

[Back to Exhibition Index](#)***The Teacher, Padmasambhava ("Lotus-Born") and His Eight Forms*** ([Image](#))

Unfinished Thangka, painting

Cotton support with opaque mineral pigments in waterbased (collagen) binder

Central Tibet

Ca. 19th century

Menri Serma "New School of Men style"

Museum #: 97.271

By Ariana P. Maki

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The eight primary manifestations of Padmasambhava are here joined by Nyingma monks and protective deities. Padmasambhava is seated in the center atop a lotus bloom with his common attributes, on his left shoulder the khatvanga, in the left hand the kapala, and holds the vajra in his right hand. His primary consorts, Mandarava and Yeshe Tsogyal, are flanking him. Directly above Padmasambhava's head is the Bodhisattva, Avalokiteshvara and atop him, the red Buddha Amitabha. The Buddha Amitabha is the direct progenitor of both Avalokiteshvara and Padmasambhava, but the extent of their relationship will not be explored here.

To the right of the Buddha Amitabha is Nargajuna, a saint of the Nyingma sect. He is identifiable by the snakes enveloping his prana. The group of three monks next to Nargajuna and a set of four on the far left of the print all belong to the Nyingma sect, founded by Padmasambhava and identifiable by their red caps.

Two of Padmasambhava's primary forms are illustrated above his consorts. Above Mandarava on the right is Padma Gyalpo, also holding a damaru in his right hand, and a mirror in his left. On the left, illustrated above Yeshe Tsogyal is Loden Chogsed, or Supreme Genius. He holds a kapala, or skull cup, in his left hand while his right cradles a damaru, a drum made from a human skull.

Padmasambhava's manifestation as a blue male in union with a white female is most often called Guru Urgyan Dorje Chang, and can be seen below Yeshe Tsogyal to the left. Although he can have many subtle differences in mudra and attributes, here his crossed hands each hold a vajra. To his left is the scorpion-wielding Guru Drakpo, one of Padmasambhava's fierce manifestations. Moving to the right, Padmasambhava's secret dakini manifestation, the lion-faced Simhamukha is illustrated. Above and to the right of Simhamukha is the Shakya Senge form of Padmasambhava, identical in representation to the Buddha Shakyamuni.

The four figures that line the bottom of the print are also primary manifestations of Padmasambhava. The bottom left shows the fierce Dorje Drolo, grasping a vajra in his right hand and a phur-pa in the left as he stands atop a tiger. Next to him is Padmasambhava dressed in Nyingma monk's robes. Second from the right is Nyima Odzer, or Golden Light of the Sun, who is portrayed in the manner of a Mahasiddha. The bottom right corner is occupied by Senge Dradog, another fierce manifestation of Padmasambhava.

(A more thorough biography of Padmasambhava is available with painting [93.011](#))

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