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Research Article

The Childhood of Dorjé Sangwatsel (b. 1814) and the Theme of the Deficient Parent in Tibetan Hagiography

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This article focuses on a set of childhood narratives in the autobiography of Dorjé Sangwatsel (b. 1814), a lama from southeastern Tibet. Looking in particular at his negative assessments of childhood guardians—including biological parents and early-life monastic mentors—this article explores the significance of deficient parenting narratives in Tibetan hagiography. After considering Dorjé Sangwatsel's autobiographical recollections of his guardians, I situate his accounts in conjunction with several other thematically similar stories and suggest three ways in which parents are deficient in Tibetan hagiography: deficient as cruel, narrow-minded, and immoral. In so doing, I hope to expose an implication of Dorjé Sangwatsel's reflections—namely, that stories of deficient parents versus awakened children help to fulfill Tibetan hagiography's compulsion to demonstrate protagonists' extraordinariness in each stage of life, childhood included. As such, the theme of the deficient parent, I suggest, functions as a literary strategy that potently exposes hagiographical exemplarity.

Keywords: Buddhism, hagiography, family, parents, guardians, children, childhood

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Positive portrayals of the parents[1] of Buddhist masters frequently adorn the pages of Tibetan hagiographies.[2] The prominent nineteenth-century Buddhist master Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thayé (1813–1899) compliments his mother for becoming his spiritual friend, leading him to "enter the door of Buddhism" and freeing him from "entrapment in the life of a householder in samsara" (Barron and Koṅ-sprul

[1] Little scholarship has focused specifically on portrayals of parents in Tibetan hagiography. Alex Wayman's essay, "Parents of the Buddhist Monks" (1977), for instance, is one of the few works that contemplates narratives about parents from the Tibetan biographical tradition. On the parents of Tibetan treasure revealer (*gter ston*) Nyangrel Nyima Özer (1124–1192), see Hirshberg (2010, 55–64). The significance of parents in South Asian Buddhist texts has been extensively explored in two major recent book-length studies—Clarke (2014) and Ohnuma (2012). On mothers and sons in Chinese Buddhism, see Cole (1998). Three essays in the recent volume *Family in Buddhism* focus directly on Buddhist parents and children in South and East Asian Buddhist literature: Cole (2013), Sasson (2013b), and Wilson (2013b).

[2] On the very concept of Tibetan hagiography, the use of the term "hagiography" in the study of Tibetan life writing, as well as similarities between Tibetan and European Christian hagiography, see Schaeffer (2004: 5–7).

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Blo-gros-mtha'-yas, 2003: 14). Tsangnyön Heruka (1452–1507), the biographer of the translator Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (1012–1097), the inaugurator of Tibet's Kagyü lineage, credits Marpa's father for encouraging his stubborn and short-tempered child[3] to study Buddhism (Gtsaṅ-smyon He-ru-ka, 1995: 5–6). Tibetan Buddhist masters, who are themselves born into lineages of Buddhist practitioners and clerics, may abundantly recall—in highly positive terms—their religious education as children at the feet of their biological fathers or uncles. Chöying Dorjé (1772–1838), a teacher of the Bara Kagyü tradition, reflects on the Buddhist teachings taught to him in childhood by his father, who he thanks for introducing him to the Dharma, and for his kindness as a teacher.[4]

Like biological parents, monastic guardians may be similarly remembered in such loving and benevolent terms. Indeed, categories of "parent" and "teacher" can often be blurred in Tibetan monastic life writing. This is not only because biological parents or relatives are themselves frequently also teachers, especially in father-son/uncle-nephew teaching lineages, but also because the protagonists of Tibetan life writing have often been raised, from early ages, within monasteries—a communal existence patterned, in many ways, along family lines.[5] Chögyel Dorjé (1789–1859), a Nyingma lineage master, recalls the

[3] Concepts of "child" and "childhood" are of course dependent upon culture, historical time-period, and a host of other factors. A general discussion of this point can be found in Ridgely (2011: 5–6). See Sasson (2013a: 4–6) for a discussion on the complexities of "child" and "childhood" terminology in the study of Buddhist traditions and literatures. Miriam Levering (2013) has recently argued, for instance, that "children" in Chinese Buddhist literature are defined according to relations to their seniors rather than according to a biological or developmental status. "Children" of the Buddhist monastic world of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, moreover, are defined as those who have not yet undergone full monastic ordination—i.e., those under the age of twenty—in Amy Langenberg's recent study (2013). This definition emphasizes children's "dependent status, limited legal standing in the community, and lack of intellectual and psychological maturity in the eyes of the Buddhist monastic tradition" (ibid.: 45). Frances Garrett (2013) examines the child as a category in Tibet through a study of the material culture of childhood—particularly therapeutic and protective objects. For a recent review of literature concerning conceptions of children and childhood in Tibet, see ibid.: 199–202.

[4] See up until the author's emotional account of his father's passing (Chos dbyings rdo rje, 1970: 330). Parents of Buddhist masters are praised in various Tibetan literary genres. The mother of Buddhist pioneers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu is celebrated in Shalu master Butön Rinchendrup's (1290–1364) *History of Buddhism* (*chos 'byung*) for contributing to her sons' religious accomplishments (Wayman, 1977: 151–2).

[5] Discussions of parent-child relations in monastic hagiography would be incomplete without considering both biological and monastic types of "family," which feature considerable thematic overlap. See Wilson (2013a: 4–5) on the patterning of the Buddhist monastic community along family lines and on Buddhist scriptures in which the Buddha describes his monks as his spiritual offspring. Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa's chapter in *Family in Buddhism* explores "the interaction between biological and imagined concepts of transmission" of Tibetan religious traditions (2013: 67). She writes that "Tibetan monasteries have not rejected familial discourse; they have instead reappropriated it, in the mobilization of new discourses of imagined families, which provide alternate genealogies of authority and reproduction in the transmission of tradition" (ibid.). Also see Reiko Ohnuma's recent review of scholarship that explores the implications of the exclusion

deep attachment he developed toward his kind lama, who the former saw in the form of the Buddhist deity of compassion, Avalokiteśvara (Chos rgyal rdo rje, 1975: 24–26). Chögyam Trungpa (1939–1987), a major figure in the dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, fondly remembers one of his main childhood tutors as "almost a father" to him (Trungpa, 1985: 47). While revealing almost nothing about his biological father, Losel Tengyong (b. 1804), a Buddhist monk from Shalu Monastery, profusely reflects on the virtues and influence of his main childhood lama, whose death poetically "scorched" the protagonist's heart in "flames of suffering" (Blo gsal bstan skyong, 1971b: 509).

Effusive praises of the guardians of children in monasteries are certainly not unique to Tibetan hagiography. Losel Tengyong's verses on his departed lama (1971b: 509) closely resemble the Frankish monk Walafrid Strabo's (808–849) poem on the passing of his monastic teacher, who the monk recalls he loved as a father (Quinn, 1989: 78–79). The life story of Hugh of Avalon (1135/1140–1200), the French Carthusian monk and bishop of Lincoln (in England), recalls his "almost motherly affection" toward his monks (McLaughlin, 2004: 56). The biographer of English abbot Aelred of Rievaulx (1110–1167) writes that the latter's dying words to his monks were, "I love you as earnestly as a mother does her sons" (ibid.). The point has been made in studies of Christian hagiography that narratives of adoration between clerics and child monks may certainly reflect a desire to "praise the centrality of the relationship of master to student" (Quinn, 1989: 79). The same objective is certainly shared in the many cases in which monastic mentors are praised as esteemed guardians of children in Tibetan monastic life writing.

