis in Indian vajrayāna revelation.

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00:20:23,920 --> 00:20:31,890

The rest of today's presentation will return to the Mahāyāna theme of dharmabhāṅakas reincarnating into future times to propagate sūtras.

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00:20:31,890 --> 00:20:35,820

They had first heard directly from the Buddha in his own lifetime and how it came

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00:20:35,820 --> 00:20:40,590

to play a highly visible role in the construction of Tibetan gter ma narratives.

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00:20:40,590 --> 00:20:45,810

This also commits me to correct a mistake I make in a recent article Rethinking Treasure Part

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00:20:45,810 --> 00:20:52,370

One where I gave a brief preview of this topic in advance of a more detailed study.

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00:20:52,370 --> 00:20:57,500

In Rethinking Treasure Part One, I described things shaped by an Indian Mahāyāna Sūtra,

185

00:20:57,500 --> 00:21:05,480

the Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra, henceforth Pratyutpanna and the Tibetan gter ma traditions.

186

00:21:05,480 --> 00:21:08,540

The Pratyutpanna has been extensively studied by Paul Harrison,

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00:21:08,540 --> 00:21:13,280

and much of its materials on the concealment and revelation of Mahāyāna sūtras do indeed

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00:21:13,280 --> 00:21:20,120

find striking parallels in Tibetan tTer ma traditions so that my analysis was partially correct.

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00:21:20,120 --> 00:21:28,760

However, I also made a naive mistake. I mentioned the Pratyutpanna was somehow unique or at least rare in containing such narratives.

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00:21:28,760 --> 00:21:36,800

On the contrary, as we learnt from David Drewes last week, the scenario described in the Pratyutpanna is neither rare nor unique.

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00:21:36,800 --> 00:21:43,070

The diametric opposite is actually the case. This narrative structure is so commonplace in Mahāyāna sūtras,

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00:21:43,070 --> 00:21:47,900

so ubiquitous, that it constitutes David Drewes has termed the standard claim

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00:21:47,900 --> 00:21:52,580

of Mahāyāna sūtra literature and is replicated in dozens of different Mahāyāna,

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00:21:52,580 --> 00:21:58,590

sūtras as a prime method of explaining their existence. As David Drewes explained,

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00:21:58,590 --> 00:22:03,420

the standard claim is that the Buddha spoke the sūtras to Bodhisattvas during his final

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00:22:03,420 --> 00:22:09,600

life and appointed them with a task of returning to this world to reveal them 500 years later.

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00:22:09,600 --> 00:22:17,130

This scenario was actually presented already Aṣṭasāhasrikā.

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00:22:17,130 --> 00:22:23,430

Numerous Mahāyāna sūtras contain self-referential narratives intended to explain their own existence,

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00:22:23,430 --> 00:22:28,560

a necessity since Mahāyāna sūtras were not passed down through the traditional āgamas or nikāyas,

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00:22:28,560 --> 00:22:36,480

it nevertheless claimed to be the Buddha's own speech. The internal logic of these narratives partly resembles that of the Jātakas.

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00:22:36,480 --> 00:22:44,060

The stories of the Buddhist past lives with similar themes of karmic cause and effect, of travel through time, and of reincarnation.

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00:22:44,060 --> 00:22:52,790

But the Mahāyāna sūtra narratives focus specifically on how the sūtras will continue to be propagated after the Buddha's nirvana.

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00:22:52,790 --> 00:22:56,870

The Pratyutpanna's narratives to this effect, are typical of many others,

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00:22:56,870 --> 00:23:00,980

most occurs in Chapter 13, which opens with interlocked, interlocutor,

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00:23:00,980 --> 00:23:10,010

a layman Bhadrāpāla asking the Buddha, "Reverend Lord, at a future time in that age following the nirvana of the Tathāgata,

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00:23:10,010 --> 00:23:15,200

Will this samādhi of the Pratyutpanna Sūtra spread here Jambudvīpa?"

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00:23:15,200 --> 00:23:20,060

The Buddha replies that, while the samādhi of the Pratyutpanna Sūtra will continue to circulate for a while after his

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00:23:20,060 --> 00:23:24,700

nirvana, at a later date copy of it will have to be sealed within caskets,

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00:23:24,700 --> 00:23:33,990

sgrom bu, and hidden in caves, stūpas, rocks, and mountains where they will be protected by nāgas and such like deities. Then says the Buddha,

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00:23:33,990 --> 00:23:40,400

the disastrous last 500 years. When true dharma is in decline and false dharma and bad morality prevail,

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00:23:40,400 --> 00:23:48,170

a few beings of exceptional merit and karma will deliberately appear specifically to recover the Pratyutpanna from its hiding places.

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00:23:48,170 --> 00:23:54,720

These special persons will rediscover the Pratyutpanna, make copies of it, study it and expound it to others.

