

TSADRA FOUNDATION SERIES

GURU  
RINPOCHÉ

HIS LIFE AND TIMES



NGAWANG ZANGPO

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GURU RINPOCHÉ  
*His Life and Times*

by  
Ngawang Zangpo

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*To the people of the Himalayas,  
who introduced me to Guru Rinpoché  
and who embody his courage and wisdom.*

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## Preface

SOON AFTER I encountered Tibetan Buddhism, I became convinced that my teacher, Kalu Rinpoché, was Guru Rinpoché incarnate. This did not represent a thoughtful conclusion on my part; it was an emotional response to what I perceived to be his character and impact on my life. Such impressions are entirely personal; others felt his presence more evocative of bodhisattvas such as Great Compassion or Tara, whose meditations he taught worldwide; or of the great yogis Milarépa or Tang-Tong Gyalpo, whose lives he emulated. There is no right or wrong in these perceptions; they inform and enliven our faith. My appreciation of my teacher as Guru Rinpoché, while an entirely personal and perhaps unreasonable conclusion, has stayed with me to the present day and explains much of this book. During periods of retreat, I searched for prayers to Guru Rinpoché and found the text of *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters*, which quickly became a treasured companion, as have many diverse versions of Guru Rinpoché's life story. My discovery that Tibetan accounts of their first major Buddhist master are not free from contradictions has not dampened my enjoyment of them. If nothing else, my life with Tibetan lamas has proved to be a rich education in de-structuring and widening my imagination of enlightenment or enlightened beings, beginning with Guru Rinpoché.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to share with non-Tibetan readers these stories and supplications. To them I have added some information concerning the Buddhist view of history, and a few relevant details of India, China, and Tibet's life during that era. I have lived in India for five years and in Taiwan for three, and I am always immersed in the Tibetan world, which no longer has borders to restrict it. I deeply appreciate all three cultures and hope to show how they intersected in surprising ways before and during Guru Rinpoché's fateful visit to Tibet.

Finally, I observe with immense happiness the coming of Guru Rinpoché to new lands, particularly the wild West, my birthplace. Buddhism is still in its infancy outside Asia, yet it has already had a major impact on many people's lives. We cannot measure Buddhism's development in new environments by its acquisition of land, bricks, and mortar, but by changes in our minds, lifestyle, and deathstyle. Such changes take time. Yet where once Guru Rinpoché seemed an impossibly inscrutable foreigner, he is now coming into clear focus. I hope that this book will contribute to this process.

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Snow Lion Publications' team has always been a pleasure to work with. Sidney Piburn and Steven Rhodes are the two kind persons whose attention to every detail nursed this book to completion. Thanks as well to Minette Mangahas of Berkeley for her help.

I have dedicated this book to the women and men of the Himalayas, lamas and laypersons, who have kept Guru Rinpoché's presence alive. I have written this book with a non-Tibetan audience in mind; but I have often been conscious, as I write, of a thousand years of Guru Rinpoché's followers reading over my shoulder. Do my words do their faith justice? Am I helping new, non-Tibetan Buddhists share their wavelength? These are the questions they ask by the example of their devotion to their first Buddhist tantric master.

I do not idealize Himalayan culture and society, or look down upon Western culture. Yet I do admire the effort of Tibet's people to put their faith into practice, as difficult as that might be. To illustrate this, allow me to relate a story:

The Great Stupa in Nepal's Katmandu Valley is a magnet for all Himalayan Buddhist pilgrims, as they believe it was the site where Guru Rinpoché vowed in a past life to take Buddhism to Tibet. People worship there all day long, either with offerings of lamps or incense, or with prostrations and circumambulations, since a stupa is said to symbolize the Buddha's mind. In such a place, to renew the structure's paint and decorations, making them more attractive to everyone, is considered a good deed, a public service with a spiritual dimension. A French friend wished to sponsor such a whitewashing and decoration of the Great Stupa, and asked me to arrange it.

I had chosen the day December 10, 2001 at random and I was surprised that morning to find a group of Tibetan Bönpos in the stupa's inner courtyard, bright and early. They offered incense and prayers; many other Tibetans followed them. I finally asked what the special occasion was. The answer: the anniversary of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize.

With each passing minute, the stupa area, inside and out, filled with Tibetans of all faiths, regions, and ages. It was a major event; I had never witnessed such a large congregation of people at the stupa. Finally, hundreds of schoolchildren filed into the inner courtyard and sang while the adults prayed. For many hours after the main crowd had dispersed, a large group of older men and women sang and danced in the styles of their lost homeland.

We might see this as a moment of pure folklore, gentle tribes re-living their quaint past, but that is not my view. Those who gathered were refugees, men and women who had unwillingly fled their homes and country on foot, over mountain passes and into foreign lands. The climates and diseases of their destinations killed more of them than did the dangerous journey. They were forced to learn new languages and ways of life. Those who survived often managed to do more than eke out an existence: some thrived. They reconstructed temples, printing presses, and schools. We might put ourselves in that picture: could American or Canadian refugee families arrive penniless in Mexico, without a word of Spanish, and succeed? Could destitute European refugees with children reach the shores of Morocco and hope to prosper?

Most Tibetans have lost friends and family members to violent or premature deaths, due to having stayed in occupied Tibet, or to hardships during their escape, or to transplantation to totally foreign and sometimes

hostile environments. Yet they gathered that day in a festival of peace. Not one person shouted anticommunist slogans; no one made speeches denouncing those who seemed to have caused their nation's tragedy. These people are not dupes; they are perfectly lucid about what they have lost and the sacrifice it has taken to preserve what is left. They may remain attached to their irretrievable past—clans, dress, and music—but they are often astute citizens of the world. So are their children, who watch MTV, dress as modern Asians, and find new clans in internet chat rooms.

Young and old gathered that day to pray for a peaceful solution to their people's tragedy. I think most were conscious that it is they themselves who pay the price for those peaceful prayers. Theirs were not wishes for world peace coming from the cozy suburbs of some well-defended nation. The folded hands and bowed heads that day were of stateless refugees, first and second generation, who have chosen the hard path of love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity in the face of unacceptable loss. Each member of the Tibetan nation has drunk deeply from their recent history's wells of sorrow and rage. Yet each eventually tastes the other, more powerful flavors of their collective memory, the nectar of past and present bodhisattvas, who help them use their life experiences as food for awakening and buddhahood, not for victimhood or schemes of revenge.

That day was a poignant moment for me, a study in contrasts. My beloved West was at that moment stymied by shock, panic, and lack of imagination. It could find nothing better to do than to try once again what no religion advises in the face of others' aggression: demonizing enemies and raining death and destruction upon them. (What part of "Thou shalt not kill" do theists on either side not understand?) Meanwhile, my beloved Tibet was celebrating peace at Guru Rinpoché's home monument, and elsewhere throughout the Himalayas and the world. The Tibetans do not have all the answers, but they have embarked upon a collective search for peace, justice, and freedom without violence, be it physical, verbal, or mental. It is a slow and extremely demanding process, one that does not come with guarantees of success during the course of anyone's lifetime. Nevertheless, the search for an efficient way to kill "evil" human beings is a path equally long and fraught with uncertainty.

I am deeply grateful to my Tibetan friends, high and low, young and old, male and female, who have assimilated Guru Rinpoché's blessing into their personal spiritual lives and have woven his message into the fabric of their

society. These ambassadors of Guru Rinpoché's courage and wisdom are the Himalayas' priceless export to a world in dire need of their influence. As they would say, "May all beings without exception enjoy happiness and any acts that foster continued happiness. May all beings live free from sorrow and its causes. May all beings' true, unadulterated happiness never fade. May all beings live in even-minded serenity, free from hatred or attachment toward those near or far."

## A Note on Phonetic Renderings

IN A "NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION" that opens *Twilight Goddess*, Thomas Cleary and Sartaz Aziz wrote, "Various academic transliteration schemes have been developed for individual languages, but we have chosen not to adopt them in this context because their complications pose unnecessary problems for readers without actually making accurate pronunciation possible, while specialists and students do not really need academic orthographic conventions to recognize words." (p. ix) Perhaps it takes scholars of their stature to state such an obvious truth.

Students writing their master's or doctoral theses are required to conform to the academic transliteration schemes mentioned above. However, the same schemes are unwelcome in a book destined for an educated, yet non-specialist readership because they give the reader no guidance as to pronunciation. How are we to pronounce the Tibetan in a book sub-titled, *The Enlightenment of Ye-shes mTsho-rgyal*, written by Nam-mkha'i snying-po? What would any reader surmise about pronunciation when reading the following line, chosen at random from another excellent book, "Thu'u bkwan and Lcang skya's other mentors wanted Khri chen Blo bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma to be appointed as his tutor." (*Among Tibetan Texts*, p. 137) (Would you like to hazard a guess how to pronounce the last name mentioned here? If you guessed Tree-chen Lo-zong Ten-pé Nyi-ma, you were probably a Tibetan in your past life.)

I would conclude that these authors or translators did not intend their books to be released to the general public, but wrote for a hermetic community of scholars. I further imagine that their publishers are so well funded that they are unconcerned with book sales. Lastly, it seems clear that such projects were not conceived with the larger Buddhist community in mind. Modern Buddhists throughout the world are often well educated



in the secular realm and sophisticated in their spiritual lives. Yet when we translators write in our in-house codes, we exclude many intelligent readers who have no calling to become Buddhist scholars but who read to deepen their understanding of Buddhism, their chosen faith. I do not believe scholars need to "dumb down" or unduly popularize their work for the larger Buddhist community; rather, they need to rise to the challenge of writing clearly and intelligibly outside of academic conventions.

A small step in that direction is using an easily comprehensible system of phonetic rendering. Buddhist writers do not need to reeducate readers in how to read English; we need to render foreign names in ways that can give a reader a fair chance of pronouncing them. Too often, Buddhist books are prefaced with guides that remind me of George Bernard Shaw's directions on how to spell the word "fish": g-h-o-t-i, he said. "Gh" as in "laugh", "o" as in women, and "ti" as in dictionary. For example, one current eminent scholar presents us with this guide for pronunciation of vowels: "'a' indicates the vowel sound of 'opt'; 'i' of 'it' or 'eat'; 'u' of 'soon'..." and so on. This obviously amounts to cruel and unusual punishment to the reader.

In this book, I tried to write Tibetan words as an Anglophone reader might pronounce them without prompting from such a pronunciation guide. While I have aimed for consistency, I have not devised a complete set of hard and fast rules. English embraces so many words of diverse origins that a foolproof set of rules may forever elude us. Yet we can probably guess that most readers will normally read "ph" as an "f" sound, and "th" as in "the." I have dropped the h's from such combinations, where it indicates a sound that does not correspond to a sound commonly suggested by the same letters in English. Thus, you will read Taranata, rather than Taranatha. This may shock and dismay Buddhist scholars, yet even the venerable New York Times now spells the capital of Nepal "Katmandu."

Likewise, e's at the end of most English words are either silent or pronounced "ee." Left to our own devices, we read "may" and "me" differently, although the present conventions in the phonetic renderings of Tibetan would have us read them as homonyms. The old system asks the reader to learn and perform a wholly unnatural mental gymnastic. An accent on e's that are pronounced "ay" is an imperfect solution, but you read in this book of Guru Rinpoché, not Rinpoche. (Again, the New York Times spells the name of one of Canada's figure skaters as Salé, whereas many publications seem to have taken a page from Tibetan scholars and

write Sale. This, to my eyes, can only be read by an English reader as rhyming with "whale.")

The u's in Tibetan phonetic renderings indicate an "oo" sound, as in "boom." Yet, in works seemingly written for the general public, the u sometimes remains, leaving us with names like Gyaltsen Bum. What is a normal, well-educated reader to assume? A Tibetan man one day asked me about his name's spelling in English, as he had discovered that the orthodox rules do not work outside the small world of Tibetan scholars. Some well-meaning person had taught him, "correctly," to spell his name "Thubten." Had he dared change to the "incorrect" and less elegant "Toobten," he might have found his name pronounced closer to a sound his mother would recognize. Thus, you will read, should the occasion arise, "boom" and not "bum," "toob" and not "thub."

It's that end words in Tibetan phonetic renderings function like ending e's in English. If you were to read "hi" in scholarly works, this would not indicate the sound of the word "high," but, perversely, a sound closer to "he." When this sound must be indicated in the text, I have written it as "ee." This is far from ideal in many respects, and you will still find some exceptions, such as "dakini," rather than "da-kee-nee," but the latter would probably be kinder to readers.

