

The science of sensual pleasure according to a Buddhist monk: Ju Mipam’s contribution to *kāmasāstra* literature in Tibet

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Abstract

Of all the myriad aspects of Indian learning to be incorporated into Tibetan Buddhist scholarship, one of the least likely would seem to be the Indian science of sensual pleasure, *kāmasāstra*. Even so, we do find traces of Sanskrit *kāmasāstra* transposed into Tibetan Buddhist idiom. The most innovative example is the *Treatise on Passion* (*‘Dod pa’i bstan bcos*) written by Ju Mipam Jamyang Namgyel Gyatso (1846–1912). This article investigates the reasons why the polymath monastic scholar Ju Mipam included *kāmasāstra* in his expansive literary output, as well as his sources and influences for doing so. It argues that Mipam’s work builds on an intertextuality already apparent in late medieval Sanskrit tantric and *kāmasāstric* works, but one that took on new importance in the context of the non-biased outlook (Tib. *ris med*) that characterized Ju Mipam’s nineteenth-century eastern Tibetan milieu.

Keywords: *Kāmasāstra*, Tibetan Buddhism, Tantra, Ju Mipam Jamyang Namgyel Gyatso (*‘Ju mi pham ’jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho*), *Rimé* (*ris med*)

Sensual pleasure is centrally important for different reasons in two South Asian knowledge systems: the secular domain of *kāmasāstra*, “the science of sensual pleasure”, and the religious domain of later Tantric Buddhism.¹ On the one hand, in works dedicated to *kāmasāstra*, the pursuit of sensual pleasure for its own sake reigned supreme. Sanskrit-language works such as the third-century Vātsyāyana’s *Kāmasūtra* and later works dating from the early second millennium such as Padmaśrī’s *Nāgarasarvasva* and Kokkoka’s *Ratirahasya* contain a broad array of aesthetic concerns relevant to the Indian urbane, such as cosmetics, perfume, games, poetry, gardening, courtship, domestic affairs and

1 I wish to thank Wendy Doniger for her encouragement and useful feedback about this article from its early stages. The article benefitted from inclusion in a papers session on “Buddhism and sexuality” at the 2014 American Academy of Religion meeting in San Diego co-sponsored by the Buddhism Section and the Religion and Sexuality Group. In addition, input from Matthew Kapstein, Vesna Wallace, Jeffrey Hopkins, Douglas Duckworth, Donald Lopez, Theresia Hofer, and Barbara Gerke made this a better work. Last but not least, I am grateful to the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (formerly Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, TBRC), without which accessing the Tibetan texts cited here would have been exponentially more difficult.

friendship, but they are best known for their expositions of the 64 erotic arts.² On the other hand, in later Tantric Buddhist works, sensual pleasure was an important tool on the spiritual path not as an end in itself but as a method for transmuting the craving of passionate desire into wisdom-infused bliss endowed with the capacity to eradicate the craving from which it arose. A common tantric analogy for this process is that of an insect born from wood (i.e. desire), who then consumes that wood and transforms it into wisdom. In the words of the first Panchen Lama Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen (Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1570–1662):

For example, even though a wood-born insect is born from wood, it completely consumes the wood. Likewise, by means of lust, great bliss is produced through an initial desirous motivation [followed by] looking, holding hands or embracing, and uniting the two [male and female] organs. When this [great bliss] is produced inseparably at the same time as a cognition realizing emptiness, the [ensuing] primordial wisdom in which bliss and emptiness are inseparable completely consumes the afflictions, ignorance, lust, and so forth.³

This alchemical transformation of sensual pleasure into blissful wisdom is not the focus of the rich erotic literature of India, nor did it inspire an indigenous Tibetan tradition of erotic literature.⁴

Nevertheless, we do find traces of the Indian science of sensual pleasure transposed from their cosmopolitan courtly origins into Tibetan Buddhist idiom. One of the most interesting examples is the earliest extant Tibetan-language *kāmasāstra* treatise, which was written by the monastic scholar Ju Mipam Jamyang Namgyel Gyatso ('Ju mi pham 'jam dbyangs nam rgyal rgya mtsho, 1846–1912). Despite the innovative nature of Mipam's *Treatise on Passion: Treasure Pleasing the Whole World* ('*Dod pa'i bstan bcos 'jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gter*), to date there has not been a single article published that focuses on it and no English translation yet exists.⁵ The reason for this is more than scholarly oversight, prudery over its explicit subject matter, or hesitancy regarding the complexity of its Tibetan language. Rather, scholarly dismissal of Mipam's *Treatise on Passion* can be attributed to the polemics of a later writer who based his own *Treatise on Passion* ('*Dod pa'i bstan bcos*) partly on

2 Daud Ali, "Rethinking the history of the *kāma* world in early India", *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 39, 2011, 2.

3 Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, *Gsung 'bum*, vol. 4 (*nga*) (New Delhi: Mongolian Lama Gurudeva, 1973, TBRC W23430), 40–1. Another translation of this passage can be found in Tsong-ka-pa, H.H. the Dalai Lama, and Jeffrey Hopkins, *Tantra in Tibet* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1977), 201.

4 "No indigenous [Tibetan] account of the topic [eroticism] seems to exist" according to Claus Vogel, "Surūpa's *Kāmasāstra*, an erotic treatise in the Tibetan Tanjur", *Studia Orientalia* XXX, 1966, 3.

5 For the Tibetan work, see Mi pham rgya mtsho, *Gsung 'bum*, vol. 13 (*nga*), (Paro, Bhutan: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, 1984–93, TBRC W23468), 525–90; and Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, '*Dod pa'i bstan bcos* (Delhi: T.G. Dhongthog, 1969, TBRC W1KG5251).

that of Mipam. The author of this later work was none other than the former monk and iconoclast Gendün Chöpel (Dge 'dun chos 'phel, 1903–51), remembered as the leading Tibetan intellectual of the twentieth century.⁶ Gendün Chöpel's *Treatise on Passion* gained broad acclaim internationally as well through the publication of an English-language translation by Jeffrey Hopkins.⁷ In his *Treatise on Passion*, Gendün Chöpel spared any pretence of modesty in comparing his work to that of his predecessor:

The venerable Mi pham wrote from what he studied.
 The promiscuous Chos 'phel wrote from what he experienced.
 The difference in the power of their blessings
 Will be understood when a passionate man and woman put them into
 practice.⁸

In his study of the work, Jeffrey Hopkins concurs with Chöpel's own view of the supremacy of his rendition of the 64 erotic arts. Because Chöpel's work contains more expansive descriptions of the erotic arts that provide more "intimate, vivid, and enticing detail", Hopkins concludes that "Mi-pam's text is dry by comparison".⁹ The great bibliographer of Tibetan works E. Gene Smith contributed his own hesitation about Mipam's *Treatise on Passion*, speculating that he "only worked from dusty Sanskrit originals" whereas Gendün Chöpel "was inspired to record firsthand information gained during his extensive travels in India".¹⁰ This may be, although Sanskrit originals of *kāmasāstra* works would have been scarce in Mipam's nineteenth-century eastern Tibet, and the fact that Mipam was a monastic hierarch does not necessarily indicate whether or not he wrote on this delicate matter from personal experience.¹¹ In any case, even if Gendün Chöpel's *Treatise on Passion* is richly packed with salacious detail, the fact that Gendün Chöpel wrote a Tibetan treatise on the Indian erotic arts while living as an ex-monk in India in 1938 is in many senses less surprising than Ju Mipam's authorship of such a text in eastern Tibet in 1886. In twentieth-century Colonial India, Gendün Chöpel had considerable international exposure to different social mores, religious scriptures, and modern ideas. He

6 Donald S. Lopez, *The Madman's Middle Way: Reflections on Reality of the Tibetan Monk Gendun Chopel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

7 Jeffrey Hopkins, *Tibetan Arts of Love* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1992). Currently there is another translation of Chöpel's *Treatise on Passion* in press: Gendun Chopel, *The Passion Book: A Tibetan Guide to Love and Sex*, trans. Donald S. Lopez and Thupten Jinpa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

8 Lopez, *The Madman's Middle Way*, 34. Except when otherwise noted, such as in this case, all Tibetan–English translations are my own.

