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A Sacred Legacy of Reincarnation

Glenn H. Mullin

Edited by Valerie Shepherd FOREWORD BY

His Holiness the Dalai Lama



CLEAR LIGHT PUBLISHERS SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

Dedicated to the memory of my two principal tantric gurus: Kyabje Ling
Dorjechang and

Kyabje Trijang Dorjechang

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Acknowledgments

This book is the product of many years of involvement with Tibet's spiritual culture. This began with informal reading and study as a young man, and then culminated in my traveling to Himalayan India in 1972 and remaining there in formal Buddhist training for a period of twelve years, first at the Buddhist Studies Department of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, and then at the Tibetan School of Dialectical Studies. During this period I had the honor and privilege of receiving teachings, initiations and transmissions from some thirty-five masters from the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Foremost amongst these were Kyabjey Ling Dorjechang and Kyabjey Trijang Dorjechang, the two principal gurus of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. These two masters were grandfatherly figures in my life, embodying all things good in Tibetan culture and in Buddhism, as well as every noble quality of the human spirit. Their passing in the early 1980s left a void that can never be filled. The present volume is therefore dedicated to their memory.

Over the past two decades I have written approximately a dozen books on the lives and teachings of the various Dalai Lamas. Most of these were published by Snow Lion in Ithaca, New York. I would like to thank Jeff Cox and Sidney

Piburn, my two old friends and editors at Snow Lion, for their permission to incorporate a few materials from those many books here.

The many years that I spent pouring over Tibetan manuscripts during my studies in Himalayan India involved the guidance of Tibetan mentors and friends too numerous to list in full. Nonetheless the most important of them should be mentioned here. Three of these were incarnate lamas: H.E. Doboomb Tulku, H.E. Amchok Tulku, and H.E. Sharpa Tulku. Some were learned monks carrying the geshey degree, such as Geshey Ngawang Dargyey, Chomdzey Tashi Wangyal, Geshey Tubten Tsering, and Geshey Tenpai Gyaltzen. Others were lay scholars, including Lobzang Norbu Tsonawa, Tsepa Rigzin, Lobsang Dawa, Tubten Jampa and Lobzang Chompel.

More recently during the immediate preparation of this book two Tibetan lamas showed special kindness to me, offering guidance, advice and technical assistance: Geshey Lobzang Tenzin Negi, Ph.D., and Geshey Yeshey Pelgyey. The former is the director of the Loseling Institute in Atlanta, which is an affiliate of Emory University, and has been a very dear friend for many years. The latter manages Tibetan Traditions in Atlanta, and consults on the interests of Drepung Loseling Monastery in America. Geshey Yeshey Pelgyey in particular was especially considerate, helping me with the biographies of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Dalai Lamas.

Geshey Drakpa Kelsang contributed to the chapter on the Ninth to Twelfth Dalai Lamas, all of whom were short-lived.

I would very much like to thank my editor, Valerie Shepherd, as well as Harmon Houghton, Marcia Keegan and the staff of Clear Light Publishers for their patience and perseverance on this project. The book was over a year in the making and required considerable teamwork. (I prefer to think of my writing temperament as a passion and a virtue, but nonetheless it requires the indulgence of my editors.)

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Debby, for her emotional and intellectual support and inspiration; and to my seven children for their many lessons in humor and laughter.

It is not possible for one individual in the present era of the kaliyuga to write a book of this nature and scope without a number of errors creeping onto the

pages. The story has a cast of thousands, and continues over many centuries. I have done my best to keep on track, but occasionally may have lost my focus. Therefore in advance I would like to thank the buddhas, bodhisattvas, dakas, dakinis and Dharma protectors for overlooking any mistakes that have occurred. My hope is that whatever I have gotten right will more than make up for wherever I have gotten wrong.

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Foreword

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

In recent years, steadily growing awareness of Tibet and its rich and ancient culture has sparked interest in the successive lineage of the Dalai Lamas as an institution. This is, I am sure, a result of the closely entwined relationship that has historically existed between Tibet, its people and the Dalai Lamas.

Seventh-century Tibet was a militarily powerful nation, unified under a single ruler, whose influence was felt far and wide. King Songtsen Gampo was the first of three religious kings whose efforts resulted in a complete change in the Tibetan outlook. They introduced Buddhism from India with the effect of shifting the focus of conquest from neighbouring peoples and lands to the inner workings of the mind and heart. In the ensuing centuries, as the Buddhist way of life, with its rich art and literature, was steadily assimilated, the Tibetan nation became politically fragmented.

Tibetan Buddhism reached maturity at a time when Buddhism was disappearing from India, the land of its origin. The Dalai Lamas emerged, therefore, at a time when not only the Tibetan people and their peaceful way of life needed leadership and guidance, but when the very existence of Buddhism needed protection.

I believe that the activities of the first four Dalai Lamas can be viewed as each contributing to the Great Fifth's ability to provide the strong leadership that unified Tibet for the first time since the early religious kings. He therefore made Tibet great once more and inaugurated a unique religious and secular form of government. Since

then, the Ganden Podrang government that the Great Fifth founded has been a major unifying factor in the life of Tibet, and this is a responsibility that has now fallen to me, too, at this most difficult time in my country's history.

The first Dalai Lama, Gendun Drubpa, was a direct disciple of Jey Tsongkhapa, and all subsequent Dalai Lamas have been staunch followers of the Gelukpa doctrine he propounded. It is noteworthy, for example, that of the standard set of Eight Editions of the Stages of the Path or Lam Rim, three were composed by

Tsongkhapa himself, two were written by Dalai Lamas—Essence of Refined Gold by the Third and The Transmission of Manjushri by the Fifth—and the remaining three were composed by direct teachers of the Dalai Lamas. Few of the Dalai Lamas, however, have been exclusively Gelukpa, but have followed the ecumenical example set by Tsongkhapa himself. For he studied not with the lamas of any single tradition, but with the greatest teachers of his day.

Several Dalai Lamas, particularly those who were influential rulers like the Fifth and the Thirteenth, have had notably strong relationships with Guru Rinpochey, Padma Sambhava. This, I believe, has less to do with questions of doctrine and much more to do with Guru Rinpochey's special pledge to King Trisong Deutsen of support for the welfare of the Tibetan nation.

In Tibet we had a vast literature, much of it consisting of translations of Sanskrit scriptures into Tibetan and subsequent commentaries to them. But more popular were the smaller indigenous works. Many of these told the stories of the lives of great teachers and practitioners. Others were the small works of individual lamas containing pithy advice based on their own experiences. In this book readers will find a selection of such works related to the Dalai Lamas. There are accounts of the lives of each of the Dalai Lamas up to and including myself, and there are examples of the writings or teachings of these masters. In compiling this selection, the author not only sheds light on the contribution past Dalai Lamas have made to the religious and political life of Tibet, but he also gives the flavour of the sort of writings that are treasured by ordinary Tibetans.

It is nearly thirty years since Glenn H. Mullin first arrived in Dharamsala and began to take an interest in the works of the Dalai Lamas. I admire the persistence with which he has pursued this interest and have sometimes wondered if he has not found out more about them than even I know. Many people have told me that he reveals an ability in his books to make things Tibetan accessible and easily understood to ordinary readers. Therefore, I welcome this volume that is the first to give some account of the lives of all the Dalai Lamas, along with examples of some of their works. I pray that readers will find here some inspiration in their own quest for inner peace. I hope, too, the book will yield some appreciation of the role that the Dalai Lamas have played in the history of Tibet and how important that history has been in the living transmission and practice of the fruitful spiritual tradition that is Tibetan Buddhism.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of fluid, connected strokes. The signature is written in a cursive style, starting with a vertical line on the left, followed by several loops and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama

Introduction

To describe the manner in which ordinary humans experience reality, the Buddha used the metaphor of a group of blind men who unknowingly encounter an elephant. Unable to see the animal, they each touch whatever is closest to them. One touches the tail and thinks it is a snake. Another touches a leg and thinks it is a tree. A third touches the belly and thinks it is a house.

Each of their experiences was equally valid but also equally invalid. They all experienced something, but their understanding was limited by the various conditions under which they had to operate, such as their blindness and the particular part of the animal that they happened to touch, as well as by their own past reservoir of knowledge, through which the sensory data had to be filtered. In the end each came to a completely different conclusion, yet each was convinced that he was right.

The image fits with our own predicament. We confidently use terms like “facts,” “truth” and “reality”; yet in the end these are mere words, and our experience of any given subject is conditioned by our personal make-up.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the telling of a history. Life is so rich, detailed and multifaceted that we cannot describe in full the things that occur in just one day of an ordinary individual’s life. Words are simply inadequate. Yet we attempt to speak of thousands of years of human experience as though it were a flat object held in the palm of the hand. In the end, the story we tell is really just a summation of our own interests, priorities and perspectives.

The problem is amplified even further when dealing with the life of a mystic. This is perhaps best illustrated by a passage in the biography of the Ninth Dalai Lama, which was written by Demo Tulku Jigmey Gyatso. The Ninth passed away at the tender age of nine, yet his biographer wrote, “The deeds of this great bodhisattva were as vast as the ocean, and I have only been able to catch a few droplets of these with my ink.” He then goes on to write a biography several hundred pages in length.

Buddhists believe that every living being functions simultaneously on many dimensions. For ordinary beings much of this is unconscious. However, the aryas, or highly attained masters, do so consciously. Often their deeds are like

seeds, the fruition of which will not be seen for many generations or even centuries. They can be sitting quietly in a room, but at the same time be consciously talking to gods or ghosts, or to beings who are far removed in time and space, or can be sending secret emanations that are performing magical deeds on the other side of the universe. We only see as much of this as our karmic maturity and spiritual evolution allows.

In a biographical poem of the Buddha written by the First Dalai Lama, the latter likens his attempt to tell the Buddha's life story to the effort of trying to empty the waters of the ocean with an oyster shell. He goes on to say,

The qualities of a Buddha are limitless as the sky;

Who is able to describe them all?

But, ah, how fortunate I am to have the karma

To be able to relate the few of which I know.

In this same way, the deeds of the Fourteen Dalai Lamas and their predecessors are characterized by the multidimensional quality of all mystics, and thus what is said of them in the pages that follow are but glimpses through a very small window.

The problem of dealing conventionally with the unconventional world of mystics, yogis, saints and bodhisattvas is one issue. Another is the unique situation with Tibet and Tibetan literature.

Westerners tend to think of Tibet as a Shangri-La-like kingdom, a King Arthur's Avalon set in the Himalayas, with the Dalai Lama as a combined Arthur/Merlin.

No doubt Tibet had some Shangri-La qualities; its dedication to the enlightenment tradition, and the fact that it was cut off from the mainstream world by its rings of mountain ranges insured it a certain innocence.

However, Tibet had very little in common with Medieval Europe in terms of its internal political structures. Whereas many Medieval European countries were distinct and unified entities, Tibet was a federation of several hundred kingdoms and tribes, each of which had its own king or chieftain.

This lack of centralized power was both Tibet's strength and its weakness. It made it possible for the country to be invaded and captured with relative ease, and this happened once or more almost every century; but it made it almost impossible to control once captured. The Mongols learned this under Genghis Khan, as did the various Chinese emperors, and later the British. The Chinese Communists who invaded Tibet and captured it in the 1950s are no closer to controlling it today than they were on the day they walked in almost five decades ago.

As for the person entrusted with the Dalai Lama office, he was generally a figurehead leader of the country rather than an actual hands-on one. It was hoped that he would be someone everyone could look up to and admire, a kind of national role model. His principal job was that of peacemaker between the hundreds of kingdoms and tribes that constituted the Tibetan "federation."

Each of the kingdoms and tribes that were united under the general umbrella of the Lhasa government had its own kings, queens, chieftains and/or emperors. The Tibetans also used a variety of titles for the personages who held these positions. For example, the king of Tsang, who was the Fifth Dalai Lama's chief antagonist and probably the most powerful man in central Asia during the early seventeenth century, appears in Tibetan literature with the title Depa, or "Head," and not as Gyalpo, or "King." At the same time the king of Gongkar, a relatively insignificant and tiny region to the southwest of Lhasa, is referred to as a Gyalchen, or "Great King." Similarly the king of Neudong, a region near Lhasa, is referred to as a Gongma, or "Emperor," even though at that same time his power was greatly eclipsed by that of the king of Tsang.

I have not attempted to sort out the historical backgrounds of these various figures, but rather just present them in accord with the manner in which they impacted the lives of the Dalai Lamas.

This picture of Tibet as a loosely affiliated federation of quasi-independent states is rarely presented in Western literature on Tibet, and has led to a considerable misunderstanding of the role of the Lhasa government in the life of the average Tibetan.

There are a number of technical hitches in dealing with Tibetan history. One of these has to do with the treatment of dates.

T Tibetans have their own calendar. They use a twelve-year cycle named after twelve animals, much like China, combining the twelve animal years with the five elements to get a sexanry system of twelve times five. They did not number the sexantries prior to the mid-eleventh century, so an “Iron Dog Year prior to that time can be in any sexanry cycle. Later Tibetan historians

tried to sort things out retroactively, but generally made a mishmash of things. Therefore, no Tibetan date prior to the eleventh century is reliable, with the exception of cases involving incidents with China, when a Chinese record can be invoked as a cross reference.

The Tibetan year is lunar, and the months begin on the new moon. The new year generally occurs on the first new moon of February, but does not always do so. Because of the nature of the lunar cycle, a few days are lost each year from the solar cycle. To make up the difference, an extra month is added to the calendar every fourth year, thus creating a super-leap year. Because a whole month is added, the year that follows a leap year begins rather late, with each succeeding year beginning approximately a week earlier. The new year immediately before a leap year can begin as early as the new moon of late January, whereas the new year following a leap year can fall at the end of February. To further complicate matters, other wrinkles in the calendar are smoothed over by doubling a day, e.g., having two days both called “the twelfth,” or by dropping a day out, e.g., having a month in which there is no twelfth day.

Western scholars generally skirt around the problem by treating Tibetan years as though they coincided perfectly with the Western calendar. For this reason the date of the First Dalai Lama’s death is usually stated as 1474, because he died in the Wood Horse Year, which in that particular sexanry cycle coincided with 1474. However, his death occurred at dawn of the eighth day of the twelfth month, meaning that in fact he died in mid-January of 1475.

For this reason, whenever an important event occurs in the twelfth month of a particular year I often indicate the predicament by giving both Western years, e.g., 1474/5.

Another problem emerges in dealing with Tibetan biography. Tibetans speak of a child as being a year old from the very moment of birth, although their sense of it is “being in his/her first year.” However, as soon as New Year’s Day comes,

the child is said to be two years old, or “in his/her second year.”

Thus a child born on the last day of a particular year will be spoken of as “in his/her first year” for only one day, and the next day will be described as two years old, or “in his/her second year.” For example, a child may see one day of the Wood Bird Year, and the next day be in the Fire Dog Year. He/she would consequently be said to be “in his/her second year,” although technically the child is only two days old.

In such cases, a child can be described as being as much as two years older than he or she would be reckoned to be in the West.

This does not create a problem when the name of the year is clearly mentioned, e.g., “During the Iron Dog Year, when he was in his third year...” However, if the name of the year is not mentioned in this way the actual age of the child is questionable.

The situation manifests frequently in the biographical literature of the early Dalai Lamas, although less so with the later incarnations, and generally during the first decade of their lives. Whenever it does, I have not attempted to establish the precise year unless the issue is central to the story.

A technical issue with any book on Tibet concerns the Romanization of Tibetan names and terms. This is no small matter (although it has generated considerable laughter over the decades). There is little consensus among Western scholars on what approach to take in this regard.

The problem comes from the Tibetan fascination with the consonant. A given syllable will have only one vowel sound, but can easily have as many as four or five consonants in it. Most of these are silent, or affect the pronunciation in particular ways that are not obvious to the casual reader. For example, the Fifth Dalai Lama’s ordination name, Lobzang Gyatso, is formally written as bLo-bzang-rgya-mtsho. The First Dalai Lama’s guru Khedrupjey is written as mKhas-grub-rje. Lama is written as bla-ma. The present Dalai Lama’s personal name, Tenzin Gyatso, is written as bsTan-‘dzin-rgya-mtsho.

This book is intended as pleasurable reading and not as an academic study of Tibetan history. Therefore, I have followed a system of easy transliteration, writing Tibetan personal and place names as they sound. Here I take my inspiration from the excellent grammarian Sir Winston Churchill, who once said

of the hyphen, “It is an eyesore and a blemish on the English language; and unless all of nature revolts, dispense with it.” The same could be said of the Western academic habit of inserting formal Tibetan spellings into a text, such as the names listed above. I had considered placing a glossary with formal spellings at the end of the book, but decided against it. Any well-trained Tibetologist will easily be able to re-create the formal spellings without relying on a glossary of this nature, should he or she desire to do so; and the tool would not be of value or interest to anyone but these scholars for whom it is unnecessary. Hence it would just add to the volume and thus expense of the book, without serving any useful purpose.

One liberty I have taken in my transliteration of Tibetan names is that of closing the hanging letter “e” by following it with a “y,” so as to ensure a more

accurate sounding by the casual reader. For example, whereas many Tibetologists write “Rinpoche,” I have closed the “e” with a “y” and written it as “Rinpochey.” Similarly, whereas some write “Geshe,” I write “Geshey.” My reason here is personal; after twenty years of lecture touring, I simply can no longer endure hearing people mispronounce these words respectively as “Rinpoach” and “Gaysh.” Westerners cannot be blamed for this mispronunciation; the standard rule in English syntax is that an open “e” is always silent and merely causes the preceding vowel to be made hard, such as in words like “pore” and “more.” In Tibetan, however, a concluding “e” does not affect the preceding vowel at all, and rather than being silent, is pronounced as “ey.” Therefore I have written it as such. There are dozens of words of this nature in Tibetan.

Another issue that my editors asked me to clarify is the manner in which I mention the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. For example, I sometimes write Kadam School, and sometimes Kadampa School. Similarly, I use both Geluk School and Gelukpa School, Nyingma and Nyingmapa, Kargyu and Kargyupa, Sakya and Sakyapa.

Technically the former in each case is the name of the school as an objective entity. The syllable “pa” indicates a person or people. The difference is similar to that between “Christianity” and “Tradition of the Christians.”

In fact both forms — with and without the suffix “pa” — appear commonly throughout Tibetan literature. I like to do the same in my writing.

Several earlier Western writers on Tibet have suggested that the traditional Tibetan biographies of the Dalai Lamas are somewhat superficial, in that Tibetan biographers invariably tend to treat their subjects as perfect in every way, and thus present their life stories in an overly favorable manner. The implication has been that the Dalai Lama biographical tradition is distorted by court stenographers pandering to their ruler.

This attitude is born from a lack of knowledge of Tibetan culture in general and Tibetan Buddhism in particular.

I opened this essay with a reference to Buddha's metaphor of blind men touching an elephant and mistaking their subject. The Buddhist attitude is that the manner in which we experience the outer world is so strongly shaped by our own likes, dislikes, prejudices and preconceptions, that we are generally better off to avoid judging others.

This sentiment was expressed as a proverb by an eleventh-century lama of the Kadam School, who said, "Avoid criticizing others. If you are in the mood to criticize, then criticize yourself." The same lama also said, "When speaking of others, say only good things. If you have to say something negative, say it about yourself."

Of course, as with all precepts, individual Tibetans will occasionally fail in their efforts to practice well. As a result one will occasionally hear a Tibetan speaking badly of another person. However, most Tibetans would take the negative words as reflecting more badly on the speaker than on the object of his or her criticism.

A second factor that contributes to the strong positivism that is characteristic of Tibetan biographical literature is the tantric teachings on pure perception. All tantric Buddhists are trained to regard the world that appears to the senses as being a manifestation of the beyond-duality wisdom of bliss and void. As the Seventh Dalai Lama put it in a poem,

All things found in the world and beyond
Are illusions created by one's own
thought.

Grasping at them but further distorts perception.

Give up grasping and see things as they are.

.

And elsewhere,

Whenever you meet anyone,

Greet him/her with eyes smiling with love.

Why mention that you should not even consider Holding harmful intentions or deceptive thoughts?

Also,

Always hold the pure view

That sees others as emanations of mandala deities:

That interprets all events as divine theater,

That hears all sounds as tantric music and song,

And that takes all thoughts as bliss linked to wisdom.

This is the essence of the tantric life.

In other words, the very heart of tantric training is the commitment to an intense positivism. A strong emphasis is placed on the exercise of consciously avoiding conventional negative attitudes, and on cultivating the

vision of the world and its inhabitants as supporting and supported mandala. When this is the case in general life, we should expect it be reflected in the literary tradition.

The criticism by Western scholars seems to suggest that the positivism characterizing the traditional biographies of the Dalai Lamas is exclusively connected to their high status as the spiritual and secular leader of Tibet. However, a glance at other Tibetan biographical literature reveals that this is not the case. Positivism is a quality common to almost all traditional Tibetan biographies.

No doubt this is not only due to the spiritual and philosophical considerations discussed above, but also due to the fact that a person who chooses or is chosen to be the biographer of a particular personage is in all probability someone who

admires the subject of the work. In traditional Tibet, only the rarest of birds would expend the time and energy necessary to write a biography of—and thus immortalize—someone whom he or she disliked.

I have tried to honor this tradition of sympathetic positivism throughout my treatment of the fourteen Dalai Lamas, and to avoid bringing an imposed Western critical approach into the telling of the tale.

The story could, of course, be just as easily written the other way round, with each chapter being dedicated to a personal assessment of the shortcomings of each of the fourteen Dalai Lamas. However, to do so would not make for particularly inspiring reading, and would be in utter contrast to the tradition. In brief, it would just be a cause of negative karma for both me and my readers. You can thank me for sparing you the exercise.

In general I have attempted to avoid relying on Western academic sources throughout this book. This is done not out of disrespect for the Western academic tradition, but because Tibetan studies are still at a pioneer stage in the West, particularly in the fields of history and biography, and thus drawing from them runs the risk of repeating errors.

I felt that it would be better to tell the Dalai Lama story by looking to primary—and thus Tibetan—sources. Tibetans tell their own story with a charm and flair that deserves its own coverage. I have only deviated from this policy and used Western sources when these are direct eyewitness accounts, such as those of the Christian missionaries who were posted in Tibet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By keeping to this approach I hope to provide the reader with a fresher look at the Dalai Lama tradition than otherwise would be the case.



Avalokiteshvara, reproduction of an 18th Century tangka. Photo by Armen Photographers, courtesy of The Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey.

Before the First Dalai Lama

Rachen Yeshey Gyaltzen, the guru to the Eighth Dalai Lama, gives a romantic rendition of the myth of the origination of the Tibetans as a race of people. He writes,¹

The bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara looked down on Tibet from his divine abode. In Ngari, the regions of western Tibet, he beheld beautiful mountains filled with deer, antelope and mountain goats. To the southeast of this, in Tsang, he beheld rocky hills and pastures filled with deer and monkeys. In the east, in Kham and Amdo, he beheld grassy plains and thick forests filled with various types of primates.

However, he saw that the living beings did not live in peace, and had turned this scene of beauty into a realm pervaded by hellish sufferings. Therefore he emanated a thousand incarnations that took birth among them in various animal forms and taught them the ways of peace and harmony, thus transforming the land into a celestial garden.

When the external conditions had been ripened in this way, he took birth as a monkey. During that life he encountered an abominable snowlady who was an emanation of the goddess Tara. They mated, and as a result she gave birth to the first human beings. They were all of different colors in complexion, and they rapidly increased in number, thus populating the land.

According to the tale, the offspring of the monkey and the abominable snowlady were the progenitors of the original six tribes of Tibetans, which over time evolved into the eighteen major tribes of ancient Tibet. The monkey was an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, and the snowlady was an emanation of Tara, the Bodhisattva of Enlightenment Activity. The mountain in Tibet on which this union took place is still a place of pilgrimage for Tibetans. Two burial memorials stand on it, one for each of these two forebears of the Tibetan race.

Although Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen wrote these words in the late 1800s, the Tibetan myth to which he was referring dates back to prehistoric times and appears in various forms in the earliest Tibetan literature. In all probability it has pre-Buddhist origins, and after Tibet became formally Buddhist in

the mid-seventh century it was recast in accordance with the new theology. Stated in other words, the pre-Buddhists and Buddhists had different names for the timeless spiritual being who was the source of the first humans in Tibet.

As we will see in future chapters, the divine monkey eventually became the source of the line of Dalai Lamas.

This Tibetan myth of humans descending from primates thus predates Darwin and his *The Origin of the Species* by several thousand years. The fact that it survived the advent of Buddhism in Tibet speaks strongly for its popularity, for Buddhism in India had claimed that humans were descended solely from the gods (or perhaps from beings hailing from another planet). It is curious that the Tibetans accepted so much of Buddhist doctrine from India, and yet maintained their ancient (and more anthropologically friendly) legend of the primate connection.

A very long time has elapsed between the marrying monkey and the appearance of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. What is the connection between these two personages?

The answer to that may be found in the unique meld of Buddhist attitudes and Tibetan culture forged in that cloud-capped land over the centuries that intervened between the lives of the progenitors of the Tibetan race and the life of its present spiritual and temporal leader-in-exile.

In 1939, as the West prepared itself for another protracted world war, the vast majority of Tibet's spiritual elders were gathered at Reteng Monastery to the northeast of Lhasa. The Great War of the modern world seemed millions of miles away. The Tibetans had a quite different concern: A four-year-old boy was about to arrive by caravan from Amdo, eastern Tibet, to be enthroned as the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, supreme spiritual and secular leader of the country.

After the Great Thirteenth passed away in 1933, a committee was established to search for his reincarnation. During the mummification process the body was closely studied for any signs that would indicate the direction the search should take. Weather patterns and natural phenomena were

observed for omens. The State Oracle was requested to channel the spirit of Peihar, a mystic Protector of Tibet, for advice; high lamas were consulted; dreams of prominent members of the mystical community were noted; and the

words spoken by the Great Thirteenth during his final years were analyzed for hidden meanings. The regent appointed after the death of the Great Thirteenth made a trip to the Lhamo Latso, or the Oracle Lake, and searched the waters for indications of where the reincarnation could be found.

Gradually the search narrowed to the vicinity of Kumbum Monastery in Amdo, many hundreds of miles to the east, and to a boy born in a humble household of farmers living just east of the Tibetan border, in a Tibetan community slightly inside Chinese territory. The area, the house and the child fit the descriptions given by the oracle and the clairvoyants, and also fit the visions seen by the regent in the sacred lake. Moreover, when the search party first arrived at the house the child immediately recognized a member of the group who had been a disciple of the Great Thirteenth, and when shown various religious objects he exclusively chose those that had belonged to the deceased Dalai Lama. In these and many other ways, even though at the time he was discovered he was barely old enough to speak, he convinced the authorities that he was the true incarnation of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, and therefore the reincarnation of all the previous Dalai Lamas, from the First on.

But even the First Dalai Lama was not really the first. Tibetan tradition relates a succession of over sixty lives previous to that of the boy now waiting to be transferred to his hereditary home at the Potala Palace in Lhasa. The story of these lives, their purpose, and their role in Tibetan history has roots deep in both Buddhist beliefs and in the culture and traditions of Tibet.

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When the present Dalai Lama was enthroned there were already some three thousand incarnate lamas in the Land of the Snows. With each of these the tradition was much the same: After the death of one a divination would be conducted to determine whether or not it would be useful to search for and formally recognize a reincarnation. If the divination turned out positive, then a committee would be formed to undertake the task of finding the child. The tradition was known as tulku., or “emanated incarnation,” a term borrowed from basic Mahayana Buddhist doctrine.

In Buddhism the doctrine of reincarnation is considered to be a selfevident truth. All schools of Buddhism accept it in one form or another. The idea is that until one achieves a certain level of spiritual stability one can fall into any of the six

realms of existence: the hells, the ghost realm, the animal world, the world of humans, and the realms of the anti-gods and gods. All six of these dimensions of existence are impermanent, and one is brought into them by the winds of karma and delusion. One remains in them until the forces that threw one there are exhausted, and then one moves on to another rebirth. The lower realms have greater suffering and the upper have greater pleasure; but all are equally unsatisfactory in that all are permeated by the all-pervading dissatisfaction generated by having a body-mind complex founded upon a misunderstanding of the nature of the self. Thus all beings of the six realms are caught on the wheel of confusion and are prone to suffering.

As wisdom increases and the forces of ignorance are transcended, one acquires an ever-increasing control over the wheel of rebirth. Eventually one accomplishes the power that enables one to take birth not out of the compulsive forces of karma, but in accordance with one's conscious aspiration and the altruistic concern to bring only benefit to the world. Such a being is an arya bodhisattva, characterized by the ability to enter the world at will in order to guide those ready to be trained.

Buddhism in India developed in three principal waves: Theravada (sometimes called Hinayana, the Compact Vehicle), Mahayana (the Great Vehicle), and Vajrayana (the Diamond Vehicle). The first of these is somewhat linear and conventional in its presentation of reality. The second is half linear and half esoteric. The third is exclusively esoteric.

In the Compact Vehicle teachings of the Buddha, the doctrine of reincarnation is presented in the context of cause and effect. Every action we do leaves an impression on the mind and acts as a propelling force in our unfoldment. Wholesome deeds of body, speech and mind produce happy results in this and future lives; unwholesome deeds produce the opposite. The emphasis is on self-responsibility, and on gaining control over all actions of body, speech and mind in order to attain personal liberation and nirvana.

The Buddha presented the doctrine of reincarnation somewhat differently in the Mahayana, or Great Vehicle. Here the emphasis was placed upon universal responsibility and the benefit of all living beings. Personal liberation was presented as merely a steppingstone on the way to the universal goodness of the bodhisattva, or "Enlightenment Hero." The basic principle of

cause and effect was the same, but the emphasis was placed on the increase of the heroic bodhisattva powers. The doctrine of reincarnation suggested that one could grow in strength lifetime upon lifetime, until eventually one achieved the great enlightenment that was of benefit to all living beings. Buddha spoke of twenty-two phases of spiritual unfoldment that characterize this transformation from ordinariness to the state of a universal hero.

He also spoke of the ten “arya stages,” or levels of bodhisattva sainthood. On the first of these one is able to simultaneously send forth a hundred physical emanations of oneself in order to work for the benefit of the world. On each of the succeeding arya levels this power increases tenfold. In other words, the mundane imagination is suspended and conventional reality becomes a plaything of the enlightened mind.

The esoteric Vajrayana took the doctrines of reincarnation and the bodhisattva’s universal concern a step further. If both were valid principles, then surely at the time of death one could direct one’s spirit to a rebirth that would be of maximum benefit to the world. In other words, it suggested the idea of controlled rebirth.

The Indians, however, were never able to develop the spiritual technology whereby controlled rebirth could be achieved as a social institution. This did not occur until Buddhism flowed into Tibet, the Land of Snow Mountains, and cross-fertilized with the great Himalayan mystics of Central Asia. These currents together produced the institution of the tulku, or officially recognized reincarnate lama.

Tibet came to cherish this phenomenon as one of its greatest achievements, pouring a tremendous amount of its energy and resources into its production of “reincarnate lamas.” While other countries of the period prided themselves in military conquest and capital growth, Tibet contented itself with counting the increase in the numbers of tulkus that it produced with each passing generation.

This has remained the case with Tibet for the past eight centuries.

In fact all three levels of Buddhist doctrine—Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana—speak of the bodhisattva, or Enlightenment Hero.

In the Theravada the term is reserved for one of the thousand universal teachers of this kalpabhadra, or “auspicious aeon.” The historical Buddha is counted as one of this group of a thousand, and his previous lives are recounted in the

Jataka tales, described later. In this tradition, other practitioners of the enlightenment path do not become bodhisattvas or buddhas, nor do they attain complete and perfect enlightenment. Rather, they become arhats, or “Destroyers of the Inner Foes,” and they achieve nirvana, the state beyond all suffering. Thus both their path and their achievement is less than that of someone destined for buddhahood.

In the Mahayana teachings, however, it is said that all beings one day become bodhisattvas, and all one day also become buddhas. Thus the Mahayana speaks of numerous bodhisattvas.

These bodhisattvas were once ordinary beings like ourselves. However, they generated the aspiration to achieve highest enlightenment in order to benefit the limitless beings of the world, and then they embarked upon the path of the six perfections: generosity, self-discipline, patience, joyous effort, meditation and wisdom. For lifetime upon lifetime, they have manifested in the world in accordance with the needs of living beings, appearing in different times and cultures throughout the universe, and speaking in the languages and from the perspectives of those to be trained. In this sense the term bodhisattva is being used to refer to a style of spiritual practice leading to enlightenment, and also to the person who practices and accomplishes that path.

The Mahayanist would say that Christ, Lao Tzu, and many of the world’s great spiritual teachers were manifestations of the bodhisattvas. All beings who are moved by the spirit of universal love and compassion and who achieve a high spiritual state in order to fulfill this passion are numbered among the great bodhisattvas.

The Vajrayana uses the term bodhisattva similarly. However, it speaks of bodhisattvahood as something that all of us can achieve in one short lifetime, and then use our death as a means of taking this bodhisattvahood on a quantum leap forward. This will be further discussed at a later point.

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In popular Western writing, the term bodhisattva is frequently defined as a person who makes the vow to postpone his or her own enlightenment until all other living beings have achieved liberation from worldly existence.

This is not true of the Indian or Tibetan traditions, although the Chinese

Buddhists did introduce something of this idea into their philosophies. Instead, classical Mahayana practitioners in both India and Tibet pursue the goal of enlightenment in order to benefit other living beings. The First Dalai

Lama, Gyalwa Gendun Drubpa, states this very clearly in his brief text *Notes on Training the Mind*:²

Transforming the mind in terms of its attitude toward enlightenment by means of meditation upon the bodhisattva aspiration begins by asking oneself the following question, “Granted, we would like to be able to benefit the countless sentient beings, but do we actually have the power to fully do so at the moment?” We can easily see that in our present condition not only do we not have the power to benefit all beings, in fact we cannot ultimately and finally benefit even one. Not to mention benefiting others, we do not have the ability to fully benefit ourselves. Even universal emperors, arhats and solitary adepts, having completed merely a fraction of the path to enlightenment, cannot finally accomplish the needs of the living beings. Only someone who is completely enlightened can do so.... If you wish to be of maximum and ultimate benefit in the world, and because only a fully enlightened being can be so, you should aspire to achieve full enlightenment as quickly as possible for the benefit of all that lives.

In this sense the term bodhisattva is being used to refer to a practitioner who has resolved to achieve full enlightenment as a means of being of greatest benefit to the world. In other words, he or she is a practitioner of the great Way.

Eventually the bodhisattva becomes a buddha. However, he or she does not then lose the title of “bodhisattva.” One is referred to as a bodhisattva in reference to one’s efforts to benefit the world, and as a buddha in reference to the state of utter spiritual perfection.

In Mahayana scriptures this twofold aspect of a buddha was introduced through the doctrine of the three kayas, or “bodies of a buddha”: dharmakaya, or truth body; sambhogakaya, or beatific body; and nirmanakaya, or emanation body. The first of these is the formless, gnosis aspect of a buddha; the second and third are form aspects, respectively used to communicate to beings on high (Sanskrit [Skt.], *arya*, or “saint”) and ordinary levels of spiritual maturity. The concept is not far removed from the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

The idea is that when a person achieves enlightenment and becomes a buddha — something every human being has the potential to do, regardless of race, age or sex — his or her mind dissolves temporarily into the sphere of the infinite. At that time one altogether disappears from the world of finite things. The Indians called this realm of being the dharmakaya, or “reality body.” On this dimension one can only be perceived by other fully enlightened beings. That enlightened being then manifests in two forms in order to bring benefits into the world: the sambhogakaya, or “beatific body,” which can only be perceived by aryas, or saints; and the nirmanakaya, or “emanated body,” which can be perceived by ordinary beings. For the Buddhists of ancient India, nirmanakaya referred to the form emanations of an enlightened being.

The Tibetans, being Mahayana Buddhists who derived their lineages directly from India, wholeheartedly embraced this Indian doctrine of the three kayas. In addition, they added a unique application to the third kaya, or nirmanakaya. Whereas in India it was an abstract theological concept with little basis in ordinary life, in Tibet it evolved into the tradition of yangsi lama, or “reincarnate lama.” This is a synonym for tulku. In other words, the Tibetan tulku tradition is linked to the concept of nirmanakaya, or “emanated form of a buddha.”

However, even though the Tibetans borrowed the term tulku from the doctrine of the three kayas, and in particular from the concept of nirmanakaya, they generally do not think of the lamas who are recognized as tulkus as being actual nirmanakaya emanations, for a nirmanakaya is by definition a fully enlightened being. Thus this usage of the term is somewhat honorific.

As said earlier, by the time the present Dalai Lama was born, Tibet had approximately three thousand of these reincarnate lamas, or tulkus. The Dalai Lama held a unique place among them. The situation with all of them was somewhat similar, in that each of them represented some great mystic of the past. Moreover, whenever one of them would pass away a committee would be formed to search for the reincarnation. This committee would be headed by the chief disciples and/or chief attendant of the deceased lama. The child would generally be conceived within a few months of the death of the predecessor, and therefore would be reborn about a year after the predecessor’s death.

The legal implications of the tulku tradition first emerged in the early twelfth century when the children thus recognized began to inherit the property that had

belonged to their predecessors. Thus the four-year-old peasant child who arrived in Lhasa from Amdo in 1939, and who was recognized as the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, would inherit the residences, possessions and official status of the previous Dalai Lamas.

Yet the legacy of reincarnation had not always existed in Tibet as such an exact science. Prior to the twelfth century, tulkus were not officially tracked down and recognized at birth, nor did they inherit the property of the

persons of whom they were thought to be reincarnations. It was more a matter of being informally perceived as the rebirth of a specific historical figure or figures, often because the lama himself spoke of the subject, or because a well-known teacher or clairvoyant made some pronouncement about the matter. The latter was the more common because of the Buddhist emphasis on humility; as the Buddha himself put it, “One should leave the broadcasting of personal qualities to those with delusions of grandeur.” The tradition had not yet achieved the level of acceptance necessary in order to empower it with an official legal status.

This popular acceptance steadily grew in strength during the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By the beginning of the fifteenth century it had spread throughout not only Tibet but also the dozen or so kingdoms surrounding Tibet that embraced Tibetan Buddhism, including Mongolia and Himalayan India.

The Dalai Lama office did not differ from those of most others in its principal features, although gradually the Dalai Lama’s became the most popular reincarnate lama office in Central Asia and thus became “special among equals.” This all changed in 1642, of course, when the Fifth Dalai Lama was appointed to the position of both spiritual and secular leadership of the Tibetan nation. From that time onward, at public gatherings his reincarnations were always seated higher than any other lama in the land, regardless of age, sect or any other distinguishing factor.

All tulkus bear a number that indicates the count of lifetimes that the lineage has formally been around. The present Dalai Lama, for example, is number fourteen in his lineage. This means that he is the thirteenth reincarnation of the great mystic now known to history as the First Dalai Lama, or Gyalwa Gendun Drubpa, who lived from 1391 to 1474/5. Many of Gyalwa Gendun Drubpa’s previous incarnations were also known, but these are not listed as Dalai Lamas. Rather, they are considered previous incarnations of the being who became the

Dalai Lama.

But what, according to the Mahayana, is the purpose of this line of reincarnations called the Dalai Lamas? The answer lies in the Mahayana vision of the role of the bodhisattva in uplifting human civilization in general and in leading sentient beings to enlightenment in particular. The great arya bodhisattvas are especially important in this work. The Mahayana scriptures mention numerous arya bodhisattvas who are active in our world system. Eight of these are especially important in the present era. Known in Tibetan as Gyalsey Nyey Gyey, or “The Eight Offspring of the Buddhas,” they play a role somewhat like that of the great archangels of Western civilization, appearing in various times and places as needed in order to benefit and even save individual people, and also performing crucial work in the evolution of human civilization.

Each of these eight great bodhisattvas has an outer, an inner and a secret significance. On the outer level they were once ordinary living beings who aeons ago embarked upon the spiritual path and followed Buddha Shakyamuni (as well as various other buddhas) through their stream of lives, assisting them in their enlightenment activities. On the inner level each of them symbolizes one of the eight principal qualities of enlightenment. Thus Avalokiteshvara is often referred to as the “Bodhisattva of Compassion,” Manjushri as the “Bodhisattva of Wisdom,” Vajrapani as the “Bodhisattva of Power,” and so forth. We also see them referred to as buddhas of these qualities, in the sense of being embodiments or symbols of the compassion, wisdom, or power of all buddhas of the three times and the ten directions.

On the secret level these bodhisattvas symbolize aspects of our own consciousness, in the sense of being the seeds of the qualities within us that can be developed into full enlightenment. Thus Avalokiteshvara represents the practice of the path to enlightenment through the cultivation of compassion as the primary factor; Manjushri represents this cultivation through the force of wisdom; and so forth.

Consequently, in tantric practice there is the tradition of visualizing oneself as being one or another of these bodhisattvas and reciting the corresponding mantras. A typical practice of this nature begins with reciting the vow, “I myself for the benefit of all living beings must accomplish the state of full and complete enlightenment. For this purpose I now engage in the meditation of self-identification with Avalokiteshvara and recitation of his

mantra.” We then dissolve our ordinary sense of body, mind and ego into radiant, formless space, and arise with the visualization of our body as being that of Avalokiteshvara, our mind as being compassion and wisdom combined, all sound as being the Avalokiteshvara mantra, and our ego the self-identification with Avalokiteshvara. We then emanate lights from our heart in order to accomplish the bodhisattva activities, and recite the mantra om matti padme hum.

Although we see vast bodies of literature in Tibet (much of which is translated from Sanskrit) on all eight of these great bodhisattvas, as well as on a host of other bodhisattva personages, the Tibetans developed a special affinity with Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. As we will see

later in this book, the Tibetans even came to rewrite their history in terms of the Avalokiteshvara legacy. It is a fascinating concept, and to a large extent inspired much of the character of Tibetan Buddhism in all the divergent schools and sects, in this way setting the stage for the Tibetan national character. The fact that the early Dalai Lamas were linked by myth to this particular bodhisattva was probably the most important factor facilitating the role that the Dalai Lama office was to play in secular affairs from 1642 onward.

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Buddhism developed in Tibet in four main stages. The first of these was the informal period before Buddhism was adopted as the national religion in the mid-seventh century during the reign of King Songtsen Gampo. Records of this period are sketchy at best, because a new script was adopted during Songtsen Gampo’s reign, and not much was carried over to the new linguistic medium, other than the accounts of Songtsen Gampo’s royal ancestry. This king built Tibet’s first Buddhist temples and shrines, including the most sacred Jokhang Temple of Lhasa.

The second Buddhist period is that from King Songtsen Gampo to the renaissance of the mid-eleventh century. The Buddhist schools that emerged during this four-hundred-year period used the script that was developed under Songtsen Gampo’s rule and translated much of Indian Buddhism into it. These schools are now mostly known to history as the Nyingma, or “Ancient Ones.” Although monasticism was introduced, it remained very small, with the lineages of Buddhist knowledge largely being held

and transmitted from father to son as family traditions, much as it had in the shamanic legacies of pre-Buddhist Tibet. Students were accepted from outside the family, of course, but in this way became part of the larger spiritual clan of the lineage, almost in the sense of spiritual adoption.

The renaissance of the mid-eleventh century saw a complete review of Buddhism from India and the third phase of Buddhist unfoldment. Many of the Indian scriptures were retranslated or revised in accordance with the new updated language and terminology. Here monasticism took off with a passion, and the spiritual landscape was utterly transformed. Instead of Buddhist knowledge and education being treated as family businesses, the New Buddhism saw monasteries and retreat hermitages for monks and nuns springing up everywhere. All schools of Buddhism that emerged from this movement are known to history as the Sarma, or “New Ones.” A dozen or so of these arose, three of which were to prove most significant and to survive long into the future: the Sakya, or “Grey Earth Lineage,” the Kargyu, or “Instruction Lineage,” and the Kadam, or “Supreme Instruction Lineage.”

The waves of enlightenment activity emanating from the numerous New Schools dominated the spiritual life of Tibet for some four centuries, almost eclipsing the presence of the Nyingma, or Old Schools.

Then in the early fifteenth century a great teacher by the name of Lama Tsongkhapa appeared from Amdo, eastern Tibet. One of his chief disciples was a monk by the name of Gendun Drubpa, who posthumously became known as the First Dalai Lama.

The school that emerged from Lama Tsongkhapa’s work is known as the Geluk, or “Wholesome Way.” Within a few short generations it had become larger than all other schools combined. It has continued into the present time as the dominant spiritual force of not only Tibet but also much of Central Asia, with the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama incarnations as its greatest heroes.

From the perspective of the Dalai Lama incarnations, the Kadam School that formed in the mid-eleventh century was the most important of all the spiritual movements in Tibet prior to the advent of Lama Tsongkhapa and the formation of the Geluk School. This is because during his lifetime the First Dalai Lama became popularly thought of as a reincarnation of Lama Drom Tonpa, an early

Kadampa lama. The association of the First Dalai Lama with Lama Drom was informal, and he was never officially enthroned as such; but the fact that the link was made in the minds of the people had far-reaching effects.

One of the reasons that this association was so important was because there was a general tradition that provided a list of thirty-six previous incarnations of Lama Drom in India as spiritual adepts. This same tradition also spoke of ten of Lama Drom's previous incarnations as early Tibetan kings. When the First Dalai Lama became regarded as a reincarnation of Lama Drom, these forty-six previous incarnations automatically became attached to him.

Atisha, Lama Drom Tonpa and the First Dalai Lama

The tradition of Lama Drom's thirty-six previous incarnations in India, all of which later were attached to the First Dalai Lama, originally arose from conversations between the Indian saint Atisha, Lama Drom Tonpa, and their young disciple Ngok Lekpai Sherab. These were recorded in a text known as *The Previous Incarnations of Lama Drom Tonpa**

Atisha is one of the key figures of Tibetan Buddhism, but the mystical aspect of his life has been largely overlooked by Western scholars and researchers, who generally prefer to present him as a dry contemplative and scholar who was a stern "reformer" of the corrupt practices prevalent in Tibetan Buddhism during the eleventh century.⁴

It is true that this Indian master's original invitation to visit Tibet came from the rulers of western Tibet, namely, Kings Yeshey Od and Jangchub Od of Ngari (i.e., Gughey), and that these kings extended the invitation because they were quite unhappy with the practices found in some of the monasteries of their area. These customs seem to have included sexual practices, the consumption of alcohol by the monks and nuns, and animal sacrifices.

However, Atisha's real success in Tibet was achieved not in the Ngari area, but in central and southern Tibet, where he spent the last decade of his life. It was in central Tibet that he cemented his relationship with his chief disciple Lama Drom Tonpa, and where Ngok came to him.

Atisha had been born in Bengal, India, and as a teenager had developed a strong interest in tantric practice. One day at Vikramapura he encountered a naked

woman wearing a necklace of dried human skulls. One moment she would be laughing hysterically and the next overcome by tears. He asked her to give him tantric initiation. She said to him, "If you really seek the esoteric teachings you should go into the jungles of Bengal." Therefore he followed her into the jungles. He practiced the sexual yogas with her and achieved great realization. During this early period of his life he also trained with the tantric adept Avadhutipa.

When he was in his mid-twenties the bodhisattva Tara appeared to him and prophesied, "If you become a monk your life will be far more beneficial to sentient beings." Also he dreamed of sitting with Buddha Shakyamuni and his disciples. Buddha turned to him and asked, "Why has this disciple of mine not yet become a monk?" Consequently, at the age of twenty-nine Atisha took monastic ordination and entered into formal study of the classical Mahayana scriptures at Nalanda and other central Indian monasteries, eventually becoming the abbot of Vikramashila.

Many of the greatest teachers of Atisha's era were Indonesians, however. Thus he undertook the long and dangerous sea voyage to Indonesia, where he remained for twelve years studying with the Indonesian master Dharmakirti, known in Tibetan as Serlingpa, "He of the Golden Islands." Later in Tibet Atisha was to declare that of all forty-five masters with whom he had studied he considered Serlingpa to be his most precious heart-guru.

Not long after Atisha returned to India, the great sage Naropa, India's foremost Buddhist master, came to Vikramashila Monastery and passed his spiritual mantle to Atisha. "From this day onward the responsibility of Buddhism in India rests upon your shoulders alone," he said. Twenty days later Naropa passed away, and Atisha was now regarded as the highest Buddhist monk in the country.

Meanwhile in Tibet the king of Ngari decided that a great monk should be invited to the country to revise and update the Buddhist tradition. With this in mind he began to sponsor numerous Tibetans to travel to India, become monks, and study in the three great monasteries of Nalanda, Vikramashila and Odantapuri. The name of Atisha was recommended to him as the man who was best suited to revive the enlightenment tradition in the Land of Snows, and consequently he began to send invitations and offerings to India to have Atisha delegated to a Tibet expedition.

King Yeshey Od's first few invitations were rejected by the Indian elders, for Atisha was considered the most important monk in the land. Yet the king did not relent in his mission, and decided to send an offering that could not be refused. While out gathering gold, however, he was captured by a tribe of Goloks and held for ransom, the price of his release being the weight of his body in gold.

His nephew Jangchub Od undertook the task of his release, gathered a large quantity of gold, and carried it to the Goloks. Unfortunately, when weighed, it came out to be underweight by the measure of the king's head.

Jangchub Od met with his uncle and told him that he would have to leave and gather more gold for the ransom. The elderly king pleaded with him, "No, please do not follow that course. I am an old man with less than ten years left to live. Instead, send the gold to India and offer it to the monasteries, with the request that they allow Atisha to come to Tibet and teach for a few years. Inform Atisha that I have for many years worked to bring him here, but that it seems I will not be able to meet him in this lifetime. Tell him of my fate, and ask him to direct his blessings to me. Inform the elders that my offering to them is the weight of my body in gold, together with my very life." Jangchub Od followed his uncle's instructions, and King Yeshey Od died shortly thereafter.

Meanwhile, in India, Atisha was on pilgrimage to Vajrasana, the place of Buddha's enlightenment. While he was in the Amitabha chapel, the image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara turned to him and delivered the following prophecy, "In the land of the north there is an incarnation of mine. He and

your principal meditational deity, the bodhisattva Tara, are already there working for the benefit of living beings. Many people there await your guidance. You must go there to work for the benefit of the world."

Shortly after this Atisha dreamed of the bodhisattva Tara, who told him to visit a nearby shrine. He followed this advice, and when he arrived at the shrine he met an old woman with matted hair. He asked her what he should do about his invitation to visit Tibet. The old woman replied, "You should definitely go. You will meet a layman in Tibet who will carry your work to fruition." Thus his meeting with Lama Drom Tonpa, the man destined to become his greatest disciple, was foretold to him on numerous occasions.

In Vajrasana he encountered another mystical woman, who told him, “If you go to Tibet your mission will be a great success; but your life will be shortened. If you do not go you will live to the age of ninety-two, and if you go you will not live beyond the age of seventy-three.”

Atisha thought to himself, “Twenty years of my life is worth sacrificing if my work there would be beneficial to others.”

When the invitation and offering from Jangchub Od arrived, the Indian elders consented to allow Atisha to leave the monastery and teach in Tibet for three years. He arrived in western Tibet in 1042, teaching first in Toling, then in Purang Gyal of Mangyul, where he met Lama Drom Tonpa. This was the disciple destined to fulfill Atisha’s work and destined in future lives to become the Dalai Lamas.

The meeting between Atisha and Lama Drom Tonpa was a unique encounter. Both had had premonitions of each other, and almost every day from the time of his arrival Atisha would ask, “Where is this layman who is prophesied to be my chief disciple?” On the morning of the day Lama Drom arrived in town Atisha said, “Today my layman will come to me.” He packed a lunch for Lama Drom and put it inside his robe.

When Lama Drom arrived Atisha was out giving a teaching, and Drom was advised to wait for his return. He replied, “I have been waiting for years to meet with my master. I cannot waste a single moment more.”

The two met by chance on the street. When Atisha set eyes on him he exclaimed, “Ah, at last my layman has come.” Without being introduced he reached into his robe and pulled out the lunch he had brought for him. From this time on the two were inseparable.

Atisha then traveled to Yarlung and Samyey, teaching as he went. When he was in Gyapib, Ngok Lekpai Sherab met him and invited him to Lhasa. Thus the three—Atisha, Lama Drom Tonpa, and Ngok Lekpai Sherab, whose retreat together some years later at Yerpa Lhari Nyingpo was to inspire Atisha to speak the text *The Previous Incarnations of Lama Drom Tonpa*—came together as a group for the first time.

Atisha founded numerous temples and monasteries in India, Tibet and Nepal during his life. Of these, the monastery of Reteng constructed by Lama Drom

Tonpa under Atisha's guidance is considered to be the most important. As we will see in later chapters, all the Dalai Lama incarnations would make it a place of pilgrimage and meditation. In addition, many of the tutors and regents of the different Dalai Lamas would be drawn from Reteng Monastery. This has continued into modern times. The search for the present Dalai Lama was overseen by the head lama of Reteng Monastery.

In the end, Atisha did not return to India after his three-year contract was fulfilled. The Tibetans pressed him to stay, and sent large offerings to his monastery in India requesting the permission and blessings of the elders. Permission was granted on the basis that he compose a text of his essential teachings and send it back to India. Thus was born his *Bodhipathapradipam* (Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment), which was destined to become one of the greatest classics of Asia. This work and its autocommentary were also composed at the request of King Jangchub Od, who asked Atisha to summarize the quintessential points in the teachings of Buddha in a manner that would be most appropriate to the Tibetan mind. Over the centuries to follow hundreds of subcommentaries were written to this short work, and still today it remains a favorite with the lamas. Atisha also wrote many other texts on both the sutra and tantra traditions, but his *Lamp for the Path* remains his most popular composition. In addition, with Lama Drom Tonpa and his other disciples he also oversaw the retranslation of the Sanskrit texts that he considered to be the most instrumental to a correct understanding of the Buddhist tradition.

In 1055 (some accounts put it at 1057), while teaching in Nyetang, the master fell ill. He announced that the time of his passing had finally arrived and gave his final instructions: "I am leaving Lama Drom Tonpa as my successor. Show him the same respect as you showed to me. Do not be distracted by truitless activities, and my blessings will remain with you. We will meet again in the Tushita Pure Land." Thus he passed away.

Lama Drom Tonpa became his successor, organizing Atisha's lineages into the format in which they have come down to us. In particular, Lama Drom established the Kadam Order as an infrastructure to continue and disseminate the master's teachings, and dedicated the remainder of his life to fulfilling his wishes.

One of the principal works embodying the spiritual teachings of Atisha and Lama Drom Tonpa is a text by the name of Pacho Bucho (Father Dharmas, Son Dharmas). This book is also known by the popular title The Kadam Lekbam (Book of the Kadampa Masters). It is an anthology of many different texts and stories, and was probably compiled in the early twelfth century.

One chapter of this book in particular is of interest to us here. It bears the title Dromkyi Kyerab (The Previous Incarnations of Lama Drom Tonpa). In most editions this is placed as Chapter Twenty-Three.

In The Previous Incarnations of Lama Drom Tonpa, Atisha calls Lama Drom an incarnation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and relates the stories of thirty-six previous lives of Lama Drom in various parts of India. Because the First Dalai Lama was regarded as Lama Drom's reincarnation, all thirty-six of these became attached to him and to the subsequent Dalai Lama incarnations.

The Thirty-Six Indian Incarnations of Lama Drom

Atisha's stories of the thirty-six previous Indian incarnations of Lama Drom are presented in the traditional literary style of an Indian jataka.

Readers familiar with Buddhist literature will know of the Buddha-jataka, or "birth stories of the Buddha." The Buddha-jataka is a collection of hundreds of accounts of how in his previous lives the Buddha took birth as various beings, each time taking a step closer to enlightenment and strengthening the forces of goodness in the world. Perhaps the best known version is the Jatakamala, a collection of thirty-four such stories compiled by the Indian poet Aryasura sometime in the second or third century ad. Aryasura's Jatakamala is listed as one of the six principal Indian works that Atisha recommended to his Tibetan followers.

Given the popularity of the Buddha-jataka, it was only logical for similar birth stories to emerge in connection with later Buddhist masters. This occurred in India and continued in Tibet.

Atisha is said to have spoken the birth stories of Lama Drom Tonpa during the period that he and Lama Drom were living in a three-year retreat in the caves at Drak Yerpa. These caves remain a popular place of pilgrimage even today. Atisha related the stories to Ngok Lekpai Sherab, who would become a much-beloved figure in Tibetan history. It is probably Ngok who first wrote them down.

Each story begins with a playful conversation initiated by Ngok, in which he quotes a verse of scripture and then asks Lama Drom to relate the tale of how in a previous life Drom had internalized its meaning. Lama Drom refuses out of modesty, and suggests that instead they discuss more meaningful matters. Ngok then turns to Atisha, and asks him to fulfill the request. Atisha invariably hesitates, but in the end proceeds to do so, after saying that since Drom is an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, Ngok should offer him a mandala of gold dust before the telling of the tale. The stories thus told by Atisha to Ngok Lekpai Sherab are not presented as biographical chronicles of Lama Drom's previous lives, but rather as settings in which to illustrate essential teachings. For example, Story Two is told as follows.

When Atisha and Lama Drom Tonpa were living at Yerpa Lhari Nyingpo, their

when Atisha and Lama Drom Tonpa were living at Terpa Lham Nyungpo, then disciple Ngok Lekpai Sherab came to visit them.

During the course of their evening conversations Ngok turned to Drom Tonpa and said, “Lama Drom, you have been residing with Guru Atisha for three years now. Both you and he have taught many esoteric doctrines. During one of these discourses the following precept was mentioned, ‘Do not be distracted by the many worldly activities. Instead, cherish effort in practice.’ I beg of you, tell me how you yourself accomplished this in one of your previous lives.”

His Previous Life as the Boy Brilliance

The tale that follows relates how a young boy named Brilliance, who showed great aptitude for spiritual practice, succeeded in avoiding worldly distraction.

Concerned lest this spiritually gifted seven-year-old leave them, the parents tried to persuade him to live the life of a householder. He replied:

“The life of a mundane householder is filled with distractions. Who with wisdom would choose that path? I would not be worthy to call myself your son if I were to allow myself to sink in the mud and slime of conventionality. Also, by following a worldly lifestyle I would not be able to progress in spiritual realization nor be able to bring spiritual benefits to others.”

His parents pleaded with him, “There are two ways in which to follow the bodhisattva path: one as a layman and the other as a renunciate. In

this town we have many people of birth and learning, many objects of faith, and many fields of devotion. Our citizens have respect for those with inner qualities, and our culture is pure and honorable. Therefore you should stay here, dedicate yourself to the Three Jewels and study in accordance with our traditions. It would be most wonderful if you could complete the paths and stages to enlightenment by applying yourself in that way.”

Brilliance resisted their pleas, but agreed to try to find a guru close to home. Soon, while he was playfully teaching Dharma to a group of children, he was diverted by a magical flock of swans. The swans turned to face Brilliance. They began to make sweet sounds and to swim toward him.

Brilliance listened closely to the sounds they were making, and noticed that

within the pattern he could discern words. They seemed to be saying, “This town is a great distraction to you and will hinder your spiritual progress. You should instead quickly engage in Dharma practice.”

“How can I find my guru, and where should I go to practice?” he asked. “You should travel five hundred yojanas to the south. There you will find the accomplished master Fearless Wisdom, who lives in a cave on Solitary Mountain. Request his teachings and eliminate all hesitation. Son of noble character, enter into single-pointed practice under his guidance. He has been your spiritual teacher in many past lives. He will accept to teach you now, and will continue to care for you throughout the future. Youthful one, do not hesitate. Go to him now.”

Brilliance related this event to his parents, who helped him find the teacher. Brilliance remained with him, meditated, and achieved realization. At the end of the tale, Atisha concludes,

The guru Fearless Wisdom is one of my own previous incarnations. Brilliance is now reborn as Lama Drom. The father, Well Born, has become my disciple Kuton. You, Ngok, are the reincarnation of Beauty, the mother of Brilliance.

His Previous Life as Prince Divine Gift

The following tales shows how, in a previous incarnation as Prince Divine Gift, he benefited his country by making peace with a war-like king:

The ruler of Varanasi, King Fortunate, has been counseling his ministers to be unconcerned with strengthening the country’s defenses.

One of the ministers persisted, “And if an evil army invades us, what will we do then?”

The king replied, “My eldest son is an incarnation of Arya Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Have no fears. He will protect the kingdom.”

At that time the elder prince was in a chamber on the upper terrace of the palace, and was engaged in meditation on love and compassion. The ministers went to him, prostrated many times, touched their heads to his feet, and folded their hands together in prayer.

The prince said to them, “I am a mere child and have absolutely no qualities of greatness. O ministers of my father the noble king, any greatness you see in me is merely a reflection of your own pure vision.”

The ministers replied, “O prince, your words are sweet to hear. We will follow you for as long as breath remains in our body. We will, as your father has advised us, devote ourselves to the Three Jewels, and will strive in the ways of goodness, peace and harmony.”

All the people of Varanasi dearly loved the two princes and said, “Ever since the two princes were born all has gone well for us. There have been no untimely frosts, hail or windstorms to destroy our crops. No one has been harmed by lightning or earthquakes. In former times black magicians used to come here and practice their sorcery and would carry away the hearts and blood of living beings, but this also has not occurred since the two princes were born. Even the king’s ministers have become more gentle and controlled, and have begun to emulate the character of the princes.” The citizens of the kingdom lavishly praised the princes in this way.

At that time to the north of Varanasi there lived an evil king by the name of Black Krishna who was jealous of the good king of Varanasi.

One day a beggar woman came to this evil king and begged for alms.

The king asked her, "From whence do you come?"

“From Varanasi,” was her answer.

“The king of Varanasi is known for his goodness,” Black Krishna said.

Why have you left his kingdom to come begging in mine? Do you not know that he and I are enemies?"

‘Indeed, the king of Varanasi is a very good and generous man, and gives us all we ask for,’ the beggar woman stated. “But I did not know that

there was enmity between you. I have never heard the king, nor his sons, ministers or subjects, ever say anything negative about you.”

Black Krishna asked, “Well then, what did you hear them say about me?” The

old woman informed him, “One day when I was in the center of the city I met the elder prince. He was distributing food to the beggars of the area, among whom I was one. After we had completed our meal he gave us the following advice: ‘To the north of Varanasi there is a king by the name of Black Krishna. He is prosperous, brave and generous, and never leaves anyone in poverty. If you go and visit him he will fulfill all of your wishes.’ The prince spoke very highly of you in this way.”

Black Krishna was skeptical, and asked the beggar if she were willing to swear by her words. She exclaimed, “Of course I will. If what I have said is not true, why should I leave Varanasi, where I was provided with all requisites, and travel all the way here?”

King Black Krishna thought to himself, “The prince does not speak about his own good qualities, nor does he criticize others. Perhaps my attitude toward his family and my harsh words about them have been unfair. I should go to their palace and apologize to them.”

With this thought in mind, King Black Krishna took five thousand horsemen with him and set out for Varanasi.

When the ministers of Varanasi saw such a large party of armed horsemen approaching their city they became extremely agitated and ran to their king. “Your Majesty,” they cried, “A huge army of five thousand horsemen led by King Black Krishna is approaching our city. Surely they are planning an attack upon us.”

The king replied, “Go unarmed to receive them. I have an open heart, and my sons are bodhisattvas. Therefore there is no danger. But first go and inform the elder prince.”

When the elder prince heard that King Black Krishna was outside the city gates he sent out several thousand young boys and girls to sing songs of welcome. The youths were dressed in delightfully colored clothing and performed exquisite songs and dances. The prince himself led the procession, taking several of the king’s ministers with him, as well as five hundred acrobats.

King Black Krishna thought to himself, “It would not be proper for me to show pride after receiving a welcome like this.” He descended from his horse in order to greet the prince. The two spoke at length, and King

Black Krishna gave the prince five thousand measures of gold as a greeting gift.

The prince invited King Black Krishna into the palace, and they proceeded inside with great regalia.

Peace is of course established between the realms of King Black Krishna and King Fortunate. The story concludes with Prince Divine Gift happily relinquishing his throne to his brother and retiring to meditate in the forest at the foot of a sage. At the end of the tale, Atisha identifies Prince Divine Gift as a previous incarnation of Lama Drom, Ngok as his princely brother, and himself as the forest sage. Atisha then points out that jataka stories such as this should not be mere objects of fascination or devotion, but should be taken as guidelines to how we ourselves are to train and develop our own character and mind.

All thirty-six tales of The Previous Incarnations of Lama Drom Tonpa are told with a similar simplicity and innocence, adding to their charm and universality. They quickly achieved a widespread popularity with Tibetan readers that has remained strong until the present time. They have even been republished in modern Tibet under Chinese Communist occupation. When I was in Lhasa in May of 1999 I found an edition of the complete Father Dharmas, Son Dharmas, printed in two paperback volumes, subsidized by the Beijing government.

Lama Drom Previous Incarnations as the Ten Tibetan Kings

Atisha's thirty-six stories of Lama Drom's Indian incarnations also provided a venue in which the master felt comfortable to deliver prophecies of what Lama Drom would accomplish in those subsequent incarnations when he would take ten rebirths in Tibet as kings of the country. Here the prophecies could be uttered through the mouths of the characters in the stories, and thus would not contradict Atisha's monastic precept to avoid the public display of clairvoyant powers.

For example, in The Jataka of Prince Ratna Das, the longest of the thirty-six birth stories spoken by Atisha to Ngok Lekpai Sherab, we read of how Ratna Das arrives at Oddiyana and meets with Guru Vimala. The latter introduces the prince to various dakinis, or mystical women, with whom he is instructed to practice meditation. Both Guru Vimala and the dakini Guhyajnana then pronounced a number of prophecies concerning the prince's future incarnations. One of these, pronounced by the dakini Guhyajnana, is as follows:

In future you will incarnate in Tibet as kings

in future you will incarnate in Tibet as kings

And introduce the ways of the enlightenment tradition.

You will bring civilization to that remote land.

At that time I will take birth as a princess in China And you will summon me to be your queen.

Although in reality I am the bodhisattva Tara And therefore am beyond worldly illusions,

I will play the role of your queen

In order to bring benefits to others_____

I will carry numerous objects of faith to Tibet And place them in a site like an eight-petalled lotus,

The sky above like an eight-spoked wheel of truth,

Surrounded by mountains with the eight auspicious signs.

This will be your kingdom then,

Where we will make good karma together And inspire songs of spiritual joy.

I, Guhyajnana, mystical female of secret wisdom,

Sing this wisdom song to you now.

Listen to it, O son of a king.

Elsewhere in the same text Guru Vimala explains how in the future he will be reborn in Tibet as Guru Padma Sambhava and will be helped by the reincarnation of Prince Ratna Das.

In this and in my future lives I will watch over Tibet with compassionate care.

(You, as) a Tibetan king will invite me to that land And I will become a role model of spiritual practice For the protectorless people of the Land of Snows.

Most commentaries explain that these two prophecies were fulfilled many hundreds of years later. The first one was realized when the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara was born as King Songtsen Gampo in the late sixth century and brought Buddhist princesses from Nepal and China to be his fourth and fifth wives. The second verse above was fulfilled when he was born as King Trisong Deutsen and invited Guru Padma Sambhava to Lhasa.

The accounts of these early kings as provided in Tibetan historical source works are mystical in nature. This is understandable in that, until the midseventh century, the Tibetans maintained knowledge of their royal ancestors exclusively by means of oral tradition and not through written accounts. As a result, Western historians often become frustrated in their reading of the royal chronicles. Tibetans took very little interest in the slant on history that has become the norm in Western culture. Tibetan historians mainly recorded whatever a specific king did that contributed to the enlightenment tradition. Their military exploits were just mentioned in passing.

As mentioned earlier, ten Tibetan monarchs are identified as being previous incarnations of Lama Drom Tonpa, and thus of the line of the Dalai Lama. Five of these are especially important to our purposes here, for each of them played a major role in the development of Tibet as a cohesive nation, and in the development of Buddhism's enlightenment tradition in the country.

King Nyatri Tsanpo and the Birth of the Yarlung Dynasty

(Approx. Fourth Century bc)

King Nyatri Tsanpo is generally regarded as Tibet's first recorded monarch and the forefather of the Yarlung Dynasty. His exact dates are unknown, although the official Tibetan calendar puts the beginning of his rule at 127 bc. Western scholars generally place him some two centuries earlier than this.

Yarlung is a valley to the southeast of Lhasa. One of its premier features is the sacred mountain on which the monkey and snowlady are said to have mated many ages earlier in order to produce the first Tibetans. This valley is regarded as the cradle of Tibetan civilization, largely because its royal dynasty eventually gained control over all of Tibet.

According to legend, King Nyatri Tsanpo was descended from the Indian

Shakya king known in Tibetan as Maggyapa, who was a Licchavi. Thus Nyatri Tsanpo was an Indian by birth. The story of his childhood is somewhat similar to that of Moses. His body bore many unusual signs, such as webbed fingers and toes, turquoise eyes that blinked from the bottom upward, and teeth shaped like conch shells. Consequently, his father feared that the infant was a bad omen, put him in a copper casket, and threw him into the Ganges River. The casket floated downstream, and eventually the child was rescued by a farmer.

When the boy grew up and learned what had happened to him he was overcome with grief and fear. He fled into the Himalayas, and eventually arrived in the Yarlung Valley. The people of Yarlung were deeply impressed by

his delicate and handsome appearance, and asked him from whence he had come. Not knowing their language, he raised his hand to the sky, which they took as a sign that he had descended from the heavens. They lifted him up on their shoulders and carried him back to their village to make him their king.

His name, Nyatri Tsanpo, literally means “the Lord Carried on a Shoulder Throne,” and derives from the manner of this first meeting with the Tibetans. He was the first in the line of thirty-three monarchs of the Yarlung Dynasty, the thirty-third and last being Songtsen Gampo, who in the midseventh century formally embraced Buddhism and moved his residence from Yarlung to Lhasa.

Some pre-Buddhist traditions of Tibet present a different account of King Nyatri Tsanpo and do not link him to India. Rather, their belief is that he had descended directly from the heavens by means of a mystical rope ladder. His body and those of his six immediate successors disappeared at death, for these first seven kings of Tibet returned directly to heaven by means of the ladder, taking their bodies with them. A civil war in Tibet during the time of the eighth king resulted in the destruction of the mystical ladder, and therefore from that time onward the succeeding monarchs were entombed at Chonggyey.

Another Tibetan legend ties their ancient history in with the Indian epic the Mahabharata, in which the five Pandava brothers enter into civil war with their cousins. According to the legend, one of the factions fled the battlefield, headed north over the Himalayas, and eventually ended up in the Yarlung Valley of Tibet. Their leader was a prince known as Rupati.

Putting the above accounts together, some Western historians conjecture that what possibly happened is that a small army of Indians fleeing conflicts in their homeland arrived in Yarlung sometime between 400 and 150 bc. It would have been easy enough for a sophisticated force of this nature to gain control of the Yarlung area, and from there gradually bring the neighboring tribes under their rule.

The consensus is that King Nyatri Tsanpo was of Indian origin and was linked to the kingdoms of north-central India, i.e., the Bihar-Benares region. He united the central Tibetan tribes and constructed what today is considered to be Tibet's oldest building, the Yambu Lagang Palace, which stands at the head of the Yarlung Valley and served as the seat of the succeeding kings. This rather wonderful edifice provided the prototype for what later became Tibet's unique architectural style, constructed from heavy stone cut in bold lines, and standing as it does on the peak of a mountain with a panoramic view of the valley and river below, the sky above, with a ring of mountains to complete the geomantic picture of strength and balance.

As the fifteenth-century Tibetan historian Gos Lotsawa points out in *The Blue Annals*,⁵ Nyatri Tsanpo is identified as the first king only because he created an enduring federation of the twelve principal tribes of central Tibet. In fact, several tribal chieftains from among the twelve had probably previously accomplished this union, but their rules did not endure. Nyatri Tsanpo holds the distinction of having created a dynasty that endured, and therefore he is given a special place of honor in Tibetan historical writings. The extent of the domain ruled over by King Nyatri Tsanpo and the manner by which he accomplished and enforced his rule are unknown. We can only say that Tibetan civilization as we think of it today descends from and through the tribes over which he ruled.

Tibetan historians of the seventh and eighth centuries spoke of King Nyatri Tsanpo as being an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Because Atisha's disciple Lama Drom was also regarded as an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, it was only natural to attribute this prior incarnation to him. The First Dalai Lama, as a reincarnation of Lama Drom, automatically inherited the legacy.

King Lha Totori and Tibet's Early Royal Interests in Buddhism (Approx. Fifth Century ad)

The next significant royal incarnation of Avalokiteshvara and previous

incarnation of Lama Drom (and the Dalai Lamas) is Lha Totori, the twenty-eighth ruler in the Yarlung Dynasty. It is with him that Buddhism first caught the attention of the Tibetan monarchy. This explanation invokes the legend of “the mysterious helpers.”

According to the traditional account, when King Lha Totori was sixteen years old, a casket filled with several Buddhist scriptures and various other holy objects fell from the sky into the courtyard of the Yambu Lagang Palace. That night the king dreamed that a voice resounded from the sky and pronounced the following words, “After five generations the significance of these articles will become known.”

Most traditional Tibetan historians assert that at that time the Land of Snows had no literary tradition and that therefore the actual contents of the scriptures were unknown. What is known is that two of the scriptures were the Karanda-vyuhasutra and Chittamani-dharani, both of which are associated with Avalokiteshvara. According to all accounts, the king appreciated their preciousness, even though he had no way to read their contents, and placed them, together with the other items in the casket, in a location worthy of objects of veneration. Through their blessings he lived to 120 years of age and enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous reign; hence their popular name of “the mysterious helpers” was born.

The dating of Lha Totori is inexact; conjectures range from 331 to 441 aD. In *The Blue Annals*, Gos Lotsawa comments that the myth of the casket “descending from the heavens” is merely a poetic rendition of what actually occurred. To present what he considers to be the real story he quotes a text by Nelpa Pandita,

Nelpa Pandita said, “Because the Bonpos adored heaven, it was said that [these books] had fallen from heaven.” Instead of this Bonpo tradition it is said that [these] books had been brought [to Tibet] by Pandita Buddharakshita and the translator Li-the-se. Since the [Tibetan] king could not read, the Pandita and the translator returned [to Nepal]. This account seems to me to be true.⁶

King Songtsen Gampo, Lhasa, the Great Tibetan Empire and 108 Buddhist Temples (MidSeventh Century ad)

As predicted, five generations later the meaning of the items contained in King

Lha Totori's sacred casket would come to be more deeply understood. This occurred in the midseventh century, when King Songtsen Gampo formally embraced Buddhism as Tibet's state religion and sent scholars to India to devise a Tibetan script and grammar suitable for the translation of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit. He also patronized the building of 108 Buddhist monuments and the translation of numerous scriptures.

The Tibetans paint a picture of King Songtsen Gampo as being a man almost exclusively devoted to Buddhist practice. He moved his capital from the Yarlung Valley to Lhasa, which has since remained the hub of Tibetan life. A visit to the holy places of Lhasa today takes in dozens of sites where he meditated and made retreats, sometimes by himself and sometimes with one or several of his queens. For example, at Pabongkha, on the mountains north of Lhasa, we find two free-standing towers. In Songtsen Gampo's time they were linked by a rope bridge, so that during the day he could meditate in the northern one, and at night walk over to enjoy the company of his wives in the southern one. Similarly, the caves below Chakpori Mountain east of Lhasa were consecrated by his meditating presence. Several cave chapels in the base of the Potala Palace were also sanctified by his spiritual activities in them.

However, he was not always such a peaceful man. His father, King Namri Songtsen, had begun a campaign of strengthening the influence of the Yarlung Valley over the other Tibetan chieftains, and when Songtsen Gampo inherited the throne he enthusiastically embraced his father's expansionist policy, dramatically increasing his military forces and seriously undertaking the business of empire-building.

Within a decade his armies had become the terror of Asia. The frontiers of his empire extended eastward into modern-day China, south into India, north into the Mongolian grasslands, and west to the Persian frontier. At the peak of these activities he was undoubtedly the most powerful man in Asia, and perhaps in the world.

Tibetans, however, largely ignore this aspect of his career and instead emphasize his interest in Buddhism. For them, this was his true source of greatness. Not only did it cause the formal, state-sponsored introduction of Buddhist knowledge into the country, it also inspired literacy amongst the people and a burst of interest in building, the arts, medicine, and the many other aspects of culture that were concomitant with the Buddhist civilizations of Tibet's neighbors.

Yet the two activities, military and spiritual, were most probably interlinked. His conquests had brought a dozen Buddhist kingdoms under his control, including Khotan to the north and Tun Huang to the east. He was impressed with Buddhist civilization and possibly felt that the introduction of it into his country would provide a unifying influence over and above what he had accomplished through military means.

The Tibetans explain the origins of his Buddhist interests somewhat differently. Early in his life Songtsen Gampo had married three wives from various regions of his empire in order to establish blood relations with the different factions of his people. He then decided that he should take a few foreign wives as well, to enhance Tibet's international standing. He first requested and was granted the hand of Princess Tritsun, a daughter of the Nepali king Amushuvarman. A few years later he sought and received the hand of Princess Wencheng Kongjo, a daughter of the Chinese emperor T'ai Dzung. Both of these women were Buddhist, and according to popular tradition it was their influence upon King Songtsen Gampo that inspired his conversion to Buddhism.

Both the Nepalese and Chinese princesses brought numerous Buddhist images with them, and to house these King Songtsen Gampo had a temple

built for each. For the Nepalese princess he constructed the Jokhang, Tibet's oldest and holiest temple, the gates of which face southwest toward Nepal. Later he built the Ramochey for the Chinese princess, the gates of which face eastward, toward China. (Ironically, after the Chinese Communist invasion of Tibet in the 1950s and their attempt to rewrite Tibetan history in order to vindicate their activity, they destroyed the Ramochey that had been built for the Chinese princess, and preserved the Jokhang that had been built for the Nepalese princess. Somehow they had gotten the histories of the two reversed. Their idea was to erase, or at least downplay, traces of the Nepalese princess from the environs of Lhasa and to present the Chinese princess as the number one queen. Thereby they hoped to "prove" that Songtsen Gampo's marriage to Kongjo in 641 ad signified Tibet's original submission to China and that their invasion was merely the enforcement of an age-old right. Paintings of Songtsen Gampo sitting with his two Buddhist queens were touched up, with the Nepalese princess being put on a seat slightly lower than that of the Chinese. Such is history in the hands of Communists.)

In early Tibetan accounts the Nepalese princess is given a more exalted position

than the Chinese, partially because she arrived in Lhasa first and stayed longer, and also because over the succeeding centuries Nepal was to play a major role in the development of Tibetan Buddhism, lying as it does on the route to India. Moreover, Nepalese builders, painters, and craftsmen were considered the best in Asia at the time, and the explosion of building activity that King Songtsen Gampo's conversion to Buddhism heralded brought hundreds of Nepalese artisans to Tibet. In addition to the two great temples constructed for his Nepalese and Chinese queens, he commissioned the Red Mountain Palace (upon which a thousand years later the Fifth Dalai Lama was to construct the Potala Palace) and 108 minor temples and monuments at places geomantically selected by his soothsayers. The last group of constructions had the special function of taming the spirits of Tibet and thus preparing the way for the introduction of Buddhism.

As mentioned previously, one of his most significant deeds was that of sending scholars to India with instructions to develop a script and grammar suitable for translating Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit. The head of this delegation was the minister Tonmi Sambhota, who chose for this purpose a script written in a Kashmiri version of Sanskrit, which he adapted by reducing the number of consonants from fifty to thirty, and the number of vowels from sixteen to five. This script, and also the grammar created for it, have survived from that time until today, with only minor improvements being made upon it over the centuries. It is still used throughout Tibet, Ladakh, Bhutan, and the Tibetan ethnographic world of Central Asia as the principal literary basis of Central Asia's intelligentsia.

Songtsen Gampo is the first Tibetan king whose life is known in detail, partially because his deeds led to the creation of an empire that caught the notice of his neighbors (and thus we learn much of him from foreign sources), and also because Tibet now had a written tradition with which to keep its records, rather than having to rely upon oral tradition.

Nonetheless, this prior incarnation of the Dalai Lamas is presented by the Tibetans with a fairy-tale imagery. All his deeds are explained as the mystical enactment of a divine theater; for he was no mere king, but rather the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara incarnated in order to unify the Tibetan nation and introduce the enlightenment tradition of Buddha Shakyamuni to his people. An account found in *Tales of the Previous Incarnations of Arya Avalokiteshvara* relates the events of his life in typical mystical style:

In accordance with ancient prophecy, he was born at Jampa Migyur Ling as the son of King Namri Songtsen and Queen Tsepong Zatrime 1,500 years after the Omniscient Friend of the Sun had passed into the sphere of peace.⁷ It was the Female Boar Year. From birth there was an image of Amitabha Buddha in the halo above his head, indicating that he was an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, and thus he was known as “the prince with two heads.” ... He ascended to the throne of fearlessness at the age of thirteen and became equal to a universal emperor.

At that time the thought arose within him, “Would that I were empowered to be of true benefit to the people of the Land of Snows.” The bodhisattva Samantabhadra appeared to him and bathed him with waters from his mystical vase; and then Buddha Amitabha appeared, touched him on the crown of his head, and empowered him. In this way he was imbued with the ability to accomplish extraordinary deeds.

The text relates some of these extraordinary deeds: moving to Lhasa, building his palace on Red Mountain, and sending Tonmi Sambhota to India. It adds:

He also commissioned Tonmi to supervise the translation of numerous Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Tibetan, especially those sutras and tantras associated with the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara....

In this way he unified the people, introduced reading and writing, established the basis of Buddhist knowledge, and formulated a legal code based on the “divine dharmas of ten virtues” and “human dharmas with sixteen rules.”

Moreover, in accordance with prophecy the king sent forth a magical emanation from the point between his eyebrows, which manifested as the divine craftsman Akarmati Shri and spontaneously created a statue of eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara, as well as the sandalwood Avalokiteshvara statue known as Wati, and numerous other holy objects....

In terms of supramundane perception (i.e., how mystics perceived the course of events), from his right eye he sent forth an emanation of a universal emperor, who summoned from Nepal the princess Jomo Tritsun....

The story relates the drama of how he won the hands of both the Nepalese and Chinese princesses, built temples for each of them, and built 108 other

temples throughout Tibet, all of which he consecrated himself.

Moreover, he invited the Buddhist masters Acharya Kupara and Brahmin Shakara from India, Acharya Shilamanju from Nepal, and several Hwashang Mahayana monks (i.e., Ch'an masters) from China, commissioning them to teach the Dharma, to translate Buddhist scriptures of the sutra and tantra traditions into Tibetan, and to lay the foundations of monastic ordination.

The king himself externally played the role of a supervisor in all of this and himself did not publicly teach. However, secretly he gave many esoteric instructions to those who were sufficiently ripe to receive them.... More than a hundred yogis having mystical attainments arose under his tutelage. He established numerous meditational hermitages, such as the one at Yerpa, and lived to the age of eighty-two. Then in the Iron Dog Year he melted into light and dissolved into the heart of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, from whence he had come. In the eyes of ordinary people, he enacted the drama of death at Zalmo Gang in Panyul.

The above excerpts from this account, which is quite standard in Tibetan chronicles, illustrate why Western scholars have trouble with Tibetan historical writing. The approach taken is always mystical, with very little attention being given to the rules of conventional reality. As we can see, it leaves out King Songtsen Gampo's military career altogether, including the invasion of China that was necessary to acquire the Chinese princess, and does not address his tough side at all.

The codes of law that Songtsen Gampo introduced—the “divine dharmas of ten virtues” and “human dharmas with sixteen rules”—have an interesting story associated with them. The former group refers to the standard ten Buddhist virtues and the avoidance of their opposites, namely, killing, stealing, sexual abuse, lying, slandering others, speaking harshly, speaking purposelessly, coveting the possessions of others, harboring ill will toward others, and closed-mindedness. The sixteen “human dharmas” are (1) not to kill, steal, or take others' wives; (2) to live by the guidelines of the Three Jewels of Refuge; (3) to show respect to parents and elders; (4) to practice nonviolence and live without hostility; (5) to show genuine friendliness; (6) to be helpful to neighbors; (7) to be honest and straightforward in speech; (8) to heed the learned and the wise; (9) to be moderate in possessions, and in the consumption of food and drink; (10) to avoid harsh and violent speech; (11) to pay debts in due time; (12) to be

straightforward in financial matters, and not cheat others; (13) to avoid envy for others; (14) to not overly associate with cruel and destructive people; (15) to speak thoughtfully, sparingly, and helpfully; and (16) to not gossip about others, nor interfere with them, unless requested to do so.

It is not clear how these tenets were individually enforced, but King Songtsen Gampo certainly did make a point of enforcing them. For example, we read that when the Nepalese master Shilamanju arrived in Lhasa he was shocked to hear that his patron the king was in the habit of having dozens of men beheaded on a daily basis. He went to him and proclaimed, “I am sorry, sir, but I cannot teach the Dharma to you when you behave in this manner. It would be pointless.” The king laughed and said,

O venerable one, please let me explain what is happening here. When I decided to incarnate in this land of barbarians in order to tame the people and place them on the path to enlightenment I knew that it would not be an easy task. I could not bring myself to harm other living beings, and therefore simultaneous to my incarnation here I also emanated ten thousand forms of myself, each of whom had the purpose of breaking my laws and consequently being punished by me as an example to the people. The ten thousand men I have beheaded during my rule are mere emanations of myself. With the death of each one it is solely myself who experiences the pain.

He then lifted up his turban and showed the Nepalese monk the image of Amitabha Buddha in his halo, and pointed as well to ten thousand scars on

his neck, each of which had mystically appeared when one of his emanations had been beheaded.

Whether one views his life and deeds in the magical light of the transcendent reality that so appeals to the Tibetan mind, or in the secular light of power struggles and socioeconomic dynamics that seem to characterize the Western approach, we are nonetheless left with a man whose impact on Central Asia initiated a profound transformation of human society, paving the way for the age of enlightenment that was soon to follow in the Land of Snows.

King Trisong Deutsen, Exorcism, and Tibet’s First Royal Monastery (Mid-Eighth Century ad)

Trisong Deutsen’s father, King Trideu Tsugdan, had devoted considerable

energy to furthering the Buddhist work initiated by Songtsen Gampo, and when Trisong Deutsen ascended to the throne he followed in his father's footsteps in this regard. Indeed, it was he who established the tone and character that Tibetan Buddhism was to take.

During the early years of his reign, however, his spiritual activities were limited because of the situation that existed in his court. Tibetan sources tell us that his ministers had divided into two camps, one representing the pre-Buddhist shaman priests, and the other representing the Buddhist faction. The former, which was by far the stronger, was led by the minister Mazhang, and the latter by Selnang. Not until Mazhang passed away was Trisong Deutsen able to achieve the power to act of his own accord.

The Second Dalai Lama's biographer, Yangpa Choje, relates that "He took birth as King Trisong Deutsen in order to facilitate the predestined work of Guru Padma Sambhava, who was invited from India to Tibet in order to subdue the forces of negativity and to establish the enlightenment tradition."

King Trisong Deutsen's introduction to Padma Sambhava, also called Guru Rinpoche, had come about through his connections with Acharya Shantarakshita. This master, one of the most illustrious Buddhist scholars of his time and a former abbot of Nalanda Monastery, had been brought to Trisong Deutsen's attention by his minister Selnang, who had met Shantarakshita while traveling in Nepal. Shantarakshita came to Tibet and taught widely there. In addition, he attempted to establish Tibet's first monastery.

The pre-Buddhist Bonpo shamans, however, resented his activities and used their occult powers to hinder his work. At least, this is how the Tibetans interpreted the course of events. Shortly after Shantarakshita arrived, the Red

Mountain Palace was struck by lightning, and the palace at Pangtang was destroyed by a flood. Men and livestock became afflicted by various diseases, and ill omens manifested everywhere. King Trisong Deutsen discussed the fears being expressed by his people. Shantarakshita said to him, "The Tibetan spirits are displeased. I will go to Nepal and contact a master by the name of Guru Padma Sambhava, who is a great and accomplished tantric adept. I shall request him to come and assist us. You, O king, should prepare a letter of invitation." Consequently, Shantarakshita left for Nepal, where he met with

Padma Sambhava and communicated the king's request to him.

The Tibetan accounts of Padma Sambhava are indeed fabulous. He was not born by normal means, but magically, on a lotus in the land of Oddiyana in northwest India. He had total occult power over gods, demons, and humans alike. He was not a monk, but quite to the contrary, seems to have seduced as many women as he could fit into his busy schedule. As one biography put it, "He united with women wherever he went, so as to bring high spiritual beings onto this earth and thus bring light into a dark world." He was famous for his drinking, womanizing, tantric songs, and occult powers. One of his Indian consorts was Mandarava, Shantarakshita's own sister.

When the great guru first arrived in Tibet it is said that the king was unsure of the protocol to be followed; he could not decide whether the master should bow to him, the king, or whether he should bow to the master. Guru Padma Sambhava quickly resolved the issue by holding up his hand and emanating fire from it, which engulfed the king in flame. The two instantly established a guru/disciple relationship, and King Trisong Deutsen became one of Padma Sambhava's most ardent devotees. He even gave him his favorite queen, Yeshey Tsogyal, as a lover. (She in turn became a great saint, and is today one of the most hallowed figures from this period of Tibetan history.)

Padma Sambhava embarked upon a long course of exorcism, subduing the Bonpo spirits one by one. Although he is said to have banished the most malignant by means of tantric ritual, most of them he tamed and bound to the sacred duty of protection of the Dharma. In this way, the essential substance of Bonpo worship was incorporated into Buddhist practice.

When this aspect of his work was complete, Guru Padma Sambhava advised the king to request Shantarakshita to return from Nepal. Together the three of them then undertook the project of creating Tibet's first monastery, Samyey, which was completed between the years 787 and 791^{AD}. The structure of the building was based upon the design of Odantapuri

Monastery in India, and was shaped like a mandala. The king himself chose seven of Tibet's brightest young men to become the first residents of this monastery. Shantarakshita summoned the prerequisite number of monks from India, and the ordination ceremony was accomplished.

Next, the three of them established teams of translators and set upon the task of systematically rendering all the most important Sanskrit works into Tibetan. This was overseen by the twenty-five chief disciples of Padma Sambhava. Dozens of scholar-monks were imported from India, Nepal, and Kashmir for the project. Included in the Indian contingent were the renowned masters Vimalamitra, Shantigarbha, and Dharmakirti the Second.

Before leaving Tibet Padma Sambhava made an extensive tour throughout the country, consecrating and empowering the lakes, rivers, mountains and caves by means of his presence and his tantric rituals, king Trisong Deutsen traveled with him on many of these excursions, receiving the secret, esoteric doctrines from him.

King Trisong Deutsen himself established twelve meditation centers around the country for the use of his people, the three most famous being those at Chimpu, Yerpa, and Pal Chuwori. He is said to have dedicated much time to the practice of meditation in order to set an example for his people.

As the standard Tibetan accounts put it, although this king was an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, as well as an emanation of Manjushri, and thus did not need to study or learn, he enacted the role of a mere king in order to facilitate and establish the enlightenment tradition in the Land of Snows. Indeed, the work that he sponsored and oversaw in this regard is mind-boggling. Thousands of scriptures were translated, hundreds of buildings were erected, and the traditions of both the sutras and tantras were thus placed on a firm footing for the benefit of future generations.

The next most significant event to take place during Trisong Deutsen's life affected the direction that Buddhism in Tibet was to take over the course of the succeeding centuries; namely, the great debate between the Indian and Chinese factions of Buddhist monks.

The exact cause of the conflict between the two is unclear. Most Tibetan accounts interpret it as having been based in the philosophical differences between the Chinese Ch'an and the Indian Mahayana/Vajrayana schools. The statement usually given is that the Ch'an monks were teaching a form of meditation known in Tibetan as yila yang chila mi chepai gom, which translates as "doing absolutely nothing in the mind." In other words, it was a form of suppression of thoughts. The situation was expressed as follows

by Hwashang Mahayana, the head Ch'an monk: "Both white clouds and black clouds obstruct the sun. He who has no thoughts at all achieves liberation from cyclic existence." Also, the sociological implication was that good and evil actions were equally meaningless, for both were ultimately nonexistent and conventionally distorted.

In that these two schools had co-existed in various places in Central Asia for several centuries, including in Lhasa for over a hundred years, the thesis that the conflict was born from philosophical differences is unconvincing. More probably it had to do with the political situation prevailing between Tibet and China at the time.

Chinese accounts record that during Trisong Deutsen's reign Tibet achieved the peak of its military power in Central Asia. Not only did his armies capture what today is much of the Kangsu, Quinghai, and Szechuan provinces, as well as vast Chinese territories in Turkestan, in 763 they even managed to capture the Chinese capital of Ch'ang-an, forcing the Chinese emperor to flee for his life. In his place they enthroned a puppet emperor; and although this last victory was short-lived, for the territory was too far from the Tibetan homeland for the Tibetans to defend for long, it reflects the nature of Sino-Tibetan relations at the time. The above event occurred very early in Trisong Deutsen's rule, long before he had become strongly involved in Buddhist practice. It does not appear that his Buddhist interests hampered his military activities on the Chinese front.

Chinese monks had first come to Tibet during the time of Songtsen Gampo, in order to care for the Ramochey Temple that he had constructed for his Chinese queen. In all probability, some monks had remained there from that time, for most of the succeeding kings took at least one Chinese wife from the imperial family's reserve into their circles in order to maintain an open link with the Chinese court. However, neither this nor the influence of Buddhism mitigated the love of the Tibetans for pillaging China. King Trisong Deutsen's own mother was a Chinese princess, and his dedication to Buddhism was phenomenal; yet throughout his reign he constantly kept some tens of thousands of soldiers busy on the eastern borders.

It is possible that this aspect of the times provided the underlying stimulus for the course of events that ensued. The facilitating conditions may have been as follows: The greatly increased numbers of Indian, Nepali, and Kashmiri monks who were brought to Tibet by King Trisong Deutsen for the work of

translation

soon greatly outnumbered their Chinese counterparts. The Chinese probably resented the higher respect being shown to them, and ill-feelings developed. In addition, Shantarakshita placed great emphasis on the traditional basis of ethics and the pursuit of intellectual studies, and Guru Padma Sambhava supplemented this approach with the extensive use of tantric ritual in meditation. Much of this was foreign to the Hwashang monks, whose main pursuit was silent sitting practice. They expressed their concern with the predicament, and the rest is history. At least, this is my reading of how things evolved.

A debate was arranged between the two factions, and it was agreed that the losing faction would leave Tibet forever. Shantarakshita's chief disciple, Kamalashila, was summoned from India to represent the Mahayana/ Vajrayana approach. Because he was the heavyweight logician of his time, the provincial Hwashang monk assigned to meet him never stood a chance. The debate took place in Samye Monastery in 791-92; as could easily be foreseen, the Chinese lost and the Hwashang monks were expelled from Tibet.

The event is important because it determined that henceforth Tibetan Buddhism would take its direction exclusively from Sanskrit sources. Translations from the Chinese were discontinued, and from that time onward Tibet essentially became an Indian cultural satellite.

In retrospect, it probably was a fortuitous turn of events. Buddhism in India was soon to be destroyed by the Muslim invasions from the West, and today the classical Indian traditions of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism are preserved most extensively in the literary and oral traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Chinese Buddhism, on the other hand, did not suffer from its expulsion. It prospered in its homeland, and later spread to Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

When we read Tibetan works on the life of Trisong Deutsen we discover a mystic and highly accomplished yogi who did more for Buddhism in Tibet than any other individual before or since. From Chinese sources we see the political and military side of his genius. In both areas he achieved greatness. The Tibetans remember him primarily for the former of these two attributes.

King Tri Ralpachen and the Final Flowering of Early Buddhism in Tibet (Early Ninth Century)

The tenth and last incarnation of Lama Drom as a Tibetan monarch was that of King Tri Ralpachen. Most western scholars place the dates of his reign as 817 to 836 ad. He was Trisong Deutsen's grandson, and the last great Buddhist king of Lhasa in the early period.

Tri Ralpachen's uncle Munely Tsanpo had succeeded King Trisong Deutsen to the throne and had the unusual distinction of attempting three times to establish a socialist form of government. Three times all wealth and property were confiscated and divided equally between his subjects, but on each occasion these found their way back to their original possessors. In the end, he concluded that the laws of karma made it impossible to equalize human situations. Nonetheless, he was contemplating a fourth attempt when an irritated nobleman assassinated him. The throne passed to his younger brother, and then to Tri Ralpachen, another Dalai Lama pre-incarnation.

On the spiritual front, Tri Ralpachen is remembered with great veneration because he organized and sponsored a complete revision of all the Buddhist works that had been translated into Tibetan over the previous two centuries. Many of these had been made from secondary sources, such as Khotanese, Chinese and Kashmiri translations, and not from the original Sanskrit. As a result, some were accurate translations and others were not. In addition, they had been made during various periods of scholarship, and thus showed a wide divergence in the usage of terminology and linguistics. He commissioned them all to be reworked, comparing them to the original Sanskrit editions and following strict guidelines in the usage of terminology and grammar.

A special Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary of technical terms was created for the project, and everyone was expected to adhere to it. As a result, the translations of almost all the 4,500 works found today in the Tibetan canons—both the Kangyur, or translated words of Buddha, and the Tengyur, or translations of works by later Indian masters—are credited to scholars working under King Tri Ralpachen's commission.

He was also active as a builder, his masterpiece in this regard being the Onchando Palace, a nine-storied edifice in three tiers, the first three stories being made of stone, the next three of brick, and the top three of wood. He himself lived in the bottom three; he housed his monks and translators in the middle

three; and the top three were reserved for usage as libraries and chapels.

As with his predecessors Songtsen Gampo and Trisong Deutsen, his life too is presented as that of a man sincerely and intensely dedicated to meditation and the spiritual life. Unlike them, he also directly transported his religious sentiments into political policies. In 822 he established a peace treaty that put an end to the pillaging of China. The wording of the treaty was as follows:

The great king of Tibet, a miraculously manifest lord, and the great king of China, the ruler Hvang-ti... with the singular desire of bringing peace to their subjects, have agreed upon the higher purpose of ensuring lasting harmony between their two countries----

Between the two nations no smoke nor dust will be allowed to arise. There shall be no sudden incursions, and the very word “enemy” shall not

be spoken___The Tibetans will remain with contentment in the land of

Tibet, and the Chinese in the land of China. So that this may remain true forever, the Three Precious Jewels and the assembly of saints are invoked as witnesses, as are the sun, moon, planets and stars.

The treaty was carved into three stone pillars, with one being placed in Lhasa, the second in the Chinese capital, and the third on the border between the two countries.

Four of the above five kings—Lha Totori, Songtsen Gampo, Trisong Deutsen, and Tri Ralpachen—are also described, respectively, as incarnations of the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra, Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri and Vajrapani.

To the Tibetan way of thinking it is not a contradiction that all of them are also incarnations of Avalokiteshvara. One being can carry the blessings of any number of bodhisattvas in a given lifetime. As Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen puts it, “The ways of the bodhisattvas are beyond the limits of the imagination of the ordinary mind.”

When Atisha spoke of these early incarnations of his disciple Lama Drom Tonpa, who was destined in future lives to become the Dalai Lamas, King Songtsen Gampo was already popularly recognized as having been an incarnation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. It is possible that there was a tradition prior to Atisha's time linking the other of the ten kings in a reincarnation pattern with Songtsen Gampo, although I have not seen references to it.

The First Dalai Lama 's Fifteen Previous Incarnations as Nepali and Tibetan Sages

A second important textual source is *Tales of the Previous Incarnations of Arya Avalokiteshvara*, which is a more contemporary presentation of the Dalai Lama story, based on an eighteenth-century work. This text begins its account of the former lives of the Dalai Lamas with abbreviated versions of the thirty-six Indian jatakas as told by Atisha, and then goes on to discuss the ten incarnations as early Tibetan kings. It follows this with brief accounts of fifteen incarnations as Tibetan and Nepali scholar-monks and yogis, beginning with Lama Drom Tonpa.

Lama Drom

Lama Drom is the most important of all the early incarnations from the point of view of Tibet's religious history, for the work of Lama Drom led to the emergence of the Kadampa Order, which influenced all other sects of Tibetan Buddhism and became the dominant religious force in Central Asia. It has remained as such until today.

Spiritually, it was the lineages coming through Lama Drom Tonpa that most profoundly set the stage for the character to be assumed by the Dalai Lamas. As the present Dalai Lama once said to me in an interview,

Generally we Tibetans do not like the term "Lamaism" that Western scholars use for our tradition, because it seems to imply that our spiritual legacy is something other than the teachings of Buddha. Tibetan Buddhism is simply Buddhism as practiced and developed in Tibet. However, if we were to look for an element that most profoundly characterizes the Buddhism of Central Asia we could say that it is the Kadampa tradition coming from Atisha and Lama Drom Tonpa. Perhaps the word "Lamaism" could be applied to the style of Buddhist teaching descending from these two masters. It is the lineages from them that have come to serve as the basis of all Tibetan schools of Buddhism.

As for Lama Drom's precise dates, his biography states that he was in his thirty-second year when the Kalachakra sexagenary calendar was introduced into Tibet by Atisha. He passed away in the Wood Dragon Year of the First Sexagenary, that is, in 1064.

Lama Drom's appearance and work in Tibet is said to have been prophesied by the Buddha himself in the Manjushri Root Tantra:

At the end of a five hundred year cycle (of my teaching)

A layman will appear in the northern Land of Snows

Who will bring great benefits to my enlightenment tradition_____

He will build a monastery at a place called "Horn."

The last line in the above verse is obviously a reference to Reteng Monastery. Established by Lama Drom in the Fire Bird Year, or 1057, it served as an institution to preserve and transmit the lineages that Atisha had brought to Tibet. Its name literally means "Encircled by Horn-Shaped Mountains." This monastery became the principal seat of the Old Kadampa School and served as one of the most important spiritual institutions of Central Asia until Lama Tsongkhapa and his disciples established Ganden, Drepung and Sera monasteries in the early fifteenth century.

These three then eclipsed Reteng in importance, and after this time the latter was used largely as a retreat hermitage. Nonetheless, for a period of almost four and a half centuries it stood as the greatest of all the monasteries in Tibet.

Six other names in this list of fifteen incarnations are extremely important. Two of these refer to lamas of the Sakya School, and four to lamas of the Nyingma School.

Sakya Incarnations

The two Sakyapa lamas listed are Sakya Kunga Nyingpo and Sakya Pakpa, both of whom are linked to the establishment of the Sakya Monastery and to the early days of the formation of that sect.

The name Sakya means "Gray Earth" and refers to a mountain in southwestern Tibet. The monastery established on this mountain in 1073 was given the same name, Sakya Gonpa, or "Gray Earth Mountain Monastery." The sect that grew out of it in turn took its name from the monastery. Legend has it that when Atisha was traveling from India to Ngari he passed through the area. On beholding the mountain he entered into a trance and prophesied that the

bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara would perform great enlightenment deeds there. He also prophesied that seven incarnations of Manjushri would oversee the monastery's activities. The Avalokiteshvara incarnations Atisha referred to are the two incarnations mentioned above, Sakya Kunga Nyingpo and Sakya Pakpa.

Sakya Kunga Nyingpo

Sakya Kunga Nyingpo was born in 1092 as the son of Konchok Gyalpo of the Khon family. It was Konchok Gyalpo who had originally established the Sakya Monastery, even though he himself, like Lama Drom Tonpa, was not a monk. His son Kunga Nyingpo studied with many different Tibetan masters, most notably Bari Lotsawa, and while still a child achieved high realization.

At the age of twelve Kunga Nyingpo engaged in six months of solitary meditation. At the end of this retreat he entered into visionary states in which he directly communicated with the bodhisattva Manjushri on a mystical level. He received numerous esoteric transmissions from Manjushri, including the four-line verse known as “Separating the Mind from the Four Clingings”:

If you cling to this life, you are not a spiritual practitioner;

If you cling to samsaric pleasure, you do not possess the mind of spiritual freedom;

If you are concerned with self-interests, you do not possess the spirit of the bodhisattva path;

And if you cling (to belief in a self), then you do not possess the view (which understands voidness).

Later in his life Sakya Kunga Nyingpo wrote eleven commentaries to this verse for his eleven chief disciples. In these he elucidated how the four lines point out the complete path leading to enlightenment: The first introduces the need for meditation on death and impermanence; the second implies the need for meditation on the four noble truths, the nature of karma and rebirth, refuge, the eightfold path to liberation, and so forth; the third points to the need for the meditations on love, compassion, and the bodhisattva qualities; and the fourth invokes the meditations on shunyata, “the great void.”

The lineage of this teaching remains one of the most popular subjects of study in the Sakya Order today. The verse may seem simple enough, but several of the longer commentaries to it are many hundreds of pages in length and cover all the fundamental practices to be found in the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana traditions. It, together with the tantric doctrine of Lamdrey, or “The Path and Its

Result,” came to constitute the two central pillars of the Sakya School.

When Sakya Kunga Nyingpo was thirty-two years old, his guru Zhangton advised him, “If you devote yourself to meditation practice you will achieve the great seal (of enlightenment) in this one lifetime. If (after that time) you devote yourself to teaching you will lead many students to realization. For a period of eighteen years you should not mention even the names of the transmissions that I have given to you. After that time you will accomplish whatever you undertake.” Consequently, for the next eighteen years Sakya Kunga Nyingpo spent most of his time in solitary meditation and fulfilled the prophecy made by his guru. As well as achieving spiritual realization he manifested many of the common powers, such as clairvoyance, levitation, and the ability to be in many different places simultaneously.

After completing the period of silence stipulated by his guru he dedicated the remaining sixteen years of his life to transmitting his teachings to his students. Three students achieved full enlightenment; another eight achieved high states of saintliness; and thousands more were placed on the enlightenment path.

Some historians refer to Sakya Kunga Nyingpo as the founder of the Sakya School; for even though he was not the first master in the lineage, his work in formulating and structuring the Sakya teachings gave the school the character that has endured over the centuries and that caused it to thrive and grow. When he passed away in 1158 at the age of sixty-six, Tibet mourned the loss of one of its greatest sages.

Marco Polo, Kublai Khan, and Sakya Pakpa

The second of the two early Sakyapa lamas who were previous incarnations of the Dalai Lama is Sakya Pakpa, popularly known as Chogyal Pakpa. From a political perspective he was the most important of all the pre-Dalai Lama incarnations in the medieval period, for it was he who designed the patron/priest relationship choyon, that was to characterize the arrangement of Mongolia with Tibet, and subsequently was to be adopted in later centuries by Manchuria and then China.

Sakya Pakpa was born in 1235 as the great-grandson of Sakya Kunga Nyingpo, and showed from birth all the signs of being a high incarnation. When he

was eight years old he gave a public discourse to several thousand monks on the Hevajra Tantra, one of the highest and most esoteric doctrines taught by the Buddha, and then followed this with an initiation and teaching on the Kalachakra Tantra, again one of the most subtle and obtuse Buddhist subjects. It was on this occasion that he was given the name Sakya Pakpa, which means “Arya (Transcended One) of the Sakya Clan.” He dedicated his early years to study and meditation, and became renowned as one of the greatest sages of his era.

By Sakya Pakpa’s time Tibet had long abandoned the ways of war that had characterized its early history and instead was primarily engaged in spiritual and philosophical pursuits. Buddhist India to the south, Tibet’s guru for so many centuries, had fallen to the Turkic Muslim invasions, and China to the east had succumbed to apathy and stagnation. The rising star on Asia’s horizon was Mongolia.

Mongolia had stepped onto the world’s stage as a major power under Genghis Khan, who was born in 1162. By the time Genghis reached his forty-fourth birthday he had brought all eighteen Mongol tribes under his sway and

thus was able to proclaim himself emperor of Mongolia. He then conquered the Tartar kingdoms to the north of China, and turned his attention to China itself.

To capture the Chinese empire he divided his forces into three armies and crossed the Great Wall: the first army, commanded by three of his sons, struck from the north; the second, led by his four brothers, entered from the west; and the third, under his own direct command and that of his youngest son, rode in from the northwest. The soft Chinese forces were no match for his fast-moving horsemen, and soon all of China was his.

By the time his grandson Kublai Khan came to the throne, the Mongol domain stretched from the Yellow Sea to the borders of Poland, and from Siberia in the north to the Indian plains in the south. When Marco Polo’s father and uncle left Europe for China in 1260 very little was known of the Far East in European circles. The Polos were well received in the Khan’s court, and when they left for Europe the Khan suggested that they organize a European delegation to the East.

The European leaders did not respond, however, and in the end it was just the three Polos who returned to China. Because of the extensive notes that Marco

Polo kept on this journey we have today an excellent portrait of life in Mongol-ruled China, of Kublai Khan himself, along with the first account of a Tibetan lama to be described in Western writings.⁸ That lama was Sakya Pakpa, guru to the Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan and previous incarnation of the Dalai Lamas.

Unfortunately, Marco Polo's picture of the Tibetan presence in the Mongolian courts is somewhat biased. He had been instructed by the Pope to try to introduce Christianity to the Mongols, and in this he failed, largely due to the great respect that Kublai Khan held for the Tibetan lamas who were his spiritual mentors. Thus Marco Polo's view of the Tibetans was thus tainted by this confrontation.

As Marco Polo himself put it, when the subject of conversion was broached to the Khan he replied, "Why should I become a Christian? You yourselves must perceive that the Christians of those (Western) countries are ignorant, inefficient people, and do not possess the ability to perform any miraculous deeds. On the other hand, the lamas can easily do whatever they wish in this regard. When I sit at my table the cups in the middle of the hall float to me spontaneously, filled with wine and other drinks, without being lifted by any human hand, and I drink of them. The lamas have many such wonderful powers, and can even control the weather through their rituals...."

You yourselves have witnessed how their statues are able to speak and to predict the future ____ Should I convert to Christianity and call myself a

Christian, the nobles of my court will ask me why I have done so. They will ask me, 'What extraordinary miracles have been performed by its ministers?' ... To this I shall not know what to answer, and I shall be considered as having made a grievous error."

The above reference by Marco Polo to the Khan's food and drink being served to him by telekinesis is interesting. The Tibetan legend on how Kublai Khan came to embrace Buddhism involves a similar story. It is said that after establishing his empire the Khan decided that he and his noblemen should all embrace a similar religion, but was unable to decide which to adopt. He invited representatives of all the different traditions known to him to come and demonstrate their abilities. Included in the gathering were Nestorian Christians,

Taoists, Confucians, and proponents of various schools of Buddhists. Sakya Pakpa of Tibet was among the last group. Each in turn spoke of the philosophy and import of their traditions; but the Khan could not decide which was superior. He requested them to physically demonstrate their knowledge, for through words alone he could not make his decision. When it came to magical demonstrations most of them could do nothing at all. But when Sakya Pakpa's turn came he pointed to a group of cups on a table some distance away, causing them to float through the air toward the members of the assembly. Each cup was filled to the brim, and Sakya Pakpa invited the group to drink their fill. Yet drink as they may, the cups remained full.

Consequently, Kublai Khan adopted Tibetan Buddhism and took Sakya Pakpa as his guru. He was to remain a faithful Tibetan Buddhist for the rest of his life, much to the chagrin of Marco Polo. As a sign of the blessing, Sakya Pakpa empowered Kublai Khan with the ability of telekinesis during his meals, and thus his food was always served to him in this extraordinary manner. Sakya Pakpa served in the greater role of spiritual preceptor to the Khan and his family and organized numerous spiritual learning centers for the education of the Mongolian nobility.

In return for this service the Khan gave Tibet its political independence, appointing Sakya Pakpa as the Tibetan king and bestowing upon him the title Chogyal, which literally translates as "Dharma King." This was the beginning of the patron / priest relationship between Tibet and the Mongolian emperors that was to ensure the independence and international security of Tibet from then on. All subsequent Mongolian emperors honored it. When the Manchu

Tartars captured China in the early 1700s they too adopted it, and thus it was the pillar of Tibet's relationship with the superpowers to the east until the Ching Dynasty fell in 1911. After the fall of the Manchus the Tibetans severed this special relationship with the emperors of China, an act that culminated in the expulsion of all Chinese from Tibet in 1913. But the nature of the relationship between Tibet and China that Sakya Pakpa initiated served as the blueprint for a friendship that endured for over seven hundred years, throughout the Yuan, Ming, and Ching dynasties, with the Tibetan lamas as the gurus to and educators of the Chinese court, in return for which they received a guarantee of Tibet's political security on the international political scene.

In one interview I did with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1990 he mentioned

an interesting accomplishment of Sakya Pakpa. Apparently, after Kublai Khan consolidated his power over China, he reviewed the population situation in the country and felt that the number of Han Chinese people threatened the health of the land. He decided that once each year the population should be thinned, and to effect this he would have some hundreds of thousands of Han Chinese farmers marched out to the seaside at low tide. When the tide came in they would be washed out to sea and drowned.

After Kublai Khan adopted Tibetan Buddhism under Sakya Pakpa, the lama informed him that his method of population control was un-Buddhist and would have to be abandoned.

His Holiness concluded this story by saying to me, “Thus in the past we Tibetans showed great kindness to the Han Chinese. It is ignoble of them to colonize our country today and to treat us so cruelly. Instead, they should be thinking of how to repay this debt that they owe to us.”

I observed teasingly, “Well, it is said that one of your past lives is that of Sakya Pakpa, who prevented Kublai Khan from continuing this policy. Had he followed it throughout his reign, China’s population today would be much smaller. Many of the soldiers who invaded and who occupy Tibet are probably descended from those Han Chinese whom Sakya Pakpa saved. I think you made a mistake in your previous life. You should have let him drown them. People rarely think of repaying such debts when they can get out of them.”

His Holiness concluded, “Yes, had he done so our present predicament may never have occurred. But as a Buddhist Sakya Pakpa could not have accepted to be Kublai Khan’s guru if such a policy were to remain in force. The result is that we Tibetans have a special responsibility for the Chinese. I consider it to be one of my tasks in this lifetime to do something for those

billion Chinese caught under the present Communist dictatorship. As the Dalai Lama, I have a duty to accomplish the welfare of the Tibetan nation and to teach Buddhism around the world to those who are ready for it, but I also have a responsibility to the hundreds of millions of Chinese who have this karmic relationship with Tibetans because of the deeds of Sakya Pakpa.”

Because of this relationship between Sakya Pakpa and Kublai Khan, the Sakya School temporarily became a theocratic power in Tibet. It should be pointed out

that they ruled fairly and without abusing their position for sectarian purposes. The other schools of Tibetan Buddhism were not oppressed in any way, and continued to prosper. Even though this role of the Sakya lamas in Tibet ultimately came to an end when they were replaced by the Pagmo Drukpa line of rulers, who in turn were replaced in 1642 by the Dalai Lamas, Tibetans still think of these early Sakyapas with great affection. In particular, they regard Sakya Pakpa with tremendous appreciation for his role in freeing Tibet from the Mongolian Empire and establishing Tibetan Buddhism as one of the most dynamic spiritual forces in Asia. The head of the Sakya School has, under the Dalai Lama administration at Lhasa, always maintained the hierarchical position of the country's fourth highest lama. (Only the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, and the female incarnation Dorje Pakmo, are ranked above him. Other high Tibetan lamas, such as the Karmapa and the Mindroling Lama, were placed on a rung below that of the Sakya Lama.)

Sakya Pakpa was important to Tibetan history in many other ways besides his spiritual and political accomplishments. For example, the Tibetan artistic tradition is profoundly indebted to him. Under Mongolian patronage and this lama's creative eye, Tibetan painting, sculpture and architecture took a quantum leap forward. The Old Menri School of art, perhaps the most sublime style of painting in Tibet's long history, is said to be rooted in his activities. Medicine and the literary arts also blossomed under his direction. He himself was a prolific writer, his works on the Kalachakra tantric system being particularly important.

Nyingmapa Incarnations

As stated earlier, Lama Drom had fifteen early incarnations as Nepali and Tibetan yogis and sages. Four of these incarnations as Nyingmapa lamas are especially relevant to Tibet's history. These are the yogis Nyang Nyima Odzer, Guru Chowang, Pema Wangyal, and Chogyal Wangpo Dey. These four are known as the emanations of Avalokiteshvara on the planes of body, speech, mind and realization, respectively. They are usually grouped together with Sakya Pakpa, whom we met earlier in this chapter, and who is regarded as the embodiment of Avalokiteshvara's mystical activities.

The greatness of these four Nyingma lamas, all of whom were prior incarnations of the Dalai Lamas, is centered around their efforts to bring cohesion and structure to the vast array of doctrines and lineages that were subsumed under

the general name of Nyingma, or Old Schools. In ancient Tibet there was no Nyingma School as such. Rather, the term came to be applied in later years to all the monasteries that used scriptures translated during the early period; that is, prior to Atisha's disciple Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo. It was the work of Nyingma lamas such as Guru Chowang and Nyang Nyima Odzer that gave the Nyingma its distinctive character and thus empowered it to survive as a distinct entity over the centuries.

Perhaps spiritually it could be said that it was these early incarnations as Nyingma lamas that set the basis for the character the Dalai Lama office was to assume throughout its history. Almost all the Dalai Lama incarnations were Gelukpa by monastic training, but in their adult life they supplemented their Gelukpa lineages with numerous traditions from the Nyingma School. This was particularly true of the Second, Third, Fifth, Sixth, and Thirteenth incarnations.

In a way, it perhaps was this Nyingma-Gelukpa combination that made the Dalai Lama the natural choice for the role of spiritual and secular leader of the Tibetan people; for the Gelukpa was a fusion of all the New Schools— Sakya, Kadam, Kargyu, Jonang, Raluk, and so forth. Thus every Dalai Lama is trained in the essential doctrines of these schools, and then complements this training with Nyingma lineages, making him a master of all Tibetan spiritual traditions.

As the Fifth Dalai Lama put it after being appointed to this position of leadership in 1642, "To be the overall spiritual head of all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, I regard it as my sacred duty to understand, uphold and propagate each of them on an equal footing." He had made this remark in response to criticism he received from certain Gelukpa monks for the amount of time he was dedicating to studying, practicing, and teaching the Nyingma lineages.

On another occasion he commented, "Gelukpa lamas think I'm a Nyingma; Nyingma lamas think I'm a Gelukpa. Neither seems to want me in their camp because of my affiliations with the other. My problem is that I love both equally.

Once the present Dalai Lama said to me in an interview I was conducting with him, "All the greatest of the early Dalai Lamas combined the Old and New Schools in their training. I have tried to follow in their footsteps in this regard."

The seeds of this pattern might well be said to have their karmic roots in the fifteen previous incarnations as lamas of diverse schools, many of them being of Nyingma affiliation; and before that in the Dharma kings who helped establish Buddhism; and before even that in the lives of various Indian mystics. The tradition is almost as old as Buddhism—or, if we include the children of the original monkey progenitor of Tibet in this karmic genealogy, it is as old as humanity itself.

Conclusion

The First Dalai Lama was born into a Tibet in which the concept of a person's previous lives was commonplace. Although he was born of humble stock, interest in him took a quantum leap when a respected Tibetan mystic casually mentioned that he was a reincarnation of Lama Drom, who had lived some three centuries earlier. This link brought a vast mythology with it.

The First Dalai Lama personally downplayed the connection, and never mentioned it in any of his own writings. In all probability it nonetheless contributed to his mystique, and increased his spiritual status in the minds of most Tibetans.

Numerous Western scholars have erroneously stated that after coming to political power in 1642 the Fifth Dalai Lama fabricated an association between the Dalai Lamas and the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in order to bring the simple-minded masses under his sway. As we can see from the above accounts, which predate the Fifth Dalai Lama by hundreds of years, this Western attitude is born from ignorance of the tradition and is fostered solely by the bad habit of one academic repeating the mistaken statements of an earlier one.



Gendun Drubpa, the First Dalai Lama. Courtesy of the Swedish Humanistic Research Council, Saviours of Mankind," The Sven Hedin Foundation, Statens Etnografiska Museum, Stockholm, Sweden.

The First Dalai Lama: How It All Began

Tashi Lhunpo, the monastery that the First Dalai Lama built when he was fifty-six years old, quickly became one of the most important spiritual institutions of Central Asia. Although it was partially destroyed in the mid-1960s by the so-called Chinese Cultural Revolution, those sections that existed during the First's lifetime remain largely intact today. When one is standing in the central assembly hall at Tashi Lhunpo, one can almost feel the presence of the great saint and mystic who founded it.¹

For the location of his monastery the First Dalai Lama chose a “bird offering” site. The bird offering, as anyone who has visited Tibet knows, was the traditional method of choice for disposing of the dead. Tibetans did not like to waste arable land with burial, nor waste wood on cremation. Instead, they generally disposed of their dead by cutting the body into small pieces and feeding these to the vultures. The method was not only efficient, it was also spiritually beneficial. The final act of the deceased was one of generosity, of giving the discarded body as a gift of food to other living creatures.

In recent years the Western press has dubbed this tradition “sky burial.” Every Tibetan village had a resident who served as master of the rite. First, the flesh would be stripped from the bones and diced. Next, the bones would be ground into powder, mixed with barley flour and water, and rolled into small balls. Finally, the eyes, heart and brain would be similarly ground and mixed with dough. Within an hour the entire corpse would be prepared in this way, while vultures, accustomed to the process, gathered in the vicinity. When all was ready, the master of ceremonies would toss a piece toward the vultures and step aside, allowing them to approach and devour the entire banquet. Tibetans believed the vultures that came to the bird offering were in fact dakinis, or angelettes, and not ordinary birds.

The First Dalai Lama had once made a small retreat beside the bird offering site at the foot of Mount Tashi outside the town of Shigatsey, which at the time was the capital of Tsang, or southwestern Tibet. Since the time of the Buddha himself the Buddhist tradition has encouraged practitioners to meditate in cemeteries and charnel grounds in order to gain an appreciation of the nature of corporeal existence, and the First Dalai Lama was upholding this ancient legacy. Some years later, when he decided to build a monastery, he requested that the

local community allow him to do so on that very site. The people were delighted that he had chosen their valley for his spiritual center, and enthusiastically consented. Most of them joined the volunteer force that assembled during the various phases of the construction, for indeed it required several years of effort. His teaching throne in the main assembly hall was placed just a few feet from the large stone slab on which the bodies had been prepared for the birds. This stone was left visible to the public, and all who came to him for blessings had to walk across it in order to stand in his presence. The symbolism was clear and immediate. It is still there today for all visitors to see.