Another visual speed bump I feel obliged to include in the text is "ö," to indicate to the reader that the sound is unlike our common English pronunciation of an "o" (i.e., a long o) but is closer to the vowel sound we make in "book." The same scholar I mentioned above wrote in his pronunciation guide that an "ö" in his text "indicates the vowel sound of 'er' (minus the 'r')." I have long wondered if our name for Tibet comes from just such a phonetic rendering. Tibetans call their country "Bö" (again, "book" minus the 'k'). The first traveler to Tibet who asked a native what country he had reached probably heard, "This is Tibet (*di bö rê*)." If we delete from the sentence the verb *rê*, we are left with *di bö*, which is written in Tibetan 'di bod. Change the d's to t's and have an e stand for the ö, which "indicates the vowel sound of 'er' (minus the 'r')" and we have a name for a country which no native would recognize as his or her own—"Tibet."

Finally, you may recall a brand of computers now relegated to distant memory, Wang Computers. It was surprising to hear it pronounced on television as rhyming with "sang" or "rang," but we have only "correct"

transliteration to blame for this wrong “wang,” which would be “wong” in a phonetic rendering. Likewise, we should probably replace the “yang” in our diet not with “yin” but with “yong.”

Questions of apt styles for the representation of the sounds of words are related to the larger movement of serious Buddhist translation out of a strictly academic setting. Many translations, prepared as theses or as the scholarly production expected of tenured teachers, remind me of tantras enunciated by a Buddha or bodhisattva to an audience composed of enlightened beings who shared the same mind stream. That is a perfectly acceptable level of Buddhist discourse. Nevertheless, expressions of enlightenment exist in other contexts in which it is assumed that the speaker and the audience were not of one mind. Such forums demand that the speaker or translator employ a usage attuned to the listener. It seems not a question of choosing between right or wrong usages; our work asks us to choose among a number of correct options the style appropriate to the occasion. Thus, you find in this book an attempt to conform not to a set of rules, past or present, but to what I imagine my Anglophone sisters and brothers need to find on the page if they want to pronounce Tibetan words included in this text.

## Introduction

GURU RINPOCHÉ succeeded in implanting the practice of tantric Buddhism throughout the Himalayan region, particularly in Tibet. Although he left the region well over a thousand years ago, he is still remembered vividly and invoked regularly by Tibetan-speaking Buddhists, for whom his presence remains alive. Except for the Buddha Shakyamuni, no other human being is so deeply venerated by the Tibetans; Guru Rinpoché is often referred to as “the second Buddha.” He towers above all later masters who brought Buddhism from India to Tibet or those Tibetans who went to India in search of instruction. The many tales told of his life, such as those included in this book, portray him as an individual who had overcome human limitations and could act freely for the good of the world. Whether or not we choose to believe what might seem only legends, Guru Rinpoché was undeniably responsible for transforming the spiritual and secular life of the people of the Himalayan region and he remains the single most significant influence in modern Himalayan tantric Buddhism.

The main portion of *Guru Rinpoché: His Life and Times* contains translations of Tibetan texts written on the subject of this great Indian Buddhist master of the eighth and ninth centuries. Guru Rinpoché’s arrival in Tibet marked a radical change in the country’s religious and political orientation. And it is he whose presence still accompanies Tibet’s Buddhists, and those who practice Himalayan tantric Buddhism, whenever they turn their hearts toward the refuge of their faith. He is their, and our, “second Buddha.”

How can we express in English what effect Guru Rinpoché had on those who met him? The word *charisma* does not even begin to cover it. A fitting image is this: We see the stars and the moon at night, but when the sun arrives, they disappear. We may be able to see the moon in the daytime, but it seems inert. The stars do not leave the heavens, the moon always shines

with the same intensity, but the sun shines so many times brighter that the other lights of the heavens seem to vanish.

The Tibetans have a word for that, pronounced *zil-nün* (written *zil gnön*), literally, "to overwhelm with brilliance," although the Tibetan definition is "to render others weak." This might be close to a very simple and unused verb in English: to cow, "to make timid and submissive by filling with fear or awe; intimidate" (*Webster's New World College Dictionary*). Tibetans use *zil-nün* in conjunction with another word to name one of the most popular forms of Guru Rinpoché, *Nong-see Zil-nün*, literally "he who overwhelms existence's appearances with his brilliance."

That was and is Guru Rinpoché. His awe-inspiring presence had nothing to do with the media or publicity, political power or wealth. In the eighth century, he walked over the Tibetan border from Nepal accompanied by a few Nepalese craftsmen whom he soon sent on ahead to Lhasa. He was a foreigner, from an area of India that had fought wars with Tibet not long before, and he traveled alone on foot with what he could carry. As we will see in the translated accounts of his life below, he set about transforming Tibet, from the underground (the spirits, gods and demons) up. While no consensus exists for the duration of his stay, this much is clear: he left Tibet's Buddhists with the indelible feeling that their land was now blessed. As Jamgon Kongtrul was fond of saying whenever he broached the subject, "There was no area of Tibetan soil larger than a horse's hoof untouched by Guru Rinpoché's feet." And, he might have added, no Tibetan Buddhist heart untouched by his spiritual influence. This was Guru Rinpoché's effect.

This collection joins a number of translations devoted solely to Guru Rinpoché's life, notably *The Lotus-Born*, *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*, and *The Legend of the Great Stupa*, and many others that contain long passages describing his acts and teaching, such as the indispensable *Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* by His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoché, the many wonderful works by Tulku Thondup, including *Masters of Meditation and Miracles* and *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, and the precious translations by Eric Pema Kunsang, including *Dakini Teachings*.

In general, the books just mentioned speak in unison of Guru Rinpoché's life—they provide the traditional "lotus-born" account that is common to the treasure texts. Easily the most outlandish and extravagant version of Guru Rinpoché's life and acts, the account of his life that begins with his birth from a lotus remains the most important to practicing tantric Buddhists.

To that classical picture of Guru Rinpoché this book adds two very different versions of his life: the Tibetan non-Buddhist (Bön) account and an account based on Indian and early Tibetan chronicles. While these short texts share their main subject and unanimously accord Guru Rinpoché his rightful place of honor, they diverge from the traditional account in significant ways. The main point that begs for attention and explanation is that of his birth. The treasure texts recount unanimously his birth from a lotus; other sources provide details of his human parents. How can we resolve this?

To begin with, it should be obvious that belief in Guru Rinpoché's miraculous birth is not an article of faith. Among the six classes of beings identified in Buddhism, beings in hell and the gods in heaven also take parentless, miraculous birth, but no one regards them as a spiritual refuge on the basis of their unusual mode of birth. We take refuge in the Lotus-Born Master because his enlightened mind is suffused with inconceivable wisdom and compassion, because his teaching leads us from here to enlightenment, and because his continued presence in countless forms, including our instructors and spiritual companions, accompanies us each step of the way. A person's total disbelief in the Lotus-Born's lotus birth shocks and dismays no one; another's total confidence in his miraculous birth is picturesque but not spiritually significant in itself.

On a worldly level, we might consider Guru Rinpoché's birth story as "skillful means." His visit to Tibet had been preceded by that of Shantiraksheeta, a great master from the Indian kingdom of Zahor.<sup>1</sup> The venerable preceptor and scholar taught the king and tried to assist in the construction of Samyé Monastery by consecrating the ground, but his efforts were in vain. Whatever we may believe about non-human spirits' mischief that undermined the building project, it is clear that Tibet's human natives were also displeased. The king asked Shantiraksheeta to return to Nepal. Faced with failure, the peaceful master contemplated his lack of progress in gaining the hearts and minds of Tibetan humans and non-human spirits, and concluded that only a master who had been born from a lotus would succeed. He advised the king to invite Padmasambhava, the Lotus-Born.

What is the implication of Shantiraksheeta's statement that only a lotus-born master could succeed where he had failed? He undoubtedly had Guru Rinpoché in mind, in the knowledge that the tantric master's spectrum of skillful means went far beyond his own, those of a peaceful Buddhist monk.

He may also have been admitting to the impossibility of any foreigner, particularly one from India, having a significant impact on Tibet in the current political situation. Shantiraksheeta was declared *persona non grata* by the same powerful persons who would later ask Guru Rinpoché to take his religion elsewhere, and for the same reasons: a foreigner's detrimental influence on the king and the people. However, the extraterritoriality that a lotus-born person enjoys probably bought Guru Rinpoché a little more time in Tibet.

"Skillful means" aside, I find that the story of the miraculous birth of Guru Rinpoché is the most appealing, an admission that could be taken as a sign of serious brainwashing. For me, his story is that of awareness one hundred percent alive from the first moment of his appearance in the world. Whether or not "in fact" Guru Rinpoché had parents is not germane to his biography: his is the story of the display of fully awakened, primordially pure awareness in life's every circumstance. Guru Rinpoché was not an individual who followed a spiritual path until illumination. He was an enlightened being who appeared in different guises entirely as a manifestation to help others, including the guise of an individual who followed the spiritual path.

We think of ourselves as being the child of specific parents, as belonging to a certain gender and race, as a citizen of a specific nation, and as a member of a caste, class and community within that country, etc. Our identification with these transient reference points, be they racial, linguistic, cultural, conceptual, or gender-specific, can become lifelong love affairs, hate affairs, or guilt affairs. What Guru Rinpoché's birth symbolizes for me is the fact that from the first moment he recognized the unborn and undying nature of his mind, primordially pure awareness. He identified with that, rather than with his body, wherever it may have come from, be it a womb, a lotus, a stork, or a cabbage patch. Whatever physical, linguistic, or conceptual worlds he adopted, he wore as ephemeral ornaments on the infinite expanse of timeless awareness.

The concept of a lotus-born individual can only be viewed as weird by non-Buddhists, whereas the thought that Guru Rinpoché had parents like the rest of us risks shocking a Tibetan Buddhist reader. Nevertheless, I have not unearthed either the lotus or the womb-birth stories from obscure, heretical sources: Jamgon Kongtrul included both versions (along with the work translated by Eric Pema Kunsang as *The Lotus-Born*) in his *Treasury*

of *Rediscovered Teachings*, a massive compendium of treasure texts Guru Rinpoché left behind in Tibet for future generations. Kongtrul's intention seems to have been to present a selection of Guru Rinpoché's lives for a diverse readership. To each reader, his or her own preferred version.

What Kongtrul did not leave to the personal tastes of his audience is the central place of Guru Rinpoché in the Tibetan spiritual universe. In many books and in many ways, he underlined his vision of Guru Rinpoché's indispensable, undying influence. For example, to the persons he accepted into his home and retreat center, he wrote,

Two points form the common basis of all spiritual practices done here. First, we should all consider ourselves practitioners of the highest level of tantra. Second, all Tibetans in general and particularly those who are followers of the Oral Instruction Lineage [*Kagyü*] and the Ancient Instruction Lineage [*Nyingma*] place their deepest confidence for this life and the next in the second Buddha, the sole refuge of beings in these dark times, the great master from Oddiyana, Guru Rinpoché. (*Jamgon Kongtrul's Retreat Manual*, pp. 121–122)

Jamgon Kongtrul once wrote an offering ceremony to honor the main masters responsible for the inception of tantric Buddhist meditation practice in Tibet (called *The Ritual of Offering to the Spiritual Masters of the Eight Great Practice Lineages*). In it, Kongtrul places Guru Rinpoché at the center of a great assembly of the foremost spiritual masters of all schools. This was not a choice based on bias or sentimentality. As far as we venture within the domains of Buddhist study, meditation, and conduct, we remain forever within the infinite bounds of the Buddha's wisdom. Similarly, regardless of our point of entry into Himalayan tantric Buddhism, we have stumbled, knowingly or not, into Guru Rinpoché's wisdom world.

In writing of Guru Rinpoché, we must broach the subject of history, both Buddhist and secular, of Tibet long ago. Modern Buddhists could be forgiven a certain reluctance to study the history of their faith. On the one hand, most traditional Buddhist accounts of the past bear only faint traces of what we expect from histories—an objective, impartial presentation of verifiable facts. Secular histories of Buddhist Asia, on the other hand, read depressingly like histories of Europe, with churches and states in sordid alliances struggling for wealth, prestige, and power. If we suspect that an

author of a "Buddhist" history wants us to take his/her book at the letter, we rightfully feel insulted, whereas most of us have long had our fill of catalogs of abusive rulers' crimes against humanity or of venal clerics' crimes against the spirit of their faith.