9 Jeffrey Hopkins, *Tibetan Arts of Love*, 41–2.

10 E. Gene Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 327 n. 782. Here Smith also adds that "it should be noted that Mi pham's 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos (Chandra [1963], v. 1 no. 3382) is not one of his sparkling works".

11 There is no evidence that Mipam ever had a consort, though according to Khenpo Tsültrim Lodrö of Larung Gar in Serta, Kandzé Tibetan Autonomous Province (TAP), PRC, he is said to have taught in traditional Tibetan non-monastic dress and not monk's robes. See Douglas Duckworth, *Jamgön Mipam: His Life and Teachings* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2011), 211 n. 4.

had access to a broad array of Indic texts, he lists over 30, as well as diverse interlocutors including English, Indian, Russian and Tibetan friends. He was adept at learning languages, and translated English, Sanskrit and Pali-language works into Tibetan; he also wrote original Tibetan philosophical works, dictionaries, travelogues and medical treatises.¹² In contrast, Ju Mipam spent his entire life as a monastic scholar in the Tibetan cultural region, primarily in the Dergé (Sde dge) Kingdom in eastern Tibet, where *kāmaśāstra* works were uncommon. Mipam notes as much in the colophon of his *Treatise on Passion*, in which he writes that “previously this branch of tantric commentary was little known”.¹³

All this raises a number of questions: why did the indefatigable monastic scholar and meditation master Ju Mipam, who left no trace of ever having a consort of his own, write a *Treatise on Passion*? What were his literary, social, and/or situational inspirations for this endeavour? What influenced Mipam to present *kāmaśāstra*, which was originally as unconcerned with the imperatives of celibate monastic Buddhism as it was with tantric transmutations of passion, as a “branch of tantric commentary”? This article proposes preliminary answers to these questions as a beginning point for further research.

An overview of Mipam’s life and works

Ju Mipam was by many accounts a luminary among luminaries in the nineteenth-century religious domain of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism; he was “perhaps the greatest polymath Tibet ever produced”.¹⁴ His father, Gönpö Dargyé (Mgon po dar rgyas), was descended from the Ju (’Ju) clan, and his mother, Singchung (Sring chung), was the daughter of a minister in the Dergé kingdom. Unlike many other prominent Tibetan masters, as a youth Mipam was not regaled as an incarnation of some renowned personage, even though he showed signs in childhood of being a religious prodigy, mastering complex scriptures and beginning to compose his own. At the age of twelve he began his career as a lifelong monk by taking novice vows at Jumohor Sangngak Chöling (’Ju mo hor gsang sngags chos gling), a branch of the Nyingma Monastery Zhechen (Zhe chen). In 1861, during his late teens, a formative experience emerged for Mipam after the invasion of the Dergé Kingdom by Gönpö Namgyel (Mgon po nam rgyal, 1799–1865) of Nyarong (Nyang rong). Mipam travelled to central Tibet on pilgrimage, during which time he stayed at the Geluk Monastery Ganden (Dga’ ldan) for a short time and learned their traditions. He mastered not only the scriptures of his own Nyingma school but also those of the Geluk, Sakya, and Kagyü schools, contributing to his association with the nineteenth-century *rimé* (*ris med*) or “non-biased” outlook, which was characterized by broad education in diverse Buddhist commentarial

12 Hopkins, *Tibetan Arts of Love*, 19–21; 39.

13 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, ’*Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 136.

14 Karma Phuntsho, “Ju Mi pham nam rgyal rgya mtsho: his position in the Tibetan religious hierarchy and a synoptic survey of his contributions”, in Ramon N. Prats (ed.), *The Pandita and the Siddha: Tibetan Studies in Honor of E. Gene Smith* (Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute, 2007), 191.

traditions. Nevertheless, he was a staunch advocate of the Nyingma tradition. Mipam's rise as a pre-eminent monastic scholar and meditation master was aided by the royal patronage bestowed upon him for being the guru of the king of Dergé, Ngawang Jampel Rinchen (Ngag dbang 'jam dpal rin chen, c. 1850–1920), as well as his status as a leading disciple of several of the most esteemed nineteenth-century religious masters. His root guru was Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo ('Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, 1820–92). He also studied with Dzokchen Khenpo Pema Vajra (Rdzogs chen mkhan po pad+ma badz+ra, c. 1807–84), Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé ('Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas, 1813–99), and Patrül Orgyen Jikmé Chökyi Wangpo (Dpal sprul o rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po, 1808–87), among others. Together with his masters Khyentsé Wangpo and Kongtrül, Mipam received the title Jamgön ('Jam mgon) for his association with Mañjuśrī, the Buddha of wisdom.¹⁵

Mipam wrote more than almost any other Tibetan author.¹⁶ His works span Madhyamaka philosophy, logic, poetics, medicine, astrology, Tantra, politics, divination and much more, forming more than 200 works as listed by the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) and comprising about 30 volumes in numerous collected works (*gsung 'bum*).¹⁷ Within this encyclopaedic range of scholarship, according to Gene Smith, Mipam's greatest contribution to the cultural history of Tibet lies in his commentaries on important Indic Buddhist philosophical treatises.¹⁸ Hence, the large majority of scholarship on Mipam focuses on his philosophical works, as do translations of Mipam's writings.¹⁹ As well they should, given that his writings on Madhyamaka and other topics formed the platform for Nyingma monastic education that remains the dominant curriculum of Nyingma Monasteries in Tibet and its diaspora today.²⁰ Even so,

15 For more on Mipam's biography, see John W. Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty: Illuminating the View of Dzogchen, the Great Perfection* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999); Duckworth, *Jamgön Mipam: His Life and Teachings*; Steven D. Goodman, "Mi-Pham rgya-mtsho: an account of his life, the printing of his works, and the structure of his treatise entitled mKhas-pa'i tshul la 'jug-pa'i sgo", in Ronald M. Davidson, (ed.), *Wind Horse: Proceedings of the North American Tibetological Society* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1981), 58–78; Douglas Duckworth, "Mipam Gyatso", *The Treasury of Lives*, <http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Mipam-Gyatso/4228>.

16 Phuntsho, "Ju Mi pham nam rgyal rgya mtsho", 191. Phuntsho mentions just one person who wrote more, Bodong Pañchen Choklé Namgyel (Bo dong pañ chen phyogs las nam rgyal).

17 For Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) holdings of works Mipam authored, see <http://tbr.org/#/rid=P252>. Editions of Mipam's collected works include Mi pham rgya mtsho, *Gsung 'bum* (see n. 5); Mi pham rgya mtsho, *Mi pham gsung 'bum las gzhung 'grel skor*, 33 vols (Khreng tu'u: 'Jam dpal d+hI yig ser po'i dpe skrun tshogs pa, 2008, TBRC W1PD76231); Mi pham rgya mtsho, *Gsung 'bum*, 32 vols (Khreng tu'u: Gangs can rig gzhung dpe rnying myur skyobs lhan tshogs, 2007, TBRC W2DB16631); Mi pham rgya mtsho. *Gsung 'bum*, 42 vols (Gser rta rdzong: Gser rta bla rung sgar, 2014, TBRC W3JT13533).