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00:23:54,720 --> 00:23:56,790

While hearing this from the Buddha, the interlocutor,

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00:23:56,790 --> 00:24:03,450

Bhadrāpāla, and his layman colleagues were deeply moved and made a mighty aspiration that they should be the ones to reincarnate

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00:24:03,450 --> 00:24:10,590

into that dreadful last 500 years to recover the Pratyutpanna from its places of concealment and teach it to others.

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00:24:10,590 --> 00:24:15,750

But they were not unaware of the gravity of the undertaking and the difficulties with which it would be fraught for,

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00:24:15,750 --> 00:24:20,070

as they observed, they would be proclaiming teachings that would not have been heard before

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00:24:20,070 --> 00:24:25,650

and preaching a profound dharma in which the inhabitants of future times might not believe.

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00:24:25,650 --> 00:24:29,100

Others in the audience exhorted the Buddha to entrust to Pratyutpanna,

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00:24:29,100 --> 00:24:34,680

these noble volunteers so that they could fulfil their great aspiration, which the Buddha duly did.

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00:24:34,680 --> 00:24:41,140

The Buddha then made precise prophecies, specifying the eight named individuals within his audience who would be the ones to

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00:24:41,140 --> 00:24:47,980

reincarnate in the future to uphold the Pratyutpanna and enlarged on the vast merits.

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00:24:47,980 --> 00:24:57,590

They would thereby acquire. Although are a layman, there is no mention of what their status was to be when they reincarnate,

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00:24:57,590 --> 00:25:04,550

the Buddha then prophesied that a further 500 persons within his audience would also reincarnate in these future times to receive,

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00:25:04,550 --> 00:25:12,740

make copies of, and further propagate Pratyutpanna teachings recovered by the reincarnations of the eight laymen.

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00:25:12,740 --> 00:25:16,580

The similarities of this narrative to Tibetan gter ma narratives are self-evident.

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00:25:16,580 --> 00:25:23,210

I set them out in more detail in the handout, which is the same as the last three screens.

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00:25:23,210 --> 00:25:32,210

Those unfamiliar with Tibet-- the handout is in the chat, those unfamiliar with Tibetan gTer ma should mainly remember a few key substitutions.

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00:25:32,210 --> 00:25:37,160

Firstly, the location is moved from Jambudvīpa in general to Tibet in particular.

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00:25:37,160 --> 00:25:41,000

Secondly, important Buddhist missionaries to Tibet notably Vimalamitra and above all,

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00:25:41,000 --> 00:25:46,040

the second Buddha Padmasambhava have become substituted for the Buddha of the Mahāyāna texts.

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00:25:46,040 --> 00:25:49,730

Thirdly, the close students of these missionaries, especially those of Padmasambhava,

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00:25:49,730 --> 00:25:55,640

were accordingly become the ones prophesied to reincarnation in the future to revive the teachings.

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00:25:55,640 --> 00:26:03,500

And along with this basic narrative framework, some of the less crucial details and items of terminology are also adopted.

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00:26:03,500 --> 00:26:07,700

My analysis in Rethinking Treasure Part One was therefore partly correct.

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00:26:07,700 --> 00:26:12,500

There are striking parallels between the narratives of the Pratyutpanna and Tibetan gTer ma.

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00:26:12,500 --> 00:26:15,950

However, I fail to realise the extent to which the Pratyutpanna's

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00:26:15,950 --> 00:26:21,680

narratives are typical of Mahāyāna sūtras in general. As David Drewes has explained,

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00:26:21,680 --> 00:26:30,650

such narratives are the standard claim of Mahāyāna sūtra literature replicated across numerous sūtras to explain their existence,

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00:26:30,650 --> 00:26:37,460

although not always the same in every detail, the basic structure remains constant in most cases.

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00:26:37,460 --> 00:26:41,270

More pertinently, we can certainly say that many of the famous sūtras,

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00:26:41,270 --> 00:26:47,210

best known to early Tibetan Buddhism, carry such themes, often quite prominently. The Akṣayamatīnirdeśa,

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00:26:47,210 --> 00:26:55,610

The Aṣṭasāhasrikā, the Kāraṇḍavyūha,, the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, the Samādhirāja, the Suvarṇabhāṣottara,, the Pratyutpanna,

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00:26:55,610 --> 00:27:00,740

The Vimalakīrti, and more that I'm not yet aware of.

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00:27:00,740 --> 00:27:06,250

With Tibetan gTer ma literature came to reproduce a conspicuous Mahāyāna sūtra literary trope,

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00:27:06,250 --> 00:27:17,180

again this is not down to the disproportionate influence of a single text, but rather the pervasive cultural influence of the entire Sūtra genre.

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00:27:17,180 --> 00:27:22,570

Since this is the case, it becomes much easier to understand what I previously found puzzling.