As a reader who enjoys contemplating Guru Rinpoché's era, during which the Tibetan, Chinese, and Indian civilizations collided, I believe it is possible for us to come to terms with and learn from that rich period. It is no easy task, however, as a truly balanced history that does justice to both the secular and religious facets of the story has yet to be written. I hope this work will be seen as a contribution to such a project.

The translations from Tibetan in the text below add some varied accounts to our growing body of literature in Western languages on the subject of Guru Rinpoché. I have added this introduction to address some issues surrounding the context of Guru Rinpoché's lives and times:

First is the sometimes mysterious relationship between Buddhism and historical writing. To most modern readers, accounts of Guru Rinpoché's lives seem to be presented as history, but in fact it would seem to be wiser to read these texts as Buddhist teachings. Buddhism cannot be all things to all people, and it would seem that, of all groups to gather at the Buddha's feet, historians leave the most often empty-handed. It is perhaps our Judeo-Christian antecedents that lead us to expect a faith based in human history, or a religion that is concerned with the subject. Yet we can find no evidence of either in Indian Buddhism during its first 1,500 years or more.

In the wish to clarify what can be a source of serious perplexity for modern readers, the first two parts of this introduction, "Buddhism, History, and the Truth" and "Buddhist History after the Buddha," represent an attempt to present Buddhism's own vision of the import of the Buddha's teaching and of the tools necessary to analyze what he taught. This declaration of the principles of Buddhist teaching allows us to judge for ourselves why Indian *Mahayana* and tantric Buddhism never produced historians or reporters among its great scholars and meditation masters. Buddhism's conscious independence from the confines of human history should free us from the unreasonable expectation that Buddhism, beyond an elementary stage, concerns itself with relative, material, historical truth. I propose that we read Buddhist texts as spiritual teachings, not as history, a use for which they were never intended.

The remaining parts of the introduction are devoted to an attempt to place Guru Rinpoché's life and activity into three contexts—the period of his visit to Tibet, that period which is ours, and that which is timeless.

Two sections, "Tibet and Asia on the Eve of Guru Rinpoché's Arrival" and "India in Guru Rinpoché's Era," describe the stage of history onto which Guru Rinpoché strode and the culture which produced him. On the one hand, Guru Rinpoché's mission was a daring one: Tibet was at the height of its imperial power, and had recently fought successfully with India, Nepal, and China. Tibet was awake and powerful, but not yet Buddhist. Such a conversion took a master of Guru Rinpoché's stature to accomplish. Yet, as dramatic as Guru Rinpoché's effect on the Tibetans was, and however larger than life he seemed to them, he remains a product of his native culture, for he lived at the zenith of Buddhist India. India at the time of Guru Rinpoché's birth numbers among the most wonderful cultures the world has ever known. I believe that examining the entire context of Guru Rinpoché's life and its impact can be uplifting and pertinent for us, since it allows us to contemplate the positive impact the advent of Buddhism can have on a society.

The final parts of the introduction reflect upon how we non-Tibetans meet Guru Rinpoché and the impact he has or can have on our spiritual lives. "Guru Rinpoché Now—in Print" traces some of the recent appearances of Guru Rinpoché in books published in English. The conclusion that one must draw from this short study is that Guru Rinpoché's widespread popularity among modern Buddhists has little to do with the printed word and owes much to words spoken by Tibetan lamas. This was not the conclusion I expected when I began to investigate Guru Rinpoché's presence in Anglophone publications. Finally, "Timeless Guru Rinpoché and Wisdom Bridges to the Present" repeats some words of modern-day masters on the subject of Guru Rinpoché and includes some observations concerning the subject of lineage, the essential link between the timeless Guru and our time-bound lives.

The intent of the introduction and the collection of translations that follows is to help readers unfamiliar with Guru Rinpoché sample some versions of his life story as they have been retold for over a thousand years. Yet, the central purpose of this book is not the transfer of information. I suggest that we can go beyond a wish to study and understand Guru Rinpoché: we

can experience his direct presence and realize, or enter into communion with, his enlightened nature. Sincere practitioners of tantra can transcend the realm of books to gain direct access to Guru Rinpoché's presence through prayer and meditation. That process should culminate in the recognition of his and our natures as identical.

## Buddhism, History, and the Truth

WHEN BUDDHISM FIRST ARRIVED in societies enlightened by modern science, traditional Buddhist teachings on cosmology were widely taken as a test case: how flexible would this "new" ancient religion be? Could Buddhism accept the hard facts of science and put aside its obviously antiquated beliefs? I think the answer has been a resounding yes, simply because, as one Tibetan master, Tai Situpa, remarked dryly, "The Buddha didn't come to this world to teach geography." Modern Buddhists, be they Asian, European, African, or American, do not reject Buddhist cosmology in its many versions, but no one believes it either. We learn in detail (and, in the Tibetan system, visualize precisely) a flat-earthed world-system and its axial mountain, around which the sun and moon circle, without ever attributing it the slightest reality. Buddhists of the past once believed it to represent relative truth, the world of vivid appearances without an underlying reality, like a magical display or a dream. Most of us are now persuaded that our eyes lie to us, that although we see it move daily, the sun is immobile, and that this planet is not as flat as we see it, but round. Against all sensorial evidence, we believe that the globe spins on its axis and hurtles around the sun—our new relative truth, a world that again vividly appears, but has no underlying reality, like a dream or a magical display.

The relegation to disuse of an ornate, 2,500-year-old system of beliefs has not been a difficult issue for modern Buddhists. Most realize that the Buddha's point in presenting cosmology was not to teach a system that could be proved scientifically or empirically. The Buddha taught to draw his audience toward enlightenment. His listeners could submerge themselves in his elaborate version of the universe, which must have seemed plausible at the time, yet they would always eventually hear the Buddha conclude, "This is how it appears, but it isn't ultimately real." They would hear his

words not as a denigration of his previous teaching but as an undermining of *any* belief-system, individual or social, spiritual or scientific, that accepts appearances as real.

As more and more Buddhist histories find their way into translation, the time has come to question them in the same way we have Buddhist cosmology: Why have they been taught or written? What is their value to us?

First, it must be said, in echo of Tai Situpa's comment on cosmology, "The Buddha did not come into this world to teach history." It should be added, with equal emphasis, that Buddhist writers since the Buddha were similarly unconcerned with writing history as we know it. These statements require some explanation.

In the Buddha's case, we can consider the example of one of the twelve classes of his sacred word, the accounts of his past lives, the "Jataka Tales." These constitute important Buddhist teachings, as they present hypothetical situations, ethical quandaries and their resolution according to the Buddha, teaching us how to live as good human Buddhists. Nevertheless, the tales include many in which the future Buddha lived as animals, who spoke intelligibly to other species of animals and to human beings. The Buddha related these stories at face value, without preceding his accounts with a warning, "These are untrue, but helpful stories." He presented them as history—his own—to be accepted as spiritual teachings meaningful to those who followed his path to enlightenment. The Jataka Tales are Buddhist teachings, not History.

Buddhist texts abound with versions of the Buddha's life, among which a discerning Buddhist much choose, according to his/her choice of spiritual path. Who we believe the Buddha was, how he attained enlightenment, and what he taught have a direct impact on our spiritual lives. There is no single answer to these questions in Buddhism, nor is there meant to be. Jamgon Kongtrul devotes an entire chapter of his *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* to the subject of the Buddha's enlightenment from the perspectives of the Lesser Way (*Hinayana*), the Great Way (*Mahayana*), and various levels of tantra. In presenting different views of enlightenment, Kongtrul's aim is not to define a single "correct view," but to help his reader bring some coherence to his/her practice of Buddhism: a correct view is one that is consistent with one's spiritual path. A person who embraces the path of the Lesser Way should accept the Lesser Way's version of enlightenment as the goal, not enlightenment as understood in the tantras, for example.

Likewise, a person whose spiritual practice follows the Highest Yoga Tantra should not conceive of the path or the goal as the Lesser Way presents it. While Buddhism prides itself on its "84,000 avenues" to enlightenment, it asks its followers to at least make coherent choices, that one's view, meditation, goal, and conduct be consistent.

In the chapter of the *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* immediately following the one on enlightenment, Kongtrul recounts the twelve deeds of the Buddha. He again reminds his reader that, apart from what he calls "the Common Way's" (i.e., Lesser Way) story, there are many other equally important perspectives on the life of the Buddha, each pertinent to a specific level of Buddhist practice. As he draws to the close of the two chapters, Kongtrul uses the words of Taranata to help the reader gain some reference points in what may seem a chaotic sense of history:

Such specific differences [in accounts of the Buddha's life] are exceedingly numerous in all other sources. Among them, for an account of the [Buddha's] enlightened deeds that appeared in common to all who lived close-by at the time the Buddha lived in the world, including such beings as those who harbored wrong views, those who practiced non-Buddhist religions, or even animals, we must consult the tradition of the Common Way, the tradition of the Listeners [*shravaka*]. For an account of how [the Buddha's life] appeared in the experience of disciples engaged in the extraordinary path of the Great Way, we must consult accounts contained in the Great Way's discourses. Among these, we find different general perspectives and specific extreme variations in their degree of spiritual impact. While the two [the Common and Great Ways] are not fundamentally contradictory, we must not blend their accounts when retelling the Buddha's life story. (vol. 1, p. 315)

Thus, according to Kongtrul and Taranata, for history, "just-the-facts-ma'am," we must rely on the Common Way's account. Yet if we yearn for enlightenment on the path of bodhisattvas, we should choose our reading material according to that criterion and immerse ourselves in *The Flower Ornament Discourse*, for example—short on facts and long on the spirit of awakening. However, we should not mix our stories of the Buddha's life. Taranata takes to task the great Tibetan scholar Butön for having recounted (presumably in his work translated into English as *The History of*

*Buddhism in India and Tibet*) the first eleven acts of the Buddha from the Great Way's perspective and the last act, transcendence of suffering, according to the Lesser Way. Taranata, quoted by Kongtrul, continues:

Among these two traditions, the Great Way is supreme for many reasons: in general, the Great Way is wide-ranging, it is the domain of inconceivable wisdom, it appears within the experience of sublime disciples, it constitutes the [Buddha's] life story of great mystery, and there are many levels within the Great Way itself. Nevertheless, the common tradition [i.e., Lesser Way] provides the only basis for study of many aspects [of the Buddha's life], such as what existed in the experience of all beings [at that time], the Buddha's life span, a chronology of events, and affirmations concerning the lands the Buddha did or did not visit. We cannot use the Great Way tradition's account [in such a fashion]. Because the Great Way presents an inconceivable domain of experience, it is difficult [within its context] to place limited definitions on [the Buddha's] location, time, and deeds. Therefore, in presenting accounts based on oral histories [Tibetan: *tam-gyu* (*gtam rgyud*)], the tradition of the Common Way is definitely of vital importance. (*Ibid.*, pp. 315–316)

Buddhists who have entered the bodhisattva path cannot restrict their faith to what is verifiable history. Bodhisattvas live in a universe filled with buddhas in every direction dwelling in cosmic time, and in a world filled with sentient beings imbued with buddha-nature. Further, according to Buddhism's own lore, the Great Way's source texts were retrieved long after the Buddha's life, from locations outside the confines of the human realm. In our day, these works still provide the foundation for the Great Way and are studied by modern scholars and meditators alike. The Great Way's path to timeless awakening is impossible without these volumes, whose authorship is attributed to the Buddha or bodhisattvas, but Buddhism claims that they were retrieved from lands beyond history.

If the relatively tame Great Way is shrouded in such mystery, it should come as no surprise that tantra's origins are equally nebulous if viewed from the perspective of sober historical research. But Buddhism beyond the Common Way has never restricted itself to solemn materialism, nor does it have any reason to do so. One of Tibet's great historians, Pawo

Tsouk-lak Treng-wa (1504–1566), wrote this (in 1564) on the sources of the Buddhist sacred texts available to Tibetans:

In general, the principal among the Buddha's inconceivable teachings are those that only existed in the abodes of other beings, such as nagas and gods. Among them, the exalted master Nagarjuna retrieved such texts as the *Perfection of Transcendent Knowledge in 100,000 Verses* from the land of the nagas. The exalted master Asanga retrieved many texts, such as the *Discourse on the Ten Stages of Awakening*, from [the heaven] Joyful. When such texts were disseminated, all authorities of the Listener persuasion criticized them, but they became assimilated as part of the doctrine of the Great Way.