The creation of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery was perhaps the most important landmark in the First Dalai Lama's life, at least insofar as his impact on Tibetan history is concerned, because it insured the preservation of his teachings for the centuries to come. Although he continued to travel and teach for the remaining decades of his life, from that time onward he based himself in Tashi Lhunpo, and passed away there in early 1475. By that time he had become the single most important lama in the country, a mystic among mystics, role model of the monastic community, guru to a large segment of the population, and an object of the patronage of kings and queens.

The First Dalai Lama was born of humble stock.² His parents were tenant farmers who had fallen on hard times, lost their land, and turned to animal husbandry as a source of livelihood. This meant that they kept a small herd of sheep and goats, living in tents and makeshift housing as they moved from one grazing land to another, paying the locals in milk, butter and wool for grazing rights. His father, Gonpo Dorjey, and mother, Jomo Namkhakyi, had already produced two children when he was conceived. Then, one night in the Iron Sheep Year—1391 by Western reckoning—Jomo Namkhakyi entered labor and gave birth to him.

That same night the encampment was attacked by bandits, and the parents were forced to flee for their lives. The child's mother, afraid she would be captured and raped, perhaps even killed, wrapped her newborn baby in a blanket, hid him behind some boulders, and disappeared into the night. When she returned the following morning she beheld a startling scene: The boy was lying unharmed. A huge black raven stood over him, protecting him from a flock of crows and vultures that had gathered to devour him.

Thus began the life of the child who would rise to become one of the most

esteemed scholar-saints in the land and who eventually would be recognized as the First Dalai Lama. Lamas later informed Jomo Namkhakyi that their divinations indicated that the raven was an emanation of Mahakala, a wrathful form of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, and that this protective divinity was to act as the child's principal mystic guardian throughout his life.

The child grew tall and fleet of foot, earning the nickname Shawa Kyareng, or "Tall Deer," and he seemed to enjoy watching over the family's flock of sheep and herd of goats. However, it was not long before his proclivities toward spiritual practice appeared. At the age of five, he began to pass his time in the fields by carving prayers and mantras on the rocks and boulders around him. Such carving—known as "making mani stones"—is a frequent devotional practice among Tibetan adults, but very unusual in one so young.

When questioned about this he explained that he was carving these spiritual inscriptions "for the benefit of my parents."

"But your parents are still alive," the boy was reminded.

He replied, "I am inscribing these prayers in the hope of benefiting all sentient beings, each of whom has been a parent to me in some past life."

It is said that several of these stone cuttings are still preserved in Tibet, in what remains of Nartang Monastery.³

When the boy was only seven years old his father passed away. Hard pressed to support him, his mother decided that it would be good for him if he could gain a seat in one of the local monasteries. The natural choice was Nartang, for her deceased husband's brother was a monk there and had agreed to become her son's guardian. This monk, Geshey Choshey, took his nephew under his wing and gave him the religious name Padma Dorjey, or "Diamond Lotus."

The choice of Nartang for his childhood education was auspicious for a number of reasons. First, it housed one of the greatest libraries in Central Asia. As a result, famous lamas and philosophers from faraway lands would visit in order to make copies of rare and sacred scriptures. Consequently, the boy received not only an excellent education, but also exposure to many different spiritual movements and ideas.

A second auspicious characteristic of Nartang was that it belonged to the

Kadampa School of Tibetan Buddhism, and in fact was the most important Kadampa monastery in the Tsang region. The Kadampa School traced its roots to the Indian master Atisha, who had come to Tibet in 1042 and taught there until his death about a decade and a half later. By the First Dalai Lama's time, the lineages of Atisha had spread throughout Central Asia and had been absorbed into all other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. This meant that the basic education the First Dalai Lama received in Nartang was common to all Tibetan Buddhist sects. This fact would prove invaluable later in his life, when he would leave Nartang and travel in search of other lineages. Because he hailed from Nartang, he was greeted with honor and respect wherever he went.

It was soon clear to the teachers at Nartang that the young goatherd was an exceptionally gifted pupil, and consequently he was provided with every facility for study and practice. The great abbot Drubpa Sherab personally took an interest in him and kept a close watch over his progress. This abbot himself provided the boy with all three levels of monastic ordination, as well as giving him many important tantric initiations and oral transmission teachings.

At age fifteen the young scholar became a novice monk and was given the name by which he was later to be known to history: Gendun Drubpa. His studies in Nartang were now progressing exceptionally well and included both the general teachings of the Buddha, known as the sutras, and the commentary texts by the great Buddhist masters of India and Tibet. In addition, he was gradually introduced to the esoteric Buddhist lineages, known as the tantras. He studied, memorized, analyzed and debated all of these subjects, thus penetrating to their finest philosophical points. In addition to these spiritual subjects, the boy studied grammar and the literary arts and also learned Sanskrit, the classical language of India. Throughout this time young Gendun Drubpa meditated several times a day and engaged in both periodic and annual meditation retreats.

According to Kunga Gyaltsen, one of his two main biographers, his gentleness and clarity were apparent during the formal debates that are a component of monastic training.

During debate session he would always remain composed, with a gentle smile on his lips. He would never raise his voice, speak harshly, nor use any other such superficial means to confuse his debate partners, but instead would rely upon subtle logical inquiry into the multifaceted meanings of the words being spoken,

and by analysis would instantly detect any errors in the arguments being thrown against him. In this way he would easily and calmly defeat anyone who dared to face him in logical disputation.

One teaching that had a profound impact on the young Dalai Lama was the lojong, or mind-training method taught by Atisha and especially emphasized at Nartang. The manner in which Atisha collected these teachings illustrates the breadth and uniqueness of this great scholar's sources of knowledge. In addition to receiving many Buddhist lineages available in India in the eleventh century, Atisha had traveled to Indonesia and studied there for twelve years under the Buddhist master Dharmakirti. Dharmakirti had fused all the teachings of Buddha into the quintessential oral transmission lineage known as lojong, which translates as "training the mind." This lineage emphasizes the meditations on love and compassion, and in particular the meditations for exchanging self-cherishing for the cherishing of others.

Kunga Gyaltsen, describes the impact that the lojong teachings had on the young monk:

From the precious Nartang abbot Drubpa Sherab he also listened to the oral teachings coming from Venerable Atisha Dipamkara Shrijnana elucidating the essence of the bodhisattva trainings. He was deeply moved by these teachings.... From the time he received these transmissions he constantly cultivated a special love and compassion for all living beings. As a result of his experiences he wrote the following verse:

It is ignoble not to be moved by the thought
Of love, white as the planet Venus,

That cherishes all the parent-like sentient beings
Who wander helplessly in the
realms of samsara.

One should strive to achieve highest enlightenment
In order to be of ultimate
benefit to all.

These teachings would prove to have lasting meaning for Gendun Drubpa, and later in life he would compose two commentaries on them.⁴

At the age of twenty Gendun Drubpa took the vows of a fully ordained monk, or bikkshu. Five years later he completed his studies at Nartang Monastery and left for central Tibet, where he visited and studied at various monastic colleges,

including Dradruk and Tangpochey. Both of these schools had been built in the seventh century ad, and thus officially were Nyingmapa, or the Old School. However, both monasteries had also invited Atisha to teach in them for extended periods of time, and thus had strong affiliations to the Kadampa School. They were located in the Yarlung Valley, from where the early Tibetan kings hailed, and therefore they were sacrosanct. Dradruk was especially important to Tibetan history, being among the original temples established by King Songtsen Gampo in approximately 650 ad in order to tame the mountain spirits of Tibet. As we saw in the previous chapter, the mythology surrounding King Songtsen Gampo came to play a major role in the mystique of the Dalai Lamas, and no doubt Gendun Drubpa's time in Dradruk was an important phase in the unfoldment of this mystique.

In 1415, when Gendun Drubpa was in his twenty-fifth year, he encountered the teacher who was to most profoundly affect the direction that his life would take. This man was Tsongkhapa the Great, an exceptional master who as a young man had left his homeland in Amdo, eastern Tibet, and traveled to all the principal spiritual centers of the land in search of the essence of the enlightenment teachings. He had studied under forty-five teachers, representing all sects of Tibetan Buddhism. After gathering all the teachings, Tsongkhapa had retreated to the mountains of Olkha and lived in meditation for five years, eating only a handful of juniper berries each day for nourishment, and had achieved realization. Now, wherever he went he was followed by hundreds of disciples.⁵

Tsongkhapa today is regarded as the founder of the Gelukpa School of Tibetan Buddhism, the order into which all subsequent Dalai Lamas have received their monastic ordination and basic spiritual education. In all probability he did not regard himself as the founder of a sect or school, but rather simply as a rejuvenator of the true teachings of the Buddha. In 1409 he established Ganden Monastery to house the lineages he had collected. His eclectic

approach appealed to the young First Dalai Lama, who immediately adopted Tsongkhapa as his principal teacher. Later, when Gendun Drubpa himself returned to his birthplace and built Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, he modeled its training regime on that of Ganden.

Tsongkhapa would pass away in 1419, and thus Gendun Drubpa was only destined to spend four years with him. However, it was a most important time; for, although Tsongkhapa had hundreds of great disciples, Gendun Drubpa was

to become listed as one of his five chief spiritual heirs. The other four heirs were all much older than Gendun Drubpa, and in fact all four of them also became his gurus, passing to him the many lineages that they had received from Tsongkhapa, and also guiding him in his meditations.

Often we see Tsongkhapa referred to in Western literature as “the reformer of Tibetan Buddhism.” This is somewhat misleading, as the Lutheranism it suggests is completely out of place. The Tibetan epithet is Seljepa, meaning “Clarifier.” All schools in Tibet prior to Tsongkhapa had received their lineages directly from India. These lineages had then passed through various hands over the generations, and in various lines, thus becoming separated from one another by time and distance. Tsongkhapa’s method was to gather the different lineages of Tibetan presentation, critically compare them to one another, and then analyze them in the light of the great classics of India. This critical approach was somewhat shocking to many Tibetans, for most teachers operated on a faith-based approach. To the First Dalai Lama, however, it was most refreshing.

Some say that at Gendun Drubpa’s very first meeting with Tsongkhapa the latter tore a piece of cloth from his robe and gave it to him, with the prophecy that he would become instrumental in preserving the Buddhist vinaya, or monastic discipline. Others say that the master gave him a complete set of robes, and made this same prophecy. In any case, many years later the First Dalai Lama wrote three extensive commentaries on monastic discipline, and these are studied even today throughout Central Asia. They are held to be among the most important Tibetan works on the subject written at any time, and certainly have contributed to the enthusiasm with which Tibetans pursued monastic life. From the time of the First Dalai Lama onward every family in the country wanted to have at least one child become a monk or nun. No doubt this spiritual intensity was inspired to no small extent by the work of the First Dalai Lama in this field.

Like Tsongkhapa, Gendun Drubpa studied with lamas from many different sects and drew knowledge and insight from them all. The teachings of Atisha and Tsongkhapa, however, had the most formative and lasting impact on his individual spiritual life, the former as lineage master and the latter as a personal guru.

Tsongkhapa’s chief tantric disciple was the monk Jey Sherab Sengey. This lama became the First Dalai Lama’s principal teacher after Tsongkhapa passed away. It is said that when Tsongkhapa had become old he asked the assembly of his

disciples, “Who here can take responsibility for my tantric lineages?” A silence went over the crowd, and some swooned merely from the thought. Only Jey Sherab Sengey responded. As a sign of his consent he quietly stood up and offered three prostrations. Tsongkhapa accepted his offer and entrusted him with all his tantric teachings. Later, Jey Sherab Sengey founded Gyumey Tantric Monastery to house these lineages.

It was under the supervision of Jey Sherab Sengey that the First Dalai Lama achieved the full flowering of his spiritual life. They made numerous meditation retreats together, and from him Gendun Drubpa received the finishing touches on his tantric education. When he was once asked who, of the dozens of gurus with whom he had studied, were the most important to him, he replied, “In the beginning of my training the master who brought me the greatest benefits was Khenchen Drubpa Sherab, the abbot of Nartang Monastery. In the middle of my training the master who brought me the greatest benefits was Tsongkhapa the Great. Then, in the final stages of my training, the most beneficial was Jey Sherab Sengey.”

Another teacher important to Gendun Drubpa was the controversial lama Bodong Chokley Namgyal, a master belonging to the Jonangpa School, and perhaps the most prolific writer in the history of Tibet. Legend has it that this master would dictate four texts at a time. He did this by circumambulating the stupa outside of his monastery, a disciple seated in each of the four directions. As he walked past each he would dictate a line of a different text. In this way he composed over two thousand titles; so many, in fact, that nobody could afford to publish him. Gendun Drubpa is listed as one of his six chief disciples.

During one of Bodong’s transmissions, Gendun Drubpa asked many pressing questions. These so impressed the elderly master that he gave him

the name Tamchey Khyenpa, or “Omniscient One.” The name stuck, and it followed him for the remainder of his life. It is the name used for him in all of his biographies. Moreover, it continued beyond the grave and came to be applied to all subsequent Dalai Lama incarnations. For example, the long-life prayer written by the regent Reteng Rinpochey for the present Dalai Lama’s enthronement in 1940 refers to the child by this name.⁶

In total, Gendun Drubpa studied and meditated for twelve years in central Tibet. He then returned to Nartang Monastery, where he entered into a more

extroverted phase of his career.

* Jf

It was a well-established part of the Buddhist tradition that monks should dedicate their time first to study, contemplation and meditation; then, after realization was attained, they should go forth to teach. This follows the model offered by the Buddha's own life, and Gendun Drubpa was, throughout his life, a model Buddhist monk. After his prolonged period of study, he began, at age thirty-five, to teach and write.

Gendun Drubpa must have been an extraordinary teacher. His biographer Kunga Gyaltsen describes the impression he created:

Whenever he would teach, his face would become radiant and clear. His voice was rich and sensitive, and carried well and with clarity to all in the audience. He would speak softly yet with a vividness of meaning that would make the most subtle point become easily understood. Using images and examples in a most skillful manner, he was able to reach out and touch the very hearts of those who would come to hear him teach, thus drawing them into a sense of the richness of the tradition being taught.

His knowledge, combined with his appealing style of teaching, drew crowds of students, including monastic and laity. His widening recognition began to attract sizable donations from the laity, which began to allow him to sponsor the creation of images and the building of spiritual centers—although Kunga Gyaltsen says that all he really wanted to do was meditate.

From the very beginning of his training he always combined learning with meditational application on a daily basis, and made retreat whenever possible. He aspired to live constantly in solitary retreat and to dedicate himself solely to meditation. It was only at the urging of his gurus and the request of his disciples that he would emerge from retreat in order to teach or engage in other Dharma activities.

Yet even when, for the welfare of others, he had to leave his retreat hermitage, he nonetheless without any external demonstration of piety remained constantly absorbed in meditation upon the compassionate bodhimind, the profound view of emptiness and the two yogic stages of highest yoga tantra. He gave several sessions of each day to meditation upon these subjects and whenever he could

find the time would retreat to intensive meditational application.

In particular, when he was fifty years of age Gendun Drubpa entered an extended retreat in a hermitage above Nartang Monastery, dedicating himself to mandala meditation and the six completion stage applications of highest yoga tantra. Here he gained the visionary experiences of the generation stage and the special realizations of the completion stage. In the middle of this retreat a conflict arose in the area and he was forced to move his retreat site for some time. However, he did not let the problem disturb his practice, and he continued his meditation in a hermitage above Jangchen Monastery for another year or so. He then came out in order to teach some disciples, but as the regional conflicts again arose he once more returned to his meditations. From then until the end of his life he divided his time between meditation retreat and emerging to work for the benefit of the world. Altogether Gendun Drubpa spent more than a dozen years in meditation retreat.

The “conflict” just referred to was in fact religious persecution. The newly formed Gelukpa School swept across Central Asia like a whirlwind. It is difficult to imagine the spiritual intensity that Tsongkhapa ushered in. Ganden Monastery, established by Tsongkhapa in 1409, was soon followed by Drepung in 1416, and then a few years later by Sera. These three monasteries acted as models for a dozen more that sprang up almost on a monthly basis. For example, one of Tsongkhapa’s disciples, Jamyang Choje, personally established over a hundred monasteries and retreat hermitages at this time. This did not pass without some degree of jealousy, for the young men and women being placed in these institutions for training came from families that had previously patronized the older schools.

In particular, several large and powerful aristocratic families associated with the Karma Kargyu Sect made a move to contain the rising expansion of the Gelukpa. Although the incident is glossed over in Tibetan history, there is no doubt that the repression was intense and bloody. At the time,

Gendun Drubpa was in a quandary as to what to do, for he was in meditation retreat and did not wish to break it. Overwhelmed with sadness, he offered a prayer to his gurus, and in particular to Lama Tsongkhapa (referred to here by his initiation name, Lobzang Drakpa) and his chief disciples. Suddenly Tsongkhapa appeared to him in a vision and resolved all his doubts.

Later, Gendun Drubpa composed a poem on his experience. Known in Tibetan as Shar Gang Rima, or “Song of the Eastern Snow Mountains” (a title derived from the words in the opening line), it has remained one of his most popular and enduring verse works. In it he advised his followers to restrain themselves from responding to the violence with more violence, and instead to practice compassion and patience.

Above the peaks of the eastern snow mountains
White clouds float high in the sky.

There comes to me a vision of my teachers.

Again and again am I reminded of their kindness,

Again and again am I moved by faith.

To the east of the drifting white clouds

Lies the illustrious Ganden Monastery, Hermitage of Joy.

There dwelled three precious ones difficult to describe—

My spiritual father Lobzang Drakpa, and his two chief disciples.

Vast are your teachings on the profound Dharma,

On the yogas of the path’s two stages.

To fortunate practitioners in this Land of Snows,

Your kindness, O masters, transcends thought.

That I, Gendun Drubpa, who tends to be lazy,

Now have a mind somewhat propelled by Dharma,

Is due solely to the great kindness of this holy teacher and his chief disciples.

O perfect masters, your compassion is indeed unsurpassed.

O three incomparable spiritual teachers,

From now until the essence of illumination

I need seek no other refuge.

Pull me to enlightenment's shores On the hooks of your great compassion.

Although your kindness can never be repaid,

O masters, still I pray to preserve your lineages At all times and with all my strength,

Never letting my thoughts fall prey To either attachment or aversion.

These days in our remote snow mountains There are many people who uphold their own lineages

While looking down upon other doctrine holders Verily as their deepest enemies.

Watching how they think and act,

My heart fills with sadness.

They boast that the lineage they are following Is a high and superior path,

Yet their motives are only to harm other traditions And their minds are chained in hopes of fame.

If we analyze them closely,

Are they not mere causes of shame?

Finding themselves in their old age Lost on barren paths far from truth,

Their spirits rage with bitter jealousy Toward those who purely practice true Dharma.

Have not demons entered into their hearts?

For them to feel guilt over evils done Yet not to apply the methods which counteract their cause the enemy Delusion,

Is of as little value as placing a chest trap at the western door

is of as little value as placing a ghost trap at the western door,

When in fact the ghost resides near the eastern door.

The true spiritual masters, who understand this point, Look upon all living beings with thoughts of love.

They regard other teachers with a deserved respect And seek to harm only the enemy within themselves, the enemy Delusion.

O friends who would follow my tradition:

Do not permit your minds to wander aimlessly. Constantly be mindful of your thoughts And try by every means to remain On the direct path to enlightenment.

Should any living beings ever heed this small advice, May they gain the mind of great compassion And the insight which perceives ultimate reality, Thus quickly attaining to the sublime glory Of supreme, peerless enlightenment.

May there rain forth the glory of spiritual masters, Their bodies ablaze with the marks of perfection, Their speech richly adorned with the sixty qualities, And their minds a treasure of profound knowledge and vast compassion.

As we saw in the opening section of this chapter, on the night of Gendun Drubpa's birth he was saved by a raven that was an emanation of Mahakala, the wrathful form of the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Gendun Drubpa's connection to Mahakala would continue throughout his life. His biographer Kunga Gyaltzen speaks of one such episode:

The master once made a journey to the south with a number of ritual masters in order to perform a rain-making rite. The local people there feared that he and the other yogis had come in order to exorcise their regional deities, and therefore they planned to attack, rob, and chase the yogis away. That night Gendun Drubpa dreamed that Mahakala appeared to him and said, "Invoke both me and the wrathful Protector Dharmaraja, and we will pacify the problem." The Mahakala of this dream was said by many to be the same as the Mahakala who had emanated as a raven at the time of Gendun Drubpa's birth in order to protect him from the wild animals that had gathered to devour him.

When Gendun Drubpa visited the renowned Sakya Monastery and asked to be shown into the presence of the holy Mahakala image there,

the temple keeper told him, "I shall put your request to Mahakala." The monk returned shortly and replied, "Mahakala said to me that there is a special person here from Nartang Monastery, and that that person should be brought to him." Gendun Drubpa in fact was from Nartang, although he had not told the temple keeper this fact. Here also he received visions of Mahakala.

Gendun Drubpa's devotion to Mahakala is perhaps most evident from a prayer that he composed at that time.

Namo Mahakala ya.

Homage to Mahakala, the Great Black One,

Wrathful emanation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

Homage to Mahakala, whose implements are The skull-cup of blissful wisdom
and the knife Of penetrating methods severing negativity,

The Black Lord of ferocious appearance Whose voice causes all on the earth to
tremble.

O Mahakala, you appear in the form of a terrible demon In order to overcome
the endless hosts of demons.

Like the first day of the new moon,

You herald the destruction of the forces of darkness.

In the presence of the Buddha himself you pledged To work against the evil
forces causing sorrow.

Homage to the fountain of protective energies

That dispel all forms of suffering

And counteract the elements obstructing life.

O Mahakala and the seventy lords in your retinue,

Yours is the power to overcome all Maras

And to carry on high the victory banner of Dharma.

Yours is the power to bring joy to the world.

Protective lord whose fangs are love, compassion, equanimity, and joy,

Whose body blazes with fires of wisdom,

Your mantra is like the roar of a lion Causing the jackals of evil to scatter.

Homage to the protective lord who when invoked Comes through the power of magical emanation And out of compassion releases magical energies That explode like the bark of a dragon.

Just as the angry yak catches its enemy on its horns And then shakes the very life out of him,

Similarly do you destroy the inner forces Which obstruct our accomplishment of spiritual liberation.

O Mahakala, lord of the Cemetery of Laughter,

Your roar ah-la-la, hum-hum and phat-phat Drains the malice of the enemies of goodness And steals the very life of evil and its agents.

Homage also to your four principal consorts:

Yungmo, Tammo, Srinmo, and Singgali,

Wisdom emanations whose bodies are naked,

Each holding a knife of method in her right hand

And with the left holding up a skull-cup

Filled with the blood of transcendental knowledge.

O Mahakala and those in your mystic circle,

Hear this prayer of mine.

Follow close behind me like a shadow

FOLLOW CLOSE BEHIND ME LIKE A SHADOW,

Protecting me in all spiritual works.

From now until all beings gain enlightenment,

Befriend all who practice the methods of the path.

Let no hindrances or obstructions arise To the study or practice of spiritual ways.

Help practitioners always to be endowed with Every condition conducive to the path,

Such as long life, health, and the necessities of life,

That they may quickly attain the state of a buddha.

Gendun Drubpa experienced many other meditative and dream visions. Several of these concerned his spiritual father Tsongkhapa and the teachings he had received from him on the pramana system of logic, the Indian-Buddhist science of philosophical reasoning. As related by Kunga Gyaltsen:

One night he dreamed that he beheld Lama Tsongkhapa seated on a mountaintop, his body radiant and luminous. Gendun Drubpa was halfway up the mountain, and Dulwapa was just above him. Dulwapa turned to him and said, “Jey Rinpochey (i.e., Tsongkhapa) is giving a special tantric initiation. We should listen to it.” Gendun Drubpa then concentrated upon Jey Rinpochey’s words, whereupon he heard him say, “O Gendun Drubpa, because of your activities the pramana teachings shall be preserved and disseminated in Tibet.”

Many years later, when Gendun Drubpa was considering the site on which to construct his monastery, he recollected that the shape of the mountain in this dream resembled that of Mount Tashi. He decided that this dream was a prophecy concerning the site, and that the monastery that he would build, which he called Tashi Lhunpo, would become instrumental in the preservation of the pramana doctrines. Indeed, he wrote several commentaries on the pramana systems, and these were soon adopted into the study curriculums of most Gelukpa monasteries throughout Central Asia. Even today, more than five hundred years later, most Gelukpa monks are expected to read and master them.

As the years passed, an increasing number of disciples and patrons requested that Gendun Drubpa build a monastery in Tsang in order to preserve and transmit his lineages. At first he was reluctant, for he was a humble man and enjoyed the simplicity of the lifestyle of a wandering teacher. However, one day he fell into a trance. Palden Lhamo, the Goddess of Tibet's Oracle Lake, suddenly appeared to him and said, "You must establish a monastery over there." As she said these words she pointed toward the west of Shigatsey. She promised that if he did so, the monastery's activities and disciples would both be great. Later, Palden Lhamo appeared to him on three different occasions in order to guide him to the exact site.

Finally, in 1447 Gendun Drubpa accepted the responsibility and agreed to build a monastery. He entered meditation and prayer, and then set about the task of collecting the materials and craftsmen necessary for the job. Mystic dakinis guided the construction. Gendun Drubpa slept in a white tent near the site while the buildings were being erected. One day he heard the words "Tashi Lhunpo" thunder from the sky. He thought, "This must be the name I should give the monastery." He took this as a sign that the name of the new monastery would become known in all directions.

His biographer Kunga Gyaltzen describes it as a "marvelous creation, with a central chapel six pillars in size. To the right of this he built a Maitreya chapel of twelve pillars and to the left he built a Tara chapel of four pillars." At this time, it was customary to describe the size of a building in terms of its number of pillars. Besides the chapels, there was an assembly hall, a courtyard, a kitchen area and a personal chapel and residence for himself. After a dream in which he saw eleven victory banners flying from a monastic building, he named his residence Gyaltzen Labrang or "House of Victory Banners." The dream, he said, was an indication that things would go well for the masters of Tashi Lhunpo for eleven generations to come. As we will see later in the chapter on the life and times of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, this prophecy was to come true.

Gendun Drubpa was himself a skilled artist and craftsman. The images that he had made for Tashi Lhunpo stand as evidence to his aesthetic tastes and abilities. Among these were a copper and gold Buddha twenty handspans in height, as well as a bejeweled Maitreya and a solid gold Avalokiteshvara. In addition, there were wall paintings, bas reliefs, wooden carvings, and painted scrolls. A small chapel dedicated to the female buddha Tara contained one statue made of pure gold, as well as others made of more humble substances. For his own private

chapel, which contained a wooden three-dimensional Tara mandala, he personally made a golden Tara and an image of Mahakala, his protective deity.

The construction of the image of Maitreya Buddha was accompanied by unheralded signs of auspiciousness. It is said that although countless beings will achieve enlightenment and become buddhas during this world cycle, only one thousand of them will be destined to become universal teachers. Buddha Shakyamuni, who lived 2,500 years ago, was the fourth of these thousand, and Maitreya will be the fifth. Buddhists await his coming much like Christians await the second coming of Christ. On the night of the consecration of this image, Gendun Drubpa dreamed that Maitreya Buddha emitted a stream of lights that covered the face of the earth and drew its inhabitants upward. He composed the following poem/prayer for the occasion. The name Maitreya literally means “love,” and he plays with this dynamic in his composition. Most Tibetans know this piece by heart.

May the beings who contribute to the creation Of images of Maitreya, the
Buddha of Love,

Experience the Dharma of the Great Way In the presence of Maitreya himself.

When, like a sun rising from behind the mountains,

The Buddha of Love appears at the Diamond Seat,

May the lotus of wisdom be opened

And the living beings swarm to drink truth’s honey.

At that time may the Buddha of Love Reach down with his compassionate
hand And prophesy the enlightenment of trainees,

That they may quickly gain illumination.

Until final enlightenment may living beings dwell In the vast and profound ways
followed By the buddhas and their offspring the bodhisattvas Of time past,
present, and future.

May all beings hold wisdom’s golden handle And fly the flag of spiritual
learning that is Adorned by discipline, meditation and insight,

That the banner of truth may everywhere be seen.

May the spiritual lineages, a source of happiness And higher being, thrive without hindrance;

May the holders of knowledge live for long And may the enlightenment teachings bring peace and joy to the world.

Through meditation upon Maitreya, the Buddha of Love,

May the living beings gain love's splendour,

That dispels the shadow of evil;

And may they progress toward illumination.

The construction of Tashi Lhunpo began when Gendun Drubpa was in his fifty-seventh year and continued for many years thereafter. For example, the Tara chapel was not completed until he was seventy-six. The scale of the work is indicated not only by the size of the buildings and the massive number of images commissioned but also by the fact that skilled artisans were brought in from Nepal to execute many of the images.

Although Gendun Drubpa had been born of very humble origins, by means of his own efforts and abilities he had risen to an exalted position as one of the most famed and respected teachers in Central Asia. The former goatherd had become a spiritual master whose gifts and accomplishments generated lavish donations from devotees of every walk of life. Due to his presence a river of offerings flowed into Tashi Lhunpo, yet Gendun Drubpa kept none of these for himself. Instead, he directed them to building, to the maintenance of other monks and meditators, and to projects such as the printing of an entire set of sutras and tantras.

Tashi Lhunpo Monastery was to remain the principal seat of the First Dalai Lama for the remainder of his life. The Second Dalai Lama would also live there in his youth, and most later Dalai Lamas would visit to study and also teach.

Eventually, when the future Dalai Lama incarnations made their home base in Lhasa, this monastery would be entrusted to the principal tutor of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Panchen Lobzang Chokyi Gyaltsen, a master later to become renowned as

the First Panchen Lama. (The Chinese list him as the Fourth Panchen, a number created by adding three pre-incarnations to the string). Tashi Lhunpo remained the seat of the Panchen Lama reincarnations from then onward. Because of this relationship of the Panchens with Tashi Lhunpo, the Panchen incarnations are also known by the name “Tashi Lama.” Over the centuries to follow, these incarnations were regarded as second in spiritual authority only to the Dalai Lamas, a further indication of the importance that Tashi Lhunpo played in the structure of Tibetan spiritual society.

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Gendun Drubpa’s death, like his life, was a teaching in itself. In his eighty-fourth year, after leading the Great Prayer Festival that had been instituted by Tsongkhapa at the start of the Tibetan New Year, Gendun Drubpa went on retreat for seven days, and then left on a teaching tour. He took only his walking stick, and his disciples carried his traveling bag. By summertime, his strength had declined to the point that he needed to be carried in a palanquin. Yet he continued to travel, stopping at Nartang Monastery to visit the site of his early monastic education for a poignant homecoming. Here the aged master made offerings in the main temple and met with his Nartang disciples for what would prove the last time.

Eventually, he returned to Tashi Lhunpo where, despite his obviously declining health, he continued a full schedule of teaching and assemblies. His concerned monks began to conduct longevity ceremonies for him, but he asked them to cease and instead to devote their time to the coming winter assembly.

In the twelfth month of that year he called his monks to him, gave them final advice, and told them that he was about to die. Some pleaded with him to use his powers in order to extend his life span, and others asked what they should do after he had passed away. He told them,

Exert yourselves in the spiritual activities constituting the path to enlightenment. Although I would like to remain with you forever, the time of my passing is near. But this is not a cause of regret; it is simply the workings of the natural law of death.

He continued,

There is no need to perform elaborate rites for me after I have passed away, nor

to build an elaborate tomb for my remains. Simply have my body cremated, mix the ashes with clay, and have the clay pressed into a thousand small images of Akshobhya Buddha. If in addition you can construct a small hut in which to place these images, that would be good. If not, it is enough simply to read some auspicious prayers and spiritual reflections for the fulfillment of my wishes.

If you are devoted to me and feel that my work here has been of benefit to you, then after I have passed away you should stay here in Tashi Lhunpo and work for the good of the monastery and the preservation and dissemination of the holy Dharma.

Always bear in mind the teachings of the Buddha, and for the sake of all living beings apply them to the cultivation of your own stream of being. Remember the doctrines of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. Make every effort to live, meditate, and teach in accordance with the intent of the Buddha. This alone can fulfill my wishes.

He then entered into tantric meditation, performing the generation stage meditations of the highest yoga tantra, and made offerings. At midnight he

slept for a while, then rose during the last watch of the night and engaged in the completion stage yogas. His biographer Kunga Gyaltzen notes,

At dawn of the eighth day of the twelfth month of the Wood Horse Year [i.e., the half moon of late January or early February, 1475] he manifested the external signs of dissolving into the four voidnesses, manifesting clear light realization and abiding within the state of dharmakaya wisdom. ... His body began to transform from that of an old man into that of a youth and shone with such brilliance that few could bear even to look at it. Countless miracles occurred in the vicinity over the days that followed. He remained sitting in meditation for many days thereafter, his heart no longer beating nor breath passing, his body emanating rainbows and great waves of light. Thus his attainment of buddhahood was made evident.

A Rosary of Spiritual Advice

The First Dalai Lama wrote a gnomic piece in which he summarizes the lojong or “mind-training” teachings of Atisha, the founder of the Kadampa School. Gendun Drubpa spent the first years of his monastic training in Nartang Monastery, an important Kadampa institution, and throughout his life the lineages from Atisha were crucial to his spiritual growth. As mentioned earlier, he also wrote two large commentaries to the lojong meditational tradition. This lineage had its origins in the Buddhism of Indonesia. Later in Gendun Drubpa’s life he traveled extensively in order to collect the various lineages imparted by Atisha that had become widely dispersed. In particular, under the guidance of one of his gurus, the lama Lha Sonam Lhundrub, he studied and practiced the tradition intensely and gained special realization.

The Atisha lojong method of spiritual training is particularly important to all sects of Tibetan Buddhism. Eventually it was to spread throughout the entirety of Tibet, and from Tibet to Inner and Outer Mongolia, western China, and the numerous Himalayan kingdoms to the north of India, including Bhutan, Ladakh, Kinaur, Spiti, Nepal, Sikkim, and so forth. In doing so, it came to be incorporated in one form or another by almost all central Asian schools of Buddhism. This process of dissemination was well underway by the time Gendun Drubpa appeared on the scene; but certainly the fact that he was a Kadampa monk by ordination combined with the high level of fame that he acquired added to the impact of the Atisha legacy. Gendun Drubpa taught the lojong transmissions widely and thus greatly increased their popularity throughout southern and central Tibet.

It is interesting to note that the source of the lojong lineage was Serlingpa, literally “He of the Golden Islands,” otherwise known as Dharmakirti of the ancient kingdom of Suvarnavipa, or modern-day Indonesia. Indonesia at the time had become one of the strongholds of the Mahayana teachings, as evidenced by the large number of Buddhist monuments, such as Borobudur, that have survived until today. Atisha had heard of this lineage from several of his teachers, and in order to receive it set out for Indonesia. He arrived after a hazardous thirteen-month journey by boat, met with and was deeply impressed by Dharmakirti, and remained in Indonesia at this guru’s feet for twelve years. He then returned to India and later came to Tibet, where he widely taught the lineages of his Indonesian master. Thus the lojong teaching is

important not only as a fundamental tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and an embodiment of the basic sentiment and attitudes of Central Asia but also as one of the few remnants of the Buddhism of Indonesia, possibly even of Borobudur.

The First Dalai Lama here writes in a type of verse known in Tibetan as labja nyinggu or “essential spiritual advice.” This is a favorite form of composition in Buddhism. Developed in India by early Mahayana masters such as Nagarjuna, Asanga, Aryadeva, and Shantideva, it became widespread in Tibet to the point that the literary corpus of a lama was not considered to be complete unless decorated with a number of pieces of this nature.

O friends with intelligence And with interest in the teachings,

Listen well to some advice

That I offer from the depths of my heart.

Although we wander endlessly in samsara,

There is little space for lasting peace Because of the negativity that we carry within.

Seek now for the ambrosia of immortality,

The wisdom of conventional and ultimate truth.

Keeping the body humble and at peace,

Speaking neither unpleasantly nor deceptively,

And keeping the mind absorbed in the spiritually beneficial,

Course in the dharmadhatu wisdom

Like a fish swimming in the ocean

Free of the hooks of desire and attachment.

The great king of trees now stands tall,

Yet certainly it will one day age and dry.

The Lord of Death shall certainly take us too,

And if we are not prepared with knowledge We shall no doubt know terror and regret.

Like me, the countless living beings Have been wandering in cyclic existence.

Many times they have been a parent to me And shone radiant kindness upon me.

How unworthy not to respond to their sorrow.

For the sake of all living beings we must Strive in the practices bringing enlightenment.

If one does not retreat to the mountains

And accomplish the profound and difficult yogas,

To refer to oneself as a yogi resembles A jackal imitating the roar of a lion.

Forget the endless materialistic pursuits And learn to accept whatever comes.

A precious human rebirth is gained this once:

Do not let it slip through your fingers.

I urge you, use it meaningfully.

Apply it to the spiritual path.

Do not project deceptive ways. like a Newly cast brass statue seems to be gold.

— the most precious, acceptable ways, and a friendly, easy state seems to be given.

Dwell in the vibrantly warm thought that encourages Spiritual growth in oneself and others.

This present age rages with five degenerate conditions Able to disrupt most paths to liberation.

The oral tradition coming from the master Atisha Easily transforms these into causes Generating progress within fortunate trainees.

Make contact with a qualified lineage holder

And apply yourself to the methods

That use the conditions of a world steeped in negativity

As causes of the altruistic state of knowledge.

A Rosary of Wisdom Gems:

A Commentary on the Meaning of Nagarjuna's The Root of Wisdom, Chapter XXIV

The bulk of the collected writings of the First Dalai Lama is comprised of commentaries to the classics of Buddhist India. He wrote elucidations of the Prajnamula of Nagarjuna, the Madhyamakavatara of Chandrakirti, the Abhidharmakosha of Vasubandhu, the Pramanavartika of Dharmakirti, and several vinaya commentaries. In this way he made a great contribution to the understanding of the roots of Buddhism, not only by what he had to say about the essential meanings of these treatises but also by encouraging a movement to stay close to the Indian masters.

Perhaps the most important of his classical commentaries is his elucidation of Nagarjuna's Prajnamula, or "Root of Wisdom," also known as the Madhyamakakarika, or "Stanzas on the Middle View." This text was written in the second century ad by the great master Acharya Nagarjuna, and served as a foundation stone to all Mahayana schools in India. It was composed in four-line stanzas and inspired dozens of commentaries in India, many of which were translated into Tibetan. It also inspired several dozen indigenous Tibetan commentaries.

Nagarjuna's work is purposely ambiguous, allowing the exploration of the Buddhist wisdom tradition to walk down many different roads. The First Dalai Lama took his verse work and rewrote it in plain prose, bringing his own interpretations into play. His treatment achieved widespread popularity, and continues to be used even today as an essential guide in the monasteries of Tibet. Here I have translated the twenty-fourth chapter of this text, which is an analysis of the meeting place of ultimate and conventional realities.

In particular, this chapter addresses a very important qualm to the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness: If all things are in ultimate nature emptiness and are void of real existence, how does anything have any significance? Why then did Buddha even bother discussing topics like the four noble truths: suffering, its causes, liberation, and the path to liberation? If we say that all things lack findable existence, have we not undermined the very purpose of taking spiritual refuge in the Three Jewels: the Buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha? A person is defined as a Buddhist due to this refuge, so does not the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness destroy the very foundation of Buddhism itself? Moreover, is not the basis of conventional, ordinary existence destroyed by the doctrine of emptiness? In brief, the doctrine of emptiness seems to undermine the essential teachings of the Buddha, as well as the conventional experience of common sense.

Nagarjuna was aware of these issues and replied to them by saying that all the arguments used against the philosophy of emptiness could just as easily be used to support it. Only because things are empty of real being are the four noble truths relevant, the Three Jewels potent, and the functionality of conventional reality possible. If things were not empty of a selfnature, everything would be frozen in time. They would not be able to interact with one another or serve as causes and effects.

Nagarjuna's position was that the nature of reality is mind-made. A table is just a name and a label that we impute upon a collection of aggregates. There is nothing in the wood, varnish, or so forth that is "tableness." Similarly, a flower is not the soil, moisture, sunlight, or air that has gone into making it; there is nothing in any of these four elements to serve as "flowerness," nor is flowerness left if we take away the four elements. A thing has no real existence in the sense that its ultimate existence is utterly different from its appearing nature. In the same way, there is nothing in the body-mind complex to represent a truly existent "me," and if we take away the body-mind complex we are not left with a

“me” that is separate from them.

The doctrine of emptiness is a doctrine of nonduality. However, as Nagarjuna pointed out—at least in the First Dalai Lama’s representation of him — this does not mean that Buddhism denies that there is a hot and a cold, happiness and sadness, pleasure and pain, tall and short, this and that, and so forth. Rather, it emphasizes the relativity of all things. Hot is only made so in comparison to something that is not so hot. This does not mean that we don’t burn our finger when we put it in boiling water. To the contrary, because of the relativity of all things, and their lack of an inherent, static nature, our finger gets burned by boiling water. In the same way, all things exist only in relationship to other things, and in the end are only names and labels.

From the First Dalai Lama’s Commentary:

The Master [Nagarjuna] opens [the chapter “An Analysis of Truth”] with a presentation of the arguments flung at him by those who disagree with his statement that nothing—including the four noble truths—has true existence. He follows this with his reply to their qualms.

The Qualms of His Opponents

It follows that you negate the existence of the creation and dissolution (of impermanent phenomena) as well as the four noble truths themselves, for you say that these are all empty (of true existence).

Therefore there is no knowledge (of the truth of suffering), no abandonment (of the true causes of suffering), no meditation (upon the true path leading to the cessation of suffering), and no attainment (of the state of true cessation), for the four noble truths are themselves without true existence.

This means that there are no four goals (i.e., stream enterer, once returner, never returner, and arhat), for knowledge (of suffering), abandonment (of its cause), meditation (on the path), and attainment (of a state of cessation of suffering) do not exist.

As the four goals are nonexistent, there are neither the four abiders in the goals nor the four enterers into the goals. This means that there is also no Sangha, for the above eight types of spiritual beings (that constitute the Sangha) do not exist.

Also there is no Dharma, for the (four) noble truths (on which the validity of Dharma depends) do not exist.

How then can there be Buddha? — for Dharma and the Sangha are nonexistent.

Thus the very existence of the Three Jewels becomes destroyed when you proclaim the doctrine that all things are without selfnature and abide in the nature of emptiness.

An accomplished philosopher, a nonreligious person, the Dharma itself, and even the views of ordinary, common people—all of their existence has been destroyed when (you say that) all things are by selfnature empty of inherent being.

Nagarjuna's Reply

The Master's reply to these arguments has four parts:

I. Showing that causality (dependent origination) has been misunderstood; II.

Showing emptiness as the very point of causality (i.e., the conventional level of reality); III. Showing the shortcomings of tenets contradicting the theory of emptiness; and IV. Showing that if the Thatness of causality is seen, the ultimate nature of the four noble truths is also seen.

[Each of these is thoroughly explained as follows:]

I. The passage demonstrating that causality has been misunderstood has two themes: A. The actual presentation [which has two parts]:

1. Showing that their arguments suffer from three misunderstandings: a) The exponents of inherent existence interpret the words “empty of true existence” to mean total nonexistence, which contradicts their position; for they do not understand the purpose for which the doctrine of emptiness was expounded, the nature of emptiness, nor the essential meaning of emptiness.

b) The doctrine of emptiness was expounded in order to eliminate grasping at true existence.

c) Its nature is the pacification of distorted perception, and its essential meaning is simply “empty of inherent existence.”

2. Showing that his opponents have not understood the two levels of reality: Their misunderstanding of the two levels of reality (i.e., ultimate and conventional) is dealt with in five sections: a) The nature of the two realities: while not understanding the purpose, nature, or meaning of emptiness, they seek to criticize the doctrine of emptiness. Who are they? The very people who do not correctly differentiate the two levels of reality! However, one must have correctly understood these two levels in order to have reversed distorted perception. Thus these are the very people for whom the doctrine of the two levels of reality was expounded.

The Dharma taught by the Buddhas rests upon the doctrine of the two levels of reality; for it is composed of doctrines dealing with the illusory, conventional level of reality and of doctrines dealing with the truth of ultimate reality.

b) Showing that if one does not understand the two levels of reality one will miscomprehend the essential meaning of all the scriptures: the exponents of inherent existence do not fully comprehend the profound Suchness of being; for they do not understand how to differentiate correctly between the two realities.

c) The purpose for which the doctrine of the two levels of reality was expounded: the doctrine of the two levels of reality has a purpose: If the conventional reality is not relied upon, one does not become a vessel to whom ultimate reality can be revealed; and until the ultimate reality has been perceived, nirvana cannot be attained.

d) The shortcomings of misunderstanding the nature of the two levels of reality: those who expound true existence, being of limited wisdom, fall down when they hear of emptiness; for their understanding remains faulty. They are like the person who grabs a snake incorrectly; or like the sorcerer who mispronounces his magical spells.

e) Explaining that because it is difficult to correctly comprehend the doctrine of the two levels of reality, it should not be taught to beginners: the (emptiness of) objects of knowledge, being a phenomenon difficult for those of feeble mind to fathom, was said by the Buddha to lead only to downfall when taught to the unprepared, for the shortcomings of apprehending emptiness incorrectly indeed are great.

B. Comparing the validity of his own and others' views:

O exponents of inherent existence, the various faults you see in the doctrine of emptiness are invalid to me, who holds the Middle View, for you speak of the undermining of arising, dissolution, the four noble truths, and so on; but to an exponent of emptiness this is not the case.

The Middle View is valid, for wherever one looks one finds the proposition of emptiness to be sound. On the other hand, the exponents of inherent existence miss the point; for their understanding of emptiness errs.

O exponents of a true existence of things, you try to turn the faults of your understanding into faults of the Middle View. You simply take whatever arises and try to call it a fault in the doctrine of emptiness. You are like the man on a horse who forgets that in fact he is riding on a horse.

You who expound an inherent nature in things: It follows that you must think that things have neither causes nor conditions; for if you say that things have inherent existence, then the view arising from it leads to that conclusion. For the same reason you are also negating the functioning of cause, effect, a doer, the act of doing, the deed itself, creation, dissolution, and attainment.

II. As for the objects of knowledge, they are not something not having emptiness as their ultimate nature; for anything that is not a dependent arising is not an existent. This is so because it is said that wherever there is a dependent arising there is emptiness; and wherever there is emptiness there is a dependent arising. Such are the philosophical attitudes of those holding to the Middle View free from extremes.

III. Nagarjuna's presentation of the shortcomings of positions contradicting the doctrine of emptiness has three sections: A. Showing how they destroy the four noble truths as well as knowledge of them, etc.: As for the exponents of inherent existence, it follows that they are negating arising, dissolution, and so forth; for they say that none of these phenomena abide in emptiness. Consequently it follows that they are also negating the four noble truths; for if there is no evolution and so forth, how can suffering and the other noble truths come into existence? The very teachings on impermanence and suffering themselves have no true existence.

If suffering were not empty of inherent existence, it could not have a true source; for were its nature to have an inherent status, it would not be able to change or evolve. Also, the state of the cessation of suffering could not exist, for you say that the existence of suffering is inherent. As that which is inherently existent cannot change, how can inherently existent suffering ever be destroyed? Its nature must be constant. Therefore by denying the doctrine of emptiness you are denying the teaching on the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.

Similarly, meditation upon the true path leading to cessation of suffering would be of no avail, for one's experience of the path, having inherent existence, could not evolve. Therefore, the path cannot be an inherently existent phenomenon, for it is an object cultivated by meditation.

(You say that if things are empty of having true existence) then it is not correct to think that by meditating on the path one will attain the cessation of suffering; for suffering, its source, and its cessation are all nonexistent. However, if one advocates the inherent existence of suffering, it follows that if one does not now have complete knowledge of suffering; one will never be able to gain it, for the previous nonexistence of this knowledge had an inherent status. To be inherent, it must either inherently exist or inherently not exist.

Thus (by denying the doctrine of emptiness) you are saying that (the teachings

on) the truth of suffering, the truth of its cause, the state of cessation, meditation upon the path leading to cessation, and also the four spiritual goals are invalid, for any sources of suffering that have not yet been abandoned will have inherent existence. The problem is the same as with an inherently existent limited knowledge of suffering.

As for the four spiritual goals, how could an ordinary person gain the ability to attain them in the future? It would be impossible, for (you say that) the previous nonattainment had inherent existence. If it has an inherent nature, there will be no way to reverse the inherency.

B. How they destroy the validity of the Three Jewels, spiritual learning, practice, etc.: Moreover (by denying the doctrine of emptiness you are saying that) there are no attainers of the four goals, nor enterers into the goals, for the goals are thus rendered unattainable (one's previous nonattainment having been inherently existent). Therefore there is no Sangha, for the eight types of spiritual beings cannot exist. The Dharma also must be nonexistent; for the four noble truths upon which it relies have been negated. How, then, can there be a Buddha?

There could not be, for the Dharma (that he would have had to practice in order to gain Buddhahood) and the Sangha (who would aid him in attaining his goal) have been denied. Therefore, your buddha cannot depend upon enlightenment and your enlightenment cannot depend upon a buddha, for that buddha and that enlightenment are both inherently existent.

(From that perspective) there would be no hope that an ordinary being who engages in the bodhisattva practices in order to attain buddhahood will attain his goal, for the state of non-buddhahood (in which he presently finds himself) is inherently existent.

A person would be unable to do either positive or negative actions, for how can that which is not empty of an intrinsic nature engage in activity? Action implies change. In inherent existence there can be no action.

Even though one did not do either a positive or negative action, the karmic results of having done so would arise; and although one were to create a positive or negative action, the karmic fruits would not come, for the fruits would have inherent existence (and therefore would not need to depend upon a specific karmic cause).

How can karmic fruits that ripen from specific causes such as a positive or negative action not be empty of having an inherent nature? They are empty of inherence, for they are entities produced in dependence upon causes.

C. How they are in discord with the views of worldly and nonworldly people alike: The exponent of true existence is also in discord with the conventional views of worldly people, for he denies the emptiness of causality. By so doing he is saying that a specific action will produce no fruit, that without effort the fruits of actions will arise, and that there would be a doer (of an action) without having to depend upon the action of doing. The living beings would be without birth and without death. They would be of a static, nonevolving nature. The events in their lives would occur at random (i.e., without any relation to their own actions), for their existence, being inherent, would not have to depend upon causes or conditions. The unattained could not be attained and the levels of suffering as well as karma and delusion could not be transcended unless they are empty of an intrinsic nature.

IV. As for objects of knowledge, the person who sees them as being interdependent phenomena empty of having true existence will also see the ultimate nature of suffering, its source, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to cessation, for he will realize that the beliefs of those expounding inherent existence are without a basis.

A Numbers Poem

Although most Tibetan spiritual literature is written in something of a serious mood, the First Dalai Lama had a wonderful sense of humor. This is reflected in his poem reproduced below.

Buddhism loves numbers and categories—three of this, four of that, five of the other, and so forth. Here the First Dalai Lama goes to town with this tradition, and writes a poem in which he brings it into his composition, with the first verse using the ones, the second verse the twos, and so on. Readers may not be familiar with what each of these number categories refers to, but will nonetheless get the general drift of his presentation.

Of note: The Tibetan pronoun kong is genderless, and can mean either “he” or “she.” English does not have this facility, and therefore I have had to use the male pronoun throughout. My apologies to my female readers.

A buddha: He looks on each living being

With the love of a mother for her one and only child,

And is long familiar with the one aspiration to benefit the world,

A white force that is one in goodness,

Awareness absorbed in the one taste of dharmadhatu wisdom Free from grasping
at the extremes of oneness or multiplicity, Constantly poised in the one-pointed
samadhi That is never out of focus for even one moment, The one basis of
beings who have destroyed every inner demon.

A buddha: He is like a bird

Flying in the face of the sky of the two levels of reality,

His two wings skillful means and highest wisdom,

Beyond fear of the two extremes of nihilism and reification,

Two eyes ablaze with two Dharmas—transmitted and inner realization—

That provide two wisdoms to eliminate all worldly states of mind.

This bird suddenly plunges to earth and devours

The two snakes of obscurations to liberation and omniscience,

And shows the world how to cross the two oceans:

Those of worldly and nonworldly existence.

A buddha: He has mastered

The three categories of the enlightenment lore

And accomplished their essence, the three higher trainings

Of self-discipline, meditative concentration and wisdom,

Thus destroying the three psychic poisons Of ignorance, attachment and

Thus destroying the three psychic poisons of ignorance, attachment and aversion, To release a roar of laughter that echoes

Throughout the three worlds, and terrifies the three insects

Of death: outer, inner and secret.

A buddha: He provides four mighty boats, the four seals of the Dharma, By which to cross the ocean of samsara With the oars of the four spiritual awarenesses, Driven by the wind of the four transcendences.

And guided by wisdom made firm

With the four levels of meditative absorption

By which spiritual aspirants gain the four doors of liberation

And arrive at the city wherein is beheld

The final nature of the four noble truths,

Yet not distracted into complacent nirvana,

But arising with the four immeasurable thoughts Of love, compassion, joy and equanimity, With the four kayas of a buddha

That fulfill the four ways of benefiting trainees.

A buddha: He beholds

The five types of weakened living beings who wander In the forest of the five aggregates constituting body and mind That are born from the seeds of the five great delusions, a forest Haunted by the wild leopards of the five harsh conditions of this age And the snakes of the five obscurations; This mind has arrived at the five perfect abodes,

Possesses the five pristine wisdoms,

And manifests the five powers, five strengths, five clairvoyances And five miraculous powers in order to lead the living beings Along the five paths leading to liberation and omniscience, Benefitting each in accord with individual needs.

A buddha: He flashes

The glistening fangs of the six perfections, and is Embellished by the wondrous aura of the six paranormal powers, His six senses tamed by the six mindfulnesses, and thus Experiencing the six sensual delights with equipoise, Sending forth a vibration that pervades the six worlds With a fire that consumes the six forests of distorted vision.

Thus he takes upon his shoulders the burden of benefiting The living beings in each of the six realms of the world.

A buddha: Due to the power of his creative energy He is empowered by the seven spiritual excellences, Like a universal emperor with the seven precious possessions.

He is free from all attachments, and sees the glitter

Of a palace made even from the seven most precious gems

With the same dispassion as a house in the hells.

To free the living beings from the seven worlds,

He would gladly enter the deepest hell As joyfully as a swan flies down into a lotus pond.

Indeed, he is empowered with the great compassion that aspires

To link all living beings to the seven spiritual jewels of an arya, And to the seven limbs of enlightenment.

A buddha: He encourages all living beings To transcend the eight states of bondage and to achieve A life form based in the eight spiritual freedoms.

To give liberation from the eight types of suffering,

He points to the noble eightfold path,

Gradually leading living beings to the exalted states Of the eight types of arya sangha, such as The eighth, the stream enterer, and also to the states Of

pratyekabuddha and Mahayana bodhisattva.

Indeed, he lives by the eight ways of freedom

And in eight ways outshines all ordinary spiritual heroes.

A buddha: He has seen the empty nature of samsara,

Seen how like the plantain tree it lacks essence,

And thus crossed the nine spiritual states, to utterly uproot The nine times nine levels of spiritual obscurations, Becoming empowered with every meditative accomplishment, Such as the nine spiritual absorptions, Thus attaining the ten spiritual powers, and Taking the ten perfections to utter completion, To transform into an object worthy of the veneration Of shravaka arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and even Tenth level Mahayana bodhisattvas, Finally attaining a form embellished

With the ten times ten plus ten plus two (i.e., 112)

Marks and signs of complete enlightenment.



Gendun Gyatso, the Second Dalai Lama. Courtesy of the Swedish Humanistic Research Council, Saviours of Mankind,” The Sven Hedin Foundation, Statens FJnograhska Museum. Stockholm WpHph__

The Second Dalai Lama: A Legacy Established

No plans were made to search for the First Dalai Lama's reincarnation after he passed away, for he was essentially a monk of the Kadam tradition, which did not embrace the tulku tradition of recognized reincarnations. Instead a stupa was constructed from the finest of silvers adorned with precious jewels, and the relics of his body were placed inside it. These can be visited today by pilgrims to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery.

Legend claims that after his death the First Dalai Lama transmigrated to Tushita Pure Land and came into the presence of Buddha Maitreya, Atisha, and Lama Tsongkhapa. The First Dalai Lama asked for advice on where he should go in order to work for the enlightenment of the world. Tsongkhapa held up two flowers and tossed them into the air. One fell to earth upon a hermitage in Yolkar called Tanak Dorjeden, in Tsang Province, southwestern Tibet. The other fell in China. Some say that this meant he simultaneously took two reincarnations, one in each of these places. It was the reincarnation in Tanak Dorjeden that concerns us here, as this is the child who would be recognized as the Second Dalai Lama.¹

The hermitage in Tanak Dorjeden was the residence of a yogic family, one with an ancient legacy of spiritual practice and transmission. In addition they had made a personal connection with Gendun Drubpa, the First Dalai Lama, for both parents had received teachings and initiations from him.

The Second's father, Kunga Gyaltsen by name, was descended from a tribe of nomads who had migrated to central Tibet from Kham, eastern Tibet, in the mid-eighth century. At the time they had been invited by King Trisong Deutsen of Lhasa to partake in the construction of Samyey, Tibet's first Buddhist monastery. As the attentive reader will note, this king was mentioned earlier as being a previous incarnation of the soul destined to become the Dalai Lamas. Thus the child born to Kunga Gyaltsen was the reincarnation of the king who

had brought their ancestors to central Tibet some eight hundred years earlier. It is not clear when the family moved from the Samyey region to Tanak Dorjeden of Tsang; presumably this occurred some centuries later.

The mere fact that the family had worked directly with the great Indian master Padma Sambhava, popularly known as Guru Rinpochey, would have given them special prestige in the community. Time served this illustrious master well, and by the Second Dalai Lama's era he had become a household myth, with every conceivable miraculous power being attributed to him. The family had also participated in the tantric rites when Padma Sambhava invoked the Dharma Protector Pehar and swore him to the guardianship of Samyey. This is an especially relevant connection, because eventually Pehar was to become the personal protective divinity of the Dalai Lama reincarnations. This deity also became the State Oracle of Nechung after the Fifth Dalai Lama assumed spiritual and secular leadership of Tibet in 1642.

As the generations passed, the family developed its own lineage of spiritual succession, transmitted from father to son. This type of shamanic lineage passing through the family line was common in ancient Tibet, each lineage more or less representing its own sect. Families of this nature generally lived by performing ritual healings, exorcisms, divinations, funeral prayers and other such community activities. During the Second Dalai Lama's era his great-grandfather, grandfather and father were all revered as highly realized lama yogis, each generation taking responsibility for the transmissions carried by the previous one. Basically they belonged to the Nyingma School, although they fused their Nyingma lineages with the Shangpa Kargyu tradition from Khyungpo Naljor and the Zhicho transmissions from Padampa Sangyey and his female disciple Machik Labdron. In addition, the father had attended many discourses of the First Dalai Lama.

This was his heritage from his father's side. As for his mother, she was recognized as the reincarnation of the famous thirteenth-century yogini Drowai Zangmo. She had received teachings and initiations from the First Dalai Lama, and had taken him as her main guru. In his Autobiography, the Second Dalai Lama reveals the great affection that he held for her. He writes,

When my father was in his forty-fifth year he married (my mother) Kunga Palmo, a recognized female reincarnate yogini who in an earlier lifetime had been the yogini Khadroma Drowai Zangmo, a direct disciple of Gyalwa Gotsang.

From childhood my mother could remember many of her previous lives. Then as a young woman she became profoundly accomplished in the three highest yoga

tantras: Guhyasamaja, Heruka, and Yamantaka. She also practiced the Medicine Buddha and numerous other tantric systems, and became profoundly accomplished in the Kalachakra doctrines.

She was especially adept at meditation and had received many profound oral transmissions directly from the First Dalai Lama.

How fortunate I was to enter the womb of such an accomplished and dedicated spiritual practitioner!

The mention here of his mother as a female reincarnate is interesting. It indicates the important spiritual role that women in fifteenth century Tibet played, and the prestige with which they were regarded.

The spiritual dedication of both male and female sides of the Second's parentage is illustrated by numerous anecdotes in his Autobiography. One, for example, tells of when he and his father visited his grandmother just before she passed away. She had been living in solitary meditation retreat for an astounding forty-four years, bricked into her remote mountain enclave, her days and nights dedicated to yoga and meditation.

In the Tibetan biographical tradition, the account of the birth of a lama usually includes his parents' premonitory dreams, prophecies by local high lamas, and auspicious omens that occurred at the time of birth. The same holds true in the case of the Second Dalai Lama.

Just before the boy was conceived, the father-to-be was engaged in a retreat for cultivating the practice of dream yoga. One night he dreamed that a young boy came to him and said, "Jey Tamchey Khyenpa Gendun Drubpa (i.e., the Omniscient First Dalai Lama) will soon come to Yolkar. You should receive him well." The father then dreamed that he flew off into the air with the boy and traveled to a meditation cave that had been frequently used by Gendun Drubpa. There he beheld the elderly First Dalai Lama, his body ablaze with light, his face white tinged with red. The lama looked at him and smiled.

The mother dreamed that the First Dalai Lama came to her, touched her womb, and said, "Soon a son will be born to you. You should call him Sangyey Pel, Enlightenment Explosion, for this is the name by which the buddhas of the ten directions and of the past, present and future know him."

The child was born late in the Fire Monkey Year (1475), on the third day of the Month of Victory. The sky was clear and free from dust and mist. The sun was radiant, and a rainbow appeared over the house even though there were no clouds. The entire district was vibrant with an extraordinary light and brilliance.

The Biography states, “Thus Avalokiteshvara took off his bodhisattva attire and descended into the ordinary world in order to fulfill the needs of living beings.” This passage is important, for it reveals how even in these early days the Dalai Lama lineage was regarded as an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

It is said that immediately upon exiting from the womb, the child looked around the room with clear eyes, acknowledging the presence of everyone there. He smiled, turned his radiant face in the direction of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, placed his tiny hands together in prayer, and recited the mantra of Arya Tara, the female buddha who had been the main meditational deity of the First Dalai Lama. In accordance with the dream instructions that the parents had received, they gave him the name Sangyey Pel.

The Biography comments that the boy showed none of the ordinary characteristics of an infant:

He shunned ordinary childhood games and instead played at being a lama. He would sit on rocks shaped like teaching thrones and pretend to give discourses to imaginary multitudes and to give hand blessings to anyone who came into his presence. He would take clay and shape it into images of stupas and buddhas or stack piles of pebbles into shapes of stupas and pretend to make offerings and prayers. This was before he even learned to speak.

When the child was three years old he began to express the wish to go to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. He would call out to birds and monkeys who came near him, “Have you come to take me home to Tashi Lhunpo?”

Often he spoke in mystical verses, which were recorded by his mother. One such verse, sung when he was two, follows:

This child cannot remain in this small house;

Soon he must move to Tashi Lhunpo,

For that is a more appropriate place for him.

There he has a far sweeter tea to drink

And many monk disciples who await his return.

Many images that he constructed sit in his temple And his Dharma robes lie in storage for him.

Take him there soon, that he may fulfill his destiny.

The father asked of him, “And who are you? What is your name?” The boy replied in song,

My name is Gendun Drubpa, the monkhood’s great hope.

Tara herself, mother of all buddhas, witnessed my death,

The monk Umdzey Sangtsulwa of Tashi Lhunpo,

An illustrious disciple of Gendun Drubpa,

Will soon come to take me home.

Tara advised me to incarnate in Dorjeden,

And the Protector spirit Mahakala accompanied me here.

But now too much time has passed, and I must go To my monastery, Tashi Lhunpo, my destined home.

Later that same year the family made a pilgrimage to some nearby temples. While the parents were making their devotions he wandered off and disappeared. They searched for him frantically, eventually discovering him sitting trancelike under a tree, his eyes gazing blankly at the sky. The area was as though bathed in rainbow light, and a small rainbow hovered above him. The parents sat quietly to the side, watching in wonder as the infant remained motionless. Eventually he rose from his trance and came over to them.

“What happened?” asked the father.

“Lama Tsongkhapa came and spoke to me,” was the boy’s reply.

“What is Tsongkhapa really like?” the father asked.

The boy described his vision, and then quoted a verse from The Ornament of Mahayana Sutras, even though he had never seen or heard the text before, which begins, “The spiritual master is at peace, gentle, quiet----”

One day when the family was visiting the temples at Shomolung, the child again went into a trance. When he emerged from it, he turned to his parents and said, “You know, I’m not really Sangyey Pel. My actual name is Lama Drom. When I look into the sky I always see Avalokiteshvara, with Tara to his right and Sarasvati to his left. They talk to me continually and give me prophecies.” As we saw earlier, Lama Drom was the eleventh-century disciple of Atisha, and a previous incarnation of the First Dalai Lama.

The father asked teasingly, “If that is the case, then how long will I live?” “You will pass away in your seventy-second year,” the boy replied.

The Biography comments that indeed the prophecy came true. Kunga Gyaltsen lived and taught for many years to come, eventually passing away in his seventy-second year.

From childhood, the Second Dalai Lama constantly and spontaneously composed mystical songs and verses. Though a complete collection of his early songs does not seem to have survived, a few of the verses are quoted in their completeness. For example, one day when the boy was two years old he pretended to enact a mystical dance. In the middle of it he turned to his parents and sang,

This life is like a game that we play,

The objects of perception, playthings in a dream.

Those who take them as real Become lost in confusion.

The wise live in mindfulness of karma

And monitor the white and black pebbles of their actions.

They avoid the black, and collect the white

To build the foundations of their own happiness, freedom and joy.

Even though the father asserted that the child was a model of perfect behavior, it would appear that the mother did not always agree on this point and that several times in his young life he was disciplined by her. In one verse he first admonishes his parents for punishing him for his actions and then delivers a prophecy concerning the Dalai Lama incarnations:

The living beings, confused by their karmic instincts,

Look down on and abuse the enlightened beings.

Thus they fall into the lower realms of samsara.

They (my parents) scold me with a seemingly good intention,

But it only brings them negative karma of speech;

They would do better to see me as their crown jewel,

For then their wishes would be fulfilled like falling rain.

Acquiring (as a son) a holy being, like the Panchen (Gendun Drubpa)

Is as rare as finding a wish-fulfilling gem.

They should meditate (on me) as being Buddha Vajradhara.

Although he (the First Dalai Lama) completely flooded This world with the sublime nectars of Dharma,

He did not complete all of his plans.

Therefore for seven incarnations he will come To work for the living beings of this world Before merging into the stainless dharmadhatu.

The fortunate beings who train under him Will surely take rebirth in the Tushita Pure Land.

The Biography makes a number of interesting comments about these verses.

According to it, the line “Therefore for seven incarnations he will come” is a reference to a passage in the early Kadampa classic *The Book of the Kadampa Masters*, in which the births and deeds of all the Dalai Lamas are prophesied. The passage goes on to quote a verse related to the Second Dalai Lama’s coming and explains how it is interpreted as prophecy:

Relying on various mystical means,

He will come in successive incarnations
For as long as the doctrine does not decline,

And not allow a break in work begun long before.

From Rasa to Reteng he will go,

And spread a garland of magnificent lotuses.

He will be known as an emanation of Lama Drom Tonpa,

And will elucidate the meaning of the secret yogas.

The interpretation of this verse is that the Dalai Lamas will work for seven incarnations to ensure that the Kadampa doctrines brought to Tibet by Jowo Atisha and transmitted by Lama Drom Tonpa will be firmly planted in the Tibetan spiritual world. The later incarnation (i.e., the Second Dalai Lama) will carry on the work of the former (the First Dalai Lama), and thus what was “begun long ago” by the First will not become broken; in other words, the legacy will be continued. Rasa refers to Lhasa. Reteng refers to the Kadampa monastery that had been built by Lama Drom Tonpa, a previous incarnation of the Dalai Lamas, and the main seat of the Kadampa School, located to the north of Lhasa in the Jang region. The Second Dalai Lama would make several retreats at Reteng and experience numerous visions there. The word “lotuses” refers to flowers and is a prophecy of the Second Dalai Lama’s establishment of Chokhor Gyal Monastery at Metoktang, “The Flower Meadow,” below the Lhamo Latso, or Oracle Lake. All future incarnations would be connected with this monastery and would be traced by relying on signs from the Oracle Lake.

When the boy was between the ages of four and eleven, his father transmitted to him all the teachings and initiations associated with the family lineages. These

included the Six Yogas of Naropa, the Six Yogas of Niguma, and the Six Yogas of Sukhasiddhi. He also gave him the secret tantric name Shepai Dorjey, or “Laughing Vajra,” a name that the Second Dalai Lama frequently used many years later in his tantric writings.

Until the boy entered Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, he accompanied his father everywhere he went, whether it was to give a teaching or initiation, perform a tantric ritual for a patron’s benefit, or visit a disciple in a meditation hut or cave. He also remained with him whenever he undertook retreats, and thus from childhood became adept at meditation.

Even though the child frequently and clearly announced that he considered himself to be Gendun Drubpa’s reincarnation, little action was taken on the matter for some years, for a number of reasons. One of these seems to be that the topic of tulkus, or “officially recognized reincarnations,” was somewhat controversial in the newly formed Gelukpa School of Lama Tsongkhapa. Although most of the older schools of Tibetan Buddhism had for some centuries maintained the tradition of official reincarnates, Tsongkhapa does not seem to have cared much for it. He did not speak out against it, but he also did not establish an official reincarnate office for himself nor did either of his two chief disciples, Khedrubjey or Gyaltsebjey.

Consequently, in the Gelukpa School a famous lama such as the First Dalai Lama could informally be thought of as a reincarnation of Lama Drom, yet no special fuss would be made over him for it. The situation was strikingly different from the case in some of the older schools, where anyone officially recognized as a reincarnation of a famous lama would actually inherit the property, possessions and so forth of the predecessor (or predecessors).

Perhaps Tsongkhapa was not completely comfortable with bringing the tulku legacy into the Gelukpa School because in some ways the tradition contradicts the vinaya, or fundamental monastic code of discipline as outlined by the Buddha himself. According to the vinaya, monks are discouraged from

owning personal property. At their death, their robes and other belongings are distributed among the community. In contrast to this, the incarnate lamas built up large estates from lifetime to lifetime. At the death of one in the line, a large portion of his or her accumulated property would be kept in trust for the child to be recognized as the reincarnation.

Moreover, tulkus were a Tibetan creation, and Tsongkhapa seems to have wanted his school to follow the central guidelines of Buddhist India, modeling itself on monasteries such as Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Odantapuri.

It is possible that the First Dalai Lama was aware of Tsongkhapa's discomfort with having Gelukpa tulkus but decided that the latter's decision was impractical in the Tibetan environment. In spite of all the faults and complications of the system, Tibetans generally loved their tulkus more than they did the ordinary monks, even if some of those monks were great saints and scholars and some of the tulkus were rascals.

If the newly established Gelukpa School was to compete with the other sects on an equal footing, it would have to recognize and incorporate tulkus.

In spite of the lack of a tulku infrastructure at Tashi Lhunpo, when the monks heard the rumors that Gendun Drubpa had been reborn nearby, their curiosity was seriously aroused.

In particular, one of the chief disciples of the First Dalai Lama, Chojor Palzang by name, dreamed that the master had returned. Shortly thereafter he journeyed to Tanak Dorjeden to meet the three-year-old child for himself. He was profoundly impressed, and told the authorities about the boy.

He soon returned with a delegation from the monastery, including other previous disciples. The child immediately recognized them, called to them by name, and embraced them as old friends.

The following year the child made an informal visit to Tashi Lhunpo. Here he instantly recognized all of his previous disciples, again calling to them by name without being introduced. He also recollected all the favorite places in the monastery frequented by his predecessor and made comments such as, "In my previous life I would often come here for quiet meditation," and "It was on this throne that I gave such-and-such a teaching."

The elders, however, thought he was still too young to enter the monastery, and recommended that he remain in training under his father for some years. It was not until his eighth year that he was to make the traditional tea offering in Tashi Lhunpo and receive the introductory ordination. He still did not take up residence there, but this event symbolized his official recognition.

News of the child spread like wildfire, and Tanak Dorjeden became a hub of activity as visitors came from far and wide to receive his blessings. The Tashi Lhunpo authorities began to press requests upon him to take up residence in the monastery, and eventually he agreed to come.

Thus he arrived in the spring of the Fire Horse Year (1487), escorted with great regalia by high lamas and abbots of numerous monasteries. Among them was Umdzey Sangtsulwa (an abbreviation of the name Umdzey Sangyey Tsultrimpa), the monk he had named in the verse quoted above:

The monk Umdzey Sangtsulwa of Tashi Lhunpo,

An illustrious disciple of Gendun Drubpa,

Will soon come to take me home.

On his arrival at Tashi Lhunpo he was installed as the reincarnation of Tamchey Khyenpa Gendun Drubpa (i.e., the First Dalai Lama) and began his new life by taking the prenovice ordination of a monk. This ordination was enacted in a grand ceremony, with the Tashi Lhunpo abbot, Panchen Lungrig Gyatso, leading the rites. As the Autobiography puts it,

On this occasion my long hair was shaved from my head, and I put on the robes of a monk, the victory banners of the Buddhadharma.

The prenovice monk was given a new name: Gendun Gyatso Palzangpo, which means “Sublimely Glorious Sangha Ocean,” or “Sublimely Glorious Ocean (fulfilling the way) of Spiritual Aspirants.” It is this name that was to remain with him throughout his life and with which he was to sign most of the books that he composed in later years. Some months after this, he took the ordination of a novice monk.

In Tashi Lhunpo, the young monk’s life mostly revolved around studies, memorization of texts, debate, and participation in temple assemblies in which scriptures and prayers would be chanted. These activities were punctuated by the occasional brief meditational retreat, usually lasting a week or two. He seems to have followed much the same curriculum as his classmates, beginning with a study of Buddhist psychology and basic logic technique, then going on to read the principal Indian Buddhist treatises.

While resident at Tashi Lhunpo he also continued his tantric studies. He often would travel to the nearby Nartang Monastery where his previous incarnation had first become a monk. There he spent intense periods with the abbot, receiving tantric initiations and training. In addition, the Nartang abbot gave him a complete oral transmission of the collected writings of the First Dalai Lama.

When he was thirteen years old, a messenger arrived to inform him that his mother was critically ill. He rushed to Tanak Dorjeden in Yolkar to be with her. The manner in which he describes his meeting with her in his Autobiography clearly reveals the high regard in which he held her, and her high level of spiritual attainment.

He quotes her as saying to him, “There is no need to try and do anything for me, for nothing will be of any avail. I have experienced repeated dreams of the complete mandalas of body, speech and mind of the Kalachakra Tantra. In my dreams these mandalas dissolved from the outside into the center and then into me. The meaning is that I will pass away within fifteen days.” The Second Dalai Lama then states, “Indeed, she passed away thirteen days later, with many wondrous omens occurring as indications of her high state of spiritual accomplishment.”

In accordance with tradition, the family had her body cut into pieces and fed to the birds as a final act of generosity on her behalf. When the flesh was cleaned from the skull, they noticed that it (the skull) was the color of pure pearl and that the inside of it bore a clear impression of the tantric deity Heruka Chakrasamvara.

The young Second Dalai Lama kept this skull with him as a reminder of impermanence and also of the great yogini that had been his mother. Years later, when he constructed Chokhor Gyal Monastery near the Oracle Lake he placed the skull there as a relic so that it would continue to be a source of spiritual inspiration to future generations.

Not long after the Second Dalai Lama entered Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the abbot, Panchen Lungrig Gyatso, retired and entered into solitary retreat in order to practice meditation. He was succeeded by Panchen Yeshey Tsemo, a close disciple of the First Dalai Lama and also the First’s official biographer. The boy intensely admired the new abbot and received numerous teachings and initiations from him. After receiving these initiations, the young monk entered into retreat

to complete the recitation of the mantras. The Biography states,

During this retreat his karmic memories were stimulated to the point that suddenly he remembered hundreds upon hundreds of his past lives. From that time onward he could comprehend the most subtle and profound teaching just by hearing it once.

If this was his great enlightenment, then the immediate years that followed were mere dramas enacted in order to project a semblance of conventionality.

Later that year he experienced a powerful dream vision that was to affect him strongly. A young naked girl came to him in his dream, holding a wisdom sword, a scripture and a mirror. He looked into the mirror, and fell into vision upon vision. At this time he received hundreds of prophecies concerning his life's work. When he awoke he wrote numerous mystical songs and hymns, and from that time onward began to compose verse works, hymns and prayers almost daily.

In the Water Mouse Year (1492), when he was 17 years old, various invitations to teach began to come to him from nearby monasteries and hermitages where his predecessor the First Dalai Lama had frequently taught. He felt that perhaps it was time for him to begin serving the community in this way.

First he visited Nenyng Monastery, where thousands of people had gathered from upper and lower Nyang to hear him speak. Both the abbot Nenyng Yangpal Nyingpo and the great scholar-saint ley Monlampal attended his teachings and initiations and later led an elaborate ceremony dedicated to his long life. At this ceremony all, even the senior-most monks, offered many prostrations and hymns of praise to him.

After this he was invited to Palkor Dechen Monastery, where he taught to the monastic community; and to Drong Tsey, where he gave Guru Rinpochey initiations and a discourse on the Six Yogas of Niguma. Again, he was shown the greatest respect. Thus he traveled from one region to another for some weeks, teaching and giving initiations as he went.

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Meanwhile, back at Tashi Lhunpo a storm was brewing, and the stage was being set for his expulsion from the monastery. Yangpa Chojey in the Biography gives

three quite different explanations — outer, inner, and secret—of how and why this occurred.

The outer interpretation is simply that the managers in the abbot's office became jealous of the increasing respect and honor that were being showered upon Gendun Gyatso. They feared that the young reincarnate lama might soon displace the abbot as the Tashi Lhunpo head, which would have the effect of demoting them in status and stripping them of some of their privileges.

The inner interpretation is that Nenyang Monastery was located in the vicinity of a malicious gyalpo spirit (a local spirit ruler), and that Gendun Gyatso somehow invoked the spirit's wrath, thus bringing a hindrance upon himself. The events that followed were the result.

The secret interpretation is that the entire sequence of events was a mystical drama consciously enacted by the abbot, Panchen Yeshey Tsemo, in order to push the young Dalai Lama out of his comfortable life in Tashi Lhunpo and help him fulfill a greater destiny. As Yangpa Choje explains:

We can look at these events as having been produced by jealousy on the part of certain administrators in the abbot's office, perhaps with this negative energy having been aroused by a curse of the Nenyang gyalpo spirit. But this is not the real story. In fact these events were all part of a mystical drama. What really happened is that the young reincarnate had a great destiny to fulfill for the peoples of central and eastern Tibet, and that he could not do so by remaining in Tashi Lhunpo.

Panchen Yeshey Tsemo understood this, and thus showed a wrathful countenance toward our master in order to push him toward the fulfillment of that destiny. This is clearly indicated by something my guru Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltsen told me. He said that when the Panchen was residing at Nenyang Monastery some months before all these events transpired, he remarked to certain of the elders there, "I have clearly seen in dream visions that the boy is without doubt the reincarnation of our guru Jey Tamchey Khyenpa, the Omniscient Gendun Drubpa. Soon he must go to central Tibet so that he can accomplish the higher works for which he is destined."

Thus it is clear that the great teachers function in mysterious ways for the benefit of living beings and on levels that cannot be fathomed by the conventional

intellect.

Whatever were the motives and perceptions of the peoples involved, Gendun Gyatso arrived back at Tashi Lhunpo to be met by a strained atmosphere. The monastic administrators hindered him wherever they could. He attempted to ignore the situation and to continue his studies as usual but met with little success. Coincidentally, just as all this was happening a letter arrived from the renowned lama Jamyang Lekpai Chojor, abbot of Drepung Loseling Monastery near Lhasa, requesting that Gendun Gyatso come to central Tibet. In fact the invitation harmonized with his own ambitions. For some time now he had harbored the wish to move to the great monastic universities of central Tibet in order to complete his education.

After waiting a seemingly length of time with no improvement in his situation, he went to the abbot and offered parting prostrations.

Thus in the second month of the Tiger Year (1494), the Second Dalai Lama left Tashi Lhunpo for central Tibet.

That night in Lhasa, Lama Jamyang Lekpai Chojor of Drepung Loseling Monastery dreamed that a sun ball arose from the west, filled his room, and from there flooded throughout the Land of Snows until all darkness was dispelled. The next morning he commented, “Soon my greatest disciple will come to me.”

Shortly thereafter, the Second Dalai Lama arrived in Lhasa and presented himself to Jamyang Lekpai Chojor with the request to be accepted as a student. From Jamyang Lekpai Chojor he received initiation into the two principal mainstream highest yoga tantra systems—Guhyasamaja and Heruka Chakrasamvara—together with all the standard Indian and Tibetan tantric commentaries to the philosophy and yogas of these traditions. In addition, under this illustrious master he reviewed the principal commentaries to the Kalachakra tantric system, as well as those to the Six Yogas of Naropa.

Within three years at Drepung he had completed the studies that would take an ordinary monk of the monastery almost twenty years. While here he also took the full bikkshu ordination. It was the Wood Hare Year (1495)^{an} he was but twenty years old.

His studies were now quite over, and he turned his mind to making pilgrimage to

the major holy places of central Tibet in order to practice meditation in them. He and his teacher Jamyang Lekpai Chojor decided to first make pilgrimage to Reteng Monastery. The night before their arrival, the Reteng lama, Pakpa Kunga Gyaltsen, experienced a dream vision in which a young girl appeared to him and said, "Tomorrow Lama Drom Tonpa himself will visit." This was a reference to the Dalai Lama lineage being a reincarnate continuation of Lama Drom Tonpa, the eleventh-century founder of Reteng Monastery.

The lama placed two hundred flower cuttings in a vase and made the prayer, "If this really is the reincarnation of Lama Drom Tonpa, may these flowers bloom during the period of his pilgrimage here." The next day Gendun Gyatso arrived. First he paid homage in the main temple and then gave a short teaching to the monks and people of the area. The flowers began to blossom as he spoke, and by the end of his discourse all of them had fully opened. They remained in full bloom throughout his stay at Reteng.

Meanwhile a monk who had been a close disciple of the First Dalai Lama, Panchen Choklha Odzer, was teaching in Riwo Dechen. He experienced numerous auspicious dreams, and interpreted them to mean that he should serve the Second Dalai Lama. Consequently he sent a messenger to the Second's great guru, Jamyang Lekpai Chojor, with the request to allow him to arrange a pilgrimage, meditation and teaching tour for the young reincarnation. Jamyang Lekpai Chojor was delighted, and immediately gave his blessings. The King of Chonggyey offered to patronize the pilgrimage. This king remained one of Gendun Gyatso's most loyal disciples and patrons from this time onward.

This first pilgrimage and teaching tour began with a visit to the Jokhang Temple of Lhasa, where he led a large ritual and prayer ceremony, with King Ngawang Namgyal of Neudzong acting as principal benefactor. Gendun Gyatso then left for the Yarlung Valley, home of Tibet's early civilization. On the way he stopped and taught at various monasteries and hermitages, including Samyey, Tibet's first monastery. His ancestors had helped build this sacred site some eight hundred years earlier.

He then continued to Tsetang Monastery, where he encountered several old disciples of the previous Dalai Lama, and then to Riwo Dechen Monastery, where Panchen Choklha Odzer met up with him for the first time.

The Biography comments on how impressed the Panchen was with the reincarnation of his guru and waxes eloquent on the impression that Gendun Gyatso made:

(The Master) sat cross-legged, with his right foot slightly extended, just as had Jey Tamchey Khyenpa (i.e., the First Dalai Lama) whenever he taught. His robes flowed around his body like clouds around a crystal mountain.

He taught to hundreds of listeners, his body radiant like a full moon in the midst of a sky of stars. Although still very young, he was fearless in the presence of the many sages who had gathered to listen to him, like a lion in the midst of humbler animals. His presence exuded utter strength and poise, like Mount Meru at the center of the universe. His smile was soft and radiant, immediately disarming those who sat before him and clearing away any doubts they may have had.

And his voice! What music! It was strong, rich and vibrant, an absolute delight to listen to and clearly audible to all in the room, both near and far. He used it like a celestial instrument as he spoke, causing the body hair on everyone there to tremble with joy and anticipation_____

Over the next twenty years, Gendun Gyatso repeatedly visited all the important holy places of central, southern and southwestern Tibet, practicing meditation and teaching to increasingly large gatherings. Kings, queens, tribal chieftains, lamas and yogis eagerly rushed forward, vying with one another to have the young reincarnation visit and teach in their areas. Every monastery, temple and hermitage wanted the blessing and prestige of having received him.

His energy seemed boundless. Request upon request poured in, all of which he accepted and satisfied with equal humility and dedication.

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In the spring of the Earth Sheep Year (1498), Gendun Gyatso left on pilgrimage to the holy places of the Olkha Mountains. Lama Tsongkhapa himself had spent many years there in meditation, and Gendun Gyatso wanted to practice in the places blessed by that great guru. In addition, he had heard stories of a wonderful and quite eccentric yogi, Khedrub Norzang Gyatso, who had been living in the caves at Odey Gungyal of Olkha. This great yogi was a direct disciple of the First Dalai Lama and had spent more than fourteen years in solitary meditation at Olkha, where he allegedly had achieved full enlightenment. Gendun Gyatso

was determined to meet him.

The night before the young monk arrived, the old yogi experienced numerous dream visions indicating that the reincarnation of his great guru was about to come to him. When they met, the yogi came out of his cave and bowed. The young Gendun Gyatso placed his hands on the yogi's shoulders and restrained him, saying, "In my previous incarnation I was your guru. Now it is your turn to serve as my guru." He then prostrated to the yogi and requested that he be accepted as his disciple. In particular, he asked the old yogi to guide him in the tantric methods of the Kalachakra yogas. The yogi agreed, and the two spent the following months traveling and practicing meditation together in the holy places of Olkha.

From this time on the two remained like father and son. In fact, most historians state that it was under this great master that Gendun Gyatso accomplished his enlightenment.

At that time he wrote a wonderful song on the meditative experiences that occurred while training under Khedrub Norzang Gyatso:

Here I sit in Rinchen Gang, in a hermitage
Where meditation spontaneously achieves results,

A Dharma site at the foot of Odey Gungyal,

A magnificent mountain rivaling Mount Kailash itself.

Thoughts of my guru Khedrub Norzang Gyatso arise,

And I recollect his immeasurable kindness.

A flood of emotion surges up from within me,

And every hair on my body trembles with joy.

I call out to him with a plaintive voice:

Pray, come forth from the sphere of the unmanifest.

Emanate the radiant countenance of your holy body;

With speech, release a great rainfall of the Dharma;

And lead living beings to the state of enlightenment That is inseparable from
your peerless mind.

0 most holy root guru, through your kind guidance

1 mastered the yogas of the two tantric stages Of glorious Kalachakra, king of
the tantras,

As well as its branches, like astrology,

That facilitate higher spiritual knowledge.

Without relying on mere words alone

You led me to a naked understanding

Of the teachings of Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and Tsongkhapa

Concerning the ultimate mode of being:

That all things abide in the nature of emptiness;

That nothing exists in its own right,

And that things are mere mental projections Imputed on their bases of
designation.

You helped me to see the great inner enemy,

The I-grasping habit that sees things as real,

And to see its limitlessly harmful effects.

You also showed me how to destroy it;

So now everything manifest in the sphere of perception Effortlessly arises within
the path of the void.

Yet you did not let me fall into nihilism,

But pointed out to me the relevance of how All the things that appear, though mere labels, Nonetheless continue to function conventionally According to the laws of cause and effect.

Thus you freed me from the terrible cliffs Of grasping at the extremes of “is” and “is not.”

O most kind root guru, it was you who taught me How to extract the quintessential meanings

Of all the profound sutras and tantras

And helped me to find the inner strength

Of a mind well trained in the wisdom tradition.

Recollecting the great kindness you showed to me,

I can easily see you as a fully accomplished buddha, And within that frame of devotion I call out to you: Please keep me in your thoughts forever

And bestow spiritual powers mundane and supreme.

In the Water Boar Year (1503), a strong urge arose within Gendun Gyatso to make a pilgrimage to his birthplace and spend some time with his father, Choje Kunga Gyaltsen. Thus he left for Tsang, teaching at the monasteries and temples as he went. In Tanak Dorjeden, in Yolkar, he met with his father and reviewed all the family lineages he had received from him as a child. The two practiced meditation together in the family temple and had long conversations that went on deep into the night. Gendun Gyatso also gave numerous discourses and initiations to the local people.

While in the area, he applied to the office of the Tashi Lhunpo abbot for an audience. “The time is still not ripe,” was the reply. Thus he spent the

summer with his father and then quietly returned to central Tibet and to retreat at Reteng Monastery.

Just before the New Year a messenger arrived to inform him that his father was seriously ill. He rushed back to Tanak Dorjeden, but by the time he arrived the

old yogi had already passed away. The Biography goes into considerable detail on the many auspicious signs that accompanied this passing, indicating his high state of mystical accomplishment. After his heartbeat and breath had stopped, Kunga Gyaltsen had remained in the state of tukdam for fifteen days, his body showing no ordinary signs of postmortem decomposition. In this way his high state of spiritual realization was revealed.

Gendun Gyatso himself led the cremation ceremony and later commissioned an elaborate golden stupa to encase the ashes. True to the prophecy that he had given to his father when the former was only three years of age, the old man had passed away in his seventy-second year.

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Over the decade to follow, Gendun Gyatso spent most of his winters in the Lhasa area and his springs, summers, and winters on pilgrimage, meditating in holy places and teaching as he went. He had also begun to compose major textual commentaries, sometimes in order to use these as a basis for his discourses and also in response to the requests that came to him. Thus his name as a teacher and author was growing. It was not unusual now for his audiences to include two or three thousand monks and nuns, as well as tens of thousands of lay people. He was also increasingly being asked to lead ordination ceremonies for new monks and nuns, and the recipients of these ceremonies would often number in the hundreds. The list of the texts that he taught and tantric initiations that he gave during these years reads like a catalog of the complete body of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.

Throughout his many travels, Gendun Gyatso repeatedly experienced dreams and visions of a mystic lake and a monastery that he would construct near it. His work in building Chokhor Gyal Monastery near Lake Lhamo Latso (which is also referred to here as “the Oracle Lake”), and his work of empowering the lake, are said to have been prophesied by many great masters of the past, including Padma Sambhava and Atisha.

The Second’s link with this sacred lake was prophesied in The Book of the Kadampa Masters:

Near the lake is beautified by a net of radiant flowers (metok).

It can be known from the mystical number thirteen;

Even now Buddha Amitabha resides there...

A Victorious One will make his residence there
And perform secret activities to
benefit the world.

This will come to pass before very long

The mention of flowers (Tib., metok) refers to Metoktang, near where Gendun Gyatso was to build Chokhor Gyal Monastery. The phrase “Victorious One” is Gyalwa in Tibetan, an epithet of the Dalai Lamas.

In another work, Guru Padma Sambhava spoke of the person (Gendun Gyatso) who would empower the area:

When the time comes to open the door to this holy place
An emanation of
Avalokiteshvara will appear,

A youth who carries the blessings of Vajrasattva,

Whom to see, listen to, or remember inspires faith.

In the summer of the Wood Mouse Year (1504), Gendun Gyatso went to teach at Dvarkpo Monastery. At that time several of the local chieftains began to pressure him to build a meditation hermitage and summer residence in the Gyal region. He was not able to begin construction then, but he conducted a purification ritual in order to affirm his karmic connections with the place. Actual construction began five years later in the Wood Snake Year (1509). First he erected a small residence and then slowly added the fundamental buildings that constitute a monastic dwelling. As Gendun Gyatso puts it in his Autobiography, his role in the construction of the monastery was a passive one. He writes:

The monastery seemed to rise up by itself. The construction materials, such as stones, wood and clay, came forth quite magically... it was as though we humans would build a bit during the day, and after we went to sleep at night the spirits of goodness would slip in quietly and work all

night----The auspicious signs that appeared were amazing. Every day,

flowers fell from the skies, and rainbows hovered above us. At night we could

hardly sleep for all the auspicious dreams that occurred... ■ The entire summer passed in that way.

Building continued through the summers of the Iron Horse (1510) and Iron Sheep Years (1511). Because of the altitude at which the monastery stood (approximately fifteen thousand feet above sea level), this was the only season during which any amount of construction could be undertaken. King Lhagyaripa supplied seventy workers during this period, and several hundred local disciples came on a voluntary basis, many of them from the nearby Dvakpo Monastery. Gendun Gyatso gave teachings and initiations during breaks in the construction work, and in this way the project moved steadily toward completion.

The main assembly hall was seventy pillars in size, with the side chambers and entrances bringing it to eighty-eight pillars. This was the main building, and around it stood the residences for the monks, the communal kitchen, and a variety of smaller temples for restricted gatherings and rituals. On the mountain above were numerous meditation huts that could shelter seventy monks in solitary retreat, while the remainder of Chokhor Gyal's inhabitants engaged in study, temple rituals, and the everyday running of the monastery.

The task of creating the statues and paintings for the main and auxiliary temples did not begin until a couple of summers later. The Biography gives a detailed account of the master artists involved in the work. During much of the work, Gendun Gyatso would visit the artists every day in order to supervise the development of the various images, several of which were made from pure gold. Like his predecessor, he was a highly talented painter himself, and the artwork in Chokhor Gyal Monastery certainly benefited from his critical eye.

During the summer of the Iron Sheep Year (1511), three hundred accomplished lamas gathered at Gyal to join him in a ten-day prayer vigil. Shortly thereafter he dreamed of Lhamo Latso Lake and was told of its mystical potential as a source of visionary experiences. In his dream a woman appeared to him and said,

In negative times there are waves of suffering
And many hindrances to the ways
of truth.

Visions inspired by this lake can offer guidance,

For it has the power to offer prophetic images.

Over the weeks to follow, Gendun Gyatso repeatedly dreamed of the lake and of his responsibility to unlock its powers. Several of these dreams involved the protective spirit Palden Lhamo, the wrathful tantric deity that his predecessor, Gendun Drubpa, had frequently propitiated and

that, consequently, the Second had relied upon from his early childhood. The lake, he now understood, was one of the principal residences of this powerful spiritual force.

During the construction of Chokhor Gyal Monastery, a sword made of meteorite metal had been unearthed. Meteorite metal, or namchak as the Tibetans call it, is a sacred substance to central Asians, and the discovery of the sword created a sensation. During the consecration rite the group of lamas went to the shores of the Oracle Lake. Here they performed an extensive invocation and empowerment ceremony and tossed the sword into the lake's waters.² When it sank to the bottom, something extraordinary took place. Gendun Gyatso tells of the experience in his Autobiography:

When we arrived at the lake, a great clamour of sound arose from the skies, like that of a severe hailstorm. I had come with some ten ritual masters to open the gates of this sacred site. We performed a rite of offering to the guardian spirits. Then we went to the shores of the lake, performed a ritual invocation of Palden Lhamo, and threw the effigy into the waters.

Suddenly the color of the lake began to transform before our eyes, becoming all colors of the rainbow one after the other. Numerous images began to appear in it, such as mandala shapes and so forth. Then it went as clear as the sky, and from within the clarity countless images appeared, such as geometric patterns.... All sorts of dramatic scenes appeared. Finally the lake seemed to bubble and boil and to turn the color of milk. Not a drop of it appeared as mere water. During the entire period, the things seen in it were perceived by all of us simultaneously.

From that time onward, hundreds upon hundreds of people have visited the lake in order to receive a vision from it... For those of pure mind and conviction, this mystical place of power seems to inspire these experiences in an unbroken stream.

Thus the master fulfilled two important prophecies concerning his life: the construction of Chokhor Gyal Monastery and the empowerment of the

Oracle Lake. This lake has continued to be used over the centuries by central Asians, most of whom aspire to visit its waters at least once in their lifetime in order to receive a vision from it that will help to unravel the mystery of their life.

In particular, the lake came to play an important role in the discovery of reincarnate lamas, especially the Dalai Lamas. In the search for a lama's reincarnation, the signs and indications gleaned from the Oracle Lake are considered to be among the most compelling and authoritative. The vision-inducing power of the Lhamo Latso Lake thus became one of the most enduring gifts of Gendun Gyatso, the Second Dalai Lama, to the peoples of Tibet.

By the time Gendun Gyatso was only thirty-six years old, he had already come to be regarded as one of the greatest saints and Buddhist scholars in Tibet. However, there was still one issue that clouded his life. This had to do with Tashi Lhunpo.

In the Iron Sheep Year (1511), just after completing the main buildings at Chokhor Gyal, a letter arrived from the Tashi Lhunpo abbot. It began, "It seems as though my guru, the omniscient Panchen Gendun Drubpa (the First Dalai Lama), has indeed taken rebirth as..." and it concluded with the humble and self-effacing signature, "Your little disciple Yeshey Tsemo."

The gist of the letter was a formal request for Gendun Gyatso to return to Tashi Lhunpo and take his rightful seat at the monastery. In his Autobiography Gendun Gyatso writes,

Previously no matter how many times I had requested an audience with the Panchen I was refused. Now here before me was a letter from him asking me to come and take over the throne of the monastery. I felt that it was the natural outcome of the test in guruyoga that he had put me through and was an indication that somehow I had passed the ordeal.

Actually, even in the most challenging moments, I had never stopped regarding him as one of my principal gurus nor allowed myself to think that his actions had any motivation other than to teach and mature me. The letter in my hands was the result.

Generally, if we point a searching finger inside of ourselves, then no matter how we look at it, the benefits of always holding the traditional attitudes toward the guru are clearly effective. The whole thing seemed to me like a perfect proof of

how important it is in these degenerate days to take every action of the guru as a teaching.

Though he had put much time and energy into building Chokhor Gyal, it would not be appropriate for him to ignore the invitation from Tashi Lhunpo. As he puts it in his Autobiography, “People would think that I was refusing the request in order to spite the abbot, and as a consequence they would unnecessarily collect great negative karma by losing respect for the Sangha.” Thus he agreed to come as soon as possible.

He left almost a year later, in the autumn of the Water Monkey Year (1512), teaching in the principal temples and monasteries on the way.

At Tashi Lhunpo a grand reception had been organized for him. The Panchen came out to greet him and began to offer prostrations. Gendun Gyatso stopped him. As he puts it in his Autobiography, “I discreetly requested him not to do so in public, for he had been my guru, and I would prefer to keep it that way. Instead I bowed to him and requested his blessings.”

Nonetheless the Panchen did vacate the First Dalai Lama’s residence in Tashi Lhunpo and hand it over to the Second. The latter remained in Tashi Lhunpo throughout the autumn, winter, and spring, teaching numerous classical Indian Buddhist scriptures, and making frequent visits to other holy places and monasteries in the area, where he taught and gave initiations.

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Meanwhile the people back in the Olkha region were becoming restless with his long absence. They had worked hard, investing great sums of energy and money to build Chokhor Gyal Monastery for him, and were distraught with the thought that he might remain in Tashi Lhunpo.

A letter signed by four hundred senior monks and patrons arrived toward the end of the spring session at Tashi Lhunpo, firmly requesting him to return soon and hinting that, if he were not to do so, the progress of work on Chokhor Gyal might come to a halt. Therefore, in the summer of the Water Bird Year (1513), he set off back toward Gyal.

Over the following years he frequently returned to Tashi Lhunpo, continuing to supervise its training program and state of development and greatly increasing

its size and number of monks, as well as to teach to the lay people of the region.

Wherever he went he received tremendous patronage. However, as the Biography puts it,

No matter what material offerings or wealth came to him, he never ever kept anything for himself. Offerings and gifts fell daily in great rainfalls, but he gave all of this away to various spiritual purposes, like building or supporting temples and monasteries, the support of solitary meditators and elderly lineage holders, and to the poor. I have heard this said repeatedly by everyone who knew him.

He himself lived a simple life, proclaiming that his only personal possessions were his monk robes, his eating bowl, and his ritual implements of vajra, bell and hand drum. Everything else that came to him he regarded as merely being entrusted to him for higher use, and as having been given to him in order for him to disperse it in the most appropriate manner

In brief, from the age of twenty-one, when he finished his studies in Drepung Loseling Monastery, until the age of thirty-six, when he completed Chokhor Gyal Monastery, he had rarely spent more than a month or two each year in Drepung and the Lhasa area. The rest of the time he spent on the road, traveling from place to place, meditating in holy sites and teaching as he went. But a change was in the making.

In the Fire Bull Year (1517) he was requested to take responsibility for Drepung and serve as its abbot. He accepted, and was installed on the halfmoon day of the fourth Tibetan month, which is the date annually commemorated as the celebration of Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and passing away.

As the abbot of Drepung, his influence was felt throughout Central Asia, for the monastic community at Drepung included not only the peoples of the Lhasa area but also the most promising students and scholars from hundreds of smaller monasteries throughout the land.

Throughout Gendun Gyatso's life, the Gelukpa School to which he primarily belonged was under considerable oppression from a number of the older schools, especially the Karma Kargyu. In particular, the Monlam Chenmo (Great Prayer Festival), which had been established by Lama Tsongkhapa, had been taken from them, and Gelukpa monks were banned even from attending it in the Lhasa area. Instead, the two-week festival was led by either the Shamarpa or the

Sangpupa lamas.³

Essentially the problem seems to have derived from the intrigues of the Fourth Shamarpa Tulku, Chokyi Drakpa by name, who from 1499 to 1523 masterminded a number of sectarian rivalries with the aim of furthering his own position with the Tibetan aristocracy. Not only did his plotting adversely affect the Gelukpa, it also nearly split his own school, the Karma Kargyu, into two branches, one under him and the other under the Eighth Karmapa Tulku, Karmapa Mikyu Dorjey. Gendun Gyatso, as well as the Gelukpa School in general, had good relationships with the latter lama; the problem was with the Shamarpa.⁴

Because Tibetans regarded the creation of the festival as one of the four greatest deeds of Tsongkhapa's life, and because he had created it as a Gelukpa festival, Gendun Gyatso felt somewhat responsible for getting the Great Prayer Festival back. One of his first acts after assuming the abbotship of Drepung was to visit the Gongma (i.e., literally "Emperor," because this king held sway over most other kings of central and southwestern Tibet) of Lhasa and discuss the matter with him. The Gongma conceded the point, and from the following year onward the festival was returned to the Gelukpas. In fact it has been conducted by them from then until today.

This festival was and is considered a symbol of extraordinary spiritual transformation. It represents the active presence of the enlightenment tradition in the world, and the meritorious energy created by the festival is said to be a major factor in sustaining world peace and prosperity, not just for Tibet but on a planetary level. In this respect the Tibetans regard themselves as merit-makers and peacekeepers for the human community, much like the Hopi natives of New Mexico. Their spiritual rites, although performed in a traditional setting, are seen as contributions to universal well-being. Thus when the festival was tampered with for sectarian and political reasons, the matter was considered very serious indeed.

The Gongma was obviously deeply impressed by Gendun Gyatso and his performance at the Great Prayer Festival. Later that year he offered to sponsor the building of an official residence for him in Drepung Monastery. Thus the Ganden Podrang of Drepung—a monastery within a monastery—came into being. This submonastery of Drepung became Gendun Gyatso's principal residence in the Lhasa area from that time on. In fact, it was to serve as the

principal home of all subsequent Dalai Lamas, until the Great Fifth became spiritual and temporal leader of a unified Tibet in 1642 and shortly thereafter made the Potala his home.

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As the abbot of Drepung, the forty-two-year-old Gendun Gyatso had numerous responsibilities in the Lhasa area. He would generally base himself there during winters and springs, teaching not only at Drepung but also at all the monasteries and hermitages in the region, especially Ganden and Sera. Similarly, he would base himself at Chokhor Gyal Monastery during summers and autumns, making various teaching tours from there into the

outlying areas. Meanwhile, he still continued to visit Tashi Lhunpo from time to time, and to oversee its well-being.

In addition to this regular teaching pattern, Gendun Gyatso taught disciples who came to him from all across Central Asia, later returning to their homelands with the lineages he had imparted to them. The Biography comments, “Thus from Kashmir on the west to China on the east, there was not a place in Central Asia that was not touched by his teachings.”

In the Fire Bird Year (1525), Gendun Gyatso was strongly requested by the elders and patrons of Sera, a Gelukpa monastery near Lhasa, to accept the responsibility of the Sera abbotship. Thus from this time on he served as head lama of both Drepung and Sera. Meanwhile, he continued to oversee both Chokhor Gyal and Tashi Lhunpo monasteries.

When he visited Sera to teach the following year, he experienced a dream vision in which he was told, “From the time Sera was built until now its numbers have remained quite small.” Thus he decided to dedicate greater energy to increasing its numbers. In particular, he had a special Buddha statue constructed for it in order to bring it prosperity. Over the years to follow, he ordained many more monks into the community there.

A character that appears in the latter half of the Biography account with increasing frequency is Queen Sangyey Paldzomma, the wife of King Tashi Drakpa Gyaltzen Palzangpo of Kyormolung. By the mid-1530s, Gendun Gyatso had apparently come to regard her as his greatest patron and lay disciple. Certainly she was both extremely wealthy and intensely dedicated

to Buddhism. She and her husband acted as major patrons of his activities in the Lhasa and Tolung areas. As the Biography puts it, “They made central Tibet shine with a spiritual light equal to that of central India during the time of the Buddha.”

This queen was also involved in his death and reincarnation, for it was on his final visit through Tolung to visit the royal family and teach at their court that he chose his place of rebirth. At that time he wrote a small verse of parting instructions for Queen Sangyey Paldzomma. (Note how her name is similar to his childhood name, Sangyey Pel.)

One should heed well the instructions of the masters,

The source of all progress here and hereafter,

And use this precious life wisely,

For it is a wish-fulfilling gem and a vessel Capable of receiving the highest spiritual knowledge.

Realize that death is certain and its time unknown, And make spiritual practice your priority;

See the Three Jewels as sources of every spiritual gain, And rely upon them with confidence.

The cause of all suffering and confusion Is negative karma and distorted emotions;

Make every effort to transcend them.

The cause of all joy here and hereafter Is creative karma and the positive mind;

Make every effort to cultivate them.

Worldly works never reach an end,

Even if we struggle at them for an aeon.

Do not make them the center of your life.

But spiritual practice is just the opposite,
And every effort brings an according benefit That extends far into the future.
Generosity and spiritual sensitivity Are the ornaments of a civilized person;
We should make these our most treasured gems.

The mind which does not discriminate against others And entertains only
thoughts to help Is the foundation of all good qualities;

We should hold it at the center of our heart.

As attachment, aversion and hypocrisy

Harm oneself and others both here and hereafter,

The wise person strives to transcend them.

And as the only stable possession is a mind Free from all states of distortion,

The wise person makes every effort to achieve it.

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In the Earth Boar Year (1539) King Nangso Donyopa of Droda invited Gendun Gyatso to Zhekar Dzong to teach. The chieftain had completed the construction of a new monastery there, and he requested Gendun Gyatso to name it and also to accept responsibility for guiding it spiritually. It was given the name Kadam Lhunpo.

At the end of his discourse there, Gendun Gyatso sang a verse to his disciples:

O hark. All of us who are friends Are held together by fragile links,

Like clouds in a windy sky.

Impermanent things know no stability,

And are like an illusory mirage.

Rely therefore on spiritual practice

only therefore on spiritual practice,

The only stable force in a world of change.

This is my advice to you; you should Try always to live by it.

When he had completed this song, the room turned very quiet. He sat in silence, color drained from his face, and his eyes closed. His head fell to one side, and he released a long sigh. Sunrabpa, his principal attendant, became concerned that the master was perhaps suffering from a severe illness, such as a stroke or a heart attack. He touched him gently on the arm to inquire of the situation.

“Be quiet,” the lama said to him. “The real question is not how my health is, but whether or not the minds of you disciples have been established on the spiritual path. Those of you who call yourselves my disciples, your thoughts should not be about me, but about your own practice of Dharma. It was only for this reason that many years ago I began to come to this region to teach.” After speaking in this extraordinary way he left for the Tiger’s Peak at Olkha.

The Iron Bull Year (1541) began as usual with Gendun Gyatso leading the festivities. Again, he presided over the Great Prayer Festival at Lhasa. Many of those present during his jataka discourses were strongly moved by his intensity and feared that he might be signaling them that he was preparing to pass away.

He stayed in Drepung during the spring and gave a large number of discourses on the Indian classical treatises and also a complete reading of everything that he himself had written. At the beginning of one particular discourse he said, “Those of you who are my disciples should listen closely, for this may be the last time that I am able to give you such extensive teachings.” He had never spoken to them like this before, and it filled them with apprehension. During the teaching there were several earth tremors, the wind in the mountains made a sound as though weeping, and an eclipse occurred. Many high lamas had repeated nightmares at night.

All the head lamas held council to decide what course of action to take. The master seemed to have no illness of any kind, yet he continued to make references to his own passing. They decided to have all the principal monasteries in central Tibet perform elaborate long-life prayers for him. In addition, they all approached him with the request to use his meditational powers to extend his life.

A contingent of lamas from Tashi Lhunpo rushed to Lhasa to request him to stay in the world and teach. The Gandenpa king, Sonam Gyalpo, and his queen also came with the same request, as did Queen Butri Gyarmo of Gongkar. In this way disciples rushed in from every direction to express concern for his well-being.

The master would have passed away that summer had all this fuss not been made over him. By means of their spiritual intensity, the disciples gained the meritorious energy for the master to live in their midst for one more year.

During the summer Gendun Gyatso made an extensive teaching tour throughout all the regions where he had large numbers of disciples. In the autumn, while lecturing at another monastery, he had a dream that his guru Khedrub Norzang Gyatso appeared to him and said, "You have built Gyal very well. Very well indeed." He took this as a sign that his guru now regarded his life's work as complete. Nevertheless, he continued his teaching, traveling to Olkha again, then to the Lhasa valley, where he stopped at Samyey Monastery and eventually arrived at Drepung. At the beginning of the year he led the Great Prayer Festival in Lhasa as usual, teaching in the mornings to the vast crowds and leading the chanting sessions in the afternoons. During one of his sermons around the New Year (1542), he commented,

Lama Tsongkhapa put a great deal of thought into two essential questions: in general how to benefit the six worlds of sentient beings and uplift the Buddhadharma; and in particular how to bring spiritual benefits to the peoples of the Land of Snow. His answer was to create the Great Prayer Festival, wherein a spiritual gathering of tens of thousands of monks and lay people celebrate in the presence of the two Jowo images. This is a source of great spiritual energy for the world, and we must

continue it in accordance with the tradition----It is an extraordinary way to bring ourselves into a special destiny.

In this way he once more gave parting advice to his disciples and prepared their minds to accept the fact that his life was drawing to a close.

The next day a messenger arrived carrying a letter from Queen Sangyey Paldzomma, requesting him to come to the palace at Kyormolung. His attendants requested him to postpone the trip, as he seemed somewhat exhausted from the many New Year ceremonies and the activities of the Great Prayer Festival.

He refused to hear of it. “I have no illness,” he replied. “There is no other patron of the Buddhadharma equal to Queen Sangyey Paldzom. The meeting with her is very important. I would like to go immediately, as I do not know if I will have the strength to do so later.”

What he did not say was that he planned for his future reincarnation to take birth in the Tolung area, of which Kyormolung was a principal hub, and he wished to perform various rituals there to create an auspicious atmosphere and also to clear any possible obstacles.

He arrived on the twenty-sixth and for much of his visit spent his time engaged in the performance of tantric rituals. On the last day of the month he led a large gutor (exorcism) ritual, and at the end of the ceremony commented to the king and queen, “Soon I must leave this old body. But do not be sad, for we will meet again before long.”

In all, he remained in the Kyormolung area between nine and ten days. This signified that his reincarnation would be reborn in the area within nine or ten months after his death.

As the group passed through the Tolung Valley, they came near an old stupa called Kyerwa. Here the master’s horse stumbled and hurt its leg, and they had to pause for some time while a fresh horse was summoned. He told his attendant Sunrabpa, “Take note of this.”

The traditional account concludes by saying, “Thus the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, manifest as an ordinary human being in the robes of a Buddhist monk, paved the way for his future life and left clear signs that would help in discovering his reincarnation.”

Gendun Gyatso arrived safely back at Drepung and took up residence in the Ganden Podrang. Although he was not suffering from any specific illness, he looked rather thin and weak. Sunrabpa called doctors to examine him, but the master shrugged off the issue. “What need is there of a doctor or of medicines?” he laughed. “I have no illness.” On another occasion when his disciples seemed concerned about him, he called to them and said, “All phenomena composed of aggregates are impermanent. Perhaps you disciples are not aware of this truth, and need a lesson in it.”

The State Oracle was also called to do a reading of the situation. The master

received him well, and the two spent much time together; but again he insisted that he had no physical problems. The oracle merely recommended to the disciples that they pray to the master to remain with them.

One day Sunrabpa seemed distraught by the master's weakened condition. The master laughed at him and said, "Tell me, which is best: to take care of an old lama like me, or to take care of a young reincarnation?" He spoke like this every day to his disciples; thus teaching them and preparing their minds for his passing. Some days he would seem old and tired; on others he would seem young and brimming with energy.

On the eighteenth day of the second month, he summoned his chief disciples and asked them to prepare an altar for prayer and meditation. He said to them, "Today I had a vision. Jowo Atisha and his disciples, Lama Tsongkhapa and disciples, and countless buddhas and bodhisattvas appeared in the sky. They then dissolved into my three places (crown chakra, throat chakra, and heart chakra). Many youthful male and female tantric deities appeared and requested me to go with them. Please do not be sad when I go. I will care for you in future lives."

The disciples begged him a hundred times not to pass away. He laughed and said to them, "I can extend my life by a few days or even weeks but not beyond that time." In this way, he played with their minds, using his own death as a means to impress upon them the nature of impermanence.

He continued like this every day throughout the second month of 154²> receiving his disciples in his room and teaching them in informal ways. One day he offered a tea ceremony in the main temple. At the end of it he said to his disciples, "This old body of mine has just about reached the limits of being of benefit to the world. Do not be sad when I pass away. I will watch over you in many future lives." He then sang them numerous tantric songs as a means of leaving them with spiritual advice. One of them went,

Listen to a song by a happy man!

Soon this illusory illness

That has created such a drama in my life

Shall fade away of itself;

No regrets. Together we accomplished much, and Only a few small efforts remain to be made.

There will be no need to fuss over my corpse.

The best funeral rite you can perform for me Is through listening, contemplation and meditation To fulfill the essence of what I have taught.

On the third day of the third month he again called his chief disciples to him. “It would be auspicious for us to meditate together,” he said to them. They all sat in communal meditation. This continued without break for the next four days. The master never slept during this time. Sunrabpa became concerned that perhaps Gendun Gyatso was overextending himself and requested him to take a rest. “Why should I sleep?” the master exclaimed. “Instead of sleep I absorb my mind in mahamudra, the ultimate nature of things. I have no need for meditation as such any more. I have no sleep, no dreams, no illnesses. I am free from such conventions.”

At the end of the fourth day the sky became filled with rainbows, and a rainfall of flowers fell from the heavens. The master looked up from his meditations and said,

In general, separation is the final result of coming together. In particular, the buddhas of the three times, as well as Jowo Atisha and Lama Tsongkhapa, continue to work for the world in countless mysterious ways.

This old body of mine has completed its work for those to be trained by me in this life. Therefore I will now abandon it. But I will not abandon you. Soon a young reincarnation will come to take my place and continue my work.

Until then, rely upon your spiritual practice, and on meditation upon the tantric deities. Regard them as my regents. Do not be halfhearted in your spiritual efforts. When you need to rest, rest your mind in meditation.

Having spoken in this way he then sat in the half-vajra posture, with his right foot slightly extended, his two hands in his lap in the meditation posture, and his eyes in the meditation gaze. It was the sixth day of the third month. At dusk that evening he began the tantric meditation known as the vajra recitation, slowly withdrawing the subtle energies from his body and directing them to the heart. This continued throughout the night.

At dawn of the following day he completed the energy absorptions and brought his breath and heartbeat to a state of stillness. He then dissolved his sense of form into the clear light of dharmadhatu. The traditional account states, “Thus he absorbed into the dharmakaya, and from there arose on that other plane in the sambhogakaya form as the tantric Buddha Heruka Chakrasamvara, sending out millions of nirmanakaya emanations in order to benefit the world while himself abiding in the enlightenment state of great

union characterized by the wisdom born together with bliss ____ And thus he made evident to all his disciples his attainment of the state of complete and perfect enlightenment.”

He was cremated shortly after that. When the cremation pyre was opened it revealed numerous relic pills and other auspicious signs. In particular, the heart had not been consumed by the flames. Instead, it had crystallized into the shape of a buddha in the form of the tantric deity Heruka Chakrasamvara.

His reliquary was constructed at Kyormolung. Made from silver and gold and studded with countless precious gems, it was formed in the shape of a Victory Stupa and stood thirteen tou in height.

The Biography states, “Thus our guru Jey Tamchey Khyenpa, who in actual fact had accomplished his enlightenment long ago, here played out a drama of life, enlightenment and death for us.”

It is said that by the end of Gendun Gyatso’s life, there was not a single person of consequence in Central Asia—either monk or householder, chieftain or simple nomad—who had not connected with him either directly by means of receiving teachings or initiations from him, or indirectly through studying with some of his close disciples.

The residence that he constructed in Drepung Monastery—the Ganden Podrang

—has survived intact until the present day, although many of the sacred images in it were destroyed during the 1960s by the Chinese Communists and their “Cultural Revolution.” Unfortunately his greatest creation, Chokhor Gyal Monastery near the Oracle Lake, was utterly destroyed down to its foundations during the Cultural Revolution. The vast collection of priceless artworks in it that were created directly under his personal supervision were all either destroyed or stolen.

Emptiness, Meditation, Action, and Attainment

Gyalwa Gendun Gyatso wrote a verse work on the theme known in Tibetan as ta-cho-gom, or “view, activity and meditation.” The text reveals his direct and quintessential approach to spiritual issues. “View” refers to the reality of emptiness of all things, the great void nature that is the highest essence; “activity” refers to the manner in which we experience the world; and “meditation” refers to the yoga that integrates spiritual methods and ideas with our ordinary life.

The colophon to the text states that Gendun Gyatso penned it while living in meditation retreat in the Olkha Mountains. As no date is mentioned in regard to it, and as he made pilgrimage to these sacred hills almost annually throughout his adult life, there is no way to establish a time line. However, it does reveal considerable maturity, so we can presume that it was written during his later years.

To the feet of my holy teacher constantly I bow down;

And I bow to the feet of the great master Lama Tsongkhapa,

A thought of whom destroys the terrors of samsara

And in a single moment bestows all needs, ultimate and mundane.

The view which understands things as they really are, the deepest mode of being,
Is a meditative experience divorced from mental dullness and agitation.

In action it perfectly unites wisdom with method And it spontaneously produces
the fruit of buddhahood’s three perfect bodies.

As for the object of the view,

It is not made artificial by conditions; in essence it is unchanging.

By nature it is pure, it is beyond concepts of good and evil.

It is all-pervading, the ultimate nature of everything And is the quintessence of
the essence; And, understanding it, one passes beyond the bounds of

entanglement.

This world we see is a painting

Born from the brush of discursive thought,

And within or upon it nothing truly existent can be found.

All things in samsara and nirvana are but mental labels and projections.

Knowing this one knows reality; seeing this one sees most true.

Understand clearly the natures of both

The limitless diversity and the one-tasteness of things,

And make this understanding firm as the very King of Mountains.

This is the key that opens the door of a hundred samadhis.

Meditative focus which abides firmly and without motion,

And insight which reasons precisely to the underlying nature of all things:

By combining these, the seeds of the two Obscurations are forever abandoned.

He who does just that is known as a great meditator.

In essence, from the very beginning

No difference can be found between samsara and nirvana;

Yet good and evil actions invariably produce according results.

The Great Way in action is the practice of the six perfections On the basis of this understanding.

The inseparability of emptiness and the manifest Is the basis of the view;

The path to be practiced is the twofold collections of goodness and wisdom;

The result is the spontaneous birth of buddhahood's two kayas. These are the view, meditation, action and attainment Most pleasing to the Enlightened Ones.

Meditation on the Two Bodhiminds

This selection from the Second Dalai Lama's many writings is an essay he wrote on the meditative lineage brought to Tibet from Indonesia by Atisha, and popularized by the Kadampa School under the name lojong, or "mind training." This tradition speaks of the path to enlightenment as comprising two principal applications: the cultivation of the aspiration to buddhahood based on universal love and compassion; and, secondly, the cultivation of the wisdom of emptiness. It calls these two jangsem nam nyi, or "the two enlightenment minds." I follow the lead of the late Mongolian master Geshey Wangyal in translating the Tibetan term jangchub kyi sem as "bodhimind.

The colophon to the essay simply states, "Written by the Buddhist teacher Gyalwa Gendun Gyatso at the request of the female practitioner Kunga Wangmo." This was one of the Second's many female disciples.

Homage to the lotus feet of Atisha

Who is inseparably one with incomparable Tsongkhapa.

Herein I set forth a simple string of words Briefly explaining how to meditate Upon the two types of bodhimind— Conventional and ultimate—

The essence of their teachings.

How to Meditate upon the Conventional Bodhimind

Meditation upon the conventional bodhimind—the aspiration to attain buddhahood oneself as the best means to benefit all sentient beings— begins with meditation upon love and compassion. This forms the basis of the meditation known as "giving and taking," the principal technique used [in the Atisha/Tsongkhapa tradition] for arousing the conventional bodhimind.

Sit upon your meditation seat in a comfortable posture and visualize your mother of this life sitting before you. Contemplate how she carried you in her womb for almost ten months, and how during this time she experienced much suffering

and inconvenience for you. At your actual birth her pain was as intense as that of being crushed to death, yet she did not mind undergoing all this misery for you, no matter how great it was. And, when you finally emerged from her womb, looking like a naked and helpless worm covered in blood and mucus, she took you lovingly in her arms and placed you to her soft flesh to give you warmth; gave you milk from her own breast, prepared food for you, cleaned the mucus from your nose and the excrement from your body, looked with a smiling countenance upon you and at night sacrificed her own comfort and sleep for you. Throughout your childhood she would rather become ill herself than permit you to become ill, and would even rather die than permit harm to come to you. As you grew up, the things that she treasured too dearly to use herself or to give to others she gave to you: the best of her food she gave to you, as well as clothing, both warm and soft. She was willing to do anything for you, even at public disgrace to herself. Ignoring her own happiness in this life and the causes of her happiness for future lives [i.e., good karma], she thought only of how to provide for your comfort, happiness and well-being. But her kindness did not end even there. That you have met with the spiritual guides and now have the opportunity to study and practice the holy Dharma—and thus to accomplish peace and happiness for this life and beyond—are purely a result of her kindness.

Meditate in this way until you appreciate her more than anything else, until your heart opens to her with love, and the mere thought of her brings joy to your mind.