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00:27:22,570 --> 00:27:28,130

How, when, and why did such narratives become appropriated into Tibetan gter ma literature?

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00:27:28,130 --> 00:27:29,270

To approach these questions,

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00:27:29,270 --> 00:27:37,520

it's best to begin by investigating the nature of Tibetan engagement in Buddhist scholarship in the period leading up to the first appearances of gter ma,

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00:27:37,520 --> 00:27:43,590

which Dan Martin has established as not later than the final decades of the 10th century.

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00:27:43,590 --> 00:27:48,710

The recent conference presentation Ulrike Roesler explains that before the 11th century,

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00:27:48,710 --> 00:27:57,140

and especially during the so-called early dissemination of the dharma in Tibet, the Mahāyāna sūtra corpus dominated Tibetan Buddhist scholarship.

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00:27:57,140 --> 00:28:04,840

She observed that Mahāyāna sūtras made up approximately two thirds of all texts listed in the two early imperial translational catalogues,

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00:28:04,840 --> 00:28:09,640

the Ldan dkar ma and 'Phang thang ma, she continued with these words

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00:28:09,640 --> 00:28:14,440

"In addition to the sheer predominance of sūtra over śāstra in terms of numbers,

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00:28:14,440 --> 00:28:19,780

we are also informed in a document from the Tibetan Imperial Court the two sūtras, the Ratnameghasūtra,

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00:28:19,780 --> 00:28:24,820

and the Laṅkāvatārasūtra sūtra were amongst the earliest text translated into Tibetan,

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00:28:24,820 --> 00:28:32,260

and the vocabulary used became normative for subsequent translations. It is therefore evident that during the eighth and ninth centuries,

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00:28:32,260 --> 00:28:38,080

Mahāyāna sūtras were given pride of place among the Buddhist texts received from India and elsewhere.

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00:28:38,080 --> 00:28:40,810

They were amongst the first Buddhist texts to be translated.

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00:28:40,810 --> 00:28:47,440

They form the largest group of texts amongst the Buddhist translations, and they are listed first in the imperial catalogues.

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00:28:47,440 --> 00:28:53,920

It was not until the second translation period from the 11th century onwards that there was a noticeable shift away from the Mahāyāna,

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00:28:53,920 --> 00:29:02,670

sūtras and towards the later stages of tantric literature on the one hand, and scholastic literature on the other."

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00:29:02,670 --> 00:29:07,860

Roessler acknowledges the Buddhist translations were an elite activity sponsored by the royal

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00:29:07,860 --> 00:29:12,780

court and that on the ground Tantric Buddhism was also practised by often hereditary lay householder.

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00:29:12,780 --> 00:29:16,560

lineages, some of which might have been influential,

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00:29:16,560 --> 00:29:21,630

but that in no way detracts from her main point that the period is characterised by the considerable

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00:29:21,630 --> 00:29:27,870

impact of Mahāyāna sūtras amongst those actively involved in the dissemination of Buddhist texts.

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00:29:27,870 --> 00:29:34,770

Since those were the greatest and most revered part of the Buddhist translations available at the time.

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00:29:34,770 --> 00:29:42,630

Named gter stons began to appear in the tenth and early 11th century, probably building on an already existing tradition.

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00:29:42,630 --> 00:29:48,600

Certainly, gShen chen klu dga' in the early 11th century describes a gTer ma culture already complex and mature,

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00:29:48,600 --> 00:29:51,810

which cannot have been very new in his own time.

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00:29:51,810 --> 00:29:59,130

It therefore seems highly probable that the first gter stons emerged from an intellectual environment preceding the 11th century shift.

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00:29:59,130 --> 00:30:07,410

That Roesler describes. In other words, from an intellectual environment where the study of Mahāyāna sūtras was still paramount.

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00:30:07,410 --> 00:30:17,640

And what is so striking about the various early extant Buddhist gTer mas is precisely the prominence within them of Mahāyāna motifs.

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00:30:17,640 --> 00:30:22,560

Two of the earliest surviving Buddhist gTer mas, the bKa' 'chems kha khol ma and the Maṅi bka' 'bum

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00:30:22,560 --> 00:30:28,530

were both allegedly found in the Jokhang in Lhasa, notionally in the 11th century.

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00:30:28,530 --> 00:30:37,020

They share overlapping text present, the first great topic religious king, Srong btsan sGam po as an emanation of Avalokiteśvara, bodhisattva of compassion.

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00:30:37,020 --> 00:30:40,370

He was to become the patron deity of Tibet.

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00:30:40,370 --> 00:30:47,060

Both these influential early gTer mas, therefore, drew substantially from a famous Mahāyāna sūtra, the Kāraṇḍavyūha,

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00:30:47,060 --> 00:30:52,980

which introduced for an Indian public, is a cult of Avalokiteśvara and his mantra oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ.