18 Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 231.

19 In the bibliography of scholarship on Mipam published in 2011 in Duckworth, *Jamgön Mipam: His Life and Teachings*, 229–32, 17 of the 21 references pertain directly to Mipam's philosophical treatises.

20 Duckworth, *Jamgön Mipam: His Life and Teachings*, 11.

it is striking how much less attention Mipam's voluminous non-scholastic writings have attracted, a point recently underscored by Bryan Cuevas in his study of Mipam's "Handbook of Tibetan Ritual Magic".²¹ Mipam's writings indicate more than a cursory knowledge of all ten of the traditional Buddhist "arts and sciences", including the five major knowledge fields of soteriology (Buddhism), logic, language, medicine, and arts and crafts, as well as the five minor knowledge fields that include poetics, prosody, synonyms, dramaturgy, and astrology and divination.²² In particular, Mipam was "almost anthropologically oriented", to borrow Gene Smith's characterization of his interest in indigenous Tibetan subjects such as *mo* divination, sorcery, the Gesar epic, and crafts, the latter compiled into a compendium on practical arts (*Bzo gnas nyer mkho'i za ma tog*) including painting, sculpture, metallurgy, sewing, embroidery, incense-making, carving, ink-making and so forth.²³ Notably, his non-philosophical interests also extended deeply into Sanskrit literary arts, although he never travelled to India or interacted directly with Indians. This aspect of Mipam's oeuvre has received the least scholarly attention, though it includes his 300-folio Sanskrit–Tibetan dictionary, his equally expansive commentary on Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaḍarśa* (*Mirror of Poetry*), and the subject of my inquiry, his *kāmasāstra* work called *Treatise on Passion*.²⁴

Summary of Mipam's *Treatise on Passion*

Mipam's *Treatise on Passion* is a thirty-four-page work in Tibetan verse (T.G. Dhongthog edition; 25 folios in the Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey *Gsung 'bum* edition). He wrote it partly in the most frequent meter used in classical Tibetan verse, a seven-syllable line containing two disyllabic feet followed by one trisyllabic foot, and partly in the second-most frequent classical Tibetan meter, a nine-syllable line containing three disyllabic feet followed by one trisyllabic foot.²⁵ The main focus of Mipam's *Treatise on Passion* is how to arouse passion, beginning with an initial section enumerating the types of

- 21 Bryan J. Cuevas, "The 'calf's nipple' (be'u bum) of Ju Mipam ('Ju Mi pham)", in José Ignacio Cabezón (ed.), *Tibetan Ritual* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 167.
- 22 For a history of these ten Buddhist "arts and sciences", see Kurtis R. Schaeffer, "New scholarship in Tibet, 1650–1700", in Sheldon Pollock (ed.), *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern South Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500–1800* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
- 23 Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 231; Phuntsho, "Ju Mi pham rnam rgyal rgya mtsho", 195; Christoph Cuppers, "On the manufacture of ink", *Ancient Nepal: Journal of the Department of Archeology*, no. 113, 1989. For Mipam's compendium on practical arts, see Mi pham rgya mtsho, *Gsung 'bum* (Paro, Bhutan: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, 1984–93, TBRC W23468), vol. 10 (*ka*), 71–138.
- 24 For Mipam's Sanskrit–Tibetan dictionary, see Mi pham 'jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, *Skad gnyid shan sbyar rab gsal nor bu'i me long* (KaHthog: 'Jam dbyangs dge legs chos 'phel, n.d., TBRC W1KG15077). For his *Kāvyaḍarśa* commentary, see 'Jam mgon mi pham rgya mtsho, *Snyan ngag me long gi 'grel pa dbyangs can rol mtsho* (New Delhi: Getse tulku kundgalodoy, 1969, TBRC W30290).
- 25 For more on these verse forms and other Tibetan meters, see Victoria Sujata, *Tibetan Songs of Realization* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 123–5; 35–6.

yoginīs whose purpose is to “increase the joy of great bliss” (*bde chen dga’ ba ’phel*). Mipam classes these *yoginīs* into four categories: the lotus woman (Tib. *pad+ma can*; Skt. *padmini*), conch shell woman (Tib. *dung can ma*; Skt. *śāṅkhiṇī*), many-talented woman²⁶ (Tib. *ri mo can*; Skt. *citriṇī*), and elephant woman (Tib. *glang chen ma*; Skt. *hastinī*). This fourfold typology is not a product of the strange imagination of Mipam, but rather these are the four “leading ladies” (Skt. *nāyikā*) derived from Sanskrit dramaturgy (*nāṭyaśāstra*), who first appear in the later medieval Sanskrit *kāmaśāstra* work by Kokkoka titled *Ratirahasya*.²⁷ Also demonstrating influences from later Indian *kāmaśāstra* works are Mipam’s stylized descriptions of the features of each of these four types of *yoginī*, including information about beauty, body odour, shape of genitalia, voice, hair type, behaviour, and so forth. For example:

Smelling like fresh meat, she has a small body and well-shaped thighs.
 She has little shame, is quickly angered, and likes to fight.
 She is naked like a crow’s foot,
 With a lower lip hanging down [when] she lies on her back, and the voice
 of a pigeon.
 She is the color of blue-green incense herbs and her blood tastes salty.
 She has dark hair and is known as a “many-talented woman” (*ri mo can*).²⁸

Mipam summarizes that, “In short, seeing [these *yoginīs*] will bring bliss (*bde*) into your experience. Consorting with them will provide a conducive mentality for channel and wind practices”.²⁹ The channel and wind (*rtsa rlung*) practices Mipam addresses here are yogic practices aimed at loosening obstructions and promoting smooth circulation in the subtle body, a psycho-physical network of channels in which wind propels vital nuclei (Skt. *bindu*; Tib. *thig le*) necessary for longevity and spiritual realization. With this aim, Mipam suggests some concoctions for alluring such passion-arousing *yoginīs*, including ingredients as disparate as peacock feathers, one’s own blood and urine, cremation ground ashes, and vulture droppings. When these are compounded properly and rubbed into one’s forehead, “By saying, ‘Come here’, whomever looks at this will want [to come] immediately”.³⁰ From these potions, we see that Mipam was not only transposing Indic *kāmaśāstra* materials into Tibetan, but highlighting elements common in Tibetan contexts, such as vultures. Though vultures also appear in Indian magic, they are particularly important in Tibet not only because they con-

26 Monier-Williams defines *citriṇī* as “a woman endowed with various talents” in Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit–English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899), 397. The Tibetan translation *ri mo can* can mean “painter”, “artist”, or can refer to something possessing a design.

27 Daud Ali, “Padmaśrī’s *Nāgarasarvasva* and the world of medieval Kāmaśāstra”, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 39, 2011, 45.

28 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, *’Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 105.

29 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 107.

30 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 107.

sume carrion, but also because they consume human remains in sky burial rituals.³¹

The second section outlines a series of seven elements that arouse a “passionate attitude” (*’dod pa’i ’dun pa, kāmacchanda*), which incidentally is the same word often translated as “sensual desire” appearing as an obstacle to proper meditation, specifically as the first of five hindrances obstructing mindfulness. Here a *desideratum*, Mipam exhorts his readers to inspire a “passionate attitude” by means of sidelong glances, laughter, bathing and anointing one’s body with saffron, sandalwood and camphor, inspiring the flame of attraction by listening to the clinking sounds of the jewellery of one’s lover, listening to her singing, watching her dance while she is behind a curtain, sitting closely together, holding hands, and so on.