Then contemplate how this mother of yours has the burden of the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death placed upon her body and mind, and that when she dies she must wander helplessly into the hereafter, perhaps even to the lower realms of existence [hell, hungry ghost or animal worlds].

If you meditate in this way long enough and with sufficient concentration you will spontaneously give birth to a sense of compassion toward her as great as that felt by parents who witness their only child being tortured in a pit of fire.

You should then think, “If I do not accept responsibility to produce the beneficial and to eradicate the harmful for my own mother, who will accept it? If I do not do something, who will?”

But exactly what harms her? Suffering and negativity. Moreover, suffering is the

immediate cause of harming her, whereas negativity is the indirect cause. Think: “Therefore it is these from which I should separate her.”

Contemplate thus; and as you breathe in, visualize that together with your breath you are inhaling all her present sufferings and unsatisfactory conditions as well as the negative karma and distorted mental conditions [attachment, aversion, etc.] that are the causes of all her future suffering. These peel away from her body and mind and come to your heart in the form of a black cloud drawn in by your breath. Generate conviction that she is thereby set free from suffering and its causes.

Similarly, exactly what benefits her? Happiness and goodness [i.e., positive karma]. Moreover, happiness immediately benefits her whereas goodness indirectly does so. Think: “Therefore, it is these that I should give to her.”

Meditate thus, and as you breathe out, visualize that together with your breath you are exhaling a white cloud of happiness and goodness/ This enters into her heart and satiates her with a wondrous mass of happiness, virtue and goodness, and causes her to progress toward buddhahood.

Then, just as was done above by using your mother as the object of meditation, consider how all friends and relatives, having been your mother again and again in previous lives, have shown you the same kindness as has your present mother. In a previous life, they, as your mother of that life, have shown you all the kindness of a mother. In that respect they are every bit as deserving of your love and appreciation as is the mother of this life. Contemplate over and over how they were kind mothers, until the mere sight of any of them fills your heart with joy and appreciation.

Then consider how, enmeshed in suffering, they are barren of true happiness. Continue meditating in this way until compassion, unable to bear their pitiable state, arises.

When both love and compassion have been generated, engage the meditation technique called “giving and taking” as previously explained.

When this has been accomplished, visualize before you three people: a person whom you dislike, a friend, and a stranger [i.e., someone toward whom you have no emotion]. Although their memories may be clouded by the continued experiences of death, the intermediate state [between death and rebirth] and

rebirth, in actual fact each of them has been your mother in countless previous lives. On those occasions each of them has shown you the same kindnesses as has your mother of this life, benefiting you in limitless ways and protecting you against whatever threatened your well-being. Generate love and compassion for them as before, and then use them as the object of meditation in “giving and taking.”

Next meditate upon how all beings of the six realms have repeatedly been your mother in lifetime upon lifetime. Engender love and compassion toward them, and engage the practice of “giving and taking.” Through inhalation take away all their sufferings—the heat of the hot hells; the cold of the cold hells; the starvation of the hungry ghosts; the merciless brutality and so forth of the animal world; the sufferings of birth, sickness and old age, etc., of mankind; the violence of the antigods; the misery of death and migration of the lower gods; and the subtle, allembicing suffering of the higher gods. Then through exhalation, meditate on giving them all that could make them happy: well-cooled breezes to the hot hells; warmth to the cold; food to the hungry ghosts; *etc.*

Finally, visualize any enemies or people who have harmed you. Contemplate how, obscured by ignorance and by the effects of repeated birth, death and transmigration, they do not recognize that they have many times been your mother, and you theirs; but, overpowered by karmic forces and by mental obscurations, they are blindly impelled to cause you harm in this life. However, if your kind mother of this life were suddenly to go crazy, verbally abuse you, and attack you physically, only if you were completely mindless would you react with anything but compassion. In the same way, the only correct response to those who harm or abuse you in this life is compassion.

Meditate like this until love and compassion arise, and then meditate upon “giving and taking”—taking the immediate and indirect causes of their anger, distortion and unhappiness, and giving them the causes of peace and joy.

In brief, with the exception of the buddhas and one’s personal gurus one should meditate upon “giving and taking” with all beings, even tenth-level bodhisattvas, shravaka arhats and pratyekabuddhas, who have the faults of subtle stains of distorted and limited perception still to be abandoned. There is no purpose, however, in visualizing “giving and taking” with the buddhas, for they, having exhausted all their faults, have no shortcomings to be removed or qualities to be attained. As for one’s personal teachers, it is improper to use the meditation of

“giving and taking” with them as the object because it is incorrect for a disciple to admit a fault in his/her teachers. Even if one of one’s teachers seems actually to have faults, the disciple should not visualize removing them. To the buddhas and one’s teachers one can only make offerings of one’s goodness and joy.

At this point in the meditation you should ask yourself, “However, do I really have the ability completely to fulfill the needs of all living beings?”

Answer: Not only does an ordinary being not have this ability, even a bodhisattva of the tenth level does not.

Question: Then who does?

Answer: Only a fully and perfectly enlightened being: a buddha.

Contemplate this deeply, until you gain an unfeigned experience of the aspiration to attain the state of complete buddhahood as the supreme method of benefiting all living beings.

How to Meditate upon the Ultimate Bodhimind

Sometimes the thought of “I” suddenly arises with great force. If, at these moments, we look closely at how it appears, we will be able to understand that although from the beginning this manifest “I” seems to be inherently existent within the collection of body and mind, in fact it does not exist at all in the manner in which it seems to exist because it is a mere mental imputation.

The situation is like that of a rock or tree seen protruding from the peak of a hill on the horizon. From a distance it may be mistaken for a human being, yet the existence of a human in that rock or tree is only an illusion. On deeper investigation, no human being can be found in any of the individual pieces of the protruding entity, nor in its collection of parts, nor in any other aspect of it. Nothing in the protrusion can be said to be a valid basis for the name “human being.”

Likewise, the solid “I” which seems to exist somewhere within the body and mind is merely an imputation. The body and mind are no more represented by the sense of “I” than is the protruding rock represented by the word “human.”

This “I” cannot be located anywhere within any individual piece of the body and

mind, nor is it found within the body and mind as a collection, nor is there a place outside of these that could be considered to be a substantial basis of the object referred to by the name “I.”

Meditate in this way until it becomes apparent that the “I” does not exist in the manner it would seem.

Similarly, all phenomena within cyclic existence and beyond are merely imputations of “this” and “that” name, mentally projected upon their basis of ascription. Other than this mode of existence they have no established being whatsoever.

Meditate prolongedly upon this concept of emptiness. Then in the post-meditation periods maintain an awareness of how oneself, samsara and nirvana are like an illusion and a dream. Although they appear to the mind, they are empty of inherent existence.

Because of this non-inherent nature of things, it is possible for creative and destructive activities to produce their according karmic results of happiness and sorrow. They who gain this understanding become sages abiding in knowledge of the inseparable nature, the common ground, of emptiness and interdependent origination.

This then is an easily understood explanation Of the glorious practices of higher being That plant the imprint of the two Buddhakayas.

I urge you to practice it,

The pure essence of the Great Way.

Song of the Tantric Path

To close this chapter, I am including a brief verse work by the Second Dalai Lama that he wrote on tantric practice.

Although all Dalai Lamas have followed and taught a union of the sutra and tantra teachings of the Buddha, the Second, Fifth and Seventh wrote most extensively on the tantric way. The Second’s commentaries to the Six Yogas of Naropa and also the Six Yogas of Niguma, two tantric systems popular with all

sects of Tibetan Buddhism, are famed for their directness and clarity, and have retained their popularity over the centuries. He also wrote extensively on lesser known tantric systems, such as the lineages of the Zhichey and Zhicho traditions.

In the following text he summarizes the essence of tantric application. A commentary to it could run into hundreds of pages and still not exhaust all its implications.

The guru is the source of all tantric power;

The practitioner who sees him as a Buddha Holds all realizations in the palm of his hand.

So devote yourself with full intensity To the guru in both thought and deed.

When the mind is not first well trained In the three levels of the exoteric path,
Then any claim to the profound tantric yogas Is an empty boast, and there is every danger
That one will fall from the way.

The door entering into the peerless Vajrayana Is nothing other than the four tantric initiations.

Hence it is important to receive these fully And thus plant the seeds of the four Buddhakayas.

One must learn to relinquish the habit of grasping At the mundane way in which things are perceived,
And to place all that appears within the vision Of the world as mandala and its beings tantric forms.

Such are the trainings of the generation stage yogas,

That purify and refine the bases to be cleansed.

Next one stimulates the points of the vajra body And directs the energies flowing in the side channels
Into dhuti, mystic channel at the center, Thus gaining sight of the clear light of mind
And giving rise to wisdom born together with bliss.

Cherish meditation on these completion stage yogas.

The actual body of the final path to liberation Is cultivation of the perfect view of emptiness;
The gate entering into illumination's Great Way Is the bodhimind.

the enlightenment aspiration; And the highest method for accomplishing
buddhahood Is meditation on the two profound tantric stages.

Hold as inseparable these three aspects of practice.

This poem summarizing the key points of tantra Is here composed by the monk
Gendun Gyatso For his disciple Chomdzey Sengey Gyatso While residing at
Drepung, a great center of Dharma knowledge.



Sonam Gyatso, the Third Dalai Lama. Photo from Neg. No. 336307, 70.2-87-2.
Gourtesy of the Department of Library Services, American Museum of
Natural History, New York.

The Third Dalai Lama: From Ocean to Oceanic

When the Second Dalai Lama had become old, he saw that he had completed his works and that it was time to impress the reality of impermanence upon the minds of his disciples. As described in the previous chapter, on numerous occasions he hinted that his passing was near. Finally in the third month of the Water Tiger Year (1542) he collected together his earthly presence and dissolved into the sphere of peace.

Shortly thereafter his disciples from Gyal, headed by the Second Dalai Lama's chief attendant, Sunrab Gyatso, sent a request to Tashi Delek Monastery of the Yarlung Valley. This monastery had a famous yogi who channeled the Dharma Protector Four-Armed Mahakala, a deity upon whom both the First and Second Dalai Lamas had relied. The disciples commissioned a seance and asked, "The Omniscient Master has passed away. Will he once more emanate in order to benefit Dharma and living beings? If so, where and when will his rebirth take place?"

In response the yogi wrote,

Over countless aeons of the past,

By the power of the vast two accumulations

Avalokiteshvara placed countless beings on the path of liberation:

I pay homage to him, the embodiment of compassion.

Because the First and Second Dalai Lamas had been regarded as incarnations of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, the disciples took these words to indicate that a reincarnation would soon occur.¹

According to legend, after the Second Dalai Lama passed away, he transmigrated into the presence of Maitreya Buddha, Tsongkhapa and Guru Padma Sambhava to discuss his future reincarnations and activities in the world. The Second Dalai Lama almost did not take birth again,

because he was deeply saddened by the conflict and turmoil that had plagued Central Asia. Buddhism had nearly disappeared from India, the land of the

Buddha's birth, and Islamic armies had destroyed the monasteries, the libraries and great universities that had nurtured the Indian teachers. Tibet was harassed on the north by the warlike Mongolians and on the east by the expansionist Chinese. Internally Tibet's petty kings vied with one another for power, and many of the monks took advantage of the rivalries in order to bring maximum benefit to their own monasteries and sects. The Second Dalai Lama was disheartened by the situation.

At this point, Padma Sambhava appeared to him and requested that he reincarnate. Padma Sambhava prophesied that if the Dalai Lama would accept the responsibility of continuing his lineage, then after a hundred years he would be given spiritual and secular authority over the land. Consequently at that time he would have the capacity to put an end to the sectarian and provincial skirmishes that were creating so many difficulties in Tibet. Padma Sambhava's efforts at persuasion were successful, and the Dalai Lama accepted.²

Exactly one hundred years later—the year was 1642—this prophecy was fulfilled when the Fifth Dalai Lama was appointed both spiritual and temporal leader of a newly unified Tibetan nation.

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As we saw in the previous chapter, the Second Dalai Lama had frequently visited the Tolung Valley in order to teach and make retreat. Many sites in this valley had been made sacred by the ancient Kadampa masters, including Lama Drom Tonpa himself. In addition, the queen of the Neudong family, which had risen to prominence over the past generations and had its base there, was an important disciple and patron of his. The Neudong king during this era is generally referred to in Tibetan literature as Gongma, or "The Emperor," because most of the petty kings of central, southern and southwestern Tibet showed allegiance to him. Shortly before the Second Dalai Lama passed away he had visited the Neudong family in order to give final teachings to the people of the Tolung Valley. On his way back to Gyal he had received an invitation to teach in Khangsar Gong; at the time he had excused himself for health reasons, but he had promised to return at a later date when his strength had increased.

Less than a year after the Second's death, a child was born in Khangsar Gong who showed all the signs of being a high incarnation. The child, it is

WHO SHOWED ALL THE SIGNS OF BEING A HIGH INCARNATION. THE CHILD, IT IS

said, emerged from the womb while still in his protective water sac, like a white crystal jewel glorious in its brilliance. The sac opened like a white lotus at sunrise to reveal a tiny body as untarnished and clear as crystal, and adorned with countless marks and signs of perfection. In the West, such an infant would be described as being “born with a caul,” a traditional indication that the child would have unusual psychic capacities. This was the child who would eventually be recognized and enthroned as the Third Dalai Lama.

The family into which The Third Dalai Lama took rebirth was, like the Second Dalai Lama’s family, one that held ancient spiritual lineages. Its ancestry also traced back to the time of King Trisong Deutsen (who, as we saw in an earlier chapter, was a previous incarnation of Lama Drom Tonpa, and thus of the Dalai Lamas). This king had brought the Indian master Padma Sambhava to Tibet in the mid-eighth century, commissioned the construction of Samyey Monastery, and sponsored a major effort at translating Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan.

Under Trisong Deutsen’s patronage a committee of 108 master translators was developed, and Tibet made major advances in its knowledge of the Buddhist arts and sciences. The principal translator on this committee was a yogi by the name of Ma Rinchen Chok. Every generation of descendants of this illustrious lotsawa, or translator, had produced several great scholars and accomplished yogis.

The Third Dalai Lama’s father was part of this unique legacy, and claimed descent from Ma Rinchen Chok. In accordance with family tradition, he was well educated in the external worldly sciences, and was highly accomplished in the inner arts of meditation and tantric practice.

The Third Dalai Lama’s mother was a daughter of the great Nyingmapa master Wangchuk Rinpochey Kunzang. She too was highly trained in meditation, and also well learned in the Buddhist scriptures.

During her pregnancy the mother experienced numerous dreams indicating that the child in her womb was a special being, and was advised to take great care of herself so as not to harm him. The family had previously given birth to several children, but all of them had died unexpectedly. Therefore, when the boy was born they gave him the auspicious name Ranu Sicho Palzangpo, or “Glorious

Child at the Breast Who Overcomes Worldly Dangers.”

The family was in the habit of commissioning monks from the local monastery to come to their house on a monthly basis, as well as on other special occasions, in order to perform tantric rituals for protection, health, prosperity and happiness. When the child first saw them he recognized all the various ritual substances and called them by name. This indicated that in his previous lives he had been familiar with tantric ritual.

When the boy was two years old a great lama visited the area. The boy's father, along with many of his fellow villagers, went for an audience, taking the child with them. When the group arrived inside the lama's room the father asked the boy, "Will you prostrate and make the traditional scarf offering to the lama, or should I do so on your behalf?"

The boy replied, "I would like to do so." However, he offered the scarf without doing the prostrations. To test the boy, the lama attempted to give a hand blessing to him, but the boy stepped back and looked straight at him.

The lama said, "Then you should give me a hand blessing instead," and he leaned his head forward. The child came toward him and touched his head with his tiny hands. The lama looked deeply into the boy's eyes and commented that indeed he must be the reincarnation of a great master.

The child seemed to constantly fall into visionary states. On many occasions he spoke of various buddhas and bodhisattvas appearing to him and of the words that they spoke to him. Everyone suspected that he must be a reincarnate lama.

The father therefore took him to the nearby Kyormolung Monastery, where there lived a famous lama who could channel the female buddha Arya Tara and receive clear prophecies from her.

The lama entered meditation and requested Tara for a prophecy. At dawn the next day he experienced a dream vision in which a white person appeared to him and spoke the following verses,

In the vast sphere of space A jewel ablaze with 1000 lights Illuminates the Land of Snows.

I call to him: Emanate and fulfill aspirations.

Homage to Avalokiteshvara, treasury of compassion Who possesses every glory,

His body a victory banner ablaze with lights,

Who looks with eyes of compassion on the living beings,

Cherishing them as a parent cherishes its only child.

The dream vision concluded with the words, “This is Gendun Drakpa Gyaltzen Palzangpo.” As we will see later, this is the name that was prophesied for the Third Dalai Lama. Moreover, the reference in the verse to Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, was taken as being an indication that the child could be the reincarnation of the Second Dalai Lama.

Because of these and other such encounters with the mystics and sages of the area, rumors of the boy began to spread in all directions.

At that time Sunrab Gyatso, the chief attendant and manager of the Second Dalai Lama, was in Gyal Monastery, where he was overseeing the creation of a silver statue of the master and also supervising the completion of the golden peak on the great shrine. This monk had become a ward of the Second Dalai Lama when he was but eight years old, and been with him from that time until the master’s passing several decades later.

When Sunrab Gyatso reached adulthood he became the Second’s chief assistant and manager, accompanying the master wherever he went, attending his every teaching and initiation, and managing every aspect of his life, from the financing of enormous building projects such as those at Chokhor Gyal to matters of health and daily concerns. The great success that the Second Dalai Lama achieved in his work was to a large extent owed to the genius of Sunrab Gyatso. After the Second Dalai Lama passed away, all of his responsibilities fell on the shoulders of Sunrab Gyatso, including the completion of Gyal Monastery, and the eventual identification, enthronement and training of the reincarnation.

Every great lama needs a great manager. Many great lamas fail to succeed in the ordinary world due to having a poor manager. As we will see in the next chapter, the fact that the Fourth Dalai Lama had a poor attendant led to a catastrophe that escalated to national proportions, and eventually even produced a civil war.

The Second's affection and appreciation for Sunrabpa is reflected in three different spiritual poems that he wrote to him on various occasions. In one of these, written at Sunrabpa's request on the occasion of the latter entering into a retreat, the attendant is described as follows:

Precious Sunrab Gyatso, you of profound devotion:

By the force of aspiration and a strong karmic link

You have been with me since your very childhood,

Devoting yourself to me in every possible way;

And for me it has been a joy to care for you.

The role of managing for a lama is not easy,

And most who try to do so go quickly astray.

Some, through day-to-day familiarity,

Come to project negatively into his ways;

Others take advantage of their position And behave badly toward fellow trainees;

While still others lack true respect And fall prey to apathy and ineptitude.

In this way they turn the Field of Merit into

Just another way of collecting negative karma

And thus destroy the basis of their own inner peace.

But you, Sunrab Gyatso, have none of these faults And always maintain pure perception and ways.

Your spiritual conviction lies not in mere words;

Your attitude is beyond all selfish thoughts.

You never disregard my spiritual advice

You never disregard my spiritual advice,

And you make every effort not to disturb my mind.

You have never given me cause for worry Concerning your integrity, your self-discipline Or your commitment to the spiritual path;

Nor do you discriminate against others,

Regardless of their wealth, power or status.

Thus although perhaps not a great scholar

If you continue to practice as you have in the past,

You will certainly fulfill your spiritual aims.

This excerpt reveals the profound spiritual bond that existed between the Second Dalai Lama and his chief attendant. Therefore, even though Sunrabpa was not the Second Dalai Lama's chief disciple—this position fell to Panchen Sonam Drakpa of Drepung Loseling Monastery—he was his main man, the one upon whom the responsibility for seeing to the completion of the Second's works fell, and also the one who now held the power to choose and enthrone the young reincarnation.'

Sunrab Gyatso became very excited when he heard that a child had been born in Khangsar Gong who showed signs of being a high incarnation. He recollected that on their last journey to Tolung, when the master was very old, they had been invited to visit and teach in Khangsar Gong. At the time the master declined, saying, "I cannot come this time because I'm not feeling well. However, I am very happy to see everyone in the area, and have a firm wish to come again in the future before long." He had given a clear acceptance to visit in this way. Also at that time his horse had stumbled and he had had to change mounts. This also now seemed to be a strong sign, for the changing of horses perhaps symbolized his destiny to change bodies here.

Sunrabpa made preparations to leave Gyal for Tolung on the eighth day of the eighth month of the Fire Dragon Year. However, early that morning, as he and his retinue were about to depart, the Nechung Oracle fell into a spontaneous trance and said, "O friend Sunrabpa. Don't rush. You do not have to light a

candle in order for the sun to rise. Relax for awhile until all the auspicious conditions are in place. Then go and perform the tests on the child. At that time I will accompany you and will bear witness to the tests. If at that time my white scarf is first presented, that would be auspicious indeed, and all will go well. I will secretly offer that scarf without manifesting it (physically). Outwardly, my friend, you can make the offering.” Having said this, the oracle presented a white kata scarf. Consequently the group decided not to go at that time, but to wait for a sign.

Sunrabpa asked everyone to keep secret the words of the Nechung Oracle and their interest in the child. Nonetheless before long everyone seemed to know that the Second Dalai Lama’s rebirth had occurred in Tolung. Sunrabpa knew that rumors of these events would eventually reach the family, and therefore he sent a letter to them asking for permission to come and see the child.

The father wrote back, “These days, Drungney Rinpochey (i.e., Precious Attendant), everyone is coming to see and examine this son of ours. Why then should you not also come? I certainly extend an invitation to you.”

At that time the child overheard the parents discussing the matter. He jumped up joyfully and said, “There is only one Precious Attendant, and no other. Please invite him to come here immediately.” In this way the child revealed his familiarity with Sunrab Gyatso.

When the group arrived at the house in Khangsar Gong, the late Second Dalai Lama’s chief aide was riding the master’s horse. The child saw them from a distance and said to the nanny, “That must be my Gyatso (i.e., Sunrab Gyatso), because my horse Yugyal has arrived. Yugyal, my dear horse, come, come.” To the mother he excitedly said, “That horse down there, ridden by the monk’s secretary, is mine.”

The monks then offered the kata scarves. The boy danced and sang, “My Gyatso has come. My Gyatso has come. My Lotro has also come.” In this way he greeted many of them by their personal names, even though he had not seen any of them before in this lifetime.

When the monks offered their katas, many auspicious signs occurred. The sky became clear, and there was an auspicious rain of flowers. A rainbow appeared over the house, and a sweet fragrance pervaded the air.

The group had brought the small statue of White Tara that the previous Dalai Lama had always kept with him on his travels. They put this in the row of offerings. On seeing it, the boy immediately took it in his tiny hands, touched it to his crown, throat and heart, and said, “This is my Tara.” He then blessed all those present by touching it to their heads.

A crystal mala was wrapped around Sunrab Gyatso’s wrist. On seeing it the boy called out, “That is my rosary. It needs to be re-strung.” The lama gave it to the boy, who immediately claimed it as his own and put it around his neck.

The boy then asked, “Where are my Dharma robes and pandita’s hat?”

In these and other ways he eliminated all doubts that indeed he was the authentic reincarnation. The sorrow of the passing of the Second was replaced by the joy of having discovered the reincarnation.

When the time came for the group to leave, the child stated, “When you go, I will come with you.” Having said this he stood up and prepared to leave with them. However, Sunrab Gyatso requested him to stay at home with his parents for awhile, and promised that soon they would send an envoy from Drepung, bringing his robes and lama hat, and invite him to Drepung.

When the child was in his fourth year—it was the Fire Horse Year, or 1546 a formal delegation headed by Sunrabpa arrived from Drepung in order to take him to the Ganden Podrang, the residence that had been built there by the Second Dalai Lama.

The Second’s chief disciple, Panchen Sonam Drakpa, had become abbot of Drepung the same year that the master had taken birth, and it was decided that the child’s official enthronement as the Second’s reincarnation should be conducted by him, as should his preliminary monastic ordination. At the ordination ceremony Panchen Sonam Drakpa gave him the name Sonam Gyatso Palzangpo Tenpai Nyima Chokley Namgyal, or “Glorious Meritorious Ocean, Sun of the Doctrine Victorious in All Directions.” He became known by the first two of these, or Sonam Gyatso.

This name generated considerable controversy. The First Dalai Lama had been known as Gendun Drubpa, and the Second as Gendun Gyatso. It was popularly believed that the Third Dalai Lama should also have Gendun as a first name. This had been prophesied in The Book of the Kadampa Masters. Moreover, as

we saw earlier in this chapter, the lama who channeled Tara at Kyormolung Monastery had also prophesied the name Gendun Drakpa Gyaltsen Palzangpo for him.

Everyone thought that Panchen Sonam Drakpa would name him Gendun Drakpa. Until today the Panchen is criticized for breaking this tradition, and for giving him the second, rather than the first name of the Second Dalai Lama.

However, Panchen Sonam Drakpa had his reasons for doing this. Gyatso means “ocean,” and this name would have great significance for the future of the lineage. As we will see, all Dalai Lamas since then have had Gyatso as their second name, and Gendun was never again used.

The boy did not remain in Drepung for long at that time, however, for his chief attendant, Sunrab Gyatso, wished to take him to the monastery at Chokhor Gyal near the Oracle Lake, and along the way to show him to the many disciples of the Second Dalai Lama. Therefore, not long after his ordination they left for Gyal.

First they stopped at Tsey Gungtang, and then at Samyey. In Samyey the boy said, “Previously Lopon Rinpoche [Padma Sambhava] and I were very beneficial to the Tibetan people.” Thus he indicated that he was the reincarnation of King Trisong Deutsen, who had brought Padma Sambhava to Tibet in the eighth century and established Samyey Monastery.

In Tsetang the group visited all the monasteries and hermitages that had been frequented by the Second Dalai Lama. The child recognized many people from his previous life and called to them by their names. In the Dradruk Temple there he named the deities in all the painted cloth tangkas, although in this lifetime he had never learned them.

It took over a month of travel to arrive at Gyal, for people lined the road all along the way in order to behold the young reincarnation and receive his blessings. A number of miracles occurred in the vicinity on the day of his arrival. Here the young lama made offerings to the sacred images housed in the monastery, especially to that of the protective deity Palden Lhamo, and offered vast prayers for the well-being of the Doctrine and the living beings. In addition, although only three years old, he gave a brief discourse on the holy Dharma to the assembly of monks.

It was mid-summer at the time of their visit, and Gyal Monastery was surrounded by the flowers which gave it its name—Metoktang, or “The Flowery Pasture.” The Third Dalai Lama would return here many times during his life in order to practice meditation. The beauty of the region is captured in a poem that he wrote during one such retreat, entitled A Song to Soothe the Ear:

O yogis who strive with diligence In the meaningful wisdom yogas,

To you I offer this melodious song Meant to soothe the ear that is irritated By the mundane humdrum of worldly life.

This site at which we have gathered,

Blessed by the presence of accomplished masters of the past And beautified by a lake of lotus flowers Is a dwelling place of the mystical Dakas and dakinis of the three abodes.

Like clouds forming in the winter sky,

The angels and angelettes assemble here,

Where snow lies like a blanket on mountains That stretch upward and touch the heavens.

As I sit in witness to this beauty I cannot help but give voice to song.

This is a place for the planting Of the seeds of spiritual joy,

A place where many times we have Shared tea together and Discussed the holy Dharma.

What pleasure greater than this is there?

In future, too, you should come here, Teachers and disciples alike,

To speak of the sublime Dharma And write on the meaning of life.

Would not this be an excellent response To this short song of mine?

It is to this end that I dedicate This verse composition That arose with spontaneous joy From the very depths of my heart.

The group spent the autumn in the Gyal area and then returned to Drepung, where the child began his rigorous training. First he received numerous tantric initiations from Panchen Sonam Drakpa in order to place the seeds of blessings of the lineage masters on his mindstream. Then from Lingto Choje Lekdon he received guidance in most of the fundamental treatises by the Indian masters, including the principal works of Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, Vasubandhu, Asanga and Dharmakirti, as well as the principal writings of Lama Tsongkhapa. In addition, from Shartsey Lekdon he received many important tantric lineages. Every day he dedicated much of his time to meditation, and periodically he engaged in intensive retreat.

After he had completed his basic training, the boy began to divide his time between Drepung and Gyal. As he traveled back and forth between these two places he would visit the monasteries and temples along the way to give blessings and teachings, and to offer prayers.

In the Water Mouse Year (1552), he took up residence with Panchen Sonam Drakpa and was placed on the Golden Throne of Drepung, being entrusted with the responsibility to maintain both the material and spiritual well-being of the monastery. He was only nine years of age at the time. The following year he followed in the footsteps of the Second Dalai Lama by presiding over the Great Prayer Festival at Lhasa, in the morning delivering the traditional discourse on Aryasura's Jataka Tales and in the afternoon leading the prayer session.

After this he again engaged in intensive study and training under Panchen Sonam Drakpa. During this time he received initiation into the Guhyasamaja Mandala, known as "The King of Tantric Systems," together with the full discourse. From other great lamas in the area he received the three lineages of Heruka Chakrasamvara Tantra, as well as the Hevajra Tantra, the Rva Lotsawa lineage of Vajrabhairava; the Kalachakra initiations, the Siddharani lineages of Amitayus; and many more tantric lineages.

In brief, during the early years of his life he absorbed all the principal traditions of both the Sutrayana and Vajrayana Vehicles that existed in Tibet at the time, integrating them into his experience by means of study, contemplation and meditation.

One of his main gurus was Tolungpa Palden Dorje. This illustrious master was

one of the three chief disciples of the great Gyalwa Wensapa, each of whom had allegedly attained full enlightenment in one lifetime and manifested the esoteric rainbow body as a sign of their accomplishment. Under Tolungpa, Sonam Gyatso received all the ear-whispered traditions coming from Lama Tsongkhapa.

When the young lama was in his twenty-second year, he took the full ordination of a monk. In this way he honored and upheld the monastic tradition as established by Buddha. During the ordination ritual he made extensive offerings to the Sangha as a sign of his respect for the monkhood.

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After his ordination, a letter of invitation came from Tashi Lhunpo, the monastery established by his predecessor the First Dalai Lama, asking him to come to Tsang to teach. Subsequently he left for Tsang. Travel was slow, however, for thousands of devotees lined the road as he went, hoping to see him and receive his blessings. Tens of thousands of people had gathered at Tashi Lhunpo to welcome him. Here he sat upon the First Dalai Lama's throne and gave numerous discourses on the holy Dharma.

While in Tsang he also visited Nartang, where the First Dalai Lama had taken monastic ordination and received his early education. Here he gave numerous discourses to the community, and also made offerings to the monks there, as a sign of his appreciation of Nartang's kindness to his predecessor.

Even though he was required to travel and teach almost without respite during this period of his life, in order to set an example of intensive practice for his disciples he constantly maintained an extensive daily meditational schedule. Every day he would wake up long before dawn so that he could begin each day with several hours of meditation. Similarly, at the completion of each day he would engage in lengthy meditation. Some say he never slept, and that when he lay down at night he engaged the tantric methods of dream yoga.

In the Iron Sheep Year (1571), an invitation arrived from Altan Khan, king of the Chakkar Mongols. This Khan was descended from the great Genghis Khan himself, separated by seventeen generations. He had heard of Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso and experienced profound feelings of faith for him. In turn, Sonam Gyatso himself felt that he possessed a karmic link with the Mongolians that would enable him to civilize them and cause them to abandon their

warlike ways. With this thought in mind, he sent the great Khan a promise to come at a later date. In the meantime he sent his disciple Lama Tsundru Zangpo as his personal representative to establish a legation at Tsokha.

The news of Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso's prospective visit to Mongolia caused considerable consternation among the Tibetans, who feared for his safety and well-being on a precarious journey of this nature. When he eventually left from Drepung, a large assembly of high monks, officials and devotees set out on the first step of the journey with him for auspicious purposes. Both the former and present Ganden Throne Holders (i.e., official heads of the Gelakpa School) were there, as well as the chief monks from Ganden, Sera and Drepung. Included in the group were a large number of renowned masters. In brief, there were representatives of all the great monasteries, as well as of all the secular leaders and chieftains, together with hundreds of ordinary people. In one voice they begged him not to go, and instead to change his mind and stay in Tibet. Yet he remained firm in his decision and the journey began.

First he went as far as Reteng, the Kadampa monastery that had been founded by one of his previous incarnations, Lama Drom Tonpa, in the mideleventh century. He sent back most of the group from there and continued on with a small retinue. As he left Reteng, King Depa Tashi Rabten grabbed hold of the stirrup of his horse and, tears streaming from his eyes, offered the following prayer:

Oh great Guru, glorious embodiment of Dharma,

May you live for long,

May the earth be filled With masters such as you.

However, by the time he had completed these words he was so overcome with sadness at Sonam Gyatso's departure that he began to choke with tears and was unable to complete the couplet, and could only hold the stirrup to his head in reverence as cries of anguish welled up from within him. Therefore Sonam Gyatso placed a gentle hand on his devoted disciple's head and finished the couplet for him, changing its context accordingly:

May there always be faithful and Devoted patrons of the Dharma such as you;

And may there be auspicious signs Of the Dharma flourishing for long.

Numerous miracles occurred on the road to Mongolia. For example, when the party arrived at the Yangtze River they found that its waters were violent and swollen, and that there was no way to cross it. Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso sat by its banks in silent meditation, and then began reciting mantras. He then cast an occult glance at it and made the magical hand gesture of wrath. Immediately its waters began to subside, and within a few moments the party was able to cross over with ease.

Eventually the group arrived at the banks of the Yellow River. Again, its waters were unusually high and violent. All the members of the party were dismayed, for it seemed that they would be unable to continue on their journey. Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso told them not to fear, and that they would be able to ford it the following day. That night they camped on the riverbank. Again he performed his meditations and mantras. When they awoke in the morning the mighty Yellow River had almost completely dried up, and was no bigger than a tiny stream. They crossed with ease and continued on their way.

After some time they arrived at Ahrik Karpatang, where a camp had been set up to receive them. Here the people showed tremendous faith in Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso and made elaborate offerings to him, including a thousand horses and ten thousand herd animals. A delegation of five hundred horsemen that had been sent by Altan Khan arrived to greet him. The delegation was led by Chojey Tsundru Zangpo, who Sonam Gyatso had earlier sent as his personal envoy to Altan Khan's court. This was to be their escort for the remainder of the journey. From here they proceeded with great regalia, banners fluttering in the wind and the sound of the high-pitched trumpets filling the air, their numbers steadily increasing as they went. Now the master was surrounded on every side by many thousands of horsemen from Mongolia, China and the borderlands of Tibet.

When they arrived in Altan Khan's court they were greeted by an enormous gathering of over ten thousand people. The Khan himself was dressed in a white robe, to symbolize his dedication to Dharma.

Actually, this was not Mongolia's first contact with Buddhism, nor Altan Khan's only connection. Some two centuries earlier the Mongols had been briefly introduced to Buddhism by Sakya Pandita and Sakya Pakpa. This was during the reign of Kublai Khan. Since then, however, Kublai's successor Timur Khan had objected to the pacifying influence of Buddhism, and from the time of his rule Mongolia had rejected Buddhism and reverted to the bloodthirsty ways of its old

shamanic religion.

Altan Khan was descended from the same Chakkar tribe to which Kublai had belonged, and he wished to bring his people back to the gentle ways of the Buddhadharma. It was his deepest prayer that Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso would be the man with the spiritual power to accomplish this feat. Indeed, it was by the concerted efforts of Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso and Altan Khan that Buddhism was reintroduced into Mongolia, and the era of bloodshed that had characterized this nation for so long was brought to an end.

In his first discourse, Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso pronounced the new law to all those present—Mongolians, Chinese and borderland Tibetan tribesmen alike. They must, he told them, learn to abandon evil and to follow in the ten ways of goodness prescribed by Buddha. Killing and stealing must be forsaken, and instead they must learn to respect the lives, property and rights of others.

In particular, he asked the Chakkar Mongols to leave behind their lust for blood. It had been the tradition in Mongolia that whenever a man died, many living beings would be sacrificed as an offering to the gods, the number of blood sacrifices depending on the status of the deceased in life. Often his wife [or wives], servants, horses and herds would be put to death as an offering. Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso ordered them to give up this horrific custom, and instead to make simple offerings of a portion of the deceased's possessions to religious causes, such as temples and monasteries, etc., as a source of merit, and to offer virtuous prayers and auspicious wishes instead of blood.

The practice of blood sacrifices, he ordered, must be totally given up. Were any family to make a human sacrifice, such as of a widow or servant, the punishment should be death to the offender. As a punishment for the making of an animal sacrifice, all the offender's possessions should be forfeited to the state. If anyone were to retaliate against these injunctions by harming the monkhood or destroying temples or monasteries, as a punishment his house and fields were to be seized by the state.

In general, the lama requested, everyone should strive in the ways of goodness. In particular, on the days of the new, half and full moon the people should take the upasika precepts of self-purification and devote themselves to spiritual practice. Especially, the Mongolians should cease making raids of pillage into China, Tibet and other areas of Mongolia, instead dedicating their energies to the

ways of peaceful co-existence. In brief, they should attempt to emulate the gentle ways of central Tibet, and to integrate the Buddha's teachings into their way of life.

These and many other such laws were set forth by Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso and were instituted by Altan Khan.

After giving the Chakkar Mongols their new code of life, Sonam Gyatso imparted to them a transmission of the Avalokiteshvara meditation, together with the six-syllable mantra of compassion (om mani padme hum). His entire discourse was rendered into Mongolian and Chinese by appointed translators, so that all those present could know exactly what was expected of them. During his discourse the sky became filled with rainbows, and flowers fell from the heavens.

One legacy of Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso's trip to Mongolia was the birth of the name "Dalai Lama." This is a literal Mongolian translation of the "Gyatso portion of the ordination name that had been given to him as a child by Panchen Sonam Drakpa. The Khan referred to him as Vajradhara Dalai Lama, meaning "Diamond Scepter Holder Ocean Lama." He in turn referred to the Khan as Chogyal Lha Tsangpa, or "King of Truth Equal to the God Brahma. These names sound rather flowery and excessive in English translation, but are not so in the Asian tradition, where colorful names and titles are commonplace.

From this time on—the year was 1578 — the Mongolians always spoke of Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso, as well as his later incarnations, as "the Dalai Lama. Because the Mongols were closely associated with the Tartars of Manchuria, and Manchuria later invaded and occupied China, the name Dalai Lama became well known throughout the entire Far East. The British picked it up from the Chinese, and the rest of the world adopted it from the British. W. W.

Rockhill, the American ambassador to China in the late part of the nineteenth century, popularized it with the Americans through his many writings. As mentioned earlier, it was never used by the Tibetans, who always preferred their own traditional epithets, such as Kundun and Jey Tamchey Khyenpa.

The following year, the Khan sponsored the building of Jangchen Chokhor Ling

Monastery for Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso. This monastery was intended to serve as the Dalai Lama's new seat as the head of Buddhism in Mongolia, and as a training institute that would produce monks who could teach and serve the Mongolian people.

After establishing the foundations of Buddhism in Mongolia, Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso left for a teaching tour through the Amdo and Kham areas of eastern Tibet. Here he not only taught widely, but also established monasteries, temples and hermitages as he went.

In 1580 he established a great monastery at Litang in Kham. This would become historically important, and several generations later the Seventh Dalai Lama would be reborn in that area and receive his basic training in it.

During this period Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso expressed an interest to visit the birthplace of Lama Tsongkhapa in Amdo. It is said that after Tsongkhapa's mother gave birth to him in 1357 his father had, in accordance with tradition, taken the afterbirth and buried it. Shortly thereafter a sandalwood tree had magically sprung forth from this burial site. Famed as the "Tree of Great Merits," it had come to be one of the holiest pilgrimage objects in eastern Tibet. The leaves and bark of the tree were said to bear impressions of mystic syllables, and the flowers were said to give off a most transporting fragrance. The Third Dalai Lama had heard about this tree since he was a child and was most eager to see it for himself. He now built a protective fence around it in order to guard it from harm, and beside it he established Kumbum Jampa Ling Monastery. This institution was destined to soon become the largest and most influential monastery in eastern Tibet.

The sacred tree at the site of the Kumbum Monastery became a major attraction to early Western travelers to eastern Tibet and has been described by many. For example, the Christian Lazarist priest Abbe M. Hue, who traveled from Peking to Lhasa during 1845-46, visited Kumbum in order to prove that the legends about the tree were mere folklore. In his book *Travels In Tartary, Thibet and China During the Years 1844-5-6*, he states:

Yes, this tree does exist, and we had heard of it too often during our journey not to feel somewhat eager to visit it. At the foot of the mountain on which the Lamasery stands, and not far from the principal Buddhist temple, is a great square enclosure, formed by brick walls. Upon entering this we were able to

examine at leisure the marvelous tree, some of the branches of which had already manifested themselves above the wall. Our eyes were first directed with earnest curiosity to the leaves, and we were filled with an absolute consternation of astonishment at finding that, in point of fact, there were upon each of the leaves well-formed Thibetan characters, all of a green color, some darker, some lighter than the leaf itself. Our first impression was a suspicion of fraud on the part of the lamas; but after a minute examination of every detail, we could not discover the least deception. The characters all appeared to us portions of the leaf itself, equally with its veins and nerves. The position was not the same in all; in one leaf they would be at the top of the leaf; in another, in the middle; in a third, at the base, or at the side; the younger leaves represented the characters only in a partial state of formation. The bark of the tree and its branches, which resemble that of the plane tree, are also covered with these characters. When you remove a piece of old bark, the young bark under it exhibits the indistinct outlines of characters in a germinating state, and, what is very singular, these new characters are not infrequently different from those which they replace. We examined everything with the closest attention, in order to detect some case of trickery, but we could discern nothing of the sort, and the perspiration absolutely trickled down our faces under the influence of the sensations which this most amazing spectacle created. More profound intellects than ours may, perhaps, be able to supply a satisfactory explanation of the mysteries of this singular tree; but as to us, we altogether give it up. Our readers may smile at our ignorance; but we care not, so that the sincerity and truth of our statement be not suspected.... The lamas informed us that... nowhere else exists another such tree; that many attempts have been made in various Lamaseries of Tartary and Thibet to propagate it by seedlings and cuttings, but that all these attempts have been fruitless.

The presence of this sacred tree no doubt contributed to the success that Kumbum Monastery achieved. Conversely, the presence of Kumbum at the site undoubtedly contributed to the tree's survival as well as to the sacred aura that surrounded it.

Kumbum Monastery served many of the Dalai Lamas over the centuries to follow. For example, the Seventh Dalai Lama lived there for half a decade in his early life. In more recent times the present Dalai Lama, who was born relatively nearby, was placed in it immediately after his discovery and before being brought to Lhasa.

After the Third Dalai Lama had spent several years traveling, teaching and building monasteries in Mongolia and eastern Tibet, his disciples in central and southern Tibet began to become restless with his absence. The monastic communities of Sera, Drepung and Ganden were particularly upset, for he was one of their most important teachers and initiation masters. Consequently a river of requests began to pour in to him asking him to return to Lhasa. From his own side, he several times expressed a wish to return to central Tibet and see his old disciples again.

However, his teaching activities continued unabated. Wherever he went he was greeted by enormous gatherings of peoples from Turkestan, China and Mongolia, as well as from the various areas of eastern Tibet. His discourses were simultaneously translated into numerous languages whenever he taught.

After circuiting through Kham and Amdo, Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso went to Kharachin, Mongolia, where he was housed in the Shangto Palace. This stately building had once been the residence of the great Mongolian kings of Hor. Here he gave the initiation of the Hevajra Mandala to the king and his ministers. To the general public he gave an introductory discourse on the nature of spiritual life. At the conclusion of the teaching the king offered him a two-pillared house built of silver. The lama refused the offering, but in order to establish an auspicious karmic connection with the king, he agreed to stay in the house for a few days.

During the first month of the Earth Mouse Year (1588), he led an extensive prayer festival. At the end of the month, a letter arrived from the Ming emperor of China requesting him to visit the Chinese capital. The invitation was written in gold and delivered in a palanquin carried by eight men. In order to establish an auspicious karmic connection, he sent an affirmative reply and promised to come at a later date.

However, soon thereafter he showed signs of being slightly ill. Knowing that his life was drawing to an end and that he had placed on the spiritual path and had matured all those with whom he held the karmic link, he wrote a long letter of advice to his many disciples whom he had not been able to see before his death.

Despite showing symptoms of illness, he continued to teach and to guide others. In the following month his illness grew more severe. Realizing that the time of

his passing was drawing near, he called his disciples to him, gave them his final advice, and then wrote out this last teaching for them.

In the garden of Chu Lha

I, who am called Glorious Laughing One,

Skilled in imparting the nectars of method and wisdom,

Sit absorbed in the experience of great bliss.

Here in this land located to the south of the Great Ocean Is a garden inhabited by spirits of the air;

A place of power blessed by Sarasvati,

Where emptiness and joy are easily induced;

A place beautified by many auspicious signs,

Where the exquisite sounds of nature echo forth To fill the ear with delight.

Here the very atmosphere acts as a fence To hold the mind from the wandering habit And as a knife to cut off the tendency Of constantly grasping at duality.

This is a pilgrimage site inspiring joy,

An abode rich in qualities of renown Expanding like the waxing moon.

Kye! For the benefit of others I have pretended to travel and teach.

Although moving daily from place to place,

I have never grown weary;

For during night's long interval I have held to the path of awareness And rested in radiant truth Like the sun in the unobstructed sky.

Is not truth the most wondrous radiance!

For in the mandala-like mirror of joyous mind The reflected objects of blissful consciousness

CONSCIOUSNESS

Appear in the same way the luminous form
Of the moon in a clear sky Is
reflected in a clear pool of water.

These words are not false,

This reality no base fabrication.

0 divinities, stand in witness

To this central concept of the Three Jewels.

1 write this plainly

And call upon the powers of truth.

0 friends on the way,

Take this, my final teaching;

Write it on a smooth white cloth
And hang it for all to see.

This would give me deep pleasure;

And it would cause some of my friends
To turn their minds to practice.

The ocean-like experience of the sport
Of great bliss and awareness of
emptiness Is produced by the forceful rivers
Of application to the supreme Vajra
Vehicle.

To enter this wondrous path and receive its full benefits
One must rely
constantly upon A qualified teacher accomplished in the tantras.

We should make the prayer that in lifetime upon lifetime
We never become
separated from this most sublime of paths, Nor from the exalted Vajra Guru.

Homage to the Three Jewels of Refuge!

Kye! Here in the Land of Hor,

A vast kingdom blessed by abundance,

As a product of previous good deeds

1 have a strong karmic connection

With many faithful patrons and disciples,

And especially with the illustrious king.

By the force of the goodness

That we have previously accomplished together,

By the laws of dependent origination

Applied to what we are now doing,

And by the force of our prayers for the future,

May all gain the glory of a guru And accomplish the Great Way.

Today we have the excellent opportunity To practice the holy Dharma,

Source of higher being and liberation.

When we rely upon the precious teachings,

The mind gravitates naturally toward joy.

For the benefit of the world We should make this our primary goal,

Looking for inspiration and direction

To the practitioners of the central Buddhist lands.

In the present degenerate age

The living beings are low in merits

And have to face many negative circumstances.

We should offer the sincere prayer that The place where we live may become a source Of benefit and joy to the world For a long time into the future.

This is a most worthwhile objective To which we can dedicate our lives.

0 patrons and students of the holy path,

Life is short, so apply yourselves with diligence.

Live in accordance with the commitments Of refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha And maintain the vows and precepts of practice.

If one does this, then one will accomplish everything good And will arrive at spiritual perfection.

1 offer my prayers that you do this,

And that the radiant sun of the teachings of Buddha May clear away the clouds of ignorance And violent barbarism that darken The borderlines of our world,

That peace and prosperity may come to all.

Kyel In this magnificent, vast kingdom That is blessed by countless good qualities—

The land known as Kharachin—

The faithful patrons and disciples of Dharma

Should gather together each day

And focus their minds on objects of joy,

Meditating upon the spiritual path.

Avoid the ways of lower beings And your gurus will live for long.

By the strength of turning the mind to goodness,

Awareness of truth increases

And grasping at appearances subsides.

Then by the laws of causality

The objects of the body, speech and mind

Automatically give rise to happiness.

At that time this human life Truly becomes an instrument of joy.

To the fulfillment of this objective May the thirteen mystical dakinis Who are of one nature with the guru Send forth their inspiring blessings.

Having written out this final teaching, Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso entered into intensive meditative practice. Finally at dawn of the twenty-sixth day of the month, he ceased breathing. His mind withdrew into the clear light dharma-awareness and his body became of a brilliant luster, emanating forth rainbows and manifesting the signs indicating that indeed he was a fully accomplished master. Such was his death that even in his passing he provided his disciples with supreme inspiration.

His disciples wanted to mummify his body, and indeed every Dalai Lama after him (with the possible exception of the Sixth) was mummified. However, conditions were not appropriate. Consequently his body was left in state for almost seven months, and was then cremated. It is said that during the cremation ceremony numerous miracles occurred in the vicinity, and many of those who were present experienced visions of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Although the Third Dalai Lama did not write as much as did his two predecessors because of the large amount of time he spent traveling and teaching, several dozen titles flowed from his pen. Most of these were tantric in nature. He also wrote a large number of spiritual poems, as well as several important meditation treatises.

Many surmise that his first guru, Panchen Sonam Drakpa, had broken the prophecy concerning the name that he should be given, and instead of retaining “Gendun” from the Second Dalai Lama’s name (Gendun Gyatso), retained

“Gyatso,” naming him Sonam Gyatso, because during the Third’s life he would become larger than life, larger than Tibet, and larger than Tibetan Buddhism. Just as the waters of the ocean flow throughout the world, he would become a Dalai Lama, or “Oceanic Teacher,” and carry the message of peace and enlightenment throughout the ten directions. In a sense this proved true, for his act of taming the violent Mongolians brought benefits to people as far west as Europe and as far east as Korea.

This legacy of peacemaker was to be continued by all future Dalai Lamas. When the present Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 he commented that he was accepting it not for what he himself had accomplished in this lifetime, but for the contribution to peace and harmony that all the Dalai Lamas of the past had made. A reporter asked him, “Do you think you are the reincarnation of all those Dalai Lamas?”

He replied laughingly, “Whether or not I am is not so important. I have always striven to live up to the legacy that they established in this respect. And I don’t feel like I have done too bad a job. Anyway, I am the first one to win the Nobel Peace Prize.”

A Song of Spiritual Advice

For the first selection of the Third Dalai Lama's many writings I have chosen a brief verse work that he composed for some disciples one year at Gyal Monastery. Succinct in meaning, it conveys the essence of his spiritual message.

Take the instinct of conviction

And focus it on the Three Jewels of Refuge:

The Buddhas, teachers of the path to enlightenment; Dharma, the path to be accomplished;

And the Sangha, the friends on the Way.

Consider the infinite living beings And meditate upon love for them.

Recollect the endless ways in which they suffer And engender compassion and tolerance toward them.

Take the wandering and restless mind And place it in the sphere of awareness Of the emptiness nature of all that exists, Knowledge of which sets the mind free.

This is the Dharma to be practiced,

The truth to be understood,

And the path to be traversed.

These are the methods that bring enlightenment,

A technique that we of this present age Have the sublimely good fortune To contact and accomplish.

The Practice of the Bodhisattva Path

For the second selection I have chosen a section of the Third Dalai Lama's famous text *The Essence of Refined Gold*. This is a work in the genre known in Tibetan as *Jangchub Lam Rim*, or "Stages on the Path to Enlightenment." Lama Tsongkhapa, the guru of the First Dalai Lama, wrote three works in this genre. The longest of these is over a thousand pages in length. The shortest, which is composed in verse, is just a few pages long. The Third Dalai Lama's *Essence of Refined Gold* is a commentary to the verse work. As readers may remember, the present Dalai Lama mentions this work in his foreword.

In the previous chapter I included an essay by the Second Dalai Lama entitled *Meditation on the Two Bodhiminds*. These two are the conventional bodhimind, which is characterized by love and compassion, and the ultimate bodhimind, which is the wisdom of emptiness. The conventional bodhimind as presented by the Second Dalai Lama in that essay is also known as “the aspirational bodhimind,” for it is the aspiration to enlightenment as the natural fulfillment of universal love and compassion. That is to say, when the mind of universal love and compassion becomes intensified, it is directed to the aspiration to highest enlightenment, for the more enlightened we are the more beneficial to others we become. Conversely, the less enlightened we are, the more harmful and confusing we are to others.

This aspirational aspect of the conventional bodhimind is to be complemented with the activated bodhimind, also called the practical bodhimind. This is the universally loving impetus to enlightenment channeled into the practice of the six perfections and four ways of benefiting trainees.

These six perfections—generosity, discipline, patience, joyous application, meditative concentration and wisdom—are the essence of the bodhisattva lifestyle, and the heart of the Great Way practiced by all buddhas past, present and future. With each of them the Third Dalai Lama quotes a verse by Lama Tsongkhapa and elucidates its meanings.

Lama Tsongkhapa wrote,

The development of the bodhimind,

The altruistic aspiration to enlightenment,

Is the central pillar of Mahayana practice,

The foundation of the bodhisattva activities,

An elixir producing the gold of merit and wisdom, A mine holding the infinite varieties of goodness.

Knowing this, courageous followers of the buddhas Hold it tightly at the center of their hearts.

The meditations for arousing the aspirational bodhimind are important. But are

they sufficient? The answer is no. One should also take up the commitment of the actual bodhimind and train in the vast activities of a bodhisattva: the six perfections, which one practices in order to ripen one's own continuum; and the four ways of benefiting trainees, which one practices in order to ripen the minds of others.

(1) How to Train in the Perfection of Generosity

Basing oneself on the motivation born from the thought that one must oneself attain buddhahood in order to be of maximum benefit to all sentient beings, one should abide in the practice of giving good counsel to those destitute of spiritual knowledge; giving protection to those oppressed by the wrath of kings, soldiers, etc.; to those frightened by sentient forces such as ghosts, demons, wild animals, snakes and so forth; and to those frightened by inanimate forces like burning, crushing, drowning, suffocation, etc.; and giving food, drink, healing medicines and so forth to those in need.

In brief, with a free heart dedicate your body, possessions, and the meritorious energy of the past, present and future for your attainment of enlightenment for the good of the world.

Lama Tsongkhapa wrote,

The perfection of generosity is the magic gem to fulfill the hopes of the world,
The best tool with which to cut the knot of miserliness constricting the heart,
The bodhisattva practice giving birth to the unfailing powers of the spirit, And
the foundation of beneficial reputation.

Knowing this, the wise rely upon the practice Of dedicating their body,
possessions and merits.

(2) How to Train in the Perfection of Ethical Discipline

One must attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. In order to do so, one should maintain an attitude having the qualities of mindfulness, mental alertness, conscientiousness, humility, modesty and so forth, and should practice the three types of ethical discipline. These are the discipline of virtuous conduct, with which, even under the fear of death, one would not indulge in evil; the discipline of tethering oneself away from mistaken modes of being, which is the

basis of furthering one's practice of the six perfections; and, founded upon the above two, the discipline of working ethically to improve the world.

To quote Lama Tsongkhapa,

Ethical discipline is water to clean away the stains of evil, Moonlight to cool the heat of delusion,

Radiance towering like a mountain in the midst of sentient beings, The force peacefully to unite humanity.

Knowing this, spiritual practitioners guard it As they would their very eyes.

(3) How to Train in the Perfection of Patience

Anger is never a worthy response to the harms that others cause to you, for the harm that they do is just the karmic product of a harm that you previously inflicted upon them. Also, as they have no mental control and are helplessly overpowered by anger, it would be inappropriate to become angry with and hurt them. As well, because one moment of anger destroys the three roots of the three bases of merit accumulated over many aeons, on no account permit thoughts of anger to arise. This is the practice of patience unmoved by harm.

When one experiences pain and suffering because of harms done to oneself by another, negative attitudes like pride, arrogance and so forth are dispelled and the mind which renounces samsara is strengthened. Remember that the experience of this unwanted harm has arisen from previous negative actions done by you yourself, and that if you respond with negative, unskillful actions based upon anger, you are creating the conditions for further violent karmic patterns. Remember also that no effect arises if it has no cause, and that if you meet this harm with patience, not only will the previous negative deed that has given birth to this difficulty be depleted, but also you will create a positive karmic pattern by the skillful practice of patience. By avoiding the further non-virtue of anger, you avoid future suffering for yourself. Furthermore, by meditating upon patience when others harm you, your practice of the other perfections develops and matures. For these and many other valid reasons, the gurus have advised us to face harm with meditation upon patience. Remember their teachings and practice the patience which views suffering delivered by others as great kindness.

Finally, recognizing that the power of the Three Jewels and of the buddhas and bodhisattvas is inconceivable, appreciate the value of the activities of a bodhisattva, and also appreciate meditation upon egolessness. Practice the patience which is certain of Dharma and wishes to train as do the bodhisattvas.

To quote Lama Tsongkhapa,

Patience is the best ornament of real heroes,

A supreme asceticism to overcome delusions,

The garuda bird to destroy the snake of anger,

Armor to protect one from arrows of criticism.

Knowing this, in every way familiarize yourself With the armor of supreme patience.

(4) How to Train in the Perfection of Joyous Application

If one has not meditated upon disillusionment with samsara as well as with desire for low-quality happiness such as that gained by lassitude, indulgence, sleep and so forth, one will continue to live in apathy. Abandon all causes of apathy and devote yourself solely to noble works of body, speech and mind. In order to alleviate the suffering of even one living being, practice the three types of joyous perseverance: armor-like perseverance, which does not abandon difficult practices for any reason whatsoever; based on that, perseverance which rests in wholesome Dharma and furthers one's practice of the six perfections; and by means of the above two, the perseverance which works for the good of others by striving for the goal of enlightenment of all sentient beings.

To quote Lama Tsongkhapa,

If one wears the armor of unrelenting perseverance, Qualities of learning and insight will increase like the waxing moon, All activities will become meaningful,

And all works begun will reach completion.

Knowing this, bodhisattvas apply themselves To vast perseverance, dispeller of apathy

apathy.

(5) How to Train in the Perfection of Meditative Concentration

With the bodhimind as motivation, divorce consciousness from agitation and torpor, and train in both worldly and transcendental concentrations. Or, from the viewpoint of direction, train in the various mental quiescence concentrations, penetrative insight concentrations, and the concentrations combining meditative quiescence and insight. Or, from the point of view of function, train in the concentrations which abide in physical and mental joy realized and experienced in this very life, the concentrations which actualize higher qualities such as clairvoyance, magical powers, etc., and the concentrations which accomplish the needs of the world.

To quote Lama Tsongkhapa,

Meditative concentration is the king to rule the mind.

When stabilized, it sits like a mountain,

When directed, it can enter all virtuous meditations.

It leads to every physical and mental joy
Knowing this, great yogis always rely upon it,
The destroyer of the inner enemy, mental wandering.

(6) How to Train in the Perfection of Wisdom

Taking the bodhisattva aspiration as motivation, one should train in the following three types of wisdom: wisdom which sees the ultimate mode of existence, the point of suchness, or emptiness, shunyata, and thus pulls out the root of samsara; wisdom which understands conventional realities (such as the four noble truths); and, by means of the previous two wisdoms, the wisdom which accomplishes the needs of sentient beings.

To quote Lama Tsongkhapa,

Wisdom is the eye to see thatness,

The practice which pulls out samsara's root,

The treasure of excellences praised in all scriptures,
The supreme lamp to dispel

dark ignorance.

Knowing this, the wise, seeking freedom,

Dedicate every effort to generating it.

The Four Ways of Benefiting Trainees

Taking as motivation the thought that one must attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, (i) one practices supportive generosity toward one's entourage of trainees. Then, (ii) in order to inspire them, one shows them a smiling face and speaks to them gently. Thirdly (iii) one teaches them the Dharma—the six perfections and so forth—and encourages them to actually practice it. Finally, (iv) one lives and practices in accordance with the teachings one has given.

You should in every possible way develop these four profound methods of benefiting others.

Combining Samadhi and Wisdom

Moreover, because ego-grasping is the root of samsara, a single-pointed concentration which does not travel a path counteracting that grasping does not have the ability to sever samsara's root. Alternatively, wisdom able to cognize non-true existence but divorced from mental quiescence able to dwell unwaveringly and single-pointedly on objects of meditation, will never turn back mental distortion, no matter how much it searches. In order to attain liberation forever free of psychic distortion, one must mount the horse of mental quiescence meditation that does not waver when placed in the view able to fathom the depths of emptiness, the ultimate and unmistakable meaning of existence. Riding this horse and brandishing the sharp weapon of the four great methods of Madhyamaka reasoning free of the extremes of eternalism and nihilism, one should generate wisdom which understands the actual mode of existence, the force which destroys all grasping at extremes, and forever expand the clear mind able to perceive the ultimate.

To quote Lama Tsongkhapa,

But the power to cut samsara's root

Lies not in single-pointed concentration alone,

And wisdom divorced of the path of meditative calm Reverses not delusion,
though it may try.

Wisdom searching for ultimate truth should ride The horse of unwavering
samadhi And with the sharp weapon of centralized reasoning Should destroy
grasping at extremes.

With vast wisdom that searches thus,

Expand the mind understanding suchness.

As stated, merely accomplishing the concentration that abides with strong focus
when placed unwaveringly upon its object is not a sufficient attainment. A mind
placed in the posture which rests in one-pointed concentration, and which is
made to analyze with wisdom able both to distinguish the various levels of
reality and to discern the mode of suchness, gives birth to a concentration which
rests firmly and unwaveringly in the significance of emptiness, the way things
are. Seeing this, appreciate how wonderful is the effort made to accomplish
concentration combined with wisdom. Make a sublime wish toward this end
yourself, and thus plant its seed forever.

To quote Lama Tsongkhapa,

One-pointed meditation brings a samadhi fantastic beyond description; Yet do
not stop there; for that, combined with distinguishing awareness Able to discern
the modes of being,

Gives birth to a samadhi which rests firmly and unwaveringly upon the ultimate.

Understanding that, see as wondrous

The efforts made in samadhi joined to wisdom.

During meditation sessions, place the mind evenly in concentration and
penetrative vision, and focus single-pointedly upon emptiness, which is as free
of extremes as the sky is of tangible hindrances. Between sessions, watch how
things, though not inherently existent, manifest, like a magician's creations.

In this way one takes up the practices of wisdom and method combined — authentic meditation upon emptiness, grasped by great compassion and the bodhimind—and goes to the other side of the bodhisattva practices.

Understanding this path well-worthy of praise, train in ways not satisfied by method or wisdom alone, but which combine the two on a balanced basis. Such training is the spiritual legacy of beings of good fortune. Apply yourself to it.

To quote Lama Tsongkhapa,

Meditate single-pointedly upon space-like emptiness.

After meditation, see life as a magician's creation.

Through familiarity with these two practices,

Method and wisdom are perfectly united,

And one goes to the end of the bodhisattva ways. Understanding this, be not satisfied by a path Exaggerating either method or wisdom, But stay on the road of the fortunate.



Yonten Gyatso, the Fourth Dalai Lama. Courtesy of The Newark Museum,
Newark, New Jersey.

The Fourth Dalai Lama:

A Descendent of Genghis Khan

The Third Dalai Lama's years of teaching in Mongolia and the Mongol regions of northwestern China had been initiated under the sponsorship of Altan Khan, a chieftain who was directly descended from the great Genghis Khan and removed from him by seventeen generations.

However, this was not the first lifetime in which the lama and the Mongol had worked together to benefit Dharma and living beings, for their karmic connections held ancient links. During the Third Dalai Lama's stay in Mongolia he confided to Altan Khan that, many lifetimes earlier, he himself had been none other than Sakya Pakpa, the guru of Kublai Khan. Furthermore, Altan was in fact a reincarnation of Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis.¹

As we saw in an earlier chapter, Kublai Khan was the Mongolian ruler of the eastern branch of the Mongolian empire during the thirteenth century, a territory that included China, Manchuria, Tibet and Korea. He had adopted Tibetan Buddhism as the state religion of his realm, and established the patron/priest relationship with Tibet through Sakya Pakpa's auspices. He gave Tibet its freedom under the rule of his guru Sakya Pakpa, and thus established the model (of cho-yon, or patron/priest) that would later be adopted by the Fifth Dalai Lama with the Mongols, and the Seventh Dalai lama with the Manchus. Kublai Khan had also become well known to Europe, for he had patronized Marco Polo during the latter's sojourn in China, and as a result been given considerable ink in the Polo journals.

The Mongols were a pushy people, even in their spirituality. When Altan Khan had first invited the Third Dalai Lama to come and teach in Mongolia it was with the implication that, were he to refuse, the Khan would send his armies to Lhasa to bring him. Many years later, after the Khan had grown old and was about to die, he called the Third Dalai Lama to him and demanded that the lama use his powers to heal him and extend his lifespan, with the implied threat that if he failed he would be put to death. The Third Dalai Lama laughed at the Khan's impetuosity, and gave him a long discourse on impermanence and death. "As Buddha said, all compounded phenomena will one day disintegrate, and all that

is born must one day die. You are no exception to this law of nature.” However, he agreed to use his powers this one time to extend the Khan’s life, and did so by applying the life-enhancing methods of the tantric cycle of Amitayus, the Buddha of Long Life.²

On their final parting, when the Third Dalai Lama left on a teaching tour of eastern Tibet, the Khan requested that the lama give his blessings in order that the spiritual seeds they had planted together would grow into a rich and abundant harvest, and that the two of them would meet again in future lives.

Not long after the Third Dalai Lama passed away in 1588, the younger wife of one of Altan Khan’s grandsons—Prince Sechen Chokhor of the Blue Palace—became pregnant. Both she and her husband had been disciples of the Third Dalai Lama, and were strong spiritual practitioners.

On the night of her conception she experienced many unusual dreams. In one of these the Third Dalai Lama appeared to her. He was dressed in a long white robe, and gazed at her tenderly. She immediately offered prostrations to him. Later that same night she dreamed that a small white child holding a crystal rosary came to her and gave her a big hug. White, of course, is the color of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, of whom the Dalai Lamas are emanations. She also dreamed of a white man riding a white horse, and then again of the Third Dalai Lama dressed in white clothing. The Third Dalai Lama said to her, “I came here to request a place to stay.”

At the time the family was living in a tent. The next morning the tent was clothed in a huge rainbow. This was seen by everyone in the vicinity.

Some nights later she dreamed that she beheld a high mountain. The words “Mount Potala” resonated. Potala is the name of the mountain in South India that is associated with the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Her eyes were drawn to the top of the mountain, and there she beheld a radiant light. Inside the luminosity sat a small white child holding a crystal rosary. He looked at her, dissolved into radiance, and melted into her body. When she awoke she felt refreshed and joyful.

For the days following her conception the mother experienced complete inner peace and joy. She felt as though the world was filled with harmony and happiness, and that all was well in all directions. Her sense of fulfillment

was so great that she had no need for coarse food for a week.

Her pregnancy began to show within a month of the child's conception. People sitting near her could hear the mantric sounds of hrih and dhiih—the seed mantric sounds of compassion and wisdom respectively—coming from inside her womb. Many also heard the mantra om mani padme hum resonate from her womb, which is the mantra of the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

Then in the eighth month of her pregnancy she fell into a trance. A white deity appeared to her and said, “This is the reincarnation of the Jey Tamchey Khyenpa (i.e., the Dalai Lama). Put him on the throne and have him give audience to the people.” These and many other extraordinary occurrences manifested.

Finally the child was born. It was the first month of the Earth Ox Year (1589). He was extraordinarily large in physical stature, and seemed more like a three year old. Many auspicious sounds came from the skies, like music and thunder, and auspicious fragrances filled the air. The newborn child looked at his parents and called to them by name.³

The Third's chief attendant had been a monk by the name of Gushri Palden Gyatso, and the responsibility of forming a committee to conduct the search for the reincarnation fell on his shoulders.

Not long after the master's passing Gushri Palden Gyatso contacted the medium who channeled Pehar Gyalpo, and requested a seance with him. His question: Would the master take rebirth in the human world in order to continue his work, and would the committee be able to find him? The oracle responded to both questions with a positive reply. However, he added that the rebirth would take place in Mongolia.⁴

This was not good news to the Tibetans, for Mongolia was a long way away. In addition, enthroning a Mongolian child on the seat of the Dalai Lama presented a host of political problems. The committee therefore went to see the Tsangpa medium for a second opinion. To their chagrin, this oracle confirmed the prophecy that they had already received.

Rumors had, however, also begun to surface about a child who had been born near Lhasa to the Zhabdrung Chogyal Puntsok family. The birth had been accompanied by many signs indicating that the child was a high incarnation. The

committee decided to examine him before looking in Mongolia. Gushri Palden Gyatso personally went to the house with the committee.

Although this child did impress them, Gushri decided that he was not the reincarnation of his master. That child was later recognized as a reincarnation of a lama who had been especially close to the Third Dalai Lama.

The search therefore turned to Mongolia.

Meanwhile, in Mongolia, events surrounding the child that had been born to Altan Khan's grandson Sechen Chokhor continued to draw attention.

During the first three months of the child's life, his mother exhibited strong signs of emotional intensity. People took this to indicate that the child was the reincarnation of a high lama.

Then one day when the boy was only three months old he turned to his parents and said, "Today is a very auspicious day. Place a good throne in the temple room and make offerings to the body, speech and mind receptacles. Place clay mold statues and treasure vases in the four directions. Make a stupa at the place where I was born. Beside my bed, place images of the eight auspicious symbols and seven royal signs. Ask the monks to do some Dharma debates. Make offerings at the great site of the six Mongol clans, together with representatives from Tibet and China, and have the gathering offer prayers. Tongwa Donden has arrived here in accordance with his wishes."

Tongwa Donden, or "He Meaningful to Behold," is part of the name used for the Dalai Lama incarnations in the prophecies found in The Book of the Kadampa Masters, and also is used by the Pehar Oracle in his trances.

The parents were profoundly impressed, and they honored his wishes.

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During the child's seventh month he slept for three days without awakening. Although the parents tried to rouse him, he would only open his eyes long enough to tell them that all was well and to allow him to continue sleeping.

When he finally got out of bed his mother asked what happened. He replied, "On the first day I dreamed that there were two butterlamps in my hands. The flames

grew ever larger, until everything in the universe was illuminated by the radiance. On the second day I dreamed that the skies were filled with rainbows, with countless buddhas and bodhisattvas sitting on them. On the third night I dreamed I stood up from my throne and traveled to Tibet.”

When he was a year old his father sponsored a consecration rite in their shrine room. A statue of the Third Dalai Lama sat on the altar amidst many other sacred images. The child went up to it, looked at it with wide eyes, and exclaimed excitedly, “This is me!” Many people were present at the time, all of whom had been disciples of the Third Dalai Lama. They all heard his words and were overwhelmed with emotion. They pushed forward and requested him to bestow blessings on them. He did so in the three traditional means, just as had the Third Dalai Lama: with one hand, with two hands, and with a wand.

Word of these events spread throughout the Mongolian community and reached the ears of disciples of the Third Dalai Lama who were in contact with Gushri Palden Gyatso, the Tibetan monk in charge of the search for the Third’s reincarnation. At the time Gushri was in residence in the Ganden Podrang of Drepung Monastery. As readers will recall, this is the residence that had been built at Drepung by the Second Dalai Lama, and that had served as principal residence of the Third whenever he was in central Tibet.

At first Gushri just sent some assistants to examine the boy. This exploratory committee was profoundly impressed, and sent back glowing reports. Shortly thereafter Gushri himself made the long trip to Mongolia. With him he brought eleven different objects that had belonged to the Third Dalai Lama. These included the Third’s mantra rosary, his favorite bell and vajra set, and his personal ritual hand drum. These were shown to the child, together with a mixture of similar items, and he was asked to choose from among them. The child correctly chose all eleven objects that had belonged to his predecessor. Everyone was convinced that indeed he was the reincarnation of the Third.

News of the identification was sent back to Tibet. Shortly thereafter a large delegation of prestigious disciples of the Third Dalai Lama set out for

Mongolia to greet the child and to attend his official enthronement as the reincarnation. These included all the chief attendants of the Third, as well as representatives from Drepung, Sera and Ganden, the three great monasteries of the Lhasa area. The Third Dalai Lama had served as abbot of the

first two of these, and had frequently taught and made retreat at the third. The delegation also included the Neudong king, the king of Gongkar, King Gyaripa, and Zhabdrung Dungyu Rinpochey.

Although the child had not met any of these dozens of people before in this lifetime, when they arrived in his audience room in Mongolia he greeted each of them by name, as though long familiar with them.

Back in central Tibet the fact that the Dalai Lama had been born abroad caused considerable consternation. The Tibetans regarded him as one of their national treasures, and feared that he may remain in Mongolia rather than be brought to Drepung Monastery in Lhasa for his training. Therefore Desi Pakdru, who was the Pakmo Drupa chieftain and had been a close disciple of the late Third, wrote a long letter to the child, requesting him to quickly return to Tibet.

This journey was not to occur for a number of years, due partially to the length and intensity of the route, and partially to the demands that the trip would place on the health and well-being of an infant. In addition, it seems that the father, Prince Sechen Chokhor, was reluctant to see him leave.

Nonetheless the child's enthronement was confirmed by a congratulatory letter from the ex-officio Ganden Tripa, Gyal Khangtsey Paljor Gyatso, who at the time was regarded as the greatest living lama in the Gelukpa School. The letter read, "I am very old, and am not strong enough to endure the journey to Mongolia in order to bring the child back. At present, however, I am the head of all the lamas in central Tibet, so it is my duty to offer him a name." The name that the aged lama gave to the child at this time, Tamchey Khyenpa Yonten Gyatso Palzangpo (or Yonten Gyatso for short), remained with him throughout his life, even after his various levels of monastic ordination, each of which is accompanied by a name change.

Rinpochey Kunzangtsey, one of the great lamas of Tibet, was appointed the boy's tutor. He immediately began transmitting various branches of Buddhist knowledge to him. The two developed a close friendship.

This lama, however, took a radically different approach to the boy's education than was the norm with high tulkus in the Gelukpa tradition. He emphasized proficiency in tantric ceremony and Buddhist shamanic ritual, with very little attention being given to the Indian Buddhist classics. This was dramatically in

opposition to the education the boy would have received in the great monasteries of Lhasa, which stressed the Indian classics and paid almost no attention to the shamanic tradition. Writing on the issue, the Fifth Dalai Lama suggests that perhaps this aspect of the boy's training was due to the boy's father, Prince Sechen Chokhor. The prince was of the opinion that his son, being the reincarnation of his guru the Great Third, did not need a formal Buddhist education, for he already carried all Dharma knowledge from his previous lives on his mindstream.

As a consequence the Fourth's education rarely touched upon the mainstream classics. Instead, his tutor guided him through the world of Buddhist tantric ritual: the methods of invoking the buddhas and bodhisattvas, as well as the mandala deities and guardian angels, and of talking to the spirits of the mountains, waters, clouds and celestial bodies. In Buddhist tantric parlance, Yonten Gyatso was introduced to the esoteric world of techniques for invoking the four trinley, or enlightenment magical activity: pacification, augmentation, power and wrath. The old master decided that his ward would do far better in Mongolia, the civilization from which the very word 'shaman' is borrowed, to master the Buddhist shamanic arts.

He was very effective in his training regime. The Fourth Dalai Lama's proficiency with tantric ritual was to become so legendary that the word Tutob, meaning "Master Shaman," became prefixed to his name by many writers of the period. Consequently he appears in many documents of the era as "Tutob Yonten Gyatso."

To put into perspective what the Great Fifth said on the subject of the Fourth's early training, one should note that the Fifth was one of the most highly educated of all the Dalai Lama incarnations, and yet elsewhere he makes a similar remark about his own early education, commenting in his old age that his one regret in life was that the tutors he had had in his youth had not been more demanding of him.

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Even though the Tibetans wanted to bring the young Fourth Dalai Lama to Tibet while he was still in his infancy, the Mongolians were reluctant to see him leave the place of his birth. Time and again a departure date was set, only to be postponed.

In the end Yonten Gyatso did not set out on the long journey to Lhasa until the Earth Pig Year, or 1599. By that time he was already ten years old.

The journey itself took over three years, for he was requested to stop at all the major monasteries and spiritual centers along the way in order to give blessings. Large crowds awaited him at every town and village, so widespread had been the fame of his predecessor the Third. Many of the people had received teachings either personally from the Third Dalai Lama, or from one of his many direct disciples.

The route the Fourth followed ran south through western China, although the regions through which he passed were largely Tibetan Buddhist by spiritual persuasion. He seemed to recognize all the sites on the way, for these had been visited by his predecessor the Third.

Finally he crossed into Tibet at the famed White Stupa. This was the traditional demarcation of the border between Tibet and China, located on the route that was used for travel between Lhasa and Beijing by most government officials. Here a delegation of five hundred horsemen awaited him. This formal escort had been sent from Lhasa, and would accompany him for the remainder of his journey.

After his initial reception at the White Stupa the Fourth remarked, "My throne is here, so let's sit for awhile." This was a reference to a throne that had been erected for the public teachings of the Third Dalai Lama when he had visited many years earlier. This throne had been maintained intact, and the peoples of the region considered it to be one of the most sacred objects in the area. Pilgrims would always include it on their itinerary, and would touch their foreheads to the front of it as a blessing, offering a prayer to the late Third as they did so.

Having spoken these words, the boy lama stepped onto the sacred throne of his predecessor and sat down. He then proceeded to give a spontaneous teaching to the crowd. During this talk he spoke in detail on the visions and intent of his predecessor the Third, and also pronounced a number of prophecies concerning the future.

The announcement that the Third's reincarnation would be stopping at the White Stupa had spread far and wide, and thousands of people had gathered to receive

him. A large public teaching was arranged for them, to be simultaneously translated into the various languages and dialects used in the border regions. These included Amdonese, Khamkhey, Mongolian, Manchurian, Turkestani and Chinese.

It was in this manner that the young Fourth Dalai Lama, the first in the line of Tongwa Donden incarnations to take rebirth as a non-Tibetan, spent his first day in Tibet.

Finally on the seventh month of the Water Hare Year, or 1603, the group arrived at Reteng, the monastery that had been established by Lama Drom Tonpa in the mid-eleventh century. As we saw earlier, Lama Drom was the chief disciple of Lama Atisha, the Indian master who had inspired the creation of the Kadampa School. The First, Second and Third Dalai Lamas had all spent time in Reteng, sometimes to make retreat, and sometimes to teach.

The youthful Fourth now continued that tradition by sitting on Lama Drom's throne and delivering a sermon on The Book of the Kadampa Masters. The Second Dalai Lama had given a sermon on this text on the full moon ceremony of every new year during his adult life, and the Third continued the legacy. Every year during the sermon many auspicious signs would occur in the natural surroundings. These similarly manifested again now, at the occasion of the Fourth's reading that first year in central Tibet. Just as he was concluding his talk the skies released a gentle sprinkle of rain, and rainbows seemed to flow in every direction.

After a brief sojourn in Reteng Monastery the group proceeded to Lhasa. They did not, however, go directly to the Ganden Podrang, his traditional residence in Drepung. Instead they proceeded to the Jokhang, the most sacred temple in the city, the centerpiece of all the 108 temples erected by King Songtsen Gampo in the mid-seventh century. Here he was given a suite of rooms, and each day gave audiences to the peoples of Lhasa.

Yonten Gyatso had worn the robes of a monk from the days of his infancy, for he was a reincarnate lama. He had, however, only taken simple layman's vows, and had not entered into either of the two actual levels of monastic ordination. Until now he had kept his hair long and well-groomed, in accordance with the Mongolian princely tradition.

The elders of Lhasa, however, had already made plans for his entry into monastic life. Thus not long after he arrived at the Jokhang his long hair was shaved from his head, and he became a novice monk in the presence of the

Former Ganden Throne Holder Trizur Sangyey Rinchen, considered to be the greatest living lama in the Gelukpa Order at that time.

During his stay in the Jokhang, a decision was made that was to have profound effects on the course of Tibetan history. The elders conferred on the subject of the young lama's education, and on whom to appoint as his tutor. To everyone's surprise, Trizur Sangyey Rinchen nominated a young and relatively unknown monk from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery named Panchen Lobzang Chokyi Gyaltsen.

The Tibetan attendants and the boy's Mongolian entourage objected. "The student would be better than the teacher," they said, and, "A famous child like the Gyalwa Yonten Gyatso should have as his tutor a famous lama from one of the monasteries in the Lhasa area, and not a completely unknown monk from the First Dalai Lama's monastery in Shigatsey." Trizur Sangyey Rinchen, however, stood his ground, and in the end his spiritual authority prevailed. Consequently Panchen Chokyi Gyaltsen was appointed as his tutor and transmission master.

Readers familiar with Tibetan literature will recognize this lama's name, for he rose to become one of the most spiritually exalted figures in central Asian history. Now famous as the First Panchen Lama, he outlived his young ward and later also became tutor to the Fifth Dalai Lama, finally passing away at the ripe old age of ninety-one. By the time of his death in 1662, he had become second only to the Dalai Lama in spiritual prestige.

The Dalai/Panchen link would continue long into the future, and the two offices became known as Yab Sey Gonpo, meaning "Father/Son Protectors." The reincarnations of these two lamas would serve as guru/disciple to one another over the centuries to follow, with whomever of the two was the elder in a particular lifetime being appointed as the "spiritual father" of the other, giving both monastic ordination and tantric lineage transmissions to him. For this reason several Panchen incarnations appear in the accounts of the Dalai Lamas to follow. The Panchen is considered the emanation of the mystic buddha Amitabha, whereas the Dalai Lama is considered an emanation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. The epithet "Father/Son Protectors" conveys the sense that these are the two lamas who in both youth and old age are the spiritual

guardians of Tibet's destiny; they incarnate again and again so as to assist one another in fostering the well-being of Tibet's spiritual civilization, and thus of its people.

Since the mid-eighteenth century the Dalai and Panchen Lama offices have stood as number one and number two respectively in the Tibetan lamaist hierarchy. The Dalai Lama is at the top, with the Panchen immediately under him. Below the Panchen is the female incarnate Dorjey Pakmo, and below her the Sakya Trizin, or sitting head of the Sakya School. Below the Sakya Lama is a group of eight lamas, which includes the Karmapa (head of the Karma Kargyu School) and several of the Ling lamas.

During the period of the short-lived Dalai Lamas—from the Ninth to the Twelfth incarnations—the Panchen was the lama of the hour, filling the void left by the four Dalai Lamas who died in their youth.

It is interesting to note that there are two ways of numbering the Panchen Lama incarnations. The Lhasa chronicles refer to the Fourth Dalai Lama's new tutor, Panchen Lobzang Chokyi Gyaltzen, as being the First Panchen Lama. The Chinese government today, and also the monks at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, speak of him as being the Fourth Panchen Lama. Therefore the Panchen Lama who died in Tibet in 1989 is the Seventh Panchen in the Lhasa chronicles, but the Tenth in the archives of Tashi Lhunpo as well as in all literature officially published by the Chinese government or any of its agencies.

This incongruity occurred because Panchen Lobzang Chokyi Gyaltzen had been recognized as a reincarnate lama in his childhood, long before the Fourth Dalai Lama had even been born. Khedrub Sangyey Yeshey, one of the greatest lamas of his era, had enthroned the boy as the reincarnation of Gyalwa Wensapa Lobzang Dondrup. Thus he may well have been the First Panchen Lama of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, but he was the Second Wensapa incarnation. Moreover, the biography of Gyalwa Wensapa speaks of two of his immediate pre-incarnations. One of these was Lama Tsongkhapa's disciple Khedrubjey, who also was a guru to the First Dalai Lama.

Thus three previous incarnations of the First Panchen Lama are clearly identified. The result is that half of the Tibetans today speak of Panchen Lobzang Chokyi Gyaltzen as being the First Panchen Lama, and the other half speak of him as being the Fourth.

For the remainder of this book I will follow the numbering of the Lhasa chronicles, with Panchen Lobzang Chokyi Gyaltsen, the guru of the Fourth and Fifth Dalai Lamas, being listed as the First Panchen Lama.

After giving public audiences at the Jokhang for some time and then receiving the ordination of a novice monk, the young Dalai Lama moved into the Ganden Podrang, his hereditary residence in Drepung Monastery. Here he was soon joined by the Panchen Lama, who had been invited from Tashi Lhunpo in order to begin the process of transmitting the dozens of Buddhist lineages to him.

In the Wood Dragon Year (1604) Gyalwa Yonten Gyatso led the Great Prayer Festival in the Jokhang at Lhasa for the first time. When he gave the traditional Jatakamala reading on the full moon day to the vast audience, everyone was amazed at his presence. He showed no Mongolian accent whatsoever, and spoke exactly like a person from Tolung, the birthplace of his predecessor.

After the festival was over he received an invitation from the king of Gongkar to come and teach. He accepted, and while there he gave the Amitayus/Hayagriva healing initiation. This was the first time in this lifetime that he had given this important transmission, a lineage that had been a favorite of all the early Dalai Lamas.

After visiting Gongkar he returned to Drepung, where he engaged in an intensive study period with the Panchen Lama. The teacher and student then left for Chokhor Gyal, the monastery that had been established by the Second Dalai Lama near the Oracle Lake. They were requested to stop at all the major monasteries and temples along the way, so that the young lama could give public blessings and teachings. He accepted all the invitations that came to him, and used the morning and evening periods to continue his studies with the Panchen Lama. When they arrived at Chokhor Gyal they were greeted by a large reception composed of all the spiritual and secular notables of the region, as well as all the monks of the monastery. Here again he taught *The Book of the Kadampa Masters*. After a short visit, teaching session and retreat, he returned to Drepung to continue his studies.

In the Fire Horse Year (1606), Yonten Gyatso was invited to make pilgrimage through the Yarlung Valley. On the way he stopped at the major monasteries of all the different sects, including Riwo Dechen, Chen Yepa, Pakdepa, Palri Drubdey, Tashi Dechen, Cho Lamrimpa, and Dedenpa. People everywhere

turned out in great numbers to receive him. At each of them he stayed some days and gave teachings. All three of his predecessors had also traveled, taught and made retreat in Yarlung, and thus his return now was a continuation of their legacy.

This journey of the Fourth Dalai Lama to the Yarlung Valley was largely a spiritual pilgrimage to the places made sacred not only by his own previous incarnations, but also by Padma Sambhava, Atisha and Lama Tsongkhapa. However, it also had political overtones. The Yarlung Valley was the cradle of Tibetan civilization and the home of all the early kings. Thus every lama of significance had to see it and also be seen in it in order to touch the national consciousness of the country.

Later in the Fire Horse Year (1606) an invitation arrived from the Neudong Palace. Gyalwa Yonten Gyatso accepted, and again all monasteries on the way received him. The Neudong king was the principal ruler of central Tibet, a tradition that had been maintained by his predecessors since the decline of the Sakyapa rule in the late 1300s. In fact it was a Neudong king who had been the sponsor of the original Great Prayer Festival organized by Lama Tsongkhapa. Although officially adherents of the Pakmo Drupa School of Tibetan Buddhism—one of the twelve Kargyu sub-sects—the Neudong rulers were generally known for their eclectic sentiments.

The current king, however, was destined to face many obstacles during his life—a fate that had been prophesied by Guru Padma Sambhava in the mid-eighth century. A symbol of the problem arose during the Fourth's visit. He had been requested to give a life-enhancing initiation. The temple was prepared with seats for the royal family and their guests, as well as two thrones, one for the lama and one for the king. In accordance with tradition, the throne for the lama was slightly higher than that of the king. However, the king's attendants had played a mischievous trick, and used extra fluffy cushions on the lama's throne. Therefore, when the king and lama sat down the latter sank into the cushions until eventually he was seated at a level below that of the king. In Buddhism it is considered to be inauspicious to have whoever is teaching the Dharma be seated lower than those listening. The inauspicious quality manifested during the ceremony. When the lama arrived at the point in the initiation when the vase of blessed liquids is touched to the recipient's head, suddenly and without any apparent reason it cracked and broke, spilling its nectars.³

After spending some days in the Neudong Palace, Gyalwa Yonten Gyatso continued on pilgrimage to Tsetang. Here again he gave public blessings and spoke to large gatherings. The king of Lhagyari extended an invitation to him, which he accepted. The monasteries of all the different sects in the area invited him to come and teach, including the seven in Ehchok. He visited and taught wherever asked, regardless of sect.⁶

In this way he circled through all the important centers of central and southern Tibet, renewing the spiritual connections that had been established by his predecessors. He then returned to Drepung and entered into meditation retreat.

In that same year a delegation of monks arrived from Tashi Lhunpo with an invitation to visit and teach in Tsang. Tashi Lhunpo, the great monastery in Tsang that had been created by the First Dalai Lama, was also the home monastery of the Fourth's tutor, Panchen Lobzang Chokyi Gyaltsen, and therefore he accepted with enthusiasm. As elsewhere, the reception given to him was elaborate, and from his side he did whatever the monks and laypeople requested of him. In Shigatsey he was invited to the homes of all the noble families.

While he was in Tsang, however, the king of Shigatsey, Karma Tensungpa by name, did not honor him with an invitation. This was significant, for the young monk symbolized the peoples and aspirations of central Tibet, and by disrespecting him the king was sending a clear signal that he held questionable motives toward Lhasa. A generation later the Fifth Dalai Lama wrote that the Shigatsey king's insult on this occasion laid the seed of suspicion between central and southern Tibet that eventually grew into war between the two regions.

After spending a period of teaching and giving blessings in the Shigatsey region, the young lama and his entourage began the long journey back to Lhasa and Drepung Monastery. They had come down by the northern route, but now returned by the route that passed through Gyangtsey and the Turquoise Lake. Here he made pilgrimage at the Kumbum Stupa ("Monument of 100,000 Buddhas"), and also Palkhor Chodey Monastery.⁷ They also were invited to stop over at the great kingdom of Gongkar, where again he gave teachings and blessings.⁸

Finally the group arrived back in Lhasa. The Fourth Dalai Lama returned to the

Ganden Podrang in Drepung, where he again entered meditation retreat.

That summer war broke out in central Tibet. The Pakmo Drupa king, together with the forces of Zho Karnak, attacked and destroyed the residence of Depa Kyisho, the king of the Lhasa Valley. The Mongolian prince Ponpo Khorlochey and his army, together with Prince Sechen Taiji and his forces, arrived in Lhasa. The Fifth Dalai Lama later wrote, "At that time a dialogue would have brought peace, but neither side was interested." The war escalated, and eventually the Tsang army arrived at Lhasa.

The Fourth Dalai Lama, being of Mongolian blood, was very concerned by these events. Although the real issue of the conflict was political power and secular advantage, it was taking on a religious overtone. The Tsangpa king belonged to the Karma Kargyu School, as did the Pakmo Drupa king, whereas the Mongolians and the Kyisho king were Gelukpas. Consequently the Fourth Dalai Lama left his retreat at Drepung and moved into Sera, where he performed many rituals and prayers for peace.

At that time he received a letter of advice from Shamar Tamchey Khyenpa Garwang Chokyi Wangchuk. This lama, the Sixth Shamar reincarnation, had risen to become the highest lama of the politically powerful Karma Kargyu sect in 1589.

The Shamarpa Lama's letter was intended as an overture to peace, and it offered prayers that the young Dalai Lama should study hard on the points of sutra and tantra, as well as on the five Buddhist sciences. However, the Fourth's attendants wrote an impolite reply. Again, the seeds of discontent between the Gelukpa and Kargyu sects were strengthened. By insulting the Shamarpa they were throwing an insult at the array of aristocratic families that supported the Karma Kargyupa school. This was a serious blunder.

The Fifth Dalai Lama later wrote that when the Fourth Dalai Lama was in Gongkar the Sixth Shamar was at Drikung Densatil. At that time they could easily have met, and the unpleasanties that followed could have been avoided. The Fourth Dalai Lama in fact made efforts to meet the Shamarpa at that time, but his attendants were against it and whisked him back to Drepung under false pretexts. Thus they didn't meet. Had they met, the Fifth states, war would have been avoided.⁹

The Fifth Dalai Lama in his writings speaks highly of the Sixth Shamar, and

credits him with making many moves to diffuse the escalating tensions between the various Tibetan aristocratic families. He sent numerous letters to the Fourth Dalai Lama for this purpose, but the Fourth's attendants did not deliver them, and instead cut connections. The Fifth Dalai Lama writes, "It became harder for an envoy from the Shamar Lama to get into the Ganden Podrang (i.e., the residence of the Fourth Dalai Lama in Drepung Monastery) and meet with the Fourth Dalai Lama than it was for Marpa to go to India." Marpa was the eleventh-century founder of the Kargyupa School, and the hardships that he faced on his three journeys to India are the stuff of which myths and legends are made.

Ganden Tri Rinpochey Konchok Chopel, who at the time was the official head of the Gelukpa School, also appreciated the efforts made by the Shamar Lama, and was upset with the office of the Fourth Dalai Lama. He wrote a strong letter to the elders of Drepung criticizing the Dalai Lama's office on three accounts: Firstly, when the Fourth Dalai Lama was in Ralung he could have met with the great Chojey Drechung but did not do so; secondly, when he was in Gongkar he could have gone to Densatil and met with the Shamar Lama but did not do so; and thirdly his office discontinued all communications with the Shamarpa.

The Shamar Lama again sent a letter to the Fourth in an attempt to cool the escalating tensions, but the Fourth's attendants again did not deliver it, and instead wrote back on the Fourth's behalf in an insulting manner.

The Shamar was deeply concerned and went to the Jokhang Temple to make prayers for peace. He offered a silk scarf in front of the main Buddha image there, together with a poem written on it in which he said, "Now the problem is just a handspan in size and can easily be resolved. Once it escalates, it will become like the step of Vishnu." This is a reference to a myth in which Vishnu took a step that went from the bottom of the universe almost to the top, to a paradise realm known as the Heaven of Thirty-Three.

Later the Fifth Dalai Lama, commenting on these events, wrote, "Had the high lamas held a conference and discussed matters at this point in time, war still could have been averted. Unfortunately, this was not to occur."

In 1611 the other kings of central Tibet, all of whom were Gelukpa adherents, began to prepare for war with the kings of Tsang, who were Kargyupa. That same year the Tsangpa and Yargyepa armies arrived in the Lhasa valleys.

All Mongols were expelled.

At that time the Panchen Lama sent a letter to the Fourth Dalai Lama in which he stated that the Yarpa and Tsangpa kings were killing Gelukpa monks and destroying monasteries in Tsang, and that the Fourth should do some tantric rituals to mitigate the harm. All the Gelukpa monasteries of central Tibet began an intense regime of wrathful tantric rituals. The Fourth Dalai Lama's rituals were very successful, and after that he became known as Tutob Yonten Gyatso, or "Yonten Gyatso the Great Shaman."

Later that year, after things had calmed down, the Fourth Dalai Lama invited the Panchen Lama to Drepung to give the series of tantric initiations known as "The Rosary of Vajras." From his side, the Fourth gave his word that he would do all in his power to keep the Mongolian armies out of Tibet.

In the Wood Tiger Year (1614), the Fourth Dalai Lama received the full ordination of a monk from the Panchen Lama. He was in the twenty-sixth year of his life. Thereafter he simultaneously became the Thirteenth Abbot of Drepung Monastery and the Fifteenth Abbot of Sera.

In 1616, a delegation from the Chinese Ming emperor arrived in Lhasa. It brought many offerings from the Ming emperor, as well as the title Kyabdak Dorjechang, or "All-Pervading Holder of Diamond Knowledge." It also presented him with a seal from the emperor, and many lavish gifts. The Chinese had built a new temple in China, and the delegation was charged with the task of requesting him to come to China and consecrate it. Gyalwa Yonten Gyatso declined to go in person, but instead performed the ceremony in Drepung. It is said that during the consecration rite that he performed in Lhasa, a rain of flowers fell at the temple in China.

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In the Fire Dragon Year (1616) the master made a retreat in the caves above Sangyib Hot Springs. This was one of the many sacred sites empowered by Guru Padma Sambhava in the mid-eighth century, and used for pilgrimage ever since. It was famed for a footprint that Padma Sambhava had left in the solid rock face.

During this visit a local shaman of the Nyingmapa school called out to the Fourth Dalai Lama, criticizing him for being Mongolian and thus an outsider. The Fourth replied, "If I said that I were an emanation of Padma Sambhava,

would you then have faith in me?” He then placed his foot on a large boulder and pressed, while uttering wrathful mantras. His foot sank into the solid rock like a hot knife into butter, leaving a footprint that has remained until the present day for pilgrims to see. Eight and a half centuries earlier Padma Sambhava had similarly made footprints in solid stone at sacred sites that he visited.

The words that the Fourth spoke at this time, and also the miracle of the footprint that he displayed, are taken as indications that not only was he an emanation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, in addition he was an emanation of the great guru Padma Sambhava.

In the twelfth month of the Fire Dragon Year (i.e., January of 1617) he decided to demonstrate to his disciples the reality of the impermanence of all collected phenomena. Consequently he passed away on the full moon day of the twelfth month. Many auspicious signs manifested in the area.

Shortly after his passing, his body was offered to fire in a stupashaped crematorium that was constructed especially for the purpose. Many monks and other disciples performed the fire offering rite during the cremation.

Later, when the crematorium was opened and examined, it was discovered that his heart, tongue and eyes had remained intact as relics of his mind, speech and body. There were also numerous relic pills in the ashes, indicating his high level of spiritual accomplishment.

His ashes were divided into three portions, with one going to the Mongolian Garga king Ponpo Chokhor, another to his father’s family, and the third being kept in central Tibet. As for the relic pills, his disciples from Drepung Monastery built a golden stupa reliquary in order to house these, and they are still kept in Drepung today.

The stupa consecration ceremony was performed by the Panchen Lama, assisted by the abbots and ex-abbots of both Drepung and Sera monasteries, as well as by monks from Namgyal Dratsang Monastery.

Gyalwa Yonten Gyatso, the Fourth Dalai Lama, died young, and therefore his life was not as visibly productive and spectacular as had been those of his three predecessors. He was, if you will, a “transition Dalai Lama,” in that his manifestation was something of a postscript to the deeds of the Third, and a setting of the stage for the accomplishments of the Great Fifth. Nonetheless he

did exhibit all the signs of a mahasattva> or “great being.”

He was not a prolific writer like his three predecessors, and in fact composed only a few prayers and tantric ritual texts. None of these have surfaced, and thus I have not been able to include anything from his pen in this volume.



Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso, the Fifth Dalai Lama. Courtesy of the Swedish Humanistic Research Council, "Saviours of Mankind," The Sven Hedin Foundation, Statens Etnografiska Museum, Stockholm, Sweden.

The Fifth Dalai Lama: The Birth of Modern Tibet

The Fifth Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Lobzang Gyatso, is usually referred to in Tibetan literature simply as Ngapa Chenpo, or “The Great Fifth.” There are hundreds of tulkus who have survived as reincarnate lama lineages for five lifetimes or more. For example, we see the Sixth Panchen Lama, the Tenth Karmapa Lama, the Twelfth Taktser Rinpochey, and so forth; but whenever one sees the words “The Great Fifth” in a Tibetan text, one knows that it can refer only to the Fifth Dalai Lama.¹

This is because in the Water Dog Year, or 1642, when the Fifth Dalai Lama was only twenty-five years of age, he was awarded the position of spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan nation. At the time the Dalai Lama labrang, or reincarnate lama institution, had been one of the ten most popular (and thus influential) spiritual entities in Tibet for over two hundred years, but the events of 1642 led to a significant transformation in its status. It was then that the Dalai Lama institution as it exists today emerged, with the Dalai Lama becoming not just one among a number of equally great lamas, but a lama who stood head and shoulders above all the others.

In one of my meetings with His Holiness the present Dalai Lama, he spoke of the activities of the first four Dalai Lamas as being part of a great master plan. His Holiness explained this plan as follows:

“The First Dalai Lama had been born and spent much of his time in Tsang, or southwestern Tibet. He had, however, made a strong connection with central Tibet by studying there for twelve years in his youth, and later returning several times to teach and meditate in the sacred power places. He had crystallized his life by building Tashi Lhunpo Monastery near Shigatsey, the capital city of Tsang Kingdom. This monastery became the rock upon which his teachings were preserved and his life works continued long after his passing.”

His Holiness went on to say, “The Second Dalai Lama continued this connection by taking birth in Tsang, but in his adulthood he moved to central Tibet, where he established a residence in Drepung Monastery. This acted as his home base, and from here he taught, practiced meditation, wrote many spiritual texts, and made many teaching tours to the outlying regions. One of his favorite places to visit was the Yarlung Valley, the cradle of Tibetan civilization and home of all

the early kings of the dynasty that eventually rose to govern all of Tibet, from Kashmir on the west to China on the east. He also frequently traveled south from Yarlung into the Dakpo regions, all the way to the borders of modern-day India, and built Chokhor Gyal Monastery near the Oracle Lake to serve these peoples. Thus he carried the Dalai Lama message from Tsang to central and southern Tibet.”

His Holiness continued, “The Third took birth in central Tibet and taught extensively throughout all the regions in which the First and Second Dalai Lamas had traveled, thus maturing the seeds that they had planted. He then traveled and taught extensively throughout the north and east, as well as in Mongolia and western China.” [As we will see in later chapters, many later Dalai Lama incarnations would receive their early education in monasteries established by the Third in the Amdo and Kham areas of the east.] “When he became the guru to the warlike Mongolian tribes, his role as peacemaker had begun, and this role has continued as an important facet of the Dalai Lama office until the present day.” His Holiness then spoke of how the Fourth was born not only as a Mongolian, but also as a direct descendent of Altan Khan, and of how he cemented the marriage of Mongolia to Buddhism and secured the spiritual friendship between Mongolia and Tibet that endured for the centuries to follow.

He concluded by saying, “Through these four incarnations, the Dalai Lama lineage established spiritual connections with almost every family in Central Asia. Most Tibetans had attended a teaching, initiation or public blessing ceremony led by one of these incarnations, or had studied with one or more of his immediate disciples. Thus in the early 1600s, when the wars of the Tibetan petty kings raged out of hand and the power brokers began looking around for someone who could serve as a unifying figure, the Fifth Dalai Lama emerged as the natural choice.”

This is how the present Dalai Lama explained the manner in which the Great Fifth rose from the position of being but one among many reincarnate lamas to the exalted position of being both spiritual and temporal chieftain of the Tibetan nation.

The Great Fifth exited from his mother’s womb on the twenty-third day of the ninth month of the Fire Snake Year, i.e., 1617. He had been born near Tiger’s Peak of Chonggyey, at the head of the Yarlung Valley. Chonggyey is well

known to all Tibetans, for it was here that the burial tombs of all the early kings of the Yarlung Dynasty were preserved. This dynasty, as we saw in an earlier chapter, had ruled much of central Tibet since long before the birth of Christ, and continued until the midseventh century, when Songtsen Gampo moved the capital to Lhasa. Much of Tibet's ancient mythology is rooted in the Yarlung Valley, and centers around the activities and accomplishments of these early kings.²

The Great Fifth's father's family was of Zahori ancestry. Many years later the Great Fifth was to sign many of his writings as "the Zahor monk Lobzang Gyatso." The word "Zahor" is of Bengali (Indian) origin, perhaps indicating a foreign marriage sometime in the distant past. Because Tibetans revere all things Indian, the name was kept for posterity. His father's actual name was Miwang Dudul Rabten Tricham Kunga Lhadzey. The first of these particles, "Miwang," indicates that he was a man of considerable standing. In fact he was a chieftain in the Lukhang clan, a name that appears frequently in Tibet's historical annals.

As with all the Dalai Lama incarnations, many auspicious signs surrounded the birth of the Fifth, thus focusing attention on his presence.

The house kept a monk in residence by the name of Sangyey Gyatso. This was a common practice in large Tibetan homes, with monks of this nature performing numerous tasks. They served as tutors to the children, ritualists in the household shrines, and as spiritual advisors to household members. Just before the Fifth was conceived, this monk had a dream in which a lama appeared to him. The lama was carrying a statue of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

Sangyey Gyatso asked the lama, "What is this?" The lama in his dream replied, "It is the self-manifest Avalokiteshvara of Lhasa." This was a reference to a sacred statue that had belonged to King Songtsen Gampo in the midseventh century, and was said to have been divinely manifested. As we saw earlier, King Songtsen Gampo was considered to be an early incarnation of the soul that would evolve into the Dalai Lamas, and Avalokiteshvara is the bodhisattva at the source of the line.

On another occasion just before the Fifth's birth, Sangyey Gyatso dreamed that the mother tried to enter the house via a window. She couldn't get in because she was so large from her pregnancy. Suddenly a goddess in beautiful robes and

jewelry appeared and helped her. The mother was then able to enter with ease. Later pundits would state that this goddess was the female buddha Tara, who had been the First Dalai Lama's principal meditation deity.

Throughout the time of his mother's pregnancy the gardens of the household blossomed with many unusual flowers, and also rainbows surrounded the house. Rain frequently fell from the sky, without any clouds being present. Moreover, the local people, without any particular reason or tradition, began to include the house on their daily circumambulation route.

Many years later when the Great Fifth mentioned these events in his diary, he adopted a humble and self-effacing style of composition. The biography, which is edited from his diary, states, "People say these things about my birth, although I myself do not remember any of them. In fact I don't know if they actually happened or are mere stories that emerged later. Moreover, even if these things did occur, I'm sure that they were connected with the birth or death of some other great being in the area, or were an indication that some local mystic gained realization at that time."

Shortly after the boy's birth his mother took him with her when she went to receive teachings and initiations from the great Nyingmapa lama Rigzin Ngawang Chogyal. Although the child was still too young to speak, from this time onward he imitated the ways of a lama and constantly pretended to give blessings to everyone he saw. He would blow mantras on sick people in order to heal them, and many claimed that they received miraculous cures in the presence of the infant. In this and many other ways the boy revealed that he was an extraordinary incarnation.

As we will see later, this early connection of the Fifth Dalai Lama with the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism was to ripen into a profound relationship, and he was destined to become a central figure in the preservation and transmission of Nyingmapa doctrines.

The child's mother was related to the king of Tsang, who at the time was perhaps the singularly most powerful figure in central and southwestern Tibet. Her dowry had included the Chushur Lhashong estate, a property far more valuable than the home into which she had married. Consequently not long after the Fifth's birth, the family moved from Chonggyey to Chushur Lhashong.

Meanwhile at Drepung Monastery, where the Fourth Dalai Lama had lived during his final years, efforts were underway to find the young reincarnation. A significant part of this process was consultation with Tibet's important oracles and mediums.

First a delegation was sent to the oracle at Samyey. The medium entered into trance as he channeled the deity, and then stated, "In a period when the spiritual friend is absent, where can one direct one's faith? We have to keep our ears turned in the direction of Yarlung Serma Zhung." Thus he clearly identified Yarlung as the place of the rebirth.

Next the committee contacted the Tsangpa Oracle. This oracle always spoke in verse, and on this occasion stated,

The golden vajra of Chonggyey

Adorned with a red ruby

Should be decorated with an auspicious scarf.

There is no better color than gold.

If the name is Dorjey, how excellent.

With these words the Tsangpa Oracle confirmed the Yarlung Valley as the place of rebirth, and further narrowed the field of search to the Chonggyey area of Yarlung.

Because of these two oracular prophecies, the committee turned its search to Chonggyey. They soon heard stories of the child born with many auspicious signs and omens, and consequently went to examine him.

However, the child was not yet to be officially recognized and enthroned as the reincarnation. Tibet was in the throes of a minor civil war at the time, and also was experiencing bad relations with the Mongols. The king of Tsang had attacked the Lhasa area and sacked the great monasteries there, including Drepung and Sera. The Tsangpa king belonged to the Karma Kargyupa school of Tibetan Buddhism, and he forcibly converted many Gelukpa monasteries in central Tibet into Karma Kargyupa ones. He was especially harsh to the Ganden Podrang, the monastery in Drepung that served as the traditional residence of the Dalai Lamas.

Most of the institutions the Tsangpa king attacked also had numerous young Mongolian monks-in-training living in them, and as a consequence various Mongolian factions were drawn into the conflict. Moreover, the Fourth Dalai Lama had himself been of Mongolian descent, and thus the sacking of the Ganden Podrang in Drepung was an especially strong insult to the Mongols. Consequently, in the Iron Bird Year (1621), a large Mongolian army confronted the Tsangpa forces at Kyangtang, and it looked as though a full scale war was about to erupt.

Two lamas who were highly respected by both sides saved the day. The Panchen Lama, who had been the guru of the Fourth Dalai Lama, and the Ganden Tripa, or official head of the Gelukpa School, rushed to the site from their monasteries, and pressed both sides for a negotiated settlement. Due to their efforts a treaty

was struck. The Tsangpa king returned what he had earlier looted from Drepung and Sera monasteries. All Gelukpa monasteries that had been forcibly converted were allowed to revert to the Gelukpa, and whatever property had been looted from them was returned.

Only when peace was established did the committee that was searching for the Dalai Lama reincarnation officially resume its work.

The committee in charge of finding the Fifth Dalai Lama had narrowed its search to three candidates. All three of them had been born with many auspicious signs, and all three seemed to recognize objects of the Fourth Dalai Lama from among collections of similar items. Moreover, the somewhat cryptic words of the various oracles who were consulted could similarly be applied to all three of the candidates without contradiction.

The Panchen Lama, who had served as spiritual tutor to the deceased Fourth Dalai Lama, had risen to become the head of the Gelukpa reincarnate lamas of the time. Similarly, another lama by the name of Lingmey Zhabdrung had achieved high realization and widespread esteem. These two lamas were asked to decide which of the three boys should be recognized as the Fourth's reincarnation.

The two lamas decided to go to Reteng Monastery, the home monastery of the early Kadampa lamas and a place where all the early Dalai Lamas had made meditation retreat several times during their lives. There the two lamas performed divinations in front of the sacred buddha image known as Jowo Jampel Dorjey that had been brought from India many years earlier, and was sacred to all the early Dalai Lamas. The divination method that they used was the "barley ball" technique. The names of the three candidates were written on small pieces of paper; these were then inserted into different dough balls made from roasted barley flour; and the dough balls were placed in a bowl.

The two lamas performing the divination then recited many mantras and offered prayers for a prophecy. Each of them in turn held the bowl containing the barley balls with the names of the three children, moving the bowl in such a way as to cause the barley balls to roll around inside the bowl until one of the balls came flying out. In both divinations—that by the Panchen Lama and then that by Lingmey Zhabdrung—the name to emerge from the bowl was that of the boy born near Taktser of Chonggyey. This child was consequently identified as the

reincarnation of the Fourth Dalai Lama, the boy who would become the Great Fifth.

Many years later the Great Fifth, writing on these matters, relates that it was his tutor Kachupa Sangyey Sherab from the Ganden Podrang who had come to his childhood home with a group of monks in order to perform the tests. They had shown him possessions of the previous Dalai Lama, mixed in with similar items not belonging to the Fourth, and asked him to choose.

The Great Fifth, who often exhibits considerable wit in his writings, comments that when he was a child studying with Kachupa the latter often used to press him to work harder. As a method of intimidation, Kachupa would threaten to tell everyone that as a child the Great Fifth had not chosen any of the right objects in the identification tests, and instead had only been given the position of the Dalai Lama incarnation because his mother was related to the quarrelsome king of Tsang, and the search committee thought that by enthroning him the Tsangpa king might become less antagonistic toward the Gelukpa.

Tibetans regard this comment by the Great Fifth as a sign that indeed he was the true incarnation, for otherwise he would not have had the humility to mention the issue himself. Nonetheless the fact that the Great Fifth did mention it stands as testimony that there was a controversy surrounding his identification as the Dalai Lama.

It is ironic, if he was enthroned as a gesture of peace to the Tsangpa king, that events surrounding his life were to bring an end to the rule of the Tsangpa kings.

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During this period of Tibet's history it was usually necessary to pay a large tax to the Tsangpa king if a reincarnate lama was recognized in his territory. Only then would the king grant permission to a monastery to claim a child as an official reincarnation and return him to his hereditary monastery for training.

However, this tax was waived in the case of the Great Fifth. When Lingmey Zhabdrung visited the boy's family in order to inform them that their son had been recognized as the Fifth Dalai Lama, he said to them, "If anything bad should happen to the child while you wait for permission from the Tsangpa king, the negative karma will be on your head."

This made the family very nervous, for they were strong Buddhists and took their karma seriously. The uncle, who was the head of the household, replied, “I cannot take responsibility for anyone’s life.” With these words he consented to the child being recognized as the Fifth Dalai Lama and being taken immediately to Drepung Monastery for installation, without the usual tax for the king of Tsang being paid.

In all probability this accelerated process was used because everyone was concerned about the recent friction between the Tsangpa king and the great Gelukpa monasteries of the Lhasa area. They feared that the Tsangpa king would use the child for political leverage rather than just charge the usual tax. No doubt the family was leery of being caught in the middle of such a tug of war, with their child in-between.

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Consequently, in the Water Dog Year, or 1622, the Panchen Lama of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and Kachupa Sangyey Sherab of the Ganden Podrang came to the child’s home to receive him, together with representatives from many different regions, monasteries and aristocratic families of Tibet. On the day of their arrival, several hours before anyone had appeared, the child looked concerned and said, “The Panchen Lama will be quite late.” In fact the Panchen Lama did arrive several hours after the others. People took this as a sign of the boy’s clairvoyant powers. He was enthroned with great ceremony on the twenty-fifth day of the second month.

After the enthronement ceremony the boy gave blessings to all who had come. One of the crowd was a Mongolian monk by the name of Gendun Gyatso, coincidentally the same name as the Second Dalai Lama. When he arrived in front of the boy the child hesitated in giving him a blessing. The crowd gasped in awe, for this monk had often given problems to the late Fourth Dalai Lama. Again, with considerable wit the Fifth writes, “Although there was a lot of talk about this incident, in fact these were all new faces to me at the time, and my hesitation at that time was mere coincidence.”

On the eighteenth day of the third month—a date chosen for its astrologically auspicious qualities—the Panchen Lama cut the boy’s long hair and gave him preliminary monastic ordination. It was on this occasion that he received the name Lobzang Gyatso, with which he has become known to history. The

Panchen Lama also gave him a large number of tantric initiations in order to place the karmic seeds of the lineages on his mindstream.

The boy then settled into the traditional chambers of his predecessors at the Ganden Podrang in Drepung Monastery, and his long period of training began.

As we saw in an earlier chapter, the Second Dalai Lama had built Chokhor Gyal Monastery near the Oracle Lake, and this institution had become an important part of the Dalai Lama legacy. It was decided that the Fifth should make pilgrimage there while still a child.

Therefore, on the eleventh day of the third month of the Wood Mouse Year, or 1624, he left Drepung with a large entourage. An enormous delegation with representatives from all over the country gathered to see him off. The great lama Lingmey Zhabdrung traveled with him as his tutor. The group stopped in all the major monasteries, hermitages and villages on the way, so that he could give blessings to the people and renew his karmic links with them.

Traveling was slow, but eventually they arrived at Gyal. It was the tradition when visiting a temple to pass in turn before all the sacred images housed there, and therefore the elders led him into the presence of the main image. Here he held up a white silk scarf and was preparing to offer it, when suddenly a gust of wind picked up a scarf that was already on the statue and blew it directly into his hands. Everyone present was filled with awe, for the effect was as though the sacred image was offering a formal greeting to him before he had had the opportunity to offer one to it.

The group remained in Gyal Monastery for several weeks so that the boy could receive the tantric initiations and oral transmissions that were associated with the Second Dalai Lama and Gyal Monastery.

Between transmissions and teaching sessions he received the large crowds of local people who had come to receive his blessings. In this way he activated the karmic seeds that had been placed by his predecessors, and prepared to take up the mantle of his destiny. He remained in Gyal until the end of the fifth month, and then returned to Drepung.

The following year he sat at the head of the enormous gathering of monks and lay people for the Monlam Chenmo, or Great Prayer Festival. The Panchen Lama had come from Tashi Lhunpo in order to lead the ceremonies, which

continued from pre-dawn until early evening for more than three weeks. Although it might be expected that a young boy would be unable to sit still and remain focused for this amount of time, the Fifth Dalai Lama seemed to be completely at home throughout the process. Tens of thousands of people had gathered from across Central Asia to attend, and everyone was impressed with the dignity of his presence. A large contingency of Mongolians had also come, for the boy was the reincarnation of the Fourth Dalai Lama, who had been one of them.

Later that same year he received novice ordination from the Panchen Lama. Earlier the Panchen Lama had given him the name Lobzang Gyatso. He now expanded it to Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso Jigmey Gocha Tubten Langtsodey. Quite the mouthful for a young boy. No doubt his friends continued to call him by the main ingredient in it, or “Lobzang.”

The Panchen Lama had served as tutor to the Fourth Dalai Lama, and he was requested to do the same for the young Fifth. He accepted in principle, although there was a problem with the logistics. He did not want to leave his monastery of Tashi Lhunpo in Shigatsey, and the monks at Drepung did not want the young Fifth Dalai Lama to move to Tashi Lhunpo.

In the end, it was decided that the Panchen Lama would have the position of senior tutor, and would fulfill this duty by occasionally coming to Drepung to give intensive tantric transmissions to his ward, or have the boy visit Tashi Lhunpo. In the interim periods, Lingmey Zhabdrung Konchok Chopel would serve as his tutor on a daily basis in Drepung, and would guide him through all the Indian Buddhist classics.

The next years of his life were therefore spent in intensive study of the general Buddhist teachings. Here he covered the five principal Buddhist subjects—prajnaparamita, madhyamaka, pramana, abhidharma and vinaya. These five, all of which are based on the great Indian treatises, were used throughout Tibet as basic studies and as prerequisites to tantric practice. In brief, he received all the principal lineages that had come from India to Tibet, as well as the major Tibetan lineages. His tutors were all Gelukpa lamas, so he received these transmissions in accordance with the presentation of the “new” schools—Kargyupa, Sakyapa, Kadampa and Gelukpa—and with how these lineages were preserved within the Geluk monasteries.

In his seventeenth year he expressed a determination to receive the tantric lineages preserved outside of the new schools, i.e., as held by the Old Schools, or Nyingma. The early Dalai Lamas had all used a multi-sect approach in their training, and he wanted to continue the tradition. Moreover, both his mother and father were Nyingma, and he felt a responsibility to honor his roots in this regard. Therefore arrangements were made for him to meet with the esteemed Nyingmapa adept Khonton Lama, and receive the full pantheon of Nyingmapa lineages from him. From this time onward his interest in the Nyingma lineages continued to grow. In his twenty-first year he met the great Nyingma lama Zurchen Choying Rangdol, and his Nyingma connection shifted into high gear.

During the next couple of years the Great Fifth demonstrated the fullness of his intellect and the vast expanse of his interests. Under the Thirty-fifth Ganden Tripa, a lama by the name of Jamyang Konchok Chopel, he once more intensely studied the five great Indian treatises and other major Indian commentarial works, as well as numerous Tibetan classics.

In addition he undertook an intense study of classical Indian poetry, and achieved such excellence in formal poetics that he became known in poetry circles as Jamyang Gawai Shenyen, "Friend Delighting the Eloquent." He also engaged in an intensive study of astrology and excelled in this sublime science. All of this he accomplished before reaching his twenty-first birthday.

In the Earth Tiger Year, or 1638, he received his complete monastic ordination from the elderly Panchen Lama, and thus fulfilled the legacy established by his predecessors in this regard.

Throughout this period of rigorous training, he continued to meditate for five or six hours a day, and also to undertake several retreats annually. These usually lasted several weeks to a month. He thus combined the best of the Buddhist academic and contemplative traditions. As the Dalai Lama, of course, he also had to set aside several hours a day for the vast throngs of pilgrims who came to Lhasa with expectations of receiving his blessings.

In between this intensive schedule he managed to undertake a complete study of Tibetan medicine and become a qualified medical doctor. In this way he laid firm foundations for the title that history was to posthumously award him, that of

“The Great Fifth.”

While the young Fifth Dalai Lama spent his time studying, meditating, composing poetry and giving blessings to large crowds, events in the world around him had begun to take on an ominous tone.

The king of Tsang, Karma Tenkyong Wangpo by name, was becoming ever more belligerent and aggressive. As we saw earlier, his father, Karma Puntsok Namgyal, had attacked and plundered numerous Gelukpa monasteries in the Lhasa area. This had occurred in 1618, a year after the Fifth Dalai Lama had been born. The hills above Drepung are said to have turned red from the blood of monks who were slaughtered as they attempted to escape into the mountains. This conflict had delayed the efforts of the search committee in finding and enthroning the young Dalai Lama. Only because of the arrival of a large tribe of Mongolians in 1619, and because of the peacemaking efforts of the Panchen Lama and Lingmey Zhabdrung, was Karma Puntsok Namgyal convinced to return to Tsang.

He continued, however, to control all of Tsang and western Tibet, as well as large parts of central Tibet. In fact there was considerable fear for the Dalai Lama’s safety during his early years, and his Mongolian followers had pressed to bring him to Mongolia for his studies.

Karma Puntsok Namgyal passed away in 1621 when the Fifth Dalai Lama was very young, and was succeeded by his son Karma Tenkyong Wangpo. This king was even more warlike than his father, and resolved to expand the extent of his rule. He was also a strongly sectarian man, and persecuted the Gelukpa monasteries wherever he could. In his hometown of Shigatsey he built a monastery above Tashi Lhunpo that he called Tashi Zilnon, “The Outshiner of Tashi (Lhunpo),” and thus fostered ill will between the two sects. He then made a pact with the king of Beri, in eastern Tibet, to persecute the Gelukpa monasteries there. Litang, the monastery built by the Third Dalai Lama, became the main target of this oppression.

The Gelukpa elders became strongly concerned with the security of their institutions and the safety of their monks. They sent a delegation to speak to the leaders of the Oirat, Dzungar and Chakkar Mongols, three tribes with many children in the Gelukpa monasteries of the Lhasa area. Gushri Khan, the chief of the Qoshot Mongols, was appointed to head a force in charge of establishing

peace in Lhasa.

In all probability this peace would have been established by negotiation, but the Tsangpa king made a major mistake. In 1635 he hired ten thousand mercenaries from the Chogthu Mongols. This put Gushri Khan in a difficult position.

The Chogthu army was dispatched from Mongolia under the leadership of Arsalang Khan, a son of the Chogthu chief, with orders to attack and burn all Gelukpa monasteries in central Tibet. Had they succeeded, Tibetan history would have taken a decidedly different turn. Perhaps the names “Dalai Lama” and “Panchen Lama” would have melted into obscurity or disappeared altogether, for the Gelukpa School to which they belonged would have been destroyed. Instead the Tsangpa king’s plan backfired, and had an effect opposite to the one he desired.

Gushri Khan learned of the Chogthu force while it was on its way to Tibet, and intercepted it at the Kokonor, or Blue Lake. Here he called a conference with Arsalang and pressed him to abandon his gruesome undertaking.