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00:30:52,980 --> 00:30:57,150

The Maṇi bka' 'bum has even been described as a reformulation of the Kāraṇḍavyūha for a

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00:30:57,150 --> 00:31:03,030

Tibetan audience to convey its message of devotion to Avalokiteśvara and his mantra.

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00:31:03,030 --> 00:31:11,890

The discovery of the Kachem Kakholma coma was attributed to Atiśa and hence the Kadampa school, but the Maṇi bka' 'bum is a composite gTer ma with three Nyingma discovers.

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00:31:11,890 --> 00:31:18,420

Grub thob dNgos grub, precise dates unknown. His student Myang ral Nyi ma 'Od zer 1124–1192

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00:31:18,420 --> 00:31:24,910

And Myang ral's spiritual successor, Guru Chos dbang, 1212 to 1270.

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00:31:24,910 --> 00:31:31,590

Certainly, the Maṇi bka' 'bum itself is often counted as the earliest extant, really important Nyingma gTer ma.

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00:31:31,590 --> 00:31:39,630

Yet it draws as heavily on sūtra themes as on tantric ones in contrast to subsequent Nyingma gTer mas, which are mostly tantric.

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00:31:39,630 --> 00:31:46,440

The same is true of the early Bon gTer stons, gShen chen klu dga', while his gTer mas included many genres of scripture.

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00:31:46,440 --> 00:31:52,950

The sūtra texts of his khams brgyad were by far the greatest in terms of sheer bulk.

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00:31:52,950 --> 00:31:56,310

It's significant to two of the Maṇi bka' 'bum's discoverers, Myang ral and,

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00:31:56,310 --> 00:32:03,080

Chos dbang are also considered the earliest and most definitive codifiers of the Nyingma school of Buddhism.

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00:32:03,080 --> 00:32:05,840

Much of their codification is pertain to gTer ma,

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00:32:05,840 --> 00:32:12,320

including the first comprehensive literary formulations of the narrative structures that framed Nyingma gter ma discovery,

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00:32:12,320 --> 00:32:19,920

as well as complex theoretical explorations and practical advice. I'm referring here to such works as Myang ral's famous biography of Padmasambhava,

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00:32:19,920 --> 00:32:26,300

of Padmasambhava, the bKa' thang Zang glingma, his huge bka' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa, and Chowang's analysis of the

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00:32:26,300 --> 00:32:31,610

meaning of the word gter and the practise of its recovery in his gter 'byung chen mo.

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00:32:31,610 --> 00:32:39,590

This seems to indicate, what this seems to indicate is that the two great masters who did most to codify the Nyingma gter ma system were themselves

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00:32:39,590 --> 00:32:46,820

reasonably well versed in Mahāyāna sūtra literature because both were also directly involved in the production of a major gter ma,

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00:32:46,820 --> 00:32:51,810

the Maṇi bka' 'bum, that substantially depended on a Mahāyāna sūtra.

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00:32:51,810 --> 00:32:53,550

In addition, Myang ral, Myang ral

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00:32:53,550 --> 00:33:01,680

was the author of historical work such as the Chos 'byung me tog snying po brang rtsi'i bcud, that had much to say about general Buddhism India. In my view,

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00:33:01,680 --> 00:33:05,910

we therefore need not be surprised that Myang ral was also capable of adapting a Myang ral

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00:33:05,910 --> 00:33:10,970

prominent Mahāyāna sūtra literary motif for use at the very heart of his vision of gter ma.

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00:33:10,970 --> 00:33:15,230

Especially since, in all likelihood, there were already precedents for him to work from.

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00:33:15,230 --> 00:33:22,320

Nor need we be surprised that everyone referenced various Mahāyāna sūtra texts to his work, in his work.

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00:33:22,320 --> 00:33:29,400

Not everyone agrees with me, however, a colleague recently suggested that the Myang ral was so ignorant about sūtras that any similarities

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00:33:29,400 --> 00:33:37,310

between his vision of gter ma and Mahāyāna sūtra literary motifs could only be coincidental.

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00:33:37,310 --> 00:33:42,710

To my thinking. While Myang ral might show little sign of engagement in śāstric Buddhist scholarship.

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00:33:42,710 --> 00:33:48,380

I don't think he was necessarily ignorant of Mahāyāna secret literature, which as all Ulrike Roesler points out,

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00:33:48,380 --> 00:33:57,040

remains a predominant field of Buddhist learning until very shortly before the Myang ral's own time.