Such masters as Garab Dorjé and the great master Lotus-Born brought the Ancient [*Nyingma*] Secret Mantra texts [i.e., tantras] from such places as Highest Heaven and the land of cannibal-demons. Such masters as exalted Nagarjuna, King Indra-bodhi, master Lawapa, and Asvara Vinasa retrieved such [new tantras] as Joyous Vajra [*Héva-jra*], Sublime Bliss [*Chakrasamvara*], and Matrix of Mystery [*Guhyasamaja*]. When such texts were disseminated, those of the Way of Characteristics [i.e., *Mahayana*] criticized them, but they became assimilated and essential as part of the doctrine of Secret Mantra.

Thus, what real point is there to the perspective that [judges] as authentic those texts for which Indian manuscripts exist and dismisses as spurious those texts for which Indian manuscripts do not exist? We have Indian manuscripts for non-Buddhist teachings, such as the source texts of the Charvaka [nihilist school of Indian philosophy], [but that fact does not authenticate them as Buddhist texts], whereas it is difficult to guarantee that volumes retrieved from such places as Joyful Heaven, Highest Heaven, and the land of the nagas only be written on palm leaves, and in words common to scholars and translators. It is difficult to know [details concerning these texts], such as the substance upon which they were written, what ink was used, and the letters' forms. However, even if you were able to see the texts, it is possible that you would develop the view that the texts are inauthentic. Nevertheless, the Buddha's teaching is inconceivable—it is given in relation to the character and capacity of disciples at specific places and times, in language and terms comprehensible to them.



Thus, if volumes of teachings appear in other realms through the Buddha's power, it is not inconsistent that they appear in the letters and language of that place and time. Therefore, when such teachers as the master Lotus-Born retrieved texts from locations such as Highest Heaven for the benefit of his Tibetan disciples, it is not out of the question that those books were written in Tibetan letters and language.

These are subjects that surpass the bounds of Listeners' and bodhisattvas' comprehension: why should spiritually immature persons such as us tire ourselves in attempting to judge them? Be cautious about this! (*Feast for the Wise*, pp. 541–542)

Why do the Buddha and his spiritual heirs thus thumb their venerable noses at conventional history? To reply to this question, we must answer the question, "Why and how did the Buddha teach?"

Although the statement, "The Buddha taught to lead sentient beings to the state of enlightenment he himself had discovered" is seemingly self-evident, we sometimes forget that if such is the case, it should be equally obvious that a sound knowledge of history and geography did not number among his top priorities. If the Buddha broached the subjects of cosmology, the genesis of human life on the planet, human history, and descriptions of the eventual end of the world, he did so with the sole intent that his words would lead his listeners along the spiritual path. The Buddhist path is not static or rigid, and it would be a mistake for those of us from static religious backgrounds to expect Buddhism to be fundamentalist. The point of Buddhist teaching is to help the listener become Buddha. A listener is neither expected nor encouraged to absorb another's Truth or to dully and dutifully follow someone else's Enlightenment. Buddhists are expected and encouraged to discover and foster their own understanding, experience, realization, awareness, awakening, and enlightenment.

On the subject of how the Buddha taught, we need to consult past Buddhist masters, who instructed us how to interpret the stunning range of the Buddha's pronouncements. One nineteenth century master, Chöying Tobden Dorjé, copied and re-ordered the words of Longchenpa (1308–1363) to present what he called "the precious keys to analysis." These keys give us ways to escape the cage of literalism and to learn to make distinctions between definitive and interpretive meaning, between relative and ultimate truth, and among styles of teaching with direct or indirect intention. It

seems important to include these keys here as they allow us to comprehend more of the why and how of the Buddha's teaching. This in turn helps us comprehend the intent and character of Buddhist "historical" writing.

Some Tibetan Buddhist books repeat a common saying among mountain people, "If you want to see the mountain you're standing on, you have to climb the far mountain." Most of us were born upon and have made our homes on the mountain of human historical consciousness. To see it in perspective, we can scale the mountain of Buddhism. It may surprise us to discover that the summit of our familiar history mountain only reaches the lower levels of Mount Buddha, after which we leave our customary signposts behind.

Upon entering the study of Buddhism's Great Way, we are first given tools to situate and to understand the overwhelming range of what the Buddha taught. The traditional order in which these tools are handed us might seem reversed—first two "keys," then, two "treasuries"—yet the first improves our mental eyesight, while the second provides a vast vista to explore with our newly discerning eyes. I cannot pretend that these subjects are easily ingested on first reading, but they constitute vital subjects for us if we are to venture into Buddhism on its own terms and to comprehend its ambivalence toward what we call history.

In brief, of the two keys, the first identifies two levels of meaning; the second, eight different underlying concerns that motivated the Buddha's words in specific contexts. We must know these if we are to understand our Teacher and his sometimes contradictory statements. After we equip ourselves with those two keys, we can unlock two treasuries of his teaching—two levels of truth and interdependent arising.

The first key is a distinction between "definitive" meaning and "interpretive" (or "provisional") meaning. The word for "interpretive" in Tibetan, *drang*, is literally "inductive" in the sense of leading along—the listener is lead through steps of interpretive meaning along the path toward the definitive meaning, a destination that the listener may not be aware of. Chöying Tobden Dorjé writes,

The definitive meaning is that the nature of reality [*dharmata*] of all phenomena, the absolute expanse [*dharmadhātu*], is naturally pure, and that the wisdom of the luminous nature of mind is naturally pure, the essence of space, without change or transition; and that it transcends coming-into-being, abiding, or cessation. Every part of the Buddhist

Canon and Treatises that presents this is gathered into the category of definitive meaning.

The interpretive meaning is that the extent of phenomena's appearances—such as the stages of coming-into-being, cessation, coming, going, purity, impurity, the psycho-physical aggregates, constituents, and sense faculties—appears in myriad forms, as in a dream, and can be analyzed, named, and taught through systematic reflection and verbalization. The parts of the Canon and Treatises that teach this are gathered into the category of interpretive meaning.... *The Praise of the Middle Way as Inconceivable* states:

“Phenomena are empty”:

This is the teaching called definitive meaning.

What teaches arising, cessation, etc.,

And the lives of sentient beings, etc.,

Is interpretive meaning; it is relative [truth].

*The Questions of Akshayamati Discourse* states:

What are the discourses of definitive meaning? What are the discourses of interpretive meaning? Discourses taught to induce entry into the path are those of interpretive meaning. Discourses taught to induce entry into the result are those of definitive meaning.

In brief, the true state of the fundamental nature and the discourses that present it are called definitive meaning and its class of discourses. Instruction to provide means to enter that fundamental nature, teachings of the many techniques to draw sentient beings' minds to it, such as [the subject of] impure delusion and its classification, is called interpretive meaning and interpretive teaching.

This is called “the mirror to view the teachings” and “the first key to open the teachings.” (*The Treasury of Discourses and Tantras*, sec. 9, pp. 35b-36a)

Thus, the definitive meaning describes the true nature of things; interpre-

tive meaning, how they appear. From this perspective, astrology and astronomy would both belong to teachings on interpretive meaning, if study of either of them helped a listener approach the definitive meaning, which falls outside the purview of either astrology or astronomy. History, no matter how accurate, would never be considered other than interpretive meaning.

The range of interpretive meaning, steps on the way to definitive meaning, is unlimited. Further, how interpretive meaning is presented in Buddhism can go beyond what we might consider kosher or Catholic. As we will read below, Buddhism admits explicitly that the Buddha used subtle shades of truth when he thought a less-than-forthright approach would be the most helpful to a specific individual. We believe the Buddha to have been most committed to his auditor's spiritual welfare, not to an abstract notion of honesty-at-all-costs. This can be challenging to our Judeo-Christian sensibilities, for we can see little evidence that the Buddha shared our attachment to what one modern Tibetan master (best left unnamed) calls “honesty-without-positive-qualities.” In the traditional Buddhist view, there are four direct intentions and four indirect intentions that we must take into account when we listen at the Buddha's feet and we have the impression that our Teacher is not talking straight:

The four [direct] intentions are formulated when, for specific reasons, the teachings are not expressed explicitly. *The Ornament of the Discourses* states:

These are known as the four intentions:

[Teaching given] in consideration of equanimity,

Other meanings, other times,

And [specific] individuals.

1. Of these four categories, the first is intention directed toward equanimity. [This can be illustrated by the statement,] “At that time, I was the Transcendent One, All-Seeing...”, said from the perspective of equanimity within the body of ultimate enlightenment [*dharmakaya*].

2. Intention directed toward other meanings [is illustrated by the statement,] “All phenomena lack an essential nature.” Such a statement can be made from the three perspectives of the lack of essential nature

[conceptual, relational, and absolute].... *The Discourse of Commentary to the Definitive Intention* states:

I stated that all phenomena lack an essential nature with a [three-fold] intention: characteristics lack an essential nature, coming-into-being lacks an essential nature, and the ultimate lacks an essential nature.

3. Intention directed toward other times can be illustrated by the statement, "You will attain enlightenment by merely remembering the name Buddha Stainless Moonlight." Although that recollection alone will not bring enlightenment, one can attain enlightenment at another time based on that significant preliminary accumulation [of merit].

4. Intention directed toward individuals' attitudes is illustrated by teaching that disparages ethical conduct and praises generosity, directed toward certain individuals who hold the view that discipline is supreme. (*Ibid.*, pp. 36a-37a)

These constitute methods given all Buddhists to interpret what they hear or read from the Buddha or other teachers. It should be evident that none of these teaching styles lend themselves to the composition of history. And it gets worse for those in search of straight historical narratives in Buddhist texts. The Buddha sometimes spoke in ways that were deliberately misleading, although he did so to lead an individual to enter the spiritual path. This category of statement is euphemistically said to have been made with "indirect intention." Sensitive souls, Judeo-Christian Buddhists, and modern legalistic minds should probably abstain from the following passage:

To have another person comprehend the correct path or meaning based on [that individual's] preferences, a teaching can employ some terms or synonyms consistent with common usage but inconsistent with [their true] meaning. *The Ornament of the Discourses* states:

The four indirect intentions—  
In respect to entry,  
In respect to characteristics,

In respect to antidotes,  
And in respect to interpretation—  
Are used [in relation] to Listeners [to refer to]  
the essential nature,  
To subdue faults,  
And to express the profound.

Thus four are mentioned:

1. Indirect intention in respect to entry is employed for some persons of the Listener [*shravaka*] propensity who do not enter the Great Way due to fear of emptiness. For them, it can be said, "Form exists." The auditor then enters [the Great Way] having understood that form ultimately exists, whereas the speaker's consideration was that appearances exist like [appearances in] a dream.

2. Indirect intention in respect to characteristics is illustrated by the statement, "All phenomena lack an essential nature," made to foster understanding of the true state of the lack of an essential nature. There are three perspectives on the lack of essential nature—conceptual, relational, and absolute....

3. Indirect intention in respect to antidotes is illustrated by the occasion when [the Buddha] understood that a person thought [the Buddha's] body small, or his life span short, and thus inferior to other teachers. He said, "At that time, I was the Transcendent Buddha Illuminator [*Vairochana*]." The listener understood that enlightenment's form bodies were equal, whereas the speaker's intention was that [he and other buddhas] have equal cultivation of merit and wisdom, attainment of the body of ultimate enlightenment, and benefit for beings. *The Treasury of Knowledge* states:

All buddhas have equal accumulations,  
Attainment of the body of ultimate enlightenment,  
and activity for beings' benefit,  
But not equal life span,  
Family, or body size.

4. Indirect intention in respect to interpretation is illustrated by the example of statements that are extremely difficult to understand, made to correct the fault of those who think, "This teaching is inferior because it is easy to understand." For example, *The Collection of Sayings* states:

Who kills his/her father and mother;  
And destroys the ruler, the two pure ones,  
And the whole surrounding land—  
That person becomes purity itself.