The meeting had a profound effect on Arsalang. He left the main body of his army at the Namtso Lake and proceeded to Lhasa with Gushri Khan and only a small personal bodyguard. When he arrived in Lhasa and demanded a meeting with the young Dalai Lama, a wave of trepidation swept the valley. The meeting was arranged in the Ramochey, the temple that had been built a thousand years earlier by King Songtsen Gampo for his Chinese wife.

To everyone’s surprise, Arsalang Khan, who had been hired to attack and destroy the Gelukpa monasteries in Lhasa, prostrated to the Dalai Lama and requested to become a Gelukpa monk under his tutelage. A more dramatic outcome of the Chogthu invasion could not have been imagined.

This was not the end of the affair, however. Arsalang’s father, who had made the contract with the king of Tsang, was furious at the manner in which his son had abandoned his duty and disobeyed orders. He sent a team of assassins to kill him, while he began gathering together an army to complete the task that had been undertaken.

Meanwhile Gushri Khan learned of the new development, and decided that his only option was to attack the Chogthu chieftain directly. He made his move in the spring of 1637, when the Chogthu chieftain was in the Kokonor region of

Amdo. The maneuver was successful, and the Chogthu threat was eliminated.

The following year Gushri Khan and a large contingent of Mongolians journeyed to central Tibet on pilgrimage. They requested audience with and teachings from the Fifth Dalai Lama, who now was twenty-one years of age. The Fifth Dalai Lama gave them spiritual names, as well as his blessings. They remained in Lhasa for some time, and then returned to the Kokonor.

Things could still have worked out well for the Tsangpa king. Gushri had pressed the Dalai Lama for permission to lead a punitive expedition to Tsang, but the Fifth had convinced him to abandon the idea, stating that the whole episode had come about because of the Tsangpa king's wounded pride. Many years earlier the king's father had visited Lhasa and requested an audience with the Fourth Dalai Lama, at a time when relations with the Tsangpa aristocracy were fragile. The Fourth Dalai Lama's manager had refused the request on the grounds that the master was in meditation retreat. This seemingly small slight, the Fifth Dalai Lama stated, was at the root of the Tsangpa king's animosity. The insult had simmered and then boiled over into war. The real culprit was the Fourth Dalai Lama's manager, and his insensitivity to a king's pride.

Thus the king of Tsang was spared. However, he did not appreciate the gesture, and in 1640 made a pact with the king of Beri, a powerful warlord from Kham in eastern Tibet. The two would unite and attack the Gelukpa together, dividing the conquered territory and whatever spoils were attained. This was mistake number two, and the cause of his ultimate downfall. Gushri Khan learned of the plan and intercepted the Beri army, utterly laying it to waste. He then turned westward and united with the central Tibetan forces. Together they rode to Tsang and waged war against the Tsangpa king for almost two years. Eventually the Tsangpa army was routed and the Tsangpa king imprisoned for treason. In 1642 all the fighting was over. Tibet, which some seven centuries earlier had fragmented into three princedoms and then splintered into several dozen major and minor kingdoms, was once more reunited.

A major figure in the reunification of Tibet was a monk by the name of Sonam Chopel, who is often described in Western literature as the chief attendant of the Fifth Dalai Lama, and also sometimes as his regent. He was in fact the Dalai Lama's changdzo, or manager, rather than a menial attendant, and was a great

personality in his own right. Every incarnate lama has a monk of this nature in his entourage, and when the lama is in his youth the changdzo has near total control of his affairs. Many changdzos continue to run all affairs of the lama even after the latter's maturity. It is also not uncommon for a changdzo to be placed in charge of the search for the reincarnation of his lama, after the latter's death.

As has been previously noted, having a great changdzo is a key to a lama's success, and an inadequate changdzo is a tremendous impediment. The changdzo not only controls all the money and property that comes to his ward but also serves as the lama's public relations officer, screening those who request an audience and turning back those whom he feels are inappropriate. He organizes all travels, accommodations, building and publishing projects, and even public teachings. In the best scenario, the changdzo serves his lama well and does not bring personal ambitions, emotional prejudices or private agendas into his work. Instead, he accommodates the fluid and successful interactions of his lama with the general population of devotees and followers, as well as with other more secular concerns, such as the institutions of other lamas, the local aristocracy and power brokers, and visitors from foreign lands.

In the Fifth Dalai Lama's time, this last aspect of the manager's duty meant receiving long lines of kings, princes, tribal chieftains and warlords from Mongolia, Amdo, Kham, western China, Manchuria, and so forth. Sonam Chopel served the young Great Fifth very well indeed, and his good works were the most direct cause of the great success that the Fifth achieved. It was Sonam Chopel's genius that brought the Great Fifth to the throne of Tibetan national leadership in 1642.

After this monumental event Sonam Chopel became known as Desi Sonam Chopel, with the title "Desi" meaning "Viceroy." All principal changdzos of the Fifth Dalai Lama from this time onward were referred to by the title "Desi." The tradition continued during the lifetime of the Sixth Dalai Lama.

There is little doubt that politically Sonam Chopel was more powerful than the Dalai Lama during these historically crucial years. For example, in 1640 the Desi had supported Gushri Khan's invasion of Tsang, whereas the Fifth Dalai Lama had very publicly opposed it, and even attempted to leave Lhasa in order to intercept and stop Gushri Khan's army. However, it was the Desi's words that were followed, and not those of the Fifth Dalai Lama.

The Desi nonetheless realized his limitations, and when the wars were over and it came time to appoint a spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet, he knew that the Dalai Lama's name held far greater weight than his own. Thus he did all that he could to ensure that the mantle of leadership went to the young Dalai Lama, and that he himself remained in the background.

Some modern Chinese historians claim that the role of the Mongolian leader Gushri Khan in reuniting Tibet and establishing the Dalai Lama as the supreme Tibetan leader means that at this point in history Tibet became a part of Mongolia. Furthermore, they claim that because Mongolia later gradually fell under the rule of Manchuria, and the Manchu emperor also conquered Han China, this gives modern Han China a legal claim to the ownership of Tibet. It is a rather convoluted logic.

The reality of the matter is that Gushri Khan was appointed by three different Mongolian chieftains to defend their interests in Tibet, and did not act on his own in the matter. None of these chieftains laid claim to Tibet as a result of his actions, nor did they empower him to do so. In fact, had either he or they attempted to do anything along these lines, the move would probably have been seen as a threat to the balance of powers, and could easily have resulted in a civil war among the Mongols themselves. As we will see later, this was to happen during the life of the Sixth Dalai Lama, when the Mongolian chieftain Lhazang Khan invaded and captured Lhasa. This led to a war between rival Mongol clans and eventually resulted in his own death.

Gushri Khan, on the other hand, simply executed his commission, and for perks just asked blessings and initiations from the Fifth Dalai Lama, as well as names for his children. He then returned to the Kokonor region and continued his rule from there. He did remain a close disciple and devotee of the Fifth Dalai Lama, and for the remainder of his life spent a considerable amount of time in Lhasa, where he was shown great respect by the Tibetans, but it would be an exaggeration to say that he attempted to establish his personal rule over Tibet.

This is perhaps best indicated by the seating arrangements at the official enthronement ceremony of the Dalai Lama in 1642. Here the Dalai Lama was placed on the highest seat in the assembly, with Gushri Khan and Desi Sonam Chopel each sitting on thrones of equal height to one another, and dramatically shorter than that of the Dalai Lama. In traditional Asia, the height of the seat tells the whole story.

From his side, the Fifth Dalai Lama accepted the role of symbolic head of the newly formed Tibetan nation and agreed to help establish the infrastructure through which the country would be harmoniously ruled. The government that formed under him took the name of his residence in Drepung Monastery, i.e., the Ganden Podrang, which had been built by the Second Dalai Lama. This has remained the name of the Tibetan government until the present day.

In the Tibetan mystical world, however, the Fifth Dalai Lama's dramatic and almost effortless rise to power is not seen as a play of mundane political dynamics. A deeper cause lay in a promise made a hundred years earlier, after the Second Dalai Lama passed away and was traveling in the afterworld. He had almost decided not to reincarnate in Tibet, but instead to take birth in another world, where his bodhisattva services would be more beneficial. Suddenly the great guru Padma Sambhava, who had come to Tibet in the eighth century and built Tibet's first monastery, appeared to the Dalai Lama in a vision and requested that he continue to incarnate in Tibet. Padma Sambhava gave the Dalai Lama the Dharma Protector Pehar (i.e., Nechung) as his personal assistant. In addition, he proclaimed that if the Dalai Lama continued to work in Tibet, he would rise to the position of spiritual and temporal head of the land, where he would be in a position to bring great benefits that would continue for centuries. The Great Fifth became spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet exactly a hundred years after the Second experienced this vision and prophecy.

In the Wood Bird Year, or 1645, the Great Fifth initiated the construction of the Potala, and the foundations were laid later that same year. This building, indeed a marvel of world architecture, remains one of the great wonders of the world and stands as a physical testament to the Fifth's extraordinary vision. This was built around the fortress on Red Mountain that had been constructed approximately a thousand years earlier by King Songtsen Gampo, an earlier incarnation of the Dalai Lamas. The new structure envisioned by the Fifth Dalai Lama carefully incorporated the principal elements of Songtsen Gampo's masterpiece.

Work on the Potala continued for the remainder of the Great Fifth's life, and in fact was not completed until after his death. However, he dedicated tremendous energy to the project, and it stands as one of his great contributions to human achievement.

A Nyingma lama friend of mine once told me that according to oral tradition the

enormous rocks used in the upper sections of the Potala were so large that they could not be set into place by ordinary means. Consequently the Great Fifth called a meeting of his Nyingma lama friends, and they all sat in meditation, recited their mystic mantras and floated the boulders into place by means of telekinesis.

The Great Fifth also commissioned numerous other building projects. Perhaps the most important of these was the construction of the National Medical College in Lhasa, which was built on Iron Mountain. Popularly known as the Mentsikhang, or “Medical and Astrological Academy,” this institution served as a medical university producing young doctors that were then sent out across the country to establish clinics. In other words, through this project the Great Fifth managed to establish what soon became a national medicare system.

He realized that the lack of maps of the country and of an accurate population census were impediments to effective government, and therefore ordered that a complete survey be made. This was accomplished as far east as Dartsedo, on the Chinese border. The population census was conducted by making a door-to-door count, the first in Tibetan history.

The Great Fifth also instituted a system of taxation, with the taxes being used to support educational institutions, temples, medical clinics and environmental projects. A treasury was established to process any surplus.

Protection of the environment was one of his priorities. No doubt the Mongolian wars that had spilled over into Tibet, as well as the war with Tsang, had wreaked considerable destruction on the fragile Tibetan habitat. A large body of traveling soldiers tends to strip forests for firewood, to hunt and kill wildlife as they move in order to supplement their diet, and to leave a trail of waste behind them. One of the Fifth’s first acts as head of state was to press for a law banning all hunting of wild animals. No doubt the stories of Lama Drom’s previous lives as related by Atisha were inspiring in this regard. He also had several kings of ancient Buddhist India to look to for his examples.³ This ban on hunting was somewhat tempered by later generations, allowing for seasonal hunting for wildlife population management and food foraging by nomads in remote regions, but remained largely in place.

In this way for several years the Great Fifth participated actively in establishing the legacy that was to become modern Tibet. He then largely passed the reins to an assembly and returned to his Buddhist studies and practice

an assembly, and returned to his Buddhist studies and practice.

He also began to dedicate an increasing amount of time to writing, and by the time he passed away had composed as much as all other Dalai Lamas combined. His complete works were gathered together after his death, and make up some twenty-eight volumes of texts, comprising hundreds of titles. Twelve of these volumes are classified as “outer,” and deal with the mundane or ordinary side of his teachings. Eight are classified as “inner,” and treat the purely spiritual side. A further eight are classified as “secret,” and resulted from his esoteric visionary experiences. These latter generally were not published for open distribution in Tibet, as were the outer and inner sections, but could only be obtained by arranging for hand copies to be made.

In the Iron Tiger Year, or 1650, a delegation bearing gifts from the Manchu emperor Shun-chih arrived in Lhasa. These were to be offered to the Fifth Dalai Lama, together with a strong request that the Great Fifth visit Beijing. The Dalai Lama was reluctant to accept, for many Tibetans who had traveled to China had died there of smallpox or other diseases. However, he was reluctant not to go, for the meeting could establish friendly relations with this powerful neighbor to the east.

The Great Fifth, now the ruler of Tibet, was in a delicate position. Manchuria, a kingdom to the north of Korea that was populated by Tartar peoples (i.e., Mongolians), had invaded China and in 1644 had toppled the Ming Dynasty. The Manchus now ruled not only their own land, but also all that had been ruled by the Mings. By going to Beijing the Dalai Lama would be formally acknowledging the new rulers of China, to the chagrin of the many Ming Chinese friends that Tibet had cultivated over the past century. On the other hand, not to go could be perceived as an insult to and personal assault on the new rulers of China, thus inviting bad relations on the eastern borders of his country.

At first he was unable to decide what to do. Consequently he retreated to Chokhor Gyal Monastery near the Oracle Lake, and engaged in meditation. In accordance with tradition, many images and signs soon began to appear within the sacred waters. He watched these in silence and for long periods, contemplating their significance.

In the end he decided that the signs indicated he should go. Therefore he left for Beijing in 1652. The overland journey required many months of travel, for he

had to stop in all the important sites along the way and give blessings and small initiations to the people. He also had to meet with all the spiritual and secular leaders of each region.

Meanwhile, the Manchu emperor had made elaborate preparations for him. He was met by official delegations at numerous stages of the journey. Several days' journey from Beijing, he was met by the emperor himself, who no doubt wanted to spend a bit of informal time with him before they entered the high-protocol scene at Beijing.

In Beijing the emperor had had a residence especially constructed for him. Called the Huang-su, or "Yellow Palace," it thereafter came to serve as a symbol of the good relations that were established between the Dalai Lama's government and the Manchus at that time. It should be added that this positive relationship continued almost without interruption until the fall of the Manchu Dynasty in 1911.

The Great Fifth was received with tremendous fanfare, and accorded all the protocol not only of a visiting head of state, but of a living buddha. In accordance with custom, at their formal meeting the two leaders exchanged titles with one another, inscribed on golden plates. The Great Fifth gave the Manchu emperor the name "Namkyi Lha Jamyang Gongma Dakpa Chenpo," or "Lordly Emperor Melodiously Wise Bodhisattva Sky Divinity." The emperor chose the name "Tantric Buddha Ocean Lama," or "Gyatso Lama Dorjechang," for the Great Fifth. The "Gyatso" part of the epithet, of course, is the Tibetan equivalent of "Dalai," the Mongolian word for "ocean."

Some modern historians suggest that the emperor's principal motives in inviting the Dalai Lama to Beijing and showing him such respect was to gain his peace-keeping influence with the tribal groups that lived along his western and northwestern borders. As the highest reincarnate lama in the Tibetan Buddhist world, the Great Fifth was held in great standing by the Tibetan and Mongolian tribes that lived in these regions. A good word from him would go a long way in mitigating conflicts. Indeed, when the Fifth Dalai Lama eventually left Beijing to return to Tibet, the emperor again showered him with honorific names and titles, one of them being "Keeper of Peace in the West."

For the Tibetans, the meeting was more esoteric. Here there were two factors at play. The first was that long ago the Third Dalai Lama had prophesied to the

Mongol chieftain Altan Khan that after eighty years his descendents would come to rule all of China. Tibetans believe that this prophecy was fulfilled with the Manchu emperor Shun-chih, who was a Tartar and thus a Mongol, and also, Tibetans believe, genetically connected to Altan through a marriage that had occurred in the interim. Thus both the Great

Fifth Dalai Lama and the Manchu emperor were now acting parts in a play they had begun two lifetimes earlier. The connection was essentially spiritual.

A second consideration was that Tibet held a special connection with Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, whereas Manchu China held a special connection with Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. These two bodhisattvas ranked high as Buddhist archangels transcending time and space, and as principal recipients of the inner teachings of the Buddha. The Dalai Lama was regarded as an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, whereas several mystics had indicated that the Manchu emperor Shun-chih was an incarnation of Manjushri. The world could only be benefited by their meeting.

Be all this as it may, Tibet and China enjoyed a peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship as a result of the foundations laid at that time, and these auspicious conditions continued for many generations to follow.

While the Fifth Dalai Lama was in Beijing, the Manchu emperor informed him that he planned to build many Tibetan Buddhist temples and monasteries across the country, and requested the Great Fifth to create a monastic charter that would provide the basic guidelines to be followed in administering them. The Great Fifth complied, and over the decades to follow dozens of Tibetan Buddhist centers were established across Manchuria and China, using the Great Fifth's monastic charter.

This dedication of the Manchus to Tibetan Buddhism continued over the generations that followed, with Tibetan Buddhism becoming the principal court religion of the Manchu rulers. By the mid-nineteenth century, knowledge of Tibetan language and literature had become a basic requirement of the Manchu intelligentsia. Thus the Great Fifth fulfilled a prophecy and also laid several major foundation stones through his visit to Beijing.

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After returning to Tibet from China, the Great Fifth went on a teaching tour

through Tsang, where he met with the elderly Panchen Lama in Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. The two had become very close over the years, and the Great Fifth wished to receive whatever lineages the great master had not yet transmitted to him. Tashi Lhunpo Monastery had been built by the First Dalai Lama. The Great Fifth now requested the Panchen Lama to accept it as his multi-lifetime seat. It has remained so until the present day, with all of the Panchen Lama reincarnations being placed in Tashi Lhunpo for education, and their mummified bodies kept there as relics. They became so strongly associated with

Tashi Lhunpo Monastery that the Panchen Lama is referred to as the “Tashi Lama” by most eighteenth-and nineteenth-century British writers.

The Fifth Dalai Lama’s viceroy, Desi Sonam Chopel, died in the Fire Monkey Year, or 1657. Until then the Desi had carried out the day-to-day tasks of running the Ganden Podrang government, with the Fifth Dalai Lama only being consulted on major issues, or when the Desi was in doubt on the right course of action to take. Thus until the Desi’s passing, the Great Fifth had been only a figurehead leader, while Desi Sonam Chopel was the de facto ruler. The Great Fifth was now asked to take a more active role in the process.

In the Water Tiger Year, or 1662, the Panchen Lama passed away at the ripe old age of ninety-one. He had served as principal guru to both the Fourth and the Fifth Dalai Lamas, and in his old age had been the guru of almost every Gelukpa practitioner in the Central Asian world, including Manchuria and the Mongol regions. The Great Fifth sponsored a spectacular entombment ceremony at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery for the Panchen’s mummified body, with hundreds of pounds of gold as well as thousands of precious and semiprecious jewels being used in the stupa that was built to house his remains. This magnificent tomb endured until the mid-1960s, when it was robbed and destroyed by the Chinese Communists.

The Great Fifth then oversaw the search for the Panchen Lama’s reincarnation, who was discovered in the form of a boy born in Tobgyal, Tsang, in 1663. In 1665 the Great Fifth officially recognized this child as his guru’s reincarnation, and gave him the name Panchen Lobzang Yeshey. This young boy would grow up to become the guru of both the Sixth and the Seventh Dalai Lamas, and one of the most highly esteemed lamas of his time. He would later receive his early monastic ordinations as well as many tantric initiations and teachings directly

from the Fifth Dalai Lama.

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Although the Great Fifth stands as one of the dominant figures in Tibet's long history, his life was not without controversy. He had come to power due to the failed expansionist designs of the king of Tsang, a strong devotee of the Karma Kargyu School. This king, had he succeeded in his ploy to expand his territory and capture Lhasa, would have tried to eradicate the Gelukpa School altogether and make the Karmapa Lama, who was the head of the Karma Kargyu School, the spiritual head of his newly formed nation. Although there were twelve subsects in the Kargyu

School, the Karma Kargyu School had been politically the strongest of these for a number of years.

The Karmapa Lama was thought to have supported and encouraged the Tsangpa king. Consequently when the king's ploy backfired, the Karmapa Lama's name greatly suffered. It is said that he became so fearful over the role that he had played in the civil war that he went into hiding for several years, until the dust had settled.

Meanwhile the Fifth Dalai Lama had excellent relations with the Drikung branch of the Kargyu School. In fact, when the traditional system in the Drikung of appointing its head from among the sons of the Drikung ruling family failed because both brothers became monks and therefore would not produce an heir, the Fifth Dalai Lama ordered both brothers to establish reincarnation institutions, with whichever of the two was the elder serving as head of the school. Until today there is a Drikung Chetsang and Drikung Chungtsang lama, or "Drikung Older Brother" and "Drikung Younger Brother" incarnation.⁴ This brought stability to the Drikung School, which quickly eclipsed the Karma Kargyu in both size and political importance. Therefore the Drikung Kargyu School speaks highly of the Fifth Dalai Lama in its annals, whereas the Karma Kargyu School speaks about him with bitterness. Even today the monks of the Karma Kargyu Sect resent the Fifth Dalai Lama, whereas those of the Drikung Kargyu speak well of him.

Another controversy surrounds the uprising that emanated from Gyangtsey and Kongpo after the Great Fifth came to power. Following the war of 1640-42, the

Tsangpa king was imprisoned at Neu for treason. Forces loyal to him rallied, however, and a major revolt emerged, plunging Tibet into civil war once more. Several monasteries came in on the Tsangpa king's side, due to their affiliations with the Tsangpa aristocracy. The uprising failed, but the battles resulting from it led to hundreds of deaths on both sides. After peace had been restored the Fifth Dalai Lama closed thirteen monasteries that had actively supported the uprising, including the prestigious Jonangpa Monastery. The sects and institutions associated with these monasteries cried foul, and accused the Fifth Dalai Lama of sectarianism. Tibetans have a long memory, and this accusation still stands within certain circles.

I once asked the present Dalai Lama about this. He replied, "These monasteries were closed for political reasons, not religious ones, and their closing had nothing to do with sectarianism. They had supported the Tsangpa king in the uprising, thus committing treason. The Great Fifth believed that that they should be closed in order to insure the future stability of the nation, and to dissuade other monasteries from engaging in warfare." His Holiness continued, "The fact is that the Great Fifth passed laws outlawing sectarian skirmishes, and passed laws ensuring the freedom of religion. This freedom was extended to not only the Buddhist schools, but also to the non-Buddhist ones. For example, he kept a Bonpo lama in his entourage to speak for the interests of the Bon movement. And on a personal level, he himself practiced so many non-Gelukpa lineages that the Gelukpas criticized him for straying from his roots."

These words of His Holiness are supported by historical evidence. Not only did the Great Fifth ban sectarianism, he even went so far as to give a large piece of land in the Lhasa valley to the Muslim traders from Kashmir, so that they could officially practice Islam when in Tibet.

This last comment by His Holiness—that the Great Fifth practiced so many non-Gelukpa lineages that the Gelukpas criticized him for straying from his roots—introduces a third controversy about the Great Fifth.

From his late teen years he had begun to take up many spiritual practices of the Nyingma School. By the middle of his life he was spending almost all of his time with Nyingmapa lamas, engaged in tantric rituals, study, meditation, teaching and other activities. In fact he is listed as the major holder for his generation of the Jangter Tradition, one of the principal Nyingma lineages. He once complained, "Gelukpas call me Nyingma, and the Nyingmas

call me Gelukpa. Neither accepts me as their own.” There is certainly some truth to this, at least insofar as the Gelukpas are concerned. For example, in the biographical encyclopedia of great Gelukpa lamas composed by Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen, the guru of the Eighth Dalai Lama, considerable space is dedicated to the lives of the First, Second, Third and Seventh Dalai Lamas. The Great Fifth’s life, however, receives just a few short and rather dry pages.

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Another controversy surrounding the Great Fifth concerns the death of Tulku Drakpa Gyaltzen, a famous Gelukpa lama of the period. He was one of the most prominent lamas of his day, and in fact in some circles was held in even higher regard than was the Great Fifth, for the Fifth at the time was still in his youth.

One day Tulku Drakpa Gyaltzen was mysteriously murdered. His followers claimed that the culprits were followers of the Fifth Dalai Lama, although there was no suggestion that the Great Fifth was personally even aware of the plot.

The theory was that the Great Fifth was being eclipsed by the towering stature of Tulku Drakpa Gyaltzen, and thus would greatly benefit from his death. As long as Tulku Drakpa Gyaltzen was alive the Fifth Dalai Lama would be number two in the Gelukpa School; his death allowed the Great Fifth to rise to the position of number one.

Whether or not the followers of the Great Fifth were involved in Tulku Drakpa Gyaltzen’s murder was never proved, but the rumors persisted.

The tale, already somewhat bizarre, now takes an even more exotic twist. It is said that the soul of the murdered monk wandered in the hereafter for some time as a disturbed spirit, creating havoc for the people of Lhasa. Eventually the Great Fifth contracted a group of Nyingmapa shamans to exorcize and pacify it, but they failed. He then contracted a group of Gelukpa shaman monks.

As a result of the rituals of this second group the spirit of Tulku Drakpa Gyaltzen was eventually pacified and transformed into the Dharma Protector Dorje Shugden.

This spirit was later adopted as a guardian angel by numerous Gelukpa monks who disapproved of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s manner of combining Gelukpa and Nyingmapa doctrines.

Although the Great Fifth tried to discourage the practice of worshipping this deity, it caught on with many monasteries. The practice continued over the generations to follow, and eventually became one of the most popular Protector Deity practices within the Gelukpa School. In particular, during the late 1800s, when four Dalai Lamas died young, it became an all-pervasive monthly practice within almost all provincial Gelukpa monasteries, and was especially popular with Gelukpa aristocratic families.

The controversy surrounding the murder of Tulku Drakpa Gyaltzen and the deity that emerged from his disturbed spirit has shadowed the Dalai Lama office until the present day. By the time the Tibetans came into exile in ¹⁹⁵⁹ worshipping Dorjey Shugden was still a common monthly practice of most Gelukpas.

In recent decades the present Dalai Lama has attempted to discourage the practice, but with little success. It is as strong today as ever, if not stronger; for with the Dalai Lama discouraging it in India, the Chinese are fully promoting it in Tibet.

Tibet watchers will be aware of this bizarre controversy, as it has even found its way onto the pages of Time and Newsweek, and has dozens of web pages dedicated to it.

Controversies aside, most Tibetans regard the Fifth as a truly great leader on both spiritual and secular fronts. Few blame him personally for the few small glitches that manifested during his lifetime.

After Desi Sonam Chopel passed away in 1657, a string of three viceroys followed, although none of them was as strong as Sonam Chopel had been. During this twenty-two-year period the Great Fifth participated strongly in the building of Tibet as a nation and the creation of the institutions that would ensure its cultural, political and spiritual success and prosperity.

He worked tirelessly as spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetans until the Earth Sheep Year, or 1679, when he requested Sangyey Gyatso, who was the nephew of his second viceroy, to accept the position of Desi. This was the second time that the Great Fifth had requested Sangyey Gyatso to serve him as viceroy. Sangyey Gyatso had declined the earlier request on the grounds that he was still too young for public service and wished to continue his spiritual training. Now, however, he accepted, for he could see that the

Great Fifth was of advanced years and was in need of his aid.

Not long after installing Desi Sangyey Gyatso as his viceroy, the Great Fifth officially retired from public life, passing all responsibility to the young Desi. From that time he left all temporal affairs to Desi Sangyey Gyatso, and dedicated the remainder of his life to meditation, teaching and writing.

Finally in the Water Dog Year, or 1682, the Great Fifth passed away.

As said earlier in this chapter, the Fifth Dalai Lama was a most prolific writer. The body of his complete collected works is as large as the collected writings of all other Dalai Lamas combined. He composed treatises not only on all the great Buddhist subjects, such as philosophy, meditation and so forth, but in addition composed numerous works on history, poetics, and other secular disciplines.

He is, however, most famous for the works known in Tibetan as *dak nang*, which could be translated as “pure revelations” or “pure visionary experiences.” His texts of this nature continue to be used by lamas and monks today in teaching and initiation ceremonies, as well as for other purposes such as empowerment of medicines, exorcisms, and so forth. I have attended numerous ceremonies by the present Dalai Lama in which he used some of the “pure revelation texts” of the Great Fifth.

I decided to include a work of this nature by the Fifth Dalai Lama here. He does not sign it with his ordinary monastic name—Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso—but rather draws on one of his many tantric names: Gongpa Zilnon Zhepa Tsai, or “Radiant Playful Laughter.” He uses this name for himself throughout a set of twenty-eight pure revelation texts known to the Tibetans as *Zabmo Sangwa Gyachen*, or “Profound Dharmas Sealed in Secrecy.”

However, rather than just use a bare translation, I thought it might be interesting to use a version of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s text that I found in the collected works of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The text in question is a tantric initiation manual. According to the colophon, the Great Thirteenth used the Fifth’s manual text for a tantric initiation ceremony that he led in Zhabgon Drochen Dekyiling Monastery of Nakchu. It was the Earth Bird Year, or 1909, and at the time the Thirteenth Dalai Lama was returning to Tibet after touring through Mongolia and China. Thus the Thirteenth essentially provides a reading of the Fifth’s

esoteric work, set in the practice environment within which it was intended. The initiation manual itself is fun, but just as interesting is the attitude of the Thirteenth toward the Fifth, and his comments in this regard. It thus perfectly suits my purposes here. Fortunately some bright spark in the audience kept notes, and we can be grateful that these notes were published in the Thirteenth's collected works after his death.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama clearly states the traditional attitude toward the pure visionary experiences of the Great Fifth on which the original text is based. As he put it, "The outer, inner and secret biographies of the great lamas of the past speak of three types of pure visionary experiences: those received in dreams; those received in meditation; and those received as direct mystical communications. This particular tradition belongs to the last of these. In fact, Gongpa Zilnon Zhepa Tsai (i.e., the Fifth Dalai Lama) was continually absorbed in the wisdom dance that experiences all appearances as pure vision, and was in constant communion with the oceanic deeds of the great aryas who are purified in spirit. Thus all his visionary experiences were pure direct cognitions."

As stated, the occasion of the Thirteenth's reading (and initiation ceremony) was a visit to the Nyingma monastery Zhabgon Drochen Dekyiling in 1909. When there he was requested to lead a healing initiation from the lineage of the Fifth Dalai Lama's mystical revelations. Thus the

Fifth's original initiation manual, created from his personal meditational visions, was used as the basis of the ceremony.

Ordinary Tibetans prefer receiving initiations of this nature to listening to conventional Buddhist teachings. Generally the session is conducted as a guided group meditation, with the presiding lama reading from the initiation manual and adding his own comments to elucidate the meanings. Because the reading is performed in the context of an actual healing empowerment ceremony, it is punctuated by occasional ceremonial adornments such as monks playing horns, beating drums and ringing bells.

Because the Fifth's text is born from his pure visionary experiences, the Thirteenth takes time to elucidate the extraordinary manner of their origin. As he explains, the Fifth received a vision of Guru Tsokyey Dorjey, or the great guru Padma Sambhava, the eighth-century founder of the Nyingma School of Tibetan

Buddhism. Numerous other great lamas of the Nyingma lineage also appeared in the vision. Padma Sambhava then spoke the text to him directly, and the Fifth transcribed it.

This type of text is also referred to in the Nyingma School as Terma, or “Treasure text.” Guru Padma Sambhava spoke it to the Great Fifth as a treasure transmission. Thus it could be called a composition by Guru Padma Sambhava, with the Great Fifth serving as his mystical stenographer. Almost all texts accredited to Padma Sambhava are in fact of this nature; they were not actually written by Padma Sambhava, but by later revealers who experienced a vision or dream in which Padma Sambhava spoke to them and they consequently transcribed his words. For example, a Tibetan prophecy often accredited to Padma Sambhava states: “When the iron bird flies and horses run on wheels, the Dharma will go to the land of the red man.” This prophecy has become widely quoted in America, and people think of Padma Sambhava as speaking or writing these words back in the mid-eighth century. In fact they were written by a Nyingma lama in the 1930s, after he experienced a dream vision in which Padma Sambhava spoke them to him.

The Fifth Dalai Lama’s text can best be appreciated if approached as a piece of mystical theater. The reading should be paced and fluid, with the emphasis on grasping the overall vision being expressed by the Great Fifth, without getting bogged down in the occasional obscure name or term that appears. The emphasis is not on intellectual or philosophical understanding, or even literary appreciation. Rather, one aims at an immersion into the oceanic mysticism that was the Great Fifth’s second nature.

A Healing Initiation Manual

Homage to the immortal guru Tsokyey Dorjey,

Embodiment of the three Buddhakayas,

He who is born magically from a lotus;

And homage to the nine Heruka deities Of the most secret Hayagriva mandala.

With reverence I bow to them And request their inspiring blessings.

1. A Ritual Text for the Healing Initiation and the Consecration of Medicines

Here, from among the many lineages of the Pure Visionary Tradition of the Fifth Dalai Lama that are related to Yangsang Gyachen, or “The Sealed Transmission of the Most Secret Mandala of Hayagriva,” is a ritual text on healing and the consecration of medicines in accordance with the mystical tradition coming from Lama Tsokyey Dorjey Kusum Rikdu, the Lotus-Born Guru who is an emanation of the three Buddhakayas.

The master who is leading the rite should begin the practice early in the morning. He commences with the usual procedures of taking refuge, generating the bodhimind and so forth, as outlined in the standard texts. He then performs the self-initiation rite, together with tsok, the tantric feast.

The disciples are invited to enter the room. They symbolically wash, flowers are given out and then offered, the tormas (sacrificial cakes) for the removal of hindrances is offered, and the protection circle is established.

When these preliminaries have been completed, the master explains the Dharma in general and then in particular (that is, he first explains the general nature of the Buddhist path, and then says something on this particular lineage).

2. A Survey of the Dharma in General and also of this Particular Tradition

Hark! In order to be of benefit to the countless living beings, whose number is as vast as the extent of the skies, one must first gain the state of peerless, complete,

perfect buddhahood. It is with this thought in mind that one receives initiation, the root of the Vajrayana path, and then engages in the various tantric yogas. Contemplate this theme, and by means of it generate the sublime bodhimind as the motivating factor. Also, cultivate the correct attitudes that are to be maintained when listening to the Dharma, as is explained in the many sutras and tantras, and thus listen correctly.

The Buddha, who himself achieved complete enlightenment, and who possessed profound skill and great compassion, taught the nectar-like Dharma in accordance with the mental tendencies, capacities and karmic predispositions of those to be trained. The doctrines that he taught may be categorized in various ways. An elaborate manner of doing so is to speak of the Nine Vehicles, or Yanas. Alternatively, these nine may be abbreviated into two: the Hinayana and Mahayana, or Small and Great Vehicles. In turn the second of these, the Mahayana, is often subdivided into two: the exoteric Causal Prajnaparamitayana (Transcendent Wisdom Vehicle); and the esoteric Resultant Guhyamantrayana (Secret Mantra Vehicle).

These two have the same basic focus, yet the latter is said to be superior to the former for four specific reasons: it is uncontrived; it has more methods at its disposal; its techniques are more easily accomplished; and it is especially designed for those of highest capacity. These four points are clearly outlined in *A Lamp on the Three Ways*.

As for the Resultant Secret Mantra Vehicle, it can be subdivided into two levels of practice: the External Vajrayana of three outer classes of tantras—kriya, charya and yoga; and the Internal Vajrayana, which refers to the anuttara yoga tantras, or “Highest Yoga” tantras.

The transmission to be dealt with in this treatise belongs to this second category.

Furthermore, the lineages of the Secret Mantra Vehicle as found in Tibet are of two distinct types: those transmitted through the Old Schools, or Nyingma, and those transmitted through the New Schools, or Sarma. The Old School lineages of the Hayagriva Tantra are superior to those found in the New Schools.

Within the Old Schools, there are three different lines of transmission of this tradition. These three are the “distant lineage” of the original instructions, and two “close lineages”: the “discovered treasure texts and the “profound pure

vision texts.” The system that is the subject here is from the pure visionary experiences of the White Lotus Holder Gongpa Zilnon Zhepa Tsai, that is, the Fifth Dalai Lama.

The outer, inner and secret biographies of the great lamas of the past speak of three types of pure visionary experiences: those received in dreams; those received in meditation; and those received as direct mystical communications. This particular tradition belongs to the last of these. In fact, Gongpa Zilnon Zhepa Tsai (i.e., the Fifth Dalai Lama) was continually absorbed in the wisdom dance that experiences all appearances as pure vision, and was in constant communion with the oceanic deeds of the great aryas who are purified in spirit. Thus all his visionary experiences were pure direct cognitions.

The tantric lineages that he received in this way he later transmitted to those of his more advanced disciples who possessed the karmic readiness. However, to ensure that immature beings would not be able to misuse these mystical teachings, the Great Fifth marked them with the seal of secrecy in the same way that the great guru Dharmodgata had sealed the prajnaparamita teachings seven times.

Therefore the tradition has come to be known far and wide as Zabcho Gyachen, or “The Profound Dharmas of the Sealed Transmission.”

There are numerous scriptures in this “sealed” genre that were written by Gongpa Zilnon Zhepa Tsai. The scripture to be dealt with here belongs to those marked by the seal of the mystic knot. It should not be given to those practitioners who are dominated by indecisiveness or by negative preconceptions.

3. The Story of the Mystical Origins of this Profound Transmission

It was the eleventh day of the twelfth month of the Water Ox Year (i.e., late 1673 or early 1674). The Fifth Dalai Lama was performing various mystical rituals with the Nyingma yogi Jangter Dakpo Rikzin Chenpo Tulku. The fundamental structure of the procedures was based on the mystical lineages of Guru Tsokyey Dorjey Kusum Rikdu, with tormas to remove hindrances in accordance with the Lama Gongdu tradition, and also healing rites accomplished by means of sheepshaped effigies, *etc.*

During the ritual, the Fifth Dalai Lama experienced the following vision.

In the space before him appeared Guru Tsokyey Dorjey, seated at the center of a vast sun disc. He was locked in sexual union with his consort. To his left appeared the yogi Chogyal Tashi Tobgyal, seated on a thick cushion, dressed in white clothing, pressing down on the earth with his right hand, and holding his left at his heart in the mudra of supreme generosity.

To his (Guru Tsokyey Dorjey's) right, sitting slightly lower, appeared the yogi Chogyal Rikzin Ngagi Wangpo Dey. He was seated on a moon disc, was dressed in a mystical hat and occult shawl, and was wearing the robes of a monk. His right hand was at his heart. His left, poised above his lap in the mudra of meditation, held a longevity vase.

During the phase of the ritual when the life energies of the five buddha families are visualized as being summoned, light-rays suddenly burst forth from the heart of Guru Tsokyey Dorjey. The tips of the rays bore the five dhyani buddhas and five families of dakinis, each in the color of the respective direction of the light-ray. The dakinis were carrying longevity arrows with auspicious threads hanging from the tips, and as they waved them the Fifth Dalai Lama actually felt the threads caress the crown of his head.

When the ritual arrived at the phase when the tormas and sheepshaped effigies are carried outside and discarded, Chogyal Wangpo Dey rose from his seat and, brandishing a mystic dagger, performed a wrathful tantric dance. His appearance was extremely fierce, and all hindrances and obstructing elements were immediately expelled.

At that point the life energies of the collection of the three Buddhakayas were drawn forth. The lama who was dressed in white then reached out. In his hand was a longevity arrow draped in threads, with which he made a summoning gesture.

The names of two lamas, Yolmo Tulku and Zurchen Choying Rangdol, resounded from the sky, and the Fifth Dalai Lama's attention moved over to Lama Wangpo Dey. Instantly Yolmo Tulku appeared to his (Lama Wangpo Dey's) right. He was standing in the royal posture and was dressed in white. His long hair was tied back in a braid, and with his right hand he was turning a rosary made of raksha beads. To Wangpo Dey's left, sitting on a slightly lower cushion, was Lama Zurchen Choying Rangdol (the Fifth Dalai Lama's main

guru in the Hayagriva yogas). He was dressed in the red robes of a monk, wore the pointed hat of a pandit, and was seated in the meditation posture.

Suddenly Lama Zurchen stood up, folded his hands together at his heart, and transmitted the oral instructions of this unique lineage.

When he had finished speaking, a stream of nectars flowed forth from the healing vase in Guru Tsokyey Dorjey's hand. This came to the crown of the Fifth Dalai Lama's head and entered his body, completely filling it. He had the sensation that his central energy channel became as firm as an iron arrow, and had red half-vajras at the top and bottom. He later commented that this sensation continued for almost the entire day.

At the conclusion of the vision, the entire assembly of gurus, including Guru Tsokyey Dorjey, dissolved into Lama Wangpo Dey. Wangpo Dey then placed his hand on the Fifth Dalai Lama's heart and said, "Do not forget the instructions that have been transmitted to you." He then transformed into a ball of light and dissolved into the Fifth Dalai Lama. The Fifth experienced a strong sense of bliss and void united.

That then is the story of the origins of this unusual tantric legacy, a tradition born from auspicious conditions and the unfolding of a great mass of virtue, a wondrous and sacred transmission having the powerful blessings of the revealed "close lineage" of the omniscient Dorjey Tokmey Tsai (i.e., the Fifth Dalai Lama).

As for the procedures of performing the longevity initiation that is the central pillar of this tradition, these involve two topics: the activities to be performed by the guru alone; and the activities that involve the disciples.

4. The Activities to be Performed by the Guru

The preliminary activities to be performed by the guru have been explained above: taking refuge, generating the bodhimind, performing the self-initiation ritual, making the tsok offering, and so forth. Beyond that, his functions involve the participation of the disciples and therefore will be explained below.

5. The Activities that Involve the Disciples

The initiating master begins by instructing the disciples: “In order to receive the blessings of the mandala divinities, who are to be seen as inseparable from the guru, you should first make the symbolic offering of the universe (i.e., the mandala offering).”

The disciples do so. The master then continues: “You have performed the symbolic offering well. Now you should request the initiation. But in order to do so you should first generate the following mental image.

“This house in which we are seated is not to be regarded as an ordinary dwelling. Rather, see it as a mystical tantric mansion standing in the legendary pure land of Ngayab Ling.

“The guru is sitting at the center of this tantric mansion. Although in nature he is your personal guru, visualize him as having the form of Guru Tsokyey Dorjey, the Lotus-Born Guru, embodiment of all the buddhas of the past, present and future.” Generate undivided conviction and make the following request: Kye!!!
O guru, embodiment of the three kayas,

Grant us the holy initiation.

Grant us protection from the dangers

Of sudden, premature death.

When this has been repeated three times, the guru admonishes the disciples to create the following visualization, while taking heartfelt refuge in the Three Jewels and generating the bodhimind aspiration to highest enlightenment.

In the space before you appears the guru inseparable from the principal deity of the mandala. He is surrounded by myriads of buddhas, gurus, meditational deities, dakas, dakinis and Dharma protectors. Generate the firm determination to practice in accordance with their guidance and not to transgress their words.

Fixing your mind single-pointedly on this image, repeat the following verses after me three times, Amitabha as the dharmakaya, lord of life energies,

Avalokiteshvara as the sambhogakaya, the

Bodhisattva of Compassion,

And Padma Sambhava as the nirmanakaya, tamer of living beings:

I take refuge in these three supreme beings.

In order to be of maximum benefit to the living beings

Whose number is as vast as the extent of space,

I will practice according to the ways Established by these three sublime beings,
Embodiments of the three Aryas.

I will free all living beings

From the dangers of premature death,

And will lead them to the stage Of supreme, peerless enlightenment.

When this has been said three times, generate the confidence that refuge and the
bodhimind have been made firm.

Then create the visualization of the field of merit:

Guru, meditation divinities, dakas and dakinis,

I summon you to come forth now And sit before me on these thrones Each of
which is made from A sun, a moon and a lotus flower.

I bow to you with body, speech and mind,

Make outer, inner and secret offerings,

Confess every weakness, negativity and obscuration,

And rejoice in the practice of the Secret Mantra Vehicle.

Pray, turn the Dharma wheel of the Secret Mantra Vehicle,

That so matures and frees the mind.

Do not pass away into parinirvana,

But remain for the benefit of living beings

Dedicated for the benefit of living beings.

All good qualities of my body, speech and mind I myself will dedicate with impunity For the benefit of the world.

May insight into the pure vajra knowledge arise.

Each of the disciples now must develop the vision of himself or herself as a mandala divinity. This is done by means of the following liturgy: From the sphere of the dharmadhatu,

In the nature of great compassion,

My mind appears as the syllable hrih.

This transforms into a pure realm

For both vessel and contents,

The legendary Lake Sindhu, at the center of which Is a throne made from lotus, sun and moon.

There I sit as Guru Tsokyey Dorjey,

Having one face and two hands.

My appearance is that of a sixteen year old,

And my face is white tinged with red.

Above the top of my crown protrusion Is a tiny green horse's head,

And above that, in nature Amitabha Buddha,

Is a small ball of radiant light.

My right hand holds a vajra,

My left a longevity vase,

And I sit in sexual union with the consort Chandali, who is white tinged with red.

She holds a longevity arrow and vase,

And her arms are wrapped around me.

Both of us are draped in ornaments Of jewels and human bone,

We wear silks and flower garlands, and Are sitting amidst a halo of five hues.

The three syllables—om, ah and hum —

Stand at our crowns, throats and hearts.

At the heart of the consort

Is a sun and moon disc surrounded

By the syllables of the life mantra.

Above the male's crown is a moon disc, and on it Sits the sambhogakaya form of Avalokiteshvara.

At his heart, on a sun and moon disc,

Is the nirmanakaya emanation Padma Sambhava.

Surrounding the male and the consort Are countless dakas and dakinis.

The master then picks up the longevity arrow and calls forth the blessings of the field of merit: HUM! HRIH! Guru Tsokyey Dorjey,

He who is complete in the three Buddhakayas,

Please empower this secret mandala.

Cause these substances which produce longevity To glow with a special power.

Bestow the powerful initiations And release the exalted powers.

Om ah hum huh vajra guru ayur jnana siddhi phal abhishaya ah ah.

The master then touches the statue to the head of each of the disciples while
saying: HRIH! Guru Tsokyey Dorjey

saying. 11111. Guru Tsogyel Dorje,
Embodiment of the three Buddhakayas,

Bestow the powerful blessings

Of the physical marks and signs of perfection

Upon these trainees of good fortune.

May they gain the life power Of the immortal vajra body.

Om ah hum hrih vajra guru ayur jnana siddhi phal rema bhum hum jaka ah ah.

The master should recite this mantra three times, with the disciples repeating it after him. He then touches the rosary to the throat of each disciple while saying: HRIH! Guru Tsokyey Dorjey,

Embodiment of the three Buddhakayas,

Bestow the powerful blessings of divine speech Upon these trainees of good fortune.

May they gain the life power Of pure, faultless speech.

Om ah hum hrih vajra guru ayur jnana siddhi phal hum vamkha abhishiccha ah.

The mirror, symbol of the vajra mind, is touched to the heart of each of the disciples: HRIH! Guru Tsokyey Dorjey,

Embodiment of the three Buddhakayas,

Bestow the powerful blessings Of the mind of bliss and void united Upon these trainees of good fortune.

May they gain the life power Of an undistorted mind.

Om ah hum hrih vajra guru ayur jnana siddhi phal hum chitta abhishiccha hum.

The initiation vase is touched to the crown of the head of each disciple:

OM! This vase is the tantric mansion.

From it flows forth ambrosial nectars Of the deities of the three Buddhakayas,

Which wash away the stains of delusion And of grasping at the appearance of duality From within trainees of good fortune.

May they gain the life power Of the immortal vajra wisdom.

Om ah hum hrih vajra guru ayur jnana siddhi phal hum kalasha abhishiccha om ah hum hrih.

Thus by the power of the longevity initiation, the ambrosial nectars of immortality flow forth. They fill the body of each of the disciples and overflow from the crown aperture. The overflow crystallizes above the crown of each disciple and forms into the shape of a horse's head, green in color and releasing neighing sounds. Above this is red Hayagriva, holding a club in his right hand and showing the threatening mudra with his left. Tiny vajras and sparks of flame emanate from Hayagriva's body, forming a ring of protection around the body of each of the disciples.

The master now places the longevity arrow in the hand of each of the disciples and says: HRIH! Now you have a special body Ablaze with vajra wisdom Emitting sparks of flame as hot As the fire at the end of time.

Thus you have gained protection

From the negative forces and hindrances That wait in watch for the chance to harm.

Thus one concludes the steps of the method for attaining the blessings and initiations that produce healing and longevity by relying upon the Hayagriva lineages of Guru Tsokyey Dorjey as clarified and enhanced by the pure visionary experiences of Gongpa Zilnon Zhepa Tsai, the Fifth Dalai Lama.

A Song on the Path to Enlightenment

The Great Fifth is most renowned for his tantric writings based on secret visions and mystical channeling, as typified by the above text.

However, he is equally loved for his spiritual poetry. Therefore, for a second selection of his writings I have chosen something from this genre. In particular, it is a poem drawn from the meditation text for which he is most famed, the Lam Rim Jampel Zhelung, or Wisdom Teachings on the Steps to Enlightenment. The Great Fifth concludes each section of this work with several verses of poetry. These verses, when extracted and strung together, serve as a poetic condensation of the Great Fifth's spiritual teachings.

In particular, the Great Fifth's Lam Rim Jampel Zhelung is a text inspired by the Third Dalai Lama's Essence of Refined Gold. Readers will perhaps remember this latter text, because I included a section of it in the chapter on the Third.

The words "Lam Rim" in the title of the Lam Rim Jampel Zhelung identify it as being in the spiritual lineage of the eleventh-century Indian sage Atisha, the founder of the Kadampa School of Tibetan Buddhism. In other words, it uses as its platform the linguistic environment and spiritual structure introduced by Atisha. As we saw earlier, Atisha was the guru of Lama Drom Tonpa, an early incarnation of the Dalai Lamas.

Meypa! To hear the melodious sounds of Dharma From the mouth of a qualified spiritual master, And to listen thus with an ear unobstructed By the faults of being an immature vessel, Arouses the store of creative energy Developed over many aeons.

This Dharma lineage possessing four great qualities,

The heart essence of all the Buddhist masters

Who appeared in India and also in Tibet,

Is a medicine beneficial to all living beings,

A magic elixir, a path most rare to find.

O fortunate ones who take up this supreme way
By means of listening, contemplation and meditation,
Extend your vision beyond the insignificant things
That benefit this one short life alone;
Instill the mind with a sense of firm detachment
And look to the enduring treasures of the spirit.

Find yourself a hermitage large enough for just one person
On a high mountain far from human habitation,
A dwelling fenced by meadows, forests and flowers,

With your shadow as your only companion.

The laughing sounds of running water
And the gentle chatter of wild deer:

These are the only sounds you need hear.

Then there is no chatter born from the three delusions
To act as a thorn to meditation.

Living like this in solitary retreat,

Wearing simple clothing and eating whatever comes,

One avoids the faults of a deceptive life.

All activities of body, speech and mind
Gradually produce only positive energy
And one arrives at the peak of aspirations
To accomplish the very highest of goals.

Meypa! We see as most kind the person

Who helps those harmed by the great enemy poverty

By giving them food, drink, clothing or other things;

Yet how immeasurably kind is the spiritual teacher Who places the jewel of eternal inner peace And knowledge in the palm of our hand, Thus delivering us to freedom from all the countless fears And pains found throughout the three worlds?

Even the state of mere nirvana is rare,

So how much more so that of final buddhahood?

What then of the embodiments of the buddhas Who guide us to that most rare of attainments?

Should we not show them supreme consideration?

And when faults do appear in their deeds,

Should we not merely regard these As projections of our own imperfect mind?

The root of spiritual fulfillment is simple enough: Cultivate pure perception of your spiritual teachers; Cultivate the pure attitude that practices as instructed; And cultivate the key of making every moment essential.

Meypa! In many past lives we have owned and enjoyed All the various worldly possessions and glories, But still we are bereft of inner peace.

O foolish mind, you see this, and yet you continue to hold Food, wealth and possessions as essential.

In past lives and even right now

The eight worldly concerns have held great sway,

Like a ghost in the heart, causing us to see

Some things as white, some as black, and some as gray.

Misery is mistaken for pleasure and excitement,

And higher goals are tossed away on the wind.

This precious human life, a boat that can carry us To eternal happiness and higher knowledge, Has this one time been gained.

If we do not use it now to travel To the jewel island of enlightenment,

And instead allow ourselves to die empty-handed,

Are not the very veins of our heart corrupt?

Meypa! This life is driven by karma and delusion,

And is pointed at death from the very moment of birth.

It veers not from this course for even one moment.

What is more foolish than ignoring this fact?

Death does not wait for a particular day, month or year, Nor care if its prey is young, mature or old.

Intellectually we accept this, but somehow we nonetheless Place the time of our own death far away in our mind.

O you with eyes to see, why are you so blind?

We miss what would be truly beneficial to us And instead chase after what is of limited benefit.

But beware: When death comes you must leave all behind And alone enter into the treacherous hereafter.

Meypa! Then those who during their lives mainly created Negative karma and harmful deeds Are drawn into iron houses filled with fire and flame, With heat so intense that every sense seems on fire; Or they fall into rivers of blood,

And are cut, chopped and crushed.

To know this and yet not be apprehensive:

Has not a demon captured your heart?

Others driven by negative karma find themselves in dark fields of ice whipped
by freezing winds, The instruments of torture freezing to the touch.

Their bodies become so cold that they break and shatter Into hundreds and
thousands of tiny freezing pieces.

Right now we find even a small pain unbearable;

Should we not then look now to the cause Of the terrible miseries of lower
rebirth, Which is the inner enemy, our own negative karma?

And should we not cultivate the ways of transcendence? Those who see this and
do not swoon with passion, Are they not made of mindless stone?

Right now we make many efforts merely to acquire The things that benefit this
short life alone, Such as food and drink; and we endure many hardships for
them.

Why then not now take up the effort to attain

The state of final spiritual liberation, that benefits forever?

Why not face the hardships whereby the sufferings Of a hundred million
lifetimes are left behind?

But no! You do not make the effort to arouse

Even one goosebump of concern

For this great abyss that falls to terror,

And instead, O foolish mind, you dedicate your genius To the vain pursuit of the eight worldly concerns.

Meypa! This unstable human life is brief as lightning;

Why squander it in vain pursuits

Such as social status and petty indulgences?

Better instead to use it to discover

The place of safety from unbearable samsaric pain.

That haven is refuge in the Three Unfailing Jewels,

The buddhas, Dharma and sangha, for these point the way To highest happiness and liberation.

Be delighted that you have met with them,

For that meeting is a product of much good karma Generated over millions of past lives.

Previously in this and in previous lifetimes We experienced untold dissatisfaction and pain Because of our inner forces of negativity.

Is that not enough? Arouse the inner force of the heart Determined to use wisely whatever remains of this life, And to establish the basis of higher being forever.

Meypa! Blinded by the thick cataracts of ignorance We know not what to cultivate nor what to avoid.

We clean our face and clothing with great care,

But forget to clean up our inner life.

Most people pass their life gathering Ephemeral possessions that soon will be

most people pass their time gathering ephemeral possessions that soon will be lost.

They exert great effort and endure hardships for them,

Yet these things are like traces left by a bird in flight,

Or like images drawn on flowing water.

The worldly norms of harming enemies and protecting loved ones
Are like the pains and pleasures experienced in a dream.

When we pass our life in the eight worldly concerns,

All our works just become more fuel for the hells.

Perhaps it is reasonable that an ignorant fool
Would give his or her life to such meaningless pursuits;
But how tragic when those who know of enlightenment do so
And throw ultimate aims to the wind!

Kah yeyl The seeds that are planted in spring
Bring an according harvest in fall.

In the same way, white and black karmic deeds
Produce according results of happiness and pain.

Contemplate this basic spiritual principle
And draw it into every aspect of your life.

Take up the practice of karmic purification
By means of the four opponent forces:
The power of invoking the Three Supreme Jewels;

The power of regretting karmic wrongs that were done;

The determination to transcend negative ways; and
The practice of specific spiritual remedies.

These four uproot the forces of negative karma
That have ruled us for long as instincts from within.

Meypa! After lying for months in darkness in the womb,

With slush and slime embracing us on every side

With earth and time embracing us on every side,

We must face the terrible pain of our birth.

Then for a moment we have a body blossoming with youth;

But soon hair and eyebrows turn white as snow,

Our physical radiance becomes dark as night,

And our posture, once so straight, bends like a bow.

Death presses upon us, and the objects of the senses Lose all of their appeal.

Medicines, divinations, prayers and rituals:

Nothing helps, and life's power Fades faster with every passing day.

Eventually the mere sight of us upsets the minds Of even our nearest and dearest of friends.

This is a call from the messengers of death.

At the present moment this mind seems inseparable From the perishable aggregate known as the body; But soon a corpse will lie on a deathbed,

And the mind will travel on alone Into the treacherous path of the hereafter.

We never want to meet with unpleasantries,

But unpleasant experiences fall like rain;

And we carefully collect friends and possessions,

Yet they scatter like clouds into all directions.

The body may enjoy the glories of a god,

But the mind experiences the sufferings of the hells;

And when the signs of death befall a god,

Even a host made of iron can shatter

Even a heart made of iron can shatter.

Just like a bird flying in the sky

Must eventually come back down to earth,

We may climb to the top of the world,

But again we must return.

Even the gods of sun and moon can fall And descend to realms of darkness,

If they are bereft of transcendental wisdom.

When this is the case, has the time not come then for you To reverse the momentum of the cycle?

Meypa! In countless lives since time without beginning We traveled with delusion and called it a friend.

It has never left us even for a moment,

Following us through every realm of rebirth.

But when it is stirred by the wind of negative karma, Delusion gives rise to waves of pain.

Ah, cyclic patterns that just go on forever!

Observe them, and see delusion as the foe.

A soldier who overcomes an ordinary enemy in battle Has a sense of accomplishment and feels like a hero.

Would it not be good, then, to become a true hero By conquering delusion, the enemy within?

We have now attained an auspicious human life

And learned the key points of the three higher trainings.

Thus we hold now in our very hands the power To destroy the sources of

suffering from within.

If we do not act now before death strikes us down,

Then alas, again and again will the cycles of suffering prevail.

Meypa! A seed of karma and delusion is planted On the mindstream in a previous life.

When activated by desire and craving,

It becomes the force creating a future life.

When an aggregate conditioned by name and form Adorned by the elements and sensory spheres Experiences contact and sensation with the sensory objects, The circles of samsaric birth, aging and death ensue.

In this way the mode of cause and effect operates Through the twelve links of dependent arising, And the world of samsara comes into play.

Would it not be good to reverse the process?

Meypa! Pure self-discipline is the earth in which to plant the seed; A mind made strong with meditative power is The moisture and nutrient to be used; And the wisdom of insight is the sun that ripens the crop.

In this way one's spiritual path matures,

Producing an inner harvest that utterly eradicates Every semblance of spiritual poverty.

When one makes careful awareness the guard at the gate,

Focuses clearly with the thousand eyes of meditative absorption

And throws the hundred point diamond scepter Of wisdom that understands the non-self nature, One guts the monster of misconstruing the world.

Therefore plant the wish-fulfilling tree of the three higher trainings In the very center of your cluttered, busy life.

The hot flames of misery will be unable to touch it,

And it will grow into a rich and beautiful garden Producing everlasting happiness and the highest of joys.

Meypa! However, to climb up the jeweled ladder

Of the precious three higher trainings

In order to escape the ocean of worldly sufferings

And then enter the mansion of personal nirvana oneself

While ignoring the plight of all other sentient beings,

What could be more shameless?

All have been your kind mother in a past life,

Yet they are locked in the terrible prison of samsara,

Are weakened, and they cry out in pain.

Meditate on all others as having been A kind mother to you in many past lives,
And arouse the strong wind of love and compassion.

Use this to sail the boat of universal responsibility That carries the weight of
benefiting all living beings, And travel directly to the jewel isle of omniscience.

For untrained people, those who behave with enmity Are like a sharp thorn
pricking at the heart.

Train yourself in the great patience born

From exchanging self-cherishing for universal love.

One uproots the mind of partiality that sees some people As friends, others as
strangers and still others as foes, And learns to see all as friends, relatives and
loved ones.

Transcend the mind that holds self above others And with the key of meeting

harms with goodness Open the door that releases spontaneous
accomplishment Of beneficial happiness to both self and others.

Fulfilling both at once in this way,

Ah, what a marvelous miracle.

Meypa! The bitter tastes of hardships and difficulties Are but sources of warmth
to ripen the seeds Of your own inner strength and understanding.

The approach taken by the aryas of the three ways

Is to face the sharp weapons of difficult people and situations

With an attitude that sees those who harm

As having been your kind parent in a previous life.

Drink the nectar of compassion for them;

Rely on the indestructible universal mind.

Accomplished bodhisattvas are rare as sky flowers,

The Mahayana path is vast as the sky,

And the teachings of the sages of India and Tibet Are as deep as the deepest of
oceans.

However, these days most teachers' wisdom Is as thin as dry grass,

And most students' minds are as dark as the night.

Therefore we have to proceed with care

In using the fingers of the enlightenment teachings

To untie the hard-to-untie knots at the heart.

Listen closely to the treasury of instructions And gain an inexhaustible source of
knowledge.

Meypa! Arouse the mind of fierce generosity And dedicate all to the benefit of the world, To the living beings of unrepayable kindness.

One instantly gains an inexhaustible treasure And plants the seeds of the highest of joys.

The perennial stress of being in need Is not something that falls on oneself alone, For every living being is prone to it.

The generous mind automatically arises When one contemplates this simple truth, And contemplates how all have been a mother to you.

Because of karma collected in the past,

The present situation is as it is

(With myself having surplus and another a lack).

Therefore, with the aspiration to benefit all others,

I should practice the paramita of sublime generosity.

Meypa! In the garden of this precious human life,

The wish-fulfilling tree is the three types of discipline.

It is laden with the weight of nirvana's rich harvest And drips with the juice of a hundred joyful tastes.

Although generosity practiced for countless ages Brings happiness and prosperity here and hereafter, We must combine it with the practice of self-discipline In order to ensure rebirth as a human or a god, And thus continue along the enlightenment path.

The chariot of this human life we have gained When driven carelessly gets stuck in the mud.

If we do not maintain it well through self-discipline And use it to ride to the plateau of eternal joy, Surely its driver is a demon.

Meypa! The valley forests of positive karma That were built up over many past

lives Are easily destroyed by the terrible fires Of a single burst of anger, Piling
burned stumps of negative energy Right up to the top of the world.

Indeed, a source of great suffering is the mind Unable to calmly face difficult
people.

The steady stream of rocky results that strike us

Have fallen down from the mountain of our own bad karma.

Why put the blame on somebody else?

Should those locked in the prison of samsara Not use the experiences to
eliminate the cause?

Who could criticize such a response?

We are at war with the very source of our sufferings;

We should wear the strong armor of the patient mind That cannot be penetrated
by any sharp weapon, Neither physical blows nor harsh, cruel words.

It is a most marvelous method; and in the end,

It carries us to nirvana itself.

Meypa! The tastes of the pleasures that are gained From sloth, excessive sleep
and mental lassitude Are useless distractions bringing no fulfillment, No matter
how much one indulges in them,

Like drinking salt water to quench a thirst.

Joyous effort, on the other hand, brings Great success in every field.

For example, a soldier who makes great effort May prevail over another who is
stronger than he; His enthusiasm gives him the edge.

Thus to bring a weak mind to the task Of accomplishing buddhahood is a
mistake.

Appreciate the brief nature of human life And strike with the iron of the

paramita Of joyous effort, that does not waste a single day, But dedicates every moment to the task Of Dharma practice, that produces eternal joy.

Doing that, one most certainly will travel To the precious land of highest liberation.

Meypa! Look at the faults of the five obstructions To the attainment of meditative absorption And behold the benefits of applying the eight remedies; Cultivate the nine stages of shamatha, or meditative focus, And give rise to a state of samadhi that is Blissful, luminous and beyond conceptuality.

Familiarity with the practice of meditation Can quieten the activity of the coarse delusions And give rise to a sense of great bliss.

However, persistence in the application soon reveals The mundane nature of this level of attainment.

Some get stuck in the bliss, and do not achieve Even a common level of samadhi, But nonetheless claim to have attained Buddhahood itself, beyond samsara and nirvana.

They should take a look inside themselves.

The scriptures state that the attainment of samadhi Is the key to clairvoyance and miracle powers.

But hoping to gain these without making the effort,

Just feeding one's belly and basking in the sun,

Is like trying to get oil by pressing on a stone.

Kyema! In the past one's mind has been indulgent and lazy, And one's precious human life lost to empty pursuits.

Go now to a place far from the crowds And delight in the practice of meditation.

When meditative bliss pervades both body and mind,

It is a simple matter to make every moment spiritual.

When this crucial point is achieved,

Famed buddhahood is not far away.

Meypa! The cataracts of the dense darkness of confusion
Obscure knowledge of the nature of the self;
We mistakenly place “I” somewhere on body and mind,
Like a snake seen in the dark is mistaken for a rope.

All misery and suffering that exists
Arises on the basis of this colossal error.

Misapprehending the nature of the self,

The magician’s creations are mistaken as real,

Like the pleasures and pains experienced in a dream.

Thus one chases after the illusions of the mind
And distorts experience of everything in the world.

Ah, the problems that arise when ignorance prevails!

No matter how much we search we never will find
Even a hint of this much-cherished “I”,
Just as a bird in flight leaves no trace.

In the end the search leads to the void,

Giving rise to the wisdom that directly perceives
The emptiness nature primordially there.

It also gives rise to knowledge of how
Even though all things lack true self-nature,
On the conventional level all things nonetheless
Operate as illusions and magical creations
In accordance with the infallible laws of cause and effect;
Both the pain of the fires of the deepest hells

And the pleasures experienced by humans and gods

Manifest in reliance on their individual karmic causes.

From the beginning everything is mere emptiness;

The conventional status of things is created
Simply by the process of labels and

names.

This is the crux of the Middle View,

And, realizing it, one gives rise to a wisdom

That is like a sharp sword that cuts the chains of misapprehension
Of the nature of self, as well as its offspring, The delusions and afflicted emotions, and the
karma they support.

Even though this wisdom is the one path Traversed by all who achieve aryaship
in any tradition, These days there are many so-called “lineage holders”

Who lack any true experience of it.

Their words on the subject are utterly useless,

Like measurements made in the dark.

However, there are also numerous qualified masters Who speak from the sphere
of authentic realization When they teach this profound aspect of truth.

When I think of them I am filled with joy And send out clouds of devotion from
my heart.

Meypa! With joyous energy empowering one’s heart And spontaneous wisdom
driving the mind, One engages in these profound six paramitas And travels to the
peak of personal perfection.

Then, in order to be of benefit to others,

One avoids attachment to personal bliss and nirvana And engages in the four
ways to ripen others’ minds, Releasing a steady stream of all-white deeds That
flows with the waters of eight excellent qualities.

Like the garuda eagle with its two strong wings That flies in the sky high over
the world, Spread the wings of method and wisdom And fly high over both
samsara and nirvana; Travel now to the land of the three Buddhakayas.



Tsangyang Gyatso, the Sixth Dalai Lama. Courtesy of the Swedish Humanistic Research Council, "Saviours of Mankind," The Sven Hedin Foundation, Statens Etnografiska Museum, Stockholm, Sweden.

The Sixth Dalai Tama: Tibet's Immortal Lover

More literature exists in English on the Sixth Dalai Lama than on any of the other early incarnations. The reason is simple enough: He is the only Dalai Lama who not only rejected the lifestyle of a monk, but in addition he created a sexual scandal almost every day of his adult life.¹

Yes, rather than live as a Buddhist monk the Sixth Dalai Lama became Central Asia's most famous playboy. Tibetans think of him much as we in the West think of Romeo or Casanova, albeit with a somewhat more mystical air. This mystical slant comes from the Sixth's association with the Buddhist tantras, and in particular with the extraordinary sexual yogas that can be adopted from these tantras. As he once himself put it in a verse,

One of them, for example, reads,

I swooned at the youthful beauty
Of the daughter of a powerful lord;

I sighed at a delectable peach
Poised on the very tip of the tree.

And another states,

My mind races everywhere with fury,
And I get not a moment of sleep;

For I am filled with a great melancholy
When my love is not with me.

According to Desi Sangyey Gyatso, on the tenth day of the second month of 1682, the Great Fifth entered into what he declared would be a long retreat. Usually in Tibet retreats of this nature lasted for somewhere between four to six years, although even twelve years was not unheard of. However, shortly after beginning the retreat the Dalai Lama manifested signs of serious illness. The medicines prescribed by his doctors did not seem to help.

On the morning of the twenty-second day of that same month the Great Fifth called his principal attendants to his bedside and said to them, "All collected phenomena are impermanent. This is not something to be feared. In my present condition, you need not listen to anything my doctors say to you, for medicine has its limitations. The time for me to pass away could be close. Should I suddenly die, keep my death secret for some years. Do not be saddened.

Conditions will ripen and before long you will find my reincarnation. The place and parents of my rebirth will become clearly known. This is due to past connections that we all have. Even if several children show indications of being me, you nonetheless will make the right choice easily.”

He concluded with a warning, “Earlier inner and outer conditions have presented threats to destroy what has been accomplished in terms of spiritual and temporal affairs.” In other words, he feared that public knowledge of his death might result in the breakdown of his newly established Tibetan administration, which is known in Tibetan as the Ganden Podrang Sizhi Zungtrek, or “Joyful Government of Spiritual and Temporal Affairs in Harmony.”

To the Desi he said, “I have undertaken this retreat in order to benefit both spiritual and temporal spheres. No matter what happens, your work and prayers will be successful. You have good knowledge and should decide by yourself what needs to be done for the well-being of both spiritual and temporal matters in the nation, as well as for the Tibetan people. Work diligently and you will bring benefits for both the short and long terms.”

When he had given these instructions to Desi Sangyey Gyatso, he looked at him affectionately and said, “Base your decisions on what I have instructed in the past. Do this and we two shall remain in contact throughout our lifetimes until great enlightenment manifests in the world.”

At this point Desi Sangyey Gyatso broke out in tears and begged the Great Fifth to use his tantric powers to increase his lifespan. The Dalai Lama replied, “Do not be upset. I am just saying these things in case something should happen to me. Don’t worry. Right now I seem to be getting better.” He then sent out the Desi, called in his other close monks, and gave much the same advice to them. They too requested him not to pass away, saying, “The Desi is still too young to take care of matters, and we would not know how to advise him.”

They all then sat with him over the hours to follow. When they saw that his passing was inevitable, they all pledged a solemn oath to him to keep his death a secret until signs indicated that the knowledge should be made public.

The very pleasant and refreshing innocence of the Tibetan tradition here comes across in Desi Sangyey Gyatso’s account of the event. He writes, “We then formally petitioned him to take a quick rebirth, adding the request that his

reincarnation not take place among any of our relatives, for this would create doubts in the minds of the people.”

The Fifth Dalai Lama looked at them for the last time and said, “Do not worry. These requests are easy to fulfill. However, you must remember to keep my death a complete secret, and go on with things as though I am still alive and in retreat.”

“How will we know what to do?” they asked.

He replied, “All the Dalai Lama incarnations relied upon Palden Lhamo, the Oracle Goddess, for their inspiration during times of doubt. Also from my side Palden Lhamo has been one of my main guardian angels throughout my life. Therefore, whenever you have doubts on what course to follow, perform a ball divination in front of an image of Palden Lhamo.” Having said the above words, the Great Fifth passed away.

The reference here to “ball divination” refers to placing different answers to a given question inside small balls made out of barley dough and then rolling these balls forcefully around inside a bowl, until one of them is thrown out by the force of momentum. The process is traditionally performed in front of a consecrated image of Palden Lhamo, so that the ball that is ejected from the bowl is determined by divine intervention, and not by mere physics. As we saw in the case of the search for the young Fifth Dalai Lama, this method of divination had been used by the Panchen Lama and Zhabdrung Rinpochey when they had to make a final choice between several candidates and were unsure of which seemed the most appropriate.

A moment after the Fifth Dalai Lama passed away, the Desi swooned and fell unconscious on the floor. The Dalai Lama was lying down on his right side when he passed away, and was in the position that the Buddha had assumed at the moment of death. However, when the Desi recovered he was amazed to see that the Fifth’s body had magically changed position, and was now sitting upright in the meditation posture, his legs crossed, and his hands folded in his lap.

As instructed, the death was kept secret from all but an inner circle. The traditional prayer ceremonies were also conducted in complete secrecy.

The next day the Desi sent an assistant to the Nechung Oracle, informed him of

the situation, and swore him to secrecy. The oracle gave them a list of prayers to perform, and declared that the Great Fifth would soon take rebirth to the southeast of central Tibet.

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The Great Fifth's instruction to keep his death a secret had a precedent. He had followed this same course of action when his own chief manager, the viceroy Desi Sonam Chopel, had passed away in 1657. Desi Sonam Chopel had been the mastermind behind the events that culminated in the reunification of Tibet in 1642 under the Fifth Dalai Lama's leadership, and the Great Fifth was concerned that his absence would be used by various factions as an excuse to revolt, or by the Mongolians as an opportunity for invasion. Tibet was still a fragile entity, with forces pushing and pulling from every direction.

As the Fifth's own death approached, the same prospect—that of national instability—loomed large in his mind. Consequently he decided on the same solution. His death should be kept a secret.

However, because his death was being kept a secret, the search for his reincarnation also had to be conducted with extreme discretion.

Desi Sangyey Gyatso personally oversaw the process. One of the people he looked to for advice was the great Nyingmapa lama Terdak Lingpa, an important disciple of the Great Fifth who was known for his prophetic abilities. Terdak Lingpa made the following prophecy,³

This great being will be reborn To the south and west of Mt. Shampo.

His reincarnation will be indisputable

And he will benefit the Dharma and living beings.

He then referred to a prophecy concerning the Sixth, in which both the year of birth and the father's name were stated,

During the years when wars are fought out of pride,

The beings will become saddened at the sufferings

And then will become tamed by the enlightenment teachings.

An emanation of body, speech and mind of the Orgyen Guru Will take birth in the Water Boar Year (i.e., 1683)

As a son of the spiritual master Orgyen Lingpa.

This second prophecy mentions the Sixth as being an emanation of the eighth-century guru Padma Sambhava, here referred to as the Orgyen Guru, or "Master from Oddiyana." This epithet for Padma Sambhava refers to his birthplace in the Swat Valley of modern-day Pakistan. This tantric master had been a layperson who during his lifetime is said to have made love to thousands of different women. Perhaps the Sixth's own inclination to sexual adventure is here being suggested by the reference to him as an emanation of Padma Sambhava.

This prophesy also mentions the Sixth's father's name as Orgyen Lingpa. This could, however, be taken as a generic epithet for a lama of the Nyingmapa School, since "Orgyen" is the name of the founder of the Nyingma School. As for "Lingpa," the first syllable of this term, or ling, simply means "place," and the second syllable, pa, means a man from or associated with that place. In other words, the name Orgyen Lingpa in the prophecy could be translated as "Man from a Nyingma Place." "Lingpa" is a very common Nyingmapa name, and hundreds of Nyingmapa lamas use it. In brief, the above reference was taken by the search committee to indicate that the Great Fifth would take rebirth into a Nyingmapa family in which the father lived as a lama and shaman.

In fact, after the Sixth Dalai Lama's reincarnation was discovered and enthroned, it was noted that the small household of his birth was known

as Urgyen Ling. Later a large temple was erected here in honor of the Sixth, complete with lifelike statues of his father and mother, as well as of the Sixth himself. Although this temple was destroyed during the Mongolian pillage of Bhutan a decade after the Sixth passed away, it was later rebuilt, and still stands today.

The Nechung Oracle was also consulted for details of the place of rebirth. He clearly indicated Monyul as the region where the search should concentrate. Monyul is located to the far south of Tibet, just to the east of Bhutan.

About that same time, Desi Sangyey Gyatso dreamed that seven suns appeared in the sky over the Monyul area. This, combined with the prophecies of Terdak Lingpa and the Nechung Oracle, convinced him that the rebirth would occur in Monyul.

Not long after the passing of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, a Nyingmapa family living near Tsona in Monyul conceived a child. The father, Lama Tashi Tenzin, was descended from the younger brother of Pema Lingpa, one of the great Nyingmapa lamas of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and one of the greatest treasure text revealers in Tibetan history. Pema Lingpa had died in 1521 and the Sixth was born in 1683, a hundred and sixty-two years later. The Sixth Dalai Lama's father made his living as a married lama priest in Pema Lingpa's lineage.

Pema Lingpa's wife, Tsewang Lhamo, experienced many auspicious dreams throughout her pregnancy. On the night of the conception she dreamed that she went to collect water from the local spring. As she leaned over to scoop up the water, she beheld a five-pointed vajra. It fell upright into the palm of her hand. She had the sense that it was very precious, and that she should guard it with great care, so she gently placed it inside her blouse. On another night she dreamed that she took both the sun and moon in her hands and held them close to her breast, until they dissolved into her body. Again, on another occasion she dreamed that many lamas of both the Gelukpa and Nyingma schools came to her and gave her many blessings and empowerments. In another she dreamed that many people came to her house, showed her great honor and placed her on a high throne.

The father also experienced many auspicious dreams. He saw the sun and moon, surrounded by the stars and planets, appear simultaneously in the sky with a

great rainbow surrounding them. Suddenly the moon fell into his wife's lap and dissolved into her womb.

Many natural omens also manifested throughout the pregnancy. Rainbows seemed to clothe the house almost continually, and flowers bloomed everywhere. Many auspicious birds and animals seemed to manifest whenever anyone came or went.

Because of these and other such signs, everyone knew that a special child had been conceived.

When the time of birth finally arrived, the mother delivered the boy with almost no pain or discomfort. On the very moment that the child slipped from the womb, the area experienced a small earthquake. Simultaneously the sky seemed to explode with a strong blast of thunder.

The father, himself an important lama of the Nyingma School, gave the child the name Sangngak Tenzin, or "Holder of Tantric Knowledge." A few days later this was changed for auspicious reasons to Ngawang Norbu, or "Precious Lord of the Teachings."

The boy's first words were, "I am not a small child. I flew from the Potala to Tsona. If we go to the Potala, everything there will be mine." He also mentioned the names of many monks who had been close to the Fifth Dalai Lama, saying, "They are all my monks."

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Shortly after the Great Fifth passed away, Desi Sangyey Gyatso discreetly sent word to the Monyul area asking that the names of any children born with auspicious circumstances be collected. Because he did not wish to give away the real nature of his search—the Fifth Dalai Lama's death was still being kept secret—he stated that he was looking for the reincarnation of another famous lama who had recently died, Zhalu Khenpo by name, the head of the prestigious Zhalu Monastery in Tsang.

In the Wood Ox Year, or 1685, when the child would have been two years old, the Desi followed up his preliminary probe by sending two monks to Monyul to examine all the children on the list that had been made, and also check to see if there were other candidates.

Their early efforts were frustrating, and they wrote to the Desi, “It is difficult searching the Mon region. When the people suspect that we are looking for the reincarnation of an important lama, everyone puts their child forth as a candidate and makes up many stories about him.”

However, two crows soon began following the two monks and cawing to them. The crows seemed to guide them on the way, and whenever the monks were in doubt as to the direction to take, they only needed to look to the crows and their behavior for the solution.

Eventually the monks arrived at the house of Lama Tashi Tenzin to examine the boy who was said to speak so articulately about Lhasa. They asked to see the child, but the parents were reluctant to consent, for he was slightly ill at the time. However, eventually they agreed.

The meeting was disappointing to the two monks. When they examined the boy he seemed sluggish and drowsy, and showed no interest in them whatsoever. They held forth a rosary that had belonged to the Great Fifth, together with a similar item, but the boy just took both of them in his hands.

The mother apologized for the boy’s behavior, and suggested that they leave and come back in a few days, after he had recuperated. The two monks left, and decided that the child was not the object of their search. They had no intention of returning to see him again. However, after they had traveled for awhile the senior lama suddenly experienced an intense pain in his hip and found it difficult even to move. At the same time a crow appeared and seemed to taunt them for leaving.

They decided to camp for the night. As they slept a dream came to the elder lama, in which the Nechung Oracle appeared to him and acted extremely displeased and angry. The oracle said to the lama, “Your search is failing because you are not examining the candidates with sufficient scrutiny. Therefore you now experience these difficulties.”

Over the months to follow the two monks walked through all the regions of the area and examined dozens of children. None seemed to show the proper signs. Then one day they arrived at Gyama. Here they visited a famous divinator and requested advice. The divinator made mystical observations and replied, “You have wandered many places without any benefit. However, you have already

seen the child. This child is an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, and his practice is that of Avalokiteshvara, although an obscuration hinders his recognition.”

The monks asked what they should do. The divinator made an observation and said, “The boy is a speech emanation of Avalokiteshvara. You should create an image of Avalokiteshvara to symbolize enlightenment body, and offer a rosary as a symbol of enlightenment mind. Then body, speech and mind will all be complete, and your search will succeed.”

Although this advice encouraged the two monks, they still had no idea where to go or how to proceed. They carefully thought through everything that had happened to them. Finally they remembered the boy whom they had not examined properly. They therefore decided to pay another visit to him.

When they approached the house, the child was outside playing. This time he looked deeply at the two monks, waved to them, and called out to them by name. When he saw the bag of sacred objects that they were carrying he broke into a dance and said, “Come here immediately. Show me my things!”

The senior monk asked him, “Are you the reincarnation of Zhalu Khenpo?”

The boy replied, “No, I am not Zhalu Khenpo. I am Lobzang Gyatso. I do not want to live here. I want to go to the Potala. I am the greatest of all.”

They then showed him two statues, one of Tsongkhapa and the other of the Fifth Dalai Lama, and asked him if he knew who they were. He took the statue of the Fifth Dalai Lama and replied with glee, “This is me! This is me!”

Over the week to follow, the two monks informally and discreetly tested the boy by showing him one object a day that had belonged to the Great Fifth, together with one that had not.

On the first day they showed him a small mystical dagger that the Great Fifth had often worn on a rosary around his neck, and also a similar one the Fifth had never touched. The boy took the correct one and held it to his heart.

The next day they showed him statues of Guru Padma Sambhava and the female mystic Yeshey Tsogyal, the two founders of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism. The boy took these in his tiny hands and placed them to his head with great respect. The monks then showed him a statue of the Karmapa Lama, who

had been a contemporary of the Great Fifth. This he took in his tiny hands as if it were a toy and began playing with it, as though playing with a friend or a brother.

On the third day they showed him a small plain text that had belonged to the Great Fifth, and also a more ornate one that had not. He eagerly grabbed the one that had belonged to the Great Fifth and declared, "This is mine. I have many more like it in the Potala." He then opened and pretended to read it.

On the fourth day he was shown two hats, one that had belonged to the Great Fifth and another that was a standard monastic hat. He held both for a long time without saying anything, and then put on the one that had belonged to the previous Dalai Lama.

On the fifth day he was shown two small knives, one of which had belonged to the Great Fifth. He spontaneously took the one that had belonged to the Fifth and began cleaning his teeth with it just as had the Fifth.

On the sixth day they showed him a tantric set of bone ornaments that had been used by the Great Fifth, together with a similar set. Again he correctly chose the proper one.

On the seventh day they showed him a teacup that had belonged to the Fifth, together with an ordinary teacup. The boy chose the correct one, and gleefully exclaimed, "This is mine."

These tests, as well as the many conversations that the two monks had with him, convinced them that indeed he was the true reincarnation.

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The two monks were convinced that they had found the correct child, and wrote to Desi Sangyey Gyatso to inform him of their success. The Desi was overjoyed, but wrote back that they should continue to present the boy as the reincarnation of Zhalu Khenpo, for he had not yet announced that the Great Fifth had died, and was maintaining the pretense that the latter was still engaged in his long retreat.

There was considerable concern for the child's safety, however, because relations between Tibet and Bhutan were unstable, and Tsona lay near the border of the two countries. In addition, Chinese spies were everywhere.

The two lamas strongly urged the family to move the child to a safer place for awhile, and suggested Sha Woog. The parents accepted, and preparations were made.

On the day of their departure many auspicious signs manifested. There was a minor earthquake in which nobody was hurt, and a light sprinkle of rain fell from the sky. As they rode away, rainbows seemed to manifest everywhere.

When they reached the pass the boy said, "Put me down here. I want to say goodbye to my village and house." In this way, although less than three years old, he showed the authority of his presence and his knowledge of the events that were in flow around him.

When they arrived at Sha Woog everyone was apprehensive, for it was rumored that a number of Bhutanese soldiers were in the area. However, the child assured them that nothing untoward would happen. Again, this was taken as an indication of his maturity and authority.

Crows were rarely seen in the Tsona area. However, two of them had taken up residence over his birthplace shortly after the mother became pregnant. These two birds now seemed to travel with the group, circling overhead and watching the road for them. Later writers considered these to be emanations of Mahakala, the special protector of all the Dalai Lamas.

The party was invited to stay for some time at the Tsona Dzong. During this period the crows remained on the roof of the fort.

On these travels the group outwardly presented the child to the public as the reincarnation of Zhalu Khenpo. Secretly, however, they respected him as being the reincarnation of the Fifth Dalai Lama.

While they were staying in Tsona Dzong, the two monks sent word of their position to Desi Sangyey Gyatso and asked for advice. The Desi arranged a special séance with the Nechung Oracle and asked what to do. The Nechung Oracle replied that the time was not yet ripe for declaring the death of the Great Fifth and the recognition of the subsequent reincarnation.

The temporary stay at Tsona Dzong therefore became a more permanent arrangement, and the young reincarnation and his family were housed in the temple complex attached to the building. He was to live here for the next twelve

years, with the Desi sending tutors to him and overseeing his early training from afar. The two monks who had been in charge of the search for him now monitored his progress, generally making two trips a year to Lhasa and back in order to deliver a personal report to the Desi, and also to get updated instructions on the direction that the boy's education should take. Throughout this long period of time he continued to live under the name of the Zhalu Khenpo Lama, and Desi Sangyey Gyatso ruled Tibet on his behalf. The pretense that the Fifth Dalai Lama was alive and well was carefully maintained, facilitated by his supposedly being in retreat.

To Westerners the idea that this deception could be maintained for fifteen years seems incredible. For the Tibetans, however, the Fifth Dalai Lama's absence from public life for this protracted period of time did not seem implausible. They were quite used to their lamas undergoing meditation retreats that lasted ten or twenty years, and even longer.

One problem faced by the Desi in maintaining the charade was that there were several occasions annually on which the Dalai Lama had to make a ceremonial appearance, however brief. Usually these occurred in the Jokhang Temple, with the Dalai Lama seated on a balcony. Desi Sangyey Gyatso arranged for a monk from Namgyal Dratsang, the personal monastery of the Dalai Lamas, to sit in for him on these occasions. The monk somewhat resembled the Fifth Dalai Lama in appearance, and even sported a mustache like that of the Great Fifth's. Seen from a distance he easily carried the day. In addition, because the Dalai Lama was supposed to be in meditation retreat, a thin curtain was draped over the window where he sat, so that he was even less visible.

Any high lama is expected to give audiences and blessings to important pilgrims visiting from afar, and the Dalai Lama is no exception to this rule. The monk from Namgyal Dratsang who had been chosen to stand in for the Great Fifth was also called upon to perform this function. Again, the excuse that the Great Fifth was in an extended meditation retreat was used to keep the visiting pilgrims at a distance. Usually someone in tantric retreat is not allowed to talk to anyone except his teachers and attendants, and this tradition was used as the reason the Great Fifth did not speak during these meetings, and just gave blessings from a distance.

All of this was orchestrated by Desi Sangyey Gyatso, who ruled Tibet in the Great Fifth's name during these fifteen years. He therefore was a major player in

determining the fate of the young Sixth Dalai Lama. It may be useful to take a brief look at just who he was.

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Desi Sangyey Gyatso had been born in the Water Snake Year, or 1653, eleven years after the Great Fifth had risen to the position of spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet. He was the nephew of Desi Trinley Gyatso, who in 1660 succeeded Desi Sonam Chopel, who had died in 1657, as the Great Fifth's viceroy. Thus Trinley Gyatso was Tibet's second "Desi." His nephew was given the name Konchok Dondrub at birth.

The boy became attached to the Great Fifth's retinue at a young age. The Great Fifth took a direct interest in him, and when the latter was in his eighth year he received the ordination of a novice monk directly from the Dalai

Lama. At that time the Great Fifth renamed him Sangyey Gyatso, or "Buddha Ocean," the name he was to use for the remainder of his life.

From that time on the boy attended almost every teaching given by the Great Fifth. He was also provided with excellent tutors, and received a thorough education in the classics. Later in his life he became a great Buddhist scholar in his own right, and many of his works are in use as textbooks even today. His writings on Tibetan history, Tibetan medicine, Buddhist astrophysics, classical poetic composition and Tibetan linguistics quickly set a new national standard. Indeed, the success of his writings brought a focus to the Tibetan cultural understanding that has endured to the present day, and it could be argued that he stands in Tibetan history much as Francis Bacon does in ours.

Sangyey Gyatso's genius was evident from the time of his youth, and when the Great Fifth fired his third Desi in 1675—the Great Fifth learned that this Desi, who held the vows of a celibate monk, was secretly keeping a mistress—the job as the Dalai Lama's viceroy was offered to Sangyey Gyatso, even though he was only twenty-two years old at the time. Sangyey Gyatso declined on the grounds that he was too young and had not yet completed his education. However, the post became vacant once more in 1679, and once more the Great Fifth requested Sangyey Gyatso to serve. This time he accepted, and he was to remain the Great Fifth's viceroy long after the latter had passed away. In fact, Desi Sangyey Gyatso held the office until his own tragic death in 1705.

Even though Desi Sangyey Gyatso received monastic ordination in childhood from the Great Fifth, he disrobed in his early adulthood and became a much-admired libertine. According to popular tradition, there was not a single woman of standing in the Lhasa area whom he did not take to bed. Therefore many years later, when the Sixth Dalai Lama announced that he planned to disrobe and the Desi tried to talk him out of it, he was not speaking from a position of moral authority on the subject.

The fact that the Desi disrobed and became a layman was not seen as a problem by the Tibetans. Most Tibetans made several of their children into monks and nuns at a very young age, often not only with the expectation but even the hope that they would return to secular life after they reached adulthood. The Desi was appreciated for his dedication to his work, much of which was political in nature and therefore perhaps more appropriate to the lay style of life. Monogamy was not a cultural norm in Tibet with either men or women, nor was the Desi scorned for his reputation as a ladies' man. In fact the reverse seems to have been the case. Tibetans remember him as one of the great pioneers of the Tibetan nation, both politically and culturally.

As we will see, however, he was not at all well liked by the Manchu emperor, and in the end this led to his undoing.

For the next twelve years, the young Sixth Dalai Lama and his parents lived in Tsona Dzong, while Desi Sangyey Gyatso worked in Lhasa to see the visions of the Great Fifth achieve fulfillment. The completion of the Potala, one of the greatest architectural achievements of human history, was perhaps his crowning achievement, but no less significant was his work in cementing the unity of the many kingdoms and tribes that constituted the newly formed Tibetan nation, and establishing a cultural foundation that would serve to foster the diverse peoples that constituted Tibet. The Desi also secretly had the Great Fifth's body mummified and a grand stupa constructed in the Potala to house this sacred relic.

Meanwhile the young Sixth was immersed in training. This began with learning to read and write, memorizing the many prayers and rituals that are the basis of tantric Buddhism, and an introduction to the complexities of Buddhist history and philosophy. His training was really no different than that of any young boy to whom a classical education was being given, although in addition the Desi had him receive a transmission of the major works written by the Great Fifth, and also of several of his own treatises, including those on linguistics, poetry and

astrology.

Unfortunately life in Tsona Dzong was not especially happy for the family, although the Desi was not to learn of this until much later. Several years earlier the boy's mother had brought a legal case against her brother, the Sixth's uncle, over a land dispute. This now incurred the wrath of the latter, who used his influence with the governors of the Tsona area to make life difficult for the family. When the Desi eventually learned of the matter, he had the governors stripped of their offices, but in the meantime a decade passed in which the Sixth's mother and father were continually harassed by the governor's men. Although this made things unpleasant for the family, Tibetans speak of the event as auspicious. Had not the eleventh-century Milarepa also suffered greatly due to an evil uncle?

In the Wood Dog Year, or 1694, the Desi again summoned the Nechung Oracle and asked if the time was ripe for announcing the death of the Great Fifth and the enthronement of the Sixth. The words of the oracle were unclear. Consequently the Desi decided to inform the Manchu emperor Kang-hsi on the state of affairs, but to request him to maintain the secret for some time.

Two years later the boy and his parents were informed that he was not the reincarnation of the Zhalu Khenpo Lama, but of the Great Fifth himself. The following year—1697—the news was made public. The Desi composed a public proclamation in which he described the Great Fifth's deathbed instructions on secrecy, as well as the details of the recognition and education of the Sixth. The timing of the announcement was set by the Nechung Oracle: the auspicious fourth Tibetan month, which is the annual commemoration of Buddha's enlightenment.

Several months later the boy was taken from Tsona Dzong to Nangkartsey. Here he was met by the Second Panchen Lama, Lobzang Yeshey, who had come to give him pre-novice monastic ordination and various spiritual transmissions. This ordination ceremony took place on the seventeenth day of the ninth month. On this occasion the boy received the name Lobzang Rigzin Tsangyang Gyatso. The last two portions of this name—Tsangyang Gyatso, or "Ocean of Melody"—would become the name by which he is known to history.

Two great Nyingmapa lamas, Terdak Lingpa of Mindroling and Pema Trinley of Dorje Drak, journeyed to Nangkartsey to meet the boy. Both of these lamas had

been very close to the Great Fifth, and they now gave numerous Nyingmapa teachings to the young Sixth. Terdak Lingpa also gave him the secret tantric name Tomey Tsai; the Sixth was later to use this as his pen name on several of his compositions.

The following month the group left for Lhasa, traveling in a large caravan. Each night they camped in tents, and the entourage was soon so large that it required almost two hundred tents. In accordance with the tradition set by the Third Dalai Lama when he traveled to Mongolia, the young Sixth's tent was set in the center of the gathering and the others arranged in concentric squares around him, thus forming the impression of a tantric mandala. His identity was now known to all, so large crowds of the general public gathered along the road for blessings as they moved, making progress slow.

Eventually they arrived at Nyetang, where Desi Sangyey Gyatso came to greet him. Here they camped for a month, and an enormous tent city arose around him. All the great Tibetan and Mongolian leaders, as well as representatives from the Manchu emperor, came to pay homage to him and to receive his blessings. Most of the monks from the three great monasteries of Ganden, Drepung and Sera also attended, as did many hundreds of monks from the smaller temples and hermitages of central Tibet.

Eventually he traveled on to Lhasa and the Potala. Finally the official enthronement took place on the twenty-fifth day of the tenth month, which coincided with the annual Ganden Ngabchu, or Butterlamp Festival. The Panchen Lama traveled from Tashi Lhunpo in Shigatsey to participate in the ceremonial investment. The Sixth Dalai Lama was in his fifteenth year. It was a happy day indeed for the teenager, as well as for the Tibetan people.

The young Sixth Dalai Lama now took up residence in the Potala and engaged in a heavy regime of studies. The Panchen Lama inaugurated this phase of his education by giving him a long list of teachings and initiations. The day-to-day process of guiding him through the many subjects of Buddhist knowledge was then assigned to his less famous tutors.

For the first two years he seems to have immersed himself in his studies wholeheartedly. By the third year, however, he began manifesting signs of discontent, and by the fourth year the Desi became seriously concerned.

The Sixth was now in his twentieth year, and it was time for him to take full monastic ordination. Up to now he had lived first as a pre-novice and then a novice monk. When the Desi informed the Sixth it was time for his full ordination, the young incarnation replied that he had not yet made his final decision on the matter.

The Desi wrote to the Panchen Lama in Tashi Lhunpo, appealing to him to use his influence on the boy. The Panchen wrote several letters to the boy, but he was unable to persuade him to follow the Desi's wish. In the end the Panchen invited him to come to Tashi Lhunpo and discuss things.

A conference of high lamas and civic leaders gathered in Shigatsey to coincide with the Sixth's arrival at Tashi Lhunpo and, hopefully, to attend his ordination ceremony. However, no matter how much they begged or how strongly they urged him to follow the traditional course of a Dalai Lama, he remained adamant in his decision not to take full ordination. Even worse, he informed them that he had decided to return his novice vows and become a lay practitioner. When the group returned to Lhasa several weeks later, the Sixth Dalai Lama was no longer wearing the robes of a monk.

Later he composed a song on his predicament,

I tried to keep my mind focused

In the presence of my accomplished lama;

But what can I say? By itself it sped Far away, to thoughts of love.

There is nothing to indicate that up until this period the Sixth Dalai Lama had been anything but true to his monastic vows, and the elders consoled themselves with this fact. A pre-novice takes eight vows, a novice thirty-six, and a fully ordained monk takes 253. All three of these levels makes one a monk, and all three entail celibacy and the avoidance of alcohol.

In Buddhism, living as a monk while breaking the vows is considered extremely negative karma. The proper way to disrobe is to formally return one's vows to the master from whom one had taken them. Freed from the precepts of restraint, one can then take up the lifestyle of a layperson, i.e., engage in sexual activity, drinking alcohol, and so forth. Someone who breaks the vows can never again become a monk, whereas someone who returns the vows before they are broken

can later take re-ordination if he or she so wishes. In fact, one can alternate between the lifestyles of monk and lay person several times in one's life with clear conscience, if one does so correctly. When the Sixth returned his precepts, the elders hoped that he was just going through an early life crisis, and would soon change his mind and once again become a monk.

This was not to be. Although he remained in the Potala, he began to let his hair grow into long locks that flowed down over his shoulders almost to his waist, and to wear the jewelry of a young man about town. Like other Tibetan youths, he tied his hair into long braids decorated with coral and turquoise beads, which he either wound around the top of his head or allowed to fall down his back. His passion no longer was the study of Buddhist scriptures; instead during the days he passed his time in archery and horse riding with friends, and at night roamed the streets of Lhasa, moving from one tavern to another in search of parties, excitement and beautiful women.

His favorite haunt was Shol, a district of Lhasa located behind the Potala. Until recently most of the houses in Shol were painted with a yellow trim.

According to popular tradition, after the Sixth died every maiden in Lhasa who had slept with him painted the family house yellow in his honor. Sales in yellow paint skyrocketed that year.

The Sixth composed many love songs during this period of his life. These are all either four or eight lines long. They are usually sung slowly and with great melody, and usually while quite drunk. Some of the favorites with Tibetans are as follows,

Words written in black ink

Are easily destroyed by a small droplet of water;

But love draws a picture on the heart That goes deep and remains forever.

And also,

It was an auspicious time

For sending good thoughts on the wind;

A young lady of excellent signs Took me home and gave me her love.

Again,

Her white teeth shot a dazzling smile To all who were present in the room;

But from the corner of her eye

She spoke of a love that was only for me.

It is hard to know if the Sixth was really as successful in romance as legend would have it, but certainly his hallowed position as the Dalai Lama, together with the good looks and charm with which he was blessed, would have made him into one of Lhasa's most eligible bachelors. Nonetheless he, like all lovers, occasionally had his heart broken. In one of his songs he writes,

I was a hunter of hearts,

And I captured a stunning angel.

But alas, another lord among men Has stolen her from me.

When she, a precious treasure, was mine,

I guarded her not with sufficient care;

Now she is lost to another,

And my only consolation is my pain.

Gushri Khan, the chieftain of the Qoshot Mongols, had been instrumental in bringing the Great Fifth Dalai Lama to power in 1642. After this, many of the Qoshots had settled in the Kokonor area of Amdo, where the northeastern border of Tibet meets Mongolia on the north and China on the east. Many Qoshot also spent much of their time in Lhasa.

In the Water Sheep Year, or 1703, Gushri's grandson Lhazang Khan became chieftain of the Qoshots. Lhazang was a strong Buddhist, and had been deeply devoted to the Fifth Dalai Lama. He had been present when the Sixth Dalai Lama was brought to central Tibet, and had tented at Nyelam for a month with the Sixth when the latter first arrived in the Kyisho Valley. He also attended his enthronement ceremony in the Potala. Lhazang had even for a period served as an attendant to the young Sixth, when the latter was still a monk. Later, when the Sixth was threatening to disrobe and traveled to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery to discuss the matter with the Panchen Lama, Lhazang Khan was one of those who came to try and dissuade him from doing so.

Just before Lhazang Khan's enthronement as chieftain of the Qoshots, Desi Sangyey Gyatso retired from his official position as the Great Fifth's viceroy and passed the reins of his office to his son Ngawang Rinchen. Perhaps the Desi would have lived out the remainder of his life in obscurity, but when Lhazang's star rose the ex-Desi became extremely concerned. He knew of Lhazang's open criticism of the Sixth Dalai Lama's unorthodox behavior, and feared that the Qoshot chieftain would use this as an excuse to interfere in Tibetan affairs.

He had sufficient reason to be apprehensive. The Qoshots had recently struck up an alliance with the Manchu emperor, and the union was dangerous to Tibetan sovereignty. To maintain a balance of power, the Desi had carefully fostered a Tibetan alliance with the Dzungar Mongols. This, he felt, would keep the Manchus at a distance. However, with a disgruntled and volatile Lhazang Khan now living on Tibet's doorstep, the situation had become precarious.

The Manchus themselves had no great liking for the Desi. They resented the fact that he had kept the Great Fifth's death a secret from them, and also resented his alliance with the Dzungars, whom they regarded as a threat to their own empire. Moreover, they resented the fact that the Manchu emperor Kang-hsi had sent several requests to the Desi over the years, many of which had been declined on some pretext or other. Among these was a request that the Panchen Lama be allowed to visit Beijing in order to teach in the imperial court. The Panchen Lama had not been keen to go, for he feared that the drastic change in altitude and climate would present him with a serious and perhaps even lethal health threat. The Desi took the heat for the Panchen, and vetoed the Manchu invitation on the grounds that the Panchen had too many commitments in Tibet. The emperor took this as a personal insult, and thus as fuel for the growing fires of his dislike for Desi Sangyey Gyatso.

Because of these and other similar considerations, the Manchus were delighted with the rise of Lhazang Khan. They saw it as an opportunity to rid Lhasa of Desi Sangyey Gyatso and thus bring Tibet more deeply into their own sphere of influence. They knew that Lhazang resented being kept in the dark about the death of the Great Fifth, and also knew that he suspected the Sixth Dalai Lama had been improperly chosen by Desi Sangyey Gyatso.

Accordingly, the Manchus soon began to press Lhazang Khan to move on Lhasa, pull a coup d'état, remove the Sixth Dalai Lama from the Potala and install another monk in his place.

From his side, Lhazang was only too keen to oblige. He saw the situation as an opportunity to win favor with the Manchus, and at the same time increase his status among both the Mongols and the Tibetans. He began to spread the rumor that the Sixth was in reality Desi Sangyey Gyatso's blood son, and was not the Great Fifth's reincarnation at all.⁴

Lhazang had to be very careful in his handling of this affair, for the Sixth Dalai Lama was still very popular with the Tibetan masses. He therefore approached the elder lamas of the three great Gelukpa monasteries Ganden, Drepung and Sera — in order to request their blessings. He knew that they too were disturbed by the Sixth's behavior, and also that they had been slighted by the Desi's handling of affairs, especially the manner in which the Desi had kept the Great Fifth's death secret for such a long period. The elders gave their tacit approval.

In all fairness to Lhazang Khan, his plan to remove Desi Sangyey Gyatso and the Sixth Dalai Lama from public life was designed as humanely as possible. He did not intend to see serious harm come to either of them. When the Desi was forced into surrender, Lhazang merely ordered him exiled to the former's estate at Gongkar (i.e., the area near the modern-day Lhasa airport). Had this instruction been followed, Desi Sangyey Gyatso would probably have lived in comfort and dignity—albeit in relative obscurity—for the remainder of his life.

Unfortunately things did not work out as planned. One of Lhazang Khan's wives—a warrior princess by the name of Tsering Tashi—had formerly been a lover of the Desi. According to legend, the Desi had jilted her and thus greatly hurt her feelings. She now used the opportunity to get her revenge. While the Desi was unarmed and defenseless, she had him brought to Tolung, where she beheaded him. Thus the Desi died due to the fury of a woman scorned.

Several events of the period indicate that the Desi had accumulated numerous enemies from among the high monks of the three great monasteries. This is indicated by the fact that they gave Lhazang Khan their tacit blessings for the Desi's removal from Lhasa and exile to Gongkar.

Moreover, the Ven. Amchok Tulku, a dear lama friend of mine in India, once informed me that the plot of Princess Tsering Tashi to behead the Desi became known to the monks of Drepung some days before it occurred. They elected Jamyang Zhepa, a high lama of Gomang Monastery and a guru to both Lhazang Khan and Princess Tsering Tashi, to ride quickly to Tolung and dissuade her from her course of action.

However, by some reports, Jamyang Zhepa took his time in getting to Tolung, so that by the time he arrived the deed would already be done. In fact when he finally did arrive the body of the Desi was still warm.

As Ven. Amchok Tulku pointed out to me, it is possible that Jamyang Zhepa actually did his best to travel quickly in order to save the Desi's life, and the rumor to the contrary might just be cynicism. However, the fact that the story exists does reveal that there were many who suspected that Jamyang Zhepa, one of the highest lamas of the era, would quite happily have seen the Desi permanently out of the way.

Such ill-will on the part of monastic elders could have been motivated either because they resented the Desi's rule, or because they blamed him for the Sixth's un-monkly behavior.

Numerous accounts similarly claim that Lhazang Khan had no wish to physically harm the Sixth Dalai Lama either. Instead, he planned to have him transported to Beijing for a meeting with the Manchu emperor, and then transferred to the Mongol area of Amdo, where he would have been treated well.

However, the Sixth died on the way to China. Tibetans suspect poisoning, although the cause of his death may simply have been an illness that he contracted on the road.

A lama friend of mine in India, the Lelung Tulku, discussed the affair with me a few years ago. One of his previous incarnations—one of the early Lelung lamas—had been a disciple of the Fifth Dalai Lama and a contemporary of the Sixth. That Lelung had also been a close confidant of Lhazang Khan.

The present Lelung informed me that Lhazang Khan, long after the death of the Desi and of the Sixth Dalai Lama, had expressed remorse for how things turned out, adding that had he known his maneuver would result in their deaths he never would have undertaken the course of action that he did. Lhazang Khan added that in reality he had a great deal of personal admiration for the Sixth's personality and style; he had ousted him only because he felt that he was not the true reincarnation of his guru the Great Fifth. He blamed the mistake on the Desi, not on the young Sixth.

As we will see, exactly why and how (and even when) the Sixth died is still a matter of conjecture.

On the seventeenth day of the Fire Dog Year, or 1706, Lhazang Khan entered the Potala with a small force of men and arrested the Sixth Dalai Lama. The next day the monks of Drepung Loseling Monastery invoked the Nechung Oracle and asked whether the Sixth was indeed the authentic incarnation of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, or if the Desi had installed the wrong child. The oracle stated that there was no doubt that he was the true incarnation.

Consequently a few days later two hundred monks from Loseling sneaked into the Mongolian camp where the Sixth was being held and forcibly whisked him off to Drepung Monastery for protection.

This was a serious matter indeed, and put Lhazang Khan in an embarrassing position. The next day he surrounded the monastery and gave the monks an ultimatum: Surrender the Sixth or face the wrath of his army.

Traditionally a Mongolian ultimatum of this nature meant that surrender would be met with leniency, and battle would mean that everyone on the losing side would be put to the sword. This policy had been instituted by Genghis Khan over four centuries earlier, and was one of the reasons the Mongol armies had been able to take over much of the known world during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Few cities or even kingdoms would choose to stand up to them, knowing that if they lost—which they probably would—everyone would be put to the sword, including women and children.

The Sixth pleaded with the monks to allow him to leave the precincts of the monastery and go with Lhazang Khan, arguing that there was no way the monks could keep off the Mongolian army, and there would just be a lot of pointless

bloodshed.

According to traditional accounts, the Drepung monks consented to allow him to go with Lhazang if he would make them three promises: He would not allow the Mongols to harm him; he would not leave Tibet; and he would return to them unharmed. As far as the monks were concerned, the Nechung Oracle had said that he was the true incarnation of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, and thus was a living buddha; consequently he had the tantric powers by which to fulfill any promises that he made.

Thus the crisis, which could have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people and the destruction of Drepung Monastery, was averted. The Sixth walked casually out of the gates of Drepung and down the hill, where he gave himself over to Lhazang Khan.

Not long after this the Mongolian force in charge of transporting the Sixth Dalai Lama left Lhasa traveling eastward, with the objective of transporting him to Beijing.

What happened after this, and how he fulfilled his three promises to the monks of Drepung Loseling, is told in a number of ways.

Some say that as the group left Lhasa, the peoples of the city tearfully lined the streets to see him go. Suddenly a young child broke away from the crowd and ran toward his horse. The child had the same name as did he— Tsangyang Gyatso—and therefore the mother called out, “Tsangyang, come back.” The Sixth Dalai Lama, hearing his name called out, turned to the mother and sang the following song,

0 white crane

Lend me your wings.

1 go not far,

And from Litang shall return.

As we will see, the boy identified as the Seventh Dalai Lama was later discovered in Litang of Kham, in eastern Tibet.

Others say that these prophetic words were not sung by the Sixth as he left Lhasa, but in fact were written to one of his lovers, the lady whom he had thought to take as his wife and thus fulfill an ancient prophecy.

As the party moved northeastward, news of their mission traveled far ahead of them. Progress was slow, for he was asked to give blessings and teachings to the people as he went, often to many thousands at a time. It seems that the Mongols were quite content to allow this to happen, presumably in order to keep in the good favor of the Tibetan masses and avoid unnecessary conflict, and also to show the people that they had no intention of harming him in any way.

When they arrived at Dam the Sixth Dalai Lama began showing signs of illness. These seemed to grow stronger with each passing day, and continued until the group arrived at Lake Kunganor, not far from the Tibeto-Mongolian border.

According to several accounts, it was here that the Sixth Dalai Lama manifested the strategy whereby he would fulfill the three promises he had made to the monks of Drepung.

It was early evening, and the group had set up their tents for the night. Suddenly he emerged from his tent, and to everyone's surprise he was dressed in the very ornate black hat costume of a tantric shaman that had belonged to the Great Fifth Dalai Lama. In the Sixth's belt was the mystic dagger that the Great Fifth had so often used in his tantric rituals. The Sixth looked at the crowd and stated, "Whatever possessions are here with me, and especially this mystic dagger and this tantric costume, should be given to my reincarnation.

He then began to strike an intense rhythm with his hand drum, and to perform a tantric dance.

Suddenly a small whirlwind arose. This was a common enough occurrence in the high mountain passes. The whirlwind seemed to increase in intensity with the quickening beat of his drum and his bodily movements, until people could barely see him for the swirling dust. It seemed as though there were small explosions of sparks and fire within the whirlwind.

The Sixth Dalai Lama then leaped into the air as a grand finale to his dance, and landed on the earth with his legs crossed in the meditation posture, his body perfectly upright, and with a dramatic stillness.

Everyone sat in stunned silence. They could only gape at his seated form. The wind died down and the dust settled.

Eventually one of his attendants approached his seated form. The attendant then suddenly burst into tears, for the Sixth had ceased breathing. He had passed away, apparently by consciously projecting his spirit out of his body by means of tantric meditation.

Thus he fulfilled two of the three promises that he had made to the monks of Drepung: not to leave Tibet, and not to allow the Mongols to harm him.

As for his third promise— to return to them unharmed—this he fulfilled by quickly reincarnating in Litang and coming back to them in the form of the Seventh Dalai Lama.

As mentioned earlier, there is also a popular tradition that claims the death scene at Kunganor was a fabrication. According to this account, the Sixth Dalai Lama lived for many years to follow.

It certainly is possible that a dust storm struck the group, allowing the Sixth to escape. Had this happened, it is not unreasonable to think that his captors officially reported that he had died in order to escape punishment for their failure.

It is also not impossible to conceive that the Sixth's captors may have become touched by the many sermons and teachings that he gave as they traveled, and felt uncomfortable with playing a part in his death. It is not impossible that they developed a stronger loyalty for him than for their own Khan, and simply released him.

The legend that the Sixth Dalai Lama escaped death at Kunganor was first given literary substance by the Mongolian monk Dargyey Nomanhan, who in 1757 or the Fire Bull Year, wrote a biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama that gives special emphasis to the period from the time of the Sixth's disappearance at Kunganor until his eventual death some forty years later. Dargyey Nomanhan claims to have first met the Sixth Dalai Lama in 1716— or at least to have met a Tibetan lama posing as the Sixth—when he himself was a child. This occurred more than nine years after the Sixth is said to have died at Kunganor.

According to Dargyey Nomanhan, after the theater at Kunganor the Sixth

traveled all over Central Asia, including central and southern Tibet, northern India, Mongolia, China, and even his own birthplace of Monyul. He performed numerous miracles wherever he went, and taught to small groups of devotees. He even returned to Lhasa in disguise, and visited all the great monasteries there. However, he soon realized that life in central Tibet was far too dangerous for him, and returned to the Mongol regions of Amdo. Eventually he founded and became abbot of Jakrung, a small meditation hermitage in the Pari region of Amdo, and also another in the Alashan region of Mongolia.

Dargyey Nomanhan's account did not find a wide readership, and was not even known to the Tibetans for over a century and a half. It first caught the attention of Tibetan intellectuals in 1889, when the Mongolian monk Dharmatala included a summary of it—a kind of Reader's Digest edition—in his vastly successful religious history of Mongolia entitled *Hor Chojung*.⁵

There seems to be little doubt that Dargyey Nomanhan did not create this myth of the Sixth's "hidden years." This in turn has led to considerable speculation.

Perhaps the founder and first abbot of Jakrung Monastery physically resembled the Sixth Dalai Lama, and a host of legends arose due to this twist of fate. Dargyey Nomanhan perhaps just gathered together many of these legends and compiled them into a highly readable account. However, he claims that he had direct access to a volume of notes written by the Jakrung Lama himself, in which this lama explicitly claimed to be the Sixth Dalai Lama. Was his claim true, or was he merely capitalizing on his own physical resemblance to the Sixth?

Be all this as it may, hundreds of power places in Central Asia are said to have been blessed by the Sixth during these "secret" years.

For example, I was recently surfing the web for information on Wu-tai Shan, the five-peak sacred mountain of China, to which I hope to make pilgrimage, when I came across the site of a travel agency in modern China that, in its description of this sacred site, states that the Sixth Dalai Lama spent considerable time here. Dargyey Nomanhan also mentions that the "disappeared" Sixth visited Wu-tai Shan on several occasions. According to the web site, pilgrims to Wu-tai Shan today always include a water spring on one of the peaks that, the website claims, was empowered by the Sixth during a visit late in his life. Pilgrims to Wu-tai Shan today go there to drink of its waters in order to obtain the Sixth's healing blessings.

There is also a third tradition surrounding the Sixth Dalai Lama. This tradition states that in fact he never passed away. Instead, just as Padma Sambhava had done a thousand years earlier, he manifested the tantric siddhi of immortality.

According to this legend, the “deaths” of the Sixth as described in the above two accounts were both hoaxes: the first while he was being held captive by the Mongols; and the second many years later as the elderly abbot of a provincial monastery.

In both of these cases he had feigned a death scene in order to assist disciples and trainees in their meditations upon impermanence and death, and to cultivate closer karmic ties with them so that he would be able to more effectively benefit them in their future lives. And in both instances he left them a shell of an emanated body for relics, so that they could collect merit by disposing of his remains. In reality, however, in both instances he merely withdrew his spiritual presence from the scene, and manifested elsewhere.

According to this legend, he is still alive today, and continues to wander the world incognito in order to bring spiritual benefits and transformation to those who are ready. He shows up when least expected but most needed, and works his spiritual magic almost without being noticed.

This legend is quite popular with ordinary lay people, who speak of “Sixth Dalai Lama encounters” much like Americans speak of Elvis sightings.

However, the tradition has considerable prestige to it. For example, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama mentioned it to Sir Charles Bell during one of their many meetings, and claimed that even in that period—the early 1920s — reports of people who had recently seen the Sixth Dalai Lama on the streets of Lhasa continued to pour in.

I personally believe that this third version of the Sixth Dalai Lama’s life— the Sixth as an immortal — is the actual situation. In fact, I think I met him the last time I visited Lhasa. He is still as mischievous as ever.

Whether or not the Sixth survived the incident at Kunganor and continued to live long afterwards, or even if he escaped death altogether and continued as an immortal, in 1708 a boy was born at Litang who was recognized as his reincarnation and was enthroned as the Seventh Dalai Lama.

The apparent contradiction in accounts is not spiritually problematic for Tibetans. They have no difficulty in accepting the Seventh Dalai Lama as legitimate even while the Sixth was still alive, for a high bodhisattva has the power to send out hundreds or even thousands of emanations.

The Tibetans would merely say that the Sixth realized his embodiment as the Sixth Dalai Lama was not able to perform the duties of the Dalai Lama in Lhasa due to the karmic limitations of the beings to be trained at the time— i.e., the Tibetans, Mongolians and Manchus. He therefore sent out a more conventional and less radical emanation, which manifested as the child born in Litang who became recognized as the Seventh Dalai Lama.

Perhaps the Sixth did die at Kunganor. Maybe the fact that he was cremated so quickly presented the opportunity for one or more people who resembled him to travel under his name, and thus receive great hospitality and reverence wherever they went. We have seen this phenomenon in recent times with several members of the family of Russia's last Tsar. Because the Russian royal family, including all of the children, disappeared after the Communist takeover, presumably murdered by the Communists, numerous myths have arisen surrounding their destiny, and several people have appeared in Europe and elsewhere who have claimed their identities.

Alternatively, perhaps the Sixth indeed escaped his escort and lived out the remainder of his life, as Dargyey Nomanhan claims. Or perhaps he escaped both deaths, and continues as an immortal prankster.

As for the lama who died in Amdo in 1746, and whom Dargyey Nomanhan believed to be the Sixth Dalai Lama, not long afterward his ostensible death a boy from the region was recognized and enthroned as his reincarnation. Known as the Jakrung Lama, his line of reincarnations has continued since that time.

I met the present incumbent in Nepal in 1992. He humbly introduced himself to me as the reincarnation of the Sixth Dalai Lama.

Tibetans make a great deal of the Sixth Dalai Lama's sexual exploits. They see these not as ordinary sexual activity, but as an indication of his tantric accomplishments.

Physical sexuality was a prime ingredient of Tantric Buddhism in early India. It continued as such during the early centuries of Buddhism in Tibet. However,

eventually the tantric tradition in India was absorbed by monasteries such as Nalanda, Odantapuri and Vikramashila, and the physical elements of the sexuality were transformed into symbolic gestures. At most, the sexuality was limited to tapping into the natural sexual energies of the human body and sublimating these for meditative purposes. Although tantric scriptures continued to talk about actual sexual practice with a partner, in all but the rarest of cases the sexual partner was merely a visualized god or goddess.

The high level of monasticism that arose in eleventh-century Tibet and increased dramatically from then onward meant that the reduction of Tantric Buddhism to monastic liturgy and symbolic visualization became the established norm. Even schools that fostered traditions of married lamas, such as the Nyingma, Sakya and Drukpa Kargyu, practiced marriage as a means of continuing family shamanic lineages and not as an environment for the sexual yogas.

The puritanism of the monastic element crept into every aspect of Tibetan religious life. Perhaps it was a matter of convenience; most Tibetans bathed only once or twice a year, and the sexual yogas of India therefore may have seemed somewhat inappropriate to them. This is not to say that Tibetan laypeople were prudish or antisexual; to the contrary, most of them were sexually both very active and very promiscuous, as evidenced by the street talk that Desi Sangyey Gyatso had slept with every woman of looks and charm in the Lhasa region.

However, Tibetans had increasingly come to see celibacy as spiritual, and sexual activity as secular, despite the references in the scriptures to the contrary. They continue to do so even today, speaking of tantric sex as though it were something intended only for those on very high stages of spiritual attainment, and as being very dangerous for ordinary people. This is, of course, cultural distortion of the authentic tantric tradition, and has no basis in either reality or early Indian scripture.

Having said this, it is important to appreciate that the tantric sexual yogas have continued to receive an honorable mention in Tibetan tantric scriptures over the centuries, and all Tibetans have remained aware of them. Therefore when the Sixth Dalai Lama took up a highly sexual multipartner lifestyle, most Tibetans explained the un-monkly behavior of their beloved mystic by declaring—albeit with something of a nod and a wink—that he was practicing the tantric sexual yogas. And it is not impossible that he was doing so.

Consequently many street stories emerged about his behavior. One, for example, has him returning to the Potala late at night, rather drunk and after a major session of sex with the ladies, when he is confronted by some government officials who chastise him for his behavior. According to the story, he just laughs and pulls out his penis. It instantly becomes erect, and he ejaculates. However, to demonstrate his tantric power he then uses his meditation to reverse the direction of the ejaculating droplets of sperm, thus drawing them back to the tip of his penis and into his body.

He then exclaims something along the lines of, “An ordinary person can fuck and a tantric yogi can fuck, but let’s not pretend that it’s the same thing.”

As I mentioned in the early section of this chapter, the Sixth was considered to be an emanation of the Indian sage Padma Sambhava, who propagated Tantric Buddhism in Tibet in the mid-eighth century. Padma Sambhava is alleged to have had sex with hundreds, and perhaps even thousands, of Tibetan ladies during his sojourn in Tibet, and to have practiced the tantric sexual yogas with them. Therefore when the Sixth renounced celibacy for sexual promiscuity, it was presumed that he was emulating the great Padma Sambhava in this regard.

The Sanskrit word for a tantric sexual partner is karmamudra, or “stamp of destiny.” The idea is that the partner is one with whom one shares a special spiritual and karmic affiliation. Because the body is the crystallization of one’s past karma, practicing tantric sex with a person with whom one has this special affinity is an especially strong method of enlightenment.

Here the moment of sexual orgasm is seen as the most sublime occasion for meditation. The male tantrica induces the orgasmic experience, but when the seminal fluids arrive at the tip of the penis he holds them there and then reverses their direction, drawing them, together with the bliss that accompanies them, back into the body. Orgasm is thus both prolonged and enhanced. The actual tantric application is then executed from within the sphere of the orgasmic experience.

This is the principle for a male practitioner. For a female, the natural radiance that occurs in orgasm, and that normally moves through the extremities of the body, is channeled through the inner core of the heart chakra, and the warmth of the bliss is used to enhance and sustain the radiance.

The occasion of sexual orgasm is said to be the best time for meditation for three reasons: At that moment one feels great pleasure; at that moment one is lucidly awake; and at that moment the mind of duality (i.e., the dichotomy of self and other) is most relaxed.

Whether or not the Sixth Dalai Lama actually engaged in his promiscuous lifestyle in order to practice the tantric sexual yogas is uncertain. It is possible that Tibetans speak of the situation in that way as a kind of linguistic honorific, and out of respect for him.

However, his love songs certainly indicate that he was well versed in tantric literature. This is to be expected; every Tibetan monk supplements his general Buddhist studies with initiation into the tantras. For example, in one verse he writes,

The mind dwells so easily

On thoughts of one's beloved;

If it could as naturally be placed on the holy Dharma,

Enlightenment in one lifetime would be easy.

The play on words between “beloved” and “holy Dharma” is borrowed from tantric scriptures. The primordial quality of the mind that arises at the moment of sexual orgasm is, in the language of the Buddhist tantras, the “holy Dharma” to be realized. Fully integrating the bliss, lucidity and beyond-duality qualities that arise at the moment of orgasm is the tantric method for accomplishing enlightenment in one lifetime.

And also,

The cuckoo has come from Monyul;

The sky softens the earth with its moisture.

Whenever I embrace a sweet lover,

Body and mind melt with the fullness.

Here the tantric idea of the sexual orgasmic state is used to portray the breaking down of the rigidity of body and mind that characterizes the unenlightened state. As the rains of spring soften the hard earth and allow it to give birth to everything that grows, the softening of body and mind from the moisture of the lover's embrace allows for every growth and transformation.

Whether or not the Sixth Dalai Lama actually wrote the love songs with which he is credited is, of course, another question altogether. Tibetan and Western scholars alike have called this point into question. Unlike earlier Dalai Lamas, who clearly signed what they wrote, the Sixth's collection of love songs was compiled after his death. None of them can definitely be attributed to him.

However, this is something of a moot point. The relevant issue is that they are believed to be by him, and are a large part of why he is so well loved in the

collective Tibetan mind.

As stated earlier, the Sixth Dalai Lama was the only incarnation in the line who chose not to remain a monk. His decision to disrobe obviously had drastic consequences.

Modern Tibetan and Western scholars often surmise that his unorthodox behavior arose because he was recognized and enthroned so late in life. Most Dalai Lamas have this rite of passage happen to them when they are between the ages of three and five, whereas the Sixth was fourteen at the time of his enthronement.

This theory seems weak. After all, before the age of three he had been recognized and enthroned as the reincarnation of the Zhalu Khenpo, a lama almost as important as the Dalai Lama himself. Moreover, during his twelve years in Tsona Dzong he was provided with excellent tutors and given an education similar to that of his predecessors.

I once asked His Holiness the present Dalai Lama for his thoughts on the matter. His Holiness replied, “My own feeling is that he had a master plan. He had decided that the system of reincarnation was too cumbersome for his position as head of the nation. I think he realized that the period between the death of one Dalai Lama and the maturity of the next posed too many dangers to the stability of the nation. Consequently he decided to follow the tradition of the early Sakya lamas, who maintained a tradition of succession by heredity.’

In other words, the present Dalai Lama here suggests that the Sixth wanted to end the legacy of having the Dalai Lama live as a celibate monk, and instead set up a system of mystical monarchy.

His Holiness concluded by saying, “Unfortunately for him his master plan failed. Perhaps the Tibetans and their disciples the Mongolians were not ready for it, and wanted a system with a monk at the helm. In any case, it led to his removal from office, and perhaps even to his death.”

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In conclusion it may be interesting to relate a Tibetan oral tradition surrounding the Sixth Dalai Lama that was told to me by one of my late gurus, the Venerable Geshey Ngawang Dargyey. According to this tradition, the

Sixth himself planned his own removal from office, and Lhazang Khan was a knowing accomplice to the fulfillment of this aim.

Here it is said that the Sixth had been prophesied to marry and produce an heir who would become something of a King Arthur in Central Asia. Had the merits of the world remained sufficiently strong, the prophecy would have been fulfilled. This prince would have united Tibet, the Mongol tribes and Manchu China under his enlightened leadership, and from there brought all the known world under the umbrella of his rule. In short, he would have become a chakravartin, or universal emperor, and ushered in a golden age that would have endured for a thousand years.

However, a number of conditions had to be met in order for this destiny to emerge. In the words of Buddhist scripture, two things in particular had to happen: an increase in the world's merit, and the mitigation of the world's collective negative karma.

Unfortunately, the opposite occurred in these two spheres. Rather than increase their merits, the people just burned them up in superficialities. Similarly, rather than purify negative karma at this critical juncture in human history, people just increased it. This was not only true in Tibet, but all over the world.

Consequently the universe of prophecy shifted on its axis. The shift meant that rather than produce a son who would usher in a thousand years of enlightenment, peace and prosperity, he would instead produce one who would become power hungry, and usher in an age of tyranny.

The Sixth felt the shift one night while on his way to meet with the lover who was destined to produce that son. He knew that conditions had changed from the very root, and that Plan A had failed. He therefore resorted to Plan B. Turning on his heels, he walked home and spent the night alone.

He then made plans for his own removal from office, with Lhazang Khan playing the part of the antagonist in the piece of theater. It was then too that he made mystical preparations for his reincarnation in Litang as the Seventh Dalai Lama.



Kalzung Gyatso, the Seventh Dalai Lama. From Neg. No. 333399, Photo Log A, Courtesy of the Department of Library Services, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

1

never spent a single night alone;

My bed always brought me some great beauty.

But I never strayed for a moment from the way,

For I never lost sight of the universal mind.

The Sixth was also the first Dalai Lama who is reported to have died a violent death. As we will see, this death is shrouded in mystery, a factor that brings added fascination to his persona.

Although he did not write much—he is usually credited with only six texts—the small collection of love songs that emerged from his pen became a favorite with all Tibetans and has remained so until today. Almost a dozen different translations and treatments of these have appeared in English over the past few decades, causing the Sixth to become something of a celebrity in the West. This collection is composed of sixty four-line verses, most of which are inspired by various of his lady friends.²

The Seventh Dalai Tama: The Tama and the Emperor

My favorite room in the Potala Palace at Lhasa is the chapel dedicated to the Seventh Dalai Lama.¹ Here one is confronted by three very different life-sized statues of this illustrious incarnation.

The first depicts him as a boy, and the playfulness that fills the pages of his writings shines forth from his eyes and his smile. The second depicts him in his early twenties; his wisdom is in full bloom and is conveyed with a delicate gesture of his hands. The third shows him the way he looked the year he passed away. It exudes an aura of serenity, and conveys a sense of satisfaction at a job well done. All three are seated in meditation and are clothed in the robes of a monk.

The Seventh did not have an easy life, for he had to contend with the chaos that followed in the wake of his predecessor, the Sixth Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Tsangyang Gyatso. Nonetheless the tumultuousness of his times does not seem to have distorted his spirituality nor his sense of humanity.

He perhaps was more like the present Dalai Lama than any other in the line, for he had to face many of the same adversities. As he wrote in a verse, The higher one climbs in samsara,

The further there is to fall;

And the lower one falls,

The more reason to climb back up.

Nobody and nothing is stable,

Other than one's own karma And one's wisdom or lack of it.

Lhazang Khan, chief of the Qoshot Mongols, had deposed the Sixth Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Tsangyang Gyatso. The Khan resented the fact that the Great Fifth's death was kept secret from him for so long, and he also resented the fact that the search for the Fifth's reincarnation was conducted in such a closed manner. In addition, the Sixth's unorthodox behavior had shocked his religious sensibilities.

In brief, Lhazang Khan suspected that the Great Fifth's viceroy, Desi Sangyey Gyatso, had purposely installed the wrong candidate on the Dalai Lama's throne as a means of taking control of the Tibetan administration for himself. He concluded that Tsangyang Gyatso was not the true reincarnation of the Great Fifth. Being a religious man, he had not intended physical harm to come to either the Desi or the Sixth Dalai Lama, and only planned to have them deposed; he sincerely regretted that they both died as a result of the flow of events. His regret was not born solely from the voice of his conscience; he knew that he would be blamed for their deaths, and that this would cause many Tibetans to resent him.

Not long after Lhazang had deposed Tsangyang Gyatso he began pressing the high lamas of the Lhasa area to endorse another lama as the true reincarnation of the Great Fifth. Eventually a monk—Ngawang Yeshey Gyatso by name—was put forth and enthroned. This monk is also referred to as the Sixth Dalai Lama; the title of “the Sixth” was officially stripped from Tsangyang Gyatso, whose life now was presented as a grand error, a crime and act of treason on the part of Desi Sangyey Gyatso.

Thus there are two “Sixth Dalai Lamas” in Tibetan history: the first being Tsangyang Gyatso, the singer of love songs, who was enthroned by Desi Sangyey Gyatso and deposed by Lhazang Khan; and Ngawang Yeshey Gyatso, who was Lhazang Khan's replacement for the deposed Tsangyang Gyatso.

Tibetans generally regard the former as the true incarnation, and the latter as a replacement who sat on the Dalai Lama throne in a time of duress. They nonetheless refer to the latter with the prefixed title of Pekar Dzinpa, or “Holder of the White Lotus.” His name usually appears in Tibetan texts as Pekar Dzinpa Ngawang Yeshey Gyatso. The prefixed title “Holder of the White Lotus” is an epithet for Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, of whom all Dalai Lamas are said to be emanations. In other words, Tibetans believe that the lamas commanded by Lhazang Khan to enthrone a new Sixth Dalai Lama did not choose just any ordinary person for the job, but rather identified a monk who was also an emanation of Avalokiteshvara.

Again, to Tibetans this is not a difficult leap in thinking. When I once asked the present Dalai Lama about the situation he laughed and replied, “There are always thousands of incarnations of Avalokiteshvara in the world. In this case the Tibetans just had to identify one of them and give him the name of the Dalai

Lama.”

This second “Sixth Dalai Lama” was enthroned in 1706, the same year that Tsangyang Gyatso was deported from Lhasa. To the best of my knowledge he remained on the Dalai Lama’s seat until 1717, when the Dzungar Mongols, irritated at Lhazang Khan and his handling of the affair, invaded Tibet and beheaded the Khan. As for Pekar Dzinpa Ngawang Yeshey Gyatso, or the “second Sixth Dalai Lama,” he was removed from the throne and made to retire to the hermitage on Chakpori Mountain in Lhasa. This is the hermitage where the monks of the Dalai Lama’s private monastery Namgyal Dratsang usually go to make the traditional three-year meditation retreat. Because of this new residence, Pekar Dzinpa Ngawang Yeshey Gyatso thereafter became known as the Chakpori Lama.

During the eleven years that Pekar Dzinpa Ngawang Yeshey Gyatso sat on the Dalai Lama throne, Tibet was ruled exclusively by Lhazang Khan; Yeshey Gyatso does not seem to have played any major role.

Objectively speaking, Lhazang was not a bad ruler, and he made every effort to accommodate the Tibetan sentiment. For example, before making most major decisions he would hold conference with the abbots of the great monasteries, and also consult with the traditional oracles, such as Nechung, Lhamo and Gadong, in order to seek their advice. He patronized all the monasteries equally, sponsored high lamas at public teaching events, and showed honor to the various royal families.

However, this was the first time in almost five hundred years that Lhasa had been ruled by a foreigner. Not since the early years of the Mongol lord Kublai Khan in the mid-thirteenth century had the fiercely independent Tibetans had to submit to a non-Tibetan ruler. They were uncomfortable with the situation, and it was not long before they began looking for ways to remove Lhazang Khan from power.

Eventually they turned to the Dzungar Mongols, rivals to the Qoshot led by Lhazang. Previously Desi Sangyey Gyatso had cultivated a close alliance with the Dzungars. This was partially for spiritual reasons; the Dzungars had many of their children living in Tibetan monasteries for education. The Desi had also seen this alliance as a means of creating a balance of power with the Manchus to the east, and as a means of warding off Manchu intrusions into Tibet. Lhazang

Khan, however, had reversed the Desi's policy, and had formed a strong alliance with the Manchus. He had even attempted to send the deposed Sixth Dalai Lama to the Manchu emperor as a friendship token.

To resurrect Desi Sangyey Gyatso's link with the Dzungars, the abbots of the three great Gelukpa monasteries jointly sent a letter to the Dzungar king, Tsewang Rabten, asking for his assistance. However, as we will see, this quickly became a matter of "out of the frying pan and into the fire." Tibet was about to enter into the bloodiest chapter of its illustrious history.

At the same time, a child who had been born in 1708 would reach maturity and become one of the most saintly of all the Dalai Lamas.

Three years after Lhazang Khan deposed the Sixth Dalai Lama and installed Pekar Dzinpa Ngawang Yeshey Gyatso in his place, rumors began to surface about a child born with extraordinary signs near Litang of Kham, in eastern Tibet. These rumors emerged not because of efforts being made in Lhasa to find a reincarnation—after all, the Lhasa lamas had helped Lhazang Khan install Pekar Dzinpa Ngawang Yeshey Gyatso on the Dalai Lama throne and had invested him with the title of "Sixth Dalai Lama"—but from Litang itself.

Visitors to any Tibetan monastery will be accustomed to seeing Tibetan laypeople making their way through the various chapels. They usually carry a small pot of butter, from which they add a few teaspoons to each butterlamp. The women often are seen carrying a young infant on their backs, strapped on with a shawl. In the Iron Tiger Year, or 1710, a woman by the name of Lobzang Chotso made just such a visit to Litang Monastery. As readers may remember, this is one of the monasteries built by the Third Dalai Lama some two hundred years earlier during the Third's teaching tour in Kham.

At the time of Lady Lobzang Chotso's visit to Litang Monastery the monks were gathered in the main assembly hall for a prayer ceremony. When she came before the altar and began making her devotions, a commotion suddenly erupted. One of the monks, Drakpa Paljor by name, spontaneously fell into trance and channeled the Nechung Oracle. While in trance he jumped up and began performing the dance of the Protector Pehar Gyalpo.

He then called out loudly and clearly, "This child is the unmistakable reincarnation of the master Tongwa Donden. You should be careful with him.

It is not appropriate for Tongwa Donden to remain in a household. Bring him to the monastery.”

As we saw earlier, “Tongwa Donden” is the epithet by which the Nechung Oracle refers to the Dalai Lama incarnations.

This monk, of course, was not the Nechung medium of Lhasa, who is usually referred to as the “State Oracle,” although the deity he was channelling—Pehar Gyalpo—was one and the same. The Lhasa medium is always a monk of the Nechung Monastery, the small hermitage on the mountain below Drepung. Several Tibetan monasteries had a monk who served as a medium to channel this important Dharma Protector, whereas only the medium of Nechung Monastery is referred to as the “State Oracle.” The channeling of Pehar Gyalpo is generally performed only on request by the spiritual elders, and usually on special annual occasions or when advice in the search for the reincarnation of a high lama is required. In this case, however, the Litang medium experienced a spontaneous channeling, thus shocking the assembly of monks, as well as everyone who was in the temple.

The medium, still in trance, then asked the mother to let him hold the child. He took the boy in his lap with great respect and asked him if he wanted to become a monk. The boy gave a big smile and nodded his consent. The medium then asked, “Am I Pehar Gyalpo?” The boy again nodded in confirmation.

The boy’s name, given to him by a local mystic not long after his birth, was Kalzang Gyatso or “Ocean of Good Fortune.” Although he would receive other names at ordination ceremonies and other rites of passage later in his life, he would keep Kalzang Gyatso as his favorite. It was also the name with which he signed his many writings after he had completed his training and took up the mantle of a sage.

The family into which the Seventh took birth in 1708 had established their spiritual connection with the Dalai Lama lineage when the Great Fifth traveled to China in 1652. At that time the man who headed the family had sponsored a teaching by the Great Fifth in the Litang area.

The Great Fifth had shown special attention to him, and now the local people understood why: The Great Fifth, they reflected, had been setting the stage for his own future rebirth into this family, an event that was to take place two

incarnations later. The sponsor of the Great Fifth's teaching in Litang had now become the Seventh Dalai Lama's grandfather.

However, the parents were less than happy when the oracle of Litang Monastery spontaneously proclaimed that their son was the reincarnation of the Sixth Dalai Lama. Indeed, they were filled with apprehension, and were profoundly concerned for the safety of their child. The Sixth had been deposed by the Mongolian chieftain Lhazang Khan, and a puppet Dalai Lama now sat on the throne in the Potala. They had no idea how the Khan would react, should he hear that their child could be the Sixth's reincarnation. Consequently they strongly requested that the oracle's words be kept secret.

Nonetheless rumors of the child traveled fast, and before long his identity was an open secret. Eventually the talk reached Lhasa and central Tibet.

The elders of the great Lhasa monasteries thought back to the last poem that the Sixth had composed before being carried out of Lhasa: O white crane

Lend me your wings.

1 go not far,

And from Litang shall return.

At first this verse had not seemed especially significant. The mention of Litang had seemed to be merely a poetic reference to a place of great beauty. Now the talk of a special child who was born in Litang gave it a very particular significance.

Eventually Lhazang Khan himself heard the rumors. In 1712 he sent a delegation to Litang to see what the excitement was about. The delegation was jointly headed by both a Tibetan and a Mongol leader.

When the parents first heard of the delegation's arrival they went into hiding in the mountains, taking the child with them. The boy's father, Sonam Dargyey, was well aware of the dangers of dealing with the Mongolians, and did not want to take any chances. However, the attendant to the abbot of Litang Monastery made inquiries of the Tibetan head of the delegation, and became convinced that there was no threat to the boy's safety. He went to the family and requested them to bring the child to the monastery in order to be examined.

The delegation studied the boy closely and then asked the parents who they thought he was. They replied, “The Nechung medium of Litang Monastery stated that he is the reincarnation of Jey Tsangyang Gyatso. In other words, they openly admitted that they had already been told their son was the reincarnation of the Sixth Dalai Lama.

The Tibetan head of the delegation forcefully replied, “I can assure you that he is not the reincarnation of Jey Tsangyang Gyatso.” He then made a strong public display of his rejection of the boy, stating that even if he were Tsangyang Gyatso’s reincarnation it would be of no special significance, for Tsangyang Gyatso had been publicly declared to be the incorrect choice of the Great Fifth’s reincarnation, and now the true incarnation sat on the throne in Lhasa.

This, however, was merely a show for the Mongols in the party. Later, in private, he confided to the elders of Litang Monastery that the child indeed seemed to be a special incarnation, and he asked them to take the boy into the monastery for protection. He then secretly gave a large sum of money to the monastery for the child’s maintenance.

The parents nonetheless still feared for the child’s safety, and once more fled with him into the mountains. Only after the delegation had left did they return to their home.

Eventually the parents became convinced that the Tibetan head of the delegation held no ulterior motives. They brought the boy to Litang Monastery, and the family took up residence there for some time.

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Tibetan biographies of the Seventh Dalai Lama do not pay much attention to the political circumstances in which he lived. They choose instead to look at the spiritual side of his life—at what he studied, what he taught and so forth.

Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen, who was the guru of the Eighth Dalai Lama and a mystic from the Mt. Everest region, describes the Seventh’s early years as follows.

The intensity of the young boy’s spiritual growth was like the growth of a water lotus. At the age of four he received a vision of Buddha Shakyamuni and the Sixteen Arhats, thus gaining their blessings. When he was only five years old he

received a vision of Lama Tsongkhapa, who advised him to quickly go to the Dharmic fields of central Tibet. These and many other auspicious events occurred. Even when still a delicate child, he poured forth the ambrosial nectars of Dharma in accordance with the specific karmic dispositions of those to be trained who came to him with faith.

Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen goes on to state that when the boy was only six years old he was given the great lama Tsagan Nomonhan Ngawang Lobzang Tenpa as his personal tutor, and gradually received a steady stream of initiations, scriptural transmissions and oral teachings from him. Apparently for reasons of security, the boy was later moved from Litang to Dergey. During the journey he stopped on pilgrimage at the great monasteries of Amdo and Kham, and on one occasion gave the initiation into the mandala of Mahakaruna Avalokiteshvara, together with an extensive discourse on all the meditative disciplines that are preliminaries to this tantric system. All who attended, it is said, were deeply moved by the brilliance and depth of the child's words.

Meanwhile the Manchu emperor heard news of the child. In 1715 he sent a delegation to the boy's family with a request that he be honored with the privilege of sponsoring the child's entrance into Kumbum, the monastery that had been built by the Third Dalai Lama at the birthplace of Lama Tsongkhapa. The parents accepted, and the following year the boy was taken to Kumbum.

On the day that it was learned the boy would be coming to Kumbum Monastery, the Kumbum medium spontaneously fell into trance and gave instructions that the Kumbum monks should organize a large reception for the child, and should make grand ritual offerings of victory banners, white conch shells and so forth. In other words, they should grant him the reception that a visiting Dalai Lama would receive, thus sending a signal that the monastery officially accepted the boy as the reincarnation of the Sixth Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Tsangyang Gyatso.

The matter was obviously controversial, for traditional accounts state that a large group of the Kumbum monks argued against giving such a formal reception. The texts add that the Dharmapala (protective spirits of the Buddhist faith) punished the dissenters by raining down sickness and hardship upon them, until they eventually relented and begged forgiveness for their errors.

The fact that this incident is mentioned in this manner in the Tibetan chronicles indicates that there was considerable apprehension over how Lhazang Khan would react when he learned that Kumbum, the greatest Gelukpa monastery in Amdo, had formally recognized the boy as the Seventh Dalai Lama.

Indeed, the young Dalai Lama was invited to officiate at the Great Prayer Festival where, according to his official biography, he sat upon the Dharma Throne that had been constructed by the Third Dalai Lama and gave an extensive discourse upon Ashvagoshā's Birth Stories of the Buddha to several thousand monks. Readings from this text were, of course, a traditional part of the New Year's Day festival in Tibet established by Tsongkhapa, a celebration led by every Dalai Lama from the Second on.

This action was a challenge to Lhazang Khan, whose own "Sixth Dalai Lama," Pekar Dzinpa Ngawang Yeshey Gyatso, still sat on the throne in Lhasa and officially bore the title of the Sixth Dalai Lama. Therefore, such recognition of the boy from Litang as the Seventh Dalai Lama was a direct signal that the monastery recognized Tsangyang Gyatso, who had died at Kunganor, as being the real Sixth Dalai Lama, and the candidate now on the throne in the Potala as being false. With Lhazang Khan's tribal grazing grounds being located in the Kokonor region only a few hundred miles from Kumbum, this was serious stuff indeed.

In all probability nobody knew just how he would react. Mongolian warlords were infamous for their volatility, and for their penchant for taking any opposition as a declaration of out-and-out war.

In spite of these concerns, in 1716 the now eight-year-old-boy was brought to Kumbum and enthroned with great fanfare. The Manchu emperor Kang-hsi acted as the main sponsor of the event, providing some three million silver coins as his part of the offering, the equivalent of several million dollars today. It was indeed a grand occasion, above and beyond even the grandness that the Kumbum medium had recommended.

Tibetans today regard this move by the Manchu emperor to have been politically motivated, and they feel that he did it in order to get a foot in the Tibetan door. However, this seems rather improbable. By recognizing the boy as the Sixth Dalai Lama's reincarnation he was in effect backing a candidate that would eventually be held up in opposition to the puppet Dalai Lama that Lhazang Khan

had installed after deposing Tsangyang Gyatso. In that Lhazang Khan was the Manchu emperor's ally—some historians go so far as to say that the Qoshot Mongols were under the suzerainty of the Manchus— this seems rather improbable—the emperor's choice seems more spiritually than politically motivated.

Perhaps, as cynics would have it, the Manchu emperor was playing both sides of the fence. However, it is also possible that he truly believed Tsangyang Gyatso to have been the authentic Dalai Lama, and the boy to be his authentic reincarnation. In any case, the Manchu emperor sent several of his own Tibetan gurus to oversee the Seventh's reception at Kumbum, and to make offerings on the royal family's behalf. This would seem to be an honor above and beyond mere political machinations.

Although Kumbum is just about as far from Lhasa as one can go without leaving the country—it lies far to the northeast of Lhasa, near the Tibetan border with China — the reception accorded the boy here sent an unequivocal message to Lhazang Khan from the Tibetans: “We do not accept your candidate as the Sixth Dalai Lama. The real Sixth Dalai Lama is dead, and we have the authentic reincarnation.”

Safely installed in Kumbum and now living under the Manchu emperor's protection, the young Seventh was free to follow the traditional path of study. Thus he cut his long hair and took the traditional pre-novice vows, putting on the maroon robes on the twentieth day of the tenth month of 1716. His ordination name became Ngawang Chodrak Tubten Gyaltzen Palzangpo, or “Master of Wisdom Speech, Famed in Truth, A Victory Banner of the Buddhadharma, A Glorious and Sublime One.” Having taken vows, the boy now engaged in a more structured training under the guidance of his tutor Chuzang Nomonhan.

While the young Dalai Lama was studying and memorizing the great scriptures of India and Tibet and trained in the methodology of logic and debate, Lhazang Khan was tossing in his sleep. The events at Kumbum were an open declaration of independence on the part of the Tibetans. Even though the lamas in the Lhasa area may not have openly stated their support for the boy—after all, to do so would be treason and therefore punishable by death—support for the child became instantly near-universal among the Tibetans.

In short, the Khan's days as ruler of Tibet were numbered.

As noted earlier, Lhazang Khan was not a bad ruler. In all probability, had Desi Sangyey Gyatso not been beheaded by one of the Khan's wives, and had the Sixth Dalai Lama not unexpectedly died at Kunganor, the Tibetans would never have resented him enough to rise up against him.

As fate would have it, just seven months prior to the young Seventh's enthronement, two Catholic missionaries suddenly showed up on the streets of Lhasa: Emanuel Freyre and Ippolito Desideri. The date was March 18, 1716» and one can only imagine the surprise of the Lhasa citizens when these two white faces appeared out of nowhere. Although the former stayed only a week and then left for India, the latter was to remain for five years. His wonderful travel journal, not published in English translation until 1913, documents his amazing journey from Rome to Goa, Delhi, Kashmir, Ladakh, Tsaparang and finally Lhasa.² He witnessed firsthand the last days of Lhazang Khan's rule, as well as the invasion of the Dzungar Mongols, and the chaos of the civil war that ensued.

Desideri exhibited the prejudices characteristic of his era and cultural background, and these prejudices resulted in an almost comical skew in his reporting of his adventures. He was, however, an honest and devoted soul, and was truly dedicated to his task of, as he puts it, "saving heathens." The comical aspect of his writings (and attitude) pervaded his journal, as reflected in his chapter headings. For example, he entitled his chapter on Tibetan Buddhism "Describing the False and Peculiar Religion Prevailing in Thibet." He dedicated two chapters to the history of the Dalai Lamas, which he entitled "Reasons Why this Alleged Incarnation of the Grand Lama Must Be a Work of the Devil," and "Continuation of the Argument as to Whether the Deceit Mentioned in the Last Chapter is a Fraud Committed by Men and Not by the Devil." His chapter on early Tibetan religious history is entitled "How the False Religion was Brought to Thibet____" Oh well, boys will be boys, and,

in that era, missionaries would be missionaries.

On May 1, 1716, two weeks after his arrival, Desideri met with Lhazang Khan and secured from him permission to open a Christian mission with which to proselytize Catholicism. His description of this meeting reveals something of the style and character of Lhazang Khan. Desideri writes, On the first of May I went to the rooms in the palace occupied by the viceroy... who ... took me with a great

number of Lamas, Governors, and other people to the audience ____ Then, commanding everyone to be

seated, he motioned me to sit opposite him, not far from the throne. He spoke first to one of the principal Lamas and then to another; then turning to me asked many questions, and at last demanded what had brought me from such a distant country. I answered him as I had answered the Minister, and he then questioned me about some points in our religion and asked what was our opinion with regard to theirs----

Desideri concluded his description of this meeting with the Khan by saying,

Turning to me he declared the liking he felt for me, promising that he would care for me as a father cares for his son; and that I could remain without fear in his Kingdom and Capital, for if anyone would molest me he would protect me; adding that I was to perfect myself in the language so that he could converse with me freely and without an interpreter_____

Lhazang Khan showed great interest in and sponsored the presence of his Italian visitor Ippolito Desideri, just as his ancient relative Kublai Khan had shown great interest in and sponsored the presence of the Italian adventurer Marco Polo some five centuries earlier. No doubt the Khan saw him as a window on the Western world, and perhaps as an instrument through which to forge bonds with Europe. He arranged accommodations and support for the Italian missionary, and saw to it that he was well cared for.

Desideri in turn greatly admired Lhazang Khan, and his admiration carries over into his prose. He writes,

By nature he was gay, joyous and affable. Courteous to all, easy of approach, he listened to and comforted those to whom he gave audience, and was very liberal with money.... His intellect was keen and prompt, and when I propounded some points in religious doctrine entirely opposed to their errors he argued with suitable reasons and was set upon elucidating every point in private and in public disputations. Though intellectually so acute, he was docile, not clinging obstinately to the errors of his sect, but admitted the truth of some of the points elucidated— He was admired for the prudence with which he managed affairs, and looked into every detail himself, instead of leaving it to others. His prudence would have been more useful to himself had it been accompanied by

the quality, very necessary to rulers, of suspicion; the want of this cost him his kingdom, his family and his life_____

The Khan obviously also had something of a sense of humor. Desideri heard of the great debate between Chinese and Indian Buddhists that had taken place in the late 800s, and that had so profoundly influenced the course of Tibetan history; the Indians won, and as a result Indian Buddhism became the national religion, with Chinese Buddhism being banned from the country. Desideri asked the Khan to allow him the same opportunity. The Khan replied affirmatively, adding that because the Tibetans train deeply in debate Desideri would do well to study Tibetan Buddhism for some years and to learn its techniques of logic before confronting the lamas on a dialectical platform. Consequently, arrangements were made for Desideri to study Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan logical methodology in the Ramochey, the temple that King Songtsen Gampo had built in the mid-seventh century for his Chinese bride. In that Tibetan Buddhist lamas of the Gelukpa schools engage in logical debate for some ten or twelve hours a day for the twenty years of their monastic training, the Khan's suggestion must have brought a few smiles to the Lhasa intelligentsia. The strength of eighteenth-century Catholicism lay in its unbending commitment to Vatican dogma, a fact that had already become evident to the Tibetans through their conversations with Desideri, and from a small booklet he wrote in Tibetan on the basic tenets of Catholicism. For the Catholics of the day, blind faith held far greater sway than logic. In brief, had the debate ever taken place, Desideri would have been toast.

However, the encounter was not to occur, and events of a far different nature were soon to sweep the land.

While the young Seventh Dalai Lama was being gradually introduced to the spiritual life, and was being carried from one region of northeastern Tibet to another in order to be shown off to the people, the abbots of the three great Gelukpa monasteries of the Lhasa area petitioned the Dzungar Mongol king Tsewang Rabten to come to their aid and to remove Lhazang Khan from the throne that he had usurped. The Dzungars were only too glad to consent.

The Dzungar king seems to have been a somewhat cunning man, and not terribly dedicated to the ideal of honor. He began his plan of attack in late 1714 by proposing a marriage between his daughter and Lhazang Khan's eldest son, which was accepted. Lhazang's son arrived in Dzungaria with a considerable

bodyguard of crack troops, which the Dzungars proceeded to disarm, later killing all of them. News of this never reached Lhasa, and King Tsewang Rabten then petitioned his prospective brother-in-law, King Lhazang Khan, to loan him a further body of troops to help protect his borders, using the supposed marriage and alliance as the platform for the request. Lhazang consented, thus further weakening his own defenses. When this army arrived in Dzungaria it too joined the fate of the first in being put to the sword.

With the stage thus set and Lhazang seriously weakened, King Tsewang Rabten then sent one army to Amdo to pick up the young Seventh Dalai Lama, and another directly toward Lhasa. The plan was to have the first army come to Lhasa with the Seventh Dalai Lama, thus ensuring the enthusiastic cooperation of the Tibetan masses, and to attack Lhazang Khan from the northeast. The second army, formed of six thousand horsemen under the command of his brother Prince Tsering Dondup, would simultaneously attack from the northwest.

The task was made more difficult for the Dzungars when the Manchu emperor learned of the movements of the eastern army, and attacked and destroyed it. However, the western army under the command of Prince Tsering Dondup proceeded to carry through the attack by itself. Lhazang Khan expected the Tibetans to enter the war on his side, and was caught by surprise when they supported the Dzungars. He did not know, of course, that the Dzungars had come at the Tibetan invitation. Lhazang and his men put up a valiant fight, but were eventually routed and destroyed. The Khan and all of his family were captured and put to death. By mid-December of 1717 the war was over. Tibet, which had been under Qoshot Mongol rule for eleven years, was now liberated.

Lhazang Khan, for all the intelligence ascribed to him by Desideri, seems to have been utterly unaware of the significance of the symbolic power that the child recognized as the Seventh Dalai Lama held in the minds of the Tibetans. Moreover, he obviously had grossly underestimated the resentment that the Tibetans felt over his role in the death of both the Sixth Dalai Lama and Desi Sangyey Gyatso. Finally, he grossly overestimated the value of the puppet Dalai Lama whom he had placed in the Potala. The moment Lhazang Khan was ousted from power, this puppet Dalai Lama was removed from the Potala, stripped of his title, and made to retire to a small monastery on the outskirts of Lhasa.

All heads in Tibet now turned eastward and looked to the child born in Litang, who was being kept and educated in Kumbum Monastery

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The chaos that marked the end of the Sixth Dalai Lama's life and the beginning of the Seventh's still had some way to go before it had played itself out. Almost three more years would pass before the young Seventh Dalai Lama, by then ten years old, could be brought to Lhasa.

Unfortunately for the Tibetans, after the Dzungars gained control of Lhasa they turned to looting, rape, pillage and murder. Prince Tsering Dondup's army—as ill-disciplined armies are sometimes wont to do—went on a rampage and engaged in an out-and-out bloodbath. In Lhasa they roamed from house to house in search of booty, torturing and killing anyone who resisted them. They pillaged almost all the monasteries and temples in the Lhasa area regardless of sect, including the chapels of the Potala. They seem to have held a special dislike for the Nyingmapa School, and razed numerous Nyingma monasteries to the ground, killing hundreds of Nyingma monks in the process. Both Mindroling and Dorjey Drak, the two Nyingma monasteries in the Lhasa region most closely associated with the Fifth Dalai Lama, were first pillaged and then reduced to ashes.

Prince Tsering Dondup no doubt planned to remain in Lhasa and assume the rule of Tibet himself. However, he soon began to fear the wrath of his brother King Tsewang Dondup, on whose orders he had embarked on his mission to save Tibet from the Qoshots. Eventually he decided that the best means of regaining his brother's favor would be to send much of the conquered booty to him. Therefore in 1719 he dispatched an enormous caravan to Dzungaria, carrying much of what he had robbed from the Potala and the monasteries of Tibet. Fortunately for Tibetan cultural history this caravan was interrupted by a small Tibetan army. Several years later, after the wars were over and the Seventh Dalai Lama had been enthroned in Lhasa, these treasures were returned to the monasteries and temples from whence they had been stolen.

Ippolito Desideri witnessed much of the fighting between the Dzungars and Qoshots, as well as the Dzungar atrocities that followed their victory. At first Desideri withdrew from his house in Lhasa and took up residence in Sera Monastery for safety reasons. Located in the hills to the north of Lhasa, from it he could directly see many of the battles from his rooftop. His account of the various engagements are graphic and detailed, providing us with

an excellent record of this important period of Tibetan history.

After the fall of Desideri's patron King Lhazang Khan, the venerable missionary retreated south to Dvakpo, where he remained for the duration of his time in Tibet. From here he documented the next dramatic phase of the war: the Tibetan effort to drive the Dzungars out of Tibet, and the formation of the alliance between Tibet and Manchu China in order to accomplish this. At one point Desideri was almost drafted into the anti-Dzungar army, but a Tibetan friend managed to get him excused at the last moment.

The Manchu emperor had several reasons for joining the effort against Prince Tsering Dondup's Dzungars. First, the Manchu alliance with the Qoshot Mongols placed the former directly at odds with the Dzungars in a number of territorial disputes. Dzungaria had perhaps been Manchu China's greatest antagonist for several decades, and the Dzungar invasion of Tibet only highlighted this point.

Second, Lhazang Khan had been not only an ally of the Manchu emperor but also a blood relative through marriage. The murder of Lhazang's wife and children had outraged the Manchu emperor. Some of the Dzungar acts of cruelty shocked even the most hardened minds. For example, the wife of Lhazang's prime minister, instead of receiving the traditional punishment of exile to a rural estate, received the sentence of death by slow torture, and then had her body chopped into little pieces and scattered over the streets of Lhasa.

Third, as we saw earlier, in invading Tibet the Dzungars had divided into two armies, one of which was charged with the task of going east to pick up the young Seventh Dalai Lama in the hope of using him to draw all Tibetan factions to the Dzungar side. This army had had to encroach upon Manchu territory, thus opening up hostilities with the Manchus. The Dzungar force was small, and was easily crushed by the Manchus, but the incident was nonetheless regarded as an act of war.

Fourth, in 1718 the Manchu emperor had sent a small force into Tibet with the objective of clearing the traditional trade routes. The Dzungars not only attacked this force but also, after it surrendered, beheaded each and every member of the caravan.

Therefore in 1720 the Manchu emperor put together an army of six thousand crack troops, with many thousands of lesser soldiers. Rather than follow the uninhabited southern route, this army took the very busy northern road, thus signaling their plans to all and sundry.

The Manchu emperor had two aces up his sleeve. First, this army carried the young Seventh Dalai Lama with it, who was now almost twelve years old. The party traveled slowly, allowing everyone along the way to receive blessings from the child. The Manchus publicly announced that the objective of their mission was to rid Tibet of the Dzungars and see the real Dalai Lama installed in the Potala. This ensured him the sympathies of the Tibetan people.

The emperor's second ace was money. The Manchu army carried an enormous amount of silver, and offered five years of a soldier's salary, paid in advance to the family, to any male over the age of twelve who would join with them. In that most Tibetans would gladly have done so for free in order to see the Dzungars gone and their precious Dalai Lama in the Potala, this added incentive brought a festive air to the undertaking. Even Buddhist monks cast aside their monastic code of nonviolence and left their monasteries in order to join the effort. By late summer the Manchu force, now swollen to an enormous number, arrived at Lhasa, escorting the precious incarnation.

At the Jokhang, the young Seventh gave a religious discourse to many thousands of monks and lay people. After the discourse he went to the Potala and met for the first time with the elderly Panchen Lama, Jetsun Lobzang Yeshey, who would become his principal tutor and mentor. On the fifth day of the following month, while Lhasa boiled with political turmoil, the Seventh received the ordination of a novice monk from the Panchen Lama, assisted by the Ganden Throne Holder, Gendun Puntsok. "Lobzang" was suffixed to his childhood name, resulting in the title by which he would come to be most frequently known: Lobzang Kalzang Gyatso.

With the Dalai Lama finally installed in his traditional seat and Lhasa full of Manchus, Prince Tsering Dondup was in an uncomfortable position. He had originally been commissioned by his brother King Tsewang Rabten only to remove the Qoshots from Lhasa, but had instead been seduced by power and, after his military objective was achieved, had chosen to break away from his brother and set himself up as the supreme ruler of Tibet. Thus he could now neither expect reinforcements from his brother, nor retreat to Dzungaria.

He had no choice but to stand and fight. And fight he did. Outnumbered five to one, his troops put up a fierce battle. By November, however, it was all over. The last of the Dzungars had either fled, died or surrendered.

This was the manner in which the young Seventh Dalai Lama first experienced Lhasa. It was a time of great suffering and bloodshed.

Of course as a youth he was not involved in any of it directly. Rather, throughout the many intrigues and conflicts he remained but a boy to whom the Tibetans looked for their salvation, and whom they hoped would prevail and then usher in an era of peace.

On the full moon day of the ninth Tibetan month of the Iron Mouse Year, or November of 1720, the twelve-year-old Seventh Dalai Lama was enthroned in the Potala.

The names of two young Tibetan aristocrats came to prominence during the days of the Qoshot and then Dzungar rules of Tibet. After the fall of the Dzungars and the advent of the Manchus, both of these figures would play major roles.

One was Polhaney of Tsang. He had allied himself with Lhazang Khan after Lhazang gained control of Tibet, and had served Lhazang well. During the Dzungar invasion of 1717 he took the unpopular path and sided with Lhazang against the Dzungars. Somehow after Lhazang's fall he managed to extricate himself from the massive punishments that the Dzungars brought with them, and escaped unharmed to Tsang. He then lived quietly on his estate in Tsang until talk of the Seventh Dalai Lama being brought to Lhasa by the Manchus reached his ears.

The other name that achieved prominence in these violent days was Gangchenney, the governor of western Tibet. Far removed from Lhasa, Gangchenney succeeded to a large extent in keeping his region out of the fracas, and established his own rule firmly over the lands to the far west.

When Gangchenney heard news of the approaching Manchu army, he contacted Polhaney and suggested that the two of them join forces and attack the Dzungars. Tibetan historians claim that the two had almost defeated Prince Tsering Dondup even before the Manchus arrived, and that the Manchus just did a bit of cleanup and then claimed all the credit. However, Desideri's account clearly paints the picture the other way around; the Manchus did the majority of

the heavy fighting, and Polhaney and Gangchenney are the ones who claimed more credit than they deserved. Odds are on Desideri for providing the more accurate version.

Whatever the case may be, after the young Seventh Dalai Lama was enthroned, the names of Gangchenney and Polhaney jumped onto the pages of Tibetan history, the former tragically and the latter successfully. The former ruled Tibet from 1720 until his death in 1727; the latter ruled from then until his own death twenty years later, in 1747. Thus during these years the Seventh Dalai Lama's role was primarily spiritual, and he played no significant secular role, other than that as peacemaker in 1727. Instead, the two warrior-nobles came to power through a series of political events.

As we saw earlier, after the Fifth Dalai Lama rose to power in 1642 his chief manager received the title of "Desi," or "viceroy," and became the single most powerful man in the country after the Dalai Lama himself. The tradition continued throughout the Fifth's lifetime, and also throughout the lifetime of the Sixth. After removing Desi Sangyey Gyatso from power in 1706, the Mongol chieftain King Lhazang Khan gave the title of Desi to his own chief minister, and the Dzungar chieftain Prince Tsering Dondup did the same with his chief assistant after his takeover of Tibet in 1717.

Once the Seventh Dalai Lama was safely enthroned, a conference was held by the Tibetan leaders in order to decide how best to repair a Tibet that had been badly wounded by the many years of war. It was decided that the role of Desi placed too much authority in one man's hands, and consequently the system was terminated. In its place a council of ministers was formed, with two senior and two junior ministers forming a central assembly. Over the years to follow, Tibet was ruled by this council. Initially Gangchenney became the chairman of the council of ministers. A few years later, in 1723, the council was expanded, and Polhaney joined as junior minister.

Communist China today attempts to justify its takeover of Tibet in the 1950s on the grounds that in 1720 Tibet became part of Manchu China. However, Emperor Kang-hsi invaded Tibet in order to punish the Dzungars, and not to take over the country. Tibet clearly did not become part of Manchu China at that time. The autonomy of the Tibetan administration that was created after the Seventh's enthronement clearly demonstrates this point. Moreover, in 1722 Kang-hsi passed away and was succeeded by his son Yung-cheng. This emperor

withdrew Manchu troops from Tibet, thus clearly demonstrating that he was interested in an alliance and not in a conquered territory.

At this point the Seventh Dalai Lama spent his time in Buddhist study and practice, and was still too young to actively participate in political affairs. He had begun to study with the Panchen Lama, beginning with the Lama Tsongkhapa's Lamrim Chenmo, or Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path. He also received the four complete initiations into the Vajrabhairava Tantra together with detailed teachings on this Highest Yoga Tantra path.

The young Seventh, Kalzang Gyatso, then took up residence in Drepung Monastery in order to study under the Ganden Throne Holder, Lobzang Dargyey. Moving rapidly through his subjects, he repeated the study of fundamental logic that he had made some years before at Litang Monastery, but as he had already mastered the subject he finished the several-year program in a few months and then went on to study Dharmakirti's Seven Treatises on Promana. From the Throne Holder Palden Drakpa he also received two daily sessions of instruction on the doctrines of the Madhyamaka School, including the works of Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti, along with Tsongkhapa's great commentaries. Before long, he attained mastery of the Madhyamaka system.

On the full moon of the fourth month of the Fire Horse Year, or 1726, he took the full ordination of a Buddhist monk. The ceremony took place in the Great Temple of Lhasa before the sacred image of Buddha Shakyamuni, with the Panchen Lama as the ordaining abbot, the Throne Holder Palden Drakpa as the acharya, the highly realized and learned Gyumey tantric abbot Khedrub Chenpo Ngawang Chokden as the consulting ordination master, and the great scriptural master Kachen Lobzang Monlam as timekeeper. In all, thirty-one of Tibet's foremost incarnate lamas were present at the ceremony. It must have been a spectacular event.

While the Dalai Lama was immersed in his studies, pouring over the Abhidharma, and receiving transmissions of the Guhyasamaja and Heruka Tantras with their related sadhanas and commentaries, Tibetan political affairs were disintegrating. The council of ministers was becoming more and more polarized, with Gangchenney and Polhaney seen by the others as overly forceful and obstinate. Then during the summer of 1727 Polhaney had to leave Lhasa for a period due to family matters, and while he was away the

other ministers used his absence as an excuse to attack Gangchenney, who was the stronger of the two and the de facto leader of Tibet. They did this by arranging a meeting at the Jokhang, Tibet's oldest and most sacred temple, and brutally murdering him there. Shocked and enraged at the murder, Polhaney quickly put together a small army. The ministers responsible for Gangchenney's liquidation did the same. Tibet once more plunged into civil war.

In the end both the elderly Panchen Lama and his young ward the Seventh Dalai Lama had to intervene and press for peace. The ministers behind Ganchenney's murder and the revolt that ensued agreed to an objective hearing, with the stipulation that the judges were to be outsiders. The Seventh Dalai Lama requested the Manchu emperor to send a tribunal to hear the case. The emperor accepted, and in 1728 the court issued its decision. Polhaney's petition was successful, and thus he emerged the winner. The three ministers behind the death of Gangchenney were charged with treason and murder, and were sentenced to death. A new council was convened, with Polhaney at its head—a position he would maintain until his death in 1747.

The Seventh Dalai Lama was placed in a somewhat sensitive situation. His father had been closely aligned with the three ministers who had been convicted of treason and put to death, and many people suspected that the father had been actively involved in the intrigues. Because of his relationship to the Seventh Dalai Lama, the father was saved from full punishment, though he was exiled to Gartar in Kham, eastern Tibet.

There was also considerable concern for the young Seventh Dalai Lama. Not only was the situation in Lhasa a great distraction to his studies, but the political instability could present dangers to his safety. His tutors decided that it would be best to take him back to Litang Monastery, where he had first been recognized as the Dalai Lama incarnate, and to continue his training from there.

Taking his tutor Tripa Palden Drakpa with him, and escorted by a large entourage of monks from Ganden, Drepung and Sera, the young Dalai Lama left for the place of his birth in the east. As usual, he was also accompanied by the young tulku Changkya Rinpochey.

His tutor Tripa Palden Drakpa died shortly after their arrival in Do Kham, and so the Seventh Dalai Lama, determined to complete his studies without interruption, requested his guru Ngawang Chokden, the Gyumey

Tantric abbot, to join him in the east. With his new teacher he studied the Fifth Dalai Lama's Wisdom Teachings on the Steps to Enlightenment, which is the practical essence of all the oral teachings of Tsongkhapa.³ Studying and meditating upon this holy text in great detail for many months directly in accordance with Ngawang Chokden's personal experience, and repeatedly questioning his teacher on all points of doubt, he quickly gained the certainty of insight.

While Polhaney, the chief minister, ruled Tibet as a de facto king, the young Dalai Lama stayed far away in Kham, immersed in study and meditation, teachings and initiations. He did not return to Lhasa until 1735, when it was finally judged that things had quieted down enough for him to return to his seat in the Potala. Thus his exile came to an end.

The return journey from Kham to Lhasa took several months, for countless monks and lay people gathered along the road to catch a glimpse of him as he went by. By this time, he was revered not only for being the foremost reincarnation in the land, but also for his scholarship and gifts as a teacher. He stayed in the various monasteries that liberally dotted every hill and valley of Tibet, often lingering to offer discourses and initiations. When he was not busy teaching at these monasteries, he would frequently sit in an audience hall and receive all those who came to see him. Throughout his life, the Seventh Dalai Lama was particularly noted for his willingness to receive long lines of devotees, conferring personal blessings on each as they slowly filed by. People might ask him to name their child or give them advice. Through a word or two, a sentence or a tap on the head he would encourage, bless or counsel them one by one. Such single-file processions of peasants, nobles, and monks from nearby monasteries could last for hours, even days. In this fashion, he eventually returned to Lhasa and his home in the Potala.

Ten years had passed since his full monastic ordination; the Dalai Lama was by this time in his twenty-eighth year. When the new incarnation of Demo Tulku, whom he had helped to locate and recognize, repeatedly requested him to bestow the primary vows of a monk, Kalzang Gyatso accepted. The event was his first ceremony of this nature, and it forged a strong bond between the two monks. Thereafter, the Dalai Lama gave him teachings and made a point of arranging seating for him at initiations, the kinds of actions that help perpetuate a karmic link. Over the centuries since that time the Demo Tulku has remained a significant reincarnation, one of the lamas who might be relied upon to help lead

the Tibetan people when a Dalai Lama is in his minority.

After the Seventh's return to Lhasa, he invited the Panchen Lama, Lobzang Yeshey, to come to the Potala and continue in his transmission of the Dharma. However, the Panchen was by then very old and his health too delicate to make the journey. Consequently, in the Dragon Year (1736)) Gyalwa Kalzang Gyatso left for Tsang Province to meet his aged master in his residence at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatsey. Here the two were joyfully reunited and spent many hours each day engaged in discussions on the various points of Dharma that were still unclear to Kalzang Gyatso. Living in the building called the Tosamling, the Seventh Dalai Lama visited his teacher's residence daily to receive teachings on the Second Panchen Lamas The Direct Path, as well as many tantric initiations and teachings. But Kalzang Gyatso was not only a student at Tashi Lhunpo; he himself gave teachings in the Great Assembly Hall on the graduated path to enlightenment, using Tsongkhapa's Essential Meaning of the Stages on the Path as the basis of the sermon. This was to be his final meeting with the Panchen Lama, for not long after his departure, the elderly guru passed away.

While at Tashi Lhunpo, Kalzang Gyatso also received a complete transmission of all doctrines of the ancient Kadampa Tradition, such as Geshey Potawa's Cloud of Precious Similes on Dharma, from the Gyumey abbot, Ngawang Chokden, who had accompanied him there. Ngawang Chokden was the great lama who had joined him in eastern Tibet after the death of his tutor. He had since become the Ganden Throne Holder, and thus now had the new name of Tripa Ngawang Chokden. He stayed with the young Dalai Lama for some time at Tashi Lhunpo, giving him countless tantric teachings and empowerments drawn from many Tibetan Buddhist sects, including those of the Sakyapa, Kargyu and Kadampa. It was this lama, Ngawang Chokden, who was to become known to history as the first Reteng Tulku. As we will see in subsequent chapters, on two occasions in future incarnations he was to serve as regent to the Dalai Lama.

The role of the Ganden Throne Holder, or Ganden Tripa, rotates between the former heads of the two tantric colleges, Gyuto and Gyumey. Because of his elevation to this post, Ngawang Chokden had become one of the three most important lamas in Tibet. Another was the Panchen Lama, and the third and youngest, the Dalai Lama, could look to them both as his gurus.

After completing his teachings with the Panchen, Kalzang Gyatso returned to Lhasa and entered meditation retreat. From a young age he had practiced meditation for five or six hours a day, and annually made several retreats of two weeks or a month in duration. The retreat he then entered in Lhasa was a longer one, and its duration was established not by time or mantra count, as had been many of his earlier retreats, but by sign. Several months passed, and then one day the sign occurred, and he crossed the line between the ordinary and the extraordinary. As Kachen Yeshey Gyaltsen puts it, “At that time, he experienced all the higher realizations exactly as described in the tantric scriptures.”

After this the Seventh returned to the active world, where he responded to the ever-increasing requests to give teachings and initiations. His biographers’ descriptions of these requests give a picture of the scope of monastic activity at the time. For instance, at the request of Lama Lobzang Chopel of the Drepung Tantric College, he gave a detailed teaching drawn from his own experience to 330 monks on the generation stage mandala meditations of the Heruka Tantra, a Highest Yoga Tantra. Traveling between the great Gelukpa monasteries near Lhasa, he gave further initiations at Ganden and Sera, including the five-deity mandala of Heruka Chakrasamvara and later the thirteen-deity mandala of Yamantaka. This latter event was attended by some 1,280 monks, including the entirety of the Drepung and Sera Tantric Colleges. Many incarnate lamas, such as the young Demo Tulku, and many accomplished scholars and yogis also requested permission to come. At the Tantric College at Sera he gave a Yamantaka initiation to the older monks and then a discourse on Tsongkhapa’s Great Exposition of the Stages on the Path to a vast assembly. To a select few from among these he gave an initiation into the Padma tradition of the thousand-armed Avalokiteshvara.

During this period the Seventh also continued to receive whatever tantric lineages he had not yet been given. Tripa Ngawang Chokden imparted to him the tantric technique known as “the mother and son sunlight accomplishing magical activity,” which is found in the cycle of Yamantaka activities. The Ganden Tripa also gave him the lineage of the Six Yogas of Naropa, which had come to him in an unbroken line from the yogi Milarepa, as well as the profound doctrine of Ganden Mahamudra and the six-branched yoga of the Kalachakra Tantra’s completion stage.

One lineage of particular interest to the Seventh Dalai Lama was that of the

Kalachakra Tantra. The Seventh therefore requested that Tripa Ngawang Chokden collect and master the complete lineage of the Kalachakra Tantra that had been gathered and propagated by Lama Tsongkhapa and his disciples, and that was in danger of extinction. Although very old, the aged Throne Holder collected the various fragmented traditions with great difficulty to himself, accomplished the practice through intensive retreat, and then passed the endangered lineages on to the Seventh Dalai Lama. The Seventh in turn made the appropriate retreats and accomplished the practice, thus becoming fearless in giving initiations into and teachings upon the Kalachakra Tantra.

In the Wood Ox Year, or 1745, the Seventh Dalai Lama was requested by many senior lamas to give the four complete initiations into the Yamantaka Tantra to more than a thousand devoted trainees. During the day of the actual initiations, it is said that the sky became utterly clear and released a rainfall of flowers, and that the mystical Wisdom Emanations invoked by him were directly perceived by several tantric yogis and knowledge holders. He also taught the Root Tantra of Heruka Chakrasamvara, chief of the Mother Tantras, together with Tsongkhapa's commentary to it, *Totally Elucidating All Hidden Meanings*.

In this way throughout his adult life the Seventh Dalai Lama taught the fundamental Indian scriptures in conjunction with the principal Tibetan commentaries, thus greatly restoring the essence of Buddhism.

Though he spent much of his life teaching those who sought his instruction and transmissions, it is said that he would often slip out of his residence for days and even weeks at a time and travel incognito through the mountains, while his attendants pretended that he was in retreat in the Potala. Often in this way he would come to the people disguised as a simple traveler or beggar, teaching them not through formal gatherings but by means of everyday life situations. Popular stories that tell of his impromptu excursions often describe him as dressed as a professional prayer reader, the lowest class of the monkhood, hawking his services door-to-door. In this guise he learned much about the concerns of everyday people, and touched the lives of many who were moved by the simplicity and gentleness of this unassuming monk.

One memorable story is told of Kalzang Gyatso's wanderings as a professional ritualist during his period of semi-exile in Kham. A peasant hired him to do a ritual in his house for a day, but in the evening was so impressed by him that he

begged him to stay for yet another day. At the end of that day, he again begged him to stay; this continued for several weeks. Finally the patient monk begged the peasant to be allowed to go, saying that he simply could not stay another day, as he had other commitments to keep. On his departure, the grateful peasant offered him a small plate of pure gold as a gift of thanks. Kalzang Gyatso, not wishing to keep it but also wishing not to injure the man's feelings, hid the plate behind some items on the man's altar. As he took his leave, he urged the peasant, "If you come to Lhasa, come and stay with me. Just ask around for the professional ritualist Kalzang Gyatso."

After the itinerant monk had gone, the peasant discovered the hidden plate. Not comfortable in keeping a gift he had already offered to one of the monkhood, he went out into a field and, saying a prayer, hurled the plate into space. It instantly disappeared.

A year later, the peasant made a pilgrimage to Lhasa, where he asked for the professional ritualist Kalzang Gyatso, but no one knew the name. His inquiry was overheard by some attendants of the Dalai Lama's, who reported it to their master. The Seventh Dalai Lama immediately sent for the peasant.

In short order the peasant arrived at the Potala, in which he spent a week as the guest of his delightful old friend, the "professional ritualist." During his stay there, the peasant happened to notice, in a prominent place on the Dalai Lama's altar, the gold plate he had hurled into the air a year before.

Such adventures notwithstanding, the biographical events related by Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen are mostly concerned with monastic teachings and initiations. In the Water Dog Year, or 1742, he traveled to Ganden Monastery, which had been built by Lama Tsongkhapa in 1409. Here he gave numerous teachings and initiations, including a complete reading of all the works written by Tsongkhapa. On several occasions during this visit he was overwhelmed by thoughts of the great Tsongkhapa's life and kindness, and he wrote several devotional poems at that time. One of them reads as follows, Above, in actuality pristine awareness Manifest as a radiant buddha-mandala,

Lies the Pure Land of Tushita, the Joyous Abode Blessed by buddhas past,
present and future.

Mountains of herbs blanketed in sweet aromas,

Flowers blossoming morning, noon and night,
A forest of leaves with turquoise trees:
Reminders of the physical presence of Jey Rinpochey.
The murmur of a river flowing swiftly,
The stirring songs of birds:
The magnificent sound of a Dharma teaching:
Reminders of the gentle voice of Jey Rinpochey.
The blue sky freely hovering,
Clear, white clouds scattered surreally,
The young sun casting beams everywhere:
Reminders of his wisdom, compassion and power.
Body adorned with the marks of a buddha,
Speech raining down vast and profound Dharma,
Mind seeing all things in the sphere of clear light:
I recollect Jey Rinpochey, Lobzang Drakpa.
Fulfill your vow to benefit beings;
Descend, grant protection and power.
To you I offer an ocean of all-good things:
Enjoy them within your great bliss.
On the mighty Nomad mountain, quiet, easy,
A land made good with goodness and power,

Stands Ganden Monastery as prophesied by Buddha,

A monastery producing limitless Awakened Ones.

Your mind absorbed in bliss and void inseparable,

The flow of life appeared as a rainbow.

One body now sends endless clouds of emanations To set this world ablaze with joy.

Your profound teachings bridging the sutras and tantras Are jewels for those truly seeking liberation.

Even the words you used are perfect,

Nakedly pointing the way for the ripe.

O Jey Lama, because of your infinite kindness We can understand all sutras and tantras as precepts,

Have a clear map of the entire path leading to perfection, And transcend all delusions and mistaken understandings.

0 Master, merely hearing tales of your deeds Can place a person on the enlightening path.

With thoughts of your greatness, with heart trembling,

1 fix my mind upon you.

Invisible father gone to bliss,

Listen to this plaintive song
Of a child still in samsara's quicksands,
Of an ill-fated son cut off from his refuge.
In terms of external appearances,
A monk can easily be proud of his life,
But if his thoughts are only on the transient,
Are his attachments not worse than those of a layman?
The masses revel in dark actions
And through harmful means gain their ends.
Flashes of a degenerate age Crash in the depths of my soul.
How glamorous and exciting to go Through the motions of practicing Dharma,
And to hear the profound teachings:
But the mind, hard as wood, is slow to improve.
The spirit, weak and uncontrolled,
Staggers with the three psychic poisons Whenever an object appears to it:
A golden vessel filled with shit.
Precious humanity, the chance to be a buddha;
But instead we create only misery with it And throw away all hope of
ever Benefiting either ourselves or others.
I, born so late, unfortunate,
Pass my time amid negativity and confusion.

Fatherly lama, look upon me, and

Hold me on the hooks of your compassion.

In this life, the bardo, and future lives,

Pray, be my guide.

My refuge, forsake me not:

Omniscient One, be with me always.

Care for all beings as a mother for her son.

Spiritual father, to we who are children

Directly reveal the mandala of your mystical presence,

Magnificent with every mark of perfection.

Bestow upon us the oral teachings Which render every experience meaningful.

Bless us to make our minds of one taste With great bliss and ungrasping vision.

Life is impermanent, like the setting sun,

Wealth is like dew on the morning grass,

Praise is like wind in a mountain pass,

A youthful body is an autumn flower.

Help me to understand the shortcomings Of constantly turning on the wheel of
samsara And to fix the depths of my mindstream On the path leading to ultimate
knowledge.

Bestow upon me transforming powers to fill My mental continuum with love
and compassion,

To see the beings of samsara's six realms As mothers who forever have helped
me.

Bestow upon me transforming powers To realize quickly the-way-things-are,

To understand images viewed by the mind As paintings created by the mind
itself.

Help me to attain enlightenment in this very life Through the yogic methods of
tantra's two stages,

To see external events as the sport of the buddhas And to satiate the mind with
bliss and the void.

And when, in order to fight delusion, meditation's enemy,

I retreat to a cave on a distant mountain,

A place giving birth to serenity and joy,

Help me to penetrate the innermost profundity.

Grant me powers swiftly to eradicate All inner and outer negative forces,

And power to cleanse the stains of having dwelled Far from the limits of
Dharma's three bonds.

O Manjushri, Bodhisattva of Wisdom, who emanates magically In peaceful,
wrathful and protective forms,

May your auspicious deeds reach fruition,

Pray, remain a constant refuge to the world.

Bestow upon me the powerful blessings Of your mysterious body, speech and
mind,

That my every physical, verbal and mental Movement may only benefit beings
and the teachings.

May the thunder of the sutras and tantras shake the earth;

May the sun of Tsongkhapa's practice lineage rage; May all trainees attain to
realization And all sentient beings fulfill their wishes.

Shortly after the Seventh's stay at Ganden, the newly discovered reincarnation of the Panchen Lama came to central Tibet and requested that the Seventh Dalai Lama bestow the ordination of a novice monk upon him. Kalzang Gyatso agreed and, returning to Lhasa, performed the ceremony in front of the sacred Buddha image at the Jowo Temple, acting as both abbot and acharya during the ceremony. The young Panchen Lama listened to many teachings on the sutras and tantras at this time. After having gained competence in the fundamental doctrines, he requested Kalzang Gyatso to give him special oral transmission teachings. The Seventh was pleased with the tulku's progress and, giving him the following advice, consented: Listen to and study the vast corpus of scriptures, just as did the incomparable master Lama Tsongkhapa, until you gain a profound understanding of the intent of Buddha. Then you should listen well to the special oral transmission teachings on the sutras and tantras and draw a direct experience of them into your heart. Finally, you should generate the thought of turning the Wheel of Dharma for the benefit of living beings near and far.

The young Panchen Lama studied extensively with the Seventh Dalai Lama, completing his scriptural training very quickly, and then again asked His Holiness for the oral transmission teachings.

* if

While the Seventh Dalai Lama was continuing to meditate, teach, and give initiations, Polhaney had continued his autocratic rule of the country, consulting the Seventh Dalai Lama only occasionally and out of politeness. The Seventh was never asked for his advice on matters, but rather was merely informed of what was happening. The king-like nature of Polhaney's tenure is indicated by the fact that when he died in 1747 he was succeeded by one of his sons. Literature of the period gives Polhaney the title "Miwang" meaning "Lord of Mankind." This is an epithet for "king," although perhaps also could be translated as "dictator."

During Polhaney's reign Tibet had moved increasingly into alignment with the Manchus and away from Mongolia. Following the civil war of 1727-28 two Manchu ambans, or representatives of the emperor, were stationed in Lhasa, supported by a small garrison of soldiers for their security. The Tibetans did not see this agreement as Tibet becoming part of Manchu China, but rather as a natural development of the two forming a close alliance. Communist China

today disagrees.

Polhaney's son Gyurmey Namgyal, who succeeded him as sovereign, attempted to extricate Tibet from Manchu control. However, his public display of anti-Manchu sentiments and his moves to realign Tibet with the Mongols only led to his death. In the summer of 1750 the Manchu ambans invited him to their residence, and one of them drew a sword and killed him with a single stroke.

The Tibetans were flabbergasted, and a riot broke out on the streets of Lhasa. Both ambans were killed, as were most Chinese residents of Lhasa and any Chinese soldier who could be found.

In 1751 the Seventh Dalai Lama directly involved himself in Tibetan political affairs for the first time, and reformed the Tibetan government. The shape that it took endured, with a few minor modifications, for over two hundred years to come, until the Chinese Communist invasion of the 1950s forced His Holiness and his followers to flee into exile in India in 1959. It is also the governmental structure used by the Tibetan government in exile in India today. The Seventh Dalai Lama assumed this secular responsibility from 1751 until his death seven years later, in 1757.

What is most amazing about the Seventh Dalai Lama is that he lived in such violent times—perhaps the most violent that any Dalai Lama had seen — and yet was perhaps the most spiritually learned and accomplished of any Dalai Lama.

if *

A very touching story in the biography describes the Seventh's deep attachment to his guru, Ngawang Chokden, and his actions at this guru's passing.

When Ngawang Chokden reached his seventy-fifth year, his body became very heavy and he even had difficulty in rising from his seat unassisted. His Holiness went to the lama's residence, offered him the symbolic mandala of the universe as well as symbols of the body, speech and mind of Buddha as well as many, wondrous material gifts, and requested him to use his powers to extend his lifespan. His old guru replied, From childhood I have lived as a Buddhist monk and have had the fortune to meet with the doctrine of Tsongkhapa. Moreover, I have had the excellent fortune to study, contemplate and meditate upon the teachings to my utter satisfaction, and to have served as a tutor to Your Holiness,

the protector of the Tibetan people. It has been a great joy to me to have been able to transmit many lineages of the sutra and tantra branches of the Buddhist path, as well as the exclusive oral transmission teachings from the meditative experiences of Lama Tsongkhapa. Now my mind is ready to meet death. This haggard body is worn out. All this old man wants is to be in solitude at Reteng Monastery when the time of his death falls.

The Seventh visited his guru's room again and again, and engaged in many profound conversations with him. Again and again he requested his teacher to remain with him in the Potala and not to leave for Reteng; but the old lama politely declined. On the morning of the departure the Seventh went to the great guru and spoke at length to him of spiritual matters. As his teacher was about to leave, Kalzang Gyatso placed the crown of his head against the old guru's chest for several moments and, shedding tears, sent forth many prayers and auspicious thoughts. The lama himself asked his pupil for his blessings and made prayers to meet with and be cared for by the Dalai Lama in all his future incarnations.

After Ngawang Chokden had left, Kalzang Gyatso offered tea ceremonies at the three great monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Ganden, with prayers that the old lama would live sufficiently long to complete his journey to Reteng without any obstacles. The Dalai Lama himself performed many rituals for this purpose.

Ngawang Chokden eventually reached Reteng Monastery and passed away peacefully not long thereafter. His attendants sent the Seventh Dalai Lama many offerings, together with the lama's relics. The Seventh Dalai Lama retreated into an upper chamber of the Potala and made many prayers and offerings. He also offered extensive rites before the sacred Buddha image in the central Temple of Lhasa and made smaller offerings at all the major monasteries in Tibet, including Sera, Drepung and Ganden. He sent offerings as well to all the great incarnate lamas of the land, requesting them to make prayers. Taking his teachers relics, he then retreated into his private chamber and entered into prayer and meditation while the silver urn in which the remains of the cremation would be placed was being made. Later the Seventh Dalai Lama placed his teacher's relics in the urn and performed all the appropriate rites himself.

At this point in his account of the Seventh Dalai Lama's life, Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen waxes eloquent and states,

Gyalwa Kalzang Gyatso was famed throughout Tibet as being a true incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, and thus himself was the object of the devotion of all Tibetan men and women. In less mystical terms, on the conventional level there was no sage or yogi in Tibet to match his fame in learning or realization. In spite of these facts, and even though at an early age he had been enthroned as the supreme spiritual and temporal authority in the nation; nonetheless he never showed the slightest trace of pride or arrogance throughout his life. This fact is clearly evidenced by the respect and open devotion that he demonstrated towards his spiritual preceptors, as reflected in his treatment of the passing of the great guru Ngawang Chokden. His life is an inspiring example of what can be accomplished by working correctly under a master—a spiritual friend who can open up the path within the mindstreams of those to be trained. Thus his life truly was an unprecedented saga of liberation.

Shortly after his guru's death, Kalzang Gyatso gave the initiation into the Kalachakra mandala to more than 1,300 monks, then gave the initiations into the Luipa lineage of the Heruka Tantra to some 1,800 monks, dedicating the merit of both to the memory of his friend and spiritual master.

The Seventh gave the most extensive transmission of his life the following year at the behest of the young Panchen Rinpochey, who requested to be given a panoramic transmission of Dharma. Gyalwa Kalzang Gyatso was pleased with the request, accepted, and embarked upon a festival of initiations and teachings that was to continue every day for more than six months. The rosary of teachings concluded with a Kalachakra initiation that Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen describes in spectacular terms.

During this last empowerment, which was based upon a water-color mandala, he had the Panchen Lama sit upon a lion throne at the center of the mandala, dressed in the full Kalachakra costume with all the implements of a Buddha Vajradhara, and had countless offerings of victory banners and so forth made to him. His Holiness then entered into the subtle yoga of a Mandala Lord and summoned forth the cycles of peaceful and wrathful deities until the skies were filled. He then transmitted the Water Initiations of the Victorious Vase, the Lord of All Mandalas Initiations, the Teacher of All Mandalas Initiations, and the Initiation of a Tantric Overlord.

In the Fire Mouse Year, or 1756, Kalzang Gyatso expressed the wish to visit the Chokhor Gyal Monastery, which had been established by the Second

Dalai Lama near the Oracle Lake. On the way he visited Sera Monastery and Ganden, where he performed initiations and empowerments for countless monks and lay people. At Ganden, on the request of Lama Sangyey Chopel, he taught the yogas for the three essential moments—death, the intermediate state and the moment of rebirth—to more than a thousand monks.

When Kalzang Gyatso arrived at Chokhor Gyal he was met by a gathering from Nga, Dvakpo, and Gyal Monasteries. During his sojourn at Chokhor Gyal he gave a discourse on the Ganden Lhagya practice and performed many rites before the sacred statue of Palden Lhamo, requesting protective activity for the strength of the Buddhadharmā.

During his lifetime he undertook three visits to Chokhor Gyal, and on each of these made pilgrimages to Dvakpo and Wolkar, two retreat sites in which Lama Tsongkhapa had spent many years in meditation and had gained realization. During these visits he would make short meditation retreats in the hermitages used by Tsongkhapa. Always moved during these visits by thoughts of the life and liberation of Lama Tsongkhapa, he composed numerous prayers and poems. One of these expresses the essence of his spiritual teachings: An image of a sun

enthroned in the heavens,

Radiating one thousand beams of light:

Were one to shower bright rays of love upon all living beings,

How excellent.

An image of a kingly eagle gliding high in space:

Were one's mind to glide without grasping
In the space of truth itself, clear and
void, How excellent.

An image of fresh, white clouds,

Bright, pure and drifting freely:

Were one to build clear, blissful absorption in the perfect mystic mandala,

How excellent.

An image of a gray wind flowing forcefully through the sky:

Were one to maintain an energy flow always beneficial to others,

The best of spiritual practices, never artificial,

How excellent.

Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen concludes his account of the life of the Seventh Dalai Lama by saying,

Finally, on the third day of the second month of the Fire Ox Year (i.e., 1757)» Gyalwa Kalzang Gyatso saw that his work for his disciples was complete. In order to demonstrate impermanence to those of his disciples who still believed in permanence, and to give inspiration in Dharma practice, he sat in meditation, absorbed his mind in the clear light of death and then, arising from the clear light, went to the Tushita Pure Land to sit before Maitreya Buddha, and from there to send out emanations in accordance with the needs of the world.

In other words, the Seventh Dalai Lama passed away in the late autumn of 1757 while absorbed in tantric meditation.

Just as had all the early Dalai Lamas, he showed complete composure and control at the time of his death. In particular, he engaged in the tantric yogas for synchronizing the tantric elemental absorptions with the natural energy transformations that occur within body and mind during the death process, and when the clear light of death arose, blended it with the universal mind of Dharmakaya, thus clearly demonstrating his attainment of enlightenment.

After his death his spirit, like that of most of the Dalai Lamas, transmigrated to the Tushita Pure Land where he met with Maitreya and Lama Tsongkhapa in order to discuss what should be accomplished in his future incarnation.

The Seventh's written works comprise several hundred titles, ranging from profound commentaries on tantra to spontaneous songs and poems, among which are found some of Tibet's finest spiritual literary achievements. A poem he wrote late in life shows his mastery of image and poetic mood, and makes impermanence all the more palpable through evoking vivid personal experience. The Seventh saw a tremendous amount of death during his lifetime, yet always seemed to retain his sense of humor. These two—

death and humor—take center stage in this late poem.

On the golden mountains far in the distance,

Rings of mist hang like belts on the meadows.

Now seemingly solid, so soon they dissolve.

My mind turns to thoughts of my death.

In spring, the season of warmth and growth,

The stalks of the crops were turquoise green.

Now, at autumn's end, the fields lie naked and parched.

My mind turns to thoughts of my death.

On each branch of the trees in my garden

Hang clusters of fruit, swelling and ripe.

In the end, not one piece will remain.

My mind turns to thoughts of my death.

From behind the peaks of Mount Potala

The sun rose like an umbrella in the sky.

Now it has gone, fallen behind the western ranges.

My mind turns to thoughts of my death.

They die old, they die young, day upon day.

I am asked to throw their souls to a pure land Or to prophesy their conditions of rebirth.

My mind turns to thoughts of my death.

Gray clouds cover the sky, obscuring it:

The first drops of rain are about to fall,
To be scattered everywhere by the dark, red wind.
My mind turns to thoughts of my death.
In the belly of the vast plateau below me,
The campfires of visiting traders glow like stars;
But tomorrow they depart, leaving only refuse.
My mind turns to thoughts of my death.
Warm summer days, the earth thronging with life;
The minds of the people are lost in gaiety.
But soon the cold winter wind will crash.
My mind turns to thoughts of my death.
High above, turquoise dragons roared in harmony;
Around me, cuckoo birds chattered sweetly.
But times have changed; where are they now?
My mind turns to thoughts of my death.
Dharma, the precious teachings of the Awakened Ones,
Is a medicine supreme, curing all the mind's ills.
These days many saints of old look down from Pure Lands. My mind turns to
thoughts of my death.
Hard it is to leave the mother who carried us,
And hard to part from relatives and friends;

Yet as the years pass, our links with them corrode.

My mind turns to thoughts of my death.

A man with teeth for the future,

With plans for months and years ahead, died,

Leaving but scant traces. Where is he now? Passed away!

My mind turns to thoughts of my death.

Buddha attained the glorious, immortal vajra body,

Yet he still enacted a death scene.

This body of flesh, blood and bone, covered in skin,

Like a bubble of water, is bound to perish.

From birth a child sees his parents age,

Sees them each day come closer to the grave.

How can you say to me, "But I am still young?"

I warn you there is no hope of hiding from death.

Spirits were high with expectations this morning

As the men discussed subduing enemies and protecting the land.

Now, with night's fall, birds and dogs chew their corpses.

Who believed that they themselves would die today?

Look and ask among the people of your land For anyone even a hundred years old.

You will be lucky to find even one!

Do you not think your own death certain?

If you look closely at and contemplate deeply
The people and things that appear
around you,

You can see that all are in constant flux.

Everything becomes the teacher of impermanence.

I remember this body when it was a child's,

And as it gradually took the form of a youth.

Now its every limb is twisted and worn.

It is my own body, yet it delights not even my own eyes.

The mind itself is impermanent, constantly oscillating
Between feelings of
pleasure, pain and indifference,

The fruits of positive,

Negative and neutral karmas.

Look where you will, at yourself or others,

Life passes like a flash of lightning.

When Yama's agents surround you, intent on murder,

What do you think will happen to you?

Relatives, friends, wealth and property

Shine with splendor in the eyes of worldly people;

Thus they bind themselves in shackles of attachment.

This pathos: How will it end?

Body lying flat on a last bed,

Voice whispering a few last words

voice whispering a few last words,

Mind watching a final memory glide past:

When will that drama come for you?

If you create nothing but negative karma,

You will stand naked of instincts to benefit the hereafter Where will you go after death?

The mere thought of it makes you flinch.

Therefore I myself and beings like me Should leave behind meaningless ways And entrust ourselves to the gurus,

Mandala deities and dakinis,

Begging them to prepare us for death's road.

In order to die well, with the joy and confidence Of being within the white rays of spiritual awareness,

It is essential to begin readying yourself now.

Familiarize yourself with the profundities of the sutras and tantras.

By the power of this song may those like me,

Irreligious people, little better than savages,

Be caught in the fires of renunciation.

May we evolve in spirit

And attain to the state of utter liberation.

I conclude this chapter on the Seventh Dalai Lama with a mystical poem that he wrote in which he summarizes the heart of his own spiritual teachings. It is rather tantric in nature, and represents the Seventh's attempts to lift the Buddhist tantras out of the morass of liturgy and ritual into which they had fallen in Tibet and place them back on the solid ground of transformative experience, where they rightly belong.

The colophon to the poem states, "The great Changkya Rinpochey, a supreme illuminator of the Dharma, a man of unsurpassed knowledge and wisdom, wrote to me with the request that I compose a spiritual song, easy to comprehend, and that would express the essence of the two stages of tantric practice in accordance with meditations of the Indian mahasiddha Ghantapada's lineage of Heruka Chakrasamvara, with its five completion stage yogas. In response, the Buddhist monk Kalzang Gyatso wrote this, entitled The Essence of All-Beneficial Ambrosia. In other words, it uses as its platform the lineage of the Heruka Chakrasamvara Tantra coming to Tibet from the Indian mahasiddha Ghantapada.

Thus we can see that it was written at the request of one of his most important tantric disciples, Changkya Rolpai Dorjey. This is the third Changkya Tulku.

The First Changkya, whose ordination name was Drakpa Ozer, had been born in the Changkya region of Domey, and became a monk in Gonlung Jampaling Monastery. When he was in his mid-teens he was sent to central Tibet for higher studies in Drepung Gomang. However, the name of his birthplace stuck with him, following him throughout his life and thereafter being prefixed to the names of his subsequent reincarnations. His immediate reincarnation, Changkya Lobzang Choden by name, was born in 1642, the same year that the Fifth Dalai Lama rose to become the spiritual and temporal head of Tibet. He became a monk at a young age, and when he was twenty years old he went to Central Tibet and received higher ordination from the Fifth Dalai Lama himself. That Changkya passed away in 1714, when the Seventh Dalai Lama was six years old. His reincarnation, who eventually became famous under the name Changkya Rolpai Dorjey, was born three years later, and was to become not only a close friend of the Seventh Dalai Lama, but also his main spiritual

heir.

Rolpai Dorjey was recognized at the age of four as the reincarnation of the Changkya Lama. His predecessor, the Second Changkya, had been a guru to the Manchu emperor, and consequently the Manchus took a keen interest in the young reincarnate lama. When he was eight years old he received an invitation from Emperor Yung-ting to come to Beijing. Here the Manchu emperor showered the boy with gifts and gave him an honorary court name, which translates as “Omniscient Lama, Lord with Love and Compassion Towering Over Living Beings.” (It sounds better in Manchurian.) In 1720 the Manchu emperor sponsored Changkya to travel to central Tibet with the young Seventh Dalai Lama, so that he could participate in the Seventh’s enthronement in the Potala. The two lamas remained close friends from that time on. Both also became close disciples of the Second Panchen Lama. When the Seventh returned to eastern Tibet between the ages of nineteen and twenty-seven, Changkya traveled with him. Toward the end of their stay in the east, the Seventh gave him all the Chakrasamvara initiations.

Later the Manchu emperor Chen-lung sponsored Changkya in the monumental task of putting together and overseeing a team of lamas charged with translating the Tibetan Buddhist canon known as the Tengyur (“Translated Words of the Indian Masters”), with its three thousand books, into Mongolian. The Manchu royal family also sponsored Changkya to form a team of lamas to translate the entire Tibetan Kangyur (“Translated Words of The Buddha”) into Manchurian, again involving well over a thousand books. Under Manchu patronage Changkya also built numerous monasteries and temples in Beijing as well as elsewhere in China. Changkya’s visits to Beijing were always sponsored by the emperor. As well as giving many Dharma teachings and tantric initiations to the Manchu ruler and his family, he even taught the emperor to read and write the Tibetan language.

Changkya and the Seventh Dalai Lama remained close over the years, and the Seventh passed most of his tantric transmissions to him. Therefore, in the lineage prayers of several of the main Gelukpa tantric systems, the name of Changkya Rolpai Dorjey appears immediately after that of the Seventh Dalai Lama. The Ghantapada lineage of the Heruka Chakrasamvara Tantra is one of the most important of these.

When the Seventh passed away in 1757, Changkya Rolpai Dorjey was put in

charge of the search for his reincarnation. He also served as the Seventh's official biographer.

Homage to ley Rinpochey, a second Buddha,

Manifestation of Vajradhara, lord of all buddhas,

In whose body reside the Awakened Ones past, present and future,

As well as their retinues and buddhafiels.

Homage to the feet of my own root guru;

Who is in real nature inseparably one with Father-Mother Heruka,

The wheel composed of all objects of knowledge,

Whose essence is great bliss clear as the autumn sky.

In the hands of one's spiritual master Lie the roots of every mystical experience.

All happiness and suffering from now until enlightenment Are his responsibility alone.

See the physical world as the guru's body;

Take sounds as the guru's teachings;

Mix thoughts and memories with his bliss and insight; Rely on this practice, king of all paths.

Fortunate are they who meet with the doctrine Of all-kind incomparable
Tsongkhapa,

Who showed as precepts all sutras and tantras.

Fortunate indeed; an opportunity obtained but once.

Yet breath, like mist, is delicate;

And life, seemingly strong, is ever near to passing.

Quickly pluck the essence of Dharma,

For definite it is you will die at the hands of the great enemy Death.

Have not the three doors stood open to negativity?

Then the inconceivable misery of the lower realms Certainly will fall upon you;

And, if still weak, you will not be able to bear them.

Some look, and see; in the innermost way they turn
To a guru-deva, an embodiment of Buddha,

Dharma and Sangha.

With attentive concentration they focus
On cultivating the white and dispersing
the black.

Reveling in objects of greed and attachment
Is drinking poison mistaken for
nectar.

The luxuries, securities and comforts of the world
Are like dramas enjoyed in a
dream.

No lasting happiness can be found
In any samsaric position,

And how foolish to sit complacent
In a hole filled with misery.

Turn the horse of the mind upward,

Rein him with the three higher trainings,

Strike him with the iron whip of fierce effort,

And cut unto the open road of liberation.

All beings, mothers who lovingly have nurtured us,
Are floundering in the seas
of confusion.

The son who cares not for their anguish,

Are the waters of his heart not bitter?

Are the waters of his heart not bitter:

Wholly discarding selfish thoughts,

Hold close the ways which better the world And strive to live the six perfections,

That yield buddhahood, ultimate benefit for all.

Sever the mind from chaotic wandering;

Fix it firmly on its object with mindfulness, Without falling prey to agitation or dullness:

Train in meditation blissful and clear.

The manifold things we perceive Are deceptive projections of deluded thought. When we search for their ultimate essence, Emptiness free of an essence appears.

The things that manifest also fade And only footprints of names remain;

The other side of this is called dependent arising. What else need be known?

The teachings of Nagarjuna and his disciples Aryadeva, Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti Were thus by Jey Rinpochey understood; A most wondrous view free from extremes.

Having first trained in these foundation practices,

Seek out a tantric master, embodiment of Buddha Vajradhara, Lord of the Paradise Beneath None;

Gain the four ripening initiations And enter into the mystic circle.

The body transforms into a great vajra-mandala,

And, in the inconceivable mansion of joyful repose,

The real deity—the subtle mind held between the Kiss of the male and female drops—

Manifests as the blood-swilling Father-Mother.

The dakas and dakinis dance a blissful dance In the mystic channels and secret drops;

Mundane perception is severed from consciousness And all emanations become ultimately pure.

Visualize yourself as Heruka with consort,

Luminous yet void, body empty,

Energy channels of three qualities vibrating within;

At your heart a Dharma wheel with eight petals

Bears the indestructible drop in the form of HUM Between the sun of method and the moon of wisdom:

Mind firm on this, tremulous misconceptions are cut,

And the clear light, sheer as the autumn sky, arises.

The outer consort, in nature fire,

Melts the life-drops that course Through the 72,000 channels,

Bringing them into the central channel,

Giving rise to the four ineffable joys.

Outside, all sensory movement of mind and energy ceases; Inside, mundane views, ignorance and darkness disperse. Thus by yoga even sleep is transformed Into the nature of dharmakaya's clear light.

By cultivating these yogic methods,

We can in general see through all distorted appearances

And in particular know the body as dream-like,

Thus building the dancing form of an endowed deity And maintaining the

according emanations.

By mentally reciting the secret mantras of the vajra dharmas

Of entering, resting and dispersing energy at the heart

While controlling the life-drop made of five clear essences,

The knots of ignorance are easily untied.

The tip of the vajra is placed firmly in the lotus And mind as the syllable HUM
is brought into the central channel; One drinks and drinks the essence of nectars
And goes mad with innate joy unmoving.

By thus settling the mind in the subtle vajra letter And bringing the drop to the
four chakras and sensory gates,

One directly sees all aesthetic objects Found throughout the three worlds.

Thus one opens the windows of the six miraculous powers, Sees the faces of
innumerable deities,

Masters the meanings of the words of the teachings And gains the delightful
company of an immortal lover.

In the tip of the vajra between the eyebrows,

The light of the sun, moon and stars swirls in the drop.

By bringing mind and energy to that point,

The white bodhimind is forever increased.

Then with the fine brush of samadhi paint A masterpiece incorporating all
beauties of life;

One gains the aid of a fully qualified consort

And one's experience of the blisses blazes higher and higher.

Mind fixed on the bliss and mudra of the consort,

A rain of innate joy pours down.

Again and again seducing the beautiful one,

Symbol of the mind embracing reality itself,

One melts into the sphere of spontaneous bliss.

From the center of the navel chakra where meet the three energy channels,

Shine lights from white and red pyramids.

Looking through the nucleus of five drops therein,

The mind's nature is seen as five buddhas.

White and yellow energies shape into a vase And the all-destroying fire rages.

The letters AH and HAM flare, fall and vibrate, Transporting one to the end of the primordial path of great bliss and wisdom combined.

Lights from the mystic fire flash into the hundred directions,

Summoning the blessings of buddhas boundless as space. Once again the five natures of mind arise as sounds, Releasing a rain of ambrosial knowledge.

The apparitions of people and things Dissolve into light, and the waves Of misconception are stilled.

No longer is the radiance of clear light obscured.

Even post-meditation mind maintains immaculate view.

In the sphere of semblant and innate mahamudra,

Empty images appear as rainbows.

Flawless method emanates phantom circles,

Erecting the perfect mandala of deities and abodes.

The illusory body merges with clear light Like clouds dissolving into space

The illusory body merges with clear light like clouds dissolving into space.

The fires of innate wisdom arise

And consume the seed of grasping for self.

This great union of the radiant vajra body With the vast clear light of mind

Is called “the samadhi moving magnificently,”

A stage not touched by the ordinary intellect.

This consciousness, purified of all transient stains, Gazes clearly and directly at the sphere of truth. Like a magic gem it manifests the Beatific Body Of Heruka Chakrasamvara for the sake of others And sends out countless emanations, Each in accord with the needs of the world.

Thus in this age of short lifespan,

Buddhahood is swiftly and easily attained By turning lust for sensual objects Towards the friend who instills great bliss.

Think: “By studying, contemplating and meditating Upon the flawless Vajrayana teachings,

The highest path, the esoteric way of all tantric adepts of the past,

May I in this very lifetime attain with ease That point most peerless and supreme.

And if in this life ultimate power is not found,

At my death may the dakas and dakinis protect me And lead to the rainbow palace of Vajrayogini In the pure land Kajou Shing, there to enjoy clouds of transcendent offerings.

May I and all practitioners of this tantra Soon complete the esoteric path of secrets And, within ourselves ever perfecting the practices Of the sutras and tantras taught by the Buddha, May we master this mysterious way.

Until then, may the mighty dakas and dakinis Who dwell in the twenty-four

Heruka grounds Care for us in every time and situation As a mother watches over her only child.”

If we compare the Seventh’s life with those of his predecessors, we notice one striking difference. Most of the early Dalai Lamas had been born into families belonging to a Nyingmapa sect, and had combined both Gelukpa and Nyingma lineages in their life and spiritual practice. The Seventh, however, was almost exclusively Gelukpa in his education and application.

As His Holiness the present Dalai Lama mentions in the chapter to follow, the same situation would prevail with the Eighth Dalai Lama. The Eighth’s guru Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen gave him a rather conservative Gelukpa education. Thus the Seventh and Eighth Dalai Lamas began a trend of nearly exclusive Gelukpa orientation that was to continue for a number of generations. Of course the four incarnations that came after the Eighth Dalai Lama all died at young ages and thus the policy in this regard was not a conscious one on the part of the Dalai Lama tutors; but nonetheless the Sixth was the last Dalai Lama for some time to dedicate himself seriously to the Nyingma doctrines. It was not until the Great Thirteenth appeared and took control of the situation that the traditional Gelukpa/Nyingmapa blend of spiritual lineages was once more re-established.

Some Western and also Tibetan historians have suggested that the cause of this trend in Dalai Lama education was a wave of religious conservatism that swept Lhasa during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that this resulted in an effort to keep the Dalai Lamas in the more discrete mode of monkly behavior characteristic of the Gelukpa school. There is not a lot of evidence to this effect, however, and it is mere conjecture.

What is more probable is that the Tibetans had become rather shaken by the wave of violence that had been perpetrated upon them, first by the Mongolians and then by the Manchus. Both of these nations were almost exclusively devoted to the Gelukpa school of Buddhism at the time, and both also regarded the Nyingmapa schools with distain. The Mongols had made a practice of pillaging and looting Nyingma monasteries and temples wherever they went. With this atmosphere prevailing everywhere across Central Asia, it may have seemed best to discourage the various Dalai Lama incarnations of this period from dabbling in Nyingmapa shamanism. After all, this dabbling had ostensibly resulted in the premature death of the Sixth Dalai Lama and also in the civil wars that occurred during the early life of the Seventh.

Whatever the case, the relationship between the Dalai Lamas and the various Nyingmapa sects took on a different character during this period. Rather than supplement their standard Gelukpa training with study, practice and teaching of the Nyingma doctrines, these Dalai Lamas remained more exclusively Gelukpa. The role of the high Nyingma lamas in the lives of these Dalai Lamas was peripheral, and limited to shamanic rituals. They, like the great Sakya and Kargyu lamas, were mainly used on a contractual basis, being hired from time to time by the Lhasa government to come and perform prayers and rituals for the elimination of obstacles to the success and well being of the Dalai Lama and his works.

Two Nyingma lamas were an exception in this trend. The Dalai Lama incarnations continued to remain personally close to the Mindroling Lamas, or traditional head of Mindroling Monastery; and also to the incarnations of the Dzogchen Tulkus, the incarnate head of Dzogchen Monastery. This has continued into the lifetime of the present Dalai Lama.



Jam pel Gyatso, the Eighth Dalai Lama. Photo from Neg. No. 336309, photo by Peter Goldberg. Courtesy of the Department of Library Services, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

The Eighth Dalai Lama: A Return to Simplicity

Each of the first seven incarnations in the Dalai Lama lineage made a tremendous impact on the course of Tibetan history. The importance of the Dalai Lama office as a socially and politically relevant force seemed to make a quantum leap forward with each successive incarnation.

This success story took a temporary pause with the death of the Seventh in 1757. Not until the Thirteenth incarnation appeared in 1876 would the Dalai Lamas again play any significant role. Indeed, most of the incarnations that followed the Seventh died young—five incarnations came and went between 1758 and 1875, a period of only 117 years—and thus were not around long enough to manifest many visible accomplishments.

The Eighth Dalai Lama was an exception in this regard.¹ He lived almost as long as the Seventh. However, whereas the Seventh had overshadowed all other lamas of his generation, the Eighth was overshadowed by many others. Any of a dozen Gelukpa lamas of his period rose above him in both spiritual prestige and political accomplishments. The Panchen Lama, the Demo Tulku and Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen are but three of these. The list could be greatly extended.

The ambiguity that surrounded his persona crystallized in two sayings that became prevalent at the time. These played on two Tibetan terms: *gyalwa*, which is a Tibetan translation for the Sanskrit term *vira*, a synonym for a buddha; and *gyalpo*, which is the Tibetan word for “king.”

The first of these, *gyalwa*, literally means “victor.” It conveys the sense that a buddha is victorious over the obscurations that are the afflictive emotions, as well as over the negative karmic instincts stemming from them. He is also victorious in the sense of having succeeded in totally eliminating the obscurations to omniscience.

The popular name for all the early Dalai Lamas was Jey Tamchey Khyenpa, or “Omniscient Master.” Someone going to an audience with any of the early

Dalai Lamas would say “I am going for an audience with Jey Tamchey Khyenpa.” However, the epithet *Gyalwa Rinpochey*, or “Precious Victor,”

had gradually come into use and was prevalent by the time of the birth of the Eighth Dalai Lama. I suspect that this occurred during the lifetime of the Fifth Dalai Lama, although I cannot establish the exact time. Conditions would suggest that it happened after the Fifth became supreme chieftain in 1642.

To make a long story short, during the life of the Eighth Dalai Lama two sayings emerged that served to undermine the authority and prestige of the Dalai Lama office. The first of these claimed, “He is a gyalwa, not a gyalpo” (i.e., “He is a buddha, not a king”). The second stated the converse, “He is a gyalpo, not a gyalwa” (i.e., “He is a king, not a buddha”). The first saying undermined the Eighth’s credibility in the role of temporal chieftain; the second undermined his credibility as spiritual chieftain. His problem was that forty percent of Tibet said the former, and forty said the latter. Only twenty percent gave him kudos in both spiritual and secular spheres. Very few people considered him competent to fulfill both roles.

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I once asked the present Dalai Lama for his thoughts on the matter. His Holiness replied that there were, in his personal opinion, a number of reasons for this.

The first was historical. The people at the time held a belief that there would only be seven Dalai Lama incarnations. Several prophecies seemed to point to this conclusion, including two that were made by the Second Dalai Lama. None of these prophecies was explicit in this regard, but the interpreters of prophecies held that this was their conclusive meaning.

The main prophecy from the Second Dalai Lama that His Holiness was referring to was spoken when the Second was in his sixth year. At that time, the Second Dalai Lama had spontaneously sung a rather long mystical song. This concluded with the following verse,

Although Jey Tamchey Khyenpa (i.e., the First Dalai Lama) had completely flooded

This world with the sublime nectars of Dharma,

He did not complete all his plans.

Therefore for seven incarnations he will come

To work for the beings of this world

Before melting into the stainless infinity sphere.

People linked this verse to several prophecies in the Book of the Kadampa Masters that mention incarnations of Avalokiteshvara and their works. One in particular states,

An incarnation of Avalokiteshvara will work for seven lifetimes To benefit the black-haired peoples of Tibet.

Neither of these two passages conclusively means that there would be only seven Dalai Lamas. The first passage, for example, could refer to seven incarnations dedicating themselves to a particular sphere of activity, such as establishing Tibet as a nation. The reality of the matter was that Tibet had become firmly established as a nation only during the lifetime of the Seventh Dalai Lama; the Tibet that the Seventh left behind when he died in 1757 is very much the same as the Tibet that endured until the twentieth century.

There is no doubt that a conference was held after the death of the Seventh with the purpose of deciding whether or not to look for and enthrone an Eighth Dalai Lama. The possibility that the tradition had run its course and should be discontinued was certainly discussed.

In the end, the decision was made to continue the legacy, and a search committee was formed with the objective of identifying a reincarnation.

Nonetheless the Eighth was never accorded the same spiritual respect as had been given to the early incarnations, and many people regarded him as a mere stand-in of convenience.

In my interview with His Holiness the present Dalai Lama on this issue, he continued by elucidating a second obstacle that he felt limited the apparent success of the Eighth Dalai Lama. This one was spiritual in nature.

His Holiness pointed out that all the early Dalai Lamas had combined Gelukpa contemplative training with the shamanic traditions of the Nyingmapa School. This had worked well for them not only on a personal spiritual level but also in terms of the respect that they received from other sects. Moreover, the Lhasa aristocracy mostly belonged to the Nyingma sect, so it also gave the early Dalai

Lamas a warm place in the hearts of most aristocratic families.

His Holiness then stated that Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen, the senior guru of the Eighth Dalai Lama, had strongly discouraged this “blending of lineages.” The Eighth Dalai Lama was thus prevented from receiving the Nyingmapa lineages that earlier Dalai Lamas had held. This limited him both spiritually and in terms of his popular appeal to the masses.

His Holiness concluded by saying that late in life the Eighth had tried to re-establish this Gelukpa-Nyingmapa blend of lineages that had characterized the approach of his predecessors. However, by then it was too late, and he passed away before he succeeded.

In 1984 I was in Middlebury, Vermont, to attend a series of teachings being given by the present Dalai Lama at the university there.

One morning a group of young children from a local primary school was given an audience with His Holiness. It took place outside on the grass, with His Holiness seated in a chair and the children in front of him. A microphone was passed around, and the kids were invited to ask His Holiness any questions that they wished.

The children were very excited, and there was a lot of wrestling over the microphone. Everyone seemed to have a dozen questions. Then one child who had managed to claim the microphone asked, “Your Holiness, are you really the same person reincarnated for fourteen lifetimes?”

His Holiness looked very thoughtful and then replied, “Actually, I often think that from the First to the Seventh incarnations was one line, and from the Eighth to myself is another.”

The kids seemed to be more comfortable with this idea that his line of reincarnations was only half as long as they had been told in their prep class for the event. Seven is a more manageable number than fourteen.

Some years later I asked His Holiness about this extraordinary interview with the children of Vermont and his rather astonishing reply.

He laughed and replied that he was drawing on a myth that surrounded the Eighth’s life. According to the myth, the Seventh’s reincarnation could not

be found, but the Tibetans wanted to continue the Dalai Lama office. They therefore picked up the reincarnation of another child who was considered to be an emanation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. This child was the reincarnation of Jamyang Choje Tashi Palden, who was the founder of Drepung Monastery, a monastery with which all Dalai Lamas held a strong connection. This lama, as well as being an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, was regarded as a reincarnation of Lama Buton Rinchen Drubpa, the founder of the Zhalu School of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as of the Indian tantrika Krishnacharya.

His Holiness chuckled and then concluded by saying, “I have always felt very close to Buton and Krishnacharya, so perhaps there is some truth to the rumor.

Thus it is clear that the Eighth Dalai Lama is something of an enigmatic figure in Tibetan history.

This being said, I would like to add that I nonetheless consider him to be one of the greats in the line. Rather than buck the tide of his times and situation, he utilized it as an opportunity to enjoy the quiet and simple life of an almost ordinary Buddhist monk. Headline dramas had not been thrust into his hands as they had with earlier Dalai Lamas, and he made no attempt to create them. Instead, he left the dramas and their glory to other lamas of his day, all of whom he knew well, and concentrated on the little things.

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Shortly after the Seventh Dalai Lama passed away, various Tibetan spiritual and secular leaders held conference, as described above. Once the question of whether or not to search for another Dalai Lama was resolved, there were other issues to address. These included the question of who should lead the country in his absence, and speak for him in his minority years.

The Fifth Dalai Lama had been the first to assume both spiritual and secular leadership of Tibet when he was appointed to this central position in 1642. This had largely been accomplished due to the wise efforts of his chief manager, Sonam Chopel. Sonam Chopel had in fact handled all secular affairs for the Great Fifth, and was given the title “Desi,” or “viceroy.” Throughout the Great Fifth’s life he always relied upon a viceroy. As we saw in earlier chapters, when he passed away in 1682 his viceroy Desi Sangyey Gyatso ruled in his place, and

then oversaw the search for and enthronement of the Sixth Dalai Lama. Desi Sangyey Gyatso concealed the death of the Great Fifth for almost fifteen years, an act that resulted in the invasion of the Mongolian warlord Lhazang Khan in 1703 and a fifteen-year loss of Tibetan independence. The Sixth Dalai Lama was deposed by Lhazang Khan, and possibly put to death by him. Meanwhile, Lhazang Khan installed a puppet Dalai Lama in the Sixth's place in Lhasa. The Khan ruled through his puppet until the former was put to death by the Dzungar Mongols in 1717. A few years later, aided by the Manchu emperor, the Dzungars were evicted and Tibet once again achieved self-rule.

Thus when the Fifth and Sixth Dalai Lamas passed away, there was no debate over who should rule immediately after their deaths and during the minorities of their successors. Desi Sangyey Gyatso took charge after the death of the Great Fifth, and Lhazang Khan ruled after deposing the Sixth.

The death of the Seventh, however, presented no clear direction. As we saw in an earlier chapter, during much of the Seventh's life Tibet was ruled by various aristocratic factions. Unlike the Great Fifth, the Seventh did not leave behind a strong and trusted manager or viceroy, nor was his death kept secret. And unlike the Sixth, he had not been torn from office, but died from ostensibly natural causes.

The group of spiritual and secular leaders who met after the death of the Seventh decided that a high monk should be appointed to rule as regent in the Dalai's Lama's absence. The lama who was chosen was the Demo Tulku Delek Gyatso, who resided at the Tengyeling Monastery. This Demo Tulku, who had been an important disciple of the Seventh Dalai Lama, became the first official "Dalai Lama Regent." The office of Desi, or viceroy, was officially dissolved. From then until today the office of Gyaltsab, or "Regent," has been the method used to represent the Dalai Lama after an incumbent passes away.

The regent is usually appointed within days of the death of a Dalai Lama, and heads the Dalai Lama office during the time of the latter's rebirth, usually overseeing the search for the reincarnation and enthronement of the new incumbent. He also represents the Dalai Lama's duties in overseeing spiritual and political concerns for the twenty or so years of the new incarnation's training.

Should a regent die during a Dalai Lama's minority, another is immediately appointed, chosen from among the high reincarnate lamas of the time.

Demo Tulku served as regent until he passed away twenty years later in 1777. By that time he had managed to successfully identify and enthrone the Eighth Dalai Lama, as well as oversee much of the boy's education and training. The official biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama was composed by Demo Tubten Jigme Gyatso, who was the reincarnation of the regent, Demo Tulku Delek Gyatso.

The Eighth Dalai Lama was born in Tobgyal Lhari Gang, in Upper Tsang. Sonam Dargyey was his father's name and Puntsok Wangmo his mother's. He entered the womb in the Fire Bull Year of the thirteenth century, i.e., 1757» not long after the Seventh's passing.

For several days after his conception, his mother's body and also the inside and outside of the family's house were clothed in rainbows and permeated by the fragrance of sandalwood. These and many other such auspicious signs occurred, indicating that the child was a bodhisattva consciously taking a special birth in order to benefit living beings.

In particular, one day while his mother was having tea with a ritualist lady friend, a five-colored rainbow spontaneously appeared and gradually dissolved into the mother's body.

Both parents experienced many auspicious dreams. For example, just after the child was conceived, the father dreamed that a monk came to him and offered him a golden vajra. On another occasion he dreamed that a white person appeared, holding a vase filled with water, and poured it over him as though cleansing him in a shower of nectars. Also, the mother dreamed that an enormous sun appeared in the cloudless sky, surrounded by smaller suns. The large sun dissolved into her body.

One evening when the youths of the village were drinking and dancing, they spontaneously composed a song:

On the peak of the sacred mountain
In the high mountain ranges
A lotus flower is born,
and illuminates
The darkness of the world.

This song achieved local popularity and became known to all. Later div-inators proclaimed that it was inspired by the birth of the Eighth Dalai Lama.

On another occasion the youths spontaneously composed another song that achieved local popularity. Again, it referred to the Eighth Dalai Lama's birth in Tsang:

A holy being has come to Tsang,

And with that has come abundance and vitality.

The sun rises in the east;

This sun has arisen in Tsang,

But its light shines toward central Tibet.

These are not the rays of the sun,

But the radiant countenance of the Holy One.

This great radiance of the Master Emanates to the Potala.

The actual birth occurred on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month of the Earth Tiger Year, or 1758. This is one of the auspicious days of the lunar cycle, a day on which the angels and angelettes fill the world with mystic song. The sky was filled with rainbows, and a sweet fragrance filled the air.

The protective deities watched over the boy from the very time of his birth and his parents and others near to him guarded his life well. In particular, on the day of his birth several crows appeared on the house, and remained there as guardians for several days to follow. These were later said to be emanations of Mahakala, the Protector deity who had guarded all previous Dalai Lamas.

Within a few days of the child's birth he sat up in meditation, crossed his legs and gazed into space as though deep in contemplation. Soon afterward, he began to exhibit other such extraordinary traits.

From the age of two onward, the boy frequently spoke of his previous life in the Potala and expressed the wish to be taken there. He also insisted on sleeping separately from his parents, a sign of his previous renunciation of worldly life. In addition, he often spoke of going to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery.

Meanwhile, back in Lhasa, efforts to find the Dalai Lama reincarnation were underway. One day the Nechung medium went into a spontaneous trance and pronounced, "I am the Nechung Dharma Protector. The celestial jewel, the master Tongwa Donden, has arrived in Lhari Gang. I, Dorjey Drakden, pay homage to him and request him to reveal the four enlightenment activities." Thus the Nechung Oracle spontaneously proclaimed the birthplace of the Eighth Dalai Lama.

Soon a team of monks was sent to the Lhari Gang area to gather the names of children born with auspicious signs. The boy born in Tobgyal Lhari Gang was included on this list. The preliminary divinations indicated that he was a strong candidate, so he became part of the shortlist. Consequently, a delegation arrived from Lhasa to examine him.

The boy responded to the presence of the delegates from Lhasa with complete familiarity and ease. This delegation included a representative of the regent who had been appointed after the Seventh's death, as well as a representative of the Panchen Lama, who had been a disciple of the Seventh Dalai Lama. Also present were the lord chamberlain and chief attendants of the previous Dalai Lama, as well as monk delegates from Ganden, Drepung and Sera monasteries. The results of these tests were again very positive.

When the boy was in his third year, the Panchen Lama traveled from Tashi Lhunpo to central Tibet, where he had been requested to consecrate the golden reliquary that had been built to house the Seventh Dalai Lama's mummified body. The boy's parents were requested to bring their child to Ganden Rabgyeling Monastery, where the Panchen would be stopping over on his travels.

The group carrying the special child arrived at the monastery just as the monks in the temple were blowing conch shells to announce a prayer gathering. Simultaneously a rainbow suddenly appeared in the sky, seeming to begin at the monastery and stretch in the direction of the child's birthplace. Demo Tulku's biography of the Eighth states, "Although many important people had gathered to receive the Panchen Lama, the boy seemed to stand out among them all like a moon among stars."

The time came for the audience, and the mother stepped before the Panchen Lama for a blessing. At the time, the child was strapped on her back in a shawl.

He looked directly into the Panchen's eyes and grabbed a rosary of mantra beads that the Panchen was wearing around his neck. This rosary had been given to the Panchen Lama by the previous Dalai Lama. The Panchen watched quietly as the child lifted it off his neck, took it in his tiny hands and began to spontaneously use it to recite mantras. He then rolled the beads in his hands, just as the previous Dalai Lama used to do.

That same day, the Seventh's chamberlain offered the boy a scarf. He received it with a dignified smile, as though long familiar with the elderly chamberlain.

The next day, representatives of the three great monasteries—Ganden, Drepung and Sera—paid a visit to the child. The boy sat with great dignity when receiving them. When the chamberlain of the Seventh Dalai Lama sat down, the boy suddenly jumped into his lap with complete familiarity and began stroking his moustache and beard.

During this stay at the monastery, the boy visited the Panchen Lama every day, and on those occasions expressed immeasurable affection for the elderly lama. On an auspicious day, the Panchen offered him a set of robes, a lama hat, a vajra and bell set, and other objects, thereby creating a beneficial omen for his spiritual life.

The boy had never been in Ganden Rabgyeling Monastery before. At the time he was in his third year. Nevertheless, when he was taken through the main temple he correctly named the buddhas, bodhisattvas, tantric deities

and lineage masters depicted in all the statues and paintings, even though he had not seen these figures in the present lifetime. He also joined the monks in the prayers that they chanted during gatherings, participated in the tea ceremony, and chanted the appropriate liturgies without mistakes, although he had not heard them before.

In these and other ways he revealed that he was the true reincarnation of the Seventh Dalai Lama.

On the eleventh day of the sixth month, the Panchen Lama introduced the boy to the Buddhadharma by cutting his hair and offering him a set of monk's robes. At that time the boy received the upasika ordination vows and the name Jetsun Lobzang Tenpai Wangchuk Jampel Gyatso Palzangpo, or Jampel Gyatso for short. This ordination and naming ceremony was performed for auspicious

purposes, because the boy was not yet old enough to receive vows. At the same time the Panchen also gave him many teachings and tantric initiations. Again, this was for auspicious purposes, and was done in order to generate positive instincts within the young child's mindstream.

On the tenth day of the seventh month of the Water Horse Year, or 1762, the Eighth Dalai Lama was officially enthroned. He was five years old at the time. The ceremony took place in the Potala, and was attended by all the high lamas and officials of the land. Shortly after this event, he received pre-novice ordination from the Panchen Lama, the omniscient Palden Yeshey. His life as a Buddhist monk had begun.

Although the Panchen Lama was to give monastic ordination and many tantric initiations to the young Eighth Dalai Lama, the job of actually tutoring him would fall to others. Regent Demo Tulku and the Panchen Lama held a conference in order to discuss who would be best for the task. The Panchen recommended one of his own disciples, an unknown monk named Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen. This lama, better known to history as the First Tsechokling, had made a twelve-year meditation retreat in the caves near the Everest region, and achieved high realization. After his retreats he had retired to the Kyirong Valley to the west of Mt. Everest, where he ran a meditation center and served the local people.²

Divinations were performed, and it was agreed to request Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen to come to Lhasa. Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen agreed, and became the principal tutor to the Eighth Dalai Lama.

Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen was an intense monk steeped in the early Kadampa legacies of humility, simplicity and spiritual purity. He also had a mischievous streak in him. During his long years of retreat he had received very little patronage from his relatives and family, and had largely survived on what he could forage in the mountains. On several occasions he had almost starved to death, but rather than break his retreat and go begging he had persevered. Even after returning from retreat to the valley of his birth, he received little attention or support from his clansmen.

Now, as guru to the Eighth Dalai Lama, he had become a lama of great prestige, and consequently received not only a stipend from the Tibetan government but also offerings from the thousands of pilgrims who came to Lhasa every month,

most of whom would request an audience with and blessings from him in his role as the Eighth's guru.

One day a large group of pilgrims arrived from his homeland, declaring themselves to be his relatives and asking for a meeting with him. He arranged to host a banquet for them, but when his dish was served it was noticed that on it, instead of food, were piles of gold, silver and jewels. He stood up, prostrated to the dish, and said, "I bow to material wealth. Previously when I was an obscure monk meditating in the mountains I had neither friends nor loving relatives. Now that wealth and fame have come to me, I seem to have an abundance of both. I pay homage to wealth, creator of friends and relatives." Kachen Yeshey Gyaltsen eventually became perhaps the greatest lama of his time. A prolific writer, he composed treatises on almost every major Buddhist topic. These were published by wood-block print shortly after his death, ensuring him a place of immortality in the annals of Tibetan literature.

Regent Demo Tulku Delek Gyatso passed away on the twenty-second day of the first month of the Iron Bird Year, or 1777. The Eighth Dalai Lama was requested to assume the throne, but he declined on the grounds that his studies were not yet complete. Therefore, a new regent was appointed.

The lama chosen for the job was Tsemonling Ngawang Tsultrim, a former Ganden Tripa, or "Holder of the Ganden Throne." This lama served as regent for a period of seven years, until the Wood Dragon Year, or 1784. He was well liked and fulfilled his duties effectively.

When the Eighth Dalai Lama was pressed to take the throne in 1781, he did so only on the grounds that Regent Tsemonling remain by his side and assist him. Therefore, Tsemonling Tulku assisted in the administration of Tibet for a further three years, after which time he was sent to Beijing to serve as the Dalai Lama's envoy to the Manchu emperor.

The Eighth Dalai Lama therefore ruled Tibet jointly with the regent for three years, and then ruled solo for a further four years. However, he was not very happy with the worldly atmosphere that the job entailed, and after this time requested permission to retire from public office in order to make meditation retreat.

The lama chosen to rule in his stead was one Tatsak Tenpai Gonpo. He assumed

office on the eighth day of the eighth month of the Iron Boar Year, or 1791. The Dalai Lama retired to a simple life of meditation, teaching and other spiritual activities.

During the Eighth Dalai Lama's early life, the Panchen Lama was invited by the Manchu emperor to come and teach in Beijing. Although the young Eighth Dalai Lama counseled against the idea on the grounds that his guru the Panchen was too old, and also that there was a high incidence of smallpox in China, the Tibetan elders were intimidated by the prestige of the invitation and pressed for permission for the Panchen to travel to China.

The Panchen therefore went to Beijing in 1779, where he was housed in the Yellow Palace that had been built for the Fifth Dalai Lama several generations earlier. The Panchen's visit was very successful in that the Manchu leaders greatly loved and respected him, and this improved relations between Tibet and China. However, he contracted smallpox and died in Beijing in 1780.

The Eighth oversaw the search for his reincarnation, and also performed the monastic ordination and name-giving ceremonies for the child that was eventually recognized and enthroned. In this way, during the lifetime of the Eighth, the tradition of Yab Sey, or "Spiritual Father-Son" that existed between the Panchen and Dalai Lamas continued.

Perhaps the most eccentric event that occurred in Tibet during the Eighth's rule was the elimination of the reincarnation lama status of the Ninth Shamar Tulku. At the time the Shamarpa was one of the two senior incarnate lamas in the Karma Kargyupa School. Several of his earlier incarnations had been held in even greater esteem than the Karmapa, the official head of the sect.

The Shamar Lama was historically a somewhat controversial figure. The intrigues of the incarnation that lived during the time of the Second Dalai Lama almost caused the Karma Kargyu Sect to split in two, with one part led by him and the other by the Karmapa. The Ninth Shamarpa once more brought controversy to his office, only this time it got his reincarnation status officially banned.

The Ninth Shamarpa had been born as the younger brother of the Panchen Lama. The Panchen was one of the highest lamas in the Gelukpa School, while the Shamarpa was one of the highest in the Karma Kargyu. After the Panchen

passed away in Beijing in 1780, a conflict developed over the handling of his estate.

In Tibet all responsibility in such matters usually falls to the eldest living brother, and the Panchen Lama left several brothers. With a high lama, most of his property would remain intact for the next reincarnation, but a portion of it could be distributed among living relatives. In this case, the eldest brother decided to cut his younger brother the Shamarpa out of any inheritance, probably on the grounds that the latter had become the head of his own monastery and estate, and thus was already wealthy in his own right. Moreover, the Shamarpa belonged to a different sect from that of the Panchen Lama.

Tensions built over the years to follow. Then the Shamarpa suddenly left on a teaching tour of Nepal. Shortly thereafter a letter arrived in Lhasa from the Gurkha king of Nepal claiming that the Shamarpa was being held hostage by him, and would only be released after a large ransom was paid. The Shamarpa sent a letter directly to the Eighth Dalai Lama requesting him to intervene and see that the ransom was paid.

Lhasa decided that the seeming kidnapping (lama-napping?) was a hoax, and that the Shamarpa and Gurkha king were acting in collusion. Consequently they refused to pay the ransom. No doubt they were also concerned over the issue of setting a precedent with the situation; if they paid this ransom, it would mean that any lama in remote Himalayan kingdoms would be fair game for kidnapping and ransom.

As expected, the Gurkhas did not harm the Shamarpa. Instead, they invaded Tibet with a large military force, sacking Dzongkha and Shekhar, two towns on the route to Shigatsey, and also capturing the Nyanang and Kyirong valleys.

The Tibetan government then dispatched a military force that engaged the Gurkhas, and within a year the Tibetans had pushed them back to the Nepali border. This army was reinforced a few months later by a small army sent by the Manchu emperor. A peace treaty was drawn up between the two parties in the summer of 1789, with Tibet paying a tribute to Nepal in exchange for Nepal withdrawing its soldiers from Tibetan territory. The Shamarpa Lama sat as mediator at negotiations.

Needless to say, the Shamarpa's role in the affair left a bad aftertaste in the mouths of the Tibetans. His strange relationship with the Gurkhas became even stranger in 1790 and 1791, when officials were sent to the border area to hammer out details of the treaty. Again, the Shamarpa was involved in arranging the meetings. This time the Tibetan officials were seized by the Gurkhas and carried off in chains. In early 1791, the young Panchen Lama was summoned to Lhasa for reasons of safety. A few months later, Shigatsey itself was captured by the Gurkhas, and Tashi Lhunpo, the monastery of the Panchen Lama, was seized and looted.

Probably all of Tibet would have fallen to the Gurkhas that summer, had it not been for the Eighth Dalai Lama's presence. The Gurkhas had built a reputation for being fierce and bloodthirsty soldiers, and the small Tibetan army felt that it was no match for them. Lhasa was in a panic, and most of its population was preparing to flee the city.

It was on this occasion that the Eighth Dalai Lama showed his true qualities of leadership. During the chaos and frenzy of this crucial time he announced that he would be holding a prayer ceremony in the Jokhang Temple, and that everyone should join him. During the tea break at the ceremony he addressed the large crowd, declaring that he had no intentions whatsoever of leaving Lhasa himself, come what may. Everyone else could do as they felt best, but he himself was staying.

The calmness and strength of the Eighth Dalai Lama on this occasion undoubtedly saved Tibet from catastrophe. Had he not stood up at this time, Lhasa would have been sacked, and the country lost to the Gurkhas.

Instead, the Tibetan aristocracy were shamed into action. They quickly amassed an army and dispatched it to Shigatsey to counter the Gurkha offensive. By the late summer of 1792 the Gurkhas had again been expelled from Tibet.

Inspired by their victories, the Tibetan army continued into Nepali territory and considered sacking the Kathmandu Valley. This probably would have happened had not the uncle of the young Gurkha king pressed for peace negotiations, sidestepping the issue of Gurkha accountability by placing the blame for the misadventures on the intrigues of the Shamarpa Lama.

Shamarpa means "The Red Hat One," referring to the red monastic hat that all

members of the incarnation lineage wore as a symbol of their position. As a punishment for his role in instigating the two wars the Shamarpa's famous red hat was confiscated from him and sent to Lhasa, where rumor states that it was buried under the front steps of the Jokhang Temple, so that all visitors to Tibet's most sacred power site would have to step on it while entering the temple. To a Tibetan, who loves his hat more than a Texan loves his dog, this was a supreme insult. Whether the hat actually was buried there or not, and whether or not it still remains there, is a moot point. The mere rumor struck the Tibetans as a fate worse than capital punishment. Had the Shamarpa been given a choice of being beheaded for treason or of having his hat buried in a public place, he probably would have chosen the former.

In addition, the Shamarpa's monastic properties at Yangpachen were confiscated, and official recognition of his future reincarnations was banned.

This ban remained in effect for almost two hundred years. In the 1960s the previous Karmapa, or official head of the Karma Kargyupa School, requested the present Dalai Lama to allow him to enthrone a young boy as the Shamarpa. The Dalai Lama consented, and the lineage was resurrected.

However, as modern day followers of Tibetan affairs will know, the legacy of controversy continues to shadow the Shamarpa office. After the Karmapa who had enthroned him passed away, the present Shamarpa attempted to take over his throne, thus coming into conflict with almost all other high lamas in the Karma Kargyu School.

In particular, it brought him into direct conflict with the Tai Situ Rinpochey, whose incarnation lineage has been second only to that of the Karmapa in the Karma Kargyupa since the banning of the Shamarpa incarnation back in the 1790s. Tai Situpa's efforts led to the discovery and enthronement of the Karmapa's reincarnation, which he effected in 1991 with the endorsement of the present Dalai Lama.

However, the Shamarpa then proceeded to recognize and enthrone an alternate candidate to the Karmapa throne, thus creating a major schism in the school. The candidate recognized by the present Dalai Lama and the Tai Situpa remained in Tibet until January of 2000, when he escaped into India, with the Shamarpa's chosen candidate being in India. Because they were removed by such distance and political environments, the schism had been kept somewhat on a back

burner. The escape of the Tibetan candidate has brought the confrontation to a head, with the Shamarpa's role being placed under intense scrutiny.

Which Karmapa candidate incarnation will eventually assume the throne of the previous Karmapa is still unknown, although official recognition by the Dalai Lama certainly gives Tai Situpa's candidate the upper hand.

The events surrounding the banning of the Shamarpa incarnation during the 1780s and 1790s during the lifetime of the Eighth Dalai Lama had the unfortunate side-effect of further alienating the Gelukpa and Karma Kargyu Schools. These two schools had developed ill feelings toward one another during the life of the Second Dalai Lama, largely due to the failed intrigues of the Fourth Shamarpa. The difficulties had worsened during the lives of the Fourth and Fifth Dalai Lamas, with the Karma Kargyu School resenting the success that the Gelukpa achieved during this period, and with the main patron of the Karma Kargyu—the king of Tsang—becoming an active oppressor of the Gelukpa, to the extent that his armies slaughtered hundreds of Gelukpa monks.

After the Fifth Dalai Lama became official head of Tibet in 1642, relations between the two schools became civil but decidedly cool, and remained as such until the Shamarpa incident with the Gurkhas during the lifetime of the Eighth Dalai Lama, when they once more took a downturn.

It had seemed that relations between the Gelukpa and Karma Kargyu had become fairly well repaired in recent years due to the hard work and excellent reputation of the present Dalai Lama, but the present squabble over the Karmapa's reincarnation threatens to once more create unwanted complications.

Although the young Eighth Dalai Lama was a good student and completed his studies in grand form, he does not jump out from the pages of Tibetan history as did his seven predecessors. His greatness was more subdued. His was a quiet strength.

Among his many accomplishments, he is most remembered for several building projects that he undertook. The most famous of these is the Norbu Lingka, better known to pilgrims to Lhasa as "The Summer Palace." This complex of buildings served him and his future incarnations as a summer residence, with the Potala

serving as a winter residence. The Norbu Lingka is a beautiful complex of temples, designed by the Eighth Dalai Lama to fit his vision of a more human Dalai Lama, as opposed to the monumental effect created by the enormous Potala. The gardens around the Norbu Lingka were designed to accommodate large gatherings, and the Eighth as well as future Dalai Lamas used them for public teaching events and for receiving groups of pilgrims.

The Eighth Dalai Lama also designed and built a beautiful little monastery in Lhasa for his beloved guru Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen. Known as Tsechokling, it became the home residence of Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen's future reincarnations. The reincarnate line of this great guru gets its name from this monastery, becoming known as the "Tsechokling Tulkus."

The Eighth did not write as prolifically as his predecessors had. His most remembered work is the very long biography that he composed of his guru Tsechokling Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen. This had the effect of greatly elevating the status of Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen in the annals of Tibetan history.

Tibetan accounts of the Eighth give him special credit for increasing the trend to monasticism in Tibetan Buddhism. He personally gave full ordination to some ten thousand monks, and gave novice ordination to tens of thousands more. He paid great attention to detail during these ordination ceremonies, often giving those he ordained extensive teachings on the paths leading to freedom and higher being.

Finally, on the eighteenth day of the tenth month of the Wood Mouse Year, or 1804, he passed away at the age of forty-seven.

Only a dozen or so texts were produced by the Eighth Dalai Lama's pen. Most of these are of an esoteric nature. In particular, he wrote extensively on the Highest Yoga Tantra system known as Mahamaya, or "The Great Illusion." He is the only Dalai Lama to elucidate this rare tantric cycle, and his efforts in this direction contributed to its survival as a tradition.

The most popular of his writings, however, is a collection of prayers and spiritual songs written at the request of various disciples.

One in particular attracted my attention. The colophon to it reads, Written at the request of Choje Lobzang Tenzin, Ngarampa Tenpa Rabgyal, Rabjampa Tsultrim Rabten and their community at the Ralai Meditation Hermitage." It is

typical of the kind of pithy advice given by meditation teachers to their students, usually to be used for recitation at the beginning or end of a meditation session. The simplicity of the style and clarity of the message is typical of the understated mood of the Eighth Dalai Lama.

Namo guru.

Homage to the spiritual master,

Male and female energies in harmony,

Manifestation of Avalokiteshvara, the compassion of all buddhas, Emanating in accord with the needs of trainees.

Driven by karma and delusion since time immemorial,

I have wandered the three worlds and known great pain.

And even now I am caught in attachment to the world.

Show compassion to me, who is a sinker Falling to rebirth in the lowest of hells.

May I firmly establish the root of accomplishment By relying upon a supreme spiritual master who reveals The key points of the paths leading to enlightenment—

The complete and unmistakable ways of the sutras and tantras— And make the offering of practicing just as instructed.

This precious human body is an ornament with every beauty. May I live in awareness of its precious nature—

How it is hard to obtain and is easily lost—

And, never distracted by the superficial things of this life,

Always strive to extract its inner essence.

Body, possessions and even cherished friends and dear ones Are illusory, like the objects of a dream.

May I maintain awareness of how they are impermanent and illusory,

And always live as though at the threshold of death.

May I arouse the mind that is apprehensive of the sufferings Of the three lower realms of rebirth most difficult to bear,

And be inspired to train in the ways of karmic law,

And thus gain freedom from lower rebirth forever.

No matter where one wanders in the three worlds—

From the highest heaven to the lowest of hells—

One finds only all-pervading dissatisfaction.

May I transcend it all and find

That firm ground of liberation and spiritual joy.

All the living beings that one encounters Have been kind fathers and mothers to me in some past life. Therefore may I cultivate the ways of the great bodhisattva And place them on the path of liberation and enlightenment.

The spiritual master qualified by great compassion Has placed me in the doorway of the peerless path.

May I therefore cherish more than even my life The commitments and precepts of the training,

The very root of every spiritual growth.

The dawn of the tantric yogas of bringing

The three enlightenment qualities into one's experience

Eradicates the darkness of birth, death and the bardo.

May I accomplish this mandala adorned with the marks and signs of perfection,

Which is free from the stains of the conventional mind

WHICH IS FREE FROM THE STAINS OF THE CONVENTIONAL MIND.

Vajra recitation at the chakra at the heart Arrests the fluctuations caused by sun and moon,

Intensifying the four descending and four ascending joys.

May I accomplish this sublime tantric yoga in this very lifetime And bring the experience of integration to final fruition.

In brief, in this and in all my future lives

May I be constantly cared for by gurus and the gods,

And may I single-pointedly cultivate the essence

Of the sublime path praised by all enlightenment masters.

In all my lives may I never be parted

From the guiding presence of qualified masters.

May I always have access to the glory of the Dharma,

That I may complete the realizations of the stages and paths, And quickly gain the state of a Buddha Vajradhara.



Isultrim Gyatso, the Tenth Dalai Lama. Courtesy of The Newark Museum,
Newark, New Jersey.

The Ninth Through Twelfth Dalai Lamas: The Quiet Years

After the Eighth, the next four Dalai Lamas all died young. The Ninth was born near the end of the Wood Ox Year (i.e., late 1805 or early 1806), and the Twelfth died in 1875. Thus the four collectively lived for a period of only seventy years. Just one lived to adulthood, and he died as a young man.

The Tibetan biographies, however, being mystical in nature, do not see the failure of these Dalai Lamas to live a full and natural life as a blemish on the Dalai Lama record. Rather, their premature passing was itself a contribution. As stated in the biography of the Twelfth Dalai Lama, who died when he was only nineteen years of age, “He chose to pass away at this tender age in order to impress the reality of impermanence and death upon the minds of trainees, to increase their sense of self-responsibility, and to weaken the tendency of grasping at permanence within them.”

Perhaps the great accomplishment of these Dalai Lamas was that they stepped back from the center stage of Tibetan spiritual and cultural life, thus encouraging others to step forward and take more significant roles.

Most modern Tibetan intellectuals (i.e., those writing after the 1959 occupation of Tibet by Communist China) suggest that these four Dalai Lamas were murdered by the Manchu Chinese, giving as the motive an ongoing Manchu conspiracy to destabilize the Lhasa government and thus to exert a stronger control over Tibet.

I don't buy the theory. The members of the Manchu aristocracy were staunch supporters of Gelukpa Buddhism, as represented by the Dalai Lamas, and therefore would have benefited from the presence of a strong Dalai Lama in Lhasa. The widespread popularity of Buddhism in its Gelukpa form throughout Manchu China makes it improbable that the Manchus murdered any of these four Dalai Lamas.

Other Tibetan historians point a suspicious finger at the regents. From the time of the death of the Seventh, the tradition had been to choose a high Gelukpa lama to act as the Dalai Lama's regent throughout the years of the search for the young reincarnation and the subsequent years of the child's education and minority. These regents were usually chosen from the pool of reincarnate lamas

who had been close to the Seventh Dalai Lama. Could they have murdered their wards in order to maintain the status of their offices?

Once more I am not convinced. These regents were all monks who were well educated in Buddhist thinking, and who were also steeped in Tibetan mythology. The pleasures of administrative power would not have held as strong a place in their minds as would the fear of rebirth in one of the hells. To murder a fellow monk, let alone an incarnation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, would certainly result in rebirth in Avichi, the deepest and worst of all the hell realms.

Moreover, handing over the reins of the regency to their wards would not be a major demotion in power for them. The regents were also tutors and gurus to the Dalai Lamas, and thus would receive the same, if not more, respect and attention in their retirement.

Besides, the deaths of their wards would only serve as blemishes on their records. It is difficult to imagine that any one of them could have misinterpreted the situation to the degree that he would destroy the very source of his office.¹

More likely to have been responsible, if foul play indeed was involved, is the Tibetan lay aristocracy of the time. Various regents may officially have held the Dalai Lama throne during this period, but the reality of the matter is that the day-to-day handling of affairs was largely conducted by lay aristocrats and power brokers. Most of these had little spiritual training, and were loyal to no one but their own families. They would have had few qualms about murdering anyone to protect their own interests and to maintain the status quo.

The favorite means of murder with Tibetan aristocrats was poison. This fit in well with the Tibetan preference for nonviolence. The Tibetan aristocrats had sufficient access to the Dalai Lama's person to allow them to administer this deadly method. In brief, they had motive, means and opportunity.

It is also possible that none of these Dalai Lamas died of foul means, but instead succumbed to childhood illness. The Dalai Lamas of this period were far more susceptible to this than the previous Dalai Lamas had been. In earlier days Tibet had largely been protected from the diseases of the outside world by its geographic isolation. It was surrounded by rings of snow mountains and high passes on every side.

However, Tibet's exposure to the outer world dramatically increased during the era of the Ninth through Twelfth Dalai Lamas. England had conquered all of India and the lands to the south and west of Tibet, while Russia had captured everything to the north. Even though Tibet itself remained something of a forbidden land to Europeans, by the early nineteenth century Lhasa had become a tantalizing destination for spies, adventurers, explorers and missionaries. This brought the Dalai Lamas into contact with numerous diseases hitherto unknown on the high Tibetan plateaus.

One of the duties of a Dalai Lama of the period, no matter how young, was to officially receive and give blessings to large groups of pilgrims to Lhasa. If a tribe of ten thousand Mongols showed up, the young Dalai Lama would probably be asked to give a short mantra transmission to them in one of the Lhasa temples, and after the transmission ceremony to give a personal blessing to all of them. Usually the entire group would file past him as he sat on his teaching throne. He would bless some by touching the tip of his blessing wand to their head. Others would receive a hand blessing, in which he would touch the head of the devotee with one or both of his hands. Sometimes he would even take the person's head in his hands and touch his forehead to theirs, which is the highest form of lama greeting and blessing.

All of this made the young Dalai Lamas susceptible to the contagious diseases that were being carried down from the silk routes of Mongolia and western China, or up from the spice and cotton routes of India. Traders from Kashmir, China, Persia and other such countries only added to the hazards.

In addition, these Dalai Lamas were continually being given gifts by this stream of visitors. Cottons and silks were common gifts, and both of these can carry contagious diseases. For example, it is believed that hundreds of thousands of North American natives died during this same period due to blankets distributed to them by the Hudson's Bay Company, and it is not impossible that these Dalai Lamas suffered a similar fate on the opposite end of the planet.

Another reason given in Tibetan mystical literature for the early deaths of these Dalai Lamas is an exclusively spiritual one, and it has to do with the karma of ordinary beings. The humans who are alive at any given point in history are characterized by a finite volume of collective good karma. This collective good karma has the effect of establishing all the positive features of the world that we experience. When collective good karma is weak, the world experiences many

difficulties. The presence of an enlightened master is therefore not dependent on the good karma of the master, but on the good karma of the ordinary people. The master has transcended all ordinary karmic patterns. An enlightened master only appears when the masses exhibit the appropriate degree of positive karma. Simply stated, these four Dalai Lamas died young because the world did not have enough good karma to deserve their presence.

The world did, however, have enough good karma to attract each of them for a brief period of time. Moreover, even though their lives were short when measured conventionally in human years, on a higher level time is an infinitely expandable or contractible substance. As the traditional Tibetan accounts would put it, when these Dalai Lamas were here on earth they worked simultaneously on many levels and on many different time frequencies in order to benefit the beings in the universe who were ready for their mysterious works of body, speech and mind.

The Ninth Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Lungtok Gyatso

(1805/6-1815)

The exalted Ninth Dalai Lama was born in the Chokhor Gon district of Denma, Kham (southeastern Tibet)², in the twelfth month of the Wood Bull Year of the thirteenth sexantry, amid many marvelous and auspicious signs. Jey Tenzin Chokyong was his father's name, and Dondrub Dolma was his mother's. The mother gave birth without the slightest pain or discomfort, a sign that her child was a high reincarnation.

As soon as the child was born he said, "Ama," or "Mother," indicating that he had the compassion that regarded all beings with the love that a child holds for a mother. He also recited the mantra om mani padme hum several times with utter clarity, in order to remind all beings of the importance of reciting this mantra.

At the time of his birth, the sound of singing and music was heard without anyone playing, and flower petals the color of a white conch shell seemed to rain down on the house, carried by the wind.

Just before the child was born, the oracle deity Nechung Chogyal spontaneously entered into the body of a monk named Ngawang Rabten from

Chokhor Gon Monastery. This monk had never channeled the Nechung Protector before, but did so several times over the days to follow. While in trance on one of these occasions, the monk took an iron sword and bent it into a knot, as easily as though tying a piece of rope. He then instructed that the sword be taken to the house of the Chokhor Gon chieftain Jey Tenzin Chokyong, commenting that the sword had great importance. He used the words “Dondrubpa yin,” which translates as “Will have great benefits.” This later was interpreted as being a play on the name of the boy’s mother. After that occasion the monk never again channeled the Nechung deity. His words were a clear indication that the child born to Dondrub Dolma was a high incarnation.

In central Tibet, the Panchen Lama was requested to oversee the search for the Eighth Dalai Lama’s reincarnation. During the Butterlamp Festival he requested the Tsangpa Oracle to make a prophecy. The oracle indicated that the search should be made in the Denma region of Kham. Therefore, a list of all children born with auspicious signs in Denma was created. This was shown to the Panchen Lama, who again made divinations.

Eventually the child was recognized as the reincarnation. However, some doubts persisted, and therefore the Nechung Oracle was invoked in the presence of the chief ministers of the Tibetan government and the three chief attendants of the previous Dalai Lama. While in trance, the Nechung medium demonstrated an even greater magnificence than usual, and pronounced, “The Radiant Jewel has been ripened in the lap of Dondrub Dolma.”

At that time, the Nechung secretary requested, “This is a very important matter, so please be very definite.” The oracle tapped on the mirror that he wore around his heart and said, “The words of Vajra Pehar do not waver.”

Eventually the child was brought to Lhasa for examination. Included in the audience were the Panchen Lama, Kundeling Rinpochey, the two Manchu ambans, the Demo Tulku, Reteng Tri Rinpochey, Shedrubling Tulku, Tsechokling Tulku, the ministers and secretaries of the Tibetan government, and the chief attendants of the previous Dalai Lama. When the boy was brought from his room and seated before this august gathering, he was undaunted. As his biography states, “He entered the room walking slowly and elegantly, like a lion amongst ordinary beings, as though long familiar with receiving such respect.” He greeted the Panchen Lama and regent, as well as the two Manchu ambans, by offering them silk scarves, and then invited them

to sit.

When tea was served he led the offering verses without shyness or hesitation. He then placed his tiny hands together and offered a prayer for the success of the enlightenment tradition and the peace and happiness of living beings.

Without hesitation, the child said to the two Manchu ambans, “You have brought some articles for me to identify. Please show them to me now.” The ambans first showed him a Tara statue that had belonged to and often spoken prophecies to Atisha. This had been very sacred to the previous Dalai Lamas. The ambans also showed him many other objects, such as a hand drum, a vajra and bell set, and so forth. Each of these was mixed with similar objects.

With the Tara image he stated, “This Tara is mine. It was a meditation object belonging to Atisha himself.” He then picked up the correct vajra and bell, as well as the drum, and played them perfectly, again as though he were completely familiar with them.

Demo Tulku then asked, “Do you recognize me?” The child replied, “Demo, Demo.”

The two Manchu ambans then asked, “Do you recognize us?” He replied, “You are the ambans.”

Thus in front of this large and prestigious gathering the child clearly showed that he was the true incarnation. Consequently he was recognized as such and placed on the Golden Throne of the Ganden Podrang Government.

His enthronement took place on the twenty-second day of the ninth Tibetan month of the Earth Dragon Year, or 1808.

Shortly after his enthronement ceremony, he received his pre-novice ordination from the Fourth Panchen Lama, the Venerable Tenpai Nyima.

In the same year that the Ninth Dalai Lama’s enthronement took place, the aged regent, Tatsak Ngawang Gonpo, passed away. Therefore on the eleventh day of the fourth month, Demo Tulku Ngawang Lobzang Tubten Jigmey Gyatso was appointed to replace him.³

Although the Ninth Dalai Lama lived for less than ten years, his biography is as

long as those of many of the early Dalai Lamas.

Our knowledge of this child is uniquely supplemented by the account of the first Englishman ever to meet a Dalai Lama.

In 1811 a Britisher named Thomas Manning arrived in Lhasa. Son of a minister from Norfolk, England, he had studied mathematics and philosophy in Caius College, Cambridge. He then went to France to study Chinese, and in 1806, the year the Ninth Dalai Lama was born, he left for Canton. He remained in China until 1810 when he moved to Calcutta, which at the time was the British capital in India. He remained in Calcutta for the better part of a year, and then left for Tibet in September of 1811 as part of a self-declared scientific expedition. His main traveling companion was a Chinese servant he had brought with him from Canton, whom he refers to as “Munshi” in his journals.

His first audience with the young Dalai Lama took place on the morning of December 17, 1811. He gives us a colorful account of the meeting.⁴

We rode to the foot of the mountain on which the palace is built, or out of which, rather, it seems to grow; but having ascended a few paces to a platform, were obliged to dismount. From here to where the Grand Lama receives is a long and tedious ascent. It consists of about four hundred steps, partly stone steps in the rocky mountain, and the rest ladder steps

story to story in the palace____At length we arrived at the large platform

roof, off which is built the house, or hall of reception. There we rested awhile, arranged the presents, and conferred with the Lama’s Chinese interpreter_____

I made the due obeisance, touching the ground three times with my

head to the Grand Lama, and one to the Ti-mu-fu----Having delivered

the scarf to the Grand Lama, I took off my hat, and humbly gave him my clean-shaved head to lay his hands upon.

Pilgrims to the Potala today still take this long and arduous walk up hundreds of stone steps in order to arrive at the platform roof where the early Dalai Lamas received visitors. The lama referred to above as the “Ti-mu-fu” is probably the Dalai Lama’s tutor and regent, Demo Tulku Ngawang Lobzang Tubten Jigmey

Gyatso, the author of the biographies of both the Eighth and Ninth Dalai Lamas. Presumably he learned this pronunciation (i.e., “Ti-mu-fu) from his Chinese servant, to whom “Demo” sounded like “Ti-mu.” Elsewhere in his journal Manning speaks well of this lama, who assisted him in his stay in Lhasa and showed him kindness on the numerous occasions that the two met.

Manning was obviously deeply charmed by the young Ninth Dalai Lama, and gives us a wonderful description of his impressions of the boy.

The lama’s beautiful and interesting face and manner engrossed almost all of my attention. He was at that time about seven years old, and had the simple and unaffected manners of a well-educated princely child. His face was, I thought, poetically and affectingly beautiful. He was of a gay and cheerful disposition; his beautiful mouth perpetually unbending into a graceful smile, which illuminated his whole countenance. Sometimes, particularly when he had looked at me, his smile almost approached to a gentle laugh. No doubt my grim beard and spectacles somewhat excited his risibility, though I have afterwards, at the New Year’s festival, seen him smile and unbend freely, while sitting myself unobserved in a corner, and watching his reception of various persons....

In fact the young Dalai Lama was only six years old at the time. He does not seem, however, to have been at all shy. Manning speaks as follows of the conversation that he held with the boy:

We had not been seated long before he put questions to us which we rose to receive and answer. He addressed himself in the Tibet tongue to the Chinese interpreter; the Chinese interpreter to my Munshi; my Munshi to me in Latin. I gave answer in Latin, which was concerted and conveyed back in the same manner.... There was no sentiment or shade of sentiment we could not exchange.

Manning concludes the account of his meeting with the Ninth Dalai Lama by stating,

I was extremely affected by this interview with the lama. I could have wept through strangeness of sensation.

Manning was also something of an artist, and drew several portraits of the boy. Unfortunately, these do not seem to have survived, as they would have given us a lifelike representation. Tibetan images of all the Dalai Lamas who died young are highly stylized, presenting them with Buddha-like faces rather than actual

likenesses.

Manning kept a fairly detailed journal of his Tibetan travels until the end of 1811. Consequently the man who later edited his writings into published form—Clements Markham—was able to work the materials from this period of Manning’s stay in Lhasa into a readable and informative narrative.

Unfortunately it seems that after a month in Lhasa, Manning became so busy that the journal received scant attention. He had been moved to open a small medical clinic, and this quickly became the talk of the town. Everyone from lamas to soldiers, and from Chinese officials to Tibetan ladies, wanted to visit his clinic and see for themselves this exotic white specimen of humanity.

By early January of 1812 his journal entries were mere dates—listed first by the Western calendar and then by the Tibetan—followed by a brief description of an event. These obviously were intended as memory aides to be filled in at a later time. For example, one entry reads, “Jan. 8th = 16th day of the twelfth moon. I visited the lama and afterward the Ti-mu-fu. He promised me books.” The next entry reads, “Feb. 10th = 29th of the twelfth moon. I visited the lama unexpectedly, and he gave me sacred leaves wrapped up in silk.” In other words, the Ninth Dalai Lama had given him a traditional Tibetan loose-leaf scripture. It was wrapped in a silken cloth, as is the Tibetan custom with sacred books.

In addition to these visits with the Ninth Dalai Lama, Manning writes that he also visited him on the last day of the Tibetan year as well as on New Year’s day, which would have been, respectively, February 11th and 12th. On the latter occasion he gave the boy a present of his telescope. No doubt this exotic instrument from England would have profoundly delighted the young monk.

We can only marvel at coincidence. One of the strongest scenes in the Martin Scorsese film on the life of the present Dalai Lama, Kundun (Touchstone Films), is that in which the Dalai Lama as a young boy is depicted standing on the roof of the Potala looking down through a telescope onto the busy streets below.

Manning met with the Ninth Dalai Lama on several more occasions, the last being April 6th. Here he tersely writes, “I took leave of the lama with a sorrowful heart. I said I would tell my king (Governor of Bengal) that I was well treated. His heart rejoices. I thank the Grand Lama, and promise that if afterwards a Lhasa man comes to Bengal it shall not be forgotten. I take

leave of Ti-mu-fu. Sorrowful. Receive presents.”⁵

Unfortunately Manning died without ever completing or rewriting his journal. Thus he never filled out the brief notes that characterized the last months of his Tibetan adventure. Nonetheless the early section of the journal is quite detailed, and because of him we gain a glimpse through Western eyes of this extraordinary child.

Unfortunately, three years after Manning’s departure from Lhasa, the young Dalai Lama contracted a cold while presiding over the New Year’s Great Prayer Festival. This eventually developed into pneumonia.

Commenting on his passing his biographer, Demo Tulku Ngawang Lobzang Tubten Jigmey Gyatso, writes, “In order to inspire thoughts of Dharma in the minds of trainees who still held to the things of this life as being permanent, and to demonstrate the glorious nature of the spiritual tradition, he began to show signs of passing during the second Tibetan month of the Wood Boar Year.”

Demo Tulku goes on to say that at one point the boy sat up straight, his breath became extremely subtle, and he appeared to enter into the death state, seeming “... to immerse himself in the clear light Dharmakaya of death, to pause there for awhile, and then to emanate the illusion-like Sambhogakaya...”

However, some moments afterwards his breathing returned to normal. Numerous devotees went to him, bowed at his feet, and begged him not to go. “O Compassionate Master,” they said, “please think of us living beings, and of the Buddhadharma. Please remain in the world for our sakes. Look on us with compassion. And if for some higher reason you must leave and go elsewhere for a time, please give us your promise that you will return.”

The boy looked at them and said, “I had hoped to do more in this lifetime for the enlightenment tradition, and also to be of greater benefit to living beings. However, I am not able to accomplish more than what has already been done. I offer prayers that in future lives I will be able to be of greater benefit to the Buddhadharma and to living beings.”

Having said these words, and having dictated a message for the Manchu emperor, he smiled and looked up at the sky.

Shortly after that—it was midday of the sixteenth day of the second Tibetan

month—he crossed his legs in the meditation posture, folded his hands in his lap, and sat up straight. For a session he engaged in the tantric meditation known as “the vajra recitation,” occasionally seeming to pause and look up toward the sky.

Demo Tulku writes, “Like this he continued the three-cycles tantric breathing, until he gradually induced the experience of clear light consciousness. He then allowed the subtle elements of his body to dissolve. First the sign of the mirage came; then an appearance like wispy smoke; then sparks, like fireflies at night; and then an awareness like the light of an undisturbed butterlamp. After that came the four emptiness experiences, beginning with the appearance like a cloudless sky, until the fourth emptiness arose, the great radiance of the primordial clear light mind. He retained this primordial clear light, and blended it with the dharmakaya buddha-wisdom, thus manifesting the full and complete dharmakaya mind. He rested for awhile in the great blissful state, and then once more manifested a Nirmanakaya form in order to bring benefits into the world. Thus he passed away without expressing the slightest fear or discomfort.”

This is the manner of his death, according to the description afforded by his tutor and biographer, Demo Tulku Ngawang Lobzang Tubten Jigmey Gyatso, who sat with him throughout the experience.

The Panchen Lama was invited from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery to come and preside over the death rites and prayers, and to write a prayer for the quick return of the master. This prayer was chanted throughout all the principal monasteries and hermitages of Tibet.

The boy’s body was mummified and placed in a golden stupa. This has been kept since then in a special chamber in the Potala, where it remains as an object of veneration to pilgrims.

His Holiness the present Dalai Lama once commented to me that one of the reasons the Ninth is given so much attention is that an important prophecy is associated with him. According to the prophecy, he would have many obstacles to living a full life, but if he achieved adulthood and came of age he would become the greatest of all the Dalai Lamas.

This prophecy was widely known. Therefore, when he suddenly and unexpectedly passed away at noon of the sixteenth day of the second month of the Wood Boar Year (i.e., 1815), at the tender age of nine, the nation was thrown

into sorrow.

The Tenth Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Tsultrim Gyatso

(1816-1837)

The tenth reincarnation of the omniscient Jey Tamchey Khyenpa was born in Litang of Kham Province, eastern Tibet.⁶ As readers may remember, the Third Dalai Lama had built an important monastery in Litang many centuries earlier, and also the Seventh Dalai Lama had been born in the Litang area.

His biography states that his father, Lobzang Nyendak, had great faith in the Dharma, was of a very honest and brave character, and was physically strong and athletic.

His mother, Namgyal Butri, was also strongly devoted to the Dharma. She practiced daily meditation, and in particular had strong and active compassion for the poor and helpless. She was in the habit of reciting the mantra of compassion—om mani padme hum—for many hours every day.

On the night of the conception—an auspicious day of the sixth month of the Wood Boar Year, or 1815—his mother dreamed that a lama appeared to her and placed a white greeting scarf over her head. At that moment she heard many monks calling to her, saying, “Come over here, come over here.” She turned and walked toward the sounds.

Three days later she dreamed that the sun rose and shone with radiant lights that filled the whole world.

The biography states, “When we examine these dreams it would seem that the lama in the first dream was Amitabha Buddha. The white scarf placed over her shoulders indicated that she had the karma to give birth to the Bodhisattva of Compassion, the Supreme Arya Avalokiteshvara. Walking toward many monks indicated that she would soon move to central Tibet, the home of the three great monasteries and two tantric colleges. The rising of the sun indicated that the child in her womb was a high incarnation who would dispel the darkness of ignorance in the world, thereby bringing benefits and joy to the living beings.”

The child emerged from the womb at dawn on the twenty-ninth day of the third month of the Fire Mouse Year, or 1816.

Many auspicious signs accompanied the birth, indicating that the child was the reincarnation of a high being. One of these was that the mother delivered him without experiencing the slightest pain or discomfort. Another was the intense radiance that was emitted by his body when it exited from the womb. As the biography puts it, “The radiance of his body filled the room with light, like sunrays bouncing back from a mirror.”

In accordance with local custom, the next day an eight-year-old girl came to offer him a ball of fresh butter. When she arrived, she beheld a river of milk flowing from the eastern side of the house. She called to the parents and others who were present, and they also perceived this spectacle. The biography comments that the stream of milk indicated that the blessings of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, would protect everyone in the household, including the parents.

During the girl’s visit, many “jewel pills” magically appeared near the fireplace. These are blessing substances empowered through tantric ritual in which Avalokiteshvara is invoked and his “jewel mantra” is recited many times. This is the mantra om mani padme hum; the word mani means “jewel.” The sign of accomplishment of the ritual is that a half-filled vase of pills becomes miraculously filled. The magical appearance of these pills in the household at this time indicated that Avalokiteshvara had made his presence known.

The house was located in a deep valley, and generally no crows were seen in the vicinity. However, some twenty days before the boy’s birth two crows took up residence on the roof of the house. They were brilliantly black, as though coated in oil, and came whenever the child was at home.

The many extraordinary dreams that the mother experienced during this period and also the many auspicious signs that had occurred around the birth attracted considerable attention to the child. Tibet had many hundreds of reincarnate lamas, and the people of the vicinity felt that one of them must have been reborn in their midst.

Meanwhile, back in Lhasa the responsibility for finding the new incarnation fell

to the regent, Demo Tulku Ngawang Lobzang Tubten Jigmey Gyatso. He had already requested the Panchen Lama to assist him with the funeral rites and entombment of the deceased Ninth Dalai Lama; now he requested the Panchen to assist him with the preparations for the coming of the Tenth.

The Panchen Lama agreed, and the two of them held a large tantric ceremony in order to remove obstacles to the process, as well as to ripen the positive karma required for the search to be successful.

They then jointly presided over an invocation of the Nechung Oracle. The Nechung medium went into trance, and the oracle spoke through him. The indication was clear: The search should be conducted in the far eastern regions of the country. The two lamas also consulted the other oracles of Lhasa, and received the same advice.

Consequently in the Fire Mouse Year—it was the year after the Ninth had passed away—Demo Tulku sent a strong command to the kings and high lamas of three specific regions of the east that could have been indicated by the prophecies: Do Kham, the area west of Dartsedo and the four districts of Kongpo. The command requested them to build lists of children born with unusual signs in their areas, admonishing them not to omit any.

On the eighth month of the following year—it was the Fire Bull Year, or 1817—several monks from Kham arrived in Lhasa and spoke of a child born with extraordinary signs in Litang. Although reports of various children had emerged over the months, somehow this rumor seemed to strike a chord with everyone, and within days the child had become the talk of the town. Coincidentally, shortly thereafter two reports arrived from Litang, one from the monastery and the other from the government bureau there; both spoke of an extraordinary child whose birth was attended by many auspicious signs.

The regent once more consulted the oracles, and also personally made divinations. The indications were positive. Indeed, this child just could be the object of his search.

The regent decided to act immediately, and dispatched a team to examine the boy. The team was jointly headed by his personal representative and the son of the chief cabinet minister. It also included representatives of the three great monasteries—Ganden, Drepung and Sera—as well as a senior monk from

Dulwa Dratsang of Drepung Loseling Monastery. This monk had been especially close to the Ninth. The delegation carried letters to the kings and chieftains of the region, as well as the high lamas.

They traveled quickly, leaving on the sixteenth day of the tenth month and arriving on the seventeenth day of the eleventh month. When they arrived in Litang they went directly to the monastery and announced their purpose.

Arrangements were immediately made to take the members of the search committee to visit the child.

The next day they arrived at the child's house. At the time of their arrival, although he was only two years old, he was seated alone on a white woolen mattress as though engaged in tantric ritual. Numerous tantric implements sat on a small table in front of him. These included a bell and vajra set, as well as a hand drum, a ritual vase and a mirror. As the group entered the house he spontaneously picked up the bell and drum, and began playing them. These, they were told, were the only toys with which he liked to play.

There were about thirty members in the delegation, comprised of both Tibetans and Manchus. The child showed no anxiety or discomfort whatsoever as they entered the house, but continued to sit quietly, pretending to recite mantras.

Included in the delegation were three monks who had known the Ninth Dalai Lama. They asked the child if he recognized them. He was still too young to speak, but nonetheless looked at them with wide eyes and a large smile, indicating that he did.

He then called to his father. When the father came and sat down, the child took the vase in his hands and touched it to the father's head, as though performing a purification ritual.

The next day the lama from Dulwa Dratsang Monastery offered a bell, vajra and hand drum to the child. The boy took the three in his hands in the correct manner—bell in the left, and the other two in his right—and played them correctly. He then touched the vajra to the monk's head, as though giving blessings.

Five months later several monks again came to the house, this time to perform purification rituals. After performing the purification ritual, the head lama commented to the boy, "Because you are Avalokiteshvara appearing in this

world in order to benefit sentient beings, you should perform extensive activities.”

Sometime after that the boy’s mother was speaking and mentioned the name of Avalokiteshvara. The boy called out to her, “Mother, I am Avalokiteshvara.”

On another occasion, the boy saw someone getting his head shaved. The boy said, “I also need to shave my head.” The implication was that he wanted to have the shaved head of a monk.

Again, one day he called to his father. “Saddle my horse. I must soon leave for Lhasa.”

The government officials had now taken a serious interest in the child. They sent word that he should be moved from his home into the monastery at Litang in order to ensure proper cleanliness and health precautions. Therefore, on an astrologically auspicious day in the seventh month he was moved to Litang Monastery. As the party departed from the house he commented, “Actually, they should be taking me to Lhasa.” He showed only joy and excitement at the prospect of leaving home and moving into the monastery, as though he had been long familiar with monastic life.

He arrived at Litang Monastery on the morning of the twenty-eighth day of that month. A five-colored rainbow appeared in the sky above the monastery, seeming to stretch from the monastery and disappear into the direction of his birthplace. Everyone who was present witnessed this spectacle and marveled.

The boy was housed in Shokdruk Khamtsen of Litang Monastery. One day the dance master of the monastery came to visit him. Without having been introduced to him the boy called out, “Ah, dance master, please come close.” Thus he indicated that they had met before.

On the twelfth day of the eighth month, he went to visit the abbot. The abbot asked, “Do you recognize me?” He replied, “Yes, I recognize you very well.” Having said this, he immediately offered the abbot a greeting scarf.

Thirty-six years prior to this time, in the Iron Bull Year, or 1781, the Manchu emperor, Chen-lung, had sent a golden urn to the Eighth Dalai Lama, with the instruction that it was to be employed in the selection process of his future reincarnations.⁷ The emperor wanted to play a more direct part in the choosing

of the Dalai Lama reincarnations, because the Gelukpa School to which the Dalai Lamas belonged was the official religion of his court. The idea was that the names of the leading candidates should be written on scrolls of paper and placed in the golden urn. Prayers for divine intervention should then be performed, following which a representative of the emperor would draw forth one of the names, much like the drawing of a lottery. The name on the drawn lot would indicate the candidate to be enthroned as the Dalai Lama.

This urn method, however, was not used during the selection process of the Ninth Dalai Lama, as the signs clearly indicated that the candidate from Denma of Kham was the true incarnation, and this decision was accepted by all concerned parties. It was employed for the first time in the confirmation of the Tenth Dalai Lama.

Originally there had been three candidates on the shortlist, with the boy from Litang seeming to be the most promising. All three were brought to Nyetang near Lhasa in early 1819, which was the Earth Hare Year. Regent Demo Tulku, together with numerous high lamas from Ganden, Drepung and Sera monasteries, then personally examined all three.

The boy from Litang won their confidence, and the regent confirmed him as the authentic reincarnation. Later that year, unfortunately, before the enthronement ceremony could be arranged, Regent Demo Tulku suddenly contracted smallpox and passed away. A lama from Sera Mey Monastery by the name of Tsemonling Jampel Tsultrim was appointed as the new regent.

The temporary power vacuum created something of a shift in loyalties, however, and the process of officially confirming the Tenth Dalai Lama was delayed. All three candidates were retained as possibilities. No move was made to enthrone the boy from Litang who had earlier been endorsed by the previous regent; on the other hand, neither was his candidacy rejected in favor of one of the other two boys.

Three years passed in this way without anything being done. Finally in the Water Horse Year, or 1822, the Fourth Panchen Lama, Lobzang Tenpai Nyima, took it upon himself to personally intervene.

To break the stalemate he brought out the emperor's golden urn. Some say his personal divinations had indicated that the name of the boy from Litang would

be the one to emerge in the drawing. Others say that the urn in fact was never really used; the Panchen just proclaimed publicly that it had been used, in order to silence opposition to the enthronement of the boy from Litang.

In any case, it was announced that the name of the boy from Litang was the authentic reincarnation.

On the eighth day of the eighth month of that same year he was brought to the Potala and placed upon the Golden Throne as the crown ornament of Tibet. After the enthronement ceremony, he received the pre-novice ordination from the Panchen Lama and was given the name Tsultrim Gyatso.

After his enthronement, the young Tenth Dalai Lama was immersed in the rigorous spiritual training expected of a Dalai Lama. As the biography puts it, “From his many sublime teachers he drank deeply and continuously of the profound teachings, receiving countless empowerments, transmissions and commentaries in order to prepare himself to better benefit living beings and the Dharma.” It then goes on to list the hundreds of lineages and texts that he received.

No doubt his presence was an inspiration and source of hope for many people. However, he was not destined to complete his training nor to take up the actual mantle of spiritual and temporal leadership, for on the first day of the ninth month of the Fire Bird Year, or 1837, he suddenly passed away.

The Tenth Dalai Lama had always been of a fragile constitution, at least from his mid-teen years. He was given the best Tibetan doctors and medical care, but nothing seemed to help. The biography explains his situation as follows: “In this degenerate age, when the beings to be trained lack the necessary merits, it is hard for the great masters to stay in their midst. They manifest constant signs of sickness, and often die young.” The text provides long lists of the dozens of rituals and prayers that were performed by various great lamas and monasteries. His tutor, Yongdzin Trizur Ngawang Chopel, seems to have spent almost as much time praying for his life as he did tutoring him. The monks of the two chief tantric monasteries, Gyumey and Gyuto, were kept constantly busy in rituals for him, and even the Panchen Lama was contracted for the purpose.

The biography says, “Although he and those in his high spiritual state have attained the vajra body, and therefore have transcended the ordinary experiences

of birth, sickness, old age and death, they often take on these modes in order to touch and inspire the minds of ordinary beings.” The text then goes on to quote a dozen Indian scriptures that support this thesis, and tell of how Buddha himself died an extraordinary death in order to impress the concepts of impermanence and suffering on the minds of his disciples.

It is not impossible that the Tenth Dalai Lama was murdered by means of a slow poison. When he was in his mid-teens he began to push a plan to overhaul the economic structure of the country. This would have seriously upset the status quo of the aristocratic families, and led to a massive transfer of wealth from the upper classes to the common people. It was not long after he had made this reform plan his pet project that he began to manifest signs of illness and fragility; these symptoms continued and increased until his eventual death half a dozen years later.

During the Tenth’s life Tibet was ruled first by the regent Demo Tulku, and after Demo Tulku’s death by the regent Tsemonling Jampel Tsultrim. Both of these operated through the auspices of the Kashag, or cabinet of chief ministers, as well as through the various civil service offices that had been created over the generations.

The former regent, who was a monk from Drepung Loseling Monastery, was well liked by the Tibetans, although regarded as eccentric almost to the point of madness. This is the “Ti-mu-fu” of whom Thomas Manning speaks in his journals.

The latter regent, Tsemonling Jampel Tsultrim, was a monk from Sera Mey, and became increasingly unpopular during the twenty-four years of his reign—so much so that eventually he was deposed and his estates confiscated. The Panchen Lama was called upon to facilitate this sensitive maneuver. But this took place much later, during the lifetime of the Eleventh Dalai Lama.

Although the Tenth Dalai Lama could not personally carry all his work to completion, shortly after his death a boy took birth in Gartar of Do Kham, eastern Tibet, who bore all the signs of being the Supreme Incarnation.

The Eleventh Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Khedrub Gyatso

(1838-1855/6)

The omniscient Eleventh Dalai Lama was born in Gartar in Domey, of Kham, in eastern Tibet near the border with China, in the Earth Dog Year of the fourteenth sexantry, or 1838. This was the place where the minister Garton Tsan, in the reign of Songtsen Gampo, had skillfully escaped from the Chinese.⁸

The biography states that the Eleventh's father, Tsewang Dondup, was greatly respected for having taken a vow of nonviolence and for always speaking truly and beneficially. His mother, Yungdrung Butri, is said to have possessed all the qualities of a woman of most noble character.

Many auspicious signs surrounded the birth of the child. For example, the day after his conception a shower of flower petals occurred over the house, even though it was the middle of winter. Also, a golden flower with three blossoms on a single stem appeared on the fence of the main gate of the nearby monastery. A month after his conception an unusual storm occurred; it had very soft thunder but very heavy lightning. This was taken as a sign that something auspicious had occurred in the area.

At about this time a monk in the local monastery named Gelong Lobzang Trinley had an unusual experience; he was not sure if it was a dream or a vision. He beheld an enormous elephant adorned with a net of precious jewels; the elephant looked at him and then walked into the monastery.

Another monk in the monastery dreamed that the mountains surrounding the Gartar area were covered with a white greeting scarf.

The father dreamed of a snow mountain ablaze with lights. Within the radiance, many auspicious forms appeared. Merely gazing into the light gave rise to great pleasure. Then numerous tantric deities began to appear within the radiance. Eventually the female buddha Tara appeared, and from her shoulders there appeared two waterfalls. These produced streams of water that gently flowed toward the father and into his house.

The mother also had numerous dreams. In one of these she saw a tree with many

branches, leaves, flowers and fruit. One of the flowers had a thousand petals. She, her husband and mother-in-law carefully dug up the tree and transplanted it at their house. Many monks came from the monastery to this house, and made requests for the family to remain in that area.

While the child was in the womb, during the first month of the Earth Dog Year (i.e., 1838), a rainbow appeared over the local monastery. The rainbow seemed to completely cover the monastery, like a tent covering a box. At the same time, the house of the child's future birth was covered in a rainbow that seemed to manifest within a white radiance. These two spectacles were witnessed by everyone in the village.

The actual birth occurred at dawn of the first day of the waxing moon of the ninth month. The Eleventh's mother delivered him without experiencing any pain whatsoever.

The sun then rose, covering the mountains in the area with rainbows. White puffy clouds appeared around the mountains in the shape of auspicious offerings, a sign of the pleasure of gods and spirits.

Meanwhile, back in Lhasa a committee had been formed with the task of searching for the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. The Nechung Oracle advised that the search be made in the Kham region.

Trichen Palden Nominhan Rinpochey, the Chinese ambans residing in Lhasa, the abbots of the three great monastic universities, and numerous high government officials decided to send a committee to travel through Kham to find the reincarnation.

The team was comprised of three members: the abbot of the Dulwa Department of Drepung Monastery, Lotro Tenpa by name, who was the official head of the committee; and two other monks who had been close with the previous Dalai Lama. One of these was Rupun Namsey, who had been in charge of the security of the previous Dalai Lama. They arrived in Gartar on the third day of the ninth month of that year.

The night before the group arrived at the house, the young incarnation did not sleep, but stayed awake all night pretending to give blessings to a large gathering. He said to his mother, "Tomorrow I will ride on a mule and go home. There is no need to be unhappy. It will be very pleasant." That

evening the boy prepared seats for many guests.

The delegation arrived in his house on the thirteenth day of the month and met the child for the first time. At the time he was but two years old, and was just learning to speak. For auspicious purposes they offered a long greeting scarf with Amitayus images embroidered on it. The boy accepted it with great delight.

Sometime after the group arrived and were sitting quietly with the boy, they asked him if he recognized them. He looked affectionately at Rupun Namsey and smiled, as though confirming their past connection. From this moment on all three members of the committee believed him to be the true incarnation.

It was also noted that wherever the boy went a large black crow seemed to follow. This bird had first been noticed in the vicinity around the time of his birth. If the family went out to visit friends or family it seemed to accompany them as they traveled, hovering somewhere in the distance and seeming to watch their movements carefully. It seemed fearless, and whenever anyone took it food, it accepted with dignity. Later people would say that this crow was an emanation of the Dharma Protector Mahakala, who manifested in the form of crows to protect all of the early Dalai Lamas.

On the twelfth month, a large delegation including government officials, monks from Gartar Namgyal Ling Monastery, and numerous important local dignitaries came to the boy's house. The security chieftain Rupun Namsey offered a set of tiny robes to the boy and raised a victory banner on top of the monastery.

The boy was carried from his house to Gartar Namgyal Ling Monastery in a huge procession. As the group drew near the monastery, a radiant five-colored rainbow appeared in the sky.

First he was taken through the main temple to view the shrine. As the procession moved through the temple, scarves were offered to the main images on his behalf. They came to a statue of the Seventh Dalai Lama, and

one of the members of the group asked the boy if he recognized it. "That is me," he replied gleefully.

The shrine held three images that had been used as personal meditational objects by the Seventh Dalai Lama. The boy insisted on offering his own scarves to them. In the shrine to Maitreya he also offered scarves to each of the images.

There was an image of Avalokiteshvara in this room that the others missed. He pointed it out, and then said, “Me, me.”

Eventually arrangements were made for them to proceed toward central Tibet. They stopped overnight at Orong Shi, and at midnight the child awoke and said to his mother, “Tomorrow we will arrive at my place at Litang.” This was a reference to the monastery built by the Third Dalai Lama in Litang.

Eventually they arrived at Lhasa. Here he was greeted by the Panchen Lama, Regent Tsemonling and the two Manchu ambans, as well as by representatives of the Tibetan government and all the great monasteries.

At this point the search for the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation had been narrowed to two candidates. Tests on both boys were conducted in front of this large gathering. Many meditational objects of the previous Dalai Lamas were shown to them, mixed with imitations. The Eleventh chose all the correct ones without any mistake, and thus removed all doubts of his authenticity. His family was therefore informed that he was officially confirmed as the true reincarnation of the recently deceased Tenth Dalai Lama.

However, to satisfy the wishes of the Manchu emperor, the golden urn was brought out. The two names were written on small pieces of paper, rolled up and inserted into the urn. When the drawing was done, the Eleventh’s name appeared on the paper that emerged.

Just before the drawing, a monk by the name of Gelong Ritropa asked the boy what he thought of the situation. He replied with great confidence, “Don’t worry. My name alone will be drawn from the urn.”

He was not in the room when the drawing was done, but precisely at the moment of the drawing he crawled up on his throne, sat in meditation and announced to his mother, “They have just drawn my name.”

In this way the traditional identification of the Eleventh Dalai Lama was accomplished. He was officially recognized and placed upon the Golden Throne as the supreme spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people on the sixteenth day of the fourth month of the Water Tiger Year, or 1842.

That day, the boy received his pre-novice ordination from the Fourth Panchen Lama, Tenpai Nyima. It was on this occasion that the Eleventh received the

name Khedrub Gyatso. The usual “Gyalwa” is prefixed to this, giving us the name by which he is known to history: Gyalwa Khedrub Gyatso.

X-X * X

Tsemonling Jampel Tsultrim had been appointed to serve as regent in the Earth Hare Year (1819), and had held the throne until the Wood Dragon Year (1844), a period of over twenty-four years. Although his work during the early years of his regency was appreciated, he had become increasingly unpopular with the passage of time.

The Nyingmapa historian Khetsun Sangpo Rinpochey describes the series of events of the period as follows,⁹

During the last year of Tsemonling Jampel Tsultrim’s rule the people began to fear for the safety of the young Dalai Lama. As a consequence, in the Wood Dragon Year, or 1844, the young incarnation was quietly carried out of the Potala, with the intent to transport him to Kham, his birthplace, where he would no longer be in danger.

However, when the monks of Sera Mey Monastery heard news of the Dalai Lama’s predicament, they panicked and kidnapped three chief secretaries from the regent’s government as security against the Dalai Lama’s welfare.

The absence of these three secretaries from the daily governmental meetings resulted in a declaration of national emergency. The Fourth Panchen Lama, Tenpai Nyima, was hurriedly invited from Tsang Province, and on the sixth day of the eighth month of that year was placed on the throne as the new regent.

He accepted the seat of power for only a few months, and on the twenty-sixth day of the fourth month of the following year handed the regency to Reteng Ngawang Yeshey Tsultrim Gyatso.

Khetsun Sangpo Rinpochey’s interpretation of events seems improbable. Tsemonling was from Sera Mey Monastery, and the account has monks of Sera Mey rising up against their own man. Tibetan monks tend to be unquestioningly loyal to the lamas of their home monastery. It is hard to imagine that Sera Mey monks would play a part in dethroning a Sera Mey regent.

The Tibetan historian Shakabpa tells an entirely different story, and one in which

the Sera Mey monks play a markedly different role.¹⁰

Shakabpa suggests that Regent Tsemonling had alienated the Kashag, or house of cabinet ministers, as well as the main spiritual leaders of the country, due to his somewhat heavy-handed way of doing things. Consequently the ministers called a conference with the abbots and exabbots of the three great monasteries—Ganden, Drepung and Sera—and passed a resolution to depose him. Two of the cabinet ministers were sent to the regent's house to confront him and take his letters of office. However, the monks of Sera Mey had been informed of the plan. When the cabinet ministers arrived at the regent's house they were met by a contingent of Sera Mey monks and given a solid thrashing for their efforts.

The situation was at a stalemate. The Kashag called in the Panchen Lama to mediate. The Panchen Lama accepted, and as a consequence Tsemonling eventually resigned his regency.

The Panchen Lama was asked to serve as interim regent until a proper replacement could be identified. He carried out this duty from the autumn of that year until the following spring, a period of just under nine months, when the incarnate lama of Reteng Monastery, Reteng Ngaweng Yeshey Tsultrim Gyatso, known as Reteng Rinpochey, was appointed to the office. As readers may perhaps deduce from the chapter on the Seventh Dalai Lama, this lama is a later reincarnation of the Seventh's chief guru, Tripa Ngawang Chokden.

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The young Eleventh Dalai Lama received the actual novice ordination from the Fourth Panchen Lama, Tenpai Nyima, in the Fire Horse Year, or 1846. As was the case with the earlier Dalai Lamas, he was then immersed in an intense regime of education and spiritual training under many of the greatest lamas in the country, including the Panchen Lama.

The Eleventh Dalai Lama seemed to be an extremely promising young man, and at the age of seventeen (i.e., when he was in his eighteenth year) he was requested to accept responsibility for the spiritual and temporal leadership of the nation.

He accepted, and was enthroned on the thirteenth day of the first month of the Wood Hare Year, or 1855. It was early spring, and the world seemed full of

great possibilities.

Unfortunately on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month of that same year, just slightly more than eleven months later, he suddenly passed away.

The regent, Reteng Rinpochey, had served the country for a period of eleven years, from his enthronement in the Wood Snake Year, or 1845, until the Eleventh Dalai Lama's enthronement in the Wood Hare Year, or 1855. He then retired to Reteng Monastery.

However, his regency had been very successful, and he was deeply respected by both lay officials and high lamas. Therefore after the sudden death of the young Dalai Lama he was again requested to return to Lhasa and sit upon the Golden Throne.

Part of his job description was the search for the Twelfth Dalai Lama.

The Twelfth Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Trinley Gyatso

(1856-1875)

The Twelfth was born in the southern part of central Tibet near Lake Olkha." His father, Bakdrok Nyangtsangwa, was a blood descendant of the Bak clan, a shamanic lineage going back to the time of Padma Sambhava himself. His mother, Tsering Yudonma by name, was a highly accomplished meditator and devoted spiritual practitioner.

The Twelfth's birthplace was in the region where, almost five centuries earlier, Lama Tsongkhapa had wandered across an abandoned hermitage in which he discovered an old, dilapidated image of Maitreya Buddha. He, together with the disciples who were traveling with him, took up residence in the hermitage and spent the next phase of his life restoring the sacred image.

This seemingly small deed had great consequences. Some even say that it opened the door to a new age and ushered in a world renaissance. The pure land associated with Maitreya Buddha is known as Tushita in Sanskrit, which the Tibetans translated as "Ganden." When Lama Tsongkhapa later built his first monastery, he gave it this name, and made its central image a statue of Maitreya Buddha. In the early days the school descending from him was known as the

Ganden Choluk, or “Spiritual Lineage of Ganden.” This was later shortened to Galuk by taking the first syllable of the first word and the second syllable of the second; however, because Galuk does not roll off the tongue quite right, it was later modified to “Geluk.” Tsongkhapa’s act of restoring the sacred Maitreya image at Olkha was a symbol of the world-regeneration that was about to take place, a new and unheralded phase in human evolution.

The Twelfth Dalai Lama both entered the womb and took birth into the world during the same year, which was that of the Fire Dragon, or 1856.

As with all the early Dalai Lamas, his birth was accompanied by many auspicious signs. On the day of his birth, countless wild deer, yaks and other animals came to the house and circumambulated it, crying out joyfully. Both parents experienced numerous prophetic dreams and beheld many auspicious signs throughout the year.

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At the time of the Twelfth’s conception, the family had fallen into hard times and had accumulated a large debt that they were unable to repay. Uncomfortable with their position and having nobody to turn to for assistance, they decided to escape their predicament by moving to another part of the country.

However, the night after they made this decision, both parents experienced many unusual and auspicious omens. In particular, the father dreamed that numerous celestial beings manifested in the sky and said to him, “There is no need to move. The sun of your happiness is just about to dawn.” Consequently they changed their plans and decided to stay and brave the storms of creditors.

When the ninth month of the mother’s pregnancy was drawing to a close the father dreamt that he saw the sun rising from behind the mountains above Lake Olkha. The rays of the sun struck him, embracing his body and filling him with exuberant joy.

The mother dreamed that she was being carried by a mighty elephant, and then that she climbed to the peak of Odey Mountain.

From the time that the child entered the womb until his actual birth, his mother knew only health and joy untainted by any physical difficulties. The birth itself

occurred at dawn of the new moon of the twelfth month. The infant exited from the womb with his legs crossed in the meditation posture and his hands folded in his lap in the gesture of meditation.

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Meanwhile in Lhasa, the regent, Reteng Rinpochey, had initiated the process for tracing down the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. The oracles had been consulted, and lamas had visited the Oracle Lake for visions.

Then in the Earth Horse Year, or 1858, a number of omens occurred in Lhasa that caused the people to press for the selection procedure. The strongest sign was witnessed by all the people of the city. White clouds gathered over the mountains above the city and formed themselves into the shape of the Tibetan syllable 01, an apparent reference to Olkha. Everyone in the city witnessed this and marveled at it. Similar phenomena manifested on several occasions throughout the year. Taking these portends to indicate that the time was ripe for action, the leaders of the Tibetan spiritual traditions and secular institutions came together and requested that the tests be made.

The candidates for the Dalai Lama incarnation had been narrowed down to a shortlist of three names. All three were shown items familiar to the previous Dalai Lamas. Among these was a statue of Lama Tsongkhapa used in meditation by the previous Dalai Lamas as well as a vajra, bell and rosary set belonging to the Eleventh Dalai Lama.

These were presented together with similar items, and the boys were asked to choose. Only the boy from Lake Olkha chose the correct item in every case.

First various images of Lama Tsongkhapa were shown to him. He took the correct one immediately, picking it up with his two tiny hands and placing it in his lap, bowing repeatedly to it with respect. Similarly, with each of the other objects in turn he demonstrated not only complete confidence and familiarity, but utter joy in the process.

These tests were performed in the presence of many officiating monks and lay people, with the regent, Reteng Rinpochey, as head.

As for the other two boys, sometimes they picked the correct item but then put it down and took an incorrect one, or held both correct and incorrect items and

were unable to decide on which one to retain.

At one point in the process, a tray containing various rosaries was brought out for selection. None of these was connected to any previous Dalai Lama. The boy from Lake Olkha first picked up an ornate coral rosary, but then returned it to the table and took a much more simple piece. The implication was that he was not attached to ornate and valuable worldly possessions, but had the karmic predispositions for the more simple things of a monk.

In this way the traditional tests were performed on the young Dalai Lama. The indications were clear, and he was confirmed as the authentic incarnation.

Most of the Tibetans wanted him to be immediately enthroned. The regent, however, insisted that they should also use the emperor's golden urn and perform the drawing of lots with the names of the three candidates, for this had been done with both the Tenth and Eleventh Dalai Lamas. Many of the lamas argued against it, fearing that the wrong name might be drawn.

The regent seemed confident that the correct name would emerge, and insisted that the drawing be performed. Consequently the names of the three boys were written on slips of paper, and these were rolled up and inserted into the urn. When the name of the boy from Lake Olkha appeared on the slip that was drawn, everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

Everyone, that is, except the regent. He seemed to be completely confident from the beginning that the boy from Lake Olkha who had been so successful in the Tibetan tests would be equally victorious in the Manchu divination.

The young Dalai Lama, still less than three years old, was housed in a small monastery that had recently been constructed in Lhasa. He and his family remained here until the full moon of the first month of the new year. He was then taken to the Norzang Kalzang Podrang in the Norbu Lingka, where he underwent the traditional hair-cutting ceremony and received his new monastic name.

The actual enthronement took place some two years later, in the year of the Iron Monkey, or 1860. The ceremony was held publicly in the presence of the chief spiritual and secular leaders of the country, and attended by a multitude of ordinary people.

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After the enthronement, the young Dalai Lama was provided with tutors and his years of training began. He showed natural poise in his new position, and great aptitude in his studies.

In the Earth Dragon Year, or 1868, he presided over the Great Prayer Festival at Lhasa, with tens of thousands of monks in attendance, as well as many more lay people. Although only twelve years old, he showed not the slightest discomfort in the presence of this vast assembly. He delivered his first Monlam Chenmo sermon on the full moon of the first month of that year. Even though many of the greatest sages in the land sat listening to him, he seemed to be utterly unintimidated by their presence. He led the Monlam Chenmo every year from then until his death in the Wood Hog Year, or 1875.

His was an era of political intrigue and transformation in Lhasa, although he was too young to be involved in the events. The intense training program in which he was immersed kept him otherwise occupied, and his tutors studiously steered him clear of them.

The political dramas began shortly after the young Twelfth Dalai Lama was enthroned. A powerful member of the Tibetan cabinet, Wangchuk Gyalpo Shetra, made a move to curb the regent's authority and seize greater power for himself by having the government appoint an assistant to the regent's office. According to Shetra's plan, this assistant would be loyal to himself, and thus give him control of the regency.

However, the maneuver failed. The regent learned of the plan, and preempted Shetra's move, forcing him to resign from government service and retire to his country estate.

At first it seemed that Shetra had accepted defeat with dignity. However, in the Water Dog Year, or 1862, he decided to return to Lhasa, this time backed by a small army amassed by Palden Dondrub, the treasurer of Ganden Monastery. The regent was from Sera Monastery, and Palden Dondrub had stirred up feelings of jealousy and resentment among the monks of both Ganden and Drepung.

Thus when Shetra entered the city he had the backing of a large contingent of monks from both Ganden and Drepung. His procession into the city was made

with considerable pomp and ceremony, so as to attract the attention of as many of the people as possible. When he passed in front of the Potala he dismounted from his horse and publicly prostrated three times to the Potala, indicating his loyalty to the young Dalai Lama, and thus implying that he was acting in the best interests of the nation.

The coup d'état was effected largely without bloodshed. He simply proclaimed himself "Desi," or viceroy, a title that had not been used since the time of the Sixth Dalai Lama. Nobody had the courage to contest his claim.

The next day he entered the Potala without meeting any resistance. The regent, a somewhat elderly and timid monk, had no wish to engage him in military conflict. Instead the regent retreated to Sera Monastery, and from there fled to a self-imposed exile in China. A few years later Shetra allowed the regent to return to his monastery in Tibet and live out the remainder of his life in peace.

Shetra, now known as Desi Shetra, continued to show great respect for the young Dalai Lama, although he himself stood as the principal ruler of the country.

He did, however, retain the previous government infrastructures, with the Kashag of cabinet ministers as well as the traditional civil service. In addition, he added an Assembly, known as the Gandrey Drungchey, or Ganden/ Drepung Assembly, comprised mainly of delegates from Ganden and Drepung Monasteries. Sera was excluded from representation due to its loyalties to the former regent. Shetra considered the Gandrey Drungchey to be a national body, for these two monasteries were comprised of departments representing all the different regions of the country.

As for his friend Palden Dondrub, who had facilitated his successful coup, Shetra gave him the position of cabinet minister. When Shetra died in 1864, the office of Desi died with him and the Kashag took over the reins of government.

However, in 1868 Palden Dondrub, the Ganden treasurer who had organized the coup for Shetra, pulled one of his own. He then assumed central power in the Tibetan administration.

While all of this was going on, the young Twelfth Dalai Lama continued his studies as usual. No doubt, however, he was well aware of the dramatic events occurring around him.

Palden Dondrub ruled for only three years. The harshness of his personality and cruelty of his means created a constant stream of enemies for him. Like so many petty dictators the world over, he had many of those who opposed him put to death.

Things came to a head in the Iron Sheep Year, or 1871. Palden Dondrub's many enemies formed an alliance and ousted him from office.

The Kashag then once again took over its rightful place in the administration of the country. The Gandrey Drungchey Assembly was dissolved and was replaced by the Tsongdu, or National Assembly, which continued until the fall of Tibet to the Chinese Communists in 1959.

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After Shetra had pulled his coup d'état and declared himself viceroy, he ceremoniously entrusted the young Twelfth Dalai Lama with the national seal. This occurred on the twelfth day of the third month of the Water Dog Year, or 1862, when the Twelfth was but eight years old. On the thirteenth of the fifth month of that same year—a date chosen by astrological means as being the most auspicious for the event—Shetra organized a formal enthronement ceremony. However, the move was purely symbolic. Desi Shetra had removed the regent and placed the child Dalai Lama on the throne merely in order to consolidate his own power and to avoid active resistance.

A new regent was appointed in the Wood Bird Year, or 1863, although he had no real function other than to see to the interests of the young Dalai Lama. The former Ganden Throne Holder, Khyenrab Wangchuk, was chosen for this purpose, and he remained by the Twelfth's side until passing away a decade later in the Water Monkey Year, or 1872. This lama was perhaps most instrumental in deposing the usurper Palden Dondrub from power in 1871. He is therefore lovingly remembered in the Tibetan chronicles as the man who saved the Twelfth Dalai Lama's life and saved Tibet as a nation. This lama was officially referred to as the Dalai Lama's representative, but in fact was more of a father and guardian to him in a precarious time of tumultuous change.

Not long after this lama passed away, the Twelfth was requested to assume his traditional responsibility of spiritual and temporal leadership. Accordingly he was enthroned in the Water Bird Year, or 1873.

He never really performed the duties of his office, however, and largely concentrated on his studies. Less than three years later, in the Wood Boar Year, or 1875, he suddenly became ill and passed away. It was the twentieth day of the third month.

The author of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's biography mentions an interesting episode in the life of the Thirteenth's predecessor, the Twelfth.

He points out that the Twelfth Dalai Lama had once experienced a vision of Padma Sambhava, in which the great guru spoke the following words of prophecy:

O Trinley Gyatso, supreme lord of truth,

You who are my own mind emanation:

If you accept the practice of secret mantra by Relying upon a Knowledge Lady,

Tibetan Buddhism will thrive And the Dharma Protectors will act.

But if you do not rely upon The siddhi of karmamudra,

You will soon die.

Then you will take rebirth in Langdun Forest

And bear the name "Able One."

That incarnation, born in the Year of the Mouse,

Shall then have to accept the burden

Of political responsibility

And face many difficult circumstances.

The prophesy also stated,

During this reign a large army

Shall wander into the land of Tibet

And you, the leader of the Tibetan people,

Will make a journey to China.

The contents of this vision are discussed at length in the biographies of both the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dalai Lamas. The meaning is that if the Twelfth Dalai Lama took a sexual consort he would live for a long time, but if he remained a monk he would die young. His reincarnation, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, who was born in Langdun of the Dakpo area and had the name Tubten Gyatso, or “Ocean of Knowledge of the Able One,” is clearly mentioned in the prophecy.

The Twelfth Dalai Lama assumed the throne of supreme national authority in the Water Bird Year, or 1873, and passed away less than three years later at the age of twenty. Thus it would appear that he chose not to extend his lifespan by disrobing and marrying, out of concern for the monastic tradition.

Why the Twelfth Dalai Lama was advised to practice kamamudra, or tantric sex, why he refused, and how this resulted in a visit to China by his reincarnation, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, became hot topics after he passed away. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama’s biography discusses these points, as well as other prophecies related to the event, such as that given by Terton Pema Lingpa in the text *Throwing Light on Prophecies*, which describes what this Dalai Lama would have accomplished had he lived out his natural lifespan. Included in these activities were a visit to India at age forty-seven, establishing a firm relationship with India and Nepal (thus eliminating the conditions that led to the Chinese invasion), and a visit to China at age thirty-five.

The “Knowledge Lady” mentioned in the prophecy, according to numerous discussions of the event, refers to a lady by the name of Rigma

Tsomo from the Kokonor region of Amdo, whom the Twelfth had met in Lhasa. Coincidentally, the present Dalai Lama was born not far from this lady's homeland.

I once asked the present Dalai Lama about this unusual prophecy and the Twelfth Dalai Lama's dilemma concerning it, and His Holiness replied that the Twelfth was forced to decide between a long and fruitful life for himself, or the long-term benefit to the monastic tradition. Had he married and fulfilled the prophecy, he would have left an heir to oversee Tibet's future. On the other hand, by remaining a monk he would link his activities to those of his future reincarnation, who would carry them to fulfillment.

He chose the latter course of action.



1 übten Gyatso, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. Courtesy of The Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey.

The Great Thirteenth:

Monk, Mystic and Statesman

When the Twelfth Dalai Lama passed away in the third month of the Wood Boar Year at the age of nineteen, Central Asia was plunged into sorrow. Tibet had not had a strong Dalai Lama for some time, and the absence was becoming deeply felt.

The next incarnation in the lineage was to more than make up for the deficit. Known to history as “The Great Thirteenth,” he was in fact more than simply great; he was almost superhuman in his accomplishments in both spiritual and secular realms, being noted for his writings, his contributions to the arts and his impact on Tibetan society in general.¹

As Taktser Rinpochey states in the foreword to my book on the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, “The fact that all these things were done by one man is amazing. Each of these spheres of activity would require a complete lifetime for an ordinary person. His accomplishments were like those of ten great men.”² In Tibetan historical literature only one other Dalai Lama is referred to simply as “Great,” that being “the Great Fifth.”

The Great Thirteenth was the first of the Dalai Lamas to be intimately known to the West. Western travelers had met earlier Dalai Lamas, of course, but most of those incarnations had been short-lived, and the Western meetings with them were limited to a few brief audiences.

During the Thirteenth’s lifetime, however, Tibet was invaded by England. At the time he was in a three-year meditation retreat, and had to break his solitude in order to take refuge first in Mongolia, and then China. In both of these places he came into contact with British diplomats.

Half a decade later, Tibet was invaded by a Muslim army from Manchu China, and the Great Thirteenth took refuge in British India. He remained there for some three years as a guest of the British government while overseeing the effort to free his country from Manchu occupation.

Some years later, Sir Charles Bell, the British officer who had been appointed by

the British Government to serve as liaison officer to the Great Thirteenth, wrote an account of his personal impressions. Entitled *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*,¹ this work became something of a best seller, and gave the West its first accurate, in-depth knowledge of the Dalai Lama personage.

The Great Thirteenth had perhaps the most challenging life of any Dalai Lama since the Great Fifth. His was the task of carrying Tibet from its ancient ways into the modern world. He was born into an age when Mongolia and Manchu China were no longer the two great superpowers at work in Asia. England and Russia had stepped onto the stage, and their expanding empires eclipsed those of both the Mongols and the Manchus.

This phase of Tibetan history coincides with what is referred to in Western literature as “The Great Game.” This was the era in which England and Russia vied with one another for supremacy in Asia. Every country on the Asian map was but a piece on the chessboard in a match between these two superpowers.

Tibet was a particularly important piece in the game, for Tibetan Buddhism was the religion of a dozen kingdoms in Himalayan India ruled by the British, and also of a dozen Mongolian kingdoms to the far northeast that were ruled by expansionist Russia. Both of these superpowers therefore had a vested interest in Tibet; it was the cultural and spiritual fountainhead of large tracts of their own territories.

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As we saw earlier, the Tibetans had developed a special relationship with Manchu China. They referred to this relationship as *choyon*, or “priest/patron,” with the Tibetan lamas as the priests and the Manchu Chinese as the patrons in the arrangement. The Tibetans saw themselves as having the upper seat in the arrangement; they were the religious teachers and spiritual advisors to the Manchu aristocracy. The Manchus, however, gradually began to think of themselves as being in the superior position. For them the Tibetan lamas were their spiritual and educational employees, and Tibet therefore was in a position of subservience to them.

Both Britain and Russia recognized the special relationship that existed between Tibet and Manchu China. The British decided to capitalize on it during the very year that the Great Thirteenth took birth. This maneuver manifested in the form

of the Chefoo Convention, signed by the British and Chinese on Sept. 13, 1876, and amended in July of 1886 amid considerable controversy. Although there were many details to this Anglo-Chinese treaty, in essence it meant that China agreed not to object to Britain's invasion of Burma, in return for Britain's recognition of Manchu authority over Tibet. In brief, the "patron" had sold out the "priest."

To the British, this aspect of the Chefoo Convention was part of London's greater plan of containing Russian expansionism. By recognizing Tibet as part of Manchu China, England would effectively be keeping the Russians out of Lhasa and away from the northern borders of British India.

The outcome of the Chefoo Convention was to overshadow Tibetan affairs from that time until the present day, and was the single biggest challenge faced by Tibet during the Great Thirteenth's lifetime. Enforcing it resulted in two British invasions of Tibet—the Macauley Expedition of 1886-1888 and the Younghusband Expedition of 1903-1904—and also in the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1909. These were traumatic experiences for the young Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

In 1888 the United States Government followed Britain's lead on the matter and relegated Tibet to the status of being under China's jurisdiction, thus hammering another nail into Tibet's coffin.

Later, the British deeply regretted their colossal error in devising this aspect of the Chefoo Convention. They tried to rectify it in later treaties by introducing the term "suzerainty," stating that Tibet was "under the suzerainty of China," and was not an actual part of China. This word appears as a defining characteristic of the China/Tibet relationship in the treaties emerging from the Shimla Convention of 1913-1914.

However, the damage was done. From the time of the Chefoo Convention until today, China has officially regarded Tibet as part of her empire. First the Manchus maintained this position, and, after the fall of the Manchu Dynasty in 1911, the Chinese Republicans adopted the policy.

Although neither the Manchus nor the Republicans could enforce their claims to Tibet, the Communists who defeated the Republicans in 1949 had the military power to do so easily. Between 1949 and 1951 Communist China gradually

pushed its weight westward, until all of Tibet fell to it.

As we will see, the Great Thirteenth dedicated much of his life to reversing the diplomatic problems created for Tibet by the Chefoo

Convention, and in 1913 even banned all Chinese officials from the country. However, although he was able to win a de facto independence for his country, he was never able to accomplish a de jure one.

Paradoxically, from 1913 until the Great Thirteenth's death in 1933, while Tibet was in reality completely independent from China to the extent that Chinese diplomats and soldiers were not even permitted in the country, the Tibetans were unable to convince the rest of the world to accept its independent status. Britain, America, and the rest of the world continued to regard her as part of China.

This was the situation into which the Great Thirteenth was born, and the political environment in which he lived.

According to the Great Thirteenth's official biography by Purchokpa Tubten lampa, after the Twelfth Dalai Lama passed away and was contemplating rebirth, he turned his attention to the tiny village of Langdun, or "Elephant View," located a few hundred kilometers to the southeast of Lhasa. The village was known by this name because it lay at the foot of a magnificent mountain shaped like a charging elephant. Situated in Lower Dvakpo between the holy Heruka pilgrimage site of Tsari and the sacred mountain of Shanta, the entire area was adorned by many naturally-formed mystical signs, such as the eight auspicious emblems, the seven royal symbols and so forth. Purchokpa informs us, "When the Twelfth Dalai Lama was preparing to take rebirth he observed this site with admiration, and felt that it would be ideal."

Next the appropriate parents had to be chosen. Purchokpa writes, In Langdun there lived a peasant farmer by the name of Kunga Rinchen. By nature he was sincere and non-deceitful, and had faith in the spiritual masters and the Three Jewels of Refuge. He was a naturally good man, known to all for his wise counsel, stable mind, steadfast devotion and fearlessness in the face of danger. Physically he was both handsome and strong. His wife, Lobzang Dolma, was equally noble in spirit. She was unassuming and gentle, with an instinctive sense of respect and compassion for all living beings. Throughout her life she had

dedicated all her spare time to spiritual practice, and had a deep aspiration to one day give birth to a buddha. It was this humble peasant family that the Omniscient Master chose for his next rebirth.”

Purchokpa describes the actual process of reincarnation in rather dramatic terms, “He flew forth from the pure buddhafiels like a falling star and, amid countless extraordinary signs, entered into this world once more.” On the night of his conception, the Langdun region was struck by an earthquake because, as Purchokpa puts it, “The humans and gods of the world were unable to sustain the joy of the birth of such a great soul.” The walls of the room in which the child was conceived cracked open and the roof shifted a handspan in distance. However, the altar in the room remained undisturbed. And although many buildings in the area collapsed, no harm whatsoever befell any living being. The next day rainbows filled the sky, seeming to emanate from the tiny house of the peasant family.

At first the local people were filled with apprehension. They approached the sage Dvakpo Tulku Jampal Lhundrub⁴ with the request to perform a divination and to interpret the nature of the many strange phenomena that were occurring. “When the earth shakes,” he told them, “either bad or good can be indicated. Often the birth of a high bodhisattva is accompanied by signs such as these. Indeed, it is not impossible that the recently deceased Gongsa Choktrul (the Twelfth Dalai Lama) has himself chosen to take rebirth here in the Dvakpo region. Many of the events that have occurred are very similar to those that manifested when Gyalwa Gendun Drubpa (i.e., the First Dalai Lama) completed construction of the main temple of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery.”

On the night of the child’s conception, the mother-to-be dreamed that a young female dressed in Lhasa-style clothing came to her, offered her a white silk scarf and said, “A great lamp of the world is about to take rebirth as your son. Watch over him carefully.” Later the same evening, she dreamed that she found a white conch shell, the sound of which reverberated with the melodious Dharma teaching that awakens fortunate beings from the sleep of ignorance and points out the path leading to peace and liberation.

On another occasion she dreamed that a string of prayer flags reached from the Potala of Lhasa to the pillar of the conception room of her house at Langdun. A Lhasa monk and a girl dressed in exquisite ornaments appeared to her and gave her a beautiful vessel studded with jewels. “This cup belongs to Kyabgon

Rinpochey [i.e., the Dalai Lama],” the girl told her. “Please keep it for him.”

These and many other such dreams came almost nightly to the expectant mother during the course of her pregnancy.

Many unusual physical phenomena also occurred. In the seventh month of the year the family began to prepare the winter’s supply of butter. One morning they half-filled several containers, and then took a break for lunch. When they returned, the containers had miraculously filled and overflowed by themselves. Then in the middle of the winter a pear tree outside the family’s house blossomed. The flowers stayed in bloom for several weeks, and were unaffected by the snow and the freezing weather.

Another event that caused considerable talk occurred on the evening of the sixth day of the tenth month of the year. An apparition of a pagoda-style building appeared over the farmhouse and remained visible for much of the evening. Eventually it transformed into a multicolored rainbow and then became a pure, white luminous sphere and melted into the sky.

From the beginning of Lobzang Dolma’s pregnancy a large white bird took up residence in a walnut tree beside the family’s house. Every morning it would fly off in the direction of Lhasa, but would always return in the evening, circumambulating the house clockwise three times before coming to rest in its nest. Elders and shepherds in the area also noted the appearance of a new star directly over the nearby Gampo Mountain.

All of these omens generated considerable excitement. Everyone suspected that a high teacher was soon to incarnate among them. However, few dared to think that this would be none other than the Dalai Lama himself.

Lobzang Dolma had not spoken to anyone about the content of her many dreams, not wanting to cause unnecessary gossip. She knew well enough that almost all the pregnant mothers in the country were praying that the children in their wombs were the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. But Tibet had more than three thousand reincarnate lamas, and at any one time several dozen of these were in the state between death and rebirth. Lobzang Dolma, as well as most other people in the region, simply thought that the Langdun area was about to be blessed by the birth of one of these.

At dawn of the fifth month of the Fire Mouse Year (1876) Lobzang Dolma

painlessly gave birth to a baby boy. The first rays of the morning sun burst forth from behind the eastern peaks and flooded into the room at the precise moment that the infant took his first breath. A brilliant rainbow instantly appeared over the house in a sky that was dotted with small puffs of cloud. A few moments later a light rain fell, auspiciously purifying the land and coating everything with diamond-like droplets that seemed to add to the magic of the occasion.

Purchokpa writes, “Even at the moment of birth the child was of an extraordinary appearance. The limbs of his body were perfectly developed, and his forehead was broad and full, like an opened umbrella. His hair was rich and lustrously black, with a single strand of white curling out clockwise at the crown. The pads of his fingers and toes were marked by tiny orbs of light, and mystic wheels could be discerned in the lines on the soles of his feet. His eyes were wide and elegant, and gazed with an expression of alert compassion that seemed to be fully aware of everyone and everything in the room. He bore every sign of being an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, and those who beheld him instinctively experienced a strange and inexplicable sense of joy.”

Back in Lhasa a committee had been formed to search for the Twelfth Dalai Lama’s reincarnation. A lama from Kundeling Monastery had been appointed as regent after the Twelfth’s death, and he would oversee the search.

The Twelfth had passed away while sitting in meditation in the Joyous Sunlight Chamber, a small chapel located in the south wing of the Potala. At the time of his passing he had been facing directly south, but by the following evening his head had turned toward the southeast. The body was later placed to dry in a casket of salt, as part of the mummification process. Once more it was faced in a southerly direction, but when the lid of the casket was removed to change the salt it was noticed that again the head had turned toward the southeast. Each time the salt was changed the position of the head was corrected, but each time it automatically turned back toward the southeast. All those in charge of the funeral rites witnessed this phenomenon.

The elderly Fifth Panchen Lama was approached by the committee and asked to perform a divination to determine the direction of the Twelfth’s rebirth. He confirmed that it would take place to the southeast of Lhasa. The two oracles of Samyey Monastery were then invoked and questioned. Both of them stated that the reincarnation would manifest to the southeast.

During the summer the State Oracle of Nechung Monastery performed a trance in the presence of the Twelfth Dalai Lama's mausoleum. When asked for information on where the new incarnation would take place he replied, "The auspicious fruit of your aspirations will take rebirth to the southeast of Lhasa. A mountain shaped like an umbrella rises from behind the house of his birth, and a waterfall flows in front." He went on to describe in detail the layout of the place in which the rebirth would occur.

Again in the seventh month of the Fire Mouse Year (1876) the Nechung Oracle was invoked. This time he stated, "The emanation of great compassion, our supreme transcended master, has already taken rebirth in the place that previously I described to you. The flowers of his body, speech and mind even now have begun to blossom."

At dawn of the twenty-sixth of the tenth month, which is the day after the national Butterlamp Festival, a brilliant rainbow appeared in the sky above Lhasa. One of its tips seemed to emanate from the Potala and the other reached out to the southeast. This was visible to all. The sky was adorned with small white clouds that were almost solid in appearance, and were shaped like victory banners and other auspicious symbols.

The committee was now preparing to send out search parties to the southeast, with instructions to gather the names of children recently born under auspicious conditions. The Nechung Oracle was again invoked, this time in front of the regent, Tatsak Rinpochey, and various government officials, as well as the teachers, incarnate lamas and administrators of Drepung Monastery. The oracle spoke to them as follows:

"Hrih! O regent who serves the land so well, monk and lay officials of the government, elders of Nechung Monastery, lamas and administrators of Drepung Monastery, I will fulfill your wishes to know where the reincarnation is located. The Three Jewels of Refuge bear witness to the truth of what I say. Our sky-like teacher, the mere sight of whom brings benefits in both this and future lives, has been reborn to the southeast. I have already described the landscape to you. His father's name is Kunga and his mother's is Dolma. You should immediately appoint a holy master to go to the Oracle Lake and make an observation there. I will offer my assistance in the search."

"Whom should we send?" the committee asked.

“Appoint the former abbot of the Upper Tantric College, Gyuto Khensur Lobzang Dargyey. Have him go to Chokhor Gyal Monastery beside the waters of the Oracle Lake. Meanwhile, you should draw up a list of all villages to the southeast of Lhasa, and send this list with him. While at Chokhor Gyal Monastery, Gyuto Khensur should perform a hundred

thousand invocations of Palden Lhamo. When this has been done he will definitely receive clear signs of the reincarnation’s exact location.”

Consequently Gyuto Khensur, together with a small number of hand-picked ritual assistants, left for Chokhor Gyal Monastery and the Oracle Lake. They took up residence there and began the lengthy invocations and meditations that had been recommended by the Nechung Oracle.

At the time of the group’s arrival it was the middle of winter and the lake’s surface was covered with snow. However, after they had completed their spiritual practices a forceful wind arose and cleaned away the snow, until, as Purchokpa puts it, “The surface of the lake became as clear as a crystal mirror polished a hundred times.”

Then images began to form from within the lake. First the group beheld a farm with neatly kept terraces above to the east. An ancient stupa stood to the northeast. To the southeast was an old farmhouse, two or three stories in height, with a courtyard surrounded by a metal fence.

After these scenes had passed, a picture of a small village appeared. The village seemed to lie between the house and the stupa. These and many other images came and then faded. The group also saw the shape of the mountains in the area, as well as the nearby villages, grazing lands and meadows, and a long strip of farmland. As Purchokpa put it, “All of this appeared to them as clearly as though reflected in a mirror, or as though perceived in a crystal ball.” The details of the scenes in their visions were carefully written out and sent to the central committee.

Gyuto Khensur then entered into intense prayer and meditation. Just before dawn of the third day of the tenth month he dreamed that he stood in the center of a village. Walking eastward to the outskirts of the village he came to the household of a peasant farmer. The verandah of the house faced south, and on it sat a couple with a small child in their arms. “This is Kyabgon Rinpochey,” they

said to him. He took the child into his lap, whereupon the boy lovingly touched him on the forehead and cheeks and said, “It is now more than five months since I took birth. But for the moment do not reveal my true identity to my parents or to the local people.” Gyuto Khensur then awoke from his dream with a start.

Toward the end of his retreat Gyuto Khensur again dreamed of the child. This time he was told, “The reincarnation has taken place to the southeast of Lhasa in the region of Dvakpo Langdun. Go there and you will easily locate him.”

Gyuto Khensur communicated all of this information to the Lhasa authorities and then left for Dvakpo Langdun. In his dream he had been advised to be secretive, and so he traveled in the guise of a simple pilgrim to the region, without announcing his real purpose.

In Dvakpo Langdun he recognized the many landmarks that he had perceived in the Oracle Lake and in his dreams, and was easily able to locate the peasant household that had appeared to him. When he arrived at the house, the parents and child were seated on the verandah just as they had been in his dream.

Later Gyuto Khensur wrote, “As for the child, he was slightly thinner than I remembered him from my dreams, but was otherwise identical. And how delightful he was to behold! His body was simply exquisite, with every sign of being that of a high incarnation. When I saw him I could easily imagine what it must have been like for those who had met Buddha as a child in Lumbini Gardens. And when I picked him up and placed him in my lap he touched my face as though blessing me, just as had occurred in my dream. From that moment on I didn’t have the slightest doubt that this was the child for whom we had been searching.”

Gyuto Khensur had come to the house informally and did not reveal his purpose to the parents or villagers. He sent a hurried message back to Lhasa to inform the authorities of his discovery, and asked the parents to permit him to stay in their guestroom for awhile while he visited the local power sites. The request was not unusual; Tibet had no hotels, and most households kept a room to rent to pilgrims and travelers. In this way he managed to keep an eye on the child’s well-being without attracting undue attention to himself.

His letter to Lhasa generated considerable excitement. The committee had compiled a list of promising children who had been born with auspicious signs. Further tests narrowed the list to three names.

Soon two special officials were sent to perform the traditional tests. With them they carried the late Twelfth Dalai Lama's vajra and bell set, a rosary, a hand drum, and some articles of clothing. One by one the articles, mixed in with a number of similar objects, were placed on a tray and held up to the boy, and he was asked to take what he wanted. In each case he chose only those that had belonged to the previous Dalai Lama. This same test had been conducted on the other two candidates, but only the boy from Langdun was able to correctly separate the authentic articles from the imitations. The search for the new Dalai Lama had come to an end. The results were conclusive.

During the search for the Dalai Lama's reincarnation a slightly comical episode took place in Lhasa. The wife of Kuchok Doring, who hailed from a powerful aristocratic family, was pregnant at the time. Convinced that the child in her womb was the precious incarnation, she told everyone of her convictions. Each morning and evening she would hold an incense pot under her dress for a few moments in order to consecrate the passage whereby the incarnation would enter the world. When it was announced that the Dalai Lama's reincarnation had been discovered in the Dvakpo region, and thus it was clear that the baby in Lady Doring's womb was not a candidate, a popular folk song appeared on the streets of Lhasa:

The radiant sun of Tibet Has taken birth in Dvakpo.

As for Lady Doring,

All she has is ash on her ass.

* +

On the full moon of the ninth month of the Fire Ox Year (1877) a delegation was sent from Lhasa to Langdun, bringing with it lavish gifts from the regent, as well as from the government and the principal monasteries. A throne was constructed in the living room of the tiny house, and the child was placed on it. The dozen or so officials sat around him on carpets laid out on the floor. The many presents that they had brought with them were offered to the child and his family, including numerous religious statues and articles, sacred medicines, three pouches of silver coins, a number of gold bars, large sacks of various foods and so forth. Although he was merely an infant, the child behaved with perfect

decorum throughout the proceedings. This was an unofficial enthronement, but his identity as the true incarnation was now made known to all.

The following month the child and his family were asked to come to Lhasa. Crowds of pious devotees lined the road as the procession moved along, hoping to catch a glimpse of the young lama and to receive his blessings. He was carried on a golden palanquin at the center of a line of high monks and officials. The spectacle was magnificent, with a large escort of horsemen dressed in traditional Mongolian outfits, monks in rich yellow brocades, dignitaries in various ethnic costume, *etc.* Occasionally the procession would stop for the child to give blessings to the crowds that had gathered.

Eventually they arrived at Guntang, located across the Kyichu River to the south of Lhasa. It was the day before the full moon of the eleventh month, and an elaborate reception had been arranged for the boy in the Dewachen Temple. Here he met with the regent, Tatsak Rinpochey, for the first time, as well as with all the high lamas and government officials of the Lhasa area. Numerous foreign dignitaries were also permitted to be present, including the Chinese ambans and the ambassadors of Nepal, Kashmir, Sikkim and so forth. All who came received the traditional hand blessing, which the child performed without shyness or intimidation. The regent formally welcomed him, and the monks of the principal monasteries offered prayers for his long life.

Two weeks later, on the fourth day of the new year (i.e., the Earth Tiger Year, or 1878), the child met with the Fifth Panchen Lama and prepared to receive the hair-cutting rite and preliminary ordination of a monk. The Panchen, whose advice had been instrumental in the search for the new incarnation, had come all the way from Shigatsey in order to perform the ceremony and to give the young lama his ordination name.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama's ordination ceremony took place a week later, on the eleventh day of the new year. On this occasion, the Panchen Lama gave him the name Jetsun Ngawang Lobzang Tubten Gyatso Jigtrel Wangchuk Chokley Namgyal Palzangpo, or "Venerable Lord of the Teachings, He of Sublime Mind, Ocean of Buddhist Doctrines, Fearless and Powerful One, Glorious Guru Victorious in All Ways." (Tibetans generally use only the fourth and fifth parts of it, or "Tubten Gyatso.")

The young lama and his family remained in Guntang for approximately two

months. They were then taken across the Kyichu River to Samten Ling, a monastery located on a hill three miles to the north of Lhasa commanding an excellent view of the Lhasa plains. The child lama would remain here with his parents for the next year, undergoing preparation for his formal enthronement and entrance into the Potala.

This was the beginning of the many years of study that would follow. The regent was appointed as his senior tutor, and Purchokpa Jampa Gyatso as junior tutor. This latter master had in fact served as the principal guru of the previous Dalai Lama (the Twelfth) and had led the funeral services following the Twelfth's death, as well as overseeing the mummification of the body.

The elderly regent, in his capacity as senior tutor, would give the Thirteenth a number of initiations, precepts and transmissions; but the actual job of day-to-day teaching would fall to Purchokpa, the junior tutor. When the regent passed away some seven years later, Purchokpa was given the position of senior tutor.

It is interesting to note that after Purchokpa's death the Great Thirteenth took time from his busy schedule to compose a major biography of him. In turn, the reincarnation of Purchokpa Jampa Gyatso was to become the chief disciple and biographer of the Great Thirteenth.

Life in Samten Ling Monastery was a period of transition for the young Thirteenth Dalai Lama. Certainly it was more disciplined than the way he had lived as a farmer's son in Langdun, but it was far less austere than the life he would lead after his entrance into formal training in the Potala. In Samten Ling he was allowed to spend several hours with his family every day, and his schedule was informal. Once in the Potala, visits from his parents would become less frequent. His days would be crowded with spiritual study and practice, and with a constant flow of visitors from all over Central Asia coming in search of his blessings.

The great guru Purchokpa Jampa Gyatso also took up residence in Samten Ling Monastery, and began to give him instructions on a daily basis. In particular, Purchokpa was charged with the task of preparing his ward for the elaborate ceremony of enthronement that was scheduled for the following year.

News of the discovery of the new Dalai Lama was communicated to the Chinese emperor, Kuang-hsu, via the Chinese ambans stationed in Lhasa. This was a

necessary step in the process, for although Tibet was not part of China, the Tibetans certainly respected Manchu power. To recognize and enthrone a Dalai Lama without first showing the courtesy of requesting the emperor's blessings could have drastic consequences.

Anytime that the golden urn sent to Lhasa by the Manchu emperor was not used in choosing the Dalai Lama reincarnations, elaborate excuses were made to the emperor. The emperor would be informed of the development of events and his "approval" of the enthronement requested.

On this occasion, Purchokpa wrote, "The information given by the oracles and high lamas, the images seen in the Lake of the Goddess, and all of the tests performed on the candidates pointed decisively to the child from Langdun as being the true reincarnation. The Panchen Lama, regent Tatsak

Rinpochey, the high lamas and officials of Ganden, Drepung, Sera and Tashi Lhunpo monasteries, and all the monk and lay officials of the Lhasa government unanimously agreed with the results and were satisfied that the correct choice had been made. Therefore it was decided that there was no need to resort to the golden urn. The Manchu ambans were informed, and were asked to communicate this information to the emperor, together with the request for his approval of the scheduled enthronement and the appointment of Regent Tatsak Rinpochey and Purchokpa Jampa Gyatso as the senior and junior tutors."

In fact at this point in history the process of asking the emperor's approval was merely a diplomatic formality. It was little more than a courtesy owed to him for his patron role. In no way could he ever risk refusing to give this "approval," for to do so would be to jeopardize his position as patron. Consequently approval was soon forthcoming, and the Tibetans set about the task of readying themselves for the gala event.

Astrologers were asked to choose an auspicious date for the enthronement ceremony. The thirteenth day of the sixth month of the Earth Hare Year (i.e., 1879) was deemed to be most appropriate, and the preparations began. The entire city of Lhasa was cleaned and polished for the occasion, and banners were hung from every rooftop. On the day of the enthronement thousands of monks, nuns and lay devotees lined the sides of the road that the young lama would travel from Samten Ling Monastery to the Potala. The regent led the procession, followed by the Lhasa government officials, the chief monks from the various

monasteries, various other leaders from around the country, and also the Chinese ambans and other foreign dignitaries resident in Lhasa. The sound of monastic trumpets and the aroma of rich incense filled the air as the spectacle of exotic pageantry unfolded. The crowd following behind increased in size as the procession passed and the devotees lining the streets joined in.

The first stop was the Jokhang, Tibet's oldest and holiest temple. Here the Dalai Lama descended from his palanquin and offered prostrations in front of the sacred statue of Buddha Shakyamuni that was housed inside. The procession then went on to the Potala, ascending the many steps leading to the Avalokiteshvara chapel on the roof. This chapel housed a statue of the Bodhisattva of Compassion that was said to have self-manifested thirteen hundred years earlier during King Songtsen Gampo's construction of the Red Fort, from which the Potala itself was later built. The image was believed to possess miraculous qualities, and many of the previous Dalai Lamas had performed meditation in front of it.

Everyone then proceeded to the Potala's main assembly hall and the actual enthronement began. The regent and other high lamas presented the Dalai Lama with offering scarves, as did the Lhasa government officials and principal leaders from around the country, as well as the Chinese ambans and other foreign representatives. The regent delivered a proclamation officially declaring the enthronement, and the Chinese amban read a letter of congratulations from the emperor. Although only in his fourth year, the young Dalai Lama sat through the lengthy proceedings with a natural dignity that deeply inspired all those who were present.

From that day on the Dalai Lama took up residence in the traditional four-room apartment located on the roof of the Potala. His new life had officially begun.

Each day brought a new celebration. First the Panchen Lama held a welcoming banquet in honor of the young Dalai Lama, and then in turn similar receptions were sponsored by lamas and representatives of the major monasteries, various secular dignitaries from around the country, and numerous foreign officials. Each of these celebrations served to show off the young Dalai Lama to his people, and to introduce him to the principal spiritual and social leaders with whom he would have to work in his later years.

These must have been overwhelming times for the child lama. He was expected

to sit and receive a constant stream of visitors, and to participate in long, arduous ceremonies. But gradually the pace of his life began to slow down somewhat and to become less public, as the emphasis shifted from celebration and ritual to study and learning.

Purchokpa Jampa Gyatso took up residence in the Potala with the boy and was placed in charge of his basic education. The Panchen Lama and Regent Tatsak Rinpochey would also give him a number of precepts and instructions, as would many other teachers, but Purchokpa would remain his closest preceptor.

On the sixth day of the first month of the Water Horse Year (1882), the young scholar took the ordination of a novice monk, with Regent Tatsak acting as the ordaining master and Purchokpa as the acharya. The Chinese emperor sent a letter of congratulations written in gold ink, together with numerous gifts. “We rejoice at the news that the Oceanic Teacher has begun to engage in his learning more diligently than ever,” he wrote. “We offer our prayers that, through this, the Yellow Hat tradition may thrive and flourish in the world, and that Buddhism may endure on earth as long as possible. In honor of the occasion of the novice monk ordination of the Oceanic Teacher we present an emerald rosary, a rice bowl made of jade, various silk brocades....”

This was the first year that the Thirteenth Dalai Lama presided over the Great Prayer Festival of Lhasa, an event to which he would dedicate much energy and time, eventually restoring it to the level of grandeur and prestige it had enjoyed during the era of the early Dalai Lamas.

The young scholar’s studies now began to intensify, and several additional tutors were appointed to assist in his progress. A number of scholars from the principal Lhasa monastic colleges were also appointed as his tsenzhab, or special assistants in philosophical training.

At the age of twelve, the Great Thirteenth made a tour of the seven colleges that constitute the three principal monastic universities of Ganden, Drepung and Sera. His visit caused considerable excitement among the monk/scholars of these institutions, for it was announced that he would join in the debates on the open courtyards. This would be the young lama’s first opportunity to publicly test the progress of his studies, and for the monks of the monastic colleges it would be an opportunity to see their chief incarnate engage in an open competition of wits. For a fortunate few it would provide an opportunity to debate with him

personally.

The eager monks were to be more than satisfied, for in each of the colleges the young lama agreed to sit before the congregation and take up debates from the floor. No doubt his tutors were somewhat apprehensive at his bold offer; but he was not to fail them. The junior tutor, Purchokpa Jampa Gyatso, was present during all the encounters, and later commented, "Watching how easily and skillfully the youthful incarnation handled the debates thrown at him simply caused the hair on my body to stand on end. His maturity and understanding simply astounded everybody. No one who was there had the slightest doubt that he was truly the incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. All we could do was look on in awe."

The elderly Panchen Lama, who had given the preliminary ordination and a name to the young Dalai Lama, had passed away a few years earlier. The Panchen's reincarnation had been discovered and brought to Lhasa. Now it was the Dalai Lama's turn to be the one bestowing blessings and a name. To the baby Panchen he gave the name Panchen Lobzang Chokyi Nyima, "Mighty Sage of Sublime Mind, Veritable Sun of Dharma Knowledge."

In total the Great Thirteenth received teachings, initiations, oral transmissions and assorted precepts from almost a hundred different gurus during his lifetime. The majority of these were of the Gelukpa, or Yellow Hat School; but like all the earlier Dalai Lamas he combined his Gelukpa training with a strong dose of teachings and practice of the Nyingma, or Old School, dedicating tremendous energy to studying and practicing the various Nyingma doctrines.

In fact, the annals of Dzogchen Monastery describe him as an important Tertön, or "Nyingmapa Treasure Revealer." The treasures that he revealed include several important scriptures on the tantric mandala cycle known as Vajrakilaya. Many people also believe that the Great Thirteenth bore the secret tantric name Drakden Lingpa, whose magnificent deeds had been prophesied by Guru Padma Sambhava in the mid-eighth century. He is alleged to have written numerous secret texts under this alternative name; these treatises, of course, are not included in his standard Collected Works.

On the eleventh day of the first month of the Wood Sheep Year (February 1895) the Great Thirteenth took the full ordination of a monk, with his guru Purchokpa Jampa Gyatso presiding as the ordaining master. The ceremony took place in the

Jokhang Temple at Lhasa, and was attended by thousands of monks from the three monastic universities and two tantric colleges.

The Manchu emperor, Kuang-hsu, sent him a letter of congratulations. It read, "We have been informed that the Oceanic Teacher has taken the complete precepts of a monk, and are most delighted at the happy news. We offer our prayers that the Oceanic Teacher will strive to complete his studies, so that the sublime teachings of the Yellow Hat tradition may be disseminated throughout the world. We take pleasure in offering him a number of gifts, which accompany this letter...."

In the Earth Dog Year, or 1898, when the Great Thirteenth was in his twenty-third year, he announced that he would appear in each of the three principal monastic universities for public debate, and would stand for his geshey exam. This is the highest examination in the Tibetan academic tradition. To win it the Dalai Lama would have to debate with the best scholars in the country in front of some twenty thousand monk spectators, with his every word being carefully scrutinized by all.

As Purchokpa puts it, "Although nobody doubted the high level of his wisdom and understanding, he wished to uphold the tradition of proving oneself in open public debate before all the greatest sages in the land, a tradition that was maintained by all the early Dalai Lamas." He remained for more than two weeks in each of the three monastic universities, every day debating with the best scholars of the generation. Purchokpa writes, "And he

met them like a mountain that is undisturbed by wind and thunder_____The

lion's roar of his wisdom burst the bubble of pride of the many jackals who came to challenge him." Thus he ascended to the highest pinnacle of learning known to the Tibetan Buddhist world.

It is not possible to speak of the Great Thirteenth's studies without saying something about his meditation training. In the Tibetan tradition meditation is practiced in three principal ways. The first is tunzhi naljor, or developing the habit of engaging in meditation four times daily; the second is leyrung, or occasionally performing short retreats that last for a few weeks or months in duration; and the third is nyenchen, or "great retreat," that lasts from three to four years, and should be accomplished at least once during one's lifetime.

The Great Thirteenth upheld all three of these modes of meditation training. From childhood he developed the habit of sitting in meditation four times each day, with Purchokpa Jampa Gyatso overseeing his progress. In the beginning his sittings were comprised largely of chanting the sutras and various prayers, but as his maturity increased the process became less one of recitation and more an opportunity to pursue contemplation and meditation.

As for the second mode, or the practice of occasionally making short retreat, this too he honored from childhood. Every year he would engage in two or three brief leyrung, each lasting a week or two, and before reaching his teens he had performed one retreat of three months' duration. As the years passed, the time that he dedicated annually to leyrung gradually increased.

He entered his first nyenchen, or "great retreat," during the fourth month of the Water Hare Year (i.e., spring of 1903), but unfortunately this was interrupted by the British invasion. However, the Great Thirteenth undertook and completed this retreat a decade later. On the thirtieth day of the tenth month of the Fire Dragon Year (late autumn 1916) he entered into seclusion for the nyenchen in connection with the Vajrabhairava (Yamantaka) tantric system. As Purchokpa puts it, "Here he first applied himself to the generation stage yogas practiced in four daily sessions, cultivating clear appearance in the mandala meditations and making firm the divine tantric pride, thus purifying the basis of ordinary perception of death, intermediate state and rebirth. When this had been made firm he went on to the completion stage yogas that fulfill the experiences originally aroused through the generation stage practices."

Over a period of almost four years he fulfilled the tradition of the great retreat, complete with the time-honored threefold approach of preliminaries, main body of yogas, and the concluding practices. Purchokpa writes, "In this way he gained complete inner experience of the essence of the Vajra Vehicle, and upheld the legacy established by the early Dalai Lamas."

A strong political infrastructure had built up around the Dalai Lamas over the generations, even though none of them in recent memory had played a significant role within it. This was to change during the lifetime of the Great Thirteenth, and he was destined to take the helm of Tibet's political life.

In fact, no Dalai Lama before him had directly played a significant political role for any extended period of time, with the exception of the Great Fifth. And even

though the Fifth had been at the center of many political changes, most of the work for these was actually executed by his various viceroys. After the Fifth passed away great political hopes had been placed on the shoulders of the Sixth, but when he disrobed and was deposed by the Mongols, all of these fell apart. Then came the Seventh, but in the end his political status was only symbolic; he dedicated his life almost exclusively to spiritual matters, probably because of the very powerful Polhaney, who assumed sole rule throughout much of the Seventh's lifetime. Next came the Eighth Dalai Lama, but he was a quiet and retiring man who showed little aptitude for Lhasa intrigues. And, as we saw in an earlier chapter, the Ninth to Twelfth Dalai Lamas all died too young to play a significant political role.

Regent Tatsak Rinpochey of Kundeling Monastery, who had overseen the search for and enthronement of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, passed away during the fourth month of the Fire Dog Year (1886), when the Great Thirteenth was only eleven years old. He had ruled Tibet for twelve years. The Lhasa government had to appoint another regent to serve until the Dalai Lama came of age, and the position was given to Demo Tulku Trinley Rabgyey of Tengeling Monastery.

In 1893 the Great Thirteenth entered his eighteenth year, and many people pressed for him to be enthroned as active ruler of the country. However, the empowerment was postponed for two years, ostensibly so that he could complete his religious studies. Tibetan historians suggest that the brothers of Regent Trinley Rabgyey attempted to block the ceremony in order to retain power for themselves.

In any event, the Thirteenth completed his formal training and then took his final exams in the three monastic universities during the spring of the Wood Sheep Year, or 1895.

His enthronement as head of state took place four months later, on the eighth day of that same year.

Things went well enough for the next few years. The Great Thirteenth dedicated much of his time to studying and making meditation retreats, leaving the running of the country in the hands of his council of ministers. In particular, during these years he spent a great deal of time studying with the great guru Leyrab Lingpa, a master in the Nyingma School. Through him the Great Thirteenth accomplished the Nyingmapa lineages coming down from his predecessor the Fifth Dalai

Lama.

The Earth Boar Year (1899) got off to a bad start, and then turned bizarre. During a trance at the Great Prayer Festival, the Nechung Oracle warned of dangers to the Dalai Lama's life. Nonetheless the Great Thirteenth continued to preside over the festival, and also over the geshey exams. However, soon afterwards he began to complain of physical discomfort, nausea and dizziness.

The Nechung Oracle was again invoked. This time he warned of a pair of shoes that had been given to the Dalai Lama's friend, the Nyingmapa lama Sogyal Tulku, a fellow disciple of the Nyingmapa lama Leyrab Lingpa. Sogyal was questioned on the matter, and informed the committee that indeed Shaod Tulku, a young Ngakpa lama from his homeland of Nyarong in eastern Tibet, had given him a pair of exquisite shoes with the express request that he present them to the Dalai Lama as a gift. Sogyal admitted to accepting the shoes, but had never gotten around to passing them on to the Dalai Lama. In addition, Sogyal stated that once when he had tried them on he had experienced a nosebleed.

The shoes were brought forth and torn apart. Inside the soles were discovered various substances used in black magic, including a mystical diagram with the Dalai Lama's name written on it. Shaod Tulku was arrested and questioned, and confessed that he had been hired by the brothers of the former regent, Demo Tulku Trinley Rabgyey, to destroy the Dalai Lama through occult means in an attempt to win back the throne for them. Tibetans suspected that Shaod Tulku had been putting a slow-acting poison into the Dalai Lama's food, to supplement the effects of his magical spells. The shaman Shaod Tulku, together with the ex-regent and his brothers, were all arrested for treason. Thus, according to Tibetan historians, the murderous plot was foiled.

The story sounds somewhat implausible to the Western ear. There may be truth in it; but perhaps it was just a ploy to remove the regent and his brothers from political life. They had become unpopular during their rule, and had made many enemies among the Lhasa aristocracy.

Moreover, the premature deaths of so many of the recent Dalai Lama incarnations had the Tibetans on edge, and they were in no mood to take any chances.

As described earlier, the Great Thirteenth's life was overshadowed by the political events of his time, and particularly by Tibet's pivotal role in the so-called "Great Game" between Britain and Russia. Britain thought they played an ace with the Anglo-Chinese treaty of 1876, known as the Chefoo Convention, in which they placed Tibet under Manchu China. China ostensibly was neutral in the Great Game, although in reality was politically closer to British than Russian spheres of influence.

However, this move produced very few immediate results. As part of the Chefoo deal the Manchus were supposed to use their influence in Lhasa to get the Tibetans to agree to open a trade mart at Yaaatung, on the southern border of Tibet, for the purpose of conducting trade with the British. The Tibetans refused to do this on the grounds that they had not signed the Chefoo agreement, and honoring any of its terms would be a tacit submission to it.

What followed was more comedy than serious politics. In the mid-1880s, the British unilaterally opened a trade mart at Yaatung to signal their enforcement of the Chefoo Treaty. The Lhasa government blocked all roads to it so that no Tibetans could avail themselves of it. The trade mart was in fact merely a circle of stones marking the designated trading spot. Every night the Tibetans would sneak down from the mountains and drag these stones away, thus effectively dismantling the "trading post"; the next day the British would put up a few new ones. This went on for awhile, causing no serious harm to anyone but seriously embarrassing the British.

Eventually it was decided that something had to be done. In 1886 the British sent the Macauley Expedition to the region to defend their "trading post." As it turned out, there happened to be a force of some ten thousand Khampa warriors in Lhasa on pilgrimage at the time. The young Thirteenth Dalai Lama, only ten years old, requested the warriors to go to the Yaatung area and set up fortifications there in order to send the British a signal.

The episode was embarrassing to the British in India, but there was no consensus on how to react. Macauley suggested that he proceed to Lingtu and request Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan to negotiate a treaty. London did not agree; there was no need to aggravate the situation by drawing attention to it and thus endangering the recently concluded Chefoo Convention. It would be better, the viceroy in India concluded, to ignore the incursion altogether and hope that the Tibetans would eventually retire of their own accord from a position that was

undoubtedly difficult to maintain with supplies.

In October, the Chinese protested to the Tibetans over this violation of the Chefoo Convention. In return, the Tibetans responded by reinforcing their position at Lingtu and closing the area to British and Chinese alike.

Commenting on this incident, the biography of the Great Thirteenth states, “The young incarnation took time from his important studies to oversee the building of a sizeable army. Many of his advisors recommended that he distance himself from the events, but he felt it to be crucial that Tibet make known her independence from both China and the English. He therefore blessed the four officials in charge of recruiting the army, and later gave his blessings as well as protection strings to the many warriors who were dispatched to the south.”

Thus at a very young age the Great Thirteenth showed his readiness to stand and deliver. His biography further states, “Because involvement in violent activities can shorten a lama’s lifespan, three high Nyingmapa lamas and fifteen ritual assistants were requested to perform long-life rituals (for the Dalai Lama) day and night during this period, as was the entire Nyingma monastery of Mindroling.”

Britain’s studied inactivity did not seem to be having the desired effect. In December of 1887, a letter was sent to the Tibetans at Lingtu informing them that if they did not withdraw voluntarily they would be forcibly removed in the spring. A similar letter was sent to the Dalai Lama in February. The Tibetans did not reply to either.

Meanwhile the Chinese were in a frenzy. In an attempt to delay affairs, they recalled their chief amban from Lhasa and appointed a new one. But the case was perhaps best described in Beijing by Li Hung-chang in a conversation with Edwin Goshen, in which the former commented, “People talk of China’s influence in Tibet, but it is only nominal, as the lamas are powerful there.” In other words, England and China may have agreed with one another to recognize Tibet as part of China, but the Tibetans had no intention of doing so, and the Manchus had no ability to enforce their claim.

In March 1888, the British sent a force of two thousand well-equipped soldiers under Brigadier Graham to expel the Tibetans from Lingtu. In May the poorly equipped Tibetans launched a surprise attack, and almost succeeded in capturing

the Governor General of Bengal, who at the time was visiting the frontier. However, the attack eventually was repelled. In September a further Tibetan attack was launched, this time from Nadong. It too was unsuccessful, and marked the end of the Tibetan initiative.

Tibet had lost its first war with the British Empire, but she had succeeded in letting the British know her feelings and attitudes regarding Chinese authority within her borders. Britain had unwittingly opened something of a can of worms with China by creating the 1876 Chefoo Convention. By “giving” Tibet to China, she brought into question her own position in the many Himalayan states, such as Sikkim and Bhutan, that traditionally were Tibetan satellites. And because of the complex situation she had created, she could not now sign a treaty directly with Tibet but rather had to do so through a Chinese intermediary.

Therefore the treaty that followed the Anglo-Tibetan conflict on the Sikkimese border was slow and painstaking in the making, and was to further alienate the Tibetans from both the Chinese and the British. Signed at Darjeeling in 1890 by A. N. Paul for England and both Ho Chang-jung and James Hart for China, in effect it was a mutual agreement by these two parties recognizing British control over Sikkim, as well as Chinese control over Tibet. Again, the Tibetans were not consulted in the matter.

Not having been allowed to participate in the negotiations, Tibet refused to acknowledge the treaty. The British border markers that were erected on the frontiers of Tibet and Sikkim were removed by the Tibetans, and as for the trade mart at Yaatung, the Tibetans walled off the only road leading from Yaatung into Tibet, thus effectively rendering the enterprise impotent.

Another problem created by the treaty and resented by Lhasa was that the British now for the first time formally had agreed not to talk directly to the Tibetans, but rather to refer all Tibet-related matters to the Chinese government.

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While all of this had been going on to the south and east of Tibet, the Russian Empire had been steadily growing in the north. Russian strength was well known in Lhasa, mainly because of the large number of Mongolian Buddhist principalities that had fallen under Russian sway. Many of the Mongolians of these areas continued to pursue their studies in the great monastic

universities of Lhasa, bringing with them stories of the Russian activities.

One man in particular was to play an important role in building communications between Lhasa and the Russian Czar. This was Tsanzhab Ngawang Lobzang, a Mongolian monk who had graduated with high honors from the Gomang Department of Drepung Monastery, and who was one of the seven dialectical instructors or Tsanzhabs to the Dalai Lama. Popularly known to the Tibetans as Tsennyi Khenpo, or “Master of Dialectics,” he became famed to both the British and the Russians by the simpler name of Dorjjeff (from the Tibetan Dorje). Born in the Buriyat region of the Mongolian territories that had in recent times been acquired by the Czar, Dorjjeff was therefore a Russian citizen.

On October 22, 1900, a dispatch reached the Foreign Office in London from Her Majesty’s Charge d’Affairs in St. Petersburg. It informed the British Government that not only was the Mongolian lama Dorjjeff in Russia, but that the Journal de Saint Petersburg had carried a lengthy article outlining Dorjjeff’s reception by the emperor (Czar Nicholas II) in the Lividia Palace at the Black Sea resort of Yalta. British intelligence also learned that Dorjjeff had carried a letter of greetings to the Czar from the Dalai Lama. For the British, this was serious stuff indeed.

In June of 1901, Dorjjeff was back in Russia (clandestinely via British India, a further irritation to the English) as the head of what the Russian press described as “... an extraordinary mission of eight prominent Tibetan statesmen.” The Tibetan envoys were given audiences by both the emperor and empress, to whom they presented gifts and a letter from the Dalai Lama. As Peter Fleming puts it in *Bayonets to Lhasa*,⁵ Dorjjeff and the Tibetans “... were a nine-day wonder in the Russian capital, where the newspapers drew the obvious conclusions from their unheralded but gratifying visit.” The Russian paper *Novoe Vremye* mused, “Under the circumstances, a rapprochement with Russia must seem to the Dalai Lama the most natural step, as Russia is the only power able to counteract the intrigues of Great Britain.”

Needless to say, the British were extremely alarmed at the turn of events. Here they had taken such pains to insure Tibet’s distancing from Russia by signing her over to China, only to see the looming possibility of bungled British policy combined with China’s increasing weakness resulting in a Tibeto-Russian pact.

Ekai Kawaguchi, a Japanese monk who lived and studied in Tibet for three years

just after the turn of the century, speaks of a short treatise written by Dorjjeff that had gained wide popularity in Tibet. The treatise, Kawaguchi states, set forth the proposition that Russia was none other than the mythological Shambala, the mystical kingdom that was prophesied to emerge one day as the great patron and defender of Buddhism. Kawaguchi wrote, "I knew several priests who undoubtedly possessed copies of this pamphlet.... The one from whom I confidentially obtained the drift of the writing told me that he found in it some unknown letters. I concluded that the letters must be

Russian----Tsennyi Khenpo's artful scheme has been crowned with great

success, for today almost every Tibetan blindly believes in the ingenious story... and holds that the Czar will sooner or later... found a gigantic Buddhist Empire."

6

Kawaguchi also reports seeing two large caravans of gifts from the Czar arriving in Lhasa, the first comprised of two hundred camels loaded with various wares and the second of three hundred camels. He makes particular reference to the golden brocades that were a personal present to the Dalai Lama, a gift that symbolically meant more than the many hundreds of lesser items.

These exchanges between Tibet and Russia inspired near-panic in British India. The new viceroy, Lord Curzon, had arrived in 1898 and was determined to set the British Empire's relationship with Tibet on a proper footing. He had grown up in the school that saw Russia as the greatest menace to British supremacy, and looked with mistrust on the policy of leaving Tibet in China's care. He was not at all convinced that such a course of action (or rather, inaction) would be sufficient to check the Russian advance. On the 24th of May, 1899, he wrote to Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India,

The lamas have found out the weakness of China. At the same time they are being approached by Russia. There seems little doubt that Russian agents, and possibly even someone of Russian origin, has been at Lhasa, and I believe that the Tibetan Government is coming to the conclusion that it will have to make friends with one or the other of the two great Powers. That our case should not be stated in these circumstances, and that judgement should go against us by default, would be a great pity.

Britain had maneuvered herself into a difficult position with Tibet, first by nibbling away at the Himalayan kingdoms to the south and west of Tibet and

second by signing treaties with China recognizing Chinese authority over Lhasa. In 1898, Calcutta sent presents to the Dalai Lama via the Bhutanese diplomat Kazi Urgyen, with the request that Kazi discreetly investigate the possibilities of establishing a closer relationship between Tibet and British India. He reported that the Dalai Lama had asked him to act as an unofficial peacemaker between Lhasa and Calcutta, and that Tibetan attitudes seemed to be favorable to a British overture. However, he added, the Tibetans were not agreeable to Chinese authority in their country and would only talk to the British provided that it did not appear they were doing so at the orders of China. Kazi Urgyen informed the British that “. •. the Dalai Lama is doing his utmost to lessen Tibetan dependence on China, and has established an arsenal in Lhasa as part of his plan to build up the Tibetan army.”

In 1899, the British had Kazi Urgyen draft letters to the Dalai Lama proposing trade. The Tibetans declined to accept the correspondence due to the fear that a dialogue of this nature could be interpreted to mean that they accepted the Anglo-Chinese trade regulations of 1893, to which the Tibetans had not been allowed as a participant.

Lord Curzon decided on an alternative route of communication. In July of 1900, he dispatched a letter to the Dalai Lama via western Tibet. The letter was returned a few months later; nobody wanted to take responsibility for delivering it.

Kazi Urgyen was scheduled to visit Lhasa the following year with two elephants, two peacocks and a leopard for the Dalai Lama. Lord Curzon gave him a revised form of the earlier letter. If the Tibetans did not soon start negotiating with the British, Curzon wrote, .. my Government must reserve the right to take such steps as may seem to them necessary and proper to enforce the terms of the Treaty, and to ensure that the Trade Regulations are observed.”

Kazi Urgyen returned to India in October, claiming that the Dalai Lama had refused to accept the letter. However, Sarat Chandra Das, the famous lexicographer who for several decades had been an advisor of Tibetan affairs in the pay of British India, commented that in all probability Kazi Urgyen did not have the courage to present the letter directly to the Dalai Lama as instructed, but instead had followed the traditional protocol of first discussing the matter with the Lhasa ministers. The ministers would undoubtedly have been against the idea, and once Kazi had asked their advice he would be unable to go

over their heads by approaching the Dalai Lama directly.

The timing of these events was interpreted by the British to be significant. The Buriyat monk Dorjjeff happened to be in Russia bearing greetings from Lhasa the same year that the viceroy attempted to send his first letter to the Dalai Lama. The viceroy's second letter was sent and returned the following year, when Dorjjeff and the delegation of "eight Tibetan statesmen" were in St. Petersburg with the Czar, having gotten there by traveling through British India. The British had suffered a distinct loss of face.

Soon thereafter popular rumors began to abound in both London and British India of a "secret pact" between Russia and Tibet. Another rumor spoke of a "Sino-Russian agreement," in which China and Russia were alleged to have signed a treaty allowing the former the right to allow Tibet to orient toward Russia in return for Russia allowing various parts of Chinese Turkestan and eastern Mongolia to be left open for a Chinese takeover.

This latter agreement was reported to have been signed in Lhasa on Feb. 23rd, 1903, by a Russian agent named Licoloff and the Chinese amban Ho. British intelligence in China concurred that five Russians had visited China in 1903 and then gone on to Lhasa, thus giving credence to the rumor. The North China Herald went so far as to publish a story outlining the main clauses of the supposed agreement.

Lord Curzon personally believed that something was afoot to which the British were not privy. In November of 1902, he wrote that he was "... a firm believer in the existence of a secret undertaking, if not a secret treaty, between

China and Russia about Tibet," and that he considered it his duty to "frustrate this little game while there is still time."

The idea of a secret Sino-Russian pact was not impossible. China's control over Tibet was questionable, so for her to relinquish her weak claims there for more tangible gains elsewhere was quite plausible.

Lord Roberts, the Commander-In-Chief of the British army in India, was extremely concerned. In October of 1902 he wrote, "I consider it out of the question Russia being permitted to obtain a footing in Tibet; we have had, and shall still have, quite enough trouble owing to Russia being so near to us on the Northwest Frontier of India that we cannot avoid; but we can,

and ought to, prevent her getting a position which would inevitably cause unrest all along the Northeast Frontier.”

To Curzon there was only one possible solution; an Anglo-Tibetan treaty negotiated in Lhasa. He regarded the Russian threat as serious indeed, and wrote, “Unless we take steps promptly and effectively to counteract it, we shall rue the day for years to come.”

The problem for Lord Curzon was that London did not see Tibet as being as important as China in the overall scheme of things in the British Empire, and in no way wished to risk the lucrative China trade by violating the Chefoo Convention through an invasion of Tibet. A compromise was struck: The British would meet the Tibetans at Khambajong, just inside Tibetan territory, and negotiate a trade agreement from there. J. C. White and Major Francis Younghusband were appointed to lead the British delegation, with an escort of two hundred soldiers. But the Home Government insisted that on no account was there to be an advance beyond Khambajong without direct permission from London.

The British force crossed the Tibetan border without resistance on July 1903. However, the Tibetans did not dispatch anyone with sufficient authority to carry on discussions. Days became weeks and months, with no progress in the situation.

Lord Curzon now had to build up a case to convince London to allow the party to advance further into Tibet. The issue was a sensitive one, for the project had to be executed without unduly alarming either China or Russia. Trade with China could not be sacrificed, and a direct encounter with Russia could easily lead to a conflict that could escalate out of control. Nobody was certain whether or not Russia had pledged assistance to Tibet, nor even if Russian troops were present in Lhasa.

In November a cautious note of permission to advance arrived. J. C. White was recalled and Younghusband became the sole political head of the expedition, with Brigadier-General MacDonald as commander of the military escort (which had by now increased to over 8,000 men). In December they crossed the Jelepala Pass into the Chumbi Valley and Phari. In January they proceeded to Tuna, where they set up camp for three months and waited in vain for a delegation from Lhasa.

In March the expedition moved toward Gyantsey, meeting its first resistance at Guru. Here the Tibetans were easily defeated, with heavy casualties on the Tibetan side. The expedition reached Gyantsey on April 11th, after a number of further clashes but with no serious setbacks.

May saw an unsuccessful Tibetan attack on the expedition at Gyantsey, but still no delegation arrived from Lhasa to negotiate a treaty. Finally the British force reached Lhasa on August 3rd. The Lhasa Convention was signed on September 7th by both the British and the Tibetans (the Chinese amban refusing to participate).

On the 22nd of September Younghusband and his expedition left to return to India. But they did not return as heroes. The invasion of Tibet had been intensely controversial, being initially conceived solely as a trade mission. News that more than a thousand Tibetans had died in the skirmishes did not go over well in London. Younghusband was accused of going above and beyond the mandate that had been given to him.

As problematic as his methods were, there were several clauses of the Lhasa Convention that he had forced. Article seven, for example, allowed for the British occupation of the Chumbi Valley for a period of seventy-five years, which was tantamount to annexation, a move that would cause considerable international consternation. Article nine asked the Tibetans to agree to have no dealings with any foreign power whatsoever without British consent, an arrangement that undoubtedly would enrage both the Russians and the Chinese. An appended separate article allowed for the British trade agent at Gyantsey to visit Lhasa at will, a clause more or less creating a British Resident in Lhasa. This was something that London and Russia had agreed that neither of them would do.

Probably all would have gone well if Curzon had been in India at the time. Unfortunately for Younghusband, Curzon was on an extended leave, and his replacement, in the person of Lord Ampthill, was not of a similar disposition. Whereas both Curzon and Younghusband had felt that the only way to guarantee Tibetan freedom from a Russian presence was the establishment of a permanent British influence in Lhasa, London did not agree and had said so previous to the expedition and in no uncertain terms.

The debate and confusion that raged in London and India following the

Younghusband expedition eventually led to the disgrace of Younghusband and, to a lesser extent, Lord Curzon. Unfortunately it also resulted in the treaty of Great Britain and China, signed in Beijing in April of 1906, in which all that Younghusband had gained was thrown away and Tibet was handed over once more to Chinese control. This policy was later further strengthened by the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1907, in which Russia agreed to Tibet's going to China in return for British recognition of the Czar's presence in Mongolia; and also by the Shimla Convention of 1913-14, where once again misguided British politics were to tie Tibet to China.

In the "Great Game of the British Empire" it may accurately be said that England thrice sold Tibet to China. First, the British in India chose to call Tibet a part of China in the hope of gaining favor with the Manchu emperor and using Tibetan soil as an alternative trading route to the Far East. Next she re-sold Tibet to China in order to validate her own colonialism of Burma and the Indian Himalayas, and to keep Tibet out of the Russian sphere of interest. Last, having invaded Tibet and rendered her helpless, she handed her over to China in order to maintain the status quo and to cover up her own bungled policies.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama seems at a very young age to have perceived the delicacy of the Tibetan predicament, and to have attempted to negotiate a middle ground between British India, Russia and China. The path he followed was perilous, and perhaps it may be argued that it did not meet with tremendous success. However, the fact that he never buckled under the pressure, and that he inspired his tiny country to challenge the might of these three superpowers in Asia, is one of the many reasons that the Tibetans remember him as the "Great Thirteenth."

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The manner in which the Great Thirteenth dealt with the British throughout this period was criticized by many Western diplomats of the era. Certainly he had not handled matters in the way the British had hoped he would. But on the other hand, it must be admitted that the British were not particularly accommodating to the Tibetan position. With the Chefoo Convention, they had insisted on dealing with Tibet as though she were a suzerain of China, and this was a platform from which the Tibetans did not wish to work.

As early as 1899, the Great Thirteenth had sent a message to British India stating

that he was willing to open a dialogue with the British, provided that it was on an equal footing and that it did not appear that he was doing so in acquiescence to Britain's Chefoo Convention with China. It may well be argued that, if any mistake was made here, it was made by the British in insisting in all their communications that Tibet accept the Anglo-Chinese pact. In the end, the British claimed that they were invading Tibet because the latter refused to accept the Trade Regulations of the Chefoo Convention, to which the Tibetans themselves had not been a signature.

It would appear that in 1903, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama was convinced Tibet's foreign relations were basically stable, for in the early summer of that year he entered into the "great retreat," or nyenchen, that lasts for a period of three to four years. And in all probability he had interpreted the general political atmosphere correctly, at least as far as the overall British policy was concerned. London in no way wanted to see a military invasion of Lhasa, for to do so was to risk grave consequences in her relationships with both Russia and China.

However, the timing was unfortunate. While Younghusband sat on the borders of Tibet sending messages back and forth to Lhasa, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama was engaged in his retreat. The Tibetans, therefore, attempted to stall the British, hoping to postpone the making of any important decisions until the Dalai Lama's retreat was over. To them it was only a matter of delaying things for two or three years, when their leader would again be out and around in public; to the British the delays seemed endless and inexplicable. Younghusband wrote,⁷ "Never have I met so obdurate and obstructive a people." It seemed that his every attempt to bring discussions to a head met with delays and obstructions. Younghusband, of course, was completely unaware of the fact that the Dalai Lama was in a closed retreat. Nor do later British writers seem to have known of it. Even Bell fails to mention the fact in his Portrait of the Dalai Lama.

The situation may best be described as the collision of two radically different cultures: the one intensely spiritual and the other both militant and secular. Younghusband had determined to settle a trade agreement with the Tibetans by the summer of 1904, but with the Dalai Lama in a three-year retreat, the Tibetans were in a state of temporary political incommunicado.

Fourteen months after the Great Thirteenth had entered into meditation, the British left Gyantsey and began the final stage of their invasion of Lhasa. The Tibetan Government, unsure of what course of action to follow, invoked the

Nechung Oracle and asked his advice. The oracle recommended that the Dalai Lama be requested to discontinue his retreat and leave for Mongolia until a settlement with the British could be achieved.

In typical style, the Tibetan biography of the great Thirteenth by Purchokpa provides us with a nonworldly account of the Dalai Lama's reasons for leaving the Tibetan capital at that time. Purchokpa writes,

The Great Thirteenth realized that there were countless trainees in Mongolia and China in need of his attentions. Also, he had a longstanding wish to visit the holy places of the northeast, particularly the birthplace of Lama Tsongkhapa in Amdo and the holy Five-Peaked Mountain [i.e., Wu-tai Shan] of Manjushri in western China. He especially wanted to spend some time on the Five-Peaked Mountain, for he felt it to be important for him to re-consecrate the site for the spiritual inspiration of future generations and as a power spot for the release of mystical energies conducive to world peace. He also realized that he was destined to rediscover several important religious treasures there that would be important to the future of Buddhism. Therefore when the British appeared at the bridge south of Lhasa he decided that the time had come for him to leave the Potala and travel to these faraway regions.

Thus it came to pass that when Younghusband arrived in Lhasa, the Dalai Lama was nowhere to be found. He had departed for Mongolia, leaving instructions with his Cabinet and the Ganden Tripa to work out a treaty with the British. The tactic was an ancient one: The invaders would be placed at a distinct disadvantage by having to deal with minor officials, and if a bad treaty were agreed to it could later be repudiated on the basis that it had not been signed by the Dalai Lama himself.

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The next five years saw a "Dalai Lama on the road." Although the British conflict was resolved within a few months of his departure, he remained in Mongolia for a year, teaching and giving initiations at various places in the country, and also performing the usual Dalai Lama functions, such as giving hand blessings to long lines of pilgrims.

He then traveled down the eastern border regions of Tibet, where his predecessor the Third Dalai Lama had established many monasteries several centuries

earlier, and where the Seventh had lived during his early years. Again, here he taught and gave many initiations to the local peoples.

His reception at Kumbum, the monastery that had been established by the Third Dalai Lama at the birthplace of Lama Tsongkhapa, was witnessed by two Englishmen: Lt. John Weston Brooke; and the Christian missionary J. Ridley of the China Inland Mission.

An account of Brooke's travels was later published from his diary, edited by W. N. Fergusson, and provides us with a vivid picture of the spectacle.⁸ The pair watched the procession pass on the road, and then followed it into the town. Brooke wrote,

A crowd of horsemen drew near, surrounding a large yellow cloth-covered chair, which was carried by four horses led by four mounted Tibetans, two on each side, so that we only caught a glimpse of the occupant for a second. We followed with the crowd until we reached a large camp which was prepared for him outside of the monastery of Kumbum. Here we found hundreds of tents, all pitched in a square, with one, a Mongol tent of rich yellow cloth, surrounded by a wall of the same material, where the Dalai Lama was to spend the night. Outside the square were crowds from many different nationalities from different parts of Asia: Mongol princes with gaily-attired camels, bringing presents from the north; wild-looking Tibetans with matted hair hanging down their backs, riding equally wild-looking ponies, driving unwieldy yaks, thin from long travelling, perhaps from Lhasa or unknown regions in southern Tibet; Chinese in gorgeous colored silks; and muleteers with their galled mules.

The next day the Dalai Lama gave blessings and a sermon to the colorful crowd, and moved into a space that had been prepared for him in the monastery. The Englishmen were given a private audience. Brooke's diary recalls,

He gave me a small image of Buddha. Mr. Ridley received a bundle of

joss-sticks and a roll of Lhasa cloth____The room was well-warmed, and

a mysterious scent of incense pervaded the atmosphere. The Dalai Lama sat in front of us, cross-legged, on silk cushions which were placed on a table about four feet high. His face did not show the slightest trace of expression; he greeted us with a slight forward movement of his body, but

nothing like a smile ever approached his face as we conversed____One

could not help thinking that he must have trained his features to resemble the unsympathetic emptiness of the brazen images of the country.... After about half an hour's talk, which was mostly on our side, I asked if I might photograph him, but he refused. With a low bow we backed out of his presence; as we backed his features relaxed into a faint

smile----So ended our audience with the Dalai Lama, his first, I believe,

with an Englishman.

The Great Thirteenth remained at Kumbum Monastery for several months, giving teachings and blessings to pilgrims and the people of the area. He also took the opportunity to make short trips into the adjoining regions, and to lead prayer gatherings in front of the mystical tree that had grown from the spot where Tsongkhapa's afterbirth had been buried.

It was during this stay that he developed his friendship with the Taktser Tulku, one of the high incarnate lamas of Kumbum, and the lama to whom I refer in the second note to this chapter. As mentioned there, after the Taktser Lama died he was reborn into a small family in the Taktser region. The present Dalai Lama was born into this same family approximately a decade later, a year after the death of the Great Thirteenth.

Thus we can see that, in addition to teaching and giving initiations in the Kumbum area during this visit, the Great Thirteenth was also making arrangements for his own future incarnation.

While he was at Kumbum, a delegation of officials arrived from Lhasa requesting him to return immediately. Another delegation arrived from the emperor and empress at Beijing, requesting him to visit the Chinese capital. The Russians then contacted him, advising him to return to Lhasa without visiting Beijing, and offering him an armed escort. The British also contacted him here and advised him not to go to Beijing.

It should be noted here that the Dalai Lama's political predicament was extremely sensitive at this point in time. After the flight from Lhasa, the Chinese emperor had declared him deposed, and had had posters to this effect put up on the streets of Lhasa (though it is said that the Tibetans immediately took them

down and smeared them with human excrement). The English then attempted to set up the Panchen Lama as a replacement to the Dalai Lama, but the former had declined the offer.

In all probability the Great Thirteenth was planning to return to Lhasa at this point in his travels. However, when both Russia and England played their hands and revealed that they were against his visit to China, his curiosity was aroused and he determined to accept the emperor's invitation.

But first he would visit one of China's holiest pilgrimage sites: Wu-tai Shan, the sacred Five-Peaked Mountain. Here he took up residence in a temple that had been built several centuries earlier for the Fifth Dalai Lama. For five months he remained on the Five-Peaked Mountain, immersed in prayer and meditation. And of course the throng of devoted pilgrims continued to come to him for his blessings and teachings. His biography states that while at Wu-tai Shan he achieved many visionary experiences and performed a number of miracles. Of note, W. W. Rockhill, the American ambassador to China who later mastered the Tibetan language and visited Lhasa, came to see him at this time, carrying greetings from President Roosevelt.⁹

The Dalai Lama arrived in Beijing in September of 1908, and was received with great ceremony. Here he stayed at the Yellow Palace that had been built by Manchu emperor Shun-shi for the Fifth Dalai Lama when the latter had visited Beijing.

When the Great Fifth had come to Beijing in 1653 he had been treated as the leader of a foreign country. Now, however, the Chinese Government knew that the Thirteenth was in a weakened position, and they planned to use this to their advantage. The Dalai Lama was told that he would be expected to kowtow at his audience with the emperor and empress, i.e., bow in the manner of a visiting vassal. He would also be given a seat lower in height than those of the Chinese rulers, again a symbol of Chinese authority over Tibet.

The Dalai Lama objected to both conditions, and the audience had to be postponed. He would see the emperor and empress on equal terms, or he would not see them at all.

Eventually arrangements were made, and he received independent audiences with both Chinese rulers. The audiences went well, and in October he was

entertained at the palace for a full week, officiating over various religious rites and leading prayers for peace in the land.

Then a most unexpected event occurred. Suddenly on November 21st the emperor passed away; and the following day the empress followed suit. The nation was thrown into a state of shock.

The Dalai Lama was asked to lead the funeral rites for both. Tibetans believe that his advice was also sought in choosing the new emperor, the boy destined to become the last ruler of Manchu China.

A month later, the Great Thirteenth left Beijing and began the long trek back to Lhasa. The journey would take him almost a year to complete, for he was expected to give sermons and initiations at every monastery along the route, and to give blessings to the crowds who lined the roads as he traveled. His Collected Works is filled with notes taken by various disciples at discourses given on these occasions, and with small texts of advice written for the different monasteries.

He finally arrived at Lhasa in the middle of December, 1909, having been absent from the Potala for more than five years.

The Great Thirteenth had originally left Tibet because of the invasion of Sir Francis Younghusband, and in hopes of undoing the political web the British had spun around his country. Yet even though he succeeded in making known the Tibetan sentiment, the problem was a long way from being solved.

In all fairness it must be said that Sir Francis had been a kind invader, as invaders go. He was well-intentioned in his mission, and was genuinely humane with the conquered Tibetans. Providing medical care to the wounded and compensating the local villagers for all food and services that he demanded of them, he left his victims with a general impression of his decency and fairness. The treaty that he struck with the Lhasa authorities would have served Tibet well, had London allowed it to stand; but unfortunately the Foreign Office undermined it two years later in the Anglo-Chinese Agreement signed at Beijing, where all that Younghusband had won for England was handed over to the Chinese, much to the chagrin of all who had intimate knowledge of the actual situation in Central Asia.

The real failure of London's policy in Tibet was its lack of consistency. The Younghusband expedition had effectively destroyed Tibet's defenses, an act that perhaps would not have resulted in disaster had the British upheld their end of the bargain in the Lhasa treaty; but the new agreement signed in Beijing in 1906 gave the Chinese a free hand in a now hamstrung Tibet.

Even as the Dalai Lama was returning from China, the dangers began to become manifest in the form of General Chao Erh-feng, known to the Tibetans as "Butcher Chao" because of his habit of beheading all who stood in his way. The number of those he beheaded was said to reach into the tens of thousands. Butcher Chao had begun carving away at pieces of Tibet's eastern border as early as 1905, merely a year after Younghusband's invasion. His activities steadily increased over the following years, and he decided to take the Tibetan capital shortly after the Dalai Lama's return. With Tibet stripped of its defenses, the task was an easy one. The Chinese army arrived in Lhasa on the third day of the first month of the Male Iron Dog Year, i.e., February of 1910.

The Nechung Oracle was again invoked. He advised that the Dalai Lama should flee to British India, and should work from there for Tibetan independence. The problem had been created by the British, and it should be solved from British soil.

The Great Thirteenth's escape this time was far more dangerous and dramatic than it had been in 1904, for Lhasa was now in enemy hands. Therefore the Dalai Lama, his chief ministers, and a small armed escort slipped out of the Potala in the dead of night, crossing the river and heading westward. The next day General Chao learned of the flight and sent a cavalry in chase, offering a large reward to whoever would bring him the head of the Dalai Lama.

One man stands out above all others in the events to follow: Chensel Namgang, a youth of peasant extract whom the Dalai Lama had taken in as a member of his bodyguard staff some years earlier and had cultivated as one of his main aides. When the Dalai Lama crossed the Chaktsam Bridge and headed south toward India, Chensel Namgang remained behind with a small body of troops and for two days held off the large and highly trained Chinese forces, thus allowing the Dalai Lama time to make good his escape. This young hero then slipped off into the hills and followed after his master. Chensel Namgang was later to play an important part in Tibetan history. He was first appointed by the Dalai Lama as head of the Tibetan resistance movement in India, and later, after the Manchu

Government had fallen and the Chinese were pushed out of Tibet, he became the famous Tsarong Dazang Dradul, Commander-in-Chief of the Tibetan military. A separate book deserves to be written about the many glorious deeds of this wonderful hero, who so symbolizes all that was good in Old Tibet and great in the Tibetan character.

The Great Thirteenth was well received in India by the British, who fully extended their hospitality to the Dalai Lama, no doubt to a considerable extent because of a sense of guilt over the mess London had unwittingly made of its diplomatic policy towards Tibet.

In Kalimpong the whole town came out to receive their famous and holy visitor. Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Christians alike lined the road to greet him. A few days later the party was moved to Darjeeling, the summer capital of Bengal. The visitors were to be housed here until the situation in Lhasa permitted their return.

As on the Dalai Lama's earlier trip to Mongolia and China, here again he was in a forced exile, but from outer appearances he seemed more like a sage on pilgrimage. Every day hundreds of devotees came to see him and receive his blessings, and he continued to give teachings and initiations as usual. The predicament in Tibet must have demanded much of his thoughts, but, as with the present Dalai Lama, the Great Thirteenth showed the ability to thoroughly compartmentalize his life, and at any one moment to live in that dimension expected of him. When British diplomats visited, he was the diplomat; when Tibetan ministers and resistance leaders approached him, he responded as the secular chieftain; and when pilgrims and devotees came, he was the spiritual preceptor.

Shortly after the Great Thirteenth's arrival in Darjeeling, he met with Sir Charles Bell, whom the British Government now placed in charge of his care. Over the years to follow, this sensitive and kind Englishman, who years earlier had acquired a flawless command of the Tibetan language, was to become the Dalai Lama's closest British friend. He was also to serve as one of the most important Western spokesmen for Tibet in those early days of Tibetology, authoring half a dozen books on Tibetan culture.

Sir Charles arranged for the Dalai Lama to be settled in a vacant English mansion just outside the town, with his ministers settled in a townhouse.

The accommodations were simple but adequate. The British Government also provided a small grant for the provision of their new guests.

In March, Viceroy Lord Minto invited the Dalai Lama to Calcutta, where he was accorded a twenty-one gun salute. The Foreign Office, however, had ruled that England was to remain neutral in Tibet's conflict with China, and thus Lord Minto was in a position to do nothing more than grant hospitality and moral encouragement to the refugees, whose task it was to effect the liberation of their homeland.

The Dalai Lama therefore appealed to the Russian Czar to come to Tibet's aid. Again, the reply was polite but reserved; Russia's treaties with Britain did not permit her to intervene in Tibetan affairs.

As Sir Charles Bell points out, throughout this rather trying ordeal the Dalai Lama continued his religious practices and meditations as usual. Anyone passing near his house in the morning or evening would hear him chanting his prayers, to the accompaniment of his small hand drum and bell. And often when he traveled in India he would miss his meals rather than interrupt his meditations.

The departure of the Dalai Lama from Lhasa and his exile in Darjeeling caused severe problems for the Chinese in Tibet, who would have far preferred to use him as a puppet in their designs or to dispose of him altogether. As the latter course of action was now out of the question, they made overtures to him to return and take up office under Chinese supervision. A Manchu official with a letter to this effect arrived in India in September of 1910. The Dalai Lama sent a stern reply to the amban:

I received your message asking me to return to Lhasa to help you in your administration of our country.... In the past the Manchu emperors had always shown great care for the welfare of the successive Dalai Lamas, and the Dalai Lamas had reciprocated these feelings of friendship. We always had each other's best interests at heart.... But now the situation has changed drastically.... Many Chinese troops were recently sent into Tibet, oppressing the people and the monasteries to such an extent that requests came to me from every quarter to give my permission for violent resistance. I refused this permission, feeling that it would be best first to attempt to work out a peaceful settlement. With this in mind, and at great personal hardship, I came to the Tibetan frontier and prepared to negotiate. But then many Chinese troops were sent after me to bring me back

dead or alive.... Meanwhile back in Tibet many peace-loving people have been killed or illegally imprisoned.... It appears that the emperor himself has stood behind all of this on the advice of the amban, without any considerations whatsoever for Tibetan independence or the ancient religious connection between our two countries... .Therefore I feel that there is no longer any point in talk.... It is not possible for Tibet and China to have the same relationship as before.

In March of the new year (1911), the Dalai Lama and his party took the opportunity to make pilgrimage to the four places in India that are holy to all Buddhists: where the Buddha had been born, where he had achieved his enlightenment, where he had delivered his first teaching and where he had passed away. In each of these locations the Great Thirteenth meditated and engaged in intensive prayer. His visit to and re-consecration of these sites was to revive the interest of the many Himalayan Buddhists in them, giving them a new lease on life. It is interesting to note that the present Dalai Lama has continued the work that was then initiated by the Thirteenth, and that the revival of the Indian Buddhist pilgrimage places has to a large extent been due to these two incarnations.

Tibetans believe that the patron/priest arrangement that the Manchus had enjoyed with the Tibetan lamas over the past two centuries had provided the Manchus with the karmic fortune required for the latter's peace and stability. Thus, when the Great Thirteenth was in Beijing and the emperor and empress had abused their patron role by trying to pressure him politically, it was no coincidence, Tibetans believe, that the two rulers passed away even while he was still in the city. They had destroyed the root of merit sustaining their positions; the karmic repercussions manifested almost instantly in their deaths.

But the Chinese error did not end there, for the new rulers almost immediately invaded Tibet in the hope of making it into a province of China. The entire Manchu Dynasty had now undermined its base of merit. The karmic result was the revolution of 1911 that broke out in China while the Dalai Lama was in exile in India. In November, Manchu rule came to an end, replaced by Sun Yatsen and his Nationalist Party. Butcher Chao was recalled from Szechwan and suffered death by beheading, the gruesome punishment he had inflicted on so many of his own victims. The wheel of fate had turned full circle.

When the Great Thirteenth heard news of the growing strength of the Chinese revolution, he sent Chensel Namgang, the hero of Chaktsam Bridge, back to Tibet to lead the underground forces. The tactic worked well. All over Tibet the Chinese garrisons were uprooted, until only the main army in Lhasa remained.

In June of 1912, the Great Thirteenth left Kalimpong for Tibet, having once again outlived the temporary successes of his adversaries.

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In January of 1913 the Great Thirteenth arrived in Lhasa. The entire city turned out to greet him and rejoice in the success of his adventures. On the eighth day of the first month of the new year, he issued his famous Declaration of Independence, with its five essential clauses defining Tibet's new direction. He wrote,

From the time of Genghis Khan and Altan Khan of the Mongols, the Ming Dynasty of the Chinese, and the Ching Dynasty of the Manchus, Tibet and China cooperated on the basis of the patron/priest relationship. But a few years ago the Chinese authorities in Szechwan and Yunnan provinces, using the pretext of policing the trade marts, sent large numbers of troops into our country and attempted to colonize us. Therefore I left Lhasa, taking my ministers with me, and hoped to set straight in the emperor's mind that our relationship was and always had been one of patron/priest and not one of the subordination of one by the other. However, his reply was obstructed by corrupt Beijing officials, and in the process of our dialogue the Manchu Dynasty collapsed. The Tibetans were encouraged by the turn of events, and expelled the Chinese from central Tibet, and I returned safely to my sacred homeland. All that remains now is to drive out a few more Chinese troops from the eastern border areas, and the Chinese intent of colonizing Tibet will have faded like a rainbow in the sky.

The Great Thirteenth then went on to outline the five principal policies to be implemented in the immediate future: (1) Everyone should strive to preserve Tibet's cultural traditions through rebuilding any of the institutions and monuments that had been destroyed by the recent period of conflict; (2) the various religious traditions should respect one another, and should look more to the maintenance of their spiritual and educational traditions and less to politics and business enterprises; (3) the civil and military government officials should act with fairness and justice toward all citizens, and should improve their human

rights records—in particular, capital punishment and all forms of harsh physical punishment of criminals should be abolished in all parts of the country; (4) more thought and effort should be given to the issue of national defense, “for although the Tibetans are a religious and independently minded people, safeguards must be put in place to ensure national survival”; and (5) the traditional methods of land distribution and taxation should be revised, and more modern social forms introduced. A month after the Great Thirteenth’s issuing of this declaration, Tibet and Mongolia signed an agreement recognizing one another’s independence from China.

The Dalai Lama’s next step was to attempt to bring the Chinese to the negotiating table, with the British as intermediaries. This took the form of the Shimla Convention of 1913-14. Here he sent the Minister Shetra to negotiate for Tibet. Britain sent Sir Charles Bell and Sir Henry McMahon. Finally, the Chinese sent Ivan Chen.

Shetra informed Bell that the Dalai Lama wanted four conditions to be met: (1) Tibet was to manage her own internal affairs; (2) she should also have control over her external affairs, although important issues could be decided in reference to Great Britain; (3) no Chinese amban, officials or soldiers would be stationed in Tibet; and (4) Tibet’s territory on the east would include the areas up to Tachienlu.

While in India the Dalai Lama had gained an understanding of the British love for legalities. Therefore the Tibetans went to the conference with extensive documentation in support of their claims, including all the old treaties that had been signed with China and other Asian countries, numerous tax records from disputed areas, documents of Lhasa appointments of officials in disputed areas, and so forth. In total they brought fifty-six thick volumes of legal documents. The Chinese came with very little other than verbal claims.

The British were in a difficult position. All legal evidence was on the side of the Tibetans and, in addition, the Chinese had been expelled from Tibetan territories. But McMahon did not want to antagonize the new Chinese rulers. Thus the Tibetans were asked to accept a deal similar to that created by the imperialist powers in Mongolia: there would be two Tibets, one Outer and the other Inner. The former, which would include all of western, southern and central Tibet, as well as much of the eastern provinces of Kham and Amdo, would be completely autonomous, though under the suzerainty of China. China would not be allowed

to interfere with the internal administration of this region, which would remain under the Dalai Lama's direct rule; nor would China be allowed to send any troops into Outer Tibet, other than an ambassador and his private escort, which was not to exceed more than three hundred soldiers.

The arrangement did not please anyone. It was far less than the Dalai Lama had expected, and he did not at all like the idea of "two Tibets. Nor did he trust the provision allowing China special status; he had hoped that if a favored status with regard to Tibet were given to anyone, it would be to either the British or Russians. Perhaps in her position as mediator in the discussions, Britain did not feel it would be appropriate for her to be awarded this privilege; and she certainly was not about to see it be granted to Russia.

The wording of the agreement was also alien to the Chinese, who therefore refused to sign it. In the end McMahon lost patience, and the treaty was signed bilaterally by Britain and Tibet, with the stipulation that China would not be privy to any benefits of the document until she added her signature to it (which in fact she never did).

It is sad to note here that one of the reasons the Tibetans agreed to endorse the Shimla Convention and did not press more forcefully for the four conditions that the Great Thirteenth had stipulated, particularly those that defined Tibet's relationship with China, was the persuasive influence of Sir Charles Bell. The high regard which the Tibetans held for Sir Charles and his friendship with the Dalai Lama acted as factors that won the Tibetan negotiators over to McMahon's vision. No doubt Sir Charles played his part in good conscience, feeling that the deal was reasonable to the Tibetans; but he had a distinct conflict of interest, for his job primarily was to sell the British blueprint to the Tibetans, and not to advise the Tibetans on what was best for them. The Tibetans did not fully understand this, and took his advice as being solely that of a friend of Tibet.

In the end, the Shimla Convention was just one more confusing event in Britain's ambiguous treaties with and about Tibet. On this occasion McMahon had insisted that Tibet sign a treaty acknowledging herself as "an autonomous region of China"; but by signing the document directly with Tibet without Chinese consent, the legal implication was that Britain recognized Tibet as an independent nation with the authority to sign its own international agreements.

But treaty or no treaty, the Dalai Lama was not having any Chinese diplomats or

troops in his country; and because China had not signed the Shimla Convention she could not call on the British to lobby for her right to do so.

Thus from the time of the Great Thirteenth's Declaration of Independence in 1913 until after his death in 1933, no Chinese officials were allowed to live on Tibetan soil. Chinese individuals who had married Tibetans had their choice of adopting Tibetan nationality or leaving the country.

For the remainder of his life the Great Thirteenth continued to attempt to get Tibet's independent status accepted by the international community; yet even though he managed to keep all Chinese out of his country, nobody would listen to his plea. The international community felt that jurisdiction over the issue lay with Britain, and thus would only follow Britain's lead.

Unfortunately for Tibet and the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Britain was preoccupied with the struggle to maintain her rapidly disintegrating empire, and had no intention of causing waves with China over what to her was not a pressing issue.

Some years later Sir Charles Bell realized the gravity of the position he had influenced his Tibetan friends to accept at Shimla. He commented bitterly, "Britain, while professing friendship [with Tibet], seems always to refuse assistance."

Over the years that followed, he attempted to rectify his error by changing the British attitude. His first attempt came in his visit to Lhasa in 1920-21 and the subsequent British agreement to sell arms to Tibet that he negotiated. He made another attempt in 1930, when he lobbied in London for outright recognition of Tibet's independence on the grounds that no Chinese official had been permitted in Tibet for over twenty-five years. He suggested that Asia would in the future be far more secure if Tibet were established as an independent buffer state between India and China.

Unfortunately the timing of his petition was bad, and met with no success.

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Of the five clauses attached to the Great Thirteenth's Declaration of Independence, the fourth (and perhaps most important) focused on national defense. From his childhood, the Dalai Lama had demonstrated a strong interest in developing the military. Even as early as the mid-1880s he had begun

to realize that Tibet's independence would never be secure until she was able to defend herself. The traditional arrangement of patron/priest, in which the former was expected to see to the security of the latter, may have worked well enough in the olden days of loose and informal foreign contracts, but it was not suited to the bureaucratic mentality of the twentieth century. Perhaps the Shimla Convention more than anything else had driven this idea home. It had become obvious that neither Britain nor Russia would do anything for Tibet, and that if China were to be kept out it would have to be by Tibet's own efforts.

Therefore not long after returning to Lhasa, the Great Thirteenth arranged for an overhaul of the army, with the Hero of Chaktsam Bridge, who now had been renamed Tsarong, as the Commander-in-Chief.

In Tibetan eyes, the world's three most powerful nations were Russia, Britain and Japan, all of whom had had successful military encounters with

China. The Great Thirteenth therefore arranged for each of these powers to train a Tibetan regiment. At the conclusion of the training period the three regiments had to demonstrate how well they could perform. It is said that the soldiers trained by the Japanese advisor Yasujiro Yajima most deeply impressed the Lhasa authorities, and that it was therefore decided to have the Tibetan military run along Japanese lines.

The decision could also have been linked to the fact that the various treaties Russia and Britain had signed with each other (and with the Chinese) placed them both in an unpredictable political stance as regards Tibet; they might help clandestinely, but neither could be counted on under pressure. Also, neither Britain nor Russia would supply Tibet with armaments, whereas Japanese wares could easily be acquired via Mongolia. Finally, Japan had had several military incidents with both China and Russia, from which the Japanese had emerged victorious. Tibet's new international direction thus began to move toward Japan.

This was the case until a year or so after the Dalai Lama entered his great retreat, when pro-British forces in Lhasa used his absence to replace the Japanese with a British orientation. From then on the Tibetan military followed British training methods. The transition was completed in 1920, when Sir Charles Bell officially visited Lhasa and managed to implement an arrangement with the British that would include the limited supply of arms.

The period from 1913 to 1916 saw the Great Thirteenth busily engaged in revitalizing Tibet's cultural and spiritual institutions. He had been in exile out of the country for almost eight years because of the British and Chinese invasions, and there was much to be done. The monastic communities had to be revived and their educational facilities upgraded, as did those of the medical colleges and hospitals. The various schools of performing arts had to be seen to, and the fine arts stimulated. Then the political institutions, which for five years had been run by the Chinese invaders, had to be overhauled, and, as mentioned above, the military had to be built up. In brief, a country had to be reconstructed from the ruins of the old.

It appears that by the spring of 1916 the Great Thirteenth felt that things had once more been set in order, for during the fourth month (June) of that year he temporarily retired from public life and entered into his great retreat, which was to last until the autumn of 1920. No doubt for him this was a welcomed period of inner peace and spiritual rejuvenation. He had been under intense pressure for more than a decade, and the opportunity to do nothing but sit and meditate must have been tremendously uplifting.

One of the principal reasons for the greatness the Tibetan people attribute to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, and one of the causes of the fondness with which they remember him, is the manner in which he dealt with anyone who showed corruption or vanity. His courage in the face of the British and Chinese military forces proved him a man of independent spirit and insightful perception; but it was in his dealings with his own people that his personality shone most brightly. An example reflecting his strong character in this regard is the manner in which he restructured the administration of the Great Prayer Festival of Lhasa, Tibet's largest national celebration.

Traditionally the policing of Lhasa was handed over to two monk officials for the duration of this festival. This policing contract was awarded on a bidding system, with the winner of the concession being given the right to collect fines for any violations that occurred during the festival.

The result was that whoever received the contract would attempt to fine whomever they could for as much as possible for the most insignificant infraction. It was a race with time; a set amount had been paid for the privilege of policing the city, and there was an opportunity to collect a fortune in fines during that brief period.

The original idea had been good enough. The festival was largely a gathering of monks—some fifty thousand of them—so it was only logical that it should be policed by monks. But over the centuries, the emphasis changed from keeping the monks in line to harassing the Lhasa townspeople into paying indiscriminate fines for fabricated offenses. As a result, almost all laypeople deserted the city during the festival and went to visit relatives or friends in the country, often returning only to discover that their homes had been looted in their absence.

The Great Thirteenth stripped the festival magistrates of this power, making their position purely ceremonial. He arranged that each of the principal monasteries, rather than bid for the concession, should send him the names of two monks, from which he would choose those who would serve.

Tibetans like to tell the story of when he called in the monk administrators and let them know of the new plan. “But the tradition was established by the Fifth Dalai Lama himself,” they argued. “And who is the Fifth Dalai Lama today?” was his reply. They could not argue with his logic; they themselves had enthroned him as the Fifth’s reincarnation. Because of the Thirteenth’s intervention the festival once more became an occasion of joy and celebration, and the laypeople again began to attend it. In fact, one of the principal deeds of the Great Thirteenth was his revival of this festival. Throughout the later years of his life he always presided over it, and his presence gave it a sanctity it had not enjoyed since the days of the early Dalai Lamas.

Another popular story is his treatment of Sera Monastery when he learned that the Sera treasurers had been following questionable practices in the handling of monastic finances. It is said that a farm village had borrowed some money from

Sera Mey, but when the time came to repay the loan it was unable to do so. Some monks from the monastery went to the village to forcibly collect, and when they were unsuccessful they instead seized various possessions as collateral.

The farmers appealed directly to the Dalai Lama, whereupon he had the matter investigated. Later he summoned the abbots of the three departments of Sera and kept them waiting in his antechamber for two full days before giving them an audience. He then fined them heavily, and warned them that if in the future he ever again heard of such happenings they would be dismissed from their posts.

The Great Thirteenth was no less forthright with the aristocracy. This is well illustrated by the life of the Hero of Chaktsam Bridge, who due to his personal talents surpassed any of the noblemen of the day and became one of the most influential men in the Dalai Lama's government. A similar case is that of the monk Kunpella, a peasant by birth whom the Dalai Lama cultivated as his principal aide, and who also became one of the most powerful men in the land. These and other such events made the Great Thirteenth into a champion of the ordinary person and a symbol of mobility in Tibetan society.

Another pertinent story emerges from the Dalai Lama's efforts to publish the Kangyur, the Tibetan scriptural collection in one hundred and eight volumes containing the sutras and tantras ascribed to Lord Buddha. The project was extensive, since Tibetan printing is done with wood blocks, each of which must be individually carved by hand. The complete project would require the carving of approximately a hundred thousand blocks. The editing work alone demanded the participation of several master scholars.

A problem arose during the printing. There are a number of conflicting interpretations of the philosophical doctrines contained in certain of the scriptures due to the ambiguity of some of the passages, ambiguities that Tibetan scholars traditionally have praised as contributing to the richness and nondogmatic nature of Buddhist philosophy. But part way through the project the Dalai Lama discovered that the chief editor, Jey Sherab Gyatso, was rewriting some of the more sensitive passages so as to make them more closely agree with the viewpoint of his own monastery. There were also a number of contested scriptures accepted by the Nyingma School but which Jey Sherab Gyatso did not personally regard as being the word of Buddha, and which he therefore attempted to omit altogether.

The Dalai Lama was furious, and dismissed him from the prestigious position of editor-in-chief. He had all of Jey Sherab Gyatso's work rechecked, and did the remainder of the editing himself.

Another important work of the Great Thirteenth's was his restoration of Tibet's oldest temples and monasteries, including the Jokhang, the Ramochey, and Samye Monastery. The wall paintings in many of these were more than a thousand years old, and were badly in need of repair. Some of the more superstitious Tibetans objected to the restoration on the grounds that it required removing the old paint, which meant the temporary destruction of the consecrated images. The Dalai Lama mentions this criticism several times in his public sermons at the Great Prayer Festival and scolds his people for holding such superstitious views. One year he commented, "It is rather sad that, when Buddha himself so strongly advocated the use of reason and the logical mind, so many of our people seem to still be stuck in the mire of superstition and primitive thinking." But he was not daunted, and the various restoration projects continued without interruption.

Tibetans also love to tell of how strict he was with his weather lamas, whose job it was to remain high on the mountains around Lhasa, making rain when rain was needed, and stopping hail when the crops and flowers were ripe and in bloom. His weather lamas were the best in the country, so they were generally successful in their rituals; but when they failed, the Great Thirteenth would call them to account. If after consideration he decided that the failure was not due to lack of effort on their part, there was no punishment. But on one occasion after an unexpected hailstorm, he learned that his four weather lamas had not been at their posts on the mountain when the storm had begun to form. He had them brought to his courtyard and whipped.

In the field of education, the Great Thirteenth is appreciated for his efforts to upgrade and standardize the examination process for those who would stand for the geshey degree, the highest academic honor in the Tibetan Buddhist world. It was rumored that corruption and bribery had crept into the process of obtaining this most coveted diploma, and that some who were allowed to enter the final tests were unfit. Since the final examination was oral, and for ordinary monks took place on an open courtyard in the company of many other candidates, it was possible for an unqualified candidate to slip through without really being tested. This was because the most intensive tests were supposed to take place back in the individual monasteries, with each monastery sending only its top graduates

for the public debates at the Great Prayer Festival. The Dalai Lama implemented a much more rigid screening process so that unqualified candidates could not appear. He himself, together with his tutors and several carefully selected high lamas, then personally supervised the final stages of the testing, and sat in on the public debate tests.

Nor did he permit those who had attained the geshey degree to rest on their reputations. It is said that he kept a close eye on all the top lamas, and often called them individually to check up on what they were doing with their knowledge.

The Great Thirteenth's contribution to the Tibetan medical tradition was no less significant. He upgraded the training and testing of medical students in the two principal medical colleges at Lhasa, and revised the system of "national medicare" that the Great Fifth Dalai Lama had installed several centuries earlier.

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Amid all of these activities the Great Thirteenth lived a quiet but busy life. Every day he would rise long before sunrise and perform several hours of meditation. After breakfast he would personally carry out his correspondence with those who wrote to him from around the country. Many letters also came to him from the various Mongolian regions, as well as from India and China. Some of these requested private spiritual advice, others requested his prayers for someone who had died, and still others sought names and blessings for newborn children. Some were from intimate disciples, others from distant devotees. He gave each his personal attention.

After lunch he would generally paint or meditate for an hour or so, before embarking on the long series of private and official audiences that would comprise the afternoon. On some days this would include meetings with his ministers or the parliament; on others he would be expected to give individual blessings or teachings to large groups who had come to see him. The various committees in charge of the numerous projects he had initiated would also report to him at this time. It is said that he loved to garden for an hour or so in the early evenings, and to take a walk in the Norbu Lingka park at sunset. He would then retire to his chambers, to write or meditate, or to join his private monastery Namgyal Dratsang in prayers and rituals. The many compositions attributed to him were generally penned at this time of the day.

Sleep would not come until almost midnight; and it is said that when he was in the middle of giving an initiation ritual or teaching that required several days or weeks to complete, often he would sit up in meditation all night.

One of the more exhausting tasks required of him must have been that of giving group blessings. This could involve receiving a complete tribe of nomads from some part of the country, or from Mongolia or Himalayan India. It could also involve receiving a complete monastery or nunnery. Even if the group numbered ten or twenty thousand people in size, he would be expected to bless each person individually. The crowd would pass before him in single file, and he would either place his hands on the head of each devotee in turn, or touch the devotee's head with his tasseled wand. This would be punctuated by brief vocal interchanges, in which he would ask a question of someone in the group, or someone would ask a brief question of him. With laypeople the request was often for a name for a baby, or a sacred medicine pill, or a blessing to cure some illness. With monks and nuns it was more often a request to attend some initiation or teaching he was about to give, or for his blessings for a meditation retreat on which they were about to embark.

Tibetans also like to speak of the miraculous powers and psychic abilities of the Great Thirteenth. Generally a monk is not allowed to openly display these qualities; but sometimes even a Dalai Lama will slip in this regard. It is said that once when presiding over the Great Prayer Festival, he noticed some monks performing their rites incorrectly. He immediately stood up in disgust and stamped his foot to draw their attention back to the ritual. An impression of his foot was left in the solid stone on the verandah of the Jokhang Temple for all to see; it was more than a centimeter in depth and was perfectly shaped to the contours of his foot.

Another important function of every adult Dalai Lama is participation in the process of the discovery and certification of new reincarnate lamas. Whenever a high lama dies, a committee is formed to search for the reincarnation. Often the Dalai Lama will be approached for clues as to where to begin the search. Some Dalai Lamas have shown a greater talent in this work than others, but it is said that the Great Thirteenth was among the best. From the time he reached maturity he played an instrumental role in the discovery of many of the incarnates who required "finding," including the reincarnations of his senior tutor Purchokpa (who later became his chief disciple and biographer), his assistant tutor Ling Rinpochey (who later became the senior tutor to the present Dalai Lama), and

Reteng Rinpochey (who after the Great Thirteenth's death became the regent of Tibet).

For example, when the search for the reincarnation of the high lama of Reteng Monastery began, the committee first came to the Dalai Lama for advice. He watched his dreams for a few days, and then sent them a letter describing the landscape of the area, the direction from Lhasa, and the first names of the mother and father (neither of whom he had ever met). The information led the committee to the correct area, and eventually to the discovery of the incarnation.

In later years, the Great Thirteenth showed a special fondness for this incarnation. He would often visit Reteng Monastery for a few weeks at a time, retreating to solitary meditation in a small house in the juniper forest above the temple complex. He gave many private initiations and teachings to the young lama, and carefully watched over his spiritual growth.

Then a year before he died he gave the Reteng Rinpochey his personal divination box, commenting that in the future he may need it to help decide matters of state. Later the Reteng Lama became one of the most important figures responsible for the discovery of the new Dalai Lama incarnation.

Indeed, after the Great Thirteenth passed away the dangerous job of serving as regent was unexpectedly given to Reteng Rinpochey. The decision was made by the Tibetan cabinet and by a drawing of lots of the names of the various candidates that had been put forth.

The Tibetans regard the Thirteenth's act of giving the young Reteng Tulku his divination box as a sign of the clairvoyance of the former, for at the time there was no way other than clairvoyance that he could have known Reteng Rinpochey would be chosen to serve as regent.

An important duty of every Dalai Lama is the ordination of those who want to embark on the religious life. Each person ordained by a lama will also receive a monastic name from him. The name is usually in two parts, the first being the first name of the ordaining lama and the second being specific to each individual. Because the Great Thirteenth's first name was Tubten, and he ordained thousands of monks and nuns, this became one of the most common personal names in monasteries throughout Central Asia in the early part of this

century.

In turn, each of these ordained monks and nuns later helped in the naming of new children in their own communities, also giving their own first name as the first name of the child. Because of the Great Thirteenth's tremendous popularity, the next best thing to meeting him was to receive a name from him or from someone whom he had ordained.

In this way the name Tubten spread until it became the most widely used in the land. Even today one Tibetan out of every four or five seems to have Tubten as a first name, a small legacy inherited from the Great Thirteenth.

The Great Thirteenth is also fondly remembered for his fiery temperament. Almost all Westerners who met him commented on how wrathful he was in his dealings with his own people. Some mistook this forcefulness as representing a bad temper, but those who knew him well saw it as a skillful means of effectively motivating a conservative and slow-moving society. Though all the Dalai Lamas are thought to be emanations of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, each of them embodies characteristics of all three essential bodhisattvas: Avalokiteshvara, whose nature is compassion; Manjushri, embodiment of wisdom; and Vajrapani, who embodies power and wrath. In general the Great Thirteenth was an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion; but his mode of expression very much reflected the nature of Vajrapani, the Bodhisattva of Wrathful Activities.

When he was once asked why he was always so kind and gentle with his foreign friends and so wrathful with the Tibetans he laughed and replied, Even treating them as wrathfully as I do, still they only listen to half of what I say. How much less effective would I be if I were to be less wrathful with them?

The Great Thirteenth inherited two major problems with his position as political chieftain, neither of which he was able to solve during his lifetime. The first of these, which is discussed above in some depth, was British insistence on regarding Tibet as being under Chinese suzerainty.

The second had to do with a chasm that had formed in the relationship between the Lhasa government and the office of the Panchen Lama.

As described earlier, the various incarnations of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas had shared a close relationship, and generally whichever lama was the elder at

any given point in history would serve as the guru to the younger. In terms of traditional hierarchy they were the two highest lamas in the country.

However, a major rift occurred when the Great Thirteenth was still a child, and this rift gradually widened, ending in disaster.

The failure of the Great Thirteenth and his government to solve the problem had repercussions that carried through into the lifetimes of the present Dalai Lama and the Seventh Panchen, who died in 1989. They have continued with the new Panchen incarnation, the Eighth.¹⁰

The root of the breach lay in an incident that occurred in the 1880s, when the Great Thirteenth was still an infant. These were the days of Tibet's closed door policy, when no one was allowed to visit from British India without specific permission from Lhasa. Lhasa saw this as a means of keeping out the British expansionists, who generally used friendly "scientific expeditions" as a ploy to make maps for future military use. Violation of this Lhasa policy was an act of treason, and was punishable by death.

In the late 1870s, the Tashi Lhunpo authorities were approached by a Tibetan from Darjeeling, India, to issue a travel permit to Sarat Chandra Das, a Bengali Indian who wished to map the Tibetan ranges. Consequently Das made two visits to Lhasa, the first in 1879 and the second in 1881, even managing to gain an audience with the young Thirteenth Dalai Lama. But then the Lhasa authorities made a terrible discovery. Sarat Chandra Das was a spy in the employ of the British government. An investigation followed, and the officials who had issued him with travel documents were arrested and tried for treason.

Among them was Sengchen Dorjey Chang, Tashi Lhunpo's greatest living master and also a tutor to the Panchen Lama. The Lhasa aristocrats, not wanting to show favoritism, sentenced him to death for his breach of national security, a punishment that was carried out by drowning. This was the first cause of the Lhasa/Tashi rift.

Mistrust intensified in the late 1880s with the conflict between Tibet and the British. Lhasa instituted a special tax to cover the costs of the army that had been formed to push the British out of Tibet. Tashi Lhunpo had traditionally been exempt from such taxes because of the special status of the Panchen Lama. However, this time they were not spared. The Tashi Lhunpo administrators

interpreted the change as further harassment for their participation in the Sarat Chandra Das affair.

A third complication grew out of the fact that both the British and the Chinese saw the Panchen Lama and the Tashi Lhunpo administration as a possible alternative to the Lhasa government. This was natural enough, for the Panchen was hierarchically the second highest lama in the country; but both foreign governments exploited the situation in such a way as to put the Panchen in a compromised position with his own countrymen, and especially with the Lhasa authorities. Moreover, Tashi Lhunpo was closer to British India than was Lhasa, and thus was a more natural British choice as a center for communications with Tibet.

A final ingredient in the formula was the fact that the long period of shortlived Dalai Lamas—the Ninth to Twelfth—had eroded the visible presence of the Lhasa government, and the Panchen had often been called upon during these years to sort out problems of national import. The British naturally came to see him as an alternative to the uncooperative Lhasa authorities.

The concept of elevating the Panchen Lama to the position of head of Tibet became an actual British proposal in 1904, when Sir Francis Younghusband invaded Lhasa and the Dalai Lama was forced to flee to Mongolia and China. Having gained control, Younghusband wanted to establish an administration in Lhasa that would be friendly to British interests. He lobbied with his superiors to allow him to set up the Panchen Lama as the acting head. The Panchen's congeniality contrasted sharply with what Younghusband perceived as the Dalai Lama's uncooperative attitude. However, permission was never cleared, for Younghusband had fallen out of favor with the Home Office, and also because it became obvious that the Tibetans would strongly resist the move. Nor did the Panchen openly express interest in the proposal.

In 1905, the British sent a message to the Dalai Lama—now in exile in Mongolia—informing him that he should not return to Lhasa until the situation there had calmed, and that if he were to disregard this advice he could expect the British to take military action against Lhasa once more. Meanwhile the British viceroy had invited the Panchen Lama to visit Calcutta during the winter of 1905-6, an event planned to coincide with the prince of Wales' tour of India.

The Panchen cautiously accepted the invitation, probably thinking that to ignore

the British at this delicate moment in history would be unwise, but also knowing full well that such a visit to the camp of the enemy while the Dalai Lama was still in a state of forced exile would be regarded with extreme suspicion by Lhasa, and could even be construed as grounds for a charge of treason. The Panchen's visit to India was successful and certainly benefited Tibet, but nonetheless did increase the suspicions of the Lhasa government, who undoubtedly felt somewhat insecure in their relations with him due to the incident with the tutor Sengchen Dorjey Chang.

The Great Thirteenth finally returned to Lhasa in 1909, but this event was almost immediately followed by the Chinese invasion headed by Butcher Chao. The Dalai Lama had to flee the country once more, this time taking refuge in British India. The Chinese had previously denounced the Panchen Lama because of his visit to Calcutta and his communications with the British; but now they made an immediate about-face and began to play up to the administrators of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. In January of 1911, with the Dalai Lama still in exile in India, they invited the Panchen Lama to Lhasa. Here they housed him first in the prestigious Jokhang Temple, and then in the Dalai Lama's own summer palace, the Norbu Lingka. He was lavishly entertained and repeatedly shown off in public in the company of the Chinese amban. It should be pointed out that it would have been difficult—and perhaps even lethal—for him to refuse this invitation, but nonetheless the Lhasa aristocrats resented it.

The Panchen had not been in Lhasa long, however, when the revolution in China reached full strength and the Manchu government fell to the Nationalists. The Tibetans saw their opportunity for independence and seized the moment. Acting on instructions from the Dalai Lama's government in exile, they rose in rebellion. The Chinese forces in Lhasa eventually surrendered. The Dalai Lama returned to Tibet, and the Panchen returned to Tashi Lhunpo.

This could easily have been the end of the story, but such was not to be the case. After returning to Tibet, the Great Thirteenth cut off all direct ties with China, and would only communicate with Beijing through British mediation. Consequently the Chinese saw the Panchen Lama as their only hope for getting a foot in the Tibetan door. Over the years that followed, the new Chinese government continued to make overtures to the Panchen Lama, sending lavish gifts to both him and his administrators. They also requested to have the Panchen or at least one of his representatives present at the Shimla Convention of 1913-14, a condition that neither Lhasa nor Britain endorsed.

Things were somewhat quiet for the next decade, partially because the Dalai Lama was in meditation retreat for almost half this time period. On the surface it seemed that the rift between the Lhasa government and the Tashi Lhunpo authorities would heal by itself.

The Tashi Lhunpo people, however, held their suspicions that the Lhasa power brokers were just biding their time and waiting for a convenient moment to come down with the hammer. There is no doubt that they feared for the Panchen Lama's life and safety, for the memory of how his great tutor had been executed remained strong in their minds. They did not doubt the good intentions of the Dalai Lama himself, but were not convinced that he had the power to keep certain members of his government in check. The unrest in Lhasa during Sir Charles Bell's visit of 1921, and the harsh manner in which the Lhasa government had responded to it, could only have added to their fears.

The Sixth Panchen Lama had many devotees throughout Asia, more than even the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. This was true not only in Tibet but also throughout Mongolia and China. In 1923 he accepted an invitation to undertake a teaching tour throughout the remote regions of the northeast, including Mongolia. He left Tashi Lhunpo on December 23 of that same year, amid protests from the Lhasa government, who feared that his foreign travels would be used by China and perhaps even the British to further divide the Shigatsey region from Lhasa.

The die had been cast. Bad went to worse, and before long the Panchen Lama found himself crossing the border from Mongolia into China. From that time onward the prospects of his return became infinitely complex. At a time when the national priority was disentanglement from the Chinese web, he had involved China in Tibetan affairs.

Months soon began to turn into years. The teaching tour that had originally been planned as a short excursion became an extended exile. The Panchen began to regret the course of action that he had taken, and repeatedly appealed to the British to mediate his return for him.

The Dalai Lama too was distraught over the Panchen's long absence, and feared that it would cause unnecessary friction within the country at a time when he wanted to create a strong united front. He wrote several letters to the Panchen, requesting him to return and guaranteeing him safe passage.

However, the problem was not easily resolved. The Panchen's officials would not allow him to return unconditionally, and the conditions that they set were unacceptable to several of the most important Lhasa ministers. The dialogue went back and forth, mostly through British intermediaries, but to no avail.

Finally it appeared that a suitable arrangement had been struck, and the party prepared to return. Suddenly war broke out in China and, not wanting to enter Tibet on an unstable footing, the Tashi Lhunpo officials reneged on the agreement.

Eventually in 1933 a new deal was struck and the Panchen began the long homeward journey. But then dramatic news arrived from Lhasa: The Dalai Lama had suddenly and mysteriously passed away. Again there was no way the Panchen could proceed, for in the Dalai Lama's absence the situation in Tibet would be volatile, and for them in particular it would be extremely hazardous. Consequently they turned back to China, where the Panchen Lama lived out the remainder of his life. He passed away a few years later, in November of 1937.

It is interesting to note that throughout the long years of their estrangement, the Dalai and Panchen Lamas generally spoke well of one another, and both of them placed the blame for the problem not on each other but on their administrators. The Panchen felt that various Lhasa ministers were persecuting him and Tashi Lhunpo out of jealousy for the esteem in which the Shigatsey administration was held by both the British and Chinese leaders. On the other hand, the Dalai Lama believed that the Panchen was being badly advised by several of his ministers, who many suspected were in the pay of first the British and then the Chinese.

It is also interesting to note that one of the final acts of the elderly Sixth Panchen Lama was the assistance he rendered to the Lhasa committee in its search for the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's reincarnation, the Fourteenth and present Dalai Lama. This, of course, occurred several years after the Great Thirteenth passed away.

The advice and information that he gave at that time directed the committee to the child who eventually was recognized and enthroned as His Holiness the present Dalai Lama.

Traditionally it is said that the three most essential deeds of a lama are died, tsod and tsom: teaching disciples, engaging in philosophical discussions,

and composing spiritual treatises. For the last decade of his life, the Great Thirteenth dedicated tremendous energy to these three endeavors.

His activities in cultural spheres have already been touched upon. Here one of his most significant acts was restoring Tibet's classical institutions. The work on the Jokhang and Ramochey temples alone involved the coordinated efforts of a hundred of the country's most talented artists. The overall effect was a total rejuvenation of the fine arts. He also commissioned the building of several new temples, including the magnificent chapel in the Norbu Lingka dedicated to the Three Essential Bodhisattvas. The publishing house that he founded printed many of the great Tibetan literary classics, including the collected works of Buton and the important writings of Taranatha. The patronage that he gave to the various performing arts, both the religious cham dances and the classical lhamo operas, completely revived the Tibetan dance tradition.

As well as upgrading the traditional forms of education, he also attempted to modernize Tibet by arranging for a number of young Tibetan students to go to English schools in India and England, and sponsored the creation of a British-run school in Tibet. He did not merely appoint committees to execute these diverse tasks for him, but took a direct and personal interest in them himself. As a result, he deeply inspired the spiritual and cultural life of the country.

As a secular leader he also strove constantly for the political well-being of his people. Much of this had to be limited to internal affairs, for his wish to clarify Tibet's status vis-a-vis China was to a great extent foiled by Britain. The best he could do on the external front was physically hold the Chinese out of the country and hope that eventually a transformation would manifest in the British attitude.

From the time of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, he showed an intense dislike for communism and worked diligently to safeguard his country against it. He watched with distaste as the Red Soviets gradually absorbed and destroyed the spiritual cultures of the Buddhist republics of the Mongolian peoples to the north of Tibet, and worried that the wave of communism would one day wash over into his own country.

During the New Year festivities of 1932, the Nechung Oracle warned the Tibetan government of dangers to the Dalai Lama's life and advised that various long-life prayers and rituals be performed. These were all done as prescribed. The government officials then approached His Holiness and asked for his advice

on what more they could do.

Shortly thereafter the Great Thirteenth delivered what has come to be known as his “Final Testament,” in which he recounts the major activities of his life and advises his people on how they should proceed in the future. Because the text mentions several events that later came to pass, it is also known as The Prophecies of the Great Thirteenth, a title under which it has received several printings in the refugee camps of India.

The work is only a few pages in length, so I will take the liberty of quoting it in full. It reveals the essence of the Dalai Lama’s own interpretation of his life, the Tibet situation, and the future of his people.

As is well known to all of you, it was considered to be unnecessary to utilize the emperor’s golden urn in the process of determining my incarnation. The prophecies that had been made by the oracles and lamas and the tests performed upon me as an infant were in themselves deemed to be sufficiently convincing. Therefore as a child I was recognized and enthroned as the true reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lamas.

In accordance with tradition I was trained by numerous holy spiritual masters, including the Regent Tatsak Rinpochey and Yongdzin Purchokpa Dorjey Chang. Under their guidance I studied in depth the nature of the Buddhist path, beginning with simple prayers and continuing up to the most abstruse subjects. From them I received the preliminary, novice and full ordinations of a monk, and was guided through the five principal subjects of Buddhist Philosophy: prajnaparamita, madhymaka, pramana, abhidharma, and vinaya. I learned to debate the essential themes of all these teachings, thus becoming exposed to their inner meanings. My studies included the ocean of sutra and tantra lineages, and under these wonderful masters I received countless instructions, initiations, direct transmissions, and secret oral teachings. I applied myself ceaselessly day after day, year after year, to this vast corpus of spiritual lore, until my mind was completely saturated with it.

Even though I was still quite immature, when I reached the age of eighteen I was called upon to accept the responsibility of serving as spiritual and secular head of the country. I considered myself unqualified for the position, but because both the political and religious leaders unanimously petitioned me to accept it, and the Manchu emperor also urged me to do so, I felt that there was no alternative

but to agree.

From that time on I have had to sacrifice my personal wishes and individual freedom for the greater task of working day and night for the spiritual, social and political welfare of the country. The responsibility was by no means small, and it weighed heavily upon my mind.

In the Wood Dragon Year, the English armies began to build up on our borders and threaten an invasion. It would have been simple enough for me to have placated them by submitting to their demands, but such a course of action could have easily resulted in danger to our independence and sovereignty. Therefore, in spite of the difficult and hazardous journey, I left for Mongolia and Manchu China, the two countries with whom the Great Fifth Dalai Lama had established patron/priest arrangements, and with whom Tibet shared relations of mutual respect and support.

I was given wonderful receptions in both these countries, and in Beijing the emperor and empress received me graciously and showed me great honor. I informed them of our situation, and they showed deep sympathy.

But while I was there they both passed away and the new emperor, Shon-ton, was installed. I held some talks with him, and then left to return to Tibet.

Yet even as I traveled, the Chinese amban sent false reports to the emperor and as a result a Chinese army under Lui Chan began to invade from the east.

Once more as the person responsible for the welfare of the country I was forced to leave my homeland and struggle for the national interest. Again, without regard for the hardships incurred by such an undertaking, I took my ministers and officials and retreated into the holy land of India, where I appealed to the British government to mediate negotiations between China and ourselves. The British did attempt to do this, but the Chinese were totally unresponsive.

Under these circumstances there was really nothing we could do, other than sit and pray for a favorable change in the nature of the situation. And our prayers were soon answered, for the profound power of truth is great, and the forces of karma infallible. Civil war broke out within China itself, and the picture in Tibet completely transformed. The Chinese troops stationed in our country were cut off from all assistance, and became stagnant like a pool from which the flow of water is terminated. Bit by bit we were able to rout them out and to expel them

from our land.

My government and I resumed control of the country in the Water Ox Year (1913), and from that time until the present day, the Year of the Water Monkey (1932), we have continued to rule without any trace of foreign interference. This has been an era of peace and prosperity for Tibet, and all the people have been able to live in harmony and joy.

These events of our history are well documented, and are known to all of you. Therefore I do not have to go into them in detail. I have mentioned them in brief just to let you know how I perceived things as they happened. Throughout all that occurred I did my best to safeguard our spiritual, cultural and political identity, and if there have been any positive results from my efforts that alone will bring me satisfaction. I am not recounting these various deeds so that you will praise or thank me; the only reward I seek is for our land to remain strong and for our people to live in happiness. Other than this I do not want even a sesame seed for my efforts.

I have now become rather old, and want to step down from the responsibility of serving as spiritual and secular leader of the country. I would like to dedicate the remainder of my time to meditation, and to think about my next life. This is something that we all must do in our old age.

Unfortunately it appears that I am not to be allowed this luxury, and I dare not turn my back on the trust that has been placed in me by my meditational divinities and Dharma Protectors. Moreover, when I approached my spiritual preceptors with the request that they grant their blessings for my decision to resign from power they asked me not to do so; and also the majority of the Tibetan people seem to have faith in me alone these days, and have fervently petitioned me to change my mind on the matter and to remain at the helm of the country. Therefore there is really nothing I can do other than continue.

However, I am now almost fifty-eight years old, and soon it will be impossible for me to serve you any longer. Everyone should realize this fact, and begin to look to what you will do in the future when I am gone. Between me and the next incarnation there will be a period in which you will have to fend for yourselves.

Our two most powerful neighbors are India and China, both of whom have very powerful armies. Therefore we must try to establish stable relations with both of

them. There are also a number of smaller countries near our borders which maintain a strong military. Because of this, it is important that we too maintain an efficient army of young and well-trained soldiers that is able to establish the security of the country. In the present age the five great degenerations seem to totally dominate life on earth, to the extent that fighting and conflict have become part of the very fabric of human society. If we do not make preparations to defend ourselves from the overflow of violence, we will have very little chance of survival.

In particular, we must guard ourselves against the barbaric red communists who carry terror and destruction with them wherever they go. They are the worst of the worst. Already they have consumed much of Mongolia, where they have outlawed the search for the reincarnation of Jetsun Dampa, the incarnate head of the country. They have robbed and destroyed the monasteries, forcing the monks to join their armies or else killing them outright. They have destroyed religion wherever they've encountered it, and not even the name of Buddhadharma is allowed to remain in their wake. I am sure you have heard the reports coming out of Ulan Bator and other such places.

It will not be long before we find the red onslaught at our own front door. It is only a matter of time before we come into a direct confrontation with it, either from within our own ranks or else as a threat from an external [communist] nation.

And when that happens we must be ready to defend ourselves. Otherwise our spiritual and cultural traditions will be completely eradicated. Even the names of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas will be erased, as will be those of the other lamas, lineage holders and holy beings. The monasteries will be looted and destroyed, and the monks and nuns killed or chased away, the great works of the noble Dharma kings of old will be undone, and all of our cultural and spiritual institutions persecuted, destroyed and forgotten. The birthrights and property of the people will be stolen; we will become like slaves to our conquerors, and will be made to wander helplessly like beggars. Everyone will be forced to live in misery, and the days and nights will pass slowly, and with great suffering and terror.

Therefore, when the strength of peace and happiness is with us, while the power to do something about the situation is still in our hands, we should make every effort to safeguard ourselves against this impending disaster. Use peaceful

methods where they are appropriate; but where they are not appropriate, do not hesitate to resort to more forceful means. Work diligently now, while there is still time. Then there will be no regrets.

The future of our country lies in your hands. Whether you are a chief minister or simple government official, monk or layperson, teacher or disciple, secular leader or ordinary citizen, I urge you all to rise up together and work for the common good in accordance with your individual capacity. One person alone cannot ward off the threat that faces us; but together we can win out in the end. Avoid rivalry and petty selfinterests, and look instead to what is essential.

We must strive together with positive motivation for the general welfare of all, while living in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha. If we do this, then there is no doubt that we will abide within the blessings of the national protective divinity Nechung, who was appointed by the Acharya [Padma Sambhava] to assist the line of Dalai Lamas in the task of caring for Tibet.

From my side, I too will do all that I can for the common good, and direct my blessings to those who do likewise. I offer them my prayers that their efforts may meet with every success. As for those who do not act correctly at this critical time, they will experience the fate they justly deserve. Their indulgent behavior may bring them comfort for a few moments, but in the end they will meet with disaster. Now they sit and lazily watch the time pass; but before long they will come to regret their apathy. And then it will be too late for remedies.

I feel that the happiness and prosperity of Tibet will continue for the remainder of my life. After that there will be considerable suffering, and each of you will individually experience the consequences of your ways in the manner I have described above.

My experiences and reason have convinced me that these things could come to pass, and that it would be useful for me to speak of them to you.

Numerous external rituals have been and are being performed for my long life. But actually the most important thing people can do for me is to perform the inner ritual of holding this advice of mine in their hearts. If in the past mistakes have been made we should learn from them, and should resolve to change and to work hard from now on to the best of our abilities.

From my side I will continue to do whatever I can to enhance the quality of our

spiritual and cultural traditions, and to dedicate my energies to securing the Tibetan political situation. I encourage and will pray for all of you in positions of leadership who do likewise. Hopefully if we all work hard our people will be able to know peace and happiness in the end, and our country will be able to survive long into the future.

You have asked me to give you my advice, and therefore I have done so. Please take it to heart, and try to apply its essence day and night in all that you do. Think carefully about what I have said, for the future is in your hands. It is extremely important to overcome what needs to be overcome, and to accomplish what needs to be accomplished. Do not confuse the two.

The above short text is perhaps the most famous of everything the Great Thirteenth wrote, for much of what he said in it eventually became reality. His advice to build up a strong army to keep out the Communists was ignored, and in the 1950s the Red Chinese invaded. In Tibet itself almost a fifth of the population was killed, and tens of thousands were put in concentration camps. Many more fled to India as refugees. They came to realize the truth of his words, “we will become like slaves to our conquerors, and will be made to wander helplessly like beggars. Everyone will be forced to live in misery, and the days and nights will pass slowly, and with great suffering and terror.”

Tibetans believe that every Dalai Lama is born enlightened, and has complete power over how long he lives and when he will die. Any appearance to the contrary is merely an act for the sake of operating in the mundane world and training the minds of ordinary people.

In his last testament the Great Thirteenth mentions being “almost fifty-eight” in conjunction with the possibility of his passing away. Tibetans believe that this was a warning to them that he would die the following year, when he was fifty-eight.

The question might be asked: If the Great Thirteenth had power over his life and death, why did he choose to pass away at that particular time?

One theory that I heard from several learned Tibetans during my stay in the refugee camps in India was that he had given his people a map of how they could become militarily self-sufficient, and thus prepare themselves for the eventual communist invasion that he had foreseen. However, they were too

lethargic and factional to heed his words, and could not accept the idea of supporting a large army. It became evident that they would not be prepared for the invasion, and that if anything were to be done he would have to do it himself.

It was prophesied that his devotees had sufficient merits to be blessed by his presence for eighty-two years, provided that they acted correctly. But when they hesitated on following through on his advice to create a strong defense for the country, it put him in a difficult position. He could quietly live out the remainder of his life and when his twilight years arrived, watch helplessly as the Red Chinese invaded; or he could pass away and reincarnate quickly, so that when the invasion occurred he would be a young, energetic man able to guide his people through the troubled waters, lead them into exile in India, and from there work for Tibetan independence and the preservation of Tibet's unique spiritual culture.

He chose the latter option.

In November of the Water Bird Year, or 1933, the Great Thirteenth summoned the photographer of the Nepalese mission and asked him to take a formal portrait of him for his disciples. The Tibetans took this as a sign that soon he would pass away, for it was an act that the Dalai Lama had never before done. Then suddenly in mid-December he fell ill with a strong cold. Within the space of a few days the cold developed into pneumonia and he passed away.

The Great Thirteenth found time in his busy schedule to compose several dozen texts of various lengths. As had many of the previous Dalai Lamas, he also wrote numerous poems, hymns and other verse works. I conclude this chapter with two of his verse works of spiritual advice.

Those familiar with Tibetan literature will know that Tibetan texts usually have a colophon appended to the end, in which something is said about the context of the composition. The colophon to the verse work that follows reads, "In the Iron Mouse Year of the fifteenth sexanry my philosophy instructor, Gomang Lobzang Ngawang, submitted a request on behalf of some of his disciples from Lower Kham, requesting me to compose a short work of spiritual advice on the nature of correct and incorrect spiritual practice that would inspire them to cultivate the wholesome. As a consequence I, the Buddhist monk Tubten Gyatso Palzangpo, wrote the above, entitled A Song To Strengthen Spiritual Practice."

The Iron Mouse Year mentioned here identifies the date of the composition as

1900, when he was a young man of twenty-five, before the invasions by Britain and then China had occurred.

Kyema hoh!

I bow to the feet of the root and lineage gurus,

Embodiments of the objects of refuge,

Essence of the kindness of the aryas.

I call to you from the depths of my heart:

Reach out with the hook of your compassion

And care for living beings until their enlightenment is achieved.

In this coarse age marked by five great degenerations,

The living beings, weak in spirit,

Are locked hard in the prison of samsara.

Their minds are of limited understanding, and

They are bound by the noose of the five psychic poisons.

Therefore the compassion of the buddhas Manifests with special strength at this time.

Hence it is also a time of opportunity, a time

To apply oneself with joy to the methods that accomplish

The purpose of this life, the bardo, and all future births.

Make clear in your mind with precision The steps on the supreme path that leads To the states of liberation and omniscience.

To give a single day to the cultivation of goodness Without mixing in any negativity Is as rare as a midday star.

The eight worldly concerns and the activities That benefit this one lifetime
alone Prevail, and they cheat us out of lasting joy.

Then, because of the instincts collected By constant familiarity with the
superficial,

We come to possess the prejudiced mind

Blind to the reality of karmic law

And mistrustful of the three supreme Refuge objects,

Like we cynically doubt a magician's act.

Thus controlled by misconception,

Our mind becomes accustomed to bad habits And we collect a mass of negative
karma By ridiculing and disparaging all that is high.

This burden of misconception is heavy,

And even further clouds the mind.

Then, living a life contradicting truth,

We procrastinate in doing anything worthwhile. Indeed, it is sad to witness
those Who thus misuse the jewel-like human potential And turn their backs on
responsible living.

Human life is rare and precious,

And is possessed of limitless capacity for growth.

Yet it is short and fragile;

And although we constantly see others Die without respect to their youth or age,

We continue to act with the false confidence That somehow our own death is far
away.

O Jewels of Refuge, inspire us now to turn

Our minds toward spiritual practice, so that at death

We need not clutch our chests in fear and regret.

For, living under the illusion of our own permanence, We generate vast stores of black karma That after death will ripen as lower rebirth.

Then we will have to face great suffering,

With little spiritual counsel for many aeons.

Such is the reality clearly described In the sutras, tantras and other scriptures.

There are many people who have heard these teachings, But whose minds are blocked by arrogance And they excuse themselves from acting accordingly On the grounds that bodhisattvas and tantric yogis Can behave unconventionally due to the power Of their insight and great compassion.

However, these sophists are not governed by compassion, And this we can clearly discern when we observe The distance between their words and their ambitions.

It would seem that their foolhardy habit Of boldly contradicting karmic law Will do little for them but bring them Into the flames of the hot hells.

The Three Jewels of Refuge are unfailing protectors,

And their power and compassion flow ceaselessly Without discrimination for friend or foe.

May they send forth their inspiring blessings,

That by the strength of their boundless excellence All beings may realize the highest path,

And that our spiritual journey need not be long.

In order to help the unfortunate beings of this age And lead them to the sublime stage of bliss,

Buddha taught the vast and profound Dharma,

That includes the six perfections, egolessness,
Emptiness, and the three higher trainings.

Such is the sense and content of the scriptures.

As for the beings who reject this sublime Way,

What can one possibly say for them, other than that An evil spirit has captured
their minds.

May the objects of Refuge release their blessings,

That these people may be turned by truth

And may follow in the footsteps of the transcended masters.

These days there are many charlatans who profess

To carry the weight of upholding

The theory and practice of the Buddhist tradition.

They pretend to be of great learning and insight;

But to settle upon an interpretation of the Dharma Without first examining the
teachings in depth

By means of reason and analysis of the scriptures Produces very little valid
understanding.

And on that basis they praise their own lineages While disparaging the traditions
of others!

Are they not simply Dharma businessmen?

And this is their spiritual focus!

May the inspiring blessings of the Three Jewels Enter deeply into their hearts,

That they may bring their minds under control And joyfully practice the real
meaning of Dharma

meaning of Dharma.

We must eliminate all signs of entanglement
In the web of inner distortion.

The Indian and Tibetan masters of the past
Composed innumerable holy scriptures
In order to benefit future generations,
And it is through application to these
That we should enter into the Great Way.

Study and master the principal themes

Of the wondrous teachings given by the Buddha.

This is the true means of contributing

To the preservation of the scriptural and insight

Transmissions of the Dharma.

As for the community of monks and nuns,

They should try to live in mutual harmony
And always be helpful to one another.

They should constantly maintain with purity
The vows entailed by their ordinations,

Abide in the spiritual way and,

By means of cherishing the eight excellences,

Be sources of inspiration for living beings.

Their basis should be the free spirit of renunciation,
The mind of non-attachment. On this foundation,
The vows of the sevenfold restraints can be received.
Not allowing the stain of a transgression
In either the natural or prescribed disciplines,

They should joyfully practice the three foundations:
Fortnightly purification, annual rainy season retreat,
And the special retreat concluding procedures.

Thus they should make firm the victory banners
Of discipline and spiritual liberation.

As for lay practitioners of the Dharma,

The source of happiness and well-being for both Those maintaining the five lay precepts And those not maintaining any formal commitments Is to avoid all forms of negative karma, Such as killing living beings;

And to apply oneself purely to cultivation Of the ten wholesome courses of action.

O Three Jewels, release your blessings, that The living beings may turn their backs on Following useless and misdirected ways, And instead may strive continually To accomplish the always white truth.

The uncontrolled consumption of alcohol Strengthens the root of every weakness, .

And the use of tobacco is a weakness in itself.

We should examine our activities of mind, speech and body, And regard negative habits as similar to poison.

May we learn to be disgusted with our failings And resolve to avoid them from now on.

There is no need for me to list

The detrimental effects of intoxication,

For Buddha himself spoke explicitly on the subject.

As for tobacco, it is said to be a weed Born from the blood of a demoness.

When tobacco is smoked, the stench first rises And disturbs the celestial beings;

It then descends and pollutes the Hundreds of thousands of naga lakes.

This in turn leads to sickness, want and conflict,

And the root of inauspicious conditions grows strong.

This is my summary of the advice found

In the sutras, tantras and precepts of the masters.
By means of it may trainees on the various levels
Gain a more clear idea of what is to be cultivated
And what abandoned in the practice of the path
That produces goodness, liberation, enlightenment and joy.
May trainees strive single-pointedly to accomplish
The Dharma as explained in the sacred writings
Of the buddhas, bodhisattvas and great gurus of the past.
May they complete the six perfections And four ways of ripening trainees,
The means of crossing over to the supreme ground Of victory, the jewel isle of
buddhahood Possessed of the three perfect kayas.
Some disciples from Echil of Kham repeatedly Requested that I compose some
verses of advice On how to live in correct practice of the Dharma.
Therefore I, the simple Buddhist monk Tubten,
With the hope of providing useful guidance to others,
Have here taken up my pen and transcribed A few of the thoughts that arose in
my mind concerning The many instructions received from my kind teachers.
May it cause goodness and correct practice to increase,
And may the living beings of the world Apply themselves joyfully to spiritual
endeavor.

The reference in the above work to tobacco is a first for a Dalai Lama.
Obviously in the Great Thirteenth's era Tibet had begun to acquire the
habit from the Chinese, as well as from traders coming from British India.

Tibetans claim that the Great Thirteenth would often slip out of the Potala at

night in disguise and haunt the night hangouts. If he saw anyone that he knew smoking, or even saw people smoking in what he considered to be an inappropriate place, he would later scold them forcefully at some public event or another.

He never outlawed any kind of drug, including alcohol, tobacco, snuff, hashish or opium, all of which were common in the Tibet of his day. He did, however, often speak out strongly against their use.

Another wonderful little piece written by the Great Thirteenth is entitled Thoughts To Be Held in the Heart. The colophon to it informs us that he wrote it while he was on his teaching tour of Mongolia. In other words, it was composed during the self-imposed exile that resulted from the British invasion of 1904. The colophon further states that it was written at the request of a monk by the name of Lobzang Jangchub Tenpai Dronmey, who "... asked for a verse work of spiritual advice in accordance with my own personal experiences."

At the time the Great Thirteenth was residing in Thakural, Mongolia, at the Hermitage of Undying Joy in Ganden Shedubling Monastery.

Homage to the spiritual masters and meditational deities Who are inseparable from the Bodhisattva of Compassion, In nature an embodiment of the ocean of buddhas.

With concentrated attention I call to you:

Send out waves of your compassionate energy.

When stability in training has been accomplished,

One can easily transform into aids on the path All negative conditions and unpleasant events That arise to disturb the mind, Such as illness, hindrances and problems.

Cultivate the ability to implement correctly This essential oral instruction.

After birth there is no possibility other Than eventually to meet with death.

Death is constantly approaching us,

And there is no method for turning it away

And there is no method for taking it away.

Therefore cultivate the ability to dedicate yourself Constantly to goodness from the depths of your heart.

At the moment apathy, sleep and laziness Seem to exert an insurmountable influence.

But consider the misery of the lower realms.

And think about how this misery could be yours. Cultivate the strength to eliminate The tendencies of apathy, attachment and aversion That arise toward the objects of perception.

Although involvement with the eight worldly concerns Can bring some immediate superficial benefits,

In the long run it only harms us

And hinders our chances for enlightenment.

Generate the attitude that is disinterested in Activities that bring only temporary pleasure,

And instead strive to attain the stage Of enlightenment's lasting joy.

Our lifespan is indefinite; no one Can prophesy exactly when he shall die.

Therefore practice the enlightenment teachings.

Find a quiet place of meditation

Far from the hustle and bustle of the world.

Take your example from the rhinoceros,

Who is always content to live alone Without the company of distracting friends.

Tie the mind firmly with the rope

Of the three supreme trainings, and guard these

As carefully as the skull of your head.

Become skilled in the spiritual trainings And wise in the ways of karmic law,
So that the paths leading to the lower realms May be cut off and closed forever.

There are those of us who have entered deeply Into the Dharma by taking
monastic vows,

And who should live by the Dharma precepts Yet do not maintain our disciplines
purely.

They behave little better than pigs and dogs,

Wandering about town in search Of distraction, amusement and pleasure.

Do not allow yourself even for a moment To engage in such vain and fruitless
activities.

Although the great meditators own no wealth Nor property gained through
cunning means,

They will never die from hunger or cold.

Try to follow their sublime examples,

And be able to live as a beggar

Rather than accumulate wealth unscrupulously.

We may obtain worldly property,

But if our level of consciousness is coarse It is difficult to achieve the stage Even
of a mere king.

Then at death we must go on alone,

Leaving behind all friends and possessions.

Therefore cut off all compromise With samsara from this moment onward.

What need is there then to cultivate a vast retinue Of friends and attendants who

What need is there then to cultivate a vast retinue of friends and attendants who just increase your wants, And who care for you only out of selfish reasons?

Instead, make spiritual qualities your friends and attendants Qualities, such as wisdom and skillful effort— And dwell untiringly with them

In the essential practices of the teachings.

The blind beings wandering in samsara try To deceive others by claiming wrong as right,

But the gurus and the enlightened beings Have eyes that see truth without obstruction.

Hence always try to abide in correct practice Without being misled into mistaken paths.

Dedicate all your actions to the benefit Of the living beings and also the Dharma.

Strive in every way to accomplish The purpose of this and future lives.

Constantly meditate and cultivate your mindstream Just as is described in the teachings of the masters.

Thus is concluded this brief text of advice Written according to my personal understanding Of the important points in training the mind, And from what I could remember Of the instructions of my own gurus.

May any white energy it possesses Act as a cause to inspire in practice People of a disposition similar to me.

If we can attune our minds

To the teachings of the holy masters,

Then we will be able to transcend the limits Of both samsara and nirvana,

And attain the peerless state of buddhahood.

Of this there need be no doubts.

Therefore I urge those of you with intelligence To make every effort to

accomplish the path.



Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. Photo © Marcia Keegan

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama: From Refugee to Nobel Laureate

After the Great Thirteenth passed away, a conference was held in order to select a regent to serve during the period of the search for the new reincarnation and the minority years of the chosen child. The names of numerous high lamas were put forth, but no agreement was reached.

One lama who was approached on the matter was the Fifth Reteng Tulku. As his name implies, he was the reincarnate head lama of Reteng Monastery. Although he was only twenty-three years old at the time, he seemed unusually mature and strong in character. He was chosen largely because his previous reincarnations had been close with earlier Dalai Lamas, and one of them had even served as regent. Moreover, the young Fifth Reteng Tulku had a deep spiritual connection with the Great Thirteenth. In fact, the Great Thirteenth had visited the young Reteng just before his death, and this was considered significant.

Though the Reteng Tulkus had been prominent and revered since the time of the Seventh Dalai Lama, the Fifth Reteng Tulku has been portrayed in ambiguous or even sinister terms by both Tibetan and Western historians. The story most commonly put about, however, is a misrepresentation of this great man's life, a heroic tale that is truthfully told here for the first time. In that the present Dalai Lama owes everything to him, a more accurate version of his story is long overdue.

The Fourth Reteng Tulku had passed away in 1911, when the Thirteenth Dalai Lama was living in exile in India. Upon the Thirteenth's return to Tibet he took personal responsibility for the final decisions in the process of identifying the reincarnation, and conducted the final divinations on the children named on the shortlist of candidates from which the Fifth Reteng would be chosen. He then gave the selected boy his first monastic ordination, and also gave him the name by which he would be known throughout his life: Tubten

Jampel Yeshey Tenpai Gyaltzen. In accordance with tradition the first part of it, or "Tubten," was part of the Thirteenth's own name.

Having gotten off to this auspicious start, the Fifth Reteng Tulku entered Sera Jey Monastery for his academic training. He excelled in his studies and in record time graduated as a Lharam Geshey, the highest degree awarded in the

monasteries of central Tibet.

The young Fifth Reteng Tulku was offered the job of regent very soon after the Great Thirteenth's passing. However, his chief manager counseled him against accepting the post. Less than a century earlier the Third Reteng had also served as regent, and even though he had done well for the nation, his service ended in personal tragedy for himself. This was Reteng Yeshey Gyatso, who, as readers may recollect, had become regent in 1845 during the childhood of the Eleventh Dalai Lama, and then in 1862 was the victim of a coup d'état effected by the layman Wangchuk Gyalpo Shetra. As a result, Reteng Yeshey Gyatso was forced to flee to safety, opting for a self-imposed exile in China. Although Wangchuk Gyalpo Shetra eventually granted him permission to return to his monastery in Tibet and to live out the remainder of his life in peace, this lama passed away soon after his return. Many suspected foul play.

Two lifetimes later, the unpleasant aftertaste still remained in the collective memory of the Reteng Monastery elders. Thus after the Great Thirteenth passed away and the request came for the Fifth Reteng Tulku to serve as regent, the response was less than enthusiastic.

The Tibetan government decided to resort to divination, and requested the Trizur Rinpoche¹ to perform this for them. The names of the leading candidates were written on pieces of paper, which in turn were inserted into balls of barley dough. These were placed inside a large bowl. Trizur Rinpoche then offered mantras and prayers, took the bowl in his hands, and began swaying it in a circular manner, until one of the balls was thrown out. The name on the paper inside the ball that emerged was that of Reteng Tulku.

Consequently the government again strongly pressed Reteng Tulku to accept the position, and eventually he did so.

Almost immediately after being enthroned as regent, Reteng Tulku established a committee charged with the task of searching for the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's reincarnation. The general area to be searched had already been identified because of a number of natural phenomena that had occurred in Lhasa after the death of the Great Thirteenth, which the diviners considered to be prophetic. Three events in particular caught people's attention.

The first was an unusual cloud formation that seemed to gather repeatedly to the

northeast of Lhasa. Everyone in the city noticed it, and the event became the topic of considerable speculation.

A second sign was that a moss pattern manifested on the wall of the room in which the Great Thirteenth's body sat in state. The pattern had a shape and presence that seemed to call attention to itself, and was located to the northeast of the body.

Thirdly, during the mummification process the head seemed to repeatedly turn by itself toward the northeasterly direction. The mummifiers would straighten the head each time they placed the body in the dehydration box of salt; but each time they opened the box to change the salt the head was seen to have moved, and to be pointing to the northeast.

These three signs were taken as indications that the Dalai Lama had taken rebirth to the northeast. No distance was indicated, however, and therefore numerous other observations had to be made.

Next the Nechung Oracle was consulted. As always he spoke in cryptic verse, but his message was clear. The search should be conducted in the far northeastern part of the country.

The regent decided that a visit to the Oracle Lake would be necessary. He elected to do this himself, together with a small group of ritualist assistants. Together they traveled to the Olkha region and took up residence in Gyal, the monastery that had been constructed by the Second Dalai Lama near the holy lake. Each day the regent and his group would walk up to the lake and meditate above it, looking down on its waters.

Eventually the visions came. Firstly the Tibetan syllables A, KA and MA seemed to form within the waters of the lake. Then came the image of a three-storied monastery with a turquoise and gold roof, as well as a path running from it to a nearby hill. Finally the image of a small house appeared. It had unique gutters, and gnarled miniature junipers growing around it.

The committee at Lhasa pondered over these indications, and decided that the syllable "A" in the lake referred to Amdo, the province to the far northeast of Tibet. The syllable "XA," they concluded, must refer to Kumbum, the largest and most sacred monastery in Amdo, for it had three stories and a turquoise-colored roof. As for the syllable "MA," it was thought to refer to the "m" sound

in both Amdo and Kumbum.

The small house in the regent's vision clearly indicated the dwelling in which the Thirteenth Dalai Lama had taken rebirth, and where the young Fourteenth Dalai Lama could be found. Furthermore, the house must be within walking distance of Kumbum Monastery, because the vision clearly indicated footpaths.

Once more the Nechung Oracle was invoked. The new information was conveyed to him for analysis. He confirmed Kumbum as the area in which the search should be conducted.

Consequently, not long after the Great Thirteenth's death a team of monks was deputized to Amdo to search for and examine children born with promising signs. The group was headed by Keutsang Rinpochey, a high lama from Sera Monastery. He had been a close disciple of the Great Thirteenth, and was revered for his spiritual accomplishments.

As readers may recollect, Kumbum is the name of the monastery built by the Third Dalai Lama on the birthplace of Lama Tsongkhapa. Later this monastery had been used as a residence by the Seventh Dalai Lama during his early years. In addition, both the Great Fifth and the Great Thirteenth had personally visited and taught in Kumbum on numerous occasions. Thus the region was rich in sacred sites associated with both Lama Tsongkhapa and the early Dalai Lamas, and was an extremely popular place of pilgrimage. Keutsang Rinpochey and his team took up residence in Kumbum Monastery and began listening for rumors of children born with exceptional signs.

Over the three years that followed, their list of promising children grew in length, until in the end it contained sixteen names. In each case they would make an outing to the house of the child and informally observe him. They did not, of course, announce that they were looking for the Dalai Lama, for this would bring too much attention to their activities and create obstacles. Instead they stated that they were on pilgrimage to the local meditation sites associated with the early life of Lama Tsongkhapa. In this way they came to the homes of the children in the guise of pilgrims requesting directions, food or hospitality, depending on the time of day.

Finally one day the trail they were following led them around a hill and directly into view of a village that seemed to match the description given by the regent

from his lakeside visions. There they beheld a small house with strange gutters and gnarled junipers. It was midwinter, with snow covering the hills, just as in the original dream seen in the Oracle Lake.

Keutsang Rinpochey instantly knew that their search had drawn to a close. He had one of his assistants pose as the head lama, while he disguised himself as a servant to the group. In this manner they approached the house and requested hospitality for the night.

As we saw in the previous chapter, during the Great Thirteenth's journey from Lhasa to Beijing in 1906 he had stayed for some time in Kumbum Monastery in order to teach and make pilgrimage. At that time he had become friends with the Taktser Lama, one of the great mystics of the Kumbum region. The two had made frequent outings together to local pilgrimage sites associated with Lama Tsongkhapa's youth.

One of these excursions had been to the small Karma Kargyu monastery where Lama Tsongkhapa had, as an infant, met with the Fourth Karmapa Lama and received from him the traditional hair-snipping rite, as well as a spiritual name. At mid-day the Great Thirteenth and the Taktser Lama had picnicked on a hill overlooking Taktser Village. The Great Thirteenth commented on the natural beauty of the place and asked to be taken on a tour through the village. He walked through each house individually, and put numerous questions to the people. The local villagers were astounded at the unexpected honor of receiving the spiritual and temporal leader of the country in their humble abodes.

When the time came to leave, the Great Thirteenth commented to the villagers that he had fallen in love with their valley, and promised them that one day he would return.

There was one house in particular in which the Great Thirteenth seemed to take an especially strong interest. Several years later, after the elderly Taktser Lama passed away, the Great Thirteenth was asked to oversee the search for his reincarnation. In the end, the child chosen by the Great Thirteenth to serve as the new Taktser Rinpochey was a boy born in this very house.

Although the search party being led by Keutsang Rinpochey did not know the specifics of this history, the trail they were following led them to this same house. The Great Thirteenth had taken rebirth as the younger brother of

the reincarnation of his old friend the Taktser Lama.²

Like Christ, the present Dalai Lama was born in a cowshed. It was the custom in Amdo, the birthplace of the present Dalai Lama, for a mother in labor to retire to a barn with the village womenfolk. There she would lay out a bed of fresh, clean hay, and use the site for the birthing process. The privacy was appreciated, and clean-up was simple; the hay could simply be carried away and burned. By the time the Dalai Lama came into the world in the summer of 1935 his mother had already given birth to numerous children in this fashion.

When Keutsang Rinpochey and his retinue came to see the child for the first time, he was two and a half years old, yet the group had been in the Kumbum area for almost three years; therefore, when they arrived, he was still in the womb.

As was the custom in Amdo, the group of travelers was shown respect and offered accommodations. During this first visit Keutsang Rinpochey quietly observed the child from a distance and became immediately convinced that he was the object of their search. However, he did not wish to attract any attention to their quest, and the next day they quietly left.

Three weeks later they again appeared at the door and asked for hospitality. This time Keutsang Rinpochey was walking with two canes, one of which had belonged to the Great Thirteenth. When the boy spotted this cane he immediately grabbed it and said, "This is mine! What are you doing with it?"

At the time Keutsang Rinpochey was wearing a mantra rosary around his neck that the Great Thirteenth had once given him as a gift. The boy immediately noticed it and claimed it as his own. He then took it in his tiny hands and began reciting mantras with it.

That evening Keutsang Rinpochey informally placed numerous objects on the table. Among these were a hand drum and a mantra rosary that had been used by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The boy spontaneously walked up to the table and picked up these two items, showing no interest whatsoever in the others.

After the tests Keutsang Rinpochey told the parents that his group was one of the parties searching for the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. He further informed them that there were sixteen candidates, but that as far as he was concerned this was the

true reincarnation.

The young child, generally aloof with visitors, seemed to immediately bond with Keutsang Rinpochey. The two conversed in the Lhasa dialect, which the boy suddenly used with fluency, even though he had never before heard it in this lifetime.

When the group left the next morning the child burst into tears, clutched at Keutsang Rinpochey's robe, and begged to go with him. Only when Keutsang Rinpochey promised that he would return for him in a few days did the young Dalai Lama console himself.

The Kumbum region of Tibet at that time was under the control of a Chinese Turkestani ruler by the name of Ma Pu-fang. He had been informed by Keutsang Rinpochey that the search for the new Dalai Lama was being conducted within his territory, and that sixteen candidates had been shortlisted. Historians today refer to the territory as "Chinese-controlled." However, Ma Pu-fang himself regarded his domain as an independent and sovereign nation.

Albeit a totalitarian, Ma Pu-fang seems to have been a generally kind man, and was well liked by most of the Tibetans who lived under his rule. He was also somewhat cunning, and saw the potential of personal profit in the situation. He decided to summon the sixteen candidates to his residence, and conduct his own tests on them. Here he sat the boys in a semicircle, and asked them questions individually while observing their responses.

After some time he had a tray of candies passed around. Most of the children took a handful of them, whereas the boy from Taktser carefully selected only one and put it away for later.

Ma Pu-fang was deeply moved by the boy's appearance and demeanor. He spoke to him, asking, "Do you know who I am?"

The boy looked directly into his eyes and replied without any sense of shyness or intimidation, "You are Ma Pu-fang."

After this Ma Pu-fang was completely convinced that the boy from Taktser was the true reincarnation. He dismissed the other candidates and their families, but kept the Taktser family with him.

The Tibetan search party soon began regretting the fact that they had informed Ma Pu-fang of their mission. They had done this for diplomatic reasons, for they had no wish to offend a powerful Muslim warlord with large armies on Tibet's eastern borders. However, over the weeks to follow a cat-and-mouse game ensued. Ma Pu-fang informed the Tibetan committee that he would only allow his guests to leave for Lhasa when he had been paid a fee.

He started by mentioning a smallish sum, but over the months to follow gradually increased the amount.

Thus it could be said that the principal candidate for the office of Dalai Lama was being held hostage for ransom. The committee tried to effect his release by stating that the boy was just one of three shortlisted candidates to be tested in Lhasa, and in all probability was not the correct one.

However, the cunning Muslim warlord was not so easily tricked. He was enjoying the drama, and remained convinced that his "guest" was the real Dalai Lama.

In the end the Tibetan government capitulated to Ma Pu-fang's demands, and paid him what in today's world would be the equivalent of many millions of dollars.

Because of the length of time required to send messages back and forth to Lhasa, the negotiations dragged on for months. As a consequence, the party could not leave for Lhasa until the third day of the sixth month of the Earth Rabbit Year, or early July 1939.

Tibetans today generally speak badly of Ma Pu-fang, blaming the delay in the official recognition and enthronement of the Dalai Lama on his behavior, and also resenting the large gifts that he demanded for the boy's release.

However, every cloud has its silver lining. During this period of forced hospitality, the Muslim warlord developed a deep affection for the child, as well as a close friendship with the boy's father. Fear of reprisals was probably a major factor saving the Dalai Lama from assassination during the drama that unfolded in Lhasa eight years later. The boy may have been installed on the throne at Lhasa as spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people, but he nonetheless remained a son of Ma Pu-fang's soil.

The excursion from Kumbum to central Tibet took the group almost three months, for word had spread that their special ward was none other than the young Dalai Lama. Consequently the group had to stop repeatedly in order to allow people to receive audiences and blessings. In general they tented as they moved, setting up camp every night. They took the northern route, via the Kokonor, or “Blue Lake,” for this was deemed safest at the time. At each stage of the trip the group grew in size, being met by delegations from Lhasa who joined in for the remaining journey.

Finally the caravan dropped out of the mountains and caught their first view of Reteng Monastery. Here the regent himself, together with a large delegation of Lhasa officials, awaited them.

The regent was overjoyed with the meeting, for the arrival of the young Dalai Lama signified the fulfillment of his first and most important duty. He had arranged a grand celebration, with Tibetan opera performances and feasts. The young child seemed to instantly bond with the regent, as though they had been friends for years.

Accompanied by the regent, the entire assembly then left for Lhasa. Here the boy and his family were housed in the Norbu Lingka, or “Summer Residence.” The boy seemed to instantly recognize his quarters, and began rooting around through the cabinets and boxes, pulling out objects that had belonged to his predecessor the Great Thirteenth and claiming them as his own.

It was autumn, and the gardens of the Norbu Lingka were laden with fruit and flowers. Lhasa must have seemed a happy place to the young Dalai Lama. The dark clouds that would soon form within and around Tibet had not yet started to gather, and there was barely a hint of them.

The boy remained in the Norbu Lingka with his family over the winter. With spring came his formal enthronement, a gala ceremony attended by all the greatest lamas and dignitaries in the country. Coincidentally, it was also the first time a Dalai Lama enthronement had been opened to foreigners. Not only was it photographed and documented by several British diplomats, but an Indian journalist on commission from the Indian Government was even permitted to film it with a movie camera.

The young Dalai Lama’s normal, family-centered childhood had now come to an

end. The family was given a town house as their residence, and he moved into the traditional Dalai Lama quarters on the roof of the Potala. His education and training would now begin in earnest.

Regent Reteng Tulku composed a beautiful verse work for the enthronement. It was chanted during the ceremony by the many hundreds of monks in attendance, as well as by all the major monasteries of the Lhasa area. It is translated and presented here in full because it tells so much about the regent's sentiment and attitude toward the young Dalai Lama, and also because it expresses many of the most sublime ideas in Buddhism.

Moreover, the opening verses mention the previous incarnations of the Dalai Lama in a fashion that reveals the context within which most Tibetans see the Dalai Lama today. One can easily imagine the four-year-old boy sitting at the enthronement ceremony, listening to the hundreds of monks who, with him as the focus of their adoration, chant the piece in the low multiphonic style typical of the central Tibetan monasteries.³

In the great sky of compassion's pure nature
Appear clouds of unobstructed
wisdom and mercy.

They release a shower of immortality.

The deities of longevity manifest

And erect a pillar of undying diamond life.

O Holy One, the radiance of your merit and wisdom Grew in strength for many aeons,

And you overcame from within yourself The darkness of the two obscurations.

As a result you now fill the world

With the light of the twofold enlightened activities.

In this way long ago you achieved full enlightenment In your life as the illustrious Buddha Kunpak,

And thus now abide in the sphere of highest nirvana.

Yet, moved by compassion, you manifest mysterious emanations Equal in number to the atoms of the world,

Marvelous forms difficult for even The great bodhisattvas to comprehend.

You manifested a pearl necklace of incarnations in India In order to illuminate the vast and profound ways of Dharma. Marvelous indeed was this string of lives As realized yogis, accomplished masters and world leaders,

Such as the Brahmin boy Keyu Nangwa.

Deeply moved by sympathy for all living beings,

You lived the legacy of universal love And manifested the bodhisattva deeds that deliver A feast of supreme and peerless joy To countless living beings.

Then in order to fulfill the wishes of the buddhas,

You accepted to incarnate here in Tibet,

This northern land covered in snow,

And as a line of kings who illuminated The land's affairs both mundane and

And as a line of kings who illuminated the land's affairs both mundane and supreme.

King Nyatri Tsanpo, King Tori Nyanshal

And the Buddhist patrons King Songtsen Gampo,

King Trisong Deutsen and King Tri Ralpachen:

These are a few of your royal incarnations.

After this you incarnated as numerous Tibetan masters, including the illustrious master Lama Drom Tonpa,

The accomplished sage Lama Nyanral Nyima Oser,

And Guru Chowang, revealer of treasure texts.

Then for four incarnations (as the first four Dalai Lamas), from Gendun Drub to Yonten Gyatso,

Who were skilled in pouring forth the nectars of Lama Tsongkhapa's legacy upon fortunate trainees,

You strove to preserve the essential wisdom doctrines.

After this as the great Fifth Dalai Lama,

Gyalwa Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso,

Who was blessed by Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, You stood like Mt. Meru, the king of mountains,

In the center of the continents of masters and yogis,

And embodied the compassion of an ocean of buddhas Possessing the highest and most sublime of wisdoms.

Then from the time of the Sixth Dalai Lama—

Gyalwa Tsangyang Gyatso, a master who was most wise In teaching the ocean

of Dharma By means of beautiful poetry and song In accord with the inclinations
of trainees—

Until the Great Thirteenth, Gyalwa Tubten Gyatso,

Who was an ocean-like holder of Buddhist lineages—

You took birth repeatedly as a bodhisattva And performed countless mysterious
deeds.

Yet even now you continue to exert yourself and strive To dispel darkness from
within Tibet,

And have again sent forth a marvelous emanation,

This illustrious (Fourteenth Dalai Lama) incarnation,

A rising sun ablaze with the radiance of compassion To simultaneously
illuminate a hundred thousand lineages In the lotus garden of the enlightenment
lore.

O master equal to the Wisdom Bodhisattva,

Whose sublime wisdom, deep as the ocean,

Upholds the legacy of the buddhas,

0 lord over the three worlds, matrix of all peerless qualities,

1 offer this prayer to you.

You who reside in the heart of the Wisdom Bodhisattva, May you become an
ocean of wisdom into which All the sutra and tantra lineages collect.

May you then remain with us forever, and Work to preserve the ocean of
teachings With your sublime wisdom and unequalled skill.

Crown jewel of all the three worlds,

Remain with us forever to increase The light of prosperity and joy By making
shine the sun and moon Of your spiritual and temporal leadership.

Fill the skies of the four directions With the brilliance of enlightenment lore.

Remain until the end of time As protector of this Land of Snows.

Continue to incarnate until all beings are enlightened, Emanating the mysterious deeds of body, speech and mind, And bestowing blessings of the four excellences:

Spiritual knowledge, prosperity, happiness and liberation.

Remain with us untiringly;

And from the realm of the three liberations,

The sphere in which samsara and nirvana are the same, Radiate forth a hundred thousand lights From the sun and moon of your great bliss To guide all living beings through the paths and stages Of spiritual growth leading to freedom and joy.

A diamond body of incomparable wonder manifests From the ocean of compassion of all the buddhas,

A magnificent jewel of three mysteries Resting amidst the four splendors.

O incomparable one, remain firmly with us forever.

Although you are absorbed in the formless wisdom Of emptiness free from all distinctions,

Nonetheless you have manifested in this body That is visible to trainees of good fortune.

O venerable lama, I request you,

Stay with us and illuminate the way.

O spiritual friend fulfilling the hopes Of an ocean of living beings,

Remain as firmly as the great king of trees,

Your branches spread wide with knowledge, mercy and power, And heavily

laden with the fruits of the three Buddhakayas.

One grows in freedom merely on seeing

Your holy body with the 112 marks and signs of perfection,

Or hearing your holy voice so beautifully melodious With the sixty qualities of excellence,

Or recollecting your mind, with its wisdom Of the non-duality of being and non-being.

O Master, remain with us forever,

The forces supporting you always firm.

O Excellent One, remain with us

And fulfill the wishes of beings beyond number.

Become a wish-fulfilling tree that stands on the root Of having gathered 100,000 teachings;

Of having deeply contemplated their essence,

Like leaves of a tree rustling in the wind,

And of having become spiritually mature through meditation Upon the coarse and subtle twofold path,

Like a tree with its branches heavily laden with fruit.

O Holy One, eye of the world,

May you remain with us forever

And fulfill the three legacies of a master:

Giving spiritual teachings that reveal The essential thought of the buddhas;

Leading discussions that dispel mistaken dogmas;

And composing texts that fill with delight The fortunate beings that love great thoughts.

Remain with us forever

As a great navigator of living beings.

Fulfill ordinary and higher aims of living beings
By sailing the ship of profound learning
In the traditions of sutra and tantra,

Your driving force the strong and steady wind
Of the three noble disciplines.

O you who are the embodiment
Of the three great bodhisattvas—

Manjushri, whose nature is knowledge of emptiness,
Avalokiteshvara, who watches mercifully over the world,
And Vajrapani, lord of the secret way,

The bodhisattva of unsurpassed power
Able to crush the armies of evil—

O excellent one, remain with us forever.

Remain with us forever
As a great protector of life,

Your body exquisite like a white lotus,

Your speech as melodious as the music
Created by the gods of song,

And your mind clearly seeing
All aspects of reality.

Remain with us forever,

Roaming on the snow mountain of perfect ethics,
Shaking the mane of your magnificently bold samadhi,
And roaring like a lion with the wisdom
That devours the corpse of ignorance.

O leader of the Land of Snows,

Which these days is steeped in darkness,

Remain with us unwaveringly,

Even until the end of the world.

Let blaze the light of your compassion
And fill this world with peace and joy

Let blaze the light of your compassion And fill this world with peace and joy.

Make firm the seven spiritual qualities within yourself And take your seat on
Dharma's golden throne,

Which is engraved with symbols of immutable wheels And supported by eight
fearless lions of enlightenment. Do not allow the enlightenment tradition to
wane,

And instead strive hard to increase it in glory.

You have returned to us from [Amdo, in] the east,

Like the sun, friend of the flowers,

Possessor of eight divine qualities,

Rising from behind the eastern mountains,

Home of the greatest of gods.

O Supreme One, release a hundred lights Of enlightened activities that will
overpower The corruptions that darken this world.

May the root of your great compassion Remain always firm without any
weakness;

May you stretch out a thousand limbs Of the ten noble disciplines;

And may you refresh all the living beings In the cool shade of your perfect joy.

May you tame the arrogant beings Who are most difficult to tame By means of
turning ten times The great wheel of the four trainings,

Thus bringing them to true spiritual knowledge And releasing a celebration of
wisdom and joy.

May you lift up your vajra might And release the thunder of glory Which
crushes to powder all harmful forces And evil spirits that obstruct the world's
joy.

May your throne, which possesses the four splendors And symbolizes your

spiritual and secular leadership,

Be ever rich with a hundred supreme joys.

May the summer lake of the Ganden Podrang ever thrive, And may you meet with every excellent success.

May the pillars supporting the edifice of your life Constantly stand as undying vajra elements,

That through the force of destiny you may carry The banner of enlightened activity As a supreme leader among gods and men To the very peak of the world.

May those who train under you never be obstructed In spiritual study, contemplation and meditation,

That they may rapidly and easily cross the twofold path Of the quick and joyous tantric way,

Gaining spiritual powers both common and supreme.

May those in your service who carry out your work Have the wisdom to implement your wishes skillfully, And to lead your people in the glory Of the Dharma's waxing moon.

May you be a constant rainfall flowing without partiality To preserve the teachings and the practices Of the enlightenment tradition in general and also The lineage of the Second Buddha Tsongkhapa,

That they may never weaken or disappear.

May the holders of the various Buddhist lineages Be adorned with the canopy of the three ways of a sage And have the strength to hold on high the gem Of the four ways of benefiting fortunate trainees.

May they enhance the surging currents Of the river of enlightenment transmission.

May the Sangha, embodiment of the seven noble jewels, Live in harmony and
with pure ways

with pure ways,

Follow the paths of study, contemplation and meditation,

Engage in the activities of teaching, debate and composition,

And fulfill every Dharmic legacy,

That the enlightenment tradition may remain strong.

May the cold winter of violent ways Subside throughout the world,

Especially in Tibet, China and Mongolia;

That the goodness and joy of the queen of spring May come, and the summer
face of enlightenment Be revealed within our minds.

May enlightened thoughts and deeds,

Forces that eliminate obstacles to prosperity and joy,

Cause every force of evil to be calmed And to lose its power to harm,

Such as the destructive attacks on religious freedom Made by barbarians and evil
spirits today.

O Great Guru, Holder of the White Lotus,

May you continue to manifest as a teacher of the Great Way Until all living
beings have crossed the paths and stages That lead to great enlightenment,

And the two purposes are spontaneously fulfilled.

May the mighty Dharma Protectors,

With whom you have long been familiar, such as Palden Lhamo, Bektsey
Chamdrel, Gyalchen Ku Nga And especially the sworn one Dorjey Drakden,

Release an immediate force of the four magical activities.

By the strength of the blessings of the unfailing Refuge Jewels,

—

The power of the truth of the unchanging ultimate sphere,

And the mighty current of universal love,

May all themes of this prayer be auspiciously accomplished Spontaneously and without the slightest hindrance.

Over the years to follow the Dalai Lama spent his time between his residences at the Norbu Lingka and the Potala, with the former being for mid-spring to mid-autumn and the latter for the winter months. This would remain the case until he came into his self-imposed exile in India in 1959, although after his visit to India in 1956 he made the Norbu Lingka his formal home.

As with the previous Dalai Lamas, at this point the emphasis in his young life was spiritual education and training, and he was given the best lama teachers in the country. He regularly underwent public tests in front of the assemblies at the principal monasteries of Lhasa, and impressed everyone with his learning. He underwent the final tests for his Geshey Lharam degree in the presence of over 20,000 monk scholars during the New Year's ceremonies of 1959, not long before escaping into exile in India. This public examination was captured on film, which survived the holocaust to follow, and has found its way into many of the documentary film studies of the Dalai Lama's life.

Although the spiritual education of the young Fourteenth Dalai Lama achieved deep fruition, and thus prepared him well for assuming his role as spiritual leader of Tibet at a young age, the preparation for his role as temporal leader proved more problematic. Perhaps nothing would have sufficed in this regard, given Tibet's external and internal conditions at the time.

On the external side, the Great Thirteenth had never managed to get Tibet's sovereign status recognized by the international community. Everyone opted to follow Britain's lead, and, as we saw in the previous chapter, it was more convenient to British colonial interests to have Tibet regarded as a protectorate of China rather than as an independent nation, which might then be vulnerable to grabs by Russia.

The Thirteenth responded to the British position by expelling all Chinese diplomats and officials from within Tibetan borders, sending a strong signal that Tibet was its own nation. He was left, however, with a volatile situation. The result was that both the British and the Chinese were able to fragment the

Tibetan aristocracy and play various parties against one another. This weakened Tibet to the point of near paralysis, so that when Communist China invaded in the early 1950s it met with little organized resistance.

Tibet was also affected by the chaotic changes wrought in Asia by the two world wars. One of these changes was the fall of Czarist Russia in 1917» toward the end of World War I, and the subsequent rise of Soviet Communism. This in turn led to the destruction of the numerous Mongolian khannates to Tibet's north, all of which had been Tibet's allies for centuries.

The spread of Communism in the north, coupled with the weakening of the Republic of China during World War II, also led to the death of Old China and the rise of Mao's Communist empire.

The second major change to affect Tibet was the destruction of the British Empire during World War II, resulting in the end of British India. In that it was the British who had defined Tibet's status for the international community, and British India that had sustained this status, this turn of events could only lead to upheavals in Central Asia, and especially in Tibet.

Thus the present Dalai Lama inherited a nation that was wedged between three powerful yet immature political entities: China, India and the Soviet Union.

Tibet's internal situation was not much better than her external one. This was partly connected to the events that followed after the Great Thirteenth's death.

During the last two decades of his life the Great Thirteenth cultivated three particular men, but after he passed away the three were sidelined by the Lhasa power brokers. These three, known as his "three favorites" in literature of the period, were all exceptionally talented and intelligent, and demonstrated tremendous depth of character.

The first of the favorites was Tsarong, whom we encountered in the last chapter. His heroism and success at Chaktsam Bridge, where he valiantly saved the Great Thirteenth's life during the flight to India in 1909, led to his being made commander-in-chief of the Tibetan resistance movement, and within three years he had forced the Chinese in Tibet to surrender. After the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet, Tsarong was given the position of commander of the army.

Unfortunately in later years he disagreed with the Great Thirteenth on the issue

of capital punishment. On his own initiative he had several criminals executed, an act that was in direct contradiction to the Dalai Lama's own edict abolishing all forms of corporal punishment. When the Great Thirteenth learned of the executions, he removed Tsarong from office.

After the Great Thirteenth's death Tsarong was kept out of the inner circle of leadership and was forced into retirement on his rural estate. Thus Tibet passed over the person who was perhaps most capable of leading the country through the difficult years of military conflict that would follow.

The second favorite, like Tsarong born of peasant stock, was Kunpella. As a young man Kunpella had been enrolled in the Dalai Lama's staff as a minor clerk but soon gained the Dalai Lama's confidence and rose to prominence. By the time the Great Thirteenth passed away, Kunpella had become chief aide as well as head of the mint and of a crack army unit that was more or less equivalent to the Royal Guard.

After the power struggles that followed in the wake of the Great Thirteenth's death, Kunpella was arrested for treason and sent into exile. Once more, a tremendous talent was wasted.

The third favorite was the genius Lungshar. Lungshar was a true renaissance man: a doctor, musician, philosopher, poet and statesman all rolled into one. The Great Thirteenth had sent him as a youth to England for education, and later assigned Tibet's modernization program to him.

Again, as with Tsarong and Kunpella, Lungshar became a prime target in the power conflicts that followed the Great Thirteenth's death, and was arrested on charges of treason. Unlike the other two favorites, he was of aristocratic blood, and thus was perceived by the Lhasa aristocracy as the most dangerous. As part of his sentence he was blinded, so that in future he would not be able to launch any political opposition.

The loss of these three men left Tibet with no clear secular leadership. This was one of the reasons the country was so easily lost to the Chinese Communists in the 1950s, when the present Dalai Lama was still a young man.

The present Dalai Lama also inherited the major rift that had developed between the Tibetan government and the administrators of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, which was discussed in some depth in the previous chapter.

In brief, the rift left the Panchen Lama, Tibet's second highest incarnate lama, in a dangerously vulnerable position, and he fled into a self-imposed exile in China in 1923. Although he attempted to pursue negotiations with Lhasa for his return, the Lhasa aristocracy made the conditions too precarious for him, and the Panchen died in China in December of 1937* four years after the Great Thirteenth's passing. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, however, he was consulted during the search for the Great Thirteenth's reincarnation, and Reteng Tulku eventually installed the boy indicated by the Panchen's divinations.

Tibetans generally shuffle the blame for the rift between the Panchen Lama and the Lhasa government onto the shoulders of minor officials and bureaucrats. Be this as it may, the result was that the search for the Panchen's reincarnation in the late 1930s was undertaken by the Tashi Lhunpo monks who had been with the Panchen Lama in China. The boy who was chosen then came to be controlled by the Chinese throughout his life.

This continued even after the Communists rose to power in China in 1949. They attempted to project the idea that the Panchen Lama was the actual spiritual head of Tibet, and that the Dalai Lama was a mere secular leader.

This divisiveness greatly weakened Tibet, making it easier for the Communists to take over in the 1950s, and hampering the present Dalai Lama's efforts to lead a unified Tibet during those crucial years.

After the Dalai Lama came into exile in India in 1959, the Communists enthroned the Panchen Lama as the new Tibetan leader. Even though his discomfort with this arrangement resulted in his being imprisoned in 1964 and disappearing for the decade and a half to follow—he was presumed dead for all that time—the overall outcome was further alienation of the Panchen and Dalai Lama offices.

Finally, mention must be made of the attempt in 1947 to remove and perhaps even murder the Dalai Lama. Although usually portrayed as a power struggle between the two regents—Reteng and his successor, Taktra—it was in fact far more sinister. The young Dalai Lama survived the episode, but it greatly weakened Tibet and created a major obstacle to his ability to successfully lead the country in its encounter with militant Communist China after he was enthroned in 1950.

As we saw above, Reteng Tulku was made regent shortly after the Great Thirteenth's death. He successfully oversaw the search for and enthronement of the present Dalai Lama, and carried Tibet through this delicate phase of its history. But along the way, he encountered some enemies.

Reteng Tulku is usually presented in an unflattering light in most Western literature of the period. The reason is simple enough: The writing was being done by British government officials, and Reteng could not be manipulated by them. As a consequence they disliked him and always spoke of him in unpleasant terms. The situation was similar to the manner in which British references to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were always derogatory; the Great Thirteenth would not cooperate with their designs, so obviously he was a man to be scorned. This same attitude was now being accorded to the regent. British diplomats and officials of the period describe him as being vain, greedy and corrupt. He was none of these, and in fact was the opposite: a great man who accomplished great things.

A second source of negative misinformation concerning Reteng Tulku's character comes from certain Tibetans whose distorted view is often repeated as though fact. This is because the people who murdered him gained control of the Lhasa government, and thus won the privilege of telling the story as they saw fit.

As we saw earlier, after Reteng was appointed regent he set up a committee to search for the reincarnation of the Great Thirteenth. A number of candidates made the shortlist. Reteng Tulku was convinced that the boy from Taktser was the true incarnation, and pushed for his official recognition. The divinations from the elderly Panchen Lama also supported this candidate.

However, one of the chief ministers of the Lhasa government, a man named Langdun, was lobbying hard for another candidate. At the time Langdun had a status equal to that of the regent, and the two co-ruled Tibet.

The candidate supported by Langdun was the son of one of his own immediate relatives. He attempted to promote the boy in various ways, and to hinder the candidacy of the child from Taktser. Langdun seems to have been a bit of a simpleton, and in all probability was placed in his position of power by the Lhasa aristocracy because they believed they could easily manipulate him.

However, Reteng Tulku eventually became impatient with Langdun's interference and gave the Tibetan government an ultimatum. Either they fire Langdun, or else he himself would resign as regent.

Had Reteng Tulku not stood up to Langdun at this time, the office of the Dalai Lama would probably have been given to Langdun's relative. The boy from Taktser, whom we all know and love today as the Dalai Lama, would have remained in Amdo, and never become the Dalai Lama.

Reteng Tulku similarly fired numerous other government officials for corruption and incompetence. The list is long, and as a result some of the Lhasa aristocracy began to strongly resent him.

Like the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Reteng Tulku united Gelukpa and Nyingmapa lineages within his spiritual practice. It is possible that the more conservative elements of Lhasa society also resented this about him.

In 1940 he visited Samye, one of the great Nyingmapa monasteries of central Tibet, in order to receive certain Nyingma lineages and also to make meditation there. When he returned in early 1941 he unexpectedly announced that his dreams in Samye had indicated that he should temporarily resign from the regency in order to undertake the three-year retreat.

His first choice for a replacement was one of his own gurus, the famous Pabongkha Tulku. Pabongkha was undoubtedly the greatest living Gelukpa lama of the period, and would have been an ideal candidate. However, he strongly disliked political affairs and distrusted the Lhasa aristocracy. He therefore declined the request.

Some years earlier an elderly lama by the name of Taktra Tulku from Drepung Gomang Monastery had been appointed junior tutor to the young Dalai Lama. In accordance with tradition, Reteng as regent held the position of senior tutor. Reteng now recommended that Taktra Tulku serve as regent for the three years that he would be in retreat. The Tibetan cabinet was hastily convened, and the proposal was approved.

Thus in early February 1941 Reteng Tulku quietly retired from public life, and passed the regency to Taktra Tulku. He then returned to Reteng Monastery and entered into meditation as planned.

Unfortunately for him, his absence as regent gave those in the Lhasa aristocracy who resented him the opportunity to grow in strength. They quietly but steadily built up their power base within the Taktra regency, and aligned themselves against him.

He might have lived out his life quietly at his monastery but for an unexpected development. In 1944, the year that he completed his retreat, the Nechung Oracle shocked everyone by proclaiming during his trance of the New Year's celebrations that the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's life was in danger. Reteng Tulku naturally heard news of this from his residence at the monastery, and requested a conference of high lamas and officials in order to discuss the situation.

The ex-regent was greeted with tremendous fanfare when he arrived in Lhasa. This must have alarmed his detractors, who by this time had gained control over the replacement regent, Taktra Tulku. Reteng remained for the conference, and stayed in order to oversee certain rituals for the Dalai Lama's well-being, but then returned to his monastery.

It was now clear to him, however, that the danger to the Dalai Lama's life prophesied by the Nechung Oracle was not merely astrological or spiritual, but came from certain individuals within the Tibetan government who wanted to seize power for themselves, and who would not hesitate to harm the Dalai Lama in order to achieve their goal.

He therefore let his position of dissatisfaction with the state of affairs become publicly known, and subtly expressed the fact that he felt Taktra was not fulfilling his primary obligation, which was to serve the interests of the Dalai Lama and the country.

This distracted the conspirators, and forced them to delay their plans of removing the Dalai Lama. They now understood that in order to do so they would first have to eliminate the ex-regent.

They also knew that before they could launch a successful attack on the ex-regent, they would have to neutralize the Dalai Lama's father, who had risen to a position of considerable strength after settling in Lhasa. This was partly due to the rank that had been bestowed upon him as the Dalai Lama's father, and to the generosity that Reteng Tulku as regent had shown to him and his family on their arrival from Amdo; but it was also to a large extent due to his integrity, native

intelligence and personal strength of character. The conspirators knew that the Dalai Lama's father would immediately come to the defense of the ex-regent in the event of an attack against him.

Therefore, in early 1947 they invited the father to a social gathering on a country estate near Lhasa, and here administered a poison in the food that was served to him. He became ill the following day, and died a slow and painful death over the month to follow.

Shortly thereafter a rumor spread that a box containing a handmade bomb had been sent to the office of the regent, Taktra Tulku, by Reteng Tulku's people. What is not known for sure is whether the box was ever received at all, or if it was sent by the conspirators.

To an objective observer, the charge that it had been sent by the ex-regent was ludicrous. Had Reteng Tulku wished to harm Taktra he certainly would have chosen a more subtle and sure means. Tibetans were no munitions experts, and bomb making was not quite their cup of tea. When it came to assassination, poison had been their first method of choice for centuries, with stabbing a close second, and perhaps strangulation a contender for third. Reteng Tulku's camp certainly had enough people in the inner clique of Lhasa life to effect any of these methods, had murder been their intent or within the boundaries of their character.

Nonetheless the ruse worked, and the plotters were able to use their concocted pretext as a reason to have Reteng Tulku and those closest to him arrested and interrogated.

The ex-regent died in prison a few days later from the torture that was inflicted upon him. In particular, the cause of his death was the internal bleeding that occurred as a result of crushed testicles.

In all probability Regent Taktra Tulku himself was not part of the plot that led to the murder of Reteng Tulku and the Dalai Lama's father. Nonetheless, at the very least history should judge him harshly for his personal incompetence. He seems to have been a rather aloof and unworldly man, and allowed the lay aristocrats who had worked their way up in his administration to handle most secular affairs. Probably he bought the story that a bomb in a box had been sent to him by Reteng Tulku's people, and evaded personal involvement by allowing

the government to take charge of the matter. If this were the case, he would not have known that the conspirators were playing him for a patsy.

Prior to the arrest of Reteng Tulku, the plotters had tried to press the Tibetan government into having the Dalai Lama's mother recall her two older male children from eastern Tibet and China, where one was a monk in Kumbum Monastery and the other a student in a Chinese school. Fortunately she suspected that something suspicious was afoot, and delayed in doing so. Had she followed the plotters' request, no doubt the two children would also have been killed at this time.

None of the perpetrators of these deeds were ever brought to justice for their crimes. To the contrary, they were able to pass themselves off to history as the patriots in the affair, with Reteng Tulku being re-cast as the villain.

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Having murdered Reteng Tulku and the Dalai Lama's father, as well as numerous people loyal to them, the conspirators were now ready to try and eliminate the Dalai Lama himself.

However, they were afraid to attack him outright. To do so could easily have caused a civil war, for he was intensely popular with the people, and also with the monks of the large monasteries in the Lhasa region. They could perhaps pass off the death of the Dalai Lama's father as an unexpected illness, and portray the death of the ex-regent as a natural outcome of internal intrigues. Any harm to the Dalai Lama himself, however, would have been examined much more closely, especially with so many bodies turning up everywhere.

Moreover, harming the Dalai Lama could have had profound international consequences. As we saw earlier, His Holiness had been born outside of Tibet in a Chinese Turkestani country ruled by the Muslim warlord Ma Pu-fang. A suspicious death of the boy could easily be used by Ma Pu-fang as an excuse for a punitive invasion.

The conspirators therefore decided that the safest course of action for them was to attempt to remove the Dalai Lama by casting doubt on the authenticity of his identity. They did this by bringing up the issue of the various children who had originally been on the shortlist for the Dalai Lama office eight years earlier. Had not the minister Langdun supported a different child, one who had been later

enthroned as the reincarnation of a high lama by the name of Ditru Tulku?

The conspirators hatched a simple plan. They would spread the rumor that Reteng Tulku had enthroned the wrong candidate. The boy now known as Ditru Tulku, they professed, was in fact the real Dalai Lama, whereas the boy on the Dalai Lama throne was the reincarnation of Ditru Tulku! The two had been confused in the selection process, and the wrong choice had been made. All that was needed to right the wrong was to have the two switch names and residences.

Spinning this tale was one thing, but getting the Tibetan monkhood to swallow it was another.

Nonetheless the conspirators did succeed in convincing the elderly regent Taktra Tulku that the theory carried enough weight in order to demand that a new divination be performed on the matter.

Consequently a grand assembly was convened in the Jokhang, with all the high lamas and officials of central Tibet in attendance. The names of the Dalai Lama and the Ditru Tulku were both inserted inside barley balls. These were placed in a bowl, prayers were recited, and then the bowl was held up and rotated. The name in the barley ball that emerged was that of the boy from Taktser.

The divination was performed a second time, and again the name of the boy from Taktser emerged. A third divination was performed, but this again produced the same result.

There was no way around it. The conspirators found themselves stalemated on the issue. They would have to console themselves with Reteng Tulku's candidate, the boy from Taktser who had already been enthroned. This is, of course, the boy who became the present Dalai Lama.

In retrospect, were it not for the spin of the barley balls that day, the Ditru Tulku would have become the Dalai Lama, and the man who is now the Dalai Lama would have become the Ditru Tulku.

The above interpretation of the events of 1947 is not common with Tibetans, nor even with Western Tibetologists, for after the episode the conspirators came to power and controlled all the instruments of the Tibetan government, with the regent Taktra Tulku as their puppet. They immediately launched a campaign of character assassination on Reteng Tulku in order to justify what had happened.

Most Tibetans bought the demonized version of Reteng Tulku that was created at that time, and Western Tibetologists picked it up from them. However, in that it was spun by the very people who murdered both the former regent and the Dalai Lama's father, we can safely write it off as outright propaganda.

The conspirators placed great emphasis upon the theory that Reteng Tulku had originally resigned the regency because he had broken his vows of celibacy and felt it would be inappropriate for him in his fallen state to give the Dalai Lama the ordination of a novice monk. The idea is ludicrous. With the exception of the Dalai Lama, very few Tibetan reincarnate lamas are actually expected to be celibate. Nobody seems to mind, so long as the matter is not flaunted. Tibetans follow a "don't ask, don't tell" policy in this regard. Reteng Tulku could easily have gotten around the problem without any great inconvenience. Moreover, he resigned well over a year prior to the date on which the Dalai Lama was to receive the novice ordination.

In all probability the talk of Reteng's "non-celibacy" was spread so as to temper public perception of his murder. The average Tibetan considered personal assassination one of the risks taken by lay politicians engaged in power struggles, whereas the murder of a pure monk was far more repulsive. By spreading the story that Reteng had broken his vows, and thus was not a pure monk, the conspirators were essentially redefining him as fair game.

The spin somewhat changed after the Communist takeover of Tibet in the 1950s and the mass exodus of Tibetan refugees in 1959. Now it was said that the political orientation was the real reason behind the power struggle. Reteng Tulku, we are told, had favored a policy of rapprochement and dialogue with China, whereas Taktra was strongly anti-Chinese and pro-British.

Again, the transparency of the propaganda is obvious. It is true that Reteng Tulku rejected the idea that Tibet could establish its independent status through ignoring China and relying on the British to sort things out for them. The Lhasa government had tried this for some three decades, and he could see that it had produced no results whatsoever. The British were no closer to representing Tibetan interests to the international community than they had been in the beginning of the exercise. In fact, they were probably farther from it than ever, for World War II had made England and China allies against Japan. Reteng Tulku believed, probably correctly, that the only hope for Tibet's future lay in direct engagement with its enormous eastern neighbor, and he attempted to

swing the Tibetan government in this direction.

Be this as it may, his attitude in this respect was not a pressing factor in the minds of those who murdered him. Simply stated, they were afraid that he would regain the regency and would have them all fired or even worse for their incompetence. They far preferred to have the elderly and unworldly Taktra on the throne, for he seemed blind and deaf to all secular affairs.

History is usually told by the victors, who invariably spin a yarn that they want the world to believe, conveniently adding and subtracting from the facts in order to suit their purposes. In the case of the events of 1947, the people directly or indirectly involved in the plot against Reteng Tulku succeeded in their power struggle, and as a result gained and for many years thereafter retained high offices in the Lhasa government. Theirs was the privilege of rewriting history so as to cover up their evil deeds.⁴ But despite their vilification, Reteng Tulku was no villain; he was a hero in the most classic sense, a man whose life was sacrificed for higher principles. In a sense Reteng's life was a tragedy, for he died a violent death; but it was also a supreme success, for through his death he saved the life of the present Dalai Lama, and completed the sublime task that had been entrusted to him.

To the best of my knowledge, and judging from his own writings, the present Dalai Lama himself is not aware of what really occurred during this dreadful period of modern Tibetan history. He was, after all, only twelve years old at the time. I never questioned him on the matter during any of the interviews I conducted with him, as I felt it would have been inappropriate to his dignity. My guess is that he had been told as little as possible, in order to protect his innocence. He certainly was not in any position to influence things one way or another.

I feel it nonetheless necessary to relate it here. An understanding of the events of 1947 is prerequisite to an understanding of the present Dalai Lama's life, for these set the stage for the political situation His Holiness would inherit when he was enthroned as supreme spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet in 1950, only three years after the murders occurred.

By that time the perpetrators of the conspiracy dominated the Tibetan government, and all forces loyal to Reteng Tulku had long since been eliminated or reassigned to the provinces. His Holiness had mainly incompetent and corrupt

officials as his underlings. It is little wonder that Tibet fell so easily to the Chinese Communists.

While most of the petty aristocrats of Lhasa were caught up in these internal machinations, the Communists were busy consolidating their power in China. Chairman Mao's armies gained final victory in 1949. One of his first deeds as dictator of his newly formed Communist empire was to proclaim his determination to consolidate China's borders, and his intention to "liberate Tibet" as part of this strategy.

Until now the intrigues of Lhasa had not directly impacted the young Dalai Lama. His spiritual education had remained at the center of his life, with his days and nights being given largely to study, prayer and meditation. Everyone was careful to keep talk of these unpleasant political events away from him. He was, after all, only a teenager. The announcement from Communist China of its intent to reclaim Tibet brought an immediate end to his age of innocence.

The Chinese began to make their move almost immediately after taking power. In late 1949 they invaded the lowlands along the eastern Tibetan border. Then during the spring and summer of 1950 the Chinese began building up a strong army on the Tibetan border.

The clique that had seized power in 1947 and now ruled Lhasa panicked. It was one thing to wrest control over a sleepy Lhasa government, but quite another to have to stand up to the Chinese Communists.

A hasty meeting of the cabinet was called, and it was decided that only the young Dalai Lama could save the day. The Nechung Oracle was invoked, and his words confirmed the decision.

Thus it was that on November 17, 1950, when the present Dalai Lama was only fifteen years old, he was enthroned as supreme ruler of Tibet. A large Chinese army of almost 100,000 soldiers had amassed on the eastern border and was poised to strike. On his side, he had nothing other than his integrity and good intentions as his tools.

The position, of course, was hopeless. His Holiness was only a boy, and he was surrounded mainly by the incompetent officials who had ousted anyone with vision and talent.

Delegations were sent to the West to solicit political backing. Perhaps Britain or America, it was hoped, would be able to stand up for them and convince China not to invade. Perhaps the United Nations would help. These delegations, however, met with no success.

The only recourse was to negotiate a treaty directly with China. Therefore in 1951 a delegation was appointed, headed by Governor Ngabo of Chamdo, and was sent to Beijing in order to probe this avenue. Although the delegation was only entrusted with the authority to discuss preliminary conditions, the Chinese partly threatened and partly bribed its members into signing off on the terms dictated by Beijing. The head of this delegation eventually went over to the Chinese Communist side, and was later given a high post in the Communist administration.

This treaty, known as the “Seventeen Point Agreement” for the seventeen conditions set forth in it, put the Tibetans in an awkward position. To repudiate it would mean invasion by China, for which the Tibetans were utterly unprepared. They had spent the sixteen years since the death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama obsessed with internal rivalries, and had given no thought to external threats. The time had now come to pay the piper. They remembered the words that the Great Thirteenth had spoken in his Last Testament, and were filled with apprehension.

Although the treaty of 1951 theoretically guaranteed Tibet its autonomy, and promised that neither Tibet’s internal administration nor culture would be interfered with, it granted the Chinese Communists permission to send troops into the country and set up fortifications in order to protect Tibets status against “imperialists.” The Chinese would be on an honor system not to use these troops against the Tibetans.

For the Communists, of course, the Seventeen Point Agreement was just a means to an end, and they had no intention whatsoever of honoring it. Their plan was to firmly entrench themselves and then slowly tighten the noose.

This is precisely what came to pass, and Chinese troops soon began pouring into the country. Because the Lhasa government had agreed to the treaty, any Tibetans who resisted were at odds with their own administration.

In 1954 the Dalai Lama was invited to visit China, where the wonders of

Communism were explained to him in detail. He also met with Chairman Mao on numerous occasions. When His Holiness complained to Mao that the Chinese soldiers in Tibet had begun to attack and destroy religious institutions, Mao just replied, "Well, you know, religion is poison." The young Buddhist monk realized then the predicament into which his nation had fallen.

The situation in Tibet worsened almost on a daily basis, and by 1956 the Tibetans of Kham and Amdo in the east had begun to rise up in revolt. His Holiness was now in the uncomfortable position of having to serve as a mouthpiece for the Chinese Communists and publicly condemn the freedom fighters.

That same year His Holiness received an invitation from Prime Minister Nehru of India requesting him to come to India in order to celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha's passing. The Chinese objected, but could not completely refuse him permission to go due to the friendship that Nehru had established with Mao. Consequently His Holiness made the journey. In India he discussed the Tibet situation with Nehru, and described how unpleasant and precarious things had come. He also discussed the possibility of remaining in India as a refugee. Nehru, who was pursuing a strong policy of friendship with China, insisted that His Holiness return to Tibet for the time being, but assured him that if Tibet erupted in war the Tibetans would be welcomed in India as refugees.

Everything came to a head on March 10, 1959. The Chinese general in charge of Lhasa sent a forceful invitation to His Holiness to visit him in the army camp without bringing along his normal security force. The Tibetans interpreted the invitation as being part of a plan to kidnap His Holiness and carry him off to China. Many Tibetan lamas had disappeared in this same way, never to be seen or heard from again.

Word spread like wildfire, and soon tens of thousands of Tibetans had gathered around the Norbu Lingka in order to protect His Holiness, and to prevent him from going. The Chinese general then gave the order for them to disperse, but this caused the crowd to grow in size.

The Nechung Oracle was consulted and went into trance. The only recourse, he stated, was for the Dalai Lama to be smuggled to India, where he could pursue the Tibetan cause from Indian soil. "Go," he said. "Go tonight."

Thus it was that on March 17, 1959, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, disguised as a Tibetan warrior and led by a group of Khampa horsemen, slipped quietly from the Norbu Lingka and melted into the crowd. He was on his way into exile in India.

The escape was successful, and His Holiness crossed the border onto Indian soil some two weeks later. Prime Minister Nehru remained true to his word, and offered the hospitality of the Indian government.

Over the months to follow more than a million Tibetans—approximately twenty percent of the entire population—attempted to follow His Holiness into exile. It is estimated that ninety percent of these died in the attempt, or were captured and imprisoned on the way. However, more than a hundred thousand succeeded in completing the journey.

In India His Holiness blossomed as a leader. He was no longer hampered by the incompetents who had gained control of the Tibetan government in Lhasa during the years of his minority, and who had surrounded him during the initial period following his enthronement. He was now able to act as his own man, and to build up a group of solid people on whom he could rely. Here he excelled in his twofold role as spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetans, and succeeded at everything he undertook.

Here also he would emerge as a great philosopher, humanist, world spiritual leader and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

For the young Dalai Lama, life in India was very different from what it had been in Tibet. First, he had the unenviable task of settling and caring for the tens of thousands of refugees who were fleeing into India. Secondly, his was also the responsibility of overseeing the efforts to preserve Tibet's ancient culture, which now was under full attack in its homeland. Thirdly, he was in charge of the effort to lobby internationally for the rights of his country and people.

Almost immediately after arriving in India the Dalai Lama set up his Central Tibetan Government-in Exile in order to accomplish these three tasks, working from temporary quarters provided for him in the Himalayas at Mussoorie, Arunachal Pradesh. A few years later the Indian government moved him and his government to Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, and he has remained there ever since.

At first the work of resettling the refugees took priority, for they had fled their homes with nothing more than what they could carry. Moreover, they had descended from the high, dry climate of mountainous Tibet into the subtropics of India, and within weeks they were beset by a wide range of diseases hitherto unknown to them, and to which they had little if any resistance. The water gave them dysentery, the mosquitoes malaria, and the low-protein diet malnutrition. Moreover, the low altitude rendered them susceptible to tuberculosis, a disease that had been almost nonexistent in Tibet, and almost a quarter of them came down with it.

Perhaps the most pressing problem was the children. Many had lost their parents while escaping from Tibet, and as a result there was a large contingent of orphans and semi-orphans. The Dalai Lama called upon international aid organizations for help, and a series of “children’s villages” was established. These were run as residential boarding schools, with twenty or thirty children in each house, and with each house under the care of a surrogate mother and father. The education in these schools combined traditional Tibetan with modern Western studies.

The Dalai Lama then brokered a deal with the Indian government in which the main body of the refugees could be settled in various communities around the country. Unused land, mostly in South India, was provided for this purpose, and soon Tibetan agricultural settlements began to spring up across the country. These were located in remote regions, such as the jungles of Mysore and Karnataka. Their isolation not only allowed the refugees to pursue traditional lifestyles, but also protected them culturally as a people. Each community was established with its own internal administration, with direct links to the Central Tibetan Government-in-Exile.

The situation of Tibetan youth was considerably different from that of most Indians, and therefore the Dalai Lama pressed for establishing a separate school system in all the Tibetan communities in India, Nepal and Bhutan. These schools, His Holiness stated, should combine the best of traditional Tibetan education with the best of modern Western studies. He called a conference of Tibetan and Western educators, and together they hammered out a curriculum that would be appropriate to the Tibetans in exile. These schools have continued to operate from that time until today, and to produce young Tibetans enriched with a solid grounding in traditional and modern knowledge.

Once these basic foundations of Tibetan society had been established, the Dalai Lama turned his attention to the preservation of Tibet's ancient culture. Here he called on all the spiritual and intellectual leaders who had escaped into exile, and together they devised blueprints for what had to be done. Soon small replicas of all the great Tibetan monasteries and nunneries sprang up, with traditional training programs once more firmly in place.

Tibetan medicine was a priority with His Holiness, and he directly oversaw the creation of the Tibetan Astro-Medical Centre (which is so named largely because Tibetan doctors rely on astronomy in deciding when to collect specific medicinal herbs). Since that time this institute has trained dozens of young doctors, and has established clinics throughout India and Nepal. Doctors from this institute now regularly tour the West in order to share their ancient knowledge with an international audience. Indeed, in 2001 both NBC's Dateline and CNN's Larry King Live aired special programs featuring Dr. Yeshey Donden and his work with American cancer patients. Dr. Donden, who many years ago delivered my own first-born son, served as the first doctor at the Tibetan Astro-Medical Centre established by His Holiness in Dharamsala.

His Holiness similarly realized the importance of the traditional performing arts, and commissioned the re-creation of Tibet's National Opera. This institution, now known as the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, has produced hundreds of young artists accomplished in Tibet's legacy of music and dance. Their company has toured the West on numerous occasions, and as a consequence many Westerners have directly experienced the fruit of this work.

Tibetan literature was similarly endangered by the Chinese Communist takeover, with all but a handful of Tibet's 10,000 libraries being destroyed. The loose-leaf pages of Tibet's ancient scriptures found a new use with Chairman Mao's soldiers, who used them as toilet paper. However, most escaping refugees had brought one or two of their favorite books with them; and in addition many Tibetan books existed in the Buddhist libraries of Himalayan India. The Dalai Lama established two institutes—Tibet House in New Delhi and the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala—and charged them with the task of gathering, preserving and cataloging whatever traditional literature they could find. In addition, these institutes were charged with finding and preserving traditional artworks, such as paintings and statues.

The latter of the two institutes—the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in

Dharamsala—also established programs for training young Tibetans in the traditional fine arts, such as tangka painting, metal sculpture, wood sculpture, calligraphy and so on. In addition, the Dalai Lama instructed this institute to open a school of Tibetan Buddhist studies for Western students interested in Tibet. He personally chose the teachers for this program, and oversaw the development of the curriculum. I am one of the hundreds of Westerners who received training in that illustrious institute, and thus am especially indebted to His Holiness in this regard.

During the last three or four years of my twelve-year residency in Dharamsala, I had the honor of working for the Research and Translation Bureau at the Tibetan Library. My work there often involved translating and/or editing works chosen by His Holiness for various conferences or other purposes. I also worked on numerous projects with Ven. Doboomb Tulku, who at the time was an aide to His Holiness. During this time I spent many long afternoons in Doboomb's office. This adjoined the balcony of the Dalai Lama's reception room, and on these occasions I could directly witness the amazing schedule that His Holiness kept. A steady stream of Tibetans came, some individually and others in groups large and small. It seemed that everyone wanted the involvement of His Holiness in the crucial aspects of their lives and works. High lamas, civic leaders and ordinary people alike came to him to report on their various activities, and to ask for his advice and blessings.

Throughout this period His Holiness was also expected to dedicate several hours a day to meditation, and to undertake numerous intensive retreats. He accomplished the former by getting up at three o'clock every morning in order to hit the meditation seat, and the latter by making retreats of a few weeks' or months' duration whenever a lull in the demands placed upon him so allowed. In 1967 the consistent effort paid off, for it was during a retreat then that his meditations produced the desired inner experiences.

That year His Holiness went from being a symbolic spiritual leader to being a living Buddhist master.

By the early 1970s the situation with the refugees and Tibetan culture had been set on a firm footing, and His Holiness was able to begin traveling abroad in order to raise awareness of the Tibet question. First he made several short visits to Europe, for the Tibetan connection with England was an old one. Then in 1979 he visited the United States for the first time. Wherever he went he was

received with tremendous enthusiasm, not only by spiritual and civic leaders, but also by scientists, educators, philosophers and healers. His prestige on the international circuit seemed to grow in leaps and bounds.

Since that time His Holiness has divided his time between serving his twofold role of spiritual and secular leadership of the Tibetans, and traveling the world in order to speak for Tibet. As spiritual leader, he oversees the spiritual affairs of the Tibetans as a people, and also teaches extensively, both to the Tibetans in India and to interested peoples around the world. He travels widely in order to spread his message of the need for love, compassion and wisdom, and to fulfill the many requests to teach that come to him. Those who subscribe to Internet news services (such as the World Tibet News) and follow his schedule will read of him being in Germany one day, Russia the next, Japan a few days later, and America the following week. There are few places on the planet he has not visited over the past two decades, from South Africa to the Scandanavian tundra fields. Capacity crowds turn out to hear him speak wherever he goes. He is sought after as a keynote speaker at conferences and think-tanks related to issues as diverse as the environment, psychology, spirituality, art, science and world peace.

The Western media generally depict his humble and humorous side. The amazing depth of his Buddhist scholarship is perhaps less well known.

During the twelve years of my residency in Dharamsala, His Holiness gave numerous public and semipublic discourses a year. These would generally be held from noon until sunset, and last anywhere from a week to a month or more. In these discourses the Dalai Lama would read from an Indian or Tibetan classic, elucidating the numerous levels of meaning buried in each passage.

The more profound teaching sessions would be held in a small private chapel on the grounds of his residence, and it was during these that his extraordinary level of scholarship shone through. Attendance at these was usually limited to the monks of whatever monastery had requested the teaching, as well as to high reincarnate lamas and monks holding the geshey degree. In addition, monks from the two small local monasteries that were especially close to the Dalai Lama—Nechung and Namgyal Dratsang were invited. Finally, a few Westerners who were able to speak Tibetan were allowed to attend.

The subject matter at these semiprivate discourses would be far more obtuse than

at his public teachings, and the text used would be downright tough. Of the two or three hundred monks in attendance, the front row would be comprised of the elderly abbots and high incarnates, the next row of slightly less prestigious monks, and so forth. In brief, the front two or three rows held the greatest monk scholars in all of Central Asia.

Whenever the Dalai Lama would come to an especially difficult passage he would pause from his discourse in order to challenge members of the front rows to offer their interpretations. He would on these instances play the devil's advocate, and challenge them to debate on the matter, attempting to find a flaw in their reading. Often these interludes would last a half hour or more, with him challenging the greatest living Buddhist scholars in debate on the most difficult passages of a very difficult text.

He would then turn the situation around, offering an interpretation himself and openly inviting the members of his audience to find a flaw in it. Although outnumbered several hundred to one, it would be very rare to find him hard-pressed on an issue.

It was also interesting to see how he was never hesitant to acknowledge when someone got a point on him during these sessions, a testament to his humor and humility.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is, at the time of this writing, in his mid-sixties. More than forty years have passed since he came into exile, and he has accomplished a tremendous amount during that period. Tibetan culture is no longer seriously endangered, for most of its essential traditions have been re-established. His travels and activities have caused international awareness of the Tibet situation to grow from a tiny glimmer to a constantly blazing and ever-increasing fire. He has addressed the European Parliament on the Tibet issue, as well as both the United States Congress and Senate, and has met with almost every important world leader. Because of his efforts Tibet remains at the forefront of human rights issues, and is China's greatest and most pressing embarrassment.

From the beginning His Holiness has maintained a policy of utilizing only nonviolent means in order to resolve the Tibet/China conflict, and he urges other nations to solve their own political problems in this same way. His tremendous contribution to the world peace movement was rewarded in 1989 when he won

the Nobel Peace Prize. He has similarly been awarded a dozen other prestigious awards for his contributions to human affairs.

Concerning the Tibet situation His Holiness once said to me in an interview, “This is the darkest period in Tibet’s long history, and its very existence as a nation is under threat. I am very honored to be the Dalai Lama with the job of bringing it through this critical phase.”

There is still a long way to go on the road to solving the Tibet situation. However, due to the efforts and skill of His Holiness, things look a lot better today than they did when he came into exile four decades ago. As he once put it, “Accomplishing this task through peaceful means can take some decades, perhaps even a few generations. We have to be firm but patient. If we can succeed, we can really make a contribution to world culture. If little Tibet can overcome the terrible force of Communist China solely through nonviolent means, people will be able to see the power of nonviolence. It could serve as a model for others, and encourage them to also adopt nonviolent methods. Otherwise, if we just win by violence, all we get is a piece of real estate. The Tibet for which we yearn will have been lost.”

After winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, His Holiness the Dalai Lama delivered the following acceptance statement. Although the references to particular events date it, it otherwise stands as a timeless statement of the ideals to which His Holiness has stood throughout his life, and which have won him friends and admirers throughout the world.

I am very happy to be here with you today to receive the Nobel Prize for peace. I feel honored, humbled and deeply moved that you should give this important prize to a simple monk from Tibet. I am no one special. But I believe the prize is a recognition of the true value of altruism, love, compassion and nonviolence, which I try to practice, in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha and the sages of India and Tibet. I accept the prize with profound gratitude on behalf of all of the oppressed everywhere and for all those who struggle for freedom and work for world peace. I accept it as a tribute to the man who founded the modern tradition of nonviolent action for change—Mahatma Gandhi — whose life taught and inspired me. And, of course, I accept it on behalf of the six million Tibetan people, my brave countrymen and women inside Tibet, who have suffered and continue to suffer so much. They confront a calculated and systematic strategy aimed at the

destruction of their national and cultural identities. The prize reaffirms our conviction that with truth, courage and determination as our weapons, Tibet will be liberated.

No matter what part of the world we come from, we are all basically the same human beings. We all seek happiness and try to avoid suffering. We have basically the same human needs and concerns. All of us human beings want freedom and the right to determine our own destiny as individuals and as peoples. That is human nature. The great changes that are taking place in the world, from eastern Europe to Africa, are a clear indication of this.

In China the popular movement for democracy was crushed by brutal force in June this year. But I do not believe the demonstrations were in vain, because the spirit of freedom was rekindled among the Chinese people, and China cannot escape the impact of this spirit of freedom sweeping in many parts of the world. The brave students and their supporters showed the Chinese leadership and the world the human face of that great nation.

Last week a number of Tibetans were once again sentenced to prison terms of up to nineteen years at a mass show trial, possibly intended to frighten the population before today's event. Their only "crime" was the expression of the widespread desire of Tibetans for the restoration of their beloved country's independence.

The suffering of our people during the past forty years of occupation is well documented. Ours has been a long struggle. We know our cause is just. Because violence can only breed more violence and suffering, our struggle must remain nonviolent and free of hatred. We are trying to end the suffering of our people, not to inflict suffering upon others.

It is with this in mind that I proposed negotiations between Tibet and China on numerous occasions. In 1987, I made specific proposals in a Five-Point Peace Plan for the restoration of peace and human rights in Tibet. This included the conversion of the entire Tibetan plateau into a zone of Ahimsa, a sanctuary of peace and nonviolence where human beings and nature can live in peace and harmony.

Last year, I elaborated on that plan in Strasbourg at the European Parliament. I believe the ideas I expressed on those occasions were both realistic and

reasonable, although they have been criticized by some of my

people as being too conciliatory. Unfortunately, China's leaders have not responded positively to the suggestions we have made, which included important concessions. If this continues, we will be compelled to reconsider our position.

Any relationship between Tibet and China will have to be based on the principal of equality, respect, trust and mutual benefit. It will also have to be based on the principal which the wise rulers of Tibet and of China laid down in a treaty as early as 823 ad, carved on the pillar which still stands today in front of the Jokhang, Tibet's holiest shrine, in Lhasa, that "Tibetans will live happily in the great land of Tibet, and the Chinese will live happily in the great land of China."

As a Buddhist monk, my concern extends to all members of the human family and, indeed, to all the sentient beings who suffer. I believe all suffering is caused by ignorance. People inflict pain on others in the selfish pursuit of their happiness or satisfaction.

Yet true happiness comes from a sense of peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved through the cultivation of altruism, of love and compassion, and elimination of ignorance, selfishness, and greed.

The problems we face today, violent conflicts, destruction of nature, poverty, hunger, and so on, are human-created problems which can be resolved through human effort, understanding, and a development of a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. We need to cultivate a universal responsibility for one another and the planet we share. Although I have found my own Buddhist religion helpful in generating love and compassion, even for those we consider our enemies, I am convinced that everyone can develop a good heart and a sense of universal responsibility with or without religion.

With the ever-growing impact of science in our lives, religion and spirituality have a greater role to play reminding us of our humanity. There is no contradiction between the two. Each gives us valuable insights into each other. Both science and the teaching of the Buddha tell us of the fundamental unity of all things. This understanding is crucial if we are to take positive and decisive action on the pressing global concern with the environment.

I believe all religions pursue the same goals, that of cultivating human goodness and bringing happiness to all human beings. Though the means may appear

different, the ends are the same.

As we enter the final decade of this century, I am optimistic that the ancient values that have sustained mankind are today reaffirming themselves to prepare us for a kinder, happier twenty-first century.

I pray for all of us, oppressor and friend, that together we succeed in building a better world through human understanding and love, and that in doing so we may reduce the pain and suffering of all sentient beings.

During the past four decades as a refugee in exile His Holiness has made major contributions in a dozen different fields of human endeavor. Some of these contributions have been recognized by the international community through awards and honorary degrees. I thought it might be interesting to readers to see the list of some of these. It conveys something of the breadth and depth of His Holiness as an ancient spirit in the modern world. One award tells the story of a thousand accomplishments.

- Life Achievement Award, 1999, Hadassah Women's Zionist Organization, Jerusalem, Israel
- Juliet Hollister Award, 1998, New York, USA
- Honorary Doctorate, 1998, Brandeis University, Boston, USA
- Honorary Doctorate, 1998, Emory University, Atlanta, USA
- Honorary Doctorate, 1997, Sun Yat-sen University, Chungshan, Taiwan
- Spirit of the Dream, 1996, The International House of the Blues Foundation, Hollywood, Calif., USA
- The Roosevelt Four Freedoms Award, 1994, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, Middelburg, Holland
- World Security Annual Peace Award, 1994, New York Lawyer's Alliance, New York, USA
- (Honorary) Doctor of Human Arts and Letters, 1994, Columbia University, New York, USA

- (Honorary) Doctor of Human Arts and Letters, 1994, Berea College, Kentucky, USA
- Honorary Fellow, 1994, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel
- First Prize for Humanity, 1993, Sartorius Foundation, Germany
- Honorary Degree of Doctor of Law, 1993, St. Andrews University, St. Andrews, U.K.
- ' Honorary Degree of Doctor of Law, 1993, Aberdeen University, Aberdeen, U.K.
- Degree of Doctor Honoris Causa, 1992, Pontifica Universidade Catolica de Sao Paulo, Brazil
- (Honorary) Doctor of Literature, 1992, Andra University, Visakapatnam, India
- Honorary Doctorate of Law, 1992, Melbourne University, Australia
- Shiromani Award, 1991, Shiromani Institute, Delhi, India
- Peace and Unity Award, 1991, National Peace Conference, New Delhi, India
- Wheel of Life Award, 1991, The Temple of Understanding, New York, USA
- Earth Prize, 1991, United Earth and U.N. Environmental Program, New York, USA
- Distinguished Peace Leadership Award for 1991, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Santa Barbara, USA
- Advancing Human Liberty, 1991, Freedom House, New York, USA
- (Honorary) Degree of Doctorate of Literature, 1990, Karnataka University, Dharwad, India
- (Honorary) Doctor of Education , 1990, Bologna University, Bologna, Italy

- (Honorary) Doctor of Divinity, 1990, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, India
- Le Prix de la Memorie, 1989, Foundation Danielle Mitterrand, Paris, France
- Nobel Peace Prize, 1989, Norwegian Nobel Committee, Oslo, Norway
- In Recognition of Perseverance in Times of Adversity, 1989, World Management Council, USA
- Raoul Wallenberg Human Rights Award, 1989, Congressional Rights Caucus for Human Rights, Washington, D.C., USA
- Dr. Leopold Lucas Prize, 1988, University of Tübingen, Germany
- The Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Award, 1987, The Human Behavioral Foundation, New York, USA
- Doctor Honoris Causa, 1984, University of Paris, Paris, France
- Liberty Torch, 1979, Gilbert di Lucia, New York, USA
- (Honorary) Doctor of Humanities, 1979, Seattle University, Seattle, USA
- (Honorary) Doctor of Divinity, 1979, Carol College, Waukesha, USA
- Special Medal, 1979, The Asian Buddhist Council for Peace, Ulan Bator, Mongolia
- The Lincoln Award, 1960, Research Institute of America, USA
- The Admiral Richard E. Byrd Memorial Award, 1959, USA
- The Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership, 1959, Manila, The Philippines
- (Honorary) Doctor of Letters, 1957, Benares Hindu University, Benares, India

An extraordinary gathering of spiritual leaders from around the world assembled at the United Nations in New York during August and September of 2000. Billed

as “The Millennium World Peace Summit,” it was promoted as an unprecedented effort by spiritual leaders to build bridges for the future.

However, the world press was shocked to learn that His Holiness had been excluded from the gathering because of pressure from the Chinese government. Hundreds of outraged articles appeared in newspapers and magazines around the world condemning the UN for capitulating to Beijing. In the end the organizers compromised by requesting His Holiness to deliver a keynote address at an off-site closing ceremony. His Holiness did not fly over to do so personally, but nonetheless consented to have a message read on his behalf.

I include this message below, because it expresses in succinct form so many of the international, humanitarian and environmental ideas to which His Holiness has dedicated himself over the years.

I also include it as a demonstration of the success that His Holiness has achieved with the Tibet issue. The very fact that China would work so hard to have him excluded from the summit stands as a testament to their fear of him, and to the grand status that he still commands in their minds. They regard their act of having him excluded as a success. However, the mere fact that they held meetings and conducted a major lobbying effort to exclude him reflects the weakness of their position.

Moreover, as a result of their efforts they generated hundreds of press articles in which they were presented as tyrants and the Dalai Lama as an underdog hero championing freedom and goodness. In the end, the major topic of everyone at the conference was the absence of the Dalai Lama.

The message by His Holiness was delivered by proxy on his behalf. It was regarded by participants and organizers as one of the great statements coming out of the summit.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I join in spirit the more than 1,000 religious and spiritual leaders around the world who will gather at the United Nations to attend the Millennium World Peace Summit to discuss ways to engage the power of religion to create a more peaceful world.

While wishing the historic summit and the eminent participants every success in

their deliberations, I take this opportunity to share with you a few thoughts of mine. I think it is a wonderful idea to employ the wisdom of the ages to make our common future more peaceful and to discuss ways to ensure that, rather than dividing us, the power of religion will make us into a family of peacemakers.

I see all the different religious traditions as paths for the development of inner peace, which is the true foundation of world peace. These ancient traditions come to us as a gift from our common past. Will we continue to cherish them as a gift and hand them over to the future generations as a legacy of our shared desire for peace or will we turn it into another weapon that will snatch away the future of the coming generations?

The choice we will make is obvious. What needs detailed discussion is how we can ensure that different religions of the world can become powerful allies of peace.

In order to do this, the different faiths need to develop mutual respect for and understanding of each other's beliefs and values.

The world's religions can contribute to world peace if there is peace and growing harmony between the different faiths. It would be sad and tragic if inter-religious rivalry and conflict undermines world peace in the 21st century.

In this regard, I have always encouraged and supported efforts towards better understanding among our different faiths. It is my firm belief that this better understanding will enhance the ability of different faiths to make positive contributions to world peace.

In this respect, the religious and spiritual leaders of different faiths can play a pivotal role by making a sustained effort to explain to their respective followers the importance respecting the beliefs and traditions of other faiths. We need to embrace the spirit of pluralism.

It is also my belief that whereas the 20th century has been a century of war and untold suffering, the 21st century should be one of peace and dialogue. As the continued advances in information technology make our world a truly global village, I believe there will be a time when war and armed conflict will be considered an outdated and obsolete method of settling differences among nations and communities. The nations and peoples of the world will soon realize that dialogue and compromise are the best methods of settling differences for

mutual benefit and for the sake of our future and the future of our much ravished and fragile planet.

However, there can be no peace as long as there is grinding poverty, social injustice, inequality, oppression, and environmental degradation. There can be no peace as long as the weak and small continue to be trodden by the mighty and powerful.

The world's spiritual and religious leaders need to address these real and pressing issues and find ways to contribute towards their elimination. These are the enemies of peace and true tyrannies of our times.

In conclusion I would like to share with you a prayer composed by Shantideva, an 11th century Indian Buddhist master, in the hope that it will provide you the same inspiration and determination as it continues to give to me. Shantideva said, "For as long as space endures, and for as long as sentient beings remain, until then may I, too, abide to dispel the misery of the world."

Finally, I would like to close this chapter with the first text that I ever translated from Tibetan into English. It is a short verse work that is known by heart to every Tibetan, and is chanted at the conclusion of most Tibetan spiritual gatherings. It was jointly composed by Kyabje Ling Rinpochey and Kyabje Trijang Rinpochey, who respectively became the Senior and Junior Tutors of the Dalai Lama in the late 1940s, when he was in his mid-teens. They remained at his side until they passed away in the early 1980s.⁵

The text is considered a masterpiece of traditional Tibetan poetics, as well as a jewel of spiritual sentiment. Naturally the Tibetan version is far more beautiful than my English rendition, especially for chanting purposes, yet some of its elegance comes through even in translation.

The formal title of the prayer is Song Producing Immortality, although Tibetans generally know it simply as "The Long-Life Prayer of His Holiness."

To the hosts of kind lamas, present and lineage,

Who are all three mysteries of the myriad buddhas
Magically manifest suiting those to be tamed,

Most precious of gems fulfilling all wishes,

Source of all goodness temporal and spiritual,

I pray from the depths of my heart:

Send forth your transforming powers

That Tenzin Gyatso, Lord of the Lands of Snow,

Live indestructible a hundred aeons

And his visions be spontaneously fulfilled.

To the myriad of tantric deities appearing As countless supporting and supported
mandalas, Anatomic phantoms of bliss and wisdom Matching the vast span of
dharmadhatu Like clouds pervading the skies,

I pray from the depths of my heart:

Send forth your transforming powers,

That Tenzin Gyatso, Lord of the Lands of Snow,

Live indestructible a hundred aeons

And his visions be spontaneously fulfilled.

To all buddhas of the three times,

Fully accomplished in abandonment and insight, Working the beneficial in seas
of worlds By ever creating lights of perfected karma, Possessors of ten faculties;
gods of gods,

I pray from the depths of my heart:

Send forth your transforming powers

That Tenzin Gyatso, Lord of the Lands of Snow,

Live indestructible a hundred aeons

And his visions be spontaneously fulfilled.

To the holy Dharma of the three vehicles,

Giving sure liberation from the three worlds,

A jewel mine of serenity and utter purity, Uncontaminated, unfluctuating, totally good,

I pray from the depths of my heart:

Send forth your transforming powers

That Tenzin Gyatso, Lord of the Lands of Snows

Live indestructible a hundred aeons

And his visions be spontaneously fulfilled.

To all sublime Sangha wise and free,

Those most brave in smashing The machinations of cyclic existence,

Sages directly perceiving truth

And wandering not from liberation's vajra city,

I pray from the depth of my heart:

Send forth your transforming powers
That Tenzin Gyatso, Lord of the Lands Of Snow,
Live indestructible a hundred aeons,
And his visions be spontaneously fulfilled.
To the dakas and dakinis of the three stages,
Dwelling in Vajrayogini's Pure Land,
In the regions, places and cemeteries,
Who, delighting in a hundred absorptions.
On great bliss and voidness,
Aid yogis to accomplish the true path,
I pray from the depths of my heart:

Send forth your transforming powers

That Tenzin Gyatso, Lord of the Lands of Snow,

Live indestructible a hundred aeons And his visions be spontaneously fulfilled.

To the oceans of wisdom-eyed Dharma protectors Who ever bear upon their crowns the knot Symbolizing their pledges to Buddha Vajradhara And have power to guard the doctrine and its holders, I pray from the depths of my heart:

Send forth your transforming powers
That Tenzin Gyatso, Lord of the Lands of Snow,
Live indestructible a hundred aeons And his visions be spontaneously fulfilled.
By the power of this, a heartfelt prayer Offered to the unfailing Refuges,
May Ngawang Lobzang Tenzin Gyatso,
Sole hope of the Tibetan people
Who are tormented by the relentless pains
Of this age of five harsh conditions
Sit constantly firm an ocean of aeons On an indestructible vajra throne,
His three mysteries unperishing,
Immutable and undeclining.
May the wishes of he who has a heart of gems,
Who benefits all with great waves of perfected karma,

Carrying on his courageous shoulders

The burden of the work of countless buddhas,

Be spontaneously fulfilled just so.

And by that power may the heavenly door Of this auspicious aeon's fulfillment
phase Open onto a springtime revival for beings;

And may there spread to the peaks of the world Auspicious signs of the
enlightenment lore Flourishing in all times and places.

O Holder of the White Lotus,

May a nectar stream of your transforming powers Ever mature the might of my
heart.

And by my delighting you with the offering Of living in accordance with the
spiritual teachings,

May the seas of bodhisattva deeds reach their goal.

By the power of the blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, The power of
unfailing cause and effect,

And the power of my pure aspirations,

May each and every aim of this prayer Be easily and quickly fulfilled.

*)4-

The final chapters of the present Dalai Lama's life are still to be written. He has accomplished a tremendous amount to date, perhaps even more than any of his predecessors. The challenges that fate have thrown upon him have dictated that it be so. His contributions toward re-establishing the Tibetan refugees, saving the endangered Tibetan civilization, and generating international awareness of the Tibet situation have all met with tremendous success.

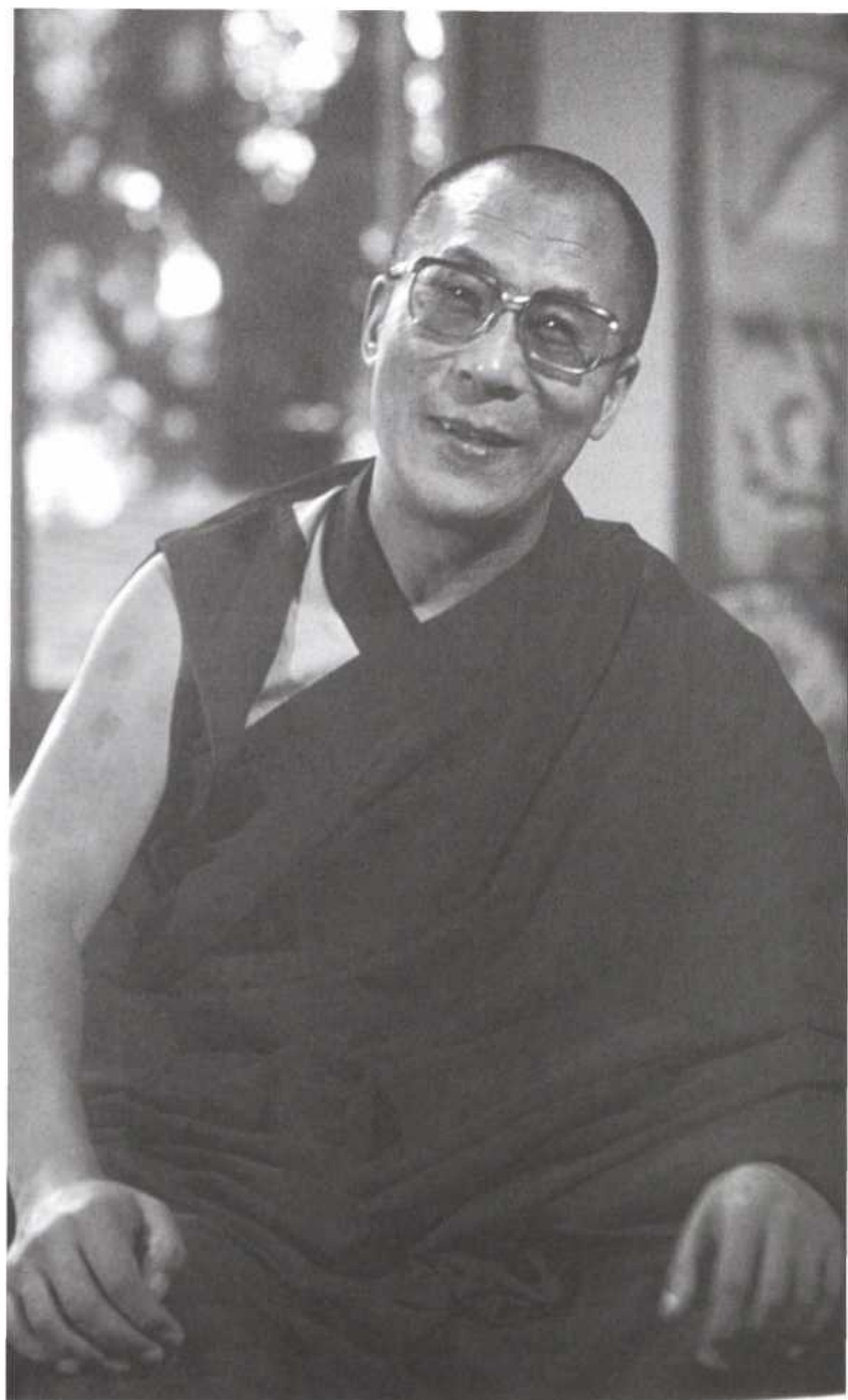
In addition, his efforts to promote world peace, humanitarian and environmental issues, universal love and compassion, and interpersonal understanding have

brought him to the forefront of today's world leaders.

However, it is only in the final chapters—those remaining to be composed—that we will know if his life is a happy tale or a tragedy. After all is said and done, his principal task as the Dalai Lama is the preservation of Tibet and its spiritual culture; and for all his many personal accomplishments, this task has not yet been fulfilled. And as said earlier even though the Tibetan aspiration from some angles looks brighter today than it did a few decades ago, it could also be argued that from other angles it is still extremely precarious. The Dalai Lama may have succeeded with flying colors in a dozen areas of the deadly game which is the Tibet-China conflict, but China nonetheless is still completely entrenched in Tibet, ruling it with an iron fist that shows no signs of weakening. The number of Chinese troops and bureaucrats in Tibet, as well as the large number of Chinese immigrants, seems from conventional appearances to give China a distinct advantage in the struggle. Moreover, China's newfound wealth and political clout in the international arena imbue it with an aura of near invincibility. It is possible that the sheer weight of the Chinese presence could smother Tibet's hopes for freedom, and thus render all the Dalai Lama's works ineffective.

That said, the Dalai Lama remains optimistic. As he puts it, "Truth and justice are on our side."

Those of us who love and admire him, and who wish him and his nation well, can only hope against hope that fate will eventually rule in his favor.



lenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. Photo © Marcia Keegan.

Epilogue: Prophecies Transcended, Prophecies Fulfilled

As we saw in an earlier chapter, the advent of each of the Dalai Lamas, as well as many of their major deeds, was foretold long ago in *The Book of the Kadampa Masters*.

Nonetheless, prophecy is considered in Buddhism to be by nature an inexact science. This is because the natural or karmic laws of cause and effect must accommodate both the free will of the individual and the mysterious energies of the forces of enlightenment. As a result, nothing about the future is absolutely certain. Prophecy, therefore, is more a matter of a projection of probabilities than it is divine pronouncement.

The ambiguity of prophecy is illustrated in the accounts of the lives of several of the Dalai Lamas. For example, the Sixth could have become the most powerful man on earth, if he had only chosen to marry and produce a child of destiny who would unite the Mongols and Tibetans under one military banner. Although he chose not to do so, the possibility always loomed before him.

Similarly, the Ninth could have been the greatest of all the incarnations, had he surmounted the obstacles to his life span and lived into his adulthood. The Twelfth had many potential encounters with greatness, although in order for them to occur he would first have had to abandon the lifestyle of a monk and take a sexual consort, a method that would have extended his lifespan. Both chose alternate destinies, and died at a young age.

In the same vein, the Thirteenth was prophesied to live to a ripe old age—some say seventy-eight years—should circumstances work out in accord with his visions. However this involved the participation of his people, who would have had to heed his wishes and strengthen Tibet's eastern borders with China. He was unable to make them listen to his unpopular demands for a strong military, mostly because this would have involved the instatement of

new taxes to cover the costs. He therefore died at the age of fifty-eight, so that the next Dalai Lama—the Fourteenth, or present incumbent—would be able to pull up the slack.

Thus, even though these Dalai Lamas fulfilled numerous prophecies that were

associated with them, they chose not to fulfill these in particular. Instead they used their mystical powers to take alternative paths, and thus opened other doors of destiny for themselves and the world.

Sometimes a prophecy is a blessing, and sometimes it is a burden.

The former is the case when a positive accomplishment is expected. For example, people were aware of a prophecy that claimed that the Second Dalai Lama would build a great monastery at Metoktang near the Lhamo Latso Lake, and that he would perform rituals that would open up the oracular powers of the lake. As a consequence, when he announced that he would visit the Lhamo Latso Lake in order to perform oracular rituals, everyone wanted to come along. Similarly, when he announced that he wished to build Chokhor Gyal Monastery at Metoktang, everyone rushed forward in order to be part of the project. Some volunteered their time and skills, others offered building materials, and still others offered gold and precious jewels for the sacred images in the temple complex. As the Second's biographer, Yangpa Chojey wrote, "It was almost as though the monastery built itself."

The Eighth Dalai Lama, on the other hand, experienced the burdensome side of prophecy. As we saw in the chapter on his life, many people of the period believed there was a prophecy that there would only be seven Dalai Lamas. Nonetheless, after the Seventh passed away a search was conducted for his reincarnation. Thus the Eighth was forced to live his life under the shadow of being one more than the "prophesied number." The ambiguity of the scriptural passages in question did leave the possibility of there being more than seven incarnations, but people nonetheless always looked somewhat askance at him.

Born under such circumstances, he must have found himself walking something of a steep uphill road. However, he pushed on with an undeterred resolve, and thus the legacy of the Dalai Lama incarnations has continued until today.

Prophecies, their interpretations and their fulfillment are sometimes not entirely lacking in humor. This is demonstrated by the Tibetan attitude toward one of the earliest prophecies known to the Tibetans.

The source here is none other than the Buddha himself. The Tibetans point to an early edition of the Lankavatara, or The Descent to Lanka Sutra, in which the Buddha is represented as saying,¹

Two thousand and five hundred years after my passing My Dharma will go to the land of the red-faced people.

The Tibetans are rather hopeless historians, at least insofar as early history is concerned, and they could never quite figure out exactly when the Buddha lived. In fact, they did not get it even approximately right, with most of them fixing the date a thousand or so years prior to what is commonly accepted today. This led to wild speculation over the meaning of the Buddha's words quoted above.

A second confusing factor was that Tibetans frequently refer to themselves as "red-faced people." The wind and sun of the high altitudes at which they live turns their facial skin the color of a ripe Macintosh apple. Moreover, they share the same genetic makeup as our native North Americans.

Consequently, for generations the Tibetans thought that the above prophecy must refer to Buddhism coming to Tibet, either in the first great movement of the mid-seventh century, or during the renaissance of the mideleventh century. Even by their eccentric calculations the figures didn't quite add up, but they seemed close enough.

However, when the present Dalai Lama visited India for the first time in 1956, he did so at the official invitation of the Indian government. The occasion was India's national celebration of the 2,500th anniversary of the passing of the Buddha. The number rang a bell with the Tibetans, and they remembered Buddha's words in the Lankavatara-sutra.

The invitation became a national issue in Tibet. The Chinese Communists had taken over the country in 1951 and now ruled it with an iron hand. Naturally they were opposed to the Dalai Lama leaving the country, which could only create instability for them. His Holiness, however, intended to attend the international event, and made his resolve publicly known. It was difficult for the Chinese to refuse him their permission without offending India, with whom they hoped to cultivate friendly relations. In the end His Holiness won the battle of wills.

The mention in the invitation of the Indian celebration marking the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddhas passing forced the Tibetans to re-think their dating of the Buddha's life, which in turn brought the meaning of the Lankavatara

prophecy into question. It now obviously could no longer be a reference to Buddhism coming to Tibet.

Not long after this, Tibet's new found exposure to the international community brought them word of the "Red Peoples" of North America, or Mi-rig Marpo, as the Tibetans now call them. Then His Holiness rapidly became the world's favorite Buddhist monk, especially with Americans. Whereas in 1956 there was not a single Tibetan Buddhist center in North America, there are now several thousand of them.

Consequently Tibetans today take this prophecy to refer not to themselves, but to America. However, they nonetheless feel a connection, in that their Dalai Lama has played such a major role in its fulfillment. This was symbolized by his attendance at the 1956 celebration in India in honor of the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha's passing, and sealed by his receiving of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

There are also sad and negative aspects to prophecy. For example, in the Great Thirteenth's prophetic statement of 1932 he said,

It will not be long before we find the Red onslaught at our own front door. It is only a matter of time before we come into a direct confrontation with it...

And when that happens we must be ready to defend ourselves. Otherwise our spiritual and cultural traditions will be completely eradicated. ... The birthrights and property of the people will be stolen; we will become like slaves to our conquerors, and will be made to wander helplessly like beggars. Everyone will be forced to live in misery, and the days and nights will pass slowly, with great suffering and terror.

Again, this was an "either-or" type of prophecy. If his people were to follow his advice and build a strong army that could defend the country, all would turn out well. If on the other hand they should fail to do so, then the terrible consequences described above would have to be faced.

Much of what the Great Thirteenth foretold in 1932 has already come to pass. The Tibetans failed to heed his words, and as a result the country was lost to Communist China in the early 1950s. This eventually led to a massive exodus of refugees, including the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and the Lhasa government.

Those who managed to escape into exile in India indeed were “made to wander helplessly like beggars.” They have lived as refugees since this time, surviving largely from handouts given as humanitarian aid by the Indian government and the international community.

As for the Tibetans who did not manage to escape into exile, the Great Thirteenth’s words that they would “become like slaves to our conquerors” have also proved true. The Chinese army quickly installed an administration in Tibet that essentially ran the country like an enormous labor camp. Everyone was forced to work from early dawn until late at night, with nothing but a few bowls of porridge as their reward, and with the bulk of the production going to the Red Army. Anyone who complained was charged with “counter-revolutionary attitudes” and either killed or shipped off to a concentration camp. Over a fifth of the population died from the trauma. The atrocities are well documented by humanitarian organizations like Amnesty International and Asia Watch.

The Great Thirteenth stated, “Everyone will be forced to live in misery, and the days and nights will pass slowly, with great suffering and terror.” This soon came to pass. The reign of terror began in 1956 and continued for over two decades. It was only relaxed after liberalization swept China in 1979. Many of Tibet’s intellectuals spent this entire period in prison, most of them dying from torture, exposure, illness and malnutrition. One doctor friend of mine who spent twenty-three years in prison reported that only three people out of the three hundred with whom he was arrested survived the ordeal.

Things have somewhat improved since then, but only slightly so. The human rights situation remains abominable.

Among the many disasters described by the Great Thirteenth, one in particular is relevant to our purposes here. He said, “Even the names of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas will be erased, as will be those of the other lamas, lineage holders and holy beings. The monasteries will be looted and destroyed, and the monks and nuns killed or chased away, the great works of the noble Dharma kings of old will be undone, and all of our cultural and spiritual institutions persecuted, destroyed and forgotten.”

The so-called Cultural Revolution that was ushered in by the Communists in the mid-1960s saw the arrest and imprisonment of all high lamas and lineage holders who would not collaborate with and act as mouthpieces for the Chinese

government. Eventually all monasteries, nunneries, temples and hermitages were closed, and either destroyed or transformed into army barracks and warehouses. The ancient artworks in them were destroyed or dismantled for their raw materials. Indeed, “the great works of the noble Dharma kings of old” were undone.

The process of tracking down and enthroning reincarnate lamas was banned, and all Buddhist training programs were discontinued. By the late 1960s the repression of Buddhism was so intense that people were arrested if their chin was seen moving without words being spoken, on the pretext that he or she was probably reciting silent mantras or prayers.

The Great Thirteenth mentioned the names of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. After the Fourteenth Dalai Lama’s escape into India in 1959 he was listed as public enemy number one by the Chinese Communists, and still holds that distinction. Even his photograph is banned from use inside Tibet. He has now lived for the past four decades—his entire adult life—outside his country.

As for the Panchen Lama, after the Dalai Lama escaped to India in 1959 the Panchen was put forth by the Communists as the spiritual and secular leader of the Tibetan people. The Chinese hoped to use him as a puppet spokesman, but unfortunately for them in 1964 he spoke out strongly against the Communist government at a large public rally, and advised everyone to look to the Dalai Lama as their only hope. Shortly after this he disappeared and was presumed dead. He did not re-emerge until 1979, when Chairman Deng’s policy of liberation led to the release of hundreds of thousands of political prisoners.

The Panchen struggled for the remaining decade of his life—from 1979^{to} 1989 — to access the opportunities of the new liberalization in order to rebuild Tibet. The Tibetans owe a great debt of gratitude to him, for during these years he oversaw the restoration of hundreds of temples, monasteries and cultural buildings, as well as the reprinting of many Tibetan classics. He managed to regain the right of Tibetans to do their basic schooling in their native tongue rather than in Chinese, and also the right of Tibetans to exchange the drab Communist garb that had been forced upon them for their traditional style of dress. In brief, he was the great hero of the moment.

In order to accomplish these ends he had to walk a fine line between Tibetan interests and those of the Communist government in Beijing.

However, in 1989 he made a public statement to the effect that no matter what China did for Tibet it could never equal what had been destroyed. A few days later he died—as a result, Tibetans believe, of poison.

The lamas of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Tibet who were in charge of the search for his reincarnation knew that they would have to consult with the Dalai Lama in India. Otherwise, the child whom they chose as the reincarnation would never be accepted as authentic by the Tibetans. They therefore discreetly sent messages to His Holiness requesting his assistance. His Holiness naturally agreed, and secret communications traveled back and forth between Tashi Lhunpo and Dharamsala over the years to follow. The search came to a successful end in 1995, and the Dalai Lama confirmed one of the children on the shortlist as the true incarnation.

What followed after this is something of a mystery, and has led to an awkward situation for everyone concerned. Dharamsala announced the chosen candidate before Tashi Lhunpo had the opportunity to clear the situation with Beijing. Beijing was shocked to learn that the Tashi Lhunpo monks had been collaborating with the Dalai Lama on the matter. The child and his family were immediately arrested, and a propaganda campaign was unleashed against them. They have not been seen or heard from since, and are believed to be somewhere in China under house arrest.

Chatrel Rinpochey, the high lama from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery who had been in charge of the search for the reincarnation, was arrested for “selling state secrets,” as were a further forty-eight monks of Tashi Lhunpo. They were all tortured and then given lengthy prison sentences. Most of them are still incarcerated, and several are presumed dead.

Shortly thereafter the Chinese had a different group of lamas put forth another child as the Panchen candidate. This child was subsequently enthroned. Tibetans refer to him as Gyami Panchen, or “the Chinese Panchen,” and also as Panchen Zunma," or “Pretend Panchen.” The Communists force all major Tibetan monasteries to display his photograph in places of prominence in their temples. They have banned all photos of the candidate chosen by the Dalai Lama.

Since the liberalization of the early 1980s, the Chinese had allowed Tibetans to keep photographs of the Dalai Lama for spiritual reasons. One could openly purchase such photos from street vendors in Lhasa, and many temples had them

on public display. After this episode, however, all photos of His Holiness were once more banned, and an enormous anti-Dalai Lama campaign was unleashed. A security team was placed in every monastery, charged with the task of re-educating the monks on political matters. This meant long evening assemblies with Communist speeches, denunciations and forced confessions. The monks and nuns were forced to sign a five-point document denouncing the Dalai Lama, as well as the boy he had chosen as Panchen, and also declaring acceptance of the candidate promoted by the Chinese government. Another of the five points stated that the signee accepted that Tibet had always been an integral part of China, and that China had only benefited Tibet since the “peaceful liberation” (i.e. invasion) of the 1950s.

Naturally many monks and nuns found it emotionally difficult to put their names to a document of this nature, and their numbers dropped radically over the months to follow. Many fled into hiding, others escaped to India, and still others were killed or imprisoned. After a shooting at Ganden Monastery, for example, the number of monks dropped from 750 to a mere 80. Now, several years later, it is back up to about 400, slightly above half its number before the incident.

The nuns were especially uncooperative. Tibetan women are headstrong and fiercely independent, but the Tibetan nuns especially so. Almost a third of them ended up in prison during the months that followed the crackdown.

What will become of the Panchen Lama is an open question. Tibetans will never accept the boy put forth by the Chinese government, and the whereabouts of the boy identified by the Dalai Lama is unknown. Amnesty International lists him as the world’s youngest political prisoner.

As with all things to do with modern China, there is also a humorous side to the episode. Chinese Communists profess to be utter materialists and therefore to reject the doctrine of reincarnation. They seem to see no contradiction in holding this view, and at the same time becoming engaged in a minor war over the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama.

The Great Thirteenth similarly mentioned the damage that a Communist occupation would bring to the various lamas and lineage holders. This mainly refers to the tulkus, or incarnate lamas, for they played the major role in receiving and transmitting the various tantric lineages. As he put it in his Last Testament, “Even the names of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas will be erased, as

will be those of the other lamas, lineage holders and holy beings.

Again, this too has come to pass. Whereas Tibet had approximately 3,000 reincarnate lamas at the time of the Chinese Communist takeover of 1951, most of these died in prison during the years of the Cultural Revolution. There are now less than a hundred in Tibet itself, and a few hundred in exile.

One of the great deeds of the present Dalai Lama has been his work in overseeing the continuation of the tulku tradition in exile. All the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism come to him for assistance in locating and identifying their reincarnations. This is done on a more modest level than in Tibet, of course; the small community of Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal simply does not have the infrastructure to find, enthrone and educate 3,000 tulkus. Nonetheless many of the most important lineages have been maintained.

Many of the great masters with whom I studied during my years in India have now passed away. However, many of them have returned as young children, and have been recognized and enthroned as tulkus.

One of these is Kyabje Ling Rinpochey, who was the senior guru of the Dalai Lama. He had been one of the three principal disciples of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. In turn, that incarnation's predecessor had been the guru to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama when the latter was in his youth. In this way the Dalai Lamas and Ling Rinpocheys exchanged the roles of guru and disciple with one another over the cycles of several lifetimes.

I was always thrilled to hear the Dalai Lama speak of Kyabje Ling Rinpochey; for it was from this elderly master that I myself received my most important tantric initiations. By the time I arrived in Dharamsala in 1972 he had already fulfilled most of his duties in training the Dalai Lama, and therefore was able to dedicate some time to teaching less significant personages. I consider myself exceedingly fortunate to have been counted among them.

Kyabje Ling Rinpochey passed away shortly after I left India in 1983. The search for his reincarnation was initiated in 1985 under the direct supervision of His Holiness, and when I returned to Dharamsala in 1986 my visit coincided with the identification of an eighteen-month-old boy as the reincarnation of the aged guru.

Previously I had seen the elderly Kyabje Ling Rinpochey in the company of the

Dalai Lama on numerous occasions. It was delightful to witness the elderly guru, now reincarnated as an infant, sitting on the Dalai Lama's lap, the two of them smiling joyfully into one another's eyes.

My first meeting with the young incarnation was remarkable. The lama who was doing the legwork on the search was a friend of mine, and shortly after my 1986 arrival in Dharamsala I bumped into him on the street. He pulled me aside and told me that the search had been narrowed down to six candidates, of which there was one whom he personally considered to be the most promising. He invited me to come and visit the boy the next day, and asked me to bring along two or three friends who had never met Rinpochey. "The child is amazing," he said to me. "He recognizes anyone whom he knew in his previous life, and refuses to acknowledge those whom he didn't know. Come with two or three friends who never met his predecessor, and we'll see how he responds."

In those days I used to wear a small beard, and the previous Kyabje Ling Rinpochey used to make me sit beside him whenever I visited him so that he could pull it as we spoke. Tibetans generally cannot grow much facial hair, so are often fascinated by what sprouts on a Western chin. Sometimes when I visited him I would have to translate for small groups of Westerners who had requested an audience, and thus would be in his presence for an hour or two at a time. By the time the audience was over my chin would be black and blue from his constant tugging on my beard.

With two companions I made my way up the hill to the small temple where the child was being kept during the tests. As the three of us approached the temple the child spotted us. He was playing on the front steps, but the moment he saw me he stopped what he was doing and looked at me carefully. His face then broke into a knowing smile, and he charged up to me, put his two little hands around my beard, and began to swing back and forth like Tarzan on a jungle vine. As for my two companions, he completely ignored them for the entire time we remained with him, giving me his exclusive attention.

A few days later I had an audience with the Dalai Lama. As soon as I had entered the room His Holiness asked me, "Well, what do you think of the new incarnation of Kyabje Rinpochey?" His eyes were dancing with laughter, for he knew that he had done a good job.

He then proceeded to tell me some of the dreams and signs he had received that

had enabled him to guide the search team in their efforts to trace down the reincarnation of his root guru, the very venerable Kyabje Ling Rinpochey.

His Holiness has similarly been instrumental in guiding the processes of identifying numerous other high tulkus, including the reincarnations of the heads of the Nyingma and Karma Kargyu Schools. Because of his efforts, the worst of the terrible consequences predicted by the Great Thirteenth in this regard have been avoided.

But then, one of the reasons the Great Thirteenth died prematurely was so that he would be able to come back as the Fourteenth and oversee the survival of Tibet and its spiritual culture.

Finally, the question of continuation must be discussed. Can the Dalai Lama legacy of sacred reincarnation be maintained over the generations and centuries that lie before us?

Here I would like to relate the story of a rumor that emerged in the late 1970s, to the effect that the present Dalai Lama would be the last of the incarnations. His Holiness was ultimately the source of the rumor, but somehow I myself happened to be the vehicle that lifted it up to a state of national debate within the Tibetan community. The issue became so well known that a biography of His Holiness appeared with the provocative title *The Last Dalai Lama*.²

In the late 1970s my late father-in-law, Mr. Irving Mandel, who had been involved in the New York media scene all of his life, took an interest in Tibet. This occurred largely because his daughter lived in Dharamsala, the headquarters of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile. Anyway, he arranged for me to serve as the informal Tibet correspondent for Associated Press. AP had nobody else covering Tibet at the time, and as I was living in Dharamsala the arrangement was convenient. I had already published a number of books and articles on Tibet, and thus it was an easy way for them to get occasional Tibet stories without much effort or expense from their side.

The arrangement was that they would telex me in Dharamsala whenever anything related to Tibet came up that they thought might be of interest to their subscribers. Usually an interview with His Holiness would be requested.

These were the days of the Cold War, with America and the Soviet Union watching one another closely. The story of “the last Dalai Lama” emerged during the days of the Polish independence movement, when Solidarity was pushing everyone’s buttons. America naturally backed Solidarity, if only to irritate the Russians. The Russians, on the other hand, could not decide on a response. They had a large military force aligned on Poland’s eastern borders, but hesitated to launch an invasion. The situation was indeed tense.

As a result, the CIA was having everything that appeared in the Polish media translated into English, as part of their intelligence-gathering efforts. Quite by coincidence, His Holiness did an interview with a Polish reporter at the time. The interview was part of a simple human-interest story on Tibet and the Dalai Lama. One of the questions concerned the future of the Dalai Lama office.

His Holiness replied that he suspected he would be the last Dalai Lama, and that the nature of the modern world would most probably necessitate the creation of new structures for Tibet. The interviewer said something to the effect that most people would take his words to indicate that the future of Tibet was bleak, and that there was no hope of Tibet ever gaining independence from Communist China. His Holiness laughed and replied that they would be making a wrong interpretation.

The interview appeared in a small Polish newspaper and would have gone unnoticed by the international community had it not been for the Russia-America squabble over Poland and Solidarity. Instead, the article was translated into English by the CIA, and somehow attracted the attention of someone in the AP office. He forwarded it to the New York bureau, and a few days later I received a telex asking me to do an interview with His Holiness on the question of “the last Dalai Lama.” Americans knew very little of Tibet and the Dalai Lama at the time—he hadn’t yet even visited the country—but somehow the idea that a centuries-old legacy was about to be shut down fired AP’s imagination.

Consequently I interviewed His Holiness on the matter, and at that time he confirmed that indeed he expected to be the last Dalai Lama.

“But what will you do in your next life? You’ll be out of a job,” I retorted.

His Holiness laughed and replied, “I’m not sure. Maybe I’ll come back as a

book, or a dog, or a bridge, and work for sentient beings in that way. Or maybe incognito, as an ordinary American like you.”

He then went on to say, “Anyway, that is from my side. If from the Tibetan side they want to continue the tradition, then that is up to them. They can always find some other qualified being, some buddha or bodhisattva, and give him the name Dalai Lama. But as for me, I doubt that I will continue.

The mention of a dog, bridge or book by His Holiness was a reference to a classical scripture by the fourth-century Indian master Chandrakirti, in which Chandrakirti describes the various ways in which one should resolve to manifest in future lives for the benefit of others. His Holiness knew that I had been studying that text for over a year at the time, and his comment was a witticism touching upon it. However, I especially liked the part about the incognito American.

Eventually the article and interview went out to the hundreds of papers around the world that subscribe to the AP news service. The Tibetans thus learned for the first time that their Dalai Lama had publicly stated he would be the last Dalai Lama; none of them speak or read Polish, so the earlier mention of it in a Warsaw newspaper had passed unnoticed.

Complete panic broke out. The last Dalai Lama! How could this be? How could His Holiness say such a thing! The intensity of the Tibetan love for their Dalai Lama institution immediately manifested as a massive public outcry. Fortunately for me, AP usually does not release the name of a correspondent who creates a particular piece for them.

After this a flurry of interviews and articles came out on the subject of “the last Dalai Lama.” In one of these, when His Holiness was asked why he had chosen to be the last in the line of incarnations, he laughed and replied, “I’m not the best Dalai Lama, but also not the worst. Therefore it may be best to be last.” He was having fun with the situation, and wanted to get a bit of extra mileage out of it.

Over the months to follow, his extraordinary announcement became the topic of debate at almost every Tibetan gathering, from informal tea shop encounters to official government assemblies and monastic meetings. Everyone had an opinion on what His Holiness really meant by his words, or on why he had said

them.

In the end everyone decided that His Holiness was a national treasure, and not a mere individual. This being the case, it was not up to him to decide whether or not he would reincarnate as the Dalai Lama in his next life. Like any national treasure, or so the theory went, he belonged to the people and not to any one individual, including himself. It therefore was up to the people to decide upon any such future course of action. His Holiness was duly informed of the resolution, and the matter was put to rest.

Questions on the subject nonetheless continued for almost a decade from the international press. His Holiness soon tired of the discussion, and eventually announced that he had only mentioned himself as the last Dalai Lama in order to send a signal to China. Beijing seemed to regard the Tibet issue as being merely a matter of placating the Dalai Lama. His Holiness wished to let them know that he was not at all concerned with his personal status or office, and that his only concern was the natural rights of the six million Tibetans who looked to him as their source of hope.

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In an earlier chapter I discuss His Holiness's description of various master plans of the early Dalai Lamas.

In particular, His Holiness mentioned how the first four incarnations spread their teachings throughout various parts of Central Asia, so that in the mid-seventeenth century, when the power brokers of Lhasa decided that a lama was needed as peacekeeper and national figurehead, the Fifth Dalai Lama was their natural choice. Their master plan worked.

The Sixth then had a master plan to disrobe and set up a lineage of transmission that would pass from father to son, much like spiritual authority passes in the Sakya School from uncle to nephew. However, his plan failed, and consequently he died young.

Similarly the Great Thirteenth had a master plan for building a strong and independent Tibet that would endure safely for many generations into the future. However, he was unable to rally the Tibetans to action on the issue. Tibet had long been secure due to its remoteness and the harshness of its environment. Modern technology had removed these barriers. The Thirteenth foresaw the

destruction of Tibet that would result from inaction at this critical juncture in history, and did not wish to witness it as an old man. He therefore passed away some two decades earlier than necessary, so that there would be a young, vigorous Dalai Lama to face up to the harshness of the situation, who would have the strength and vitality necessary to save Tibet and its culture.

His Holiness once said to me, “Many of the early Dalai Lamas relied upon master plans in order to accomplish their objectives. I have tried everything I know with the Chinese, and have not seen much success from my efforts. I don’t have much room to move any more. I may have to do like some of the early Dalai Lamas, and rely upon a master plan.”

I replied, “Well, Your Holiness, most of them applied their master plans by means of shortening their lifespans through meditation, and passing the work on to the next incarnation. If you come up with a master plan, I would like to request that you take a slightly different approach. Instead of using your meditative powers to shorten your lifespan like they did, use your powers to extend your lifespan. That would be the most appropriate approach to a master plan from our point of view.”

His Holiness chuckled and said, “Don’t worry. I am just playing with you. Anyway, if things go well I will live at least until I am eighty-six or so.’

In describing himself the Dalai Lama often states “I am just a simple Buddhist monk.” That may well be the case; but somehow with him the term “simple” seems pregnant with a wealth of meanings, from uncontrived laughter, heartfelt warmth and human authenticity to universal compassion and transcendental wisdom.

I look into the Dalai Lama’s simple smile, and all of these qualities seem to dance in the fires behind his eyes. Indeed, even in this rather cynical age he continues to embody the magic and mystery that is Tibet.

Notes

The Previous Lives of the First Dalai Lama

1. The Eighth Dalai Lama's guru Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen was perhaps the greatest Tibetan writer of the late eighteenth century. He was extremely prolific, penning hundreds of titles. His text *A Festival for the Wise: An Explanation of the Tradition of the Buddha of Compassion* makes wonderful reading and reveals the depth of the connection that Tibetans feel for Avalokiteshvara.
2. I included a translation of this work in *Selected Works of the Dalai Lama I: Bridging the Sutras and Tantras*, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, N.Y., 1985.
3. This wonderful collection of tales relating thirty-six previous lives of Lama Drom Tonpa has not yet been translated, although several editions of it have been published in Tibetan in recent decades. All thirty-six read more as allegory than as biography, much like the Buddha-jatakas of ancient India. See *The Previous Lives of Lama Drom Tonpa* in the Bibliography in the section *Books Published in Modern China*.
4. There are a number of biographies in Tibetan. In my book *Atisha and Buddhism in Tibet* (Tibet House, New Delhi, 1982) I prepared a translation of the short version by Lama Tsongkhapa, extracted from his *Lam Rim Chenmo*, or *Great Exposition on the Stages on the Path to Enlightenment*, and what follows is largely based on this account. The most thorough modern study of Atisha's life and works is *Atisha and Tibet*, by A. Chattopadhyaya and Lama Chinpa (Indian Studies Publishers, Calcutta, 1967).
5. Most Tibetans rely upon *The Blue Annals* (Tib. 'Debs-ter-sngon-po) by Gos Lotsawa for their understanding of their early history. The translation by the great Russian Tibetologist George Roerich during the 1940s, created under the supervision of the illustrious Tibetan scholar Amdo Gendun Chopel, remains invaluable. I have access only to the second edition of this (Motilal Barnasiddhas, New Delhi, 1976).
6. Tibetans tend to play down Buddhism in Tibet prior to King Songtsen Gampo and the mid-seventh century, largely because Songtsen Gampo introduced a new script and made Buddhism the official religion of the country.

However, this statement by Gos Lotsawa indicates that Buddhist monks were active in central Tibet several hundred years prior to Songtsen Gampo.

7. The words “Omniscient Friend of the Sun” in this passage are an epithet of the Buddha. This Tibetan prophecy identifies King Songtsen Gampo’s birth as occurring 500 years after Buddha’s passing. It overshoots the mark by more than five hundred years. Because of it and a number of other early references of a similar nature, Tibetans place the Buddha’s life many centuries earlier than do Western scholars.

8. There are numerous translations of Marco Polo’s journals available in English. I personally like *The Travels of Marco Polo (1254-1324)* by Ronald Leatham (London: Viking, reissued edition 1982). The portrait of Sakya Pakpa that he gives us is tainted by his jealousy of this illustrious lama. However, the miraculuous powers that he attributes to Sakya Pakpa are also mentioned in the Tibetan chronicles, and thus were obviously topics of popular legend at the time.

The First Dalai Lama: How It All Began

1. The first book that I ever published with Snow Lion was a collection of translations from the writings of the First Dalai Lama, entitled *Bridging the Sutras and Tantras* (1980).

A few years later this came out in an expanded edition as *Selected Works of the Dalai Lama I: Bridging the Sutras and Tantras* (1985), and included a translation of a traditional Tibetan biography. This book was also published in India by Tushita Books (1982).

Some years later I published another First Dalai Lama book, again with Snow Lion. This was entitled *Training the Mind in the Great Way*, and was a study of the First’s commentary to a Kadampa meditative tradition known as “The Seven Points for Training the Mind” (1993).

The present chapter draws from material uncovered while preparing those two books.

2. Two principal biographies of the First Dalai Lama have come down to us: a chronological account, entitled *A String of Jewels from the Marvelous Liberating Deeds of Omniscient Gendun Drubpa*, written by Panchen Yeshey

Tsemo of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery; and an account placed in the context of the First Dalai Lama's fulfillment of the Kadampa legacy coming from Lama Drom Tonpa, known as *The Twelve Deeds in the Marvelous Life of Omniscient Gendun Drubpa*, written by Kunga Gyaltsen of Tsetang Monastery. Although Panchen Yeshey Tsemo's account has its historical value, he was a conservative lama, and his presentation is somewhat flat. Kunga Gyaltsen brings more flare to the telling of the First Dalai Lama's story.

In addition, one of the Eighth Dalai Lama's gurus, Kachen Yeshey Gyaltsen, dedicates considerable space to the life of the First Dalai Lama in his wonderful encyclopedic work *Lives of the Masters in the Lam Rim Lineage*.

The first book I wrote on the life and teachings of the First Dalai Lama, *Selected Works of the Dalai Lama I: Bridging the Sutras and Tantras* (1985), contains a complete translation of *The Twelve Deeds in the Marvelous Life of Omniscient Gendun Drubpa*, by Kunga Gyaltsen.

3. This monastery is located just south of Shigatsey. As we will see later, when the First Dalai Lama was in his seventh year he was placed in Nartang for care and education.
4. I included the shorter of these in *Selected Works of the Dalai Lama I: Bridging the Sutras and Tantras*. The longer is included in my other book on the First Dalai Lama, entitled *Training the Mind in the Great Way*.
5. Many books on Tibetan history by Western academics state that the First Dalai Lama was the nephew of Lama Tsongkhapa. Presumably, they make this error due to confusing Tsongkhapa with Geshey Choshey, the uncle who was Gendun Drubpa's guardian during his childhood years in Nartang Monastery.
6. Bodong gave him the name Tamchey Khyenpa, or "Omniscient One," and later the honorific "ley" was attached to it. This is the source of the name Jey Tamchey Khyenpa, by which the first five Dalai Lamas were popularly known. It continued to be used in formal literary references even after this time, but appeared less frequently in the vernacular.

The Second Dalai Lama: A Legacy Established

1. Two main accounts of the Second Dalai Lama's life have come down to us:

his own Autobiography, written in 1528, and the more extensive Biography, which was not completed until after his death. The first section of the latter was written in 1530 by a lama named Yangpa Choje, who passed away before his project was complete. The work of completing the task fell to his disciple, a monk by the name of Konchok Kyab. In addition, several centuries later the Eighth Dalai Lama's guru Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen would give a thorough treatment of the Second Dalai Lama's life and deeds in his work *Lives of the Masters in the Lam Rim Lineage*.

The Second was the only early Dalai Lama to write an autobiography. Therefore, we know more about his early life and ancestry than any other of the early incarnations. In

addition, he also wrote a biographical account of his father, and we can glean more on his family life from this source.

I have published two books on the Second Dalai Lama. One is entitled *Selected Works of the Dalai Lama II: The Tantric Yogas of Sister Niguma* (Snow Lion, 1985), and the other, *Mystical Verses of a Mad Dalai Lama* (Wheaton, 111.: Quest Books, Theosophical Publishing House, 1994).

In *Selected Works of the Dalai Lama II: The Tantric Yogas of Sister Niguma*, I included a translation of a modern Tibetan account of the Second's life, which I extracted from the monumental work of Khetsun Sangpo Rinpoche, entitled *A Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Sages*. This work, in fourteen volumes, documents the lives of the principal lamas of all the different Tibetan sects.

2. The Second Dalai Lama writes that in fact they used a replica in the ritual, because the original had been stolen during the process of preparation.
3. The former of these names refers to the Shamarpa Lama, who is one of the half dozen main reincarnates in the Karma Kargyu School of Tibetan Buddhism. The latter name indicates the high incarnate lama of Sanghu Monastery.
4. As we will see in a later chapter, a future incarnation of this Shamarpa would create similar problems during the lifetime of the Eighth Dalai Lama, resulting in the invasion of Tibet by an army formed by some of his disciples among the Gurkhas of Nepal.

The Third Dalai Lama: From Ocean to Oceanic

1. There are numerous Tibetan biographies of the Third Dalai Lama, largely because he traveled so widely and therefore had such diverse groups of followers.

Among them are *A Carriage of Auspiciousness* by Tulku Trangkhaba, *Travels of the Master in the East* by Sonam Yeshey Wangpo, and *Biography of the Precious Master* by Kharnak Lotsawa Paljor Lotsawa. Two generations later, the Fifth Dalai Lama took the most authoritative of these and combined them into one, entitled *A Carriage (Carrying) an Ocean of Spiritual Realizations*. This is the account that became most popular over the centuries to follow, rendering the earlier works rather obsolete. In addition, the Eighth Dalai Lama's guru Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen created a short biography of the Third Dalai Lama for inclusion in his biographical encyclopedia *Lives of the Masters in the Lam Rim Lineage*.

In my book *Selected Works of the Dalai Lama III: Essence of Refined Gold* (Snow Lion, 1985), I included a translation of the brief biography of the Third Dalai Lama written by Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen. Here I draw from that, and also from the Fifth Dalai Lama's *A Carriage (Carrying) an Ocean of Spiritual Realizations*.

2. This traditional account of how Padma Sambhava requested the Second Dalai Lama to reincarnate and the prophecy that after a hundred years he would become spiritual and secular head of Tibet is one of the main reasons that the Tibetan aristocracy supported the Dalai Lama's government from 1642 until the present day. Most Tibetan aristocratic families belong to the Nyingmapa School, of which Padma Sambhava is regarded as the founder. This sect bases itself strongly upon visionary experience, and texts born from vision. The prophecy of Padma Sambhava therefore was seen by them as authentic and unquestionable.

3. The Third Dalai Lama wrote three inspirational poems of spiritual advice to his manager Sunrab Gyatso. All of these are included in my book *Mystical Verses of a Mad Dalai Lama* (Quest Books, Theosophical Publishing House, 1994).

The Fourth Dalai Lama: A Descendent of Genghis Khan

1. A number of Western scholars have suggested that the Third Dalai Lama

proclaimed Altan Khan to be the reincarnation of Kublai Khan, and himself to be the reincarnation of Kublai Khan's guru Sakya Pakpa, as a cunning means of winning the Khan's devotion and patronage. There is no historical evidence from any traditional source to support this view, and nothing other than vulgar cynicism to suggest it. All accounts of the Third Dalai Lama written during his lifetime present him as a man of sincere character and moral integrity. There is little doubt he believed that his words in this respect were true.

One could perhaps argue that it was reasonable for him to interpret his connection with the Khan in this way. After all, from the time of his own childhood he had been raised and educated in an environment in which he was encouraged to see himself as the reincarnation not only of the two previous Dalai Lamas, but of a long string of Indian saints and yogis, as well as of ten different early Tibetan kings. We saw some of these early incarnations listed in an earlier chapter. If he believed this exotic mythology that had been spun around his own personality, it would be natural for him to read a profound spiritual connection into his links with Altan Khan, and to look to major events in Tibeto-Mongolian history as explanations.

Beyond these two cynical views—the latter being less crude than the former by several degrees, but nonetheless still crude—there is the traditional Asian attitude that the Third Dalai Lama was speaking not from cultural or sociological grounds alone, but from the depths of a clairvoyant power that remembered previous lives.

2. I present a treatment of the meditations associated with this tantric method of life-enhancement in Chapter Six of my book *Living in the Face of Death: The Tibetan Tradition* (Snow Lion Publications, 1998).

3. Several Tibetan biographies of the Fourth Dalai Lama's life and deeds have appeared in Tibetan over the years. Moreover, because he was born a Mongol prince, there are also a number of Mongolian accounts.

The most popular biography of him, however, is that written by his successor the Fifth Dalai Lama and titled *A String of Gems*. My presentation here is based on this work.

The Great Fifth relied heavily upon several earlier treatments of the Fourth's life. That by Zhukhang Rabjampa Gelek Lhundrup, entitled *Opening the Door of*

Inspiration, is perhaps the most important of these, and the epic poem on the Fourth's life by Kharnak Lotsawa Paljor Gyatso is also fundamental. In addition, the Great Fifth was sufficiently close in time to his predecessor the Fourth to be able to interview some of the old monks who had known the Fourth personally, and as a result his writing is rich in personal anecdotes.

4. The Pehar Oracle is one and the same as the Nechung Oracle. This deity's formal name is Dorjey Drakden. He is channeled by numerous people—most of them monks across Central Asia.

After the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama the Pehar medium of Nechung Monastery became the State Oracle, and therefore Dorjey Drakden became known as the Nechung Oracle. However, other mediums continued to channel this deity, although not with government sponsorship.

5. Tibetans have a paranormal take on most events. In a Western culture this incident would just be seen as humorous, albeit somewhat rude and in bad taste. For the Tibetans it was an omen, and part of the fulfillment of the prophecy of the eighth-century master Guru Padma Sambhava, concerning the fall of the Neudong Dynasty in Tibet. Indeed,

this family soon lost its title of Gongma, or "Emperor," and its standing as special overlord among the many kings of Tibet.

The fact that the Neudong patriarch could not even control his own household, as evidenced by the manner in which the trick was played on the Fourth Dalai Lama by his servants, was no doubt symptomatic of his declining control over Tibet as a whole.

6. A previous king of the Lhagyari region had been an important patron of the Second Dalai Lama, and in particular in the Second's work in constructing Chokhor Gyal Monastery near the Oracle Lake. The Second Dalai Lama had taught extensively in Ehchok.

7. The exquisite Kumbum Stupa, constructed in the mid-1400s, is one of the few great works of art in the region not to be destroyed by the Chinese Communists during the Cultural Revolution of the mid-1960s.

8. The Fifth Dalai Lama calls Gongkar a Gyalchen, or "Great Kingdom." Again, it is just a small kingdom of a few thousand inhabitants ruled over by a

traditional king, one of the several hundred such kingdoms of which Tibet was comprised.

9. The Great Fifth presents this view in several places. One of these is in his biography of the Fourth Dalai Lama. Another is in his personal diary, which after his death was edited into the first section of his biography.

The Fifth Dalai Lama: The Birth of Modern Tibet

1. The official biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama, entitled *A Silken Robe Woven from the Threads of the Theatrical Deeds of the Zahori Monk Bendey Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso*, was composed by Desi Sangyey Gyatso shortly after the master's death. The early part of this work is taken from the Great Fifth's personal diaries, and thus is by the Fifth himself, although heavily edited by Desi Sangyey Gyatso. My presentation here is based on this work.

The Eighth Dalai Lama's guru Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen also included a short chapter on the Great Fifth in his *Lives of the Masters in the Lam Rim Lineage*. It is only a quarter the length of the chapters that he dedicates to the First, Second, Third and Seventh Dalai Lamas. Presumably he cut the Great Fifth short in this manner because he did not approve of certain aspects of the Great Fifth's life.

2. Unfortunately these sacred burial tombs, like so many of Tibet's cultural relics, were destroyed by the Communists during the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. Today only a shell of them remains.

3-His Holiness the present Dalai Lama once said to me in an interview that all animals except the wolf and the rat were protected by the laws enacted by the Fifth Dalai Lama at that time. As His Holiness put it, "Nomads could kill wolves in order to protect their herds, and farmers could kill rodents to protect their crops. All other wildlife was protected.

However, I am not certain that the ban on hunting was actually this all-embracing. Another lama friend of mine once told me that in Kham, his region of Tibet, numerous types of animals could be hunted in established seasons of the year, and that the prohibition on hunting was relaxed during these periods.

Be this as it may, hunting was certainly frowned upon and considered a habit of a lowly character. As a result, most early Western travelers in Tibet commented

on how unafraid almost all wild animals were of humans. One Canadian traveler in Tibet during the first decade of the 1900s even went so far as to write that the hunting was wonderful, because one could walk right up to a herd of antelope and shoot them at one's leisure, so unaccustomed were they to being regarded by humans as objects of prey.

4-The present head of the Drikung Kargyu School is the Chetsang Lama, or Older Brother Reincarnation.”

The Sixth Dalai Lama: Tibet's Immortal Lover

1. Several accounts of the Sixth's life exist in Tibetan. Desi Sangyey Gyatso's writings on the death of the Great Fifth and the search for his reincarnation, as well as his description of the early education and training of the Sixth, are the basis of them all. However, the Desi's account concludes when the Sixth is only eighteen years old. In the traditional Tibetan accounts the Sixth died five years later, in 1706. The account of the remaining five years of his life—from ages eighteen to twenty-three—are usually presented as an addendum to Desi Sangyey Gyatso's work.

The Mongolians, however, claimed that the Sixth escaped death in 1706 and lived for a further forty years. In 1757, or the Fire Bull Year, a Mongolian monk by the name of Dargyey Nomanhan, otherwise known as Lhatsun Ngawang Dorje, composed a biography of the Sixth that emphasized these “hidden years.” This was not published in Tibet until almost two centuries later, and thus remained unknown to most Tibetans until the early 1900s.

The account of the Sixth that follows in this chapter is mainly based on the writings of Desi Sangyey Gyatso, although it also draws from the work of Dargyey Nomanhan. In addition, some years ago I translated Khetsun Sangpo Rinpochey's short biographical account of the Sixth from the latter's *A Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Sages*, and this informs my telling of the tale.

Numerous translations of the Sixth's short collection of songs and poems have appeared, three of which I personally hold dear: *Love Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama* by K. Dhondup (Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, 1981); *The Turquoise Bee: The Love Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama* by Rick Fields (Harper San Francisco, 1998); and *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives* by

Michael Aris (Kegan Paul International, London and New York, 1989). These three authors have all passed away since their books were published. I, together with my dear friend Olivier de Nechaud de Feral, published an edition of the Sixth's love poems in French (Tushita Press, India, 1979); however, this edition is no longer in print.

2. See note 1. As for the number of verses in this collection, the most common Tibetan edition contains sixty verses. Other editions I have seen contain sixty-four and sixty-six verses.

Recently an edition has been produced in China with 300 verses. Most Tibetans, however, regard these extra 240 verses in this edition as being songs sung by the Sixth and thus associated with him, but not as being his actual compositions.

3. It is difficult to tell precisely who was entrusted with the secret of the Fifth's death and who was not. Most writings on the subject came out after the matter was made public. Terdak Lingpa is probably one of those who did not know in the early period, but later had to be included for the little piece of theater to succeed. There was some prestige in being on the "in the know" list, and something of a stigma to not being on it. Probably far fewer people knew of the secret during the early months and even years, while more had to be included later in order for them to help perpetuate the myth.

4. There is no historical evidence whatsoever to indicate that the Sixth had any direct blood relationship with the Desi, and much historical evidence to the contrary. This, however, did not seem to dissuade Lhazang Khan from propagating the rumor.

5. Dharmatala wrote his history of Mongolia in 1889, thus bringing Dargyey Nomanhan's version of the Sixth's "secret life" to the attention of a wider public. Tibetans seem to have been largely unaware of it before that date. In 1979 a study of Dharmatala's brief rendition appeared in English, presented by Piotr Klafkowski (Wiener Studien Zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, Heft 3, Vienna, 1979).

The Seventh Dalai Lama: The Lama and the Emperor

1. The principal biographer of the Seventh Dalai Lama was a reincarnate lama by the name of Changkya Rolpai Dorje. This lama had in two earlier

incarnations served as guru to Manchu emperors and their families. He was a decade younger than the Seventh, but accompanied him on many of his travels, both as a disciple and also as a personal envoy from the Manchu emperor Kanghsi. Several of the Seventh Dalai Lama's compositions were written at the request of Changkya, an indication of their closeness.

Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen, the guru of the Eighth Dalai Lama, included a wonderful account of the Seventh's life in his *Lives of the Masters in the Lam Rim Lineage*.

Over the years I published two books on the Seventh Dalai Lama, both with Snow Lion, Ithaca, N.Y. The first of these was entitled *Selected Works of the Dalai Lama VII: Songs of Spiritual Change* (1982). This book, which was a translation and study of the Seventh's collection of mystical poetry, saw two editions and then went out of print. However, it has recently been republished in a revised format as the *Seventh Dalai Lama's Meditations to Transform the Mind* (1999). It includes a translation of Khetsun Sangpo Rinpochey's abridged edition of the above biography by Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen, from the former's monumental work *A Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Sages*. In this chapter I follow Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen's timeline of the Seventh's life, and have used a number of the spiritual poems from *Meditations to Transform the Mind*.

My second book on the Seventh, also with Snow Lion, is entitled *Gems of Wisdom from the Seventh Dalai Lama* (1999). This is a translation and study of a small text by the Seventh on the quintessential elements in the Buddhist wisdom tradition.

2. *An Account of Tibet (The Travels of Ippolito Desideri of Postoia, S.J., 1712-1727)*, edited by Filippo de Fillippi (George Rutledge & Sons Ltd., London, 1932).
3. An extract from this text is used in the chapter on the Fifth Dalai Lama.

The Eighth Dalai Lama: A Return to Simplicity

1. The official biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama, which is entitled *An Ornament of the Spiritual World*, was composed by Demo Tubten Jigmey Gyatso. This Demo was the reincarnation of the lama who had been appointed as

the Dalai Lama regent after the death of the Seventh and during the minority years of the Eighth. My account here is largely based on his work.

In addition, I have drawn from the brief biographical sketch of the Eighth found in Khetsun Sangpo Rinpochey's *A Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Sages*.

2. This is the Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen whose short biographies of the early Dalai Lamas I have quoted extensively in earlier chapters.

The Ninth Through Twelfth Dalai Lamas: The Quiet Years

1. This is my take on the matter. However, Khetsun Sangpo Rinpochey in his *A Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Sages* explicitly suggests that two of the regents during this period were strongly suspected of conspiracy. I am not convinced by his evidence.

2. His biography, entitled *An Inspiration for Those of Spiritual Conviction*, was written by the regent Demo Tulku Ngawang Lobzang Tubten Jigmey Gyatso. This is the same lama who wrote the biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama.

3. This is the lama who wrote the biographies of the Eighth and Ninth Dalai Lamas.

4. Manning kept a terse journal of his travels in Tibet. This was eventually edited and published by Clements R. Markham several decades later, in the book *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*, Trubner and Co., Ludgate Hill, London, 1876. My quotes here are from pages 265-7.

5. *Ibid*, page 294.

6. The biography of the Tenth Dalai Lama, which is entitled *A String of Amazing Jewels*, was written by Darhan Khenpo Tulku Lobzang Trinley Namgyal.

7. Some Tibetan sources, including the historian Shakabpa, give this as the Water Bull Year, or 1793. However, 1781 is the more probable.

Whichever is the case, the gift of the emperor's golden urn took place during the adulthood of the Eighth Dalai Lama. China today holds forth the fact of this urn as evidence that Tibet was an integral part of the Manchu Empire during this period. Their reasoning is that the presence of the emperor's urn in Lhasa and its supposed usage in the selection of the Dalai Lamas proves that Tibet was subservient to China at the time.

The fact of the matter is that the Tibetans did not see the urn as having an imperialist implication. Rather, for them it just demonstrated the Manchu emperor's devotion to Tibetan Buddhism, and thus to the Dalai Lamas. In the Cho Yon arrangement, or "patron/priest relationship," the Manchus were the patrons and the Tibetans the priests. From the Tibetan perspective, the two were complementary and equal. If one position were to be put higher than the other, it would be that of the priest, and not the patron, because things spiritual are always higher than things physical in the sense that spirit drives matter, like the mind directs the body.

It should also be noted that the extent to which the Tibetans actually used the urn is open to question. For example, they certainly didn't use it at all in the selections of the Ninth and Thirteenth Dalai Lamas.

The Tibetans claim that even when they did use it they only did so as a gesture of politeness to the emperor; they had already predetermined which candidate was to be enthroned, and the drawing was merely a ritual to symbolize the Manchu patronage of the chosen Dalai Lama.

8. His official biography, which is entitled *Music from the Heavens for the Goddess of Song*, was composed by Darhan Khentrul Lobzang Trinley Namgyal.

9.1 included a translation of Khetsun Sangpo's accounts of these "short-lived" Dalai Lamas in my article, "The Life and Times of the Eighth to Twelfth Dalai Lamas," *The Tibet Journal* Voi. VII, Dharamsala, 1982.

10. Shakabpa's *A Political History of Tibet*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1967, is today regarded as the most authoritative source on many of the Lhasa intrigues. I myself have less confidence in it, due to the circumstances surrounding it and its author, and the connection with Amdo Gendun Chopel. Nonetheless in this particular instance it probably takes the more correct stance

on affairs.

11. The official biography of the Twelfth Dalai Lama, entitled *The Crystal Mirror*, was composed by his tutor Purchokpa Jampa Gyatso. He outlived the Twelfth Dalai Lama and became the senior tutor of the Great Thirteenth. In turn, Purchokpa's reincarnation became an important disciple of the Great Thirteenth, and after the latter's passing also became his official biographer. This lineage of reincarnations is famed as the Purchokpa Rinpochey.

The Great Thirteenth: Monk, Mystic and Statesman

1. This chapter is largely based on a work I did with Snow Lion Publications some years ago, entitled *Path of the Bodhisattva Warrior: The Life and Teachings of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama* (1988). The book is presently out of print.

The official Tibetan biography of the Great Thirteenth is entitled *A String of Wondrous Gems*, and it remains the most authoritative source for our knowledge of him. My treatment therefore draws heavily from it. It was written by Purchokpa Tubten Jampa. This is the reincarnation of the Purchokpa who was the Twelfth's official biographer.

2. Taktser Rinpochey, better known to his friends as Professor Norbu because of his professorship at Indiana University, is an elder brother to the present Dalai Lama. In the Foreword to *Path of the Bodhisattva Warrior: The Life and Teachings of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama*, he lists the Great Thirteenth's accomplishments in the fields of religion, politics, education, social transformation, literature and the arts.

Taktser Rinpochey's previous incarnation had been close to the Great Thirteenth. After that Taktser Tulku died, the Great Thirteenth was asked to oversee the search for his reincarnation. He did so, and later gave a name—Tubten Norbu—to the boy he identified.

It came as quite a surprise to the new Taktser Lama when, many years later, the Great Thirteenth was reborn as his own younger brother.

Thus the two incarnations—the Dalai Lamas and Taktser Lamas—have been closely connected in at least two lifetimes.

3. This book was published by Collins, of London, in 1946. Sir Charles also wrote three other books on Tibet, as well as numerous articles for various journals, thus contributing considerably to Western knowledge of Tibetan civilization.
4. This is a previous incarnation of the lama of the same name—Dvakpo Tulku—who has been a resident of Paris for the last few decades.
5. Flemming, Peter, *Bayonets to Lhasa*, Greenwood Publishing Group, London, 1974.
6. Kawaguchi, Ekai, *Three Years in Tibet*, The Theosophical Society, Benares and London, 1909.
7. Younghusband, Sir Francis, *India and Tibet*, J. Murray, London, 1910.
8. Fergusson, W. N., ed., *Adventure, Sport and Travel on the Tibetan Steppes*, Constable & Co., London, 1911.
9. Rockhill's article *The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa and Their Relations with the Manchu Emperors*, originally published in *T'oung-Poo Series*, No. III, Vol. 4., (Leiden, 1910), remains one of the most authoritative sources of the Manchu perspective on Tibet and the Dalai Lamas.
10. Readers will remember that this numbering system for the Panchen Lamas is different from that used by the Chinese, who add three incarnations to the list. Thus for them it was the tenth Panchen Lama who died in 1989, and not the Seventh, and the present young incarnation is listed by them as the Eleventh, not the Eighth.

As anyone who follows news on Tibet will know, six years after the previous Panchen Lama died in Tibet, the present Dalai Lama recognized a young Tibetan child as being the correct reincarnation. The Chinese government repudiated this candidate. They then recognized and installed another child in his place. In addition, they arrested the Dalai Lama's candidate and his family, as well as almost fifty monks from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery for their part in the incident.

It is rather ironic that Chinese Communists, who claim to disbelieve the doctrine of reincarnation, took this active role in identifying the Panchen Lama's reincarnation.

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama: From Refugee to Nobel Laureate

1. This is a title that refers to the former Holder of the Ganden Throne. The Ganden Tripa is the official head of the Gelukpa School, and serves for a period of seven years. Thereafter he is replaced, and becomes known as Trizur Rinpochey, or Precious Former

Ganden Throne Holder.” This is purely an honorary title and position, but anyone holding the title is held in the highest regard.

2. There are probably well in excess of a hundred books in print by or about His Holiness, including two of his own autobiographies. In addition, his elder brother, Taktser Rinpochey (Professor Tubten Norbu) has written several books on his own experiences, and of course these also contain considerable information about His Holiness. There is even a book by His Holiness’s mother, the late Mrs. Diki Tsering. Lady Tsering tells of the terrible murder of her husband, and of the plot on H.H. the Dalai Lama’s life.

The Martin Scorsese film Kundun (released by Disney) presents the early life of His Holiness in considerable detail. If you haven’t seen it, run to the video store and rent it today.

Thus knowledge of His Holiness’s life and deeds is widespread and readily available, at least the mainstream version of it. Consequently I really do not need to write much here.

Most of what I know about His Holiness the present Dalai Lama, outside of the above public sources, has come informally as a result of my twelve-year tenure in Dharamsala, India, the Himalayan hillstation village that serves as H.H.’s residence-in-exile. During that period I had the honor of compiling and editing several of his books for publication by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, and also worked on numerous film and television documentaries focusing on his life. Dharamsala was filled with many refugees from Lhasa, and naturally they all had their slant on things, as well as their individual kernels of information.

What I have done instead is tell the story from the perspective of his fulfillment of the hopes and aspirations of the early Dalai Lamas, and his continuation of their “Sacred Legacy of Reincarnation.”

3. I originally translated this text in 1981 with my very dear friend the Tibetan lexi-conographer Tsepak Rigzin. It was published that same year by the Tibetan Institute in Rikon, Switzerland, in honor of a visit by His Holiness to the Tibetan community there.

4. Shakabpa's *A Political History of Tibet* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1967) is an example. Although generally an excellent book, it tells the events of 1947 as the conspirators would have them told.

5. I translated this with an Australian friend, Harold Richard, in the late 1970s. It was published by Jon and Danny Laine in 1978 for Imperial Printing Press, India. I am especially fond of it, as it was co-authored by the two great tantric masters to whom this volume is dedicated.

Epilogue: Prophecies Transcended, Prophecies Fulfilled

1. This passage is not found in either the Chinese or Japanese editions of this sutra. However, it is not uncommon for there to be major discrepancies between different Indian Mahayana scriptures. Many Tibetan translations were made by comparing as many as half a dozen different Indian editions, all of which would vary in length and specific detail. It was not uncommon for a Mahayana sutra either to shrink or to grow in accordance with the perceived needs of whatever master was using the text as a teaching tool, and also in accordance with his own mystical visions and channeled instructions.

2. *The Last Dalai Lama*, by Michael Harris Goodman, Shambala Press, Boulder 8c New York, 1986.

Bibliographical Sources

As mentioned in the conclusion of my Introduction, I have generally tried to avoid relying on Western academic sources throughout this book. Given the pioneering stage of Tibetan studies at the moment, this seemed like the only way of telling the Dalai Lama story with accuracy. For some reason all the best Western Tibetologists have concentrated on Buddhist studies rather than history, leaving the field rather barren.

I have only deviated from this policy when the Western source is a direct eyewitness account, such as the writings of the Christian missionaries posted in Tibet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the explorers who followed in their wake.

Moreover, the Tibetans tell their own story with a charm and flare that deserves its own coverage.

General Reference Tools

Tibetan Books Published in Modern China Proper and/or Chinese-Occupied Tibet

The liberalization that swept over China in the 1980s saw the release of hundreds of lama scholars who had been kept in concentration camps for more than two decades. Nine out of ten who had been imprisoned had died during this terrible period of Tibetan history, but those who survived now turned their attention to rejuvenating Tibetan culture.

Soon after the Panchen Lama's release he was appointed to a high position in the Tibetan government. He utilized this new status as a means of rebuilding Tibet's shattered civilization. One of his first deeds was to bring together many of the surviving Tibetan lama scholars and employ them in various projects—restoring the monasteries and temples that had been destroyed, editing and publishing the great Tibetan classics and accomplishing other such tasks. He was also able to inspire teams of lamas to undertake specific research projects that would give Tibetans a more complete sense of their culture and history.

Six books published under this effort have been especially useful to me during the preparation of the present volume. I purchased all six of them from the street stalls near the Jokhang in Lhasa during my various visits to that sacred city.

Because these works were published in modern Communist China, some of them naturally highlight historical events in which China or Chinese officials play an important role. However, this just adds to the charm of the reading rather than distracting from it, and reveals the tremendous importance of Tibet's spiritual culture to the overall scene in Asia for over a thousand years. Moreover, it brings an important counterperspective to the Tibetan books published by the refugees in India, which tend to underplay the China connection.

A Biography of Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso (Tib. Nga-dbang-bko-bzang-mgya-tshoi-rnam-thar). Three volumes. Lhasa: Tibetan People's Publishing House, 1991—

This is a re-edition of the traditional biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama, written by Desi Sangyey Gyatso, *A Silken Robe Woven from the Threads of the Theatrical Deeds of the Zahori Monk Bendey Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso* (Tib.

Za-hor-gyi-ben-de-nga-dbang-bko-bzang-mgya-tshoi-'di-snang-'khrul-pai-roTrtshed-rtogs-brjod-kyi-tshuTdo—

bkod-pa-du-kua-lai-gos-bzang). As mentioned in note 1 to my chapter on the Great Fifth, Desi Sangyey Gyatso drew heavily from the Great Fifth's personal diaries in composing the earlier sections. Thus it is an exceptional work that draws from the collective genius of these two illustrious lama scholars, and provides us with an amazing window on seventeenth-century Tibet. In that it was the events of this era that gave rise to Tibet as a unified and enduring nation, this work is an invaluable resource.

The Book of the Kadampa Masters (Tib. BKa'-gdams-pa-pha-chos-bu-chos). Two volumes. Kokonor: Kokonor Printing Press, 1993.

Volume One contains several biographies of Atisha Dipamkara Shrijnana, including that written by his lay disciple Lama Drom Tonpa, who, as we saw earlier, was the most important early incarnation of the soul destined to become the Dalai Lama. In addition, it contains numerous writings of Lama Drom that were directly inspired by Atisha. Volume Two moves into the accounts of the thirty-six Indian incarnations of Lama Drom.

A Chronology of Tibetan History (Tib. Gangs-ljongs-lo-rgyus-thog-gi-grangs-can-mi-sna). Lhasa: Tibetan People's Publishing House, 1993.

This work covers secular as well as spiritual events, and in general tells the Tibet story with a wonderful passion. It does highlight Chinese connections, but does not distort or misrepresent them.

An Encyclopedia of the Sages and Siddhas of Tibet (Tib. Gangs-can-mkhas-grub-rim-byong-ming-mdzod). Beijing: People's Printing Press, 1992.

This wonderful work is a "Who's Who" of Tibetan spiritual history. It contains brief biographies of all the main lamas in Tibetan history, including the Dalai and Panchen Lamas as well as their contemporaries. I used it extensively to identify the various characters that appear in the lives of the Dalai Lamas as teachers and/or students.

The Great Dictionary of Tibetan and Chinese Terms (Tib. Bod-rgya-tshig-mdzod-chen-mo). Two volumes. Beijing: People's Printing Press, 1993.

This work is really an encyclopedia of Tibetan culture. The word “Chinese” in the title simply indicates that the Chinese equivalent of each of the Tibetan terms is provided. The book concludes with a year-by-year chronology of Tibetan history, in which the major events of each year are listed, beginning with 647 ad and concluding with 1949. I found this section to be invaluable in establishing an accurate timeline. Some of the early years are not listed, presumably because nothing of significance is known about them. However, all years in recent centuries are present and accounted for.

Lives of the Masters in the Lam Rim Lineage (Tib. Lam-rim-bla-ma-brgyud-pa-rnam-thar) by Yongdzin Yeshey Gyaltsen (also known as Kachen Yeshey Gyaltsen). Lhasa: Tibetan People’s Publishing House, 1990.

The title “Yongdzin” means “Tutor,” for Yeshey Gyaltsen was the senior guru of the Eighth Dalai Lama. “Kachen,” an alternative title by which he is known, means “Great Spiritual Master.” His amazing work, written in the late eighteenth century, brings together the biographies of all the principal lineage masters in the Kadampa and Gelukpa orders, including the Indian teachers from whom their lineages descended. Yeshey Gyaltsen includes biographies of the First, Second, Third, Fifth and Seventh Dalai Lamas in his account, as well as biographies of the various Panchen Lamas. Presumably he left out the Fourth and Sixth Dalai Lamas because they died in early adulthood, and therefore did not play important roles in the Lam Rim transmission.

The Previous Lives of Lama Drom Tonpa (Tib. ‘Brom-ston-rgyal-wai-'byung-gnas-kyi-sktes-rabs) Vol. Two of The Book of the Kadampa Masters listed above.

Collected Works of the Early Dalai Lamas

The Tibetan refugees in India, Nepal and Bhutan have reissued many of the traditional classics that survived the holocaust of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. They were able to do so largely through the kindness of the U.S. government, the American Library of Congress, and the famous PL480 Fund.

Here a great debt of gratitude is owed to the efforts of Mr. Gene Smith, who was at the American Library of Congress during these crucial years, and was able to broker funding for dozens of Sung-bum, or “Complete Collected Works,” a form in which most of Tibet’s greatest authors had traditionally been published by

woodblock print. During the 1960s, a single copy carried out by an individual refugee was often the only existing form of a particular Sung-bum.

Tibetan scholars in India also undertook research and compilation. However, in general this has not been as thorough or of as high a standard as what has been produced in Tibet. The refugee lamas have been too busy rebuilding monasteries, transmitting endangered lineages and preserving traditions.

The complete collected works of three Dalai Lamas were published in India, namely, those of the First, Seventh and Thirteenth Dalai Lamas, and these are listed below. Each of these also contains a traditional biography of its subject. (More recently, a compilation of the collected works of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama has been published in India, but I have not yet seen a copy of it.)

The Collected Works of the First Dalai Lama, which includes The Twelve Deeds in the Marvelous Life of Omniscient Gendun Drubpa (Tib. rje-dge-'dun-grub-kyi-rnam-thar-ngo-mtshar-rmed-byung) by Kunga Gyaltsen. Gangtok: Dondup Lama Sangye, 1981. Note 2 to the chapter on the First Dalai Lama discusses this work.

The Collected Works of the Seventh Dalai Lama, which includes A Magic Lamp on the Life of the the Tantric Master Lobzang Kalzang Gyatso, Omniscient Lord of All the Buddhas (Tib. rGyal-bai-dbang-po-thams-ced-mkhyen-gzigs-rdo-rje-'chang-blo-bzang-bskal-bzang-rgya-mtshoo-rnam-thar-mdo-tsam-brjod-pa-dpag-bsam-rin-po-chei-snye-ma) by Changkya Rolpai Dorjey. Gangtok: Dondup Sangye, 1975.

I discuss the author of this work in note 1 of the chapter on the Seventh.

The Collected Works of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, which includes A String of Wonderous Gems: Droplets from the Ocean of Deeds of the Great Thirteenth, An Incomparable Master on the Highest Stage, Ornament of Samsara and Nirvana (Tib.

hLar-bcas-srid-zhii-gtsug-rgyan-gong-sa-rgyal-bai-dbang-po-bka-drin-mtshungs-med-sku-phreng-bcu-gsum-pa-chen-poi-rnam-thar-rgya-mtsho-lta-bu-las-mdo-tsam-brjod-pa-ngo-mtshar-rin-po-chei-phreng-bai-glegs-bam) by Purchokpa Tubten Jampa. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1981.

I discuss this work and its author in note 1 of the chapter on the Great Thirteenth.

Biographies of the Early Dalai Lamas

In terms of publications created by the refugees in India, the work of primary value to me has been the following:

A String of Jewels: An Anthology of Previous Life Stories Related to the Emanations of Arya Avalokiteshvara (Tib. 'Phags-pa-'jig-rten-dbang-phyug-gi-gnam-sprul-rim-byong-gyi-'khrung-rabs-deb-ther-nor-bui-'phreng-ba). Dharamsala: Sherik Parkhang, 1987.

This five-volume collection has come out in various editions over the years, and with varying degrees of editorial accuracy. I have relied upon the 1987 edition.

This important publication brings together many of the mainstream biographies of the different Dalai Lamas, as well as an account of the legendary lives that occurred prior to the First Dalai Lama.

It begins with an account of the general mythology surrounding Avalokiteshvara. Here it draws heavily from Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen's *A Festival for the Wise*, and presents the various Indo-Tibetan legends under five headings: (a) the myth of how Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of Compassion, first generated the mind of the bodhisattva; (b) the legend of Avalokiteshvara and Mt. Potala; (c) the thirty-six most famous Indian incarnations, these being the thirty-six previous lives of Lama Drom Tonpa; (d) the manner in which Avalokiteshvara incarnated in Tibet as ten religious kings; and (e) his fifteen lives in Nepal and Tibet as accomplished sages and tantric masters, all of which occurred prior to the advent of the First Dalai Lama. The last of these is his incarnation as the Nepali yogi Pemavajra, which is the life immediately prior to his birth as the First Dalai Lama.

Having set the stage in this way, the work then proceeds to present the principal biographies of the Dalai Lamas, from the First to the Great Thirteenth. It does not include a biography of the present Dalai Lama, presumably because he was still rather young when the work was compiled.

Here the traditional biographies are presented, with very little editing or

abridgement. The collection contains two biographies each on the First and Second Dalai Lamas, and then one each on the subsequent eleven incarnations.

The First Dalai Lama

The Twelve Deeds in the Marvelous Life of Omniscient Gendun Drubpa (Tib. bLa-ma—

thams-cad-mkhyen-pa-dge-'dun-grub-kyi-rnam-thar-ngo-mtshar-mdzad-pa-bcu-gnyis-pa) by Kunga Gyaltzen.

This is the biography that was later included in the First's "Collected Works," and thus is the better circulated of the two.

A String of Jewels from the Marvelous Liberating Deeds of Omniscient Gendun Drubpa

(Tib. rje-thams-cad-mkhyen-pa-dge-'dun-grub-dpal-bzang-poi-rnam-thar-ngo-mtshar-rmed-byung-nor-bui-'phreng-ba) by Panchen Yeshey Tsemo.

See note 2 of the chapter on the First Dalai Lama for more on this and the previous work.

The Second Dalai Lama

Biography of the Omniscient Jey Gendun Gyatso: The Wishfulfilling Tree (Tib. rje-thams-cad-mkhyen-pa-dge-'dun-rgya-mtsho'-rnam-thar-rtog-brjod-dpak-bsam-gyi-ljong-shing).

See note 1 to the chapter on the Second Dalai Lama for more information on this work by Yangpa Choje and his disciple Konchok Kyab. This remains the principal biographical account of the Second Dalai Lama.

Autobiography (Tib. rje-thams-cad-mkhyen-pai-gsung-'bum-thor-bu-las-rje-nyid-kyi-rnam-thar).

Later included in the Second's collected works, this was published with the title *Autobiography from the Miscellaneous Writings of the Omniscient Master*, which is the full translation of the Tibetan above. Written in 1528, the Second Dalai Lama here takes the opportunity to discuss his childhood, his early studies, and then his meditation and teaching activities as a young man.

The Third Dalai Lama

A Carriage (Carrying) an Ocean of Spiritual Realizations (Tib. rje-thams-cad-mkhyen-pa-bsod-nam-rgya-mtsho'-rnam-thar-dngos-grub-rgyai-mtshoi-shing-rta).

See note 1 of the chapter on the Third Dalai Lama for more information on this work compiled by the Fifth Dalai Lama.

The Fourth Dalai Lama

A String of Gems (formed from) the Liberating Deeds of Glorious Tamchey Khyenpa Yonten Gyatso, Lord of the World (Tib. 'jig-rten-dbang-chug-thams-cad-mkhyen-pa-yon-ten-rgya-mtsho'-rnam-nor-bui-'phreng-ba).

This also was written by the Great Fifth. For his principal sources see note 3 to my chapter on the Fourth Dalai Lama.

The Fifth Dalai Lama:

A Silken Robe Woven from the Threads of the Theatrical Deeds of the Zahori Monk Bendey Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso (Tib. Za-hor-gyi-ben-de-nga-dbang-bko-bzang-mgya-tshoi-'di-snang-'khrul-pai-rol-rtshed-rtogs-brjod-kyi-tshul-dobkod-pa-du-kua-lai-gos-bzang).

As said in note 1 of my chapter on the Great Fifth, this work was composed by his last viceroy, Desi Sangyey Gyatso, who used the Fifth's personal diaries in executing the task.

The Sixth Dalai Lama

Biography of Omniscient Ngawang Chodak Palzangpo: A Divine Melody (Tib. Thams-cad-mkhyen-pa-ngag-dbang-chos-grags-rgta-mtshoi-rnam-thar-gtam-snyen-lhai-tam-bu-ra i-rgyud-kyi-sgra-dyangs) by Artini Nomanhan Ngawang Lhundrub Dargyey, popularly known as Dargyey Nomanhan.

This account draws heavily from Desi Sangyey Gyatso's account of the search for, identification of and early years of the Sixth (see note 1 to my chapter on the Sixth). As we can see from the title, it does not use the Sixth's popular name of Tsangyang Gyatso, but rather his ordination name Ngawang Chodak Gyatso.

The Seventh Dalai Lama

A Wishfulfilling Bountiful Harvest: The Life of the Tantric Master Lobzang Kalzang Gyatso, Omniscient Lord of all Buddhas (Tib. rGyal-bai-dbang-po-thams-ced-mkhyen-gzigs-rdo-rje-'chang-blo-bzang-bskal-bza ng-rgya-mtshoi-rnam-thar-mdo-tsam-brjod-pa-dpag-bsam-rin-po-chei-snye-ma) by Changkya Rolpai Dorjey.

This is a corrected edition of the Seventh's "Collected Works" mentioned on page 529.

The Eighth Dalai Lama

An Ornament of the Spiritual World: A Biography of the Omniscient Lord Jetsun Lobzang Tenpai Wangchug Jampel Gyatso Palzangpo (Tib. rGyal-bai-dbang-po-thams-cad-mkhyen-gzigs-rje-btsun-blo-bzang-bstan-pai-dbang-phyug-'jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho-dpal-bzang-poi-zhal-snga-nas-gyi-rnam-thar-mdo-tsam-brjod-pa-'jam-gling-tha-gra-yang-pai-rgyan) by Tubten Jigmey Gyatso.

See note 1 to the chapter on the Eighth.

The Ninth Dalai Lama

An Inspiration for Those of Spiritual Conviction: A Biography of the
Omniscient Lord Lobzang Tenpai Jungney Ngawang Lungtok Gyatso Palzangpo
(Tib. rGyal-bai-dbang-po-thams-cad-mkhyen-pa-blo-bzang-bstan-pai-'jung-
gnas-nga-dbang-lung-rtogs-rgya-mtsho-dpal-bzang-poi-zhal-snga-nas-gyi-rnam-
thar-mdor-mtshon-pa-dad-pai-yid-

'throg) by Demo Tulku Ngawang Lobzang Tubten Jigmey Gyatso.

This is the same lama who wrote the biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama.

The Tenth Dalai Lama

A String of Amazing Jewels: A Biography of the Tenth Omniscient Lord,
Ngawang Lobzang Jampel Tenzin Tsultrim Gyatso Palzangpo (Tib. rGyal-bai-
dbang-po-thams-cad—

mkhycn-gzigs-bcu-pa-nga-dbang-blo-bzang-'jam-dpaTbstan-'dzin-tshuTkhri-
rgya-mtsho-dpal-bzang-poi-rnam-par-thar-thar-pa~ngo-mtshar-nor-bui-'phreng-
ba) by

Darhan Khentrul Lobzang Trinley Namgyal.

The Eleventh Dalai Lama

Music from the Heavens for the Goddess of Song: A Biography of the Crown Jewel of Gods and Men, the Lotus Holder Jetsun Ngawang Kelzang Tenpai Dronmey Khedrub Gyatso

Palzangpo (Tib. hLar-bcas-skye-rgui-gtsug-nor-'phags-chen-phyag-na-padmo-rje-btsun-nga-dbang-bskal-bzang-bstan-pai-sgron-me-mkhas-grub-rgya-mtsho-dpal-bzang-poi-rnam-par-thar-pa-ngo-mtshar-hlai-rol-mo-dbyang-can-rgyud-du-snyan-pai-tampu-ra) by Darhan Khentrul Lobzang Trinley Namgyal.

The author is the same lama who wrote the biography of the Tenth Dalai Lama.

The Twelfth Dalai Lama

The Crystal Mirror: A Few Drops from The Ocean of Deeds of the Twelfth Incarnation of the Crown Ornament of Samsara and Nirvana, A Supreme Buddha in the Robes of a Monk (Tib. hLar-bcas-srid-zhii-gtsug-rgyan-rgyal-mchog-ngur-smrig-'chang-ba-bcu-gnyis-pa-chen-poi-rnam-par-thar-pa-rgya-mtsho-lta-bu-las-mdo-tsam-brjod-pa-drangs-shal-me-long) by Purchokpa Jampa Gyatso.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama

A String of Wonderous Gems, Droplets from the Ocean of Deeds of the Great Thirteenth, An Incomparable Master on the Highest Stage, Ornament of Samsara and Nirvana (Tib.

hLar-bcas-srid-zhii-gtsug-rgyan-gong-sa-rgyal-bai-dbang-po-bka-drin-mtshungs-med-sku-phreng-bcu-gsum-pa-chen-poi-rnam-thar-rgya-mtsho-lta-bu-las-mdo-tsam-brjod-pa-ngo-mtshar-rin-po-chei-phreng-bai-glegs-bam) by Purchokpa Tubten Jampa.

The author is the reincarnation of the lama who wrote the biography of the Twelfth Dalai Lama.

Other Useful Works Published in India by the Tibetan Refugees

A Festival for the Wise: An Explanation of the Tradition of the Buddha of Compassion (Tib. Thugs-rje-chen-po-gi-don-rnam-par-bshad-pa-mkhas-pai-dga-ston), Vol. 9 of the Collected Works of Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen. New Delhi: Tibet House, 1976.

This was published as part of his twenty-five volume “Collected Works” in the PL480 Series. In it Kachen Yeshey Gyaltzen presents the mythology behind the Avalokiteshvara legacy in India and Tibet.

A Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Sages (Tib. Bod-dang-rgya-kar-gi-mkhas-grub-gyi-rnam-thar), 14 volumes, by Khetsun Sangpo Rinpochoy. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1971-1982.

This important work contains abbreviated biographies of all the important lineage masters of all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. In particular, I translated his accounts of the Second, Sixth, Seventh and Ninth through Twelfth Dalai Lamas. These were published by The Tibet Journal, Dharamsala, during the early 1980s.

Tibetan Books in English Translation

The Blue Annals. A translation of Gos Lotsawa Zhunupel’s Deb-ther-sngon-po. Prepared by George N. Roerich with Amdo Gendun Chopel. Calcutta: Asia

Society of Bengal, *949—

This amazing book presents the Tibetan understanding of the history of Tibetan Buddhism and the masters who played dominant roles in this history.

The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism (Tib. rNying-mai-chos-lugs-chos-byung) by Dudjom Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje. Translated by Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991. In this work, Dudjom Rinpochey tells the Tibet story from the Nyingma perspective. It was useful for me in tracing the Dalai Lamas Nyingma connections.

A Political History of Tibet. A translation of Shakabpa's Bod-kyi-rgyal-rabs. Rendered into English under his own supervision. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.

Many Tibetan intellectuals consider the actual author of this work to be Amdo Gendun Chopel and Shakabpa the uninvited editor. Amdo Gendun Chopel was working on a book of this nature at the time of his arrest in the late 1940s. The book disappeared and was not returned to him on his release from prison in 1951. Shakabpa was one of the arresting officers.

A Political History of Tibet demonstrates a distinctly Western critical approach rather uncharacteristic of Tibetan writing. In that Amdo Gendun Chopel learned Western methodology while working under Nicholas and George Roerich during his years in India, many Tibetans contend that Shakabpa stole Gendun Chopel's manuscript and used it as the foundation of his A Political History of Tibet. Nonetheless, the book makes for illuminating reading.

The White Annals. A translation of Amdo Gendun Chopel's Deb-ther-dkar-po. Prepared by Samten Norbu. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1978.

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