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00:33:57,040 --> 00:34:02,680

For further circumstantial evidence, I can point to the example of Myang ral's older contemporary the bKa' gdams pa turned

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00:34:02,680 --> 00:34:08,630

bka' brgyud pa sGam po pa bsod nams rin chen, 1097–1153,

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00:34:08,630 --> 00:34:14,720

sGam po pa was commonly known as Zla 'od gzhon nu, or Chandraprabha Kumāra after the protagonist by

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00:34:14,720 --> 00:34:19,760

name in the Mahāyāna Samādhirāja sūtra in this influential sūtra, Chandra

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00:34:19,760 --> 00:34:24,860

Prabha kumāra is the principal interlocutor whom the prophesies will reincarnate as a dharma--

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00:34:24,860 --> 00:34:31,010

bhāṇaka in a future age to promote the teachings of the Samādhirāja after the Buddha's nirvana.

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00:34:31,010 --> 00:34:34,910

According to David Jackson, sGam po pa was recognised by his bKa' gdams pa teacher,

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00:34:34,910 --> 00:34:40,040

dGe bshes Po to ba, as the reincarnation of that very same Chandraprabha Kumāra from the Samādhirāja.

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00:34:40,040 --> 00:34:47,220

Thus, according to Jackson, sGam po pa's promotion of a controversial and uniquely sūtra based Mahāmudra

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00:34:47,220 --> 00:34:53,220

meditation system was interpreted by some of his contemporaries as deriving from the Samādhirāja,

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00:34:53,220 --> 00:34:58,170

which they believed sGam po pa specifically reincarnated to propagate.

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00:34:58,170 --> 00:35:07,340

Indeed, the central teaching of this Mahāyāna sūtra is a meditation on evenness or mnyam pa nyid, a key technical term in both Mahāmudrā

and rDzogs chen.

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00:35:07,340 --> 00:35:12,890

Be that, as it may, we can see that classic Mahāyāna sūtra literary themes of prophecy,

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00:35:12,890 --> 00:35:19,730

reincarnation, and the revelation of previously concealed teachings definitely played a vital role in the tradition building.

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00:35:19,730 --> 00:35:30,620

In the tradition building, the characterised 12th century Tibet. In a lecture delivered in Paris on the 23rd of March, travelling in time,

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00:35:30,620 --> 00:35:34,820

the role of Jataka stories and prophecies in the construction of the bKa' gdams pa School,

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00:35:34,820 --> 00:35:39,140

Ulrike Roesler gave a fascinating account of the important role of certain classic

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00:35:39,140 --> 00:35:45,480

Indian Buddhist literary conventions in the tradition building texts of the bKa' gdams pas.

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00:35:45,480 --> 00:35:51,600

Specifically, she painted a compelling picture of how Jātaka and sūtra derived notions of vyākaraṇa time travel and

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00:35:51,600 --> 00:35:57,540

reincarnation were adapted for incorporation into the narratives of the Pha chos and Bu chos of the bKa' gdams pa glegs bam

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00:35:57,540 --> 00:36:06,780

And analysing the Sanskrit term vyākaraṇa, Roesler explains that it means rather more than its usual translation of prophecy.

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00:36:06,780 --> 00:36:11,910

Vyākaraṇa implies a broader understanding of causality through all the three times of past,

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00:36:11,910 --> 00:36:16,620

present and future a supernormal knowledge, abhijñā, or accessible only to

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00:36:16,620 --> 00:36:23,970

extremely advanced beings and a necessary component of a Buddha's omniscience.

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00:36:23,970 --> 00:36:30,900

And these bKa' gdams pa narratives, Atiśa thus assumes a role parallel to the Buddha of the Indian literary prototypes.

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00:36:30,900 --> 00:36:37,120

While Atiśa's leading disciples as roles parallel to those of the Buddha's leading disciples.

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00:36:37,120 --> 00:36:41,770

When Atiśa discloses his past and future births with these disciples to illustrate

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00:36:41,770 --> 00:36:46,810

their long-standing karmic destinies with his teachings through many lifetimes,

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00:36:46,810 --> 00:36:53,930

he thereby simultaneously signals his own Buddha-like knowledge of the three times.

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00:36:53,930 --> 00:37:00,170

Turning now to the most influential Tibetan gter ma tradition, the still thriving practises of the rNying ma pa school.

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00:37:00,170 --> 00:37:04,850

We again find such knowledge of the three times central to their narratives.

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00:37:04,850 --> 00:37:12,470

But as David Gray showed us three weeks ago, scriptural revelation in tantric Buddhism is often visionary in nature.

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00:37:12,470 --> 00:37:20,540

Hence, by the 12th century Nyingma gTer ma ideology had become articulated and codified into what I am very provisionally going to

call a vision,

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00:37:20,540 --> 00:37:27,080

myth or maybe a vision narrative. I'm not sure yet. I'm referring here to the coherent and consistent,

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00:37:27,080 --> 00:37:34,400

but nevertheless, flexible mythic narrative structure woven around the life story of Padmasambhava which has determined

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00:37:34,400 --> 00:37:41,200

to shape and content of the visionary experiences of all Nyingma treasure founders since the 12th century.