But not all life stories of Tibetan masters praise the biological parents or childhood monastic mentors of their protagonists; the autobiography of Dorjé Sangwatsel (b. 1814), a lama from the Kongpo region of Tibet, is an example of a narrative in which the protagonist's early-life guardians are deficient in some respect (Rdo rje gsang ba rtsal, 1974).[6] This article focuses on the autobiography's overwhelmingly negative descriptions of the author's childhood guardians, which I encountered while reading the text for a different purpose[7] and which provided the impetus for the present study. Recounting the faults of both his biological parents and early monastic mentors, Dorjé Sangwatsel not only documents his childhood in his autobiography, but he also frames his experience in a hagiographical theme of parental deficiency. This theme, I would like to suggest, serves to highlight the protagonist's virtuous qualities.[8] After considering

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of the mother and maternal reproduction from Tibetan Buddhist male-lineage "families" (2012: 160–161), including June Campbell's *Traveller in Space* (1996), which extensively explores this topic.

[6] This text, which appears to be largely unknown in Western scholarship, is available as a reproduction of a manuscript from the library of Hemis Monastery in Ladakh (published in 1974), according to the preface in Rdo rje gsang ba rtsal (1974).

[7] I began to examine Dorjé Sangwatsel's autobiography for its reflections on nineteenth-century Tibetan monastic culture, one of the contexts examined in my book project (in progress) on Losel Tengyong's compendium of Shalu Monastery's abbots' and lamas' biographies (Blo gsal bstan skyong, 1971a).

[8] This paper does not attempt to understand what constitutes a "good" or "bad" parent in any general Tibetan cultural contexts (or in any specific regional or historical contexts). I focus herein

Dorjé Sangwatsel's autobiographical recollections of his guardians, I situate his accounts in conjunction with several other thematically similar stories in Tibetan hagiography. In doing so, I hope to expose the significance of these narratives—particularly, how stories of deficient parents in childhood help to fulfill Tibetan hagiography's compulsion to make protagonists exemplary.[9]

This article provides a preliminary look at the deficient parent theme; as the present study is only based on a fraction of available Tibetan life stories, what follows is a mere sketch, to be filled out and calibrated to a larger, more representative sample of extant Tibetan hagiographies. A more extensive and systematic study would be needed to understand the theme's idiosyncrasies according to different historical and geographical contexts; gender; specific genres, such as autobiography (*rang rnam*), biography (*rnam thar*), and compendia of abbots' biographies (*gdan rabs*); and specific (though potentially overlapping) character types, such as monks, nuns, abbots, tantric lay practitioners (*sngags pa*), "treasure revealers" (*gter ston*), and incarnate lamas (*sprul sku*). Proceeding tentatively, however, based on the materials examined below, this article suggests three ways in which parents are deficient in Tibetan hagiography: deficient as cruel, narrow-minded, and immoral.

These deficient parent narratives are found in hagiographies, which, by definition in the Tibetan religious context, recount the lives of figures considered to be awakened throughout their lives—figures who are human emanations (*sprul pa'i sku*) of buddhahood. This theme, however, is not exclusive to accounts of lamas within specific incarnation lineages—namely "*tulku*s" (*sprul sku*)[10]—and thus this article does not specifically focus on the role of these narratives within the *tulku* tradition. This is not to say that the theme does not perform specific functions when it does appear in the life of a *tulku*. Benjamin Bogin, for instance, points out a father and *tulku*-son struggle that exposes the way in which the *tulku* tradition "complicates and subverts hierarchical relations" (2013: 18).

There are numerous literary themes involving parents and children in Tibetan and other Buddhist literature, which often focus on the religious development of the parent, rather than the child—stories, for instance, about abandoning one's children to pursue the Dharma (Sasson, 2013a: 1–4) or turning to Buddhism after the death of one's child (Cole, 2009: 283–284).[11] Deficient parents, on the other hand, reveal little about themselves in

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entirely on the nature of descriptions of parents as defective in the tradition of Tibetan sacred life writing.

[9] Sacred biography (*rnam thar*) and autobiography (*rang rnam*) generally ennoble their protagonists as enlightened exemplars, albeit biography and autobiography operate under different rhetorical conventions. See Gyatso (1998: 105–106) on this point.

[10] For some recent descriptions and discussions of the *tulku* concept and tradition, see Ari (2013) and Bogin (2013).

[11] Alan Cole's chapter explores four different thematic categories involving parents and children in Buddhist literature: "1. losing a child and consequently turning to Buddhism; 2. children learning to care for their parents, alive or deceased; 3. children and parents at odds over supporting Buddhist clerics; and 4. disobedient children and their horrible fates" (2009: 283).

Tibetan hagiography, but much about the awakened qualities of their children. Despite this, stories of deficient guardians do not tell us as much about the actual experiences of children as they do about the craft of the adult hagiographer. A number of studies have explored the challenges in locating authentic children's voices—beyond adult mediation—in (historical) religious literature. Ridgely writes that difficulties in accessing historical children's voices stem not only from a paucity of materials on children, but also because of the "dense layers of adult influence and political desires that are intertwined with the children's lives in these materials" (2011: 11). In her study of Tibetan treasure revealer (*gter ston*) Namchö Mingyur Dorjé's (1645–1667) biography, Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa considers the difficulties in attempting to "unpack the actual child from his textual representation" (2011: 259). Several studies in *Little Buddhas* (2013) look at ways in which adult Buddhist projections and expectations have impacted children—both in text and in reality (Sasson, 2013a: 11). The following accounts of children, even when autobiographical, must be ultimately considered adult creations.[12] Furthermore, because these accounts are hagiographical, the characters and narratives of children (and adults alike) are often constructed on the basis of well-established Tibetan hagiographical topoi, which challenge at least some extent of the subject's individuality and may hence obscure the child-centered experience. On top of that, because the very raison d'être of Tibetan hagiography is to assert the buddhahood of its characters *throughout life*, narrations of childhood tend to showcase the extraordinary precociousness and abnormally mature insight of the characters, a tendency which often eclipses the sorts of behavior and experience one might generally expect from children, such as, for instance, play or shyness. Despite these various layers of adult interference in children's experience in Tibetan hagiography, Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa's study of Namchö Mingyur Dorjé's biography has searched for "the brief moments in which we can see emerge the hesitation, nervousness, playfulness, and imagination of a child's view of the Tibetan religious cosmos" (2011: 264).

The point of this article is not to search for children's (or their parents') "actual" experiences, but rather to explore how the Tibetan hagiographer has exploited the subject of the deficient guardian (which may well reflect lived reality) as a device to showcase the awakened qualities of a child-protagonist. Tibetan hagiographies are careful not to insinuate that awakened children are merely creations of the guidance and education of their guardians—regardless of how positively parents are portrayed. This concern is reflected in the frequent disclosure of early childhood episodes, found ubiquitously in Tibetan and other Buddhist hagiography,[13] wherein child saints learn and play in abnormally mature or compassionate ways, often to the shock of their parents. I would like to suggest that another literary strategy employed to spiritually exalt children in Tibetan hagiography is the amplification of a child's awakened qualities through the portrayal of his or her caregivers with a deficiency. The theme generates a backdrop of cruel, narrow-minded, and immoral parents against which the child's awakened qualities of compassion, insight, and virtue are dramatically exposed. This

[12] Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa writes, "Due to cultural conditioning and the passage of time, the memory conveyed within an autobiographical text also portrays an adult explanation of childhood events" (2011: 261).

[13] See, for instance, Levering (2013).

theme and its productive juxtaposition might be broadly understood to reconcile the conflict inherent in the very suggestion of Tibetan hagiographical accounts of children, namely, between the notion that children learn from, and are molded by, their guardians and the competing idea that protagonists must show their enlightened nature in each stage of life—childhood included.

Narratives of Parental Deficiency in the Autobiography of Dorjé Sangwatsel

Dorjé Sangwatsel, also known by the name Künsang Ngedön Longyang, was a nineteenth-century teacher associated with the religious center of Sangnag Chökorling in southeastern Tibet.[14] He is mostly known in Western scholarship as the author of an important history of the Nyingma tradition, written in 1882 (Rdo rje gsang ba rtsal, 1976). The autobiography, which appears to be largely unknown in Western scholarship, describes Dorjé Sangwatsel's education, travels, associates, and Buddhist insights, often interspersed with poetry and scriptural quotations.[15] The first two decades of his life describe in detail, among other topics, his childhood in southeastern Tibet, his education at Sera Monastery in Lhasa as a teenager, his experience during a major smallpox epidemic (also in Lhasa), and recollections of meetings with the Tenth Dalai Lama, Tsültrim Gyatso (1816–1837), as well as the Dalai Lama's regent, the Second Tsemönling, Ngawang Jampel Tsültrim Gyatso (1792–1862/1864).

Among the many intriguing subjects presented in Dorjé Sangwatsel's autobiography is the portrayal of his childhood guardians as overwhelmingly deficient. In describing his parents and their marital relationship at the beginning of his autobiography, Dorjé Sangwatsel chooses to convey his mother's mental illness and his father's lack of love for her. "It seems that my father didn't love my mother that much when I was young," writes Dorjé Sangwatsel. The reason appears to be "her temperament—her highly erratic mental illness (*sems skyon*) caused by something like a life-wind imbalance (*srog rlung*)."[16] Whether the father is actually criticized here is open to interpretation. But at the very least, we should note that Dorjé Sangwatsel's first description of his parents' personalities lacks the parental exaltations that one often encounters in Tibetan life writing (as noted in the introduction above).

In one of his earliest memories of his parents, Dorjé Sangwatsel recalls his crying and profound suffering (*sdug bsngal chen po*) when his mother and father would slaughter

[14] See the prefaces in Rdo rje gsang ba rtsal (1974 and 1976).

[15] The autobiographical writings of Dorjé Sangwatsel are split into two major parts: an account of the author's esoteric experience (*Rig 'dzin rdo rje gsang ba rtsal gyi gsang ba'i rtogs brjod ngo mtshar dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i rang sgra*, 169–197) and the account of the author's life (*Rig pa 'dzin pa rdo rje gsang ba rtsal gyi rtogs pa brjod pa sgra dbyangs lha mo'i gling bu*, 199–577). The latter part is then split into two major sections: previous incarnations (up to 254) and the author's present life (from 254 until the end).

[16] *ma de nyid srog rlung lta bus sems skyon mtho dma' che gshis nged chung du'i dus pha yis ha cang brtse dung che ba rang byed kyi med pa 'dra* (Rdo rje gsang ba rtsal, 1974: 257). On the concept of life-wind imbalance (*srog rlung*), see Jacobson (2007).

yaks and sheep near his home. In response to his tearful misery, Dorjé Sangwatsel remembers that his parents deceived (*mgo bskor ba*) him by sending him away to play while they continued to kill the animals (Rdo rje gsang ba rtsal, 1974: 261). When Dorjé Sangwatsel is taken to study at a monastery at the age of four, following his recognition as a *tulku*, he seems to criticize his parents of neglect by describing how a cruel chaperone named Jokar was sent along with him to the monastery. The chaperone taunts the child by talking about frightening creatures and he mistreats the child as well (for instance, by not cleaning food off of the boy's clothes)—conduct that the author recalls as "wicked" (*ngan*). Although Dorjé Sangwatsel concedes that his parents tried to do something good, he seems to ultimately blame their neglectful oversight for this unpleasant experience (ibid.: 260–261).

Dorjé Sangwatsel recalls one of his childhood teachers, Lobsang Dorjé, with particular disdain. The author mentions that this teacher had the reputation, among the student body, of being severe. Dorjé Sangwatsel describes him as harsh, or *tsanen* (*tsha nan*), to a great extent (*tsha nan che*) (ibid.: 262). *Tsanen*, which may convey positive or negative meanings depending on context, means strict, stern, or harsh (Goldstein, 2001: 870) and may describe not only harsh education (*slob gso*) (Krang dbyi sun, 2006: 2244), but also harsh scolding (*kha rdung*) (ibid.) and beating (*nyes rdung*) (Goldstein, 2001: 870). Although harsh discipline, including corporal punishment, of children is sometimes extolled in Tibetan hagiography, as discussed below, the characterization of Lobsang Dorjé as *tsanen* may best be read as a condemnation in light of Dorjé Sangwatsel's criticism of his teacher's excessive use of corporal punishment as well as the author's overall disparagement of this mentor. Dorjé Sangwatsel writes,

> I had to wake up at the first call of the rooster and recite scripture. I wasn't allowed to sleep until the middle of the night. A small measure [of his severity] was down to the fact that I was too restless because I was young—that's largely true. Yet he would beat me not just for the sake of my learning alone, but also even when I erred in the most miniscule way when he asked me to serve him.[17]

Dorjé Sangwatsel accepts part of the responsibility for his childhood beatings on the basis of his restlessness. The rest, the author seems to suggest, was excessive. Even this partial blame is significantly condemnatory given its deviation from the veneration of one's teachers so routinely featured in Tibetan monastic autobiography. What is particularly damning toward Lobsang Dorjé in this passage is Dorjé Sangwatsel's comment that the beatings exceeded their use in molding his good qualities (*yon tan*)—in other words, the child's learning—as they also resulted from simple mishaps in serving the lama. As such, the lama's deficiency results not in the fact that he beat the child, but because these beatings were unrestrained and not pedagogically useful.

[17] *zhog pa bya skad dang po nas langs te dpe cha skyor dgos pa dang / mtshan la srod 'khor phyi mo'i bar nyal ru mi yong / cung zad ni rang yang lo na phra bas 'tshub drag pa yod shas che la yon tan rkyang pa'i ched du ma yin par lag g.yog bskul ba phran bu byung min la yang nyes brtung gnang gi yod* (Rdo rje gsang ba rtsal, 1974: 262).

Lobsang Dorjé replaces the boy's earlier teacher after the latter fell into disfavor with another of the protagonist's principal caregivers at the monastery, a figure referred to in the autobiography as "doctor" (*em rje*)—about whom more will be discussed below. The image of the strict and cruel Lobsang Dorjé is carefully juxtaposed in the text with the earlier teacher, who taught the boy the alphabet, refuge prayers, and other teachings "through a gentle approach" (*'jam po'i sgo nas*). Dorjé Sangwatsel describes his first teacher as "wise and loving" (*mkhas shing byams pa*) (Rdo rje gsang ba rtsal, 1974: 262) in stark contrast to Lobsang Dorjé, who is not only cruel, but, as we will see below, also ineffective and lacking in knowledge.

Dorjé Sangwatsel, moreover, remembers being frustrated over his studies undertaken as a twelve-year-old with his deficient teachers. He laments his inability to find masters who could effectively instruct him in the texts and subjects in which he was interested and that he hence awkwardly studied alone. He likens this process to grasping in the dark, as the technique was sometimes completely ineffectual, and he reflects that knowledge learned without the guidance of masters should be better hidden away from others (ibid.: 267–268). Dorjé Sangwatsel writes that at the age of thirteen, his week-long meditation retreat was fruitless because he was not taught the correct instructions (ibid.: 271). Before leaving the Kongpo region in his early teens to study at Sera Monastery, the protagonist writes that from his teachers he was merely able to learn a little reading, writing, and chanting. He adds that he had a strong interest in learning the sciences (*rig gnas*), but that it would be difficult to find a "competent teacher" (*slob dpon tshad ldan*) in his district (ibid.: 273–4).

Dorjé Sangwatsel not only recalls that his monastic guardians were cruel and ineffective, but also narrow-minded with regard to his religious education. He remembers that his teacher (likely Lobsang Dorjé) as well as the aforementioned "doctor"—his two principal guardians, it appears—would not let him meet with an important religious figure from Dorjé Drak Monastery, who the child (who was twelve at the time) evidently revered and exceedingly wished to see (ibid.: 269–270).[18]

This first section of the autobiography concludes with Dorjé Sangwatsel setting out for Lhasa, leaving behind his narrow-minded, cruel, and ineffective mentors. Once in Lhasa, Dorjé Sangwatsel encounters a teacher who is knowledgeable, pedagogically effective, and kind, and the author devotes a space to highlighting the importance of kindness in teaching—further casting his deficient childhood teacher, Lobsang Dorjé, in a negative light. Dorjé Sangwatsel recalls that he met his new teacher, Pombor Lobsang, during a time of loneliness. He profusely compliments Pombor Lobsang in the autobiography with details on his pedagogical mastery, how he was widely admired, and how he possessed both "great knowledge and a gentle mind" (ibid.: 279). The juxtaposition between Pombor Lobsang and Lobsang Dorjé is clear. Of Pombor Lobsang, Dorjé Sangwatsel writes, "He did not behave abruptly toward beginners—he was skillful in training them

[18] I have not yet been able to identify this lama, who appears to be a woman, named Rje btsun mkha' 'gro rin po che kun bzang 'jigs med bde ldan (ibid.: 269.4–5).

by virtue of his gentleness. When my teacher was alive, I never remember him giving me a harsh scolding, let alone ever beating me."[19]

Characteristics of the Deficient Parent Theme in Tibetan Hagiography

Cruelty

Dorjé Sangwatsel's childhood guardians who are deficient through their cruelty successfully highlight the protagonist's virtuous qualities. The juxtaposition between the kinder and more effective teachers and the cruel Lobsang Dorjé serves as forum for Dorjé Sangwatsel to expose the importance he places on wisdom and compassion. It is important to note that the teacher's severity is not presented in the text as a skillful technique to help the boy learn; the violence appears to be gratuitous, and, as mentioned above, Dorjé Sangwatsel portrays all of his teachers from this period of his childhood as overwhelmingly ineffective. Juxtaposed against his deficient teacher, furthermore, Dorjé Sangwatsel comes to epitomize—as both a child and adult—his own repeated assertions that true masters are endowed with both wisdom and (a gentle form of) compassion. The tale involving Dorjé Sangwatsel's reaction to his mother and father killing yaks and sheep highlights the boy's concern for the suffering of animals—a concern that illustrates his compassion.[20] The episode additionally highlights the narrator's integrity vis-à-vis his parents' seemingly nonchalant or uncaring reaction to butchery, as does Dorjé Sangwatsel's critique of their neglectful actions in selecting his deficient chaperone. These qualities of compassion, insight, and integrity are achieved through an intertwined amalgam of experience, memory, emotion, and opinion. Childhood establishes the innateness of these qualities; the narrator's consistent opinions help to provide a coherent (and also innate or genuine) profile of an enlightened being—something that is no doubt important in the life story of any awakened master.[21]

Although parents can be cruel toward their children in all sorts of different ways in Tibetan hagiographies, these stories expectedly tend to highlight the protagonists' advanced spiritual qualities, as we have seen in Dorjé Sangwatsel's story. Tibet's most famous yogi Milarepa, for instance, thanks his aunt—whose calculated, evil, and profound selfishness set in motion Milarepa's ruin—for supporting his cultivation of patience. Milarepa says, "It is taught that patience is the best means for attaining buddhahood. My aunt is the support for cultivating such patience, and it is thanks to my uncle and aunt that I have met with authentic dharma" (Gtsaṅ-smyon He-ru-ka, 2010: 132). Parental cruelty also reveals protagonists' awakening to the truth that reality is full of suffering (*sdug bsngal*; *duḥkha*). Orgyan Chökyi (1675–1729), a Tibetan Buddhist nun

[19] *gsar bu ba la har spyod ma yin par 'jam po'i ngos nas bslab mkhas pa zhig ste / dge rgan bzhugs ring nyes brdung phar bzhag / bka' bkyon che ba gcig gnang ba ma dran* (ibid.: 280–281).

[20] The concern for animals is a hagiographic virtue in Tibetan life writing. See instances of this in the life story of Orgyan Chökyi (Schaeffer, 2004: 73, 74, 75, 81, 83, 99–100, 137–145, 164). Also see Thondup (2002: 120).

[21] On the inseparable nature of the protagonist, narrator, and author—what Philippe Lejeune calls the "autobiographical pact"—in Tibetan autobiography, see Gyatso (1998: 107).

from the region of Dolpo in northwestern Nepal, recalls her parents hatred of her as a child and a home replete with "suffering, yelling, [and] unnecessary beating" (Schaeffer, 2004: 134)—an early life that she describes as a "mountain of suffering" (ibid.: 135). Amid this anguish, brought on in part by her parents' cruelty, Orgyan Chökyi embraces the Dharma as a "panacea that will cure her from suffering" (ibid.: 73). Neglect of awakened children, whether due to cruelty or just general incompetence, fruitfully exposes the child's extraordinary preciousness. An episode from the life story of Longchenpa (1308–1364), a major Nyingma lineage teacher, recounts how the boy's mother, Sönam Gyen, forgot her son in the garden when she ran inside after the sudden onset of pouring rain. The boy was later returned to Sönam by the female protector deity Remati, who scolded the mother, threatened her with a sword, and reminded her of the child's special destiny (Stewart, 2013: 30).

The profound extent of a child's innate compassion is revealed in one story about a boy who transforms his malicious father. Before going on to become a monk at Shalu Monastery, Sotön Śākyapel (1355–1432) grew up in a lineage of expert weathermen-sorcerers (*sngags pa*) and trained in the techniques of pushing back hailstorms to protect farmers' fields. Śākyapel's father had a fierce temper and would direct hailstorms toward the fields of his enemies. After observing the child's compassionate conduct—for instance, in delivering Buddhist sermons to frogs on a riverbed—the father renounces his aggressive ways:

> On one occasion, Śākyapel went outside and sat facing a spring that was full of frogs while reciting refuge prayers. His father asked, "Boy, what are you doing?" Śākyapel replied, "I'm giving teachings to many sentient beings." Since the boy had such great compassion, he was given the name Great Bodhisattva. [At times] when the father was just slightly insulted, he would bring hail down on his enemy's field through sorcery. Although the father was once like that, after having seen the conduct of this holy one (*dam pa*), he stopped behaving in this [hostile] way.[22]

It should be noted that the cruelty Dorjé Sangwatsel recalls is different from the many stories in which guardians are lauded for instilling good qualities through skillfully applying harsh discipline. An example of this is found in the autobiography of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thayé (1813–1899), in which his father, as the autobiographer tells us, "would beat and discipline" his son at the sight of the "slightest childish behavior" (Barron and Koṅ-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas, 2003: 10). Jamgön Kongtrül asserts that his father did this in order to set him on a virtuous path, to steer him away from growing up like those "who were reckless or greedy, or who drank a lot or stole a lot or lied, and who were finally cast out from the ranks of their fellow men" (ibid.: 11). Jamgön Kongtrül

[22] *skabs shig phyir byon nas / lu ma 'khyil ba sbal cong gis khengs pa gcig gi gdong na bzhugs te / skyabs 'gro gcig mdzad kyin 'dug ba la / yab kyis o lo ci byed kyin yod dris pas / sems can shin tu mang po la chos bshad kyin yod gsungs skad / snying rje shin tu che bas / mtshan yang byang sems chen po zhes btags so // yab de thugs la cung zad mi 'tshams pa byung na / pha rol po de'i zhing sar ser ba sgos 'bebs kyi mthu rang mdzad pa zhig yod kyang dam pa 'di'i mdzad spyod gzigs pa nas de 'dra mi mdzad pa zhig byung gda'* (Blo gsal bstan skyong: 1971a, 125).

finally praises his father's corporal punishment, writing: "At such times, I would be very hurt, upset, and discouraged, but as I reflect on it later, the fact that I am now at least acceptable in the ranks of human beings is due to the kindness of that old father of mine, and I see him as extremely caring" (ibid.). Chögyam Trungpa likewise recalls how his main teacher before the age of seven would only beat him out of necessity and remembers that his tutor likened the beatings to "molding an image" (Trungpa, 1985: 48). Tulku Urgyen Rinpoché (1920–1996) describes his childhood teacher similarly: "When he was sweet, he was very sweet—but when he got angry, he would beat us. Nevertheless, he was very kind" (Urgyen, 2005: 145). In narratives such as these that praise the skillful use of corporal punishment as ultimately compassionate, strict parents are portrayed as kind and virtuous, rather than deficient.[23]

Narrow-Mindedness

Dorjé Sangwatsel's anecdote about his monastic guardians not allowing him to meet with the lama from Dorjé Drak Monastery—especially in the context of his wider portrayal of his teachers as ineffective and lacking in knowledge—suggests a critique of their narrow-mindedness with respect to his religious training and potential. The precise reason why the guardians oppose the meeting is not explicitly disclosed, but one reading of the story is that Dorjé Sangwatsel's insight into the importance of the encounter is beyond that of his teachers—again, exalting the protagonist above his guardians. That the story is fruitfully read in this way might be supported through examining similar, though more developed, narratives.

Parental antagonism toward a child's religious destiny in Tibetan hagiography can help to expose the religious zeal and special insight and nature of the enlightened child. In the autobiography of Chögyam Trungpa, the author recalls that his early childhood teacher was replaced when Trungpa was seven with another tutor. Of his first monastic teacher, Asang Lama, Trungpa writes how he was "indeed almost a father to me" (Trungpa, 1985: 47) and remembers how he loved listening to stories about the Buddha and the boy's previous incarnation while walking outside with him (ibid.: 46). Trungpa reports how his monastic superiors were displeased with the amount of time Asang spent telling his pupil stories (ibid.: 47). As his first teacher was dismissed, Trungpa recalls, "I found this parting almost harder to bear than when my mother went away" (ibid.).[24] Trungpa juxtaposes his first teacher against the new replacement, Apho-karma, who Trungpa describes as "more temperamental" than his previous lama (ibid.). The teacher, always "serious and solemn," made the lessons more difficult, discontinued

[23] The cruel parent is found in a number of Christian hagiographies. Saint Nicholas the Pilgrim (eleventh century), for instance, patiently bore his mother's repeated beatings, which were incited by his constant chanting (Weinstein and Bell, 1982: 60). Similarly, the fourteenth-century Saint Panacea (1368–1383) endured the vicious beatings of her stepmother, who eventually murdered the girl because she forgot to stable the animals at night while she was praying (ibid.; Wasyliw, 2008: 102).

[24] June Campbell offers a psychological analysis of Chögyam Trungpa's childhood as it is presented in his autobiography, focusing on the absence of his mother and the "all-male society of the monastery" (1996: 87).

Trungpa's painting lessons, and too infrequently told the boy stories (ibid.: 47–48). Under his first tutor, Trungpa depicts his childhood spent outside among animals and nature, filled with pleasant conversations, walks, and jokes; whereas his experience under the second teacher is more sterile and unhappy, and he admits to being initially afraid of Apho (ibid.: 50). The nature of Apho's parental deficiency appears to be a sort of misplaced and ineffective pedagogical conservatism and severity, juxtaposing Trungpa's playful and creative enlightenment—qualities for which this master would become famous. Apho's dismissal of Trungpa's prophetic dream about coming to the West brings the contrast to the fore. Upon Trungpa's recounting to his teacher of a dream about airplanes, trucks, and Western shoes (signaling his future destiny in the West), Apho responds, "Oh it's just nonsense" (ibid.: 48).[25] Trungpa's enlightened nature and special destiny is *literally* sculpted through his relationship with a conservative, narrow-minded, and sour mentor, who is unable to recognize and nurture the special religious nature and destiny of the child.

Another similar story is found in the autobiography of Losel Tengyong (b. 1804). At the age of thirteen, he is overcome by a compulsion to heal the sick after witnessing the death of one of his lama's associates (Blo gsal bstan skyong, 1971b: 501), a retrospection he grounds in plentiful musings on the soteriological profundity of medical practice. The boy's lama, who educated and cared for the child from the age of seven, initially objects to the boy's education in medicine, hinting of his embarrassment in front of his peers over his student's (perhaps undirected) studies, and scolds the child, telling him to terminate his medical training (ibid.: 502). It is only when the boy's guru unexpectedly encounters a page from a medical text, Losel Tengyong's autobiography reveals, that a deep understanding arose in the lama's mind, an understanding which led him to allow Losel Tengyong's medical studies (ibid.). From a misplaced conservatism in education, readers witness the lama's mind opening to the realization that medical training (even if done haphazardly) is central to Buddhist education—something the child already recognized (unlike his teacher), and which captured the ecumenism in Buddhist learning that Losel Tengyong would come to stand for throughout his life.

Stories of deficient parents can importantly exalt the protagonist, even as a child, above his or her own mentors—demonstrating that an enlightened child knows better than an ordinary teacher. The juxtaposition against narrow-minded monastic guardians thrusts the child into a discourse of authenticity, cleverly distancing him from the trappings of monastic life as rote, shallow, and given to greed, pride, and ambition that often anxiously pervade Tibetan monastic literature.

These stories from monastic life might be understood as a variant of the general theme encountered in Buddhist literature of parental obstruction toward a child's religiosity, which likewise reveals a child's special nature and destiny. The famous model for this theme is the Buddha's father, Śuddhodana, who repeatedly attempts to deter his son from renunciation. In Tibetan hagiography, mothers and fathers frequently play key

[25] Misunderstanding special messages from children as nonsense is seen in the biography of Namchö Mingyur Dorjé, whose past life experiences were initially dismissed as a child's imagination (Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, 2011: 257).

roles in grounding the protagonists within a Buddhist theme of suffering through separation from the Dharma,[26] which typically manifests as the child's separation from monastic life.

These narratives illustrate the great depths of a child's commitment to Buddhist renunciation—so much so that the alternate modes of religiosity that the children turn to as substitutes to monastic life fruitfully demonstrate their extraordinary monastic virtues. In the biography of Wangchug Rabten (1558–1636) of Shalu Monastery, for instance, the boy's mother repeatedly refuses her son's pleas to become a monk. Despite the mother's hindrances, he nonetheless conducts himself virtuously as a young layman until he is old enough to take ordination. While waiting to become a monk, the young man serves as a lay official (*drung 'khor*) for the powerful house of Rinpung, and is captured and arrested during a political conflict (Blo gsal bstan skyong, 1971a: 318). During his incarceration, Wangchug Rabten conducts himself virtuously: he engages in Buddhist practices, including offering the first portion of his prison rations to Dharma protectors (ibid.). A similar story is found in the biography of Gongkar Dorjé Denpa Jigmé Pawo (1432–1496), also of Shalu Monastery. The boy's mother insists that he become a political leader and forces him to study a number of treatises on statecraft (ibid.: 173). The boy complies, but studies Buddhist scriptures and commentaries in secret. To please his mother he travels to Neudong, then a major center of Tibetan political power, at the age of thirteen, to serve the Tibetan king Drakpa Chungné (1414–1445), who installs the protagonist as a governor of a Tibetan region at the age of fifteen (ibid.: 173–174). The text mentions that he "governed according to Dharma" and even fathered offspring, pleasing his mother through perpetuating the family line (ibid.: 174), just as the *siddha* Nāropa (1016–1100) did to please his parents (Guenther, 1971: 14 ff.). This demonstration of external (*phyi rol*) behavior is always coupled, we read, with the protagonist's inner (*nang*) activities of listening, contemplation, and meditation (*thos bsam sgom*)—an exemplary trilogy of monastic pursuits. Even after the age of 20, the boy's mother still prohibits him from joining the Buddhist order, and so he takes "intermediate" or "pre-novice" ordination (*bar ma rab byung*) (Blo gsal bstan skyong, 1971a: 174).

Many life stories showcase parental opposition to yearnings for adopting the monastic life. The autobiography of the female treasure revealer (*gter ston*) Sera Khandro (1892–1940) reveals that the protagonist's father wishes her to study Chinese and become a political leader, while Sera Khandro herself yearns to study Tibetan and become a nun (Jacoby, 2007: 20). In the life story of Yeshé Tsogyel, the eighth-century consort and disciple of the Indian saint Padmasambhava, we witness a heroine's determination to avoid marriage—to evade, as Tsogyel says, "incarcerating [her]self within the dungeon of worldly existence"—in search of renunciation (Dowman, 1996: 15). Because she refuses to accept a suitor, Yeshé Tsogyel's father dramatically throws her out of the house, saying "whoever lays hands on her first can have her," thereby setting in motion a struggle that exposes her fervor for renunciation (ibid.: 16). In the biography of Jamgön Ngawang Gyeltsen (1647–1732), a Bhutanese Drukpa Kagyü lama, the boy's parents refuse their son's request to wear a monk's robe (Dargye and Sørensen, 2008: 41).

[26] Kurtis Schaeffer discusses the importance of this kind of suffering in the life of Orgyan Chökyi (2004: 73).

Later, when the child has a chance to become a monk, the father keeps him home and only yields to his son's desire for renunciation subsequent to pressure from the Bhutanese ruler Tenzin Drukdra (r. 1656–1667) (ibid.: 42–43).

In some cases, parents who initially oppose a child's religious destiny come to accept, and even celebrate, their offspring's plans and special nature. In the biography of Shalu Monastery's Khyenrab Chöjé Rinchen Khyenrab Chogdrup (1436–1497), for instance, the boy's parents initially refuse to let their son become a monk, a vocation he hoped to pursue beginning at the age of four. It is only after resolving to run away to a monastery at the age of fourteen that his parents realize their son's determination and support his decision in going forth to take ordination (Blo gsal bstan skyong, 1971a: 178). In the biography of Rinchen Namgyel (1318–1388), also of Shalu Monastery, the main character's mother is a nun impregnated by a miraculous pill (*ril bu*) given to her by a lama, and thus the boy had no human father.[27] This initially raises the grandfather's suspicions about his daughter's chastity and he considers the child a "bastard" (*nal phrug*) (ibid.: 46). As the grandfather comes to know his grandson, however, he realizes that the boy must be an emanation (*sprul pa'i sku*) and showers him with love until the latter takes his novice ordination from the master Butön Rinchendrup (1290–1364) at the age of ten (ibid.: 46–47). In this story, the grandfather's initially negative view of the child is transformed, and he comes to see the boy's profound spiritual potential.

Something of these stories, particularly those of parents transformed by children, resembles an episode found in Buddhist literature wherein the Buddha's father, Śuddhodana, comes to realize the validity of his son's insistent preference for renunciation of his royal career, and admits the higher purpose of the Buddha's path. Śuddhodana proclaims in the *Buddhacarita*, "Rightly (*sthāne*) you went away, abandoning sovereign glory. Rightly you toiled with great labour, and rightly, beloved as you were, you left your dear relations and have had compassion on us ... If you had become a universal monarch (*cakravartin*), you would not have caused me such joy as I now firmly feel by the sight of these magic powers and of your law."[28] It is noteworthy that *monastic* guardian-child clashes in the life stories of Tibetan Buddhist monks, inheritors of the Buddha's tradition, still parallel the paradigmatic tension between the Buddha and his father. It is ironic that this crucial conflict in the Buddha's early life, which sets him on the path to renunciation, is recapitulated in the life stories of monks safely within the Buddhist universe. Indeed, they are within the Buddhist monastery itself![29]

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[27] The account of the miraculous pill and its ingestion by Rinchen Namgyel's mother is found on Blo gsal bstan skyong, 1971a: 44–45.

[28] *Buddhacarita XIX.31,33* (E. H. Johnston, 2004, Part III: 45–46). Capitalizations have been altered from Johnston's translation.

[29] Narrow-minded guardians are regularly encountered in stories about child saints from various traditions. The theme is present in biographies of major Buddhist figures, such as the Japanese Shingon founder, Kūkai/Kōbō-Daishi (774–835), whose father, brother, and uncle opposed his desire to become a Buddhist monk (Wayman, 1966: 154). The parents of the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469–1539), likewise repeatedly attempted to involve their son in worldly affairs to dissuade his religious calling (on the childhood of Guru Nanak, see McLeod, W. H. [1984: 18 ff.]).

Immorality

There are of course other ways in which deficient parents exalt enlightened children in Tibetan life writing that are not presented in Dorjé Sangwatsel's autobiography. The inherent purity of enlightened children seems to be highlighted through stories that suggest these children are particularly susceptible to "catching" a sort of immoral contagion from their impure parents. A story like this is found in the autobiography of Losel Tengyong. Following his mother's death just two days after he was born, Losel Tengyong is initially raised by his aunt and grandmother, both of whom are nuns (Blo gsal bstan skyong, 1971b: 480 ff.). After the aunt fails to uphold her disciplinary rules (*bslab khrims*), Losel Tengyong begins to suffer terrifying nightmares of an elephant-headed monster, which only cease after the boy undergoes his monastic tonsure ceremony (*gtsug phud phul ba*) at the age of seven (ibid.: 485–6).

A similar episode is found in the autobiography of Chögyel Dorjé wherein the three-year-old boy's mother eats deer meat, which causes the child to develop a stubborn illness, and which also causes his natural radiance (*mdangs*) to dull (Chos rgyal rdo rje, 1975: 22–23). Only when the boy's uncle performs a Buddhist ritual does the illness let up. Nevertheless, the boy's once extraordinary physical glow of his "luminous body that could not be obstructed by darkness" never returns.[30]

The contagion of immorality between impure parent and extraordinarily pure child broadly resembles stories from episodes in Christian hagiographies wherein saintly children refuse to nurse from "immoral" women (Weinstein and Bell, 1982: 24–25). A positive contagiousness also works in the opposite direction in Tibetan stories—yet another way of exposing a child's extraordinariness—through descriptions of enlightened children nursing from their mothers and affecting their mothers spiritually by doing so. The autobiography of Chögyel Dorjé recalls that his mother would experience "stainless great bliss" (*zag med bde ba chen po*) and have miraculous visions as her son drank from her breast (Chos rgyal rdo rje, 1975: 19).[31]

Christian hagiographies of the mystic Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) (Weinstein and Bell, 1982: 38–39), Aelfheâh, the archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1012), and the French hermit Theobaldus (1017–1066) (ibid.: 59), among others, portray parents who attempt to stymie their children's desires to become clerics. The biography of the patron saint of youth, Louis of Gonzaga (1568–1591), for instance, illustrates the point explored above that the religious determination of the child is enough to transform the mind of the parent. After deciding to enter the Jesuit order at the age of fifteen, "instead of pursuing the worldly career his father intended for him," his father was "unforgiving until at last his anger gave way to admiration for the boy's constancy of purpose" (ibid.: 26).

[30] *mun pas mi sgrib pa'i lus mdangs* (Chos rgyal rdo rje, 1975: 23).

[31] There seems to be a parallel here to Buddhist narratives about mothers gestating awakened beings (including the Buddha's mother Māyā), in which "the mother of a virtuous child will benefit from the innate qualities of her embryo" (Durt, 2002: 50). A story from Tibetan hagiography about a pregnant mother's spiritual transformation is found in Butön Rinchendrup's life story (Ruegg, 1966: 58 ff.). See Reiko Ohnuma's extensive analyses of (actual and metaphorical) breastfeeding narratives in South Asian Buddhist literature (2012: chapters 4 and 7).

Conclusion

When surrounded by a coterie of cruel, narrow-minded, and immoral parents, a child's awakened qualities of compassion, virtue, and insight are dramatically exposed. Adult antagonism toward a child's religious destiny intimates the unfeigned religiosity of an enlightened mind. When parents and mentors come to finally understand and appreciate their children's special nature, these stories dramatically illustrate the protagonists' non-ordinary ontology. Cruel and immoral guardians not only highlight a child's innate compassion, but also his or her deep insight into the nature of suffering. Narratives of deficient parents appear in both biography (*rnam thar*) and autobiography (*rang rnam*); authors of both genres have made use of this theme to expose a child's enlightenment.

While accounts of deficient (and ideal) guardians may be based on "real" experience, guardian-child interactions appear to be fertile media for the explication of the enlightened virtue of a child. Thus a bad parent can paradoxically be an ideal parent within hagiography's internal logic. The deficient parent–virtuous child is surely only a small component of the general literary strategy of exploiting interpersonal conflict—at any life stage and in any kind of relationship—to highlight a protagonist's exemplarity in Tibetan life writing, as well as all sorts of other literature. This paper looks at only one manifestation of the general literary practice of narrating stories through conflicts, conflicts which resemble experience and which hence make stories compelling.[32] On parent-child struggles in medieval Christian hagiography, Weinstein and Bell write: "The contest was the essence" (1982: 59). Surely this is true of Tibetan hagiography as well. The child-guardian relationship as a specific site of conflict, however, might fruitfully expose something of the "child" as a type of hagiographical category—one whose limitations of agency are best inverted in discrete literary techniques, for instance, within narratives of deficient parenting.

Besides biological age, notions of "childhood" in hagiographical monastic texts like those examined here are likely to be understood around a whole host of details on education, ordination, monastic training, travels, teachings given and received, participation in rituals, projects, and so forth.[33] That children of hagiographies are awakened beings ambiguates matters further because protagonists have merely "given the appearance" (*tshul bstan pa*) of experiencing their lives as fully mature "little adults"—thus placing additional hermeneutical layers on the text. The enlightened qualities of a child exposed in many Tibetan hagiographies both presage the protagonists' adult accomplishments and stabilize their ultimately unchanging wakefulness over the course of their lives. Similar issues are encountered in Chinese Buddhist biography. Miriam Levering writes, "One limitation of the genre of sacred biography is that the biographer could write only about those childhood traits or actions that confirmed that the subject did not change over the years … Consequently, we get depictions of the subject's childhood and youth that presage only later virtues or accomplishments" (Levering, 2013: 142). To add to the shifty category of childhood in Tibetan hagiography, we might note that the stories

[32] I discuss this further (Wood, 2012: 39–41) in relation to Losel Tengyong's compendium of Shalu Monastery's abbots' and lamas' biographies (Blo gsal bstan skyong, 1971a).