This statement uses parents as a metaphor for the mental formations of desire and grasping at the wheel of life. "Ruler" is a metaphor for the ground-of-all consciousness, the support or foundation for various habitual patterns. "The two pure ones" is a metaphor for [the view of] brahmins, which contends that the collection of impermanent [phenomena is a self], and that of monastic practitioners, which holds ethical conduct and discipline to be supreme. "The whole surrounding land" is a metaphor for the eight collections of consciousness, including the inner senses and the dualistic mind. "To destroy them and thus become pure" is used as a metaphor for enlightenment. (*Ibid.*, pp. 37a-38a)

The author concludes this presentation of Buddhism's general interpretive methods with this statement:

These cases [of intention and indirect intention] constitute the second key to viewing the Buddha's excellent speech. Since there are various circumstances—grammatical structure, meaning, intention, and purpose—[to be taken into consideration for a complete analysis of a teaching], it is extremely important to know how to analyze discourses and tantras with these [analytic] methods. (*Ibid.*, p. 38a)

Here, the words "grammatical structure, meaning, intention, and purpose" suggest to readers conversant with Buddhist tantra such subjects as the six styles of explanation, the six parameters, and the four methods of interpretation.<sup>2</sup> Although each of these subjects can be useful for us in understanding Buddhism's content and intent, I have deliberately included

here only material from the Great Way, as we are generally more familiar with and less intimidated by its teachings than those of the tantras. What is clear is that Buddhism's concerns are not those of journalists or objective reporters.

To this point, we have been handed the precious keys to analysis, which unlock the treasury of Buddha's teachings. That treasury contains two subjects: the two truths (relative truth and ultimate truth) and interdependent arising (the interdependent arising of the fundamental nature of reality, of the wheel of life (*samsara*), and of the transcendence of suffering (*nirvana*)). These subjects constitute the core of Buddhism, what the Buddha taught, and what we must keep in mind when we make any affirmations concerning Buddhism and its relation to the subject of history and historical truth. These considerations provided the motivation for all Buddhist compositions, including any pronouncements on history. Therefore, I include here a translation of a classic, brief presentation of the two truths and of interdependent arising.

The first subject is that of relative and ultimate truths. Within the context of relative truth, we find many sub-headings: inaccurate and accurate, correct and misleading. Ultimate truth stands alone, without categories. The author concludes this passage with a brief indication of the two truths' practical implications: they define the parameters of Buddhists' spiritual practice and its results—the three bodies of enlightenment:

[Nagarjuna's] *The Root of Transcendent Knowledge* states:

Instruction given by buddhas  
Is correctly based on the two truths—  
Worldly, relative truth;  
And sacred, ultimate truth.

If what are called "phenomena" are classified only according to their nature, they have two categories: their appearing state, relative truth; and their true state, ultimate truth. Moreover, within the category of relative appearances, there are two categories: inaccurate and accurate.

First, inaccurate relative truth can be defined as follows: During the time that we are ordinary sentient beings, the nature of our language and concepts arises in its totality as inaccurate appearances, inaccurate

grasping, and inaccurate consciousness: this constitutes what is entirely misleading relative truth. Everything within this framework is deceptive, unreal, changing, and suffering, and appears as the objective domain of a deluded person's mind. Since this is a linguistic and conceptual framework, even the Buddha conceived or expressed by sentient beings' minds reflects merely a construct designated by that mind. Because such experience is not based in the ultimate, it is called inaccurate.

During this time [of confinement within the framework of inaccurate relative truth], since appearances and awareness can appear as either truth or falsehood, the terms "correct relative truth" and "misleading relative truth" are used. Correct relative truth has these characteristics: since it corresponds to appearances, it is functional; it arises through causes; if examined, it has no inherent existence; and it is collectively perceived. It can be subsumed as earth, water, fire, air, space, and one's own inner consciousness. Misleading relative truth is not functional, such as the appearance of two moons. *The Two Truths* states:

Although their appearances resemble one another,  
The distinction between correct  
And incorrect relative truth  
Can be made according to whether or not they are functional.

Second, accurate relative truth, has two aspects: [The first] does not deviate from the result—it is the wisdom of the spiritual path's basis, with its qualities. Although progress on this path is in itself impermanent, it is called accurate since it leads to the ground of the fundamental nature....

[The second aspect] is correct attainment of the result—the form bodies of enlightenment, with their wisdoms, which dwell in the Highest Pure Land. These are changeless, permanent, and spontaneous treasures of precious qualities, the totality of perfect mastery gained from such prodigious appearances as configurations [of deities]. From the perspective of appearances, this is called relative, yet since it is inseparable from the body of ultimate enlightenment, it remains changeless, like space....

[Ultimate truth] is the true state of the fundamental nature: from

the beginning, all phenomena of the wheel of life and transcendence lack an essential nature; they surpass the domain of concepts and expression. They are not defined by the intellect, realized or not, and cannot be limited by tenets of being unified or separate. All appearing existence of the wheel of life or transcendence can be labeled as separate [phenomena, with such qualities] as good or bad, yet everything has the primordial nature of space, purity. Thus it transcends the domain of intellectual categorizations, [such as] "pure, impure, both, neither, or very pure."

The essential nature surpasses all philosophical tenets, since within recognition of the essence, there is nothing that ever existed. Even if a tenet, such as "It is like this," were proposed, it would fall into the extremes of eternalism or nihilism.

Therefore, all phenomena are pure naturally or in their true state: deep and calm, free from all formulations of philosophical tenets, devoid of premises. This state is known as "the originally pure expanse."

In brief, impure, inaccurate phenomena are relative [truth], like a dream. They are untrue, deceptive, [experienced by] the spiritually immature, beguiling, and disordered, without essence or graspable facet. The nature of pure reality is the true state of luminous wisdom, profound, peaceful, free from formulations, changeless, spontaneous, the inconceivable nature of reality.

Relative truth provides the context for the cultivation of merit, accumulated as in a dream or a magical display. Ultimate truth provides the context for the cultivation of wisdom, meditation on the meaning of the nature of reality, like space. [These two truths and cultivations] actualize the results, the form bodies and the ultimate body of enlightenment.

This concludes instruction that presents the two truths, the first treasury [of the Buddha's doctrine]. (*Ibid.*, pp. 38b–40b)

Thus, among the affirmations of "the first treasury of the Buddha's doctrine" we read, "even the Buddha conceived or expressed by sentient beings' minds reflects merely a construct designated by that mind. Because that experience is not based in the ultimate, it is called inaccurate." Such a core belief does not provide a context for what we mortals call historical truth.

To complete this presentation of Buddhism's core worldview, the "second treasury" is that of "interdependent origination," the observation that nothing "comes into being," that is to say, exists in and of itself. Interdependent origination has three fields of application—the fundamental nature of reality, the wheel of life, and the transcendence of suffering. The middle subject, interdependent arising of the wheel of life, is generally the most discussed in Buddhist texts, and provides us with the common, vital teaching of "the twelve links of causation." The presentation of this second treasury of the Buddha's teaching begins as follows:

*The Root of Transcendent Knowledge* states:

There are no phenomena  
That do not arise through interdependent origination,  
And there are no phenomena  
That are not empty.

The intrinsic state or nature of the wheel of life and of transcendence has not come from anywhere, does not go anywhere, and does not abide anywhere. Since phenomena as well are based in this intrinsic state of reality, even at moments when phenomena appear to arise or cease, they are free from all conceptual extremes of arising, resting, or ceasing. They are said to have the nature of the Middle Way. *The Root of Transcendent Knowledge* states:

Whatever has arisen through interdependent origination  
Is said to be empty.  
Teachings based on that fact  
Constitute the path of the Middle Way.

Therefore, all facets of impure appearance and the consciousness that grasps them are like strands of hair that appear to the eyes of those who have a phlegm ailment: from the moment they appear, they do not exist. Like a dream's appearances of delusion, which do not exist while falling asleep or while waking up, but only in between, the present appearances of delusion experienced by the six classes of beings do not exist in the innate constituent of the original nature of mind, the

primordially pure essence, nor do they exist at the moment of the total original purification of delusion, enlightenment. However, in this state in-between those two, these appearances are non-existent appearances; their coming-into-being, abiding, and cessation do not exist. Therefore, since the essence [of the nature of reality] has neither coming-into-being nor destruction; from the past to the present, and into the future, it does not change. "Appearances of delusion" is but a name or a label, like "flowers in space" or "a barren woman's child"—such appearances do not exist in the fundamental nature and once you realize their nature, you gain liberation. All phenomena at any time arise interdependently—they do not come into being, do not cease, come, or go; they are not single, separate, finite, or permanent. (*Ibid.*, pp. 40b–41b)

These are the two keys to analysis and the two treasuries of the Buddha's teaching—they represent what Buddhism has to offer on a theoretical level. Buddhism, however, does not consist of theory alone. To give an indication of the character of the practice that corresponds to the theory above, Chö-ying Tob-den Dorjé echoes Longchenpa again in inter-weaving theory and practical advice:

Like the appearances in a dream, all phenomena of the wheel of life and transcendent states have never come into being. Oppressed by the sleep of ignorance, the six classes of beings, in the dreams of their delusion's appearances, experience the arising of myriad forms of happiness or suffering. *The Middle Length Discourse on Transcendent Knowledge* states:

Subhuti! All phenomena are like dreams or a magical display. The transcendence of suffering is also like a dream or a magical display. If there is any phenomena superior to the transcendence of suffering, it too is like a dream or a magical display.

*The Discourse of the Wise and the Foolish* states:

Beings are like a dream;  
Similarly, karma is like a dream;

Those who undertake acts of karma  
Are all like a dream.

*The Discourse Requested by Achintyaprabha* states:

At any time, all myriad phenomena  
Have, in their nature, never come into being.  
Like a dream without substance,  
They are insubstantial.

Therefore, what is experienced as outer objects of the five [senses]—mountains, valleys, towns, sentient beings—and of one's inner body, senses, sensorial consciousnesses, and discursive recollection and awareness are all the appearances of dreams. Like dreams, apart from their appearance, they at no point exist; they are not real. Think this from the bottom of your heart and meditate on this without a moment's distraction. Wherever you go, wherever you stay, whoever your companions are, whatever you eat, whatever you say, whatever thoughts arise, whatever you do, whatever appearances arise, think at that very moment, "This is really a dream; the essence of a dream is unreal." Meditate until even in dreams all phenomena arise as a dream. (*Ibid.*, pp. 45b-46a)

I have strayed this far from the topic of history in order to present how Buddhism portrays itself and how most Buddhists experience their faith. Our faith provides a cultural-historical framework that is very wide in space and time. This seemingly all-inclusive receptacle contains a treasure that we cherish, but our treasure is not "objective," iron-clad certainty in relation to relative truth, any given cosmology, or the history of a specific individual, people, or nation. We reserve our deepest faith for the Buddha's teaching on ultimate truth—inexpressible and inconceivable, immaterial and insubstantial. We remain attached to the container of Buddhism's relative truth because of its depth, breadth, and inclusiveness, and its wealth of skillful techniques of spiritual practice, not because of its "reality." For example, we can be thrilled by immersing ourselves in the vision of *The Flower Ornament Discourse*, one of the most important scriptures of the Great Way. We allow it to transport us to a sacred dimension, which

although "unreal" is no less unreal than our present sense of enworldment and affords us a glimpse of the ultimate. (The same can be said for the worlds of tantra.)

Buddhism's world, peopled by cosmic buddhas and intrepid bodhisattvas in myriad forms and dimensions, is the world we must enter to find and appreciate Guru Rinpoché. It is a world of which it might be said, "Angels rush in where historians fear to tread." To search for history in Buddhism is to embark on a fool's errand, but this is not to denigrate Buddhism. The great master Niguma remarked in one of her songs on the subject of the nature of mind, "On a island of gold, you search in vain for rocks and stones."

Before we turn in the next section to the subject of Buddhist history written by Buddhists after the Buddha's time, I would draw your attention to the following passage on the subject of space and time, written by Pawo Tsouk-lak Treng-wa. Here he writes more as a Buddhist master than as a historian, informed by the views we have read above. He draws one vital conclusion: "in brief, the Transcendent Buddha did not view and teach the worldly realms with manifest attachment. Rather, in relation to his disciples' characters, mind-streams, and capacity, he taught and explained only what could guide them [to enlightenment]." Here is the full passage:

The correct approach among the different explanations that appear in the discourses and tantras is this: all relative appearances are only the pure and impure deluded appearances of mind. How is it possible to express or to conceive of their existence or non-existence?