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00:37:41,200 --> 00:37:48,460

By lending form to their visionary experiences, it has also shaped and predicted the content of the actual treasure discoveries.

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00:37:48,460 --> 00:37:52,060

In turn, the vision itself becomes reaffirmed,

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00:37:52,060 --> 00:37:58,210

perpetuated, and enriched with each subsequent visionary experience and with each subsequent treasure discovery.

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00:37:58,210 --> 00:38:06,740

Century after century. While this vision myth has perhaps served most prominently to underpin the ongoing revelations of new gter mas,

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00:38:06,740 --> 00:38:12,960

it simultaneously supports most, most other aspects of Nyingma ritual, practise, and identity.

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00:38:12,960 --> 00:38:22,410

Since these are often inseparably connected since these are often inseparably connected with treasure discovery and with Padmasambhava.

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00:38:22,410 --> 00:38:27,030

Anthropologists might detect some resemblance between my provisional terminology of vision,

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00:38:27,030 --> 00:38:32,160

myth or vision narrative, with the idea of the mystery proposed by the Canadian

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00:38:32,160 --> 00:38:38,620

anthropologist Kenelm Burridge and subsequently adapted by further anthropologists.

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00:38:38,620 --> 00:38:46,360

Recently, Charles Stewart used Burridge's ideas in his fascinating study of the key role played by communally occurring and,

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00:38:46,360 --> 00:38:53,620

communally curated religious streams in the miraculous rediscovery by a Greek Orthodox community of a series of

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00:38:53,620 --> 00:39:02,560

long hidden ancient sacred icons reputedly buried on the island of Naxos by ancient Christian refugees from Egypt.

361

00:39:02,560 --> 00:39:11,490

These dreams were received by several different persons, continued over time and were characterised by a specific, coherent, repeated narratives.

362

00:39:11,490 --> 00:39:19,400

They indicated to the villages where they should take to fund the icons. Well, illustrating their ancient origins and sacred power.

363

00:39:19,400 --> 00:39:28,890

Today, after decades of sustained religious outpouring, these icons form the basis of one of the major pilgrimage sites in Greek Christianity.

364

00:39:28,890 --> 00:39:37,620

The myth-dream Stewart describes in Naxos is not very unusual, and ethnographers have described comparable examples in various parts of the world.

365

00:39:37,620 --> 00:39:44,160

It's remotely possible that David Drewes has termed the standard claim of the Mahāyāna sūtras was one such myth-dream,

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00:39:44,160 --> 00:39:49,650

since it worked as an implicit mythic structure that lent a unifying cohesion to the multifarious

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00:39:49,650 --> 00:39:57,700

revelations of Mahāyāna sūtras by different dharmabhāṅakas over long periods of time.

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00:39:57,700 --> 00:40:03,730

But what sets the Nyingma vision-myth apart from the dreams of most other cultures, including the Mahāyāna,

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00:40:03,730 --> 00:40:10,600

is a comprehensive manner in which it has been extracted from its wider contexts and developed into an independent theme,

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00:40:10,600 --> 00:40:18,220

moving from the implicit to the explicit becoming formally codified and organised being committed to writing not merely once,

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00:40:18,220 --> 00:40:25,730

but many times over and developed as a major literary genre in its own right.

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00:40:25,730 --> 00:40:34,430

As far as we currently know, the Nyingma vision-myth was first committed to writing in the twelfth century by Myang ral in his seminal bKa' thang Zang gling ma

373

00:40:34,430 --> 00:40:38,910

Although Myang ral definitely drew on earlier sources.

374

00:40:38,910 --> 00:40:47,250

In a variation on Po to ba's recognition of sGam po pa as the reincarnation of Chandraprabha Kumāra, and setting a precedent for all subsequent gter stons,,

375

00:40:47,250 --> 00:40:58,110

Myang ral saw himself as a prominent figure from the vision-myth. He was the reincarnation Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra's most illustrious disciple, the emperor Khri srong lde btsan.

376

00:40:58,110 --> 00:41:02,970

Hence, he was able to rediscover both of phur pa 'phrin las section and actually root tantras of the

377

00:41:02,970 --> 00:41:07,650

bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa cycle directly from the emperor's own personal manuscripts.

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00:41:07,650 --> 00:41:17,060

The very same manuscripts entrusted by Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava brought to the emperor 400 years previously and then concealed as gter ma.

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00:41:17,060 --> 00:41:26,250

Further iterations of the Nyingma vision-myth were subsequently committed to writing by numerous later masters, notably again, O rgyan gling pa's 14th century Padma bka' thang.

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00:41:26,250 --> 00:41:34,170

The Nyingma vision-myth became so influential that it now counts as a cultural property of all Tibetans, regardless of skills or lineage.

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00:41:34,170 --> 00:41:38,340

The name given to such text is bka' thang, which is difficult to translate.

