

PKTC TRANSLATION
EXERCISE 1:
NOTES ON TRANSLATING
THE LONGCHEN NYINGTHIG
ROOT CHOD TEXT

BY TONY DUFF
PADMA KARPO TRANSLATION COMMITTEE

Copyright and Fair Usage Notice

Copyright © Tony Duff 2008. All rights reserved.

The translations and commentaries contained herein are made available online as a gift of dharma. They are being offered with the intent that anyone may download them, print them out, read and study them, share them with friends, and even copy and redistribute the files privately. Still, the following must be observed:

- The files may be copied and given to others privately provided that no fee is charged for them.
- Other web-sites are encouraged to link to this page. However, the files may only be put up for distribution on other sites with the expressed permission of the author.
- Neither the files nor their content are in the public domain; the copyright for both remains with the author.
- In accord with standard copyright law, you may use reasonable portions of these files for your own work, publication or translations.

If you cite from them or use them in that way, please cite these files as if they were printed books. Please make it clear in your work which portions of your text is coming from our translation and which portions are based on other sources.

PKTC TRANSLATION
EXERCISE 1:
NOTES ON TRANSLATING
THE LONGCHEN NYINGTHIG
ROOT CHOD TEXT

BY TONY DUFF
PADMA KARPO TRANSLATION COMMITTEE

For enquiries regarding permission to reproduce this book or any portion of it, or to obtain further books, please write to the given address or contact the author via internet and e-mail.

Copyright © 2008 Tony Duff. All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photography, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system or technologies now known or later developed, without permission in writing from the publisher.

First edition, January 2009

Palatino typeface with diacritical marks and
Tibetan Classic typeface
Designed and created by Tony Duff

Produced, Printed, and Published by
Padma Karpo Translation Committee
P.O. Box 4957
Kathmandu
NEPAL

Web-site and e-mail contact through:
<http://www.pktc.org/pktc>
Or search Padma Karpo Translation Committee on the web.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	iii
PART I. THE TITLE AND GENERAL TEXT ISSUES	1
PART II. THE REFUGE SUPPLICATION	11

INTRODUCTION

In 2008, a young translator, Chris Vicevich, asked for help with the root text of Longchen Nyingthig Chod practice. He sent us a translation that was freely available on the internet at that time done by a woman called Karen Liljenburg. The translation is dated 2006 and is available from www.zangthal.co.uk on the internet.

A cursory reading of the translation showed that there were significant problems with it. If the text were not made public, it would not matter so much but the text of the translation has been posted on the internet and made freely available. It could be very mis-leading.

A second translation is also freely available from a group called Dharmasagara, the publishing arm of Khenpo Palden Sherab. They have clearly copied Karen's translation—word for word—and changed a few things which they obviously thought were wrong. Some of their changes were for the better but some actually made the translation worse. This also is readily available on the internet.

When we saw all of this, we thought it would be useful to make a good translation of the text and use the mistakes in

the other translations just mentioned as the basis for notes that would help clarify how to translate the whole text. We thought that this kind of exercise would help to rectify any misconceptions about the text that had come from the mistakes being made freely available. We also thought that it would also make an excellent translation exercise for those wanting to learn about translating from the Tibetan. However, the work of documenting the mistakes, explaining why they were mistakes, and showing how they could be fixed turned into a mammoth task. Therefore, we decided on a different course of action. Firstly, we would make a complete translation and commentary to the text that would highlight why the text should be the way it is. Secondly, we would go back and pick out the notes we had kept at first and turn them into a translation exercise.

To follow through on our plan, we first had to obtain a clean Tibetan text. This is a requisite part of good translation work in general but we had discovered that the faulty translations even included lines of text that were not in the original text (!!). Therefore, we went through the painstaking process of making a critical edition. After that we made a correct translation of the text and a commentary that shows the meaning very clearly. The new edition of the Tibetan text was added to this, making a very complete work. The result, over eighty pages long, is available by purchase from our Padma Karpo Translation Committee website whose address is listed on the copyright page. This book will benefit practitioners enormously. And, because of how the commentary is written, it also functions to some extent as a set of notes on the correct way to translate. Therefore it will be of help to those wanting to learn more about translation.

To finish our work, we went back to the original notes we had started to keep and made those into this free exercise in translation. The notes are in two parts, the first concerning the title of the text and general issues about revealed treasure texts, and the second about the refuge supplication within the practice. The notes are in the form of Chris asking questions, with Lama Tony answering them.