This leads Mipam into the third section, his description of the famous 64 erotic arts (*sbyor ba’i sgyu rtsal*), without which “there is no supreme bliss” (*mchog gi bde ba med*).³² He elaborates, “The sages taught these eight, which are each divided into eight parts, making 64, because those without expertise in the practice of these arts fornicate in the manner of beasts”.³³ Mipam delineates these eight arts as: 1) embracing (*’khyud*); 2) kissing (*’o byed*); 3) scratching (*sen mos rtsen*); 4) biting (*so ’debs*); 5) sexual positions (*’jug*); 6) moaning (*sid sgra ’byin*); 7) rubbing (*nyed*); and 8) acting like a man (*skyes pa ltar byed pa*).³⁴ This list of eight is nearly identical to that Gendün Chöpel would articulate three decades later. Both Mipam’s and Chöpel’s lists closely resemble the list of eight found in the *Kāmasūtra* itself: embracing, kissing, scratching, biting, sexual positions, moaning, the woman playing the man’s part, and oral sex.³⁵ It is in relation to this list of eight, and the related eight subsections for each, that Hopkins’ characterization rings the truest: “Gendün Chöpel’s descriptions are

31 For an analysis of the cultural influences on funerary practices in Tibet, in particular the possible Zoroastrian or Persian origins of sky burial, see Heather Stoddard, “Eat it up or throw it to the dogs? Dge ’dun chos ’phel (1903–1951), Ma cig lab sgron (1055–1153) and Pha Dam pa sangs rgyas (d. 1117): a ramble through the burial grounds of ordinary and ‘holy’ beings in Tibet”, in Sarah Jacoby and Antonio Terrone (eds), *Buddhism Beyond the Monastery: Tantric Practices and Their Performers in Tibet and the Himalayas* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

32 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, *’Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 109.

33 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, *’Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 109–10. This is reminiscent of a statement in Vātsyāyana’s *Kāmasūtra*: “Because a man and a woman depend upon one another in sex, it requires a method, and this method is learned from the Kamasutra. The mating of animals, by contrast, is not based upon any method ...”. See Vatsyayana, *Kamasutra*, trans. Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), v. 1.2.17–20, p. 9.

34 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, *’Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 110.

35 Mipam’s omission of oral sex from his list of eight may be significant, for in the *Kāmasūtra* (v. 2.9.6–24) this is where homosexual acts appear in the form of oral sex between a man and someone of the “third nature”, who can be a man imitating a woman. In Mipam’s *Treatise on Passion*, there is no mention of people of a third nature or of homosexual acts. Thanks to Wendy Doniger for calling my attention to the potential significance of this omission. It remains to be clarified whether this omission was Mipam’s or one of his Tibetan predecessor’s, though in either case it accords with the heteronormativity pervasive in Buddhist scriptures.

more expansive, containing titillating detail”.³⁶ Mipam’s work is considerably more terse, consuming six pages of the 1969 publication or five folio sides of the *gsung ’bum* edition, though these pages do not exactly make for “dry” reading either.

In describing these eight erotic arts, Mipam’s writing closely follows Sanskrit *kāmasāstra* works in most instances. For example, his enumeration of types of embraces paraphrases seven of the eight embraces described in both the *Kāmasūtra* (v. 2.2.6–19) and the *Ratirahasya*, and the two alternately described embraces are not very different. Mipam’s list includes: 1) touching (*reg pa can*); 2) grasping and piercing (*bzung ’bigs pa can*); 3) grinding (*’dar ba can*); 4) biting and pressing (*sos ’debs gzir ba can*); 5) climbing the creeper vine (*’khri shing zhon*); 6) picking fruit (*shing thog len*); 7) that which is like sesame and rice (*til ’bras lta bu*); and 8) that which is like mixing milk and water (*’o chu ltar ’dre*). Mipam completes his enumeration of embrace types at eight, whereas both the *Kāmasūtra* and the *Ratirahasya* add four additional categories.

At times Mipam’s rendition of the 64 erotic arts appears in outline form, without any of the corresponding explanations found in *kāmasāstra* works. For example, in a few verse lines he describes the second of the eight erotic arts: “Second, the types of kisses are divided according to location: mouth, neck, breast, armpit, hollow at the base of the spine, nose, cheeks, and female genitalia”.³⁷

Mipam’s third category about scratching with the nails includes the following eight parts: 1) lightly scratching near the ear, on the breasts, lips, and so forth in order to raise goose bumps, called separation (*bral ba*); scratching in patterns called 2) half moon (*zla phyed*); 3) circle (*dkyil ’khor*); 4) long-line (*ri mo ring po*); 5) tiger’s claw (*stag gi sen*); 6) peacock’s foot (*rma bya’i rkang rjes*); 7) hare jumping (*ri bong ’phyong ba*); and 8) lotus petal (*ut + pal ’dab ma*).³⁸ Mipam’s enumeration of types of scratching closely matches that of the *Kāmasūtra* and the *Ratirahasya*, though the latter is missing the “tiger’s claw”.

Mipam’s fourth category follows the *Kāmasūtra* and *Ratirahasya* quite closely aside from the first item on the list, including the following types of biting: 1) the root (Skt. *mūlakam*); 2) swollen (*shus skrang pa*); 3) lips and teeth (*mchu so*), also called coral and jewel (*bye ru’i nor bu*); 4) *maṇimālā*, or the jewel garland (*nor bu’i phreng ba*); 5) the dot (*thig le can*); 6) the dot garland (*thig le’i phreng ba*); 7) scattered clouds (*sprin gyi dum bu*); and 8) boar’s bite (*phag gis rmugs pa*).³⁹

Mipam’s fifth erotic art, sexual positions, matches the Indic materials in name only, whereas most of the content comes from the *Kāmasūtra* section “[a woman] acting like a man” (v. 2.8.22–29) and appears to be entirely absent from the *Ratirahasya*. The eight parts that make up Mipam’s sexual positions include: 1) churning (*sруб pa*); 2) the dagger (Skt. *hu la*); 3) grinding down (*tsher sруб pa*); 4) pressing (*gzir ldan*); 5) blast of wind (*nir kha ta*)⁴⁰

36 Hopkins, *Tibetan Arts of Love*, 41.

37 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, *’Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 111.

38 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, *’Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 111–2.

39 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, *’Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 113.

40 “*Nir kha ta*” is the Sanskrit word *nirghāta* (blast of wind) transcribed in Tibetan, with a note appended in Tibetan describing its meaning as “*rab bsnun*”, or “intense thrust”.

6) doing it like a sparrow (*mchil pa ltar byed*); 7) striking and thrusting (*rdeg cing bsnun pa*); and 8) thrusting like a boar (*phag ltar bsnun*).⁴¹

Following this are the eight types of moaning, the sixth erotic art, which Mipam describes along with the seventh erotic art, rubbing. The noises listed add up to more than eight, including crying, moaning, lamenting, uttering various syllables, and uttering sounds of birds such as dove, cuckoo, a black aquatic bird (*so bya*), bee, swan, and pigeon. As for rubbing, this section gets short shrift in that it does not have a separate list of eight parts.⁴²

Mipam's eighth and final section, "[a woman] acting like a man", includes more detail than the corresponding section in the *Ratirahasya* and contains positions different from those described in the *Kāmasūtra*, therefore suggesting a different source. He explains that the following eight postures should be used if the man is fatigued or in order to enhance his passion: 1) pulling (*drud pa*); 2) pressing (*tshir ba*),⁴³ 3) spinning (*bskor ba*); 4) spinning with the legs (*byin pas bskor ba*); 5) the resting one (*ngal gso can*); 6) flying garudas (*khyung ldng dag*); 7) very stretched out (*shin tu brkyang ba*); and finally 8) doing it the village way (*grong gi bya ba*).⁴⁴ The first three of these resemble positions in the *Kāmasūtra*, but the latter five do not have clear referents to Indic materials known to me.