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00:41:38,340 --> 00:41:46,650

Dictionaries give such words as order, edict, or command, but add that it usually refers to the biographies of Padmasambhava concealed as gter ma.

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00:41:46,650 --> 00:41:54,080

Treasures. The religious aspects of the bKa' thang genre remain less explored and historical.

384

00:41:54,080 --> 00:42:00,680

Yet their primary function has always been religious, playing a key role in the inner religious lives of contemporary rNying ma pas.

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00:42:00,680 --> 00:42:08,390

It informs their meditative experiences, religious dreams and visions, while also shaping their revelations of gter ma.

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00:42:08,390 --> 00:42:11,990

Its relation to ritual performance is equally pronounced.

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00:42:11,990 --> 00:42:20,310

Whole episodes of the bka' thang can originate tantric ritual subsequently transcribed into symbolic narratives about Padmasambhava.

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00:42:20,310 --> 00:42:30,480

bKa' thang-based liturgies such as Rig 'dzin rgod ldem's Le'u bdun ma are recited at the tenth day mtshogs, or gaṇacakra, which itself worships the Padmasambhava of the bka' thangs.

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00:42:30,480 --> 00:42:37,280

An interesting contrast to the dharmabhāṅakas performances described to us in February by Natalie Gummer.

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00:42:37,280 --> 00:42:45,560

One could cogently argue that the bka' thang narratives enjoy even more life than the countless liturgical and visionary and ritual manifestations,

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00:42:45,560 --> 00:42:51,110

than in the few famous hagiographies by Myang ral, O rgyan gling pa

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00:42:51,110 --> 00:42:59,300

In these intensely devotional narratives themselves mainly discover as gter ma as Padmasambhava is envisaged as the second Buddha,

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00:42:59,300 --> 00:43:09,290

a direct emanation of Amitābha, who takes miraculous birth, fully formed and fully enlightened upon a magical lotus on a lake in Uḍḍiyāna.

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00:43:09,290 --> 00:43:18,050

Like his avatāraka or avatīrṇa Śaiva counterparts his purpose in manifesting is to teach non-ideal tantras never previously heard by humans.

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00:43:18,050 --> 00:43:26,610

But he also has a special karmic relationship with Tibetans so that he can manifest teachings for them that no other nations have received.

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00:43:26,610 --> 00:43:30,930

Plus, the bka' thang texts usually placed special emphasis on his stay in Tibet with

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00:43:30,930 --> 00:43:36,160

a discussion of his prolific concealment of gter mas in the Tibetan landscape.

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00:43:36,160 --> 00:43:44,860

And here the bka' thang literature borrows a major narrative framework from the Mahāyāna sūtra literary conventions previously described. As a knower

399

00:43:44,860 --> 00:43:51,040

Of the three times, the second Buddha, Padmasambhava, has the ability to understand all karmic causes and effects in the minutest

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00:43:51,040 --> 00:43:54,610

detail. Like the Buddha of the Mahāyāna sūtras,

401

00:43:54,610 --> 00:44:01,000

He, too, can foresee the future vicissitudes of his teaching dispensation down to the smallest particulars.

402

00:44:01,000 --> 00:44:07,450

Armed with that foresight, like the Buddha of the Mahāyāna sūtras, he can see that the teachings he has just given his disciples in 8th century

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00:44:07,450 --> 00:44:12,910

Tibet will need to be concealed for time and then re-revealed in future centuries.

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00:44:12,910 --> 00:44:15,040

Like the Buddha in the Mahāyāna sūtras,

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00:44:15,040 --> 00:44:22,060

Padmasambhava's knowledge of even the most minute workings of pratītyasamutpāda allow him to discern to which of his disciples he should,

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00:44:22,060 --> 00:44:26,740

at this moment entrust each particular teaching and in which particular future time

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00:44:26,740 --> 00:44:32,950

in which precise location in Tibet they must be reborn to recover those teachings.

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00:44:32,950 --> 00:44:39,310

He also knows exactly where, when and with which companions they should recover in those future lives,

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00:44:39,310 --> 00:44:44,180

like the Buddha's students in the Mahāyāna sūtras Padmasambhava's students, too, are inspired,

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00:44:44,180 --> 00:44:51,690

to take mighty vows to be reborn in those future times to uphold the teachings with which Padmasambhava has entrusted them.

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00:44:51,690 --> 00:44:56,730

Accordingly, like the Mahāyāna sūtras bka' thang texts attribute prophecies to Padmasambhava

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00:44:56,730 --> 00:45:02,170

in which he discloses details about the future vicissitudes of his teachings, their concealment, his entrustment.

413

00:45:02,170 --> 00:45:04,500

of those teachings to his close students,

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00:45:04,500 --> 00:45:12,800

the vows of those students to be reborn to propagate them in future lives, and many particulars about daily discoveries.