As a matter of interest, we went on further to produce a complete book of teachings on the Longchen Nyingthig Chod with not only the root text but with several commentaries included. The book is available through our PKTC web-site whose address is shown on the copyright page at the front of this book and from commercial booksellers. If you are interested in the subject of Chod practice, you will find the book to be indispensable.

STUDY TOOLS

In general, the Padma Karpo Translation Committee has published a wide range of books on Buddhist dharma. Reading nearly any of them will help anyone to understand more about the subject and the language involved. Certainly all of them will be helpful to anyone who is seriously trying to become a translator. See our website at the address given on the copyright page; you will find free texts and texts for sale there, all of them prepared to the highest level of quality.

We would like to recommend the *Illuminator Tibetan-English Dictionary* as something you should use when translating. It contains a large amount of information about Tibetan grammar in general and all of the vocabulary mentioned in

this prayer, too. You might also be interested in our major work on Tibetan grammar, *The Thirty Verses of Minister Thumi*, which presents, for the first time in the West, Tibetan grammar as it is actually used and understood by Tibetans. In fact, the translation work in here is founded on the principles of Tibetan grammar which are laid out very extensively in that book.

This e-book has a binding offset built in so that it can easily be printed and bound as a book for your library.

Our best wishes to you,
Lotsawa Tony Duff
Padma Karpo Translation Committee
Swayambhunath,
Kathmandu,
Nepal
10 January 2009

PART I:
THE TITLE AND GENERAL TEXT ISSUES

The title page reads:

འུཾ་ ལྷོང་ཆེན་སྟིང་གི་ཐིག་ལེ་ལས་མཁའ་འགྲོའི་གད་
རྒྱུང་ས་བཞུགས་མཁའ་འགྲོའི་གད་

'uM: klong chen snying gi thig le las: gcod yul mkha' 'gro'i
gad
rgyangs bzhugs:

THE SIGNATURE MARK OF THE TREASURE REVEALER

The literature here is revealed treasure (Tib. gter ma) literature. It is part of the mind transmission received by Jigme Lingpa from All-knowing Longchen Rabjam. Treasures always have two special marks written into them:

1. The signature mark of the terma revealer (Tib. gter ston rtags)
2. General terma mark (Tib. gter rtags)

The ལྷོ་མེད་ at the beginning of the title is the signature terma mark that shows the text is a revealed treasure of Jigme Lingpa.

The མེད་ at the end of that is the general terma mark found in terma literature.

THE NEED FOR TERMA MARKS IN TRANSLATION

Each treasure revealer has his own sign which functions as a signature mark. That mark is always included at the beginning of each page of a terma text and is sometimes used in other places, too. Seeing it tells you a) that this is terma literature and b) that the revealer is so and so.

Furthermore, terma texts are always punctuated with terma marks instead of the usual punctuating break mark. The terma mark consists of two circles over each other with a bar in between; it looks like this ལྷོ་. The usual break mark is a stroke; it functions as a comma, full stop, and other similar English punctuation marks. The normal punctuation mark, called a “shay” (Tib. shad), looks like this །.

The primary function of the terma marks is to provide a break in the flow of text but at the same time it tells you that the current text is terma literature. Because terma break mark does tell you that text it is being used within is terma text, its use has the added value that you can quickly tell, in mixed text containing both terma and non-terma text, which is terma text and which not. For example, some texts are made as commentary on terma literature; these texts will have the non-terma commentary punctuated using shad

strokes and any quoted terma literature will be punctuated using the general terma mark.

It is crucial that the two types of terma marks be retained in translations of treasure texts. Without them, too much information is lost and, in the case of mixed text, it is no longer possible to distinguish which is terma and which not, a distinction which is sometimes crucial to understanding the wording of the text.

This opinion is based both on personal experience in which we have seen the necessity and also on the advice of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche who told the Nalanda Translation Committee in the 1980's that keeping the marks was required when translating from the Tibetan text into another language. Nalanda Translation Committee has followed his advice ever since and the marks are always faithfully reproduced in their translations. As a member of that committee at the time, the author, Lama Tony, helped produce a format that was unobtrusive but worked nicely. In other words, it can be done without disrupting the English formatting. The terma marks have been included in our translation of the text for those reasons. For example, here is the title and the first few lines of the final translation:

From Longchen Nyingthig § The Chod Practice
Sound of Dakini Laughter §

*I prostrate to the lady queen of the expanse, great bliss,
Yeshe Tsogyal. §*

*Nature Great Completion §
Cuts at the root to a single sphere §*

Therefore it transcends cutter and cut but ན
There are people who are elaborate in style and ན
Who would make a path of the conduct of yogic
activity, ན
Therefore I show the foremost instructions for casting
aside the body as food. ན

Notice that the translation is not using a normal terma mark with a line between the upper and lower circle but is using a plain pair of circles without the line. That is because the terma mark in Jigmey Lingpa's Longchen Nyingthig terma is just a pair of circles, as shown. Normally this would be a mistake because a pair of circles without the line represents the visarga, the last vowel of the Sanskrit alphabet. However, the best of known editions of the Longchen Nyingthig terma is the one by Adzom Drukpa and it has the two circles as shown, rather than the usual terma break mark so this has been accepted as the correct form of the general terma break mark for this particular revealed treasure.

2. ACTUAL TITLE

The title comes in two parts.

A. SOURCE OF THE TEXT

ཀློང་ཆེན་སྟིང་གི་ཐིག་ལེ་ལས་མཁོ་

klong chen snying gi thig le las:

This follows a standard form that appears in titles throughout Tibetan literature. It is used when there is an anthology (Tib. “skor”, sometimes called a “cycle” though that is not the meaning) of material. In general it is indicating the meaning “From the anthology, such and such. . .” and is followed by the name of the specific text that is about to be presented as part of the anthology. Thus, it tells you two things: 1) that there is an anthology called such and such and that 2) now, from that larger whole, one specific title will follow.

The translations from Karen Liljenberg and Dharmasagara do not correctly translate this information. Their titles simply say: “The Chod Practice of Longchen Nyingthig”. However, the title actually says: “From Longchen Nyingthig: (name of text)”. Someone might say that the translations from Karen and Dharmasagara are euphonious and hence preferable. However, euphony is not an argument for correctness; there is a point of understanding here, even if it is subtle.

“Longchen Nyingthig” is the name of the transmission of Nyingthig Dzogchen teachings that came from Longchenpa; thus it is an abbreviation of “The Dzogchen teaching at the Nyingthig level that came from Longchenpa”.

Some people ask about “Nyingthig”. It is a contraction of “snying gi thig le”. It is used in the Dzogchen tradition to indicate what is called the innermost or unsurpassed level of the Dzogchen teaching. This wording has regularly been translated into English with “heart essence”, “heart bindu”, and “heart drop”. The original is Sanskrit “tilaka” which literally means a tiny little drop or a tiny little circle. How-

ever, in Sanskrit, when you hear this term, you immediately understand “the most subtle part”, “the absolute quintessence”, “the core of the core”. At any rate, saying “heart bindu” is actually incorrect and “heart drop” also is overly literal. Perhaps the original Sanskrit should just be used or even the Tibetan. I think that the most correct translation is simply “Longchen Quintessence”. Thus, this first part of the title is “From Longchen Nyingthig: (name of text)” or “From Longchen Quintessence: (name of text)”.

B. NAME OF THE SPECIFIC TEXT

གཅོད་ཡུལ་མཁའ་འགྲོའི་གད་རྒྱུང་ས་བཞུགས་མཚན་

“gcod yul mkha’ ’gro’i gad rgyangs bzhugs”

a) Indicator of Title:

The བཞུགས་ at the end of the name is a device used to indicate the title of the text contained in the book and is a translation of the Sanskrit word used for the purpose in the Sanskrit literary system. It can be ignored in English because we have our own ways of indicating a title, such as larger typeface, and so on.

The མཚན་ at the end of the title is the terma break mark used instead of a shad break mark to punctuate the title.

b) First Part of the Title

The title is one long name without a sub-title, though there are two parts to the name. The first part title is གཅོད་ཡུལ་ “gcod yul”. It has to be understood as follows.

Phadampa Sangyay brought a system of dharma into Tibet which he called “The Pacifier” (Tib. zhi byed). The practice belonging to the teaching is called གཅོད་ “gcod” in Tibetan. The name literally means “the practice of cutting” and refers to the fact that the practice severs and hence eliminates samsaric ignorance and all of its manifestations.

The first part of the title is the standard term used in Tibetan language to indicate the place where a cut will be made. The term is used with this meaning in the practice of Chod. When it is used with this meaning, it refers to the four maras because, in Chod practice, they are target of the cutting and elimination done in the practice. However, there is also a second meaning for this term; it is also used to refer to the arena of cutting as a whole. In the case of Chod, that means the practice of cutting, as opposed to the target of the cut.

Therefore, a translator has to recognize that there are two meanings then select the correct one. According to the lineage of Longchen Nyingthig teaching, the meaning is not “the four maras which are the object of cutting” but “the practice of cutting in general”. Thus, the first part of the title is “Chod Practice”.

b) Second Part of the Title

The second part of the title is མཁའ་འགྲོའི་གད་རླུང་མ་ “mkha’ gro’i gad rgyang”. This has been badly misunderstood by Western translators and is also misunderstood by many Tibetans. There is a specific meaning here and it can only be known by obtaining the instructions of the lineage.

Firstly, the second part of the title is not a sub-title as most translations have made it out to be. Rather, it is a qualifier of the first part of the title. The first part of the title says, “Chod practice in general” so there is the question, “Which Chod practice?” The answer is that this is the Chod practice that came to Jigme Lingpa and which can also come to other practitioners, as the sounds made by wisdom dakinis.

The term མཁའ་འགྲོ་ “mkha’ ’gro” in the title means “dakini”. There are many types of dakini. Here, it refers specifically to wisdom dakinis. Note that it refers to these dakinis in general and not to just one of them as one English translation makes out.

The term is བད་རྒྱུངས་ is hard to understand, even for Tibetans. The first term literally means laughter. The second term literally means long or extended. Westerners and Tibetans alike usually take it to mean “loud laughter” or “long laughter”. One translator said “bellowing laughter” and other “roar of laughter”. All of these arise because of looking at the term and assuming that its meaning can be understood by the literal meaning of its parts. In fact, the meaning of the word is not the meaning of its two parts just put together. Again the translator has to be careful. There are many compound terms in Tibetan whose actual meaning is quite different from the literal meaning of its parts.

The term བད་རྒྱུངས་ means the general sound or noise of laughter that comes when one or more people are laughing. For example, a group of people in the next room are joking and laughing. The sound of their laughter comes to you outside the room. That sound of laughter that is carrying from the people laughing is what this term is referring to.

If we had a specific word in English for the sound made by people laughing then it would be appropriate to use it here. However, we do not have such a word. We usually say “sound of laughter” and that is the meaning of the Tibetan term.

Because of not understanding the two parts of the title, Tibetans and Westerners alike have said that the title means that either the wisdom dakini of the practice or dakinis in general are laughing at the object that will be cut by the practice of Chod. That is completely mistaken and actually turns the teaching of Chod upside down.

Others have made the second part into a sub-title, making it sound as though this is Chod Practice and that it has a poetic name, “Laughter of the Dakinis”. That also is incorrect.

Others have felt that it must be that the dakinis are laughing uproariously at something and have called it “Roar of Laughter” and “Bellowing Laughter”.

All of these are seriously mistaken!

c) The Whole Title

What does the title mean then? A full explanation can be found in our book on Longchen Nyingthig Chod. Briefly, it means that the sounds of the wisdom dakinis, which are usually thought of as laughter on their side, bleed through into this human world. In this particular case, they were heard by Jigmey Lingpa in a certain way and he got this particular Chod practice by deciphering those sounds. Thus,

the title means “The Chod Practice which is the particular one heard by Jigmey Lingpa as Sounds of Dakini Laughter which he decoded into this text”. Therefore, the title is:

From Longchen Nyingthig : The Chod Practice
Sound of Dakini Laughter :

Further explanation would not be suitable here, given that this document will be freely distributed on the internet. However, the point to be made is that the translations of the title that have appeared in English so far are very far removed from the actual meaning just explained!

PART II

THE REFUGE SUPPLICATION

Here, Chris speaks.

There are many things to be understood through Lama Tony's translation however I thought that we could first go through the refuge. I will give the Tibetan followed by the Ms. Karen Liljenberg's translation followed by Lama Tony's translation then ask some questions.

Tibetan:

ཕྱུང་། རང་བྱུང་གི་རིག་པ་བཅོས་མེད་འདི་། སྐབས་ཡུལ་གྱི་ངོ་བོར་
མ་རིག་པས་། ལྷན་བསྐྱེད་གྱི་རྒྱ་མཚོར་བྱིངས་པ་རྣམས་། སྐྱབས་སུ་གྱི་
དགོངས་པས་བསྐྱབ་ཏུ་གསོལ་།

PHAT

rang byung gi rig pa bcos med 'di
skyabs yul gyi ngo bor ma rig pas
sdug bsngal gyi rgya mtshor byings pa rnams
sku gsum gyi dgongs pas bskyab tu gsol

KL's translation:

PHAT

Because this unfabricated, self-existing awareness
is not recognised as the essence of the objects of refuge,
beings are drowning in the ocean of suffering.

May the wisdom mind of the three kayas protect us.

Our translation:

PHAT :

Because of not knowing that this uncontrived, :
Self-arising rigpa is the entity of the objects of refuge, :
Beings are drowning in the ocean of suffering— :
Please give them refuge with your mind of the three kāya. :

I asked the following questions and LT replied as shown.

1) Why is བཅོས་མེད་ “bcos med” “uncontrived” and not “non-contrived”?

What are you going to say? “Contrivance-less” is actually what it says but this is one case where grammatical correctness results in something that will be almost unreadable (this is for recitation, remember).

Karen has made a common and significant mistake here. བཅོས་པ་ “bcos pa” is one of a pair of terms, the other being བཟོས་པ་ “bzos pa”. Where བཟོས་པ་ “bzos pa” means to fabricate, that is, to newly construct or make, བཅོས་པ་ “bcos pa” means to alter or to modify something which is already there specifically to improve it somehow. That is a key part of the understanding here and applies at all levels of Buddhist dharma, too, in other words, in every text.

There also the significant problem that she has translated རིག་པ་ rigpa as “awareness”. Purely linguistically, rigpa is not awareness. And, if anyone has actually contacted rigpa, they will know that rigpa is not an awareness but something much more than that. More about this below. We deliberately choose not to translate it because translating it leads to two problems: a) the one, just mentioned, that no English word is available that fits this key term and b) the one that rigpa is both noun and verb and is used regularly in both ways. There is no word in English that is both noun and verb and which can even approximately render the meaning of rigpa.

2) Why is མ་རིག་པས་ “ma rig pas” made into a verb?

Because it is a verb! It is the negated form of rigpa and can be either noun or verb. Rigpa in Sanskrit is “vidyam” as the noun and then the verb is similar to that. It is a word commonly used in the language and one that is used both as noun and verb. That is a key point. It is not that it is a noun and in some convoluted way can be used as a verb. It is both noun and verb and is used equally and regularly as such.

Vidya is part of Hindi language, too, and is in very common use today. You might be surprised to know that it is the root from which all of our words with the root “vid” come—video, etc. It means a very dynamic, insightful knowledge and the verb thereof. The English “awareness” is very far from this. A school in Indian and also in Nepal is called a “vidyālaya” a place (ālaya) where you get involved with knowledge, actively and dynamically (vidya). It is not a place where you get a passive kind of awareness that one thing is so or another is so. If it were like that, they would

use a different word conveying the meaning of an awareness of something that just comes to you. Rigpa is the Buddha's knowledge, very insightful, very on the spot, and having nothing to do with being aware at all.

We long ago decided not to translate rigpa because it is not accurately met by any word in the English language. As a matter of interest, even the Vidyādhara Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, who was successfully able to find English to express many Tibetan terms felt that this really was a problem word. As he said, it is key in our Buddhist vocabulary altogether but nothing in English comes close to matching it. He strongly rejected "awareness", saying that he thought that insight was about the closest word available but that really was not suitable either.

If we just use rigpa, it works rather well. Unlike many Tibetan words it does fit the style of English. And we can then make the verb using not only standard English verb forms but even the regular verb form (what a plus that is!) and create the verb "to rig". Thus we have rigpa the noun and "to rig", I rigged, rigging, and so on. We have found that it works very well.

When you see this key term in Tibetan or Sanskrit, it sticks out and its meaning is so clear. Now we need something that will be equally clear in English. Even in colloquial Tibetan—and we mean real Tibetan colloquial that you do not hear in Western Universities and local Shedras for Westerners—you will hear statements like "Rig song," which very accurately means "Ah yes, I see." or "I got it". And you will hear "ngas rig ma song"—"I couldn't see / hear / etcetera" whatever it was, meaning that one of your senses couldn't

penetrate it so you couldn't directly know it. It is absolutely not "I wasn't aware of it".

Look at this. "Rigpa" is the dynamic state of knowing that the buddhas have. "Ma rig pa" is its opposite, the "non-rigging" state of sentient beings. When you read a Tibetan or Sanskrit text, this change of state of mind between nirvāṇa and saṃsāra just jumps off the page at you. But what have most translators done in English? They translate them as "awareness" and "ignorance" respectively. Most people would never know from that bad choice of English that this is the same thing being talked about first in the positive and then the negative way yet that play is a crucial part of understanding the Buddhist path altogether.

In the text here, because sentient beings are "not rigging" or not "rigpa'ing", they have the problem that they have sunk down into saṃsāra and are drowning in it. Ma rig pa here is not a noun, it is a verb.

The ས་ on the end of the is མ་རིག་པས་ is an agentive case marker. It indicates that there is an agent to its left and a verb to its right. The agent is sentient beings state of མ་རིག་པ་ "not being in rigpa". It causes the action of the verb ལྱིངས་པ་ "byings pa", "sinking". In other words it causes them to be sinking in saṃsāra.

3) Please explain ལྱིངས་པ་ "byings pa".

This word has the base connotation of "sinking down into". However, it is also used to mean "drowning". In some cases of its use, the meaning "sinking down into" will be the correct meaning and in others "drowning" will be correct.

In Tibetan, you get both connotations at once so there can be a loss of meaning when it is translated. However, the Longchen Nyingthig tradition of explanation clearly states that this does include the meaning of “drowning” so we translate it that way.

This raises again the point mentioned in the last chapter, that it is necessary not to have knowledge just of the words and grammar but to have knowledge of what you are translating through personal instruction, at some point in time, from the lineage.

4) It is my understanding that to have an agentive marker attached after a Tibetan grammatical name or phrase¹ indicates that the grammatical name or phrase is not an action word, but only the agent of an action word. Is that correct?

In Tibetan, the case marker of the third case, which is the marker of the agentive case, is placed immediately to the right of an agent. By doing that, it clearly signifies the agent. The agent is the agent that performs—or causes—some action or activity. The definition of the agentive case marker is that “it shows the agent of an action” so both agent and case marker are included in the definition. Tibetan grammar texts universally state that “the agentive marker is always to the immediate right of the agent being identified but that the verb can be as close to the marker or as far away from it as the author chooses”. In other words, you can know the

¹ Tib. ming and tshig respectively. See the *Illuminator Tibetan-English Dictionary* and our standard reference on Tibetan grammar, *The Thirty Verses of Minister Thumi*, for extensive explanations of these key terms of Tibetan grammar.

agent by the position of the agentive marker but you cannot know the verb so definitely. Nonetheless, the verb will *always* be found somewhere to the right of the agentive case marker, just as the texts say it will.

5) So if the ལས་ “pas” in “ma rig pas” is not the case of the agent, then the other abbreviation yielding “pas”, is the source case marker ལས་ “las”. My understanding would be that in this case it is that source case marker acting as a source term. This seems to be correct since as a verb here “ma rig pa” means being actively being ignorant of the rigpa mentioned in the first line.

No, you missed something. The “pas” contains the agentive case marker; it is not the source case marker that you thought. The agent is the not rigpa’ing of sentient beings. The action caused by it is their sinking down into and drowning in cyclic existence.

6) With the pluralizing phrase linker² རྣམས་ “rnam” after བྱིངས་པ་ “byings pa” couldn’t we translate “byings pa” as “those sinking/drowning” or “sinkers/drowners”?

No, that’s too much. It would be sinkee or drownee but we don’t speak like that in English. In regard to this, the way the lines have been translated captures the meaning exactly of the Tibetan.

² Tib. tshig phrad. Usually but mistakenly referred to as “particle”. See the *Illuminator Tibetan-English Dictionary* and our standard reference on Tibetan grammar, *The Thirty Verses of Minister Thumi*, for extensive explanations of this key term of Tibetan grammar.

7) Can a pluralizer such as རྣམས་ “rnam” or དག་ “dag” be attached to an verb or verb phrase? Is there a Tibetan grammar commentary that mentions this?

Absolutely! The ones who are drowning because of not keeping on their lifebelts (of rigpa—my humour) is a case of a noun phrase in the plural with the phrase composed of a verb phrase including agentive case inside it.

8) Given then that the third line is a noun phrase, could the བྱིངས་པ་རྣམས་ “byings pa rnam” become the agent for བསྐྱབ་ཏུ་གསོལ་མཁོ་ “bskyab tu gsol”? I have in mind that here, “bskyab tu gsol” appears to be a verb phrase meaning “to request refuge”?

No, that is not correct. You are the one who is doing the refuge. You have visualized all sentient beings around you, as is always the case, and, because it is a Chod practice, you have made the gods and demons foremost among them. You, on their behalf, are supplicating the refuge object—which was visualized in the text prior to this—and asking that refuge be given to them. You request refuge in the formal sense—which is the meaning intended here, not the general sense of “protection” as Karen as given—for all of them. There’s a point here that is not so obvious from the words alone. Taken in context, you are the wisdom dakini and you are above saṃsāra. As such, you are petitioning on behalf of these saṃsāric beings them. There is a great deal of strength and enlightenment in your position already. It is a little different to other types of refuge.

Also, the term asking for refuge is གསོལ་ “gsol”. This is a term used for petitioning another person. It is very strong, direct, and definite. The word “may” that Karen has used

is not a petition to someone, it is just a general prayer, and that exactly is the meaning not intended here! You are standing up, as the enlightened dakini, looking at the situation and asking the enlightened ones of the three kayas, to please give all these beings who have not rigpa'd their own nature for refuge.

This then raises the issues of whether a full stop after the first three lines is correct or not. It is not; the third line directly follows on to and connects with the fourth line. Karen's full stop at the end of the third line is an error because it kills the connection between the third and fourth lines. Here, either a semi-colon or an em-dash (the correct term for a long-length hyphen) should be used so that the meaning in the lines is properly connected.

(From Chris: As a note to the reader, Lama Tony's understanding of the grammar here was verified by my teacher who does have this Longchen Nyingthig lineage. A phrase connector should be understood after the "rnam" as Lama Tony has just said. Furthermore, that connector is a ལ་ "la" and not a ཡིས་ "kyis" as I was thinking it was. Lama Tony understood this also and translated the meaning correctly because of it.)

We felt repeatedly in reading Karen's translation that she didn't understand the fullness of the energies involved and, because of that, saw that her translation doesn't flow according to the meaning that is actually there.

9) Please comment on the term རྩོམ་ "ngo bo", the entity of the refuge objects.

There is a difficulty here because this one term in Tibetan has the two separate English meanings of “essence” and “entity”. When a Tibetan reads the word, he knows to use one or the other meaning or a mixture of both but that does not work in English. In this case, the meaning intended is not “essence”. It is entity. The basic fact of the objects of refuge—their very entity—is rigpa. It is not that merely their essence is rigpa.





Tony Duff has spent a lifetime pursuing the Buddha's teaching and transmitting it to others. In the early 1970's, during his post-graduate studies in molecular biology, he went to Asia and met the Buddhist teachings of various South-east Asian countries. He met Tibetan Buddhism in Nepal and has followed it since. After his trip he abandoned worldly life and was the first monk ordained in his home country of Australia. Together with several others, he founded the monastery called Chenrezig Institute for Wisdom Culture where he studied and practised the Gelugpa teachings for several years under the guidance of Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa, Geshe Lodan, and Zasep Tulku. After that, he offered back his ordination and left for the USA to study the Kagyu teachings with the incomparable Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Tony was very active in the community and went through all possible levels of training that were available during his twelve year stay. He was also a core member of the Nalanda Translation Committee. After Chogyam Trungpa died, Tony went to live in Nepal where he worked as the personal translator for Tsoknyi Rinpoche and also translated for several other well-known teachers. He also founded and directed the largest Tibetan text preservation project in Asia, the Drukpa Kagyu Heritage Project, which he oversaw for eight years. He also established the Padma Karpo Translation Committee which has produced many fine translations and made many resources for translators such as the highly acclaimed *Illuminator Tibetan-English Dictionary*. After the year 2000, Tony focussed primarily on obtaining Dzogchen teachings from the best teachers available, especially within Tibet, and translating and teaching them. He has received much approval from many teachers and has been given the titles "lotsawa" and "lama" and been strongly encouraged by them to teach Westerners. One way he does that is by producing these fine translations.

PADMA KARPO TRANSLATION COMMITTEE

P.O. Box 4957

Kathmandu

Nepal

<http://www.pktpc.org/pktpc>