[33] On the various conceptions of children in Buddhist literature, see footnote 3.

examined above about children (generally under the age of fifteen) often involve—in one way or another—a certain lack of personal autonomy. Parental deficiency might thus be considered a literary mechanism, complementary to the extraordinary child episode, that dramatically reverses the ubiquitous ideas that children depend upon their parents and inevitably come to resemble them.

It would be interesting to investigate the theme of the deficient parent together with stories in Tibetan and other Buddhist literature in which deficient children may highlight parental virtue. An example is found in the *Nihon Ryōiki*, a collection of Buddhist tales compiled in late-eighth- / early-ninth-century Japan. This collection contains a story in which a son attempts to kill his mother so that he can obtain a mourning leave to be with his wife. As he steps forward to decapitate his mother, the earth opens to swallow him, and the mother attempts to save him, begging heaven for his forgiveness. The author of the story highlights the extraordinary compassion of the mother, writing, "How great the mother's compassion was! She was so compassionate that she loved an evil son and practiced good on his behalf" (Motomochi Nakamura, 1997: 75).

As discussed in the introduction, the initial typology of the deficient parent explored in this article would benefit from expansion on the basis of a larger sample of materials.[34] A larger sample might reveal a greater variety of deficient guardian types, some of which may resemble types of faulty parents found in other literary traditions. One sort of deficient parenting found in Christian hagiography, for example, is of parents who are "overly zealous in their efforts to further their children's spiritual vocations, or at least their ecclesiastical careers" (Weinstein and Bell, 1982: 63). Weinstein and Bell write that the ultimate point of such stories was to "emphasize that parental management was not the way to the religious life" (ibid.). Comparative cases from Christian hagiography might help to position the limits of how the deficient parent theme may behave in Tibetan hagiography and what may make the theme particularly Tibetan or Buddhist as opposed to Christian, for instance. In the medieval European context, Christian stories of deficient parents not only illustrate the general sanctity and perseverance of the child, but they also fulfill cautionary functions for parents that may embody specific religious and cultural meanings: to not "judge too quickly the extreme behavior of their children as they entered adolescence" (ibid.: 60) and to illustrate deplorable parental behavior that is "beyond the limit of Christian charity, even the charity of a saint" (ibid.: 62). Weinstein and Bell have looked at the ways in which differences in parent-child themes over time and in particular places may signal changing societal attitudes, such as emerging emphases on rational choice, shifts in power relations between parents and teenagers, or new attitudes toward adolescents (ibid.: 66–67). Further studies of guardian-child relationships in Tibetan hagiography, when contextualized historically and geographically, may reveal interesting information on the socio-cultural dynamics of family life and religious institutions in particular times and places.

[34] Aside from further studies of hagiographies similar to those examined in this article, an examination of parent-child relationships in Tibetan folklore might also yield some interesting results. See Macdonald (1990) and Schlepp (2002) about a version of the Cinderella story preserved in Tibetan.

While this study concerns itself with the qualities of hagiography—the literary textures of the parent-child relationship—we might nevertheless ascertain something regarding the bundles of assumptions about family that might be shared among the authors and readers of these texts. Despite Tibetan hagiography's compulsion to ennoble protagonists, something of a socio-religious commentary on notions of parenthood, beyond hagiography's goals, might still be gleaned from this literature. Could the two stories about the "immoral contagiousness" of biological parents or relatives reflect some sort of conceptual boundary between what constitutes biological versus non-biological parenthood? Narratives in which both types of guardians are depicted similarly in terms of their defects suggest, perhaps, that the authors and readers of these texts did not assume that either a domestic or monastic childhood was particularly better—parents in both the home and monastery could be ideal or deficient. The crossing over of the theme of the deficient parent between domestic and monastic narrative settings reveals the proclivity of Tibetan hagiography (and its authors and readers) to approach the monastery as "family"—a parallel to the medieval Christian view that in the monastery children could find "a new 'family'" and the "surrogates of their absent parents" in "their teachers, masters, and abbots" (McLaughlin, 2004: 55).

Tibetan Phonetic – Wylie Equivalents

Bara Kagyü = 'Ba' ra bka' brgyud

Butön Rinchendrup = Bu ston rin chen grub

Chögyam Trungpa = Chos rgyam drung pa

Chögyel Dorjé = Chos rgyal rdo rje

Chöying Dorjé = Chos dbyings rdo rje

Dorjé Drak = Rdo rje brag

Dorjé Sangwatsel = Rdo rje gsang ba rtsal

Drakpa Chungné = Grags pa 'byung gnas

Drukpa Kagyü = 'Brug pa bka' brgyud

Gongkar Dorjé Denpa Jigmé Pawo = Gong dkar rdo rje gdan pa 'jigs med dpa' bo

Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thayé = 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas

Jamgön Ngawang Gyeltsen = Byams mgon ngag dbang rgyal mtshan

Jokar = Jo sgar

Kagyü = Bka' brgyud

Kham = Khams

Khyenrab Chöjé Rinchen Khyenrab Chogdrup = Mkhyen rab chos rje rin chen mkhyen rab mchog grub

Kongpo = Kong po

Künsang Ngedön Longyang = Kun bzang nges don klong yangs

Lobsang Dorjé = Blo bzang rdo rje

Longchenpa = Klong chen pa

Losel Tengyong = Blo gsal bstan skyong

Marpa Chökyi Lodrö = Mar pa chos kyi blo gros

Milarepa = Mi la ras pa

Namchö Mingyur Dorjé = Gnam chos mi 'gyur rdo rje

Nāropa = Nā ro pa

Ngawang Jampel Tsültrim Gyatso = Ngag dbang 'jam dpal tshul khrims rgya mtsho

Neudong = Sne'u gdong

Nyangrel Nyima Özer = Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer

Nyingma = Rnying ma

Orgyan Chökyi = O rgyan chos skyid

Pombor Lobsang = Spom 'bor blo bzang

Remati = Re ma ti

Rigzin Chögyel Dorjé = Rig 'dzin chos rgyal rdo rje

Rinchen Namgyel = Rin chen rnam rgyal

Rinpung = Rin spungs

Sangnag Chökorling = Gsang sngags chos 'khor gling

Sera = Se ra

Sera Khandro = Se ra mkha' 'gro

Shalu = Zha lu / Zhwa lu

Sönam Gyen = Bsod nams rgyan

Sotön Śākyapel = So ston śākya dpal

Tenzin Drukdra = Bstan 'dzin 'brug grags

tsanen = *tsha nan*

Tsangnyön Heruka = Gtsang smyon he ru ka

Tsemönling = Tshe smon gling

Tsültrim Gyatso = Tshul khrims rgya mtsho

Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche = Sprul sku o rgyan rin po che

Wangchug Rabten = Dbang phyug rab brtan

Yeshé Tsogyel = Ye shes mtsho rgyal

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