After Mipam's exposition of the 64 erotic arts, his *Treatise* shifts in tone and also in meter, switching from seven-syllable lines to nine, and also towards a more esoteric description of the main topic, which is still "methods to increase bliss" (*bde ba spel ba'i thabs la brten*). This time, however, the focus is on proper timing according to the constellations and the lunar calendar, mantras, and aphrodisiac potions. This section is somewhat awkwardly appended to the preceding sections in that it is listed as "second"⁴⁵ when it seems it should be "fourth" after Mipam's previously numbered topics, which are, first, types of *yoginīs*, second, elements that arouse a passionate attitude, and third, his description of the 64 erotic arts.

The first part of the "ways to cultivate perfect bliss" (*phun tshogs bde ba'i thabs bsgrub pa*) involves being in beautiful surroundings conducive to the arts of love – a verdant and fragrant flowering grove with meadows and waterfalls covered by a delightful canopy of thunder clouds with lightening. In this pleasant atmosphere the elements that enhance bliss are bathing and being anointed with musk, camphor, sandalwood and saffron fragrances, being dressed in bejewelled raiment, and listening to harmonious song. Mipam then delineates the astrological times when intercourse is forbidden, including five of the 28 lunar mansions, as well as at dawn and dusk. Mipam's inclusion of astrological considerations in his *Treatise on Passion* builds on those found in later

41 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos, 113–4.

42 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos, 114–5.

43 The explanation for "pressing" is very similar to part four of the fifth erotic art "sexual positions" in Mipam's list, also called "pressing", (*tshir ldan*), although the roles are reversed – above it is the man doing the pressing and here it is the woman on top pressing down.

44 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos, 115–6. "Doing it the village way" is a tentative translation of *grong gi bya ba*.

45 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos, 116.

Indian *kāmaśāstra* works, such as the doctrine of *candrakalā*, which is the association of parts of the female body, sometimes marked with mantras, with different phases of the moon's monthly cycle. According to the *Nāgarasarvasva*, for example, the god of love Kāmadeva moves up the body from the toe to the top of the head over the first 15 days of the lunar month, after which it pervades the entire body for two days and then moves downward back to the toe during the waning days of the month.⁴⁶ We see a remarkably similar description in Mipam's work, though without mention of Kāmadeva, called the "pith instruction for increasing supreme bliss" (*bde ba mchog tu spel ba'i man ngag*). In this instruction, Mipam associates particular days of the waxing moon cycle with Sanskrit vowels on different parts of the body, starting with the toe and moving up to the lower leg, thigh, uterus, abdomen, heart, hand, throat, cheek, eye, ear, and finally the top of the head, after which unparalleled great bliss pervades the entire body, resulting in robust health, strength and the supreme accomplishment of spiritual realization (*dnagos grub mchog*).⁴⁷

But the majority of this portion of Mipam's text on "ways to cultivate perfect bliss" is dedicated to various potions, sometimes together with mantras, that will arouse bliss. For example:

Mix Hippophae Rhamnoides (*star bu*), Gymnadennia Orchidis Lindle (*dbang lag*), and Calcite (*cong zhi*) together with milk, drink it, and recite "*Ha ri ni sa*".
By this your desire will intensify.⁴⁸

These aphrodisiac compounds become particularly important when those cultivating bliss age. Mipam cautions that:

Yogis become devoid of heat at sixty and will lack bliss at seventy.
Women will be devoid of heat at fifty and at sixty will lack bliss. Therefore, while one is young, seek out supremely difficult-to-find great bliss.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, all is not lost if the flower of youth has faded, for Mipam details a variety of recipes to enhance the virility of the male:

Even if your body has grown old,
it can be revived by means of substances, mantra, and visualizations.
Relying upon supreme joy, arouse bliss.
Wash your "jewel" (*nor bu*) well, massage it with melted butter,

46 Ali, "Padmaśrī's *Nāgarasarvasva* and the world of medieval *Kāmaśāstra*", 47.

47 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, '*Dod pa'i bstan bcos*, 118–9.

48 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, '*Dod pa'i bstan bcos*, 118. The medicinal herb translations in this verse are drawn from Dr Tsering Thakchoe Drungtso and Mrs Tsering Dolma Drungtso, *Bod lugs sman rtsis kyi tshig mdzod bod dbyin shan sbyar, Tibetan–English Dictionary of Tibetan Medicine and Astrology* (Archana: Drungtso Publications, 2005).

49 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, '*Dod pa'i bstan bcos*, 120.

warm it with fire, and the seed of bliss will increase.

Mix equal parts of salamander (*da byid*), crab (*sdig srin*), and sparrow flesh (*mchil pa'i sha*)⁵⁰ together with honey.

Add pills made of this in a decoction of Malva Verticillata (*lcam pa*).

Combine crazy honey (*sbrang smyon*),⁵¹ Mandragora caulescens (*kha shog pa*),⁵² Datura seed (*thang phrom 'bru*),⁵³

and processed mercury (*dngul chu dul ma*) with old butter.

During the day smear this on your member, warm it up, and rub it in.

At night your “jewel” will grow larger and overwhelming supreme bliss will blaze forth.⁵⁴

Ingredients that recur in these potions include an array of aphrodisiac Tibetan medicinal herbs, licorice root, milk, honey, molasses, nutmeg, cinnamon and much more. Reminiscent of the seventh book of the *Kāmasūtra* on “Erotic esoterica”, Mipam’s aphrodisiacs contain some of the same ingredients as their Indian precursors such as honey, butter and licorice, but for the most part they make use of Tibetan flora and fauna. Amid this panoply of formulae, he makes no mention of substances that enhance the sexual capacity or experience of the female.

- 50 Salamander, crab and sparrow flesh (*da byid sdig srin mchil pa'i sha*) are described in the *Bod rgya tshig mdzod* as “types of medicines made from animals” (*srog chags sman gyi rigs*). See Krang dbyi sun (ed.), *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, vol. 1 (Beijing: The Nationalities Publishing House, 1993), 848; 1235; 463. According to Dr Pasang Yonten Arya, *Dictionary of Tibetan Materia Medica* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 95, “salamander,” or *da byid* (Latin *Batrachuporus pinchonii*) is the most powerful aphrodisiac. “Crab” (*sdig srin*) appears in two varieties: a “white” (*dkar po*) variety (Lat. *Potamon yunnanense*, freshwater crab) and a black (*nag po*) variety (Lat. *Butnus martensi*, scorpion) according to Dga' ba'i rdo rje, 'Khrungs dpe dri med shel gyi me long (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang), 377.
- 51 “Crazy honey” (*sbrang smyon*) is poisonous honey accumulated by a poisonous honeybee according to Dgra 'dul, Byams pa 'phrin las, Lho brag tshe ring bag gro, Bsod nams don grub, et. al., *Bod lugs gso rig tshig mdzod chen mo* (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006), 607.
- 52 *Mandragora caulescens* (Tib. *kha shog pa*), synonym *Mandragora chinghaiensis*, is sometimes called the Himalayan mandrake. See Arya, *Dictionary of Tibetan Materia Medica*, 18.
- 53 Tib. *thang phrom*, appearing in a white variety (*thang phrom dkar po*) known in Latin as *Przewalskia tangutica* Maxim and a black variety (*thang phrom nag po*) known in Latin as *Scopolia stramonifolia*. These are part of the family of flowering plants called Solanaceae, Eng. nightshade. See Dr Tsering Thakchoe Drungtso and Mrs Tsering Dolma Drungtso, *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Tibetan Medicine and Astrology*, 183. For more about types of *thang phrom*, see also Arya, *Dictionary of Tibetan Materia Medica*, 89–90.
- 54 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos, 120. For reference to Mipam’s expertise in processing mercury, called “tamed” mercury (*dngul chu dul ma*), see Olaf Czaja, “On the history of refining mercury in Tibetan medicine”, *Asian Medicine* 8/1, 2013, 91–3. On mercury processing in Tibetan medicine, see also Barbara Gerke, “The social life of Tsotel”, *Asian Medicine* 8/1, 2013 and Carmen Simioli, “The ‘Brilliant moon Theriac’ (*Zla zil dar ya kan*)”, *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 37, 2016.

The last section of Mipam's *Treatise on Passion* is dedicated first briefly to "ways of inciting desire (*chags pa*)" starting with types of flirtatious glances and progressing to touches and kisses, followed by a long section describing different sexual positions. This latter section is punctuated by a return to the same seven-syllable meter with which Mipam began. He lists 25 different sexual positions including "the arising of bliss" (*bde ba 'byung ba*), half-moon (*zla ba phyed pa*), honeycomb (*bung ba'i dra ba can*), tortoise embrace (*rus sbal bcing ba*), and palanquin (*do li am 'khyogs*).⁵⁵ Although these do not appear to correlate with positions found in Indian *kāmasāstra* works, they have a likely tantric source, which I will describe in the following section. Mipam then describes 16 additional sexual positions correlating to the 16 offering goddesses, consisting of four positions for each of four categories of beings: gods, demigods, humans and animals. The final topic returns to medicinal remedies made of a variety of Tibetan medicinal herbs, mercury, camphor, cowrie shells and more. This time, however, these are not aphrodisiacs *per se*, but rather substances meant to help the meditator retain his semen (*thig le 'dzin*) if he lacks the ability to do so via visualization (*dmigs pas bzung bar ma nus pa*).⁵⁶ While semen retention is not a common concern of *kāmasāstra* works, many South Asian tantric texts contain injunctions for the (male) meditator engaged in religious practice involving sexual union to refrain from losing semen and instead to absorb his female consort's fluids.

Sources for Mipam's *kāmasāstra* treatise

Mipam's *Treatise on Passion* is the first extant Tibetan *kāmasāstra* treatise, but it does have recognizable Tibetan-language antecedents.⁵⁷ In the work's colophon, Mipam alludes to these, identifying his sources as "treatises (Skt. *śāstra*, Tib. *gzhung*), Tantras (*rgyud*), and [tantric] commentaries (*dgongs 'grel*)".⁵⁸ In particular, Mipam probably drew from a short work also called *Treatise on Passion* (*'Dod pa'i bstan bcos*), which is attributed to Surūpa (Tib. *Gzugs bzang*) and appears in the Tantra section of the "Translated Treatises" or Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*) part of the Tibetan Buddhist canon.⁵⁹ Nothing is known about Surūpa, but the work is at least as old as the third Karmapa Ranjung Dorjé (Rang byung rdo rje, 1284–1339), who mentions it by title and author in his Tengyur catalogue.⁶⁰ It also appears in another Tengyur catalogue written by Butön Rinchen drup (Bu ston rin chen grub,

55 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, *'Dod pa'i bstan bcos*, 125–8.

56 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, *'Dod pa'i bstan bcos*, 132.

57 More Tibetan antecedents for Mipam's *Treatise on Passion* may yet come to light, but the other work currently listed in TBRC as part of the *kāmasāstra* (*'dod pa'i bstan bcos*) genre (Sle lung bzhad pa'i rdo rje, 1697–1740, "Rgyo 'dod skyes bu'i gdung sel", TBRC W8LS19933) is a tantric text about bringing sexual desire onto the path (*'dod chags lam du khyer*), not an antecedent to Mipam and later Gendün Chöpel's projects to write Tibetan works based on the Sanskrit genre of *kāmasāstra*.

58 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, *'Dod pa'i bstan bcos*, 135.

59 Gzugs bzang, "'Dod pa'i bstan bcos", in *Bstan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma* (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 1994–2008, TBRC W1PD95844), vol. 27, 1033–40.

60 Rang byung rdo rje. "Bstan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal gyi dkar chag", in *Gsung 'bum* (Xining: Mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006, TBRC W30541), vol. *nga*, 595–718.

1290–1364) in the early fourteenth century.⁶¹ This canonical *Treatise on Passion* commences with a description of the four female protagonists (Skt. *nāyikā*), as does Mipam's exposition. But unlike Mipam's text, the Tengyur text pairs these four with four male protagonists, including men known as the hare (*ri bong*), bull (*khyu mchog*), stallion (*rta*) and stag (*dgo ba*). From the Tengyur *Treatise on Passion*:

A hare is the master of a lotus woman.
 A bull is likewise that of a conch woman.
 A stallion is the master of an elephant woman.
 As for the many-talented woman, it is the stag.⁶²

The Tengyur text offers some brief comments on remedies that allow “those who lack the capacity to generate passion” to “generate passion difficult to counter-act” involving butter, heat and medicinal roots meant to be applied to the male sexual organ (*rtags*), though nowhere as detailed as the concoctions advocated by Mipam.⁶³ Like Mipam's later work, the Tengyur *Treatise on Passion* reproduces the doctrine of *candrakalā* that first appeared in later Indian *kāmasāstra* works; in this case the text associates various erogenous zones of a woman's body with the waxing days of the lunar cycle beginning on the first day with the top of the head and moving successively downward to the feet and back up again in the waning days. This is the reverse of the system Mipam included in his *Treatise*, which follows later Indian *kāmasāstra* works such as the *Nāgarasarvasva* by beginning at the foot and moving successively to the top of the head during the 15 days of the waxing moon. However, in other instances Mipam appears to be drawing quite directly on the Tengyur *Treatise on Passion*, such as in his description of the constellations under which intercourse is prohibited.⁶⁴

Mipam's *Treatise on Passion* indicates familiarity with the older Tengyur work, but a comparison of the two Tibetan *Treatises* reveals significant differences between them, indicating that Mipam had additional sources on *kāmasāstra* beyond that of the Tengyur work. Not only does Mipam's work not associate the four types of *yoginīs* with a corresponding typology of four types of men, but it also lacks the fourfold typology of women found in the Tengyur *Treatise* that divides them according to their medical constitution:

61 Rin chen grub, “Bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag yid bzhin nor bu dbang gi rgyal po'i phreng ba”, in *Gsung 'bum* (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2008, TBRC W1PD45496), vol. 26, 575–902.

62 Ibid., 976. Interestingly, Ali finds this symmetrical scheme of four types of females and four types of corresponding males in the fifteenth-century *Pañcasāyaka* and later Sanskrit *kāmasāstra* works, but the existence of this 8-fold typology in the Tengyur's *Treatise on Passion* suggests it originated earlier. See Ali, “Padmaśrī's *Nāgarasarvasva* and the world of medieval *Kāmasāstra*”, 45, n. 19.

63 Gzugs bzang, “Dod pa'i bstan bcos”, 976.

64 In his study and translation of the Tengyur *Treatise on Passion*, Claus Vogel translates these Tibetan constellations including: 1) *smin drug*; 2) *smal po mgo*; 3) *khra* (*wa* in Mipam's work); 4) *rta chung*; 5) *bre*; and 6) *phul dag*, as corresponding to the months of Kārttika (16 Oct.–15 Nov.), Mārgaśīrṣa (16 Nov.–15 Dec.) and Phālguna (16 Feb.–15 March). See Vogel, “Surūpa's *Kāmasāstra*”, 24, n. 4.

harmonic (*lhan cig skyes pa*); phlegmatic (*bad kan can*); pneumatic (*rlung can*); and choleric (*mkhris pa can*). Also in the Tengyur but missing in Mipam is a fourfold typology of coital positions appropriate for each of the four types of women. Whereas the Tengyur *Treatise* contains two recipes for fertility and healthy childbirth, which had become an increasing preoccupation of later Indic *kāmasāstra* works, Mipam makes no mention of procreation, perhaps indicating its lack of relevance for his objectives.⁶⁵ Other common topics of Sanskrit *kāmasāstra* discourse are conspicuously absent from both the Tengyur *Treatise* and Mipam's – courting virgins, choosing wives, adultery, and courtesans – suggesting that these topics also had little applicability for the Tibetan contexts of *kāmasāstra*, which were largely monastic. More than these points, however, the “smoking gun” indicating that the Tengyur *Treatise* was not Mipam's main or only *kāmasāstra* source is its lack of any description of the 64 erotic arts, not to mention its general brevity (the *dpe bsdur ma* edition is only seven pages).

We can see quite clearly, however, particularly in the latter section of his exposition describing sexual positions, that one of his tantric sources is the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra*, which is a Highest Yoga Tantra (*anuttarayogatantra*) found in the “Translated Teachings” or Kangyur (*bka' 'gyur*) part of the Tibetan Buddhist canon.⁶⁶ Mipam's *Treatise on Passion* draws from the sixth chapter of the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra* on completion stage yoga (*nispannayoga*). Mipam paraphrases part of this chapter (6.160–80) in describing sitting postures including the bodhisattva cross-legged position (*sems dpa'i skyil krung*) in which the right leg is on top, the female bodhisattva position (*sems ma'i skyil krung*) in which the left leg is on top, the vajra seat (*rdo rje'i gdan*, i.e. full lotus position in which both ankles rest on the opposite thigh), the half moon (*zla ba phyed pa*) and bow seats (*gzhu yi gdan*).⁶⁷ Many of the other coital positions Mipam lists and briefly explains are nearly identical to those found in a preceding section of the same chapter of the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra* (6.80–121), including “the arising of bliss” (*bde ba 'byung ba*), moving the thighs (*brla*), ground-pressing (*sa la mnan*), many-talented one (*ri mo can*), the riding yogic posture (*'phrul 'khor zhon pa*), the tortoise embrace (*rus sbal being ba*), and in every way auspicious (*kun tu bzang po*).⁶⁸ Mipam's list of 25 positions contains 12 that do not appear in the sixth chapter of the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra*, again indicating that he used an amalgamation of sources in formulating his *Treatise on Passion*. Also noteworthy are the many

65 On the increasing importance of procreation in later Indic *kāmasāstra* works, see Ali, “Padmaśrī's *Nāgarasarvasva* and the world of medieval *Kāmasāstra*”, 50–51; Kenneth G. Zysk, *Conjugal Love in India: Ratisāstra and Ratiramaṇa: Text, Translation, and Notes* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 11.

66 “Khro bo rgyud kyi rgyal po dpa' bo gcig pa”, in *Bka' 'gyur dpe bsdur ma* (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 2006–09, TBRC W1PD96682), vol. 80, 919–1039.

67 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos, 125, and Christopher S. George, *The Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra, Chapters I–VIII* (American Oriental Series Vol. 56. New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1974), 117, lines 43–5; 18 lines 1–25.

68 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos, 125–6; George, *The Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra, Chapters I–VIII*, 71; 114.

antinomian parts of the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra* that Mipam chose not to include in his *Treatise*, such as the *Tantra*'s prescriptions for worshipping women and engaging in incestuous liaisons. Nevertheless, it is clear that Mipam's *Treatise on Passion* derives in part from tantric sources.

Mipam's somewhat awkward juxtaposition of śāstric and tantric sources seems to mix apples and oranges in the sense that Mipam's work extracts *kāmasāstra* material from its larger "kāma world", to borrow Daud Ali's term for the larger aesthetic, ethical, and cosmopolitan concerns of the Indian courtly elite that frame *kāmasāstra* works.⁶⁹ Mipam applies technologies drawn from this world of sensual pleasure to the tantric aims of transforming passion into bliss that catalyses spiritual liberation. That this aim was previously absent from the domain of *kāmasāstra* is clear in the opening of Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra* (1: 1) in which he invokes the "three aims of human life" (*trivarga*), namely religion (*dharma*), power (*artha*) and pleasure (*kāma*). Conspicuously missing from this trinity is liberation (*mokṣa*), which elsewhere appears as a fourth aim and accords more closely with Mipam's objectives.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, even as dissonant as Mipam's inclusion of *kāmasāstra* in his oeuvre of Buddhist monastic scholarship first seems to be, this interplay between courtly *kāmasāstric* discourses on sensual pleasure featuring the "man about town" (*nāgaraka*) and esoteric tantric discourses on transforming passion into liberation featuring the yogi predates their Tibetan importation. Second millennium Sanskrit *kāmasāstra* works such as the *Nāgarasarvasva* by Padmaśrī, who was himself a Buddhist, incorporated new conceptions of the body into their "kāma world". These were drawn in part from tantric sources dealing with such topics as the complex physiological and spiritual network of channels that circulate pleasure throughout the body and form the basis for Tibetan tantric "channel and wind" (*rtsa rlung*) practices. Additionally, the expanded appearances of mantras, seed syllable visualizations, and coded language (*saṅketa*) drawn from Tantric Buddhist sources such as the *Hevajra Tantra* characterize these later *kāmasāstra* works.⁷¹

The flow of influence between *kāmasāstric* and tantric works in medieval India appears to have travelled both ways, for not only do we find tantric technologies adapted for secular objectives of refining sensual pleasure, but we find Indian Buddhist Tantras co-opting techniques for arousing bliss borrowed from the domain of *kāmasāstra*. We have already seen that the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra* lists coital positions in a way similar to the lists found in *kāmasāstra* works, though the specific positions in the *Tantra* do not seem to have a direct *kāmasāstra* source.⁷² Other Indian Buddhist Tantras advocate mastery of *kāmasāstra* as a means of arousing bliss necessary for religious practice; in the *Kālacakra Tantra*'s third chapter on initiation, for example, the *Tantra* and its *Vimalaprabhā* commentary advise the yogi to know *kāmasāstra* in

69 Ali, "Rethinking the history of the *Kāma* world in early India", 1–2.

70 Doniger and Kakar point out the "short shrift" Vātsyāyana gives to *mokṣa*; see Vatsyayana, *Kamasutra*, xiii–xiv.

71 Ali, "Padmaśrī's *Nāgarasarvasva* and the world of medieval *Kāmasāstra*", 49; 54.

72 George, *The Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra, Chapters I–VIII*, 71 n. 65.

order to worship the *yoginīs* properly.⁷³ Perhaps not incidentally, Mipam was one of the few adherents of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism who wrote extensively on tantric texts affiliated with the new (*gsar ma*) schools, particularly the *Kālacakra*, which he held to be supreme among them.⁷⁴

Conclusion

With this cursory introduction to Mipam's work and some of its sources, we are now ready to consider more broadly the question of why Mipam wrote a *Treatise on Passion*. Mipam's *Treatise* directs us to one way to answer this question according to Tantric Buddhist soteriology, for in his words, "without passion there is no complete liberation".⁷⁵ In the final lines of his *Treatise* before the colophon, Mipam exhorts his readers to seek instructions from a qualified lama, elaborating that:

Those bound by passion
[are bound] more tightly than all others.
Those liberated by passion
[are liberated] more quickly than all others.⁷⁶

In the colophon as well, Mipam reiterates his intention to write the *Treatise* "for the sake of clarifying the minds of those practising the teachings of the Mantra lineage [i.e. Vajrayāna]".⁷⁷ Mipam's emphasis on the importance of using passion on the path accords with his presentation elsewhere of the compatibility of different Nyingma contemplative systems, including Mahāyoga, which requires "channel and wind" practices such as those referenced here, and the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*), which does not. For Mipam, understanding how to use passion on the path was crucial because of its necessity for realizing the fundamental mind of clear light.⁷⁸

Nevertheless, even if there is soteriological benefit for arousing passion according to Vajrayāna Buddhism, the question still remains: why do we find the first extant Tibetan *kāmasāstra* treatise only in late nineteenth-century eastern Tibet, when most of its sources predate this period by several centuries? One possible answer may be found in Mipam's position as one of the leading *rimé* (*ris med*) exemplars. *Rimé* is often translated as the "ecumenical movement"

73 *Vimalaprabhāṭikā of Kalkin Śrīpuṇḍarīka on Śrīlaghukālacakratantrārāja* by Śrīmañjuśrīyaśas, vol. 2 (Rare Buddhist Text Series, vol. 12), ed. V. Dwivedi and S.S. Bahulkar (Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1994), 118. Thanks to Vesna Wallace for calling my attention to this reference.

74 For Mipam's two-volume *Kālacakra* commentary and his related liturgical writings, see Mi pham rgya mtsho, *Gsung 'bum*, vol. 17 (*e*), 18 (*wam*), and 25 (Paro, Bhutan: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, 1984–93, TBRC W23468), 525–90.

75 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos, 134.

76 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos, 135.

77 Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos, 137.

78 For a nuanced analysis of this, see Jeffrey Hopkins, *Mi-pam-gya-tsho's Primordial Enlightenment: The Nying-ma View of Luminosity and Emptiness, Analysis of Fundamental Mind, with Oral Commentary by Khetsun Sangpo* (Dyke: UMA Institute for Tibetan Studies, uma-tibet.org, 2015).

or the “non-sectarian movement”, though recent scholarship has contested its coherence as a social or religious movement and instead understood it as an unbiased outlook that can be discerned broadly among Tibetan religious masters.⁷⁹ This outlook is associated in particular with a cohort of nineteenth-century religious masters including Mipam and several of his teachers, namely Jamgön Kongtrül, Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo, and Patrül, among others. Being unbiased in the sense of *rimé* did not mean propounding a *mélange* of doctrinal positions, or holding distinct sectarian views as equally valid, for Mipam and his teachers clearly advocated for their own lineage’s doctrinal interpretations. Rather, their unbiased attitude was characterized by expansive education in the commentarial traditions of diverse Tibetan Buddhist lineages as well as a turn away from the rote memorization of Tibetan scholastic manuals (*yig cha*) used in monastic curricula. Instead, *rimé* exemplars advocated returning monastic education to the study of classical Indian Buddhist *śāstras* in Tibetan translation along with explanatory scriptural expositions (*bshad pa*).⁸⁰ Perhaps Mipam’s endeavour to revive the *kāma* enshrined in *kāmaśāstra* and place it in the service of Tantric Buddhist liberation can be understood as a part of the “back to Indian *śāstras*” impetus at the heart of the nineteenth-century non-biased outlook.

And finally, a common refrain among disciples and scholars of Mipam that we might co-opt as an explanation for his *kāmaśāstra* contribution is that Mipam wrote on everything, and for that reason was widely referred to as “omniscient” (*kun mkhyen*). So why not this *bona fide* subject of Sanskrit *śāstras* also? His encyclopaedic oeuvre covered a vast range, by no means limited to the religious sphere. Mipam’s bibliographer catalogued his works into four parts: 1) narratives and eulogies; 2) ordinary arts; 3) Buddhism; and 4) dedications, auspicious verses, and prayers. Mipam’s bibliographer placed his *Treatise on Passion* in the second part on “ordinary arts”. These include four main subsections (linguistics, epistemology, material arts, and healing) and four subsidiary subsections (poetics, astrological divination, counsel, and miscellany). Specifically, Mipam’s *Treatise* is listed in the “poetics” (*snyan ngag*) section, after his commentary on Daṇḍin’s *Mirror of Poetry* and a collection of his correspondence and before two works on music.⁸¹ According to his bibliographer, then, even though Mipam’s *kāmaśāstra* verses may have had some utility for yogis, they were at heart invocations of non-religious Indic literary arts.

That Mipam’s *Treatise on Passion* pertained to both Buddhist soteriology and non-religious literary arts need not be understood as a contradiction. After all, to

79 Alexander Gardner, “The twenty-five great sites of Kham: religious geography, revelation and nonsectarianism in nineteenth century eastern Tibet” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2006); Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, *The Social Life of Tibetan Biography: Textuality, Community, and Authority in the Lineage of Tokden Shakya Shri* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 47–50.

80 Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 245–6.

81 Kun bzang chos brag, “Gang ri’i khrod kyi smra ba’i seng ge gcig pu ’jam dgon mi pham rgya mtsho’i rnam thar snying po bsdu pa dang gsung rab kyi dkar chag snga ’gyur bstan pa’i mdzes rgyan”, in Mi pham rgya mtsho, *Gsung ’bum*, vol. 8 (*hung*) (Paro, Bhutan: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, 1984–93, TBRC W23468), 678–9.

quote Doniger and Kakar, “extreme realms of sensuality and the control of sensuality have much in common”.⁸² Indeed, the intertextuality of secular technologies of cultivating passion and religious technologies of transmuting it into liberation in second millennium *kāmasāstric* and tantric works underscores this. That Mipam inherited this intertextuality is evident in his dual explanations of his authorial intentions, for he writes that he composed his *Treatise on Passion*:

for the sake of increasing the ocean of joy
of those endowed with passion and
illuminating the light of primordial wisdom
of those endowed with yoga.⁸³

He reiterates this twofold secular and religious scope in advocating for the superiority of his *Treatise*, for it “possesses the flavour of all the joy on earth and / the treasury of yogic accomplishment”.⁸⁴

Is it our own bias, then, if we are surprised to find sexual passion included among this polymath monastic scholars’ myriad forms of knowledge expertise? If it is, we are not alone, for Mipam anticipated adverse reactions to his *Treatise on Passion*, observing that “inhabitants of the Snow Land are entrapped by the snare of doubt”.⁸⁵ In response, Mipam admonished:

Under a full moon, don’t sleep in darkness.
Endowed with pure intention, don’t go onto the path of wrongdoing.
Why disparage the teachings of experts,
without shame, like a hawk?⁸⁶

This article is an attempt to avoid such a pitfall by investigating Mipam’s contribution to the still largely uncharted history of sexuality in Tibet. While much more remains to be explored, an analysis of Mipam’s *Treatise on Passion* reveals that even though Gendün Chöpel brought aesthetic (and experiential?) prowess into the Tibetan literary domain with his famous twentieth-century work on erotics, Mipam and his predecessors had already set the stage for combining the secular science of sensual pleasure with the religious goal of spiritual liberation.

82 Vatsyayana, *Kamasutra*, xiv. Doniger and Kakar draw this insight from the ways in which the *Kāmasūtra* argues for both the cultivation of passion and its control. After all, according to Vātsyāyana, he composed the *Kāmasūtra* “in chastity and in the highest meditation” (v. 7.2.57).

83 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, ’*Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 136.

84 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, ’*Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 136.

85 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, ’*Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 136.

86 Dge ’dun chos ’phel and Mi pham rgya mtsho, ’*Dod pa’i bstan bcos*, 136.