Therefore, although the body and mind of an individual who sleeps go nowhere beyond their bed, it could be said that s/he knows and experiences that s/he went from the hells to the pinnacle of existence and to infinite other pure and impure worldly realms, and performed specific acts and activities. Nevertheless, those worlds did not come to the individual, nor did the person go to them. What was there, apart from the appearances of delusion? Likewise, as Shantidéva states:

Who created the [hells'] ground of molten metal?  
Where did those infernos of flame come from?  
They, and everything like them,  
Are the sinful mind, the Sage replied.

When a sinful mind collects the full measure of causes for the deluded appearances of the hells, and these come to fruition, the deluded appearances of the hells arise. There is no external place called "Hell" to which one can go. Moreover, all pure realms are the appearance of the interdependent arising of the vajra body's channels, circulating energy, and vital essence, and the mind's nature free from dualistic clinging. Pure realms do not exist elsewhere.

This [view] constitutes the great core of the extremely extensive collections of Great Way instruction and the innermost heart of the Vajra Way. Thus, Pak-mo Dru-pa [1110-1170], emanation of the Buddha Destroyer of the Wheel of Life, states:

This region, [called] Ngam-shö, is itself the spiritual palace of the Highest Pure Land, yet for some this place itself is only the hells' ground of molten metal.

In the discourses, Brahma with Braided Hair says to Shariputra,

You see the worldly realm as having thorns, ravines, precipices, and degeneration. Such vision is ignoble. It is a sign that an elder's mind has the thorns of negative emotions, ravines of the view, and precipices of [the extremes of] perfect peace and existence.

Moreover, to think that one goes from one place to another within what is called the external world is to not have entered the correct view. Thus, at present, for individuals of like natures, who have not realized [the correct view] and whose collection of the full measure of causes for the deluded appearances of human life has awakened, the appearances of the four continents or of travel within the regions of the Rose-Apple Continent [i.e., our world] arise unhindered. Likewise, when the collection of the full measure of causes for the deluded appearances of [lifetimes as] other beings awakens, such appearances will arise. For each sentient being, the way things appear is itself [experienced as] the correct truth. They think, "These are obvious appearances. What is there to discuss?" They take things as changeless and,

as a result, such features as size, shape, and time of worlds and beings surely manifest.

These sentient beings' collective delusion can be likened to that of one hundred persons who eat the same hallucinogenic plant. Each person's habitual patterns awaken separately and their forms of delusion only become increasingly different and distinct. In the same manner, a single action that causes rebirth in the hells, such as the completed act of killing, can produce indefinite deluded appearances of hell due to the differences in sentient beings' constituent characters. Based on this, descriptions of many contradictory appearances of shapes and sizes, etc. of worldly realms can be found in different discourses and tantras' source texts.

As explained in *The Wheel of Time [Kalachakra Tantra]*, in brief, the Transcendent Buddha did not view and teach the worldly realms with manifest attachment. Rather, in relation to his disciples' characters, mind-streams, and capacity, he taught and explained only what could guide them. In fact, just as one cannot measure a magical river's shores nor its breadth and depth, this illusory world has no limit.

Many Tibetans who conceitedly consider themselves scholars are immature individuals who do not understand this perspective. They regard the cosmologies of the world presented in *The Collection of Knowledge [Abhidharma]* or in *The Wheel of Time* with attachment and they criticize others' views. They plagiarize non-Buddhist terminologies, using measures and calculations to falsely resolve inconsistencies [in their views]. [Such acts] are as tiresome and as pointless as constructing an enclosure to protect an imaginary tree that is thought to be real. (*Complete Explanation of Meditation on Vajra Sow*, pp. 160b-161b)



## Buddhist History after the Buddha

**B**UDDHAS RARELY APPEAR in this world; it is said that, as has been the case with our Buddha Shakyamuni, a buddha's life and teaching influence human history for centuries. Buddhas make history, they do not teach it. The Buddha's teaching, both in content and in style, must be taken into account if we are to understand "Buddhist history" after the Buddha.

To begin, we must face a curious fact: Not only did the Buddha not teach history, the collection of written works of hundreds of Indian Buddhist saints and scholars contains not one work we could call history. The list of writers is impressive, including Nagarjuna, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Shantidéva, Dharmakirti, Chandrakirti, and so many undisputed masters of Buddhism's words and meanings. Did any write a history of Buddhism or of the spread of Buddhism throughout India and Asia? While we cannot affirm that they did not, we can point out that a history text does not number among the thousand of their works which Tibetans translated and preserved. Further, among the many categories of writing included in the Tibetans' *Collection of Writings of Indian Buddhist Masters*, we find such relatively mundane subjects as astrology, art, architecture, poetry, and medicine, but not history.

What we call "Buddhist history" was definitely not the concern of the greats of Indian Buddhism. It could be argued that they preserved the history of the Buddhist monastic order's origins, but this was more of a legal than a historical project, as the vows' inception and evolution set vital precedents for those who accepted the Buddha's ordinations. Indian Buddhist writers wrote of the Buddha's life and past lives, but not of the spread and development of their religion. The stories of important masters were retold, but as tales of mystery and wonder, outside the bounds of verifiable history. *The Lives of the 84 Great Accomplished Masters*, for example, is an

important work for students of tantra to read and contemplate, but should not be construed as objective history.

Where do we learn of Indian Buddhist history? In part, from the Tibetans: for example, Butön's *The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet*, Gö Lotsawa's *Blue Annals*, or Taranata's *History of Indian Buddhism*. Yet these venerable sources date from 1322, 1476, and 1608, respectively, at least eighteen centuries after the Buddha's life. Further, these writers could not draw from writings by Marpa or others who traveled to India on numerous occasions and who lived for many years there. Like their Indian mentors, the great, early Tibetan masters did not write history, neither of the Buddhist India they visited nor of their native land.

The answer to the question of who wrote accounts of India is revealing: it was the Chinese, in the persons of visiting monks whose records of what they witnessed are still used as the basis for modern historians' portrayal of some aspects of ancient Buddhist India (Fa-hsien traveled 399–414; Sung-yun and Hwei-sang, 518–521; and Hsuan-Tsang, 629–645).

It seems likely to me that the Tibetans caught the history bug not from their Indian spiritual masters, who appear immune to it, but much later, from long co-habitation with the Chinese. A century before Guru Rinpoché's visit, the Tibetans received from India a new calendar (with a seven-day week, and a twelve-month lunar year) and an alphabet. What should have resulted was a clear record of those epic times, but this is far from the case. Most later Tibetan historians, who were limited by language to sifting through paltry Tibetan sources alone, came up with wildly differing dates for key events in ancient Tibetan history. For example, the Fifth Dalai Lama's Regent (Dési San-gyé Gyatso, 1653–1705) records Guru Rinpoché's departure from Tibet in 804, six years before Dudjom Rinpoché has him arrive and sixty years before the same author dates his leaving!

To know what happened in eighth or ninth century international relations, we should probably ask the Chinese.<sup>3</sup> I do not say this from favoritism, but in the thought that the Chinese at the time kept clear records of their very troublesome neighbors to whom they sent gifts and princesses, by whom they were invaded, and with whom they signed peace accords. The Chinese people have been assiduous historians longer than any people who still keep a collective memory alive. It might be said that there is never a good time to engage the Chinese in a historical debate, as some Tibetans still try to do. It's like accepting a challenge to play basket-

ball against the Dream Team. (While the Chinese strength, meticulous historical records, is the Tibetans' weakness, the roles are reversed when discussing the present—the Tibetan people have little difficulty in speaking unequivocally about their present wishes, whereas the Chinese government is understandably unwilling to engage in an exploration of the will of its people.)

The point here is that, for history as we know it, we must leave the pure realms of Great Way and tantric Buddhism. Tibetans were keen students of Indian Buddhism but poor students of history. Thus, when we read most Tibetans' accounts of the history of Indian Buddhism, or of their own Buddhist history, we should first recall that even the most impartial Tibetan Buddhist writer was handicapped by a lack of an Indian Buddhist model for his/her work. Such histories as Tibetan writers proposed to write did not belong, strictly speaking, to traditional Buddhist composition. Their models came from the secular, material world of empires and bureaucrats. Second, and conversely, the empires they wrote to validate, that of Tibetan church institutions, required a "Buddhist," thus mythic, flavor outside the confines of secular history. What resulted was a blend of poor history and poor Buddhism that did little service to either. Tibetan history, particularly that of the early, imperial, era, was purified and Buddha-fied.

To gauge how prevalent mythic histories are among Tibetan works, we can read a modern non-Buddhist scholar, Samten Karmay, who felt he had to define the term "history" to his Tibetan readership at the outset of one of his books:

In general, what we call "history" is an individual's unbiased and impartial, precise written account of what could be objectively seen or heard of the life of the common people or the state during his/her own lifetime. Even without detailed research, we can believe or trust such written histories. On the other hand, we might gather many books claiming to be "history" or "the genealogy of kings," which record what occurred many hundreds of years before [their composition], yet it is difficult for us to treat them other than subjects of long-term study, analyzing what is true or false in their accounts.

Thus, among our Tibetan historical records, there are two kinds of material. The first are records that date before the 10th century: inscriptions on stone pillars erected during the lifetimes of [Tibetan]

rulers, the same rulers' major and minor edicts, and the ancient written accounts of that time. Examples of these ancient accounts are the Chinese imperial annals,<sup>4</sup> old records in early Tibetan script recently unearthed from what is now called Dunhuang, and wooden inscriptions called *tram-shing*, found near that location.

The second [kind of historical material] are the royal genealogies and Buddhist histories written in the 11th century or, more often, thereafter. Among these can be found some reliable royal genealogies, such as *The Buddhist History of Lho-trak*, commonly known as *Feast for the Wise*, written in 1564 by the master scholar Pawo Tsouk-lak Treng-wa (1504–1566). Modern Tibetan historians the world over recognize this work as authoritative. The reasons for this are as follows: The author did not overly repeat the blend of oral and written histories found in previous Buddhist histories. For his account of ancient Tibetan history, he made precise copies of the stone inscriptions that he himself read. Further, he went to Samyé Monastery, where he read and copied royal edicts that he found in old library collections, thus providing proof [for his historical account]. (*A Brief Royal Genealogy of the Ruler, Son of Heaven, Darma, and His Heirs*, pp. 1–3)

Karmay's definition of history seems obvious to us, but evidently not to his readership, which has rarely been treated to "pure" historical writing. We could apply Taranata's words above, written on the subject of the Buddha's life, to any objective history: "For an account of the [Buddha's] enlightened deeds that appeared in common to all who lived close-by at the time the Buddha lived in the world, including such beings as those who harbored wrong views, those who practiced non-Buddhist religions, or even animals, we must consult the tradition of the Common Way, the tradition of the Listeners." What the followers of the Lesser Way (and "pure" historians of any time) have that followers of the Great Way and tantra lack is a belief in the substantial reality of the world and of consciousness. Persons with modern education usually graduate with a similar worldview—firm belief in what the Lesser Way calls "indivisible atomic particles," the building blocks of the material world, and in "instants of consciousness," the building blocks of the individual self. Such beliefs lead to reliable histories, but not to enlightenment as understood by higher forms of Buddhism. Thus the stunning absence of historical writing among the scholars and

meditations masters of Indian Buddhism and the clumsiness of most Tibetan Buddhist masters who set about writing a non-Buddhist genre—history—when their spiritual training naturally led them into the realms of myth and legend.

One of the main arenas where the conflicting priorities of Buddhism and history collide in Tibetan writing is the "treasure texts," source of many accounts of Guru Rinpoché's life and of the early Tibetan kings. Treasure texts are said to have been concealed by Guru Rinpoché and his main disciples, and are revealed at opportune moments by destined individuals, for the benefit of Guru Rinpoché's followers. The texts, and their intended readership, belong entirely to Great Way or tantric Buddhism, spiritual paths that have little love of history-for-history's sake. If the Buddha did not come into the world to teach geography or history, the same could be said for the second Buddha, Guru Rinpoché. If we read the treasure texts as Great Way or tantric Buddhist literature, there seems to be little reason to expect them to conform to the Lesser Way's version of history. In fact, by all logic, we should expect them to stand alongside the tantras or the *Flower Ornament Discourse* in style and content. To tantric Buddhists, it makes little sense to imagine that Guru Rinpoché concealed treasure texts with the intent that his followers study early Tibetan history. It would be more consistent with Buddhist texts throughout the ages to consider his treasure texts as instruction along the path to enlightenment pertinent to the time of his readers, but not necessarily faithful to the facts of history. Why should Guru Rinpoché have written any differently than all great Indian Buddhist masters? Like them, his only priority was to help others to enlightenment.