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00:45:12,800 --> 00:45:21,060

O rgyan gling pa's Pema bka' thang is perhaps the most famous for its sheer quantity of prophecies but all bka' thang texts describes them.

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00:45:21,060 --> 00:45:26,280

Turning from bka' thang ideology to the practical mechanics of revelation in Tibet,

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00:45:26,280 --> 00:45:33,720

we find that tantric and indigenous things play equally prominent roles, which we have no time to discuss here.

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00:45:33,720 --> 00:45:45,710

Nevertheless, I should mention that the outer classificatory envelope containing these mechanics once again adopts Mahāyāna categories as paramount.

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00:45:45,710 --> 00:45:50,930

Paul Harrison, who has researched Indian Mahāyāna scriptural revelation for many years,

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00:45:50,930 --> 00:45:56,570

he argues that its various mechanics of revelation are summarised in Shantideva's Śikṣasamuccaya

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00:45:56,570 --> 00:46:05,800

when it cites a passage from the Sarvapūṇyasamuccaya-samādhi-sūtra Harrison translates as follows:

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00:46:05,800 --> 00:46:12,580

"For, Vimalatejas, the Buddhas and Lords resident in other world systems show their faces to reverent and respectful bodhisattvas,

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00:46:12,580 --> 00:46:17,700

and mahāsattvas wanting the dharma, and they cause them to hear the Dharma.

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00:46:17,700 --> 00:46:21,610

Vimalatejas, treasures of the Dharma are deposited in the interiors of mountains,

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00:46:21,610 --> 00:46:27,160

caves and trees for bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas wanting the dharma and endless dharma teachings in book form.

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00:46:27,160 --> 00:46:37,980

Come into the hands. Vimalatejas, deities who have seen former Buddhas provide bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas wanting the dharma with the inspired eloquence of Buddhas."

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00:46:37,980 --> 00:46:46,110

A parallel tripart classificatory structure was applied to Buddhist revelation in Tibet through appropriation of the Mahāyāna schema,

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00:46:46,110 --> 00:46:52,620

although already apparent in early authors such as Guru Chos dbang,

this classification to quite its present-day terminology.

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00:46:52,620 --> 00:46:54,150

More recently,

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00:46:54,150 --> 00:47:02,610

nowadays we know them as, firstly, dag snang or pure vision of meeting the Buddha face to face in a vision or dream and receiving teachings.

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00:47:02,610 --> 00:47:11,400

Secondly, Sa gter or Sa gter ma, earth treasure, meaning sacred texts concealed within the material world or in the environment.

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00:47:11,400 --> 00:47:21,740

And thirdly, dgongs gter or mind treasure a direct, divine inspiration of the mind committing the spontaneous, confident utterance of dharma.

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00:47:21,740 --> 00:47:29,960

To summarise, Tibetology is always claimed that Tibet's gter ma traditions grew from a mixing of indigenous and Indian influences.

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00:47:29,960 --> 00:47:35,390

Undoubtedly, both India and Tibet had their own treasured cultures that merged over time.

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00:47:35,390 --> 00:47:43,310

So far, however, the Indian influence have remained little explored. I hope to begin this exploration, and it promises to be interesting.

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00:47:43,310 --> 00:47:48,770

On the one hand, we believe there might have been some direct historical continuity between Indian and Tibetan

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00:47:48,770 --> 00:47:54,710

revelatory practises in the largely anonymous revelation of some early Nyingma tantras.

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00:47:54,710 --> 00:47:59,840

As careful calques of Sanskrit tantras, and largely based on reused Indian texts,

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00:47:59,840 --> 00:48:06,800

they were quite likely produced with the same revelatory methods still used at that time by Indian gurus.

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00:48:06,800 --> 00:48:16,010

By contrast, the slightly later gter ma system was a uniquely Tibetan melange of numerous sources with no precise counterparts anywhere else.

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00:48:16,010 --> 00:48:21,470

Unlike Indian Buddhism's largely anonymous dharmabhāṅakas and tantric siddhas it openly identified,

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00:48:21,470 --> 00:48:26,660

its text revealers mixing the contemporary contemporaneous tantric traditions of Kashmir

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00:48:26,660 --> 00:48:32,660

and India with powerful indigenous Tibetan elements in the spirit of 11th century Tibet.

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00:48:32,660 --> 00:48:40,370

It seems to draw these together within frame narratives inspired by Mahāyāna sūtra literary motifs long discontinued in India,

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00:48:40,370 --> 00:48:49,280

but which thereby found a remarkable new life in 10th century Tibet.

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00:48:49,280 --> 00:48:53,930

So, thanks. Thank you, Rob. That was fantastic.

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00:48:53,930 --> 00:49:02,900

That was beautifully clear, and I think after all the previous talks, I really enjoyed hearing how you fit it all together into a bigger picture.

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00:49:02,900 --> 00:49:21,129

So, thank you very much for that.