Attempts to read treasure texts not as Buddhist texts but as historical documents surely lead the reader astray. Such is the case of Professor F. A. Bischoff in his essay, "Padmasambhava est-il un personnage historique? [Is Guru Rinpoché a historical figure?]." He takes as his point of departure *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*, translated into French (as *Le Dict de Padma*) in 1912 by Gustave-Charles Toussaint. The original Tibetan book is a treasure text revealed by a Tibetan master named Orgyen Lingpa in the mid-fourteenth century, six centuries after Guru Rinpoché left Tibet. On examining the content of this work, Bischoff finds little justification for belief that Padmasambhava ever existed. One can hardly blame him, since the text in question clearly belongs to tantric Buddhism and is not intended

as history. The text recounts both Indian Buddhist history and early Tibetan history with precisely the same point: to show how Guru Rinpoché was present at each major event, or was a student of each major master, including Ananda, the Buddha's cousin and close disciple. This is plainly not history, but it is tantric Buddhism. Tibetans have enjoyed this text since its recovery until today and retain from their reading the idea that Guru Rinpoché, their refuge, first steeped himself in the best of Buddhism in the land of its birth, then infused Tibet from its Buddhist infancy with his enlightened influence. That message frees the reader from historical partiality; it refurbishes a land anchored in earthbound human history as a pure land of the second Buddha. Guru Rinpoché said that he would leave a treasure text of his life story for each generation (in this book, I have included a translation of one recovered in the twentieth century). These "life stories" are legends-to-live-by, renewals of the relationship between the Tibetan people and their primary spiritual master.

But are these autobiographies history? No, not by any reasonable definition of that term. Do we believe these stories? Yes, just as faithfully as Buddhists of the Great Way believe the Buddha Shakyamuni descended from the heavens to demonstrate enlightenment in the world and just as they believe that the principal texts of the Great Way and of tantra were retrieved from the lands of gods, nagas, non-human spirits, or invisible human kingdoms, such as Shambhala. Again, as Taranata stated, "The Great Way is supreme for many reasons: in general, the Great Way is wide-ranging, it is the domain of inconceivable wisdom, it appears within the experience of sublime disciples, it constitutes the [Buddha's] life story of great mystery, and there are many levels within the Great Way itself." Yet, as much as it is our chosen spiritual path, we enter its domain of inconceivable wisdom in the knowledge that it does not represent a basis for the writing of human history. Tantra and treasure texts share the same territory as the Great Way; for Buddhists, to read them as historical documents is pointless.

In conclusion, the Buddha's teaching did not emphasize history and its spirit has always been considered much more important than its words. The Buddha's words themselves are meant to be weighed and measured according to specific criteria, not always taken literally. Much of the Buddhist path beyond its first steps is not grounded in human history, but in a universal space and in timelessness. For reasons we can only speculate

upon, the great Indian Buddhist masters do not appear to have lifted their prolific pens to write secular or religious histories. In Tibet, Buddhist "histories" were written, but few are acceptable as history; treasure texts were revealed and sometimes are mistaken for history. At their best, treasure texts are authentic tantric Buddhist teachings; they rewrote the story of Tibet's kings and their adoption of Buddhism for reasons other than setting any objective, historical record straight. In the next sections, we will see that a clear picture of Guru Rinpoché's era and some of his vital contributions to Tibet can be better appreciated outside an exclusively Buddhist mythic view.

## Tibet and Asia on the Eve of Guru Rinpoché's Arrival

**G**URU RINPOCHÉ has become so assimilated into the Tibetan landscape that it sometimes takes a moment to recall that in fact he was a foreigner expelled from Tibet by its xenophobic leaders. They saw him as a threat to the integrity of the new Tibetan nation and suspected his missionary work had ulterior, political motives. In fact, they were perhaps wrong about his motives but correct in foreseeing that Buddhism would undermine Tibet's power—the dynasty did not survive the introduction of his foreign religion.

By modern maps, neither Guru Rinpoché nor the Buddha were "Indian." The Buddha was born in what is now Nepal; Guru Rinpoché, in Pakistan, close to the border with Afghanistan and Tajikistan. More precisely, his homeland is often cited as the Swat Valley, an area once called Udyan, from which I imagine the names Uddiyana or Oddiyana (Sanskrit) and the Tibetan equivalent, Orgyen, are derived.<sup>5</sup>

We have little collective memory of Buddhism in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Yet, in very old Buddhist statues from those countries, we are surprised to discover Buddhas and Bodhisattvas without Asian almond-eyed inscrutability and English-muffin faces, but rather with the sort of round-eyed, craggy-nosed visage that no longer automatically suggests to us the tranquility and insight of profound peace. Swat Valley undoubtedly housed thousands of such statues in its reported 1,400 Buddhist temples; it is unlikely that those buddhas looked as East Asian as they are usually depicted in Tibetan, Chinese, Korean, or Japanese art.

Despite Swat Valley's famous native son, Guru Rinpoché, known throughout the Tibetan world, the region was a net importer, rather than exporter, of History. Alexander the Great overran Swat in 327 B.C. and it regularly fell under the dominion of the ruler of neighboring Kashmir, for

better or for worse. Later, the area would be the site of battles (generally lost, as is the Buddhist custom) with Mongol and Muslim invaders. The whole of Kashmir fell under Muslim rule in 1339, after the death of the ruler, Queen Kota Rani. Swat Valley's heights of Buddhist culture were long forgotten by the time the English came (Sir Winston Churchill was stationed there), saw, conquered, and trivialized their opponents with a nonsense poem by Edward Lear in 1862 which begins:

Who, or why, or which or *what*, Is the Akond of Swat?

Is he tall or short, or dark or fair,  
Does he sit on a stool or sofa, or chair,            or SQUAT,  
The Akond of Swat?

Is he wise or foolish, young or old?  
Does he drink his soup and his coffee cold,    or HOT,  
The Akond of Swat?<sup>6</sup>

This is perhaps the first and last time Swat was to bubble to the surface of Western popular consciousness.

In modern-day Pakistan, Swat is situated in one of Pakistan's states, still called the North-West Frontier. The most famous Tibetan supplication to Guru Rinpoché, *The Seven-Line Invocation*, begins with the words, "Land of Orgyen, on the northwestern frontier...." Despite his other-worldly birth from a lotus, Guru Rinpoché always pointed Tibetans toward Udyan (Orgyen), the northwest corner of what was then India. Guru Rinpoché's disciples would turn spiritually toward Udyan, as to Mecca or Jerusalem, with a multidimensional faith. Apart from a specific point on the globe, Udyan had symbolic meanings and became in the popular imagination synonymous with a pure land. This sense of the land as a cradle of the sacred was probably heightened when most of India, Land of the Exalted Ones, passed for Buddhists from the status of a real source of enlightening culture and spirituality into the realm of myth. (This was of course due to the wholesale destruction of Buddhism in India.)

Yet Udyan was a real place: great tantric practitioners of Kashmir and Swat, such as Virupa, Niguma, and Sukasiddhi, among many others, were to have a lasting effect on Tibet's spiritual life long after Guru Rinpoché's

departure. The great Buddhist scholar Lokesh Chandra has suggested in his article "Oddiyana: A New Interpretation" that Oddiyana/Udyan/Orgyen was in fact located in the south of India, specifically modern Ekamresvara at Kanci. It would seem possible for two locations in India to have borne the same name; however, from Tibetan sources, the only coherent answer to the location of the Udyan mentioned in Guru Rinpoché's life stories (and those of the three masters mentioned above) is in the Northwest, adjacent to Kashmir. If accounts of other events or saints appear to point to an Oddiyana elsewhere, I think they can be believed without this contradicting the fact that a place or region by the same name lay close to Tibet's border.

As mentioned above, Tibet's leaders at the time of Guru Rinpoché's sojourn were xenophobic—they feared foreign masters' presence and influence—but it is possible that they were not the victims of wild, unfounded paranoia. Here is what one scholar writes of that period in Kashmir:

It was the Karkota dynasty that has given Kashmir the greatest ruler Lalitaditya Muktapida (724-761 A.D.).... He was filled with an unquenchable thirst for world conquest. He invaded and conquered many countries in Asia and India. The Punjab, Kanuj, Tibet, Ladhak, Badakshan, Iran, Bihar, Gauda (Bengal), Kalinga (Orissa), South India, Gujarat, Malwa, Marwar and Sindh were all conquered by him. It was he who finally broke the power of Arabs in Sindh....

After his death, it is mostly the weak rulers, except his grandson Jayatida, who ruled the valley. Both Lalitaditya and Jayatida were great patrons of learning and extended their patronage to [many artists and scholars]. The history of the Karkota dynasty after Jayatida is a sad story of decline. All the conquered territories regained their independence, and the sovereignty of the ruler of Kashmir came to be confined to the Vitasta basin. The economic ruin was hastened by the extravagant habits of both the rulers and the ministers. In the words of Kalhan:

The ministers and the grandees carried off the revenues of the country, feasted in mutual jealousy on the masterless kingdom, like wolves on a dead buffalo in a desert.

In spite of all this the Karkota rule on the whole has been considered as the glorious and remarkable period of ancient Kashmir. Laments Dr. P. C. Ray that,

Never before the Karkota period had Kashmir performed such a feat, nor was she able to repeat it in future.

(L. N. Dhar, *An Outline of the History of Kashmir*)

Kashmir's neighbors, including the Tibetans, undoubtedly look back on that imperial period less wistfully. The Tibetans, however, were not innocent bystanders. Witness this tale of Tibetan military might that took place seventy-five years before the rule of the great Kashmiri king mentioned above:

In the twenty-second year of Cheng-kwen or 1192 Nirvana year [A.D. 648], the Emperor [of China] sent Wang-hen-tse with thirty cavalrymen to the Indian court. But when the entourage arrived, they found the kingdom mourning the death of Harsha. Arjuna succeeded to the throne as Harsha had no offspring. Arjuna elicited a policy of religious persecution of Buddhists and even went so far as to assault Ambassador Wen-hen-tse and his party, compelling the latter to flee to Bal (Nepal), seeking refuge from Srong-btzan, as Bal at that time was the territory of Tibet. A militia dispatch was arranged by Srong-btzan, which featured a combined effort of 1,200 Tibetan soldiers and 7,000 Bal (Nepalese) cavalrymen. This army arrived at Tirahita accompanied by the Chinese envoys, and in a battle of three days' duration, the capital fell to the Tibetan army. 3,000 Indian soldiers were beheaded while 1,000 were thrown into a nearby river. King Arjuna escaped, only to gain respite and organize fresh troops. But he was once again routed by the Tibetan army and taken captive to the court of the Chinese Emperor. [...] This battle between the Tibetans and the Indians witnessed more than 13,000 killed or captured, over 30,000 livestock impounded, and the surrender of 130 citadels. (*The White Annals*, pp. 76–77)

Writing as a Tibetan patriot, the author of *The White Annals* explains at the beginning of his work why he felt the need to write it:

My countrymen betray an ignorance of our historical achievements. These historical achievements deal with events like the arrival of the Tibetan armies in India; their occupation of Kanya Kubja (capital of central India); the imprisonment of King Arjuna and the annexation and subjugation of 108 towns; the subjugation of and Tibetan occupation of Bal-yul (Nepal) for over a generation; the penetration of Tibetan armies beyond the Five-Peaked Mountain in China and the subsequent dethronement of its Emperor; and finally, the subjugation of Gru-gu, Li-yul (Khotan) and Yunan for over a century. (*Ibid.*, p. 21)

The writer of *The White Annals* is none other than one of the best-loved modern Tibetan writers, Gendun Chöpel (1895–1951), a multi-faceted genius. Although he sometimes wrote as a Buddhist, he wrote of the Tibetan imperial period with unrepentant patriotic pride. His point that Tibetans live in ignorance of their country's "glorious" past is still true. Modern Tibetans must read English to learn of the imperial period, for example in Christopher I. Beckwith's *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, Warren W. Smith's *Tibetan Nation*, Matthew T. Kapstein's *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, or even Warren I. Cohen's *East Asia at the Center*. They can also glimpse the by-gone era in French, Chinese, or Arabic publications, but not in Tibetan, which has been slow to emerge from the anesthetic of Buddhist historical writing that has whitewashed the memory of the early kings. While we must admit that this was probably the Buddhist writers' intention, Tibet has yet to foster a literate, secular culture that could produce an alternate retelling of the country's history. On the other hand, Buddhist readers of most Western, secular histories of Tibet also note that Guru Rinpoché is never mentioned in the main narrative, despite the fact that he is universally credited with Tibet's conversion to Indian tantric Buddhism. The same policy of exclusion in secular, western-written histories excludes any mention of women or of women's lives, apart from members of the Chinese aristocracy.

A Tibetan Buddhist non-historian, Patrul Rinpoché, in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, writes of the imperial period differently, as an example of impermanence:

In the reign of the Dharma King Songtsen Gampo, a magical army subdued all lands from Nepal to China. King Trisong Detsen brought

two thirds of the Jambudvīpa [a note in the text says this refers to South Asia, Mongolia, and China] under his power, and, during the reign of Ralpachen, an iron pillar was erected on the banks of the Ganges, marking the frontier between India and Tibet. Tibet exercised power in many regions of India, China, Gesar, Tajikistan and other countries. At the New Year festival, ambassadors from all those countries were required to spend one day in Lhasa. Such was Tibet's power in the past. But it did not last, and nowadays, apart from the historical accounts, nothing is left.

Reflect on those past splendors. Compared to them, our own homes, belongings, servants, status, and whatever else we prize, seem altogether no more significant than a beehive. Meditate deeply, and ask yourself how you could have thought that those things would last forever and never change. (pp. 44-45)

During the seventh and eighth centuries, Asia became increasingly vibrant. Buddhist India continued to attract the best and the brightest from the entire Asian continent to the remarkable flowering of its culture, then entering its tenth consecutive century of ever-increasing artistic, scientific, literary, philosophical, and spiritual genius. What began as one Indian's enlightenment illuminated a whole continent and transformed the spiritual life of half the world. The light of India gradually spread to Nepal, Afghanistan, Turkestan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan. Significantly, Asia became Buddhist without any of its peoples becoming unwilling political, social, economic, or cultural colonies of India.

In China, the seventh century marked the founding of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and, with it, one of the golden ages of Chinese culture. While China blossomed culturally, she was also open to foreign influences. The Silk Road was but one of many routes that led an array of outsiders from strange and exotic countries to China's heartland.<sup>7</sup> Besides a steady stream of traders, some persons journeyed to China to teach; others, like the Japanese, came not to conquer but to learn. Buddhism, a faith foreign to the Chinese, had also entered a fertile period in that country. It had traveled to China many centuries before, but this era was particularly significant due to two events: the visit of the Indian master Bodhidharma during the sixth century and the return from India of the Chinese translator and master Hsuan-Tsang in 645.

In the midst of a mature and vital Asia, the sleeping giant of Tibet began to stir. When Song-tsen Gampo (mentioned above in *The White Annals* under the name Srong-btzan) assumed the throne of Tibet in the early seventh century, the newly unified country awoke to the outside world. On the positive side, a writing system was fashioned based on Indian scripts; on the negative side, Tibet began to explore its environs by invading its civilized neighbors. Nepal was threatened first and sued for peace. To the young Tibetan king, Nepal sent gifts including a princess, Bhrikuti Devi, to be his wife. She brought some important Buddhist statues to her northern exile. Song-tsen Gampo next turned his attention to China, this time invading his neighbor and forcing her to capitulate. The Tibetan king was again offered a Buddhist princess and statues as part of a peace treaty. His last campaign was another success: the rampage into northern India mentioned above, to avenge the loss of face of a Chinese delegation. In just a few years, Tibet had asserted itself as a major power in the Asian world by wreaking blind havoc on some of the finest civilizations the world has ever known.

It is easy to suspect that both the Nepalese and Chinese kings hoped their daughters would act as pacifist Buddhist missionaries to the barbarian Tibetans, for that is exactly what transpired. Much of the remainder of Song-tsen Gampo's reign was taken up placating his two strong foreign wives and sponsoring their ambitious but sometimes conflicting plans for bringing Buddhist culture to their new home. An example is the construction of what has become known as the Jo-kong, still Tibet's most revered temple. The project was initiated by the Nepalese princess, who asked the Chinese princess to use her knowledge of geomancy to locate the most favorable site for a temple to house her statue of the Buddha. Bhrikuti flew into a rage when Wencheng suggested a lake in central Lhasa. Once it was understood, through Song-tsen's intervention, that this was in fact a genuine proposal, a more serious dispute erupted concerning the temple's design. Wencheng, the architect, planned that the temple's front gate face China; Bhrikuti insisted it face Nepal. Song-tsen Gampo's role in this project again became that of referee: he eventually sided with the Nepalese princess, by all accounts the more outspoken of the two women.

In the end, Wencheng exercised more influence on Song-tsen Gampo and Tibet. The king traveled throughout Tibet, Bhutan, and China for many years, following his headstrong Chinese wife, constructing temples in places she indicated, according to her designs. It is perhaps fitting that it is



Wencheng's statue (the Jo-wo) that rests today in and lends its name to the Jo-kong (Bhrikuti's temple) and still attracts pilgrims from all Tibetan-speaking regions of Asia.

Some accounts relate that Song-tsen Gampo died young; others, that he abdicated his throne, regained it after his son's demise, and lived until 681, outliving his Chinese wife by one year. In any event, his heirs continued his warring ways and ignored most foreign Buddhist influence that might have inhibited their aggressive nationalism and military adventures.

During the latter part of the seventh century, China was first dominated and then ruled (from 684 to 704) by a woman, Empress Wu Tse-Tien. Of mixed reputation as a person,<sup>8</sup> she was nonetheless a brilliant and ambitious ruler, and a tactician who did not tolerate Tibetan interference in Chinese affairs. Battles between their armies became more frequent and the relations between the two countries became increasingly strained.

After Empress Wu's death, the Chinese were eager to make peace with their hot-blooded neighbors. They tried the ploy that had worked so well just fifty years before: in 710, they sent a princess to marry a Tibetan prince. Their hopes were in vain, for the prince the Chinese envoy was to marry died before her arrival and she was forced to marry his father, the king, probably far less amenable to her influence than his young son would have been. Princess Jincheng (also called "the later Chinese princess") was miserable during her years in Tibet and wrote home regularly, pleading to be allowed to return. As relations between Tibet and China had not improved, the Chinese did not want to provoke a crisis: her requests were denied. She gave birth to a son, heir to the throne, but another of the king's wives stole him and claimed him as her own. The Chinese princess died in Tibet broken-hearted in 739.<sup>9</sup>

The two Chinese princesses sent to Tibet, Wencheng and Jincheng, were two of a long history of high-ranking women sent by China to marry foreign rulers. One of the major duties of China's leaders has always been to protect her people from invasion. Significantly, China's first emperor started the construction of the Great Wall, what will probably always stand as the only human structure visible from outer space. Compared to the expense and sacrifice the wall represented, dispatching a noblewoman to wed a borderland barbarian ruler was a far more efficient means to exercise some control on uncivilized tribes. If Wencheng is any indication, the women envoys were not potted plants from the imperial city: Wencheng

transformed Tibet as only Guru Rinpoché and very few others would do after her. She is credited with bringing to her adopted people Buddhism, architecture, geomancy, art, music, astrology, divination, medicine, and, most importantly, a Tibet-centered sense of the land.

Jincheng was probably trained to follow in Wencheng's illustrious footsteps, but fate was cruel to her. Both Wencheng and Jincheng probably knew the poem of China's first great woman poet, Ts'ai Yen (162?—239?), who wrote of her experience of forced marriage to a foreign leader. Her story's end was bittersweet: she returned home, although it meant the abandonment of her two non-Han children. Neither Wencheng nor Jincheng ever returned to China. Both are remembered, the first for her own accomplishments; the second for the son she bore. Here are the first two verses of Ts'ai Yen's "18 Verses Sung to a Tartar Reed Whistle":<sup>10</sup>

1  
 I was born in a time of peace,  
 But later the mandate of Heaven  
 Was withdrawn from the Han Dynasty.  
 Heaven was pitiless.  
 It sent down confusion and separation.  
 Earth was pitiless.  
 It brought me to birth in such a time.  
 War was everywhere. Every road was dangerous.  
 Soldiers and civilians everywhere  
 Fleeing death and suffering.

Smoke and dust clouds obscured the land  
 Overrun by the ruthless Tartar bands.  
 Our people lost their will, power, and integrity.  
 I can never learn the way of the barbarians.  
 I am daily subject to violence and insult.  
 I sing one stanza to my lute and a Tartar horn.  
 But no one knows my agony and grief.

2  
 A Tartar chief forced me to become his wife,  
 And took me far away to Heaven's edge.

Ten thousand clouds and mountains  
 Bar my road home,  
 And whirlwinds of dust and sand  
 Blow for a thousand miles.  
 Men here are as savage as giant vipers,  
 And strut about in armor, snapping their bows.  
 As I sing the second stanza I almost break the lutestrings.  
 Will broken, heart broken, I sing to myself.

I have little doubt that this is how Tibet must have seemed in those days, a sinister, despicable place surrounded on all sides by lands of enlightenment. Kashmir, Nepal, India, and China were enjoying the heights of civilization; Tibetans were insensitive brigands with no clue of the precious cultures they ravaged.<sup>11</sup> Beyond their immediate acts of destruction, the new Tibetan nation probably forced their neighbors, otherwise involved in artistic and spiritual pursuits that still delight and inspire us, to squander time, energy, money, and manpower on military matters. This, of course, is not how Tibetans viewed and still view themselves. Patrul Rinpoché relates this tale of Song-tsen Gampo, which reflects the admiration almost universally felt by Tibet's Buddhists toward their greatest kings:

That king [Song-tsen Gampo] was ruler of all Tibet, the Land of Snows, and brought kings in all four directions under his power. He vanquished invading armies and kept peace along the frontiers. Although he was obliged to conquer armies and defend his subjects on such a vast scale, he managed to do so without harming so much as a hair on a single being's head. (*The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, p. 201)

While we cannot dispute this view, we can speculate that Tibet's neighbors at the time took little comfort in it.

King Song-tsen Gampo, husband of two foreign wives, tried to do unto others as had been done to him—to practice pillow-talk diplomacy—but in the end his secret agent (his sister) was unwilling to perform her patriotic duties. Instead, she slyly challenged his male ego, with predictable results. Gendun Chöpel relates:

During his reign, King Srong-btzan was able to subdue Zhang-zhung through subtle diplomacy and matrimonial alliances. He did this by sending his sister Sé-kar as bride to the king of Zhang-zhung, Lig-mi-rgya. The princess remained aloof, performing neither Lig-mi-rgya's wifely nor household duties. When this situation came to the attention of her brother, the king said,

If the princess conducts herself in such a manner, our diplomacy will fail. She must assume the household duties of Lig-mi-rgya and enact her wifely functions.

[The king sent a messenger to the unwilling princess-bride, who sang to him,]

The burden of my country has fallen on me,  
 The castle of Kyung-lung is filled with dust.

[She sent a gift to her brother through the messenger, who] described the princess' song and offered the sealed gift to the king, which contained thirty beautiful old turquoises. After deep contemplation as to the import of the gift, the king said,

It seems to imply that I am to wear the turquoise as a token of bravery if I am capable of fighting with Lig-mi-rgya.  
 If not, I will be akin to a woman.

The sequel to this interlude saw an urgent conference between the king and his ministers and ultimately the devastation of Lig-mi-rgya's kingdom. Moreover, during Srong-btzan's reign, the entire Zhang-zhung was brought under subjugation. (*The White Annals*, pp. 67–68)

The country mentioned here, Zhang-zhung, has been erased from maps since that time, but presumably was located in far western Tibet. It was the cradle of the Bön religion and another regretted victim of Tibet's imperialist period.

In brief, the first king of a unified Tibet, Song-tsen Gampo, threatened

Nepal and China to the point that both countries felt constrained to send him wives, who converted him to Buddhism. During his reign, presumably before the Buddha's peace had calmed his mind, he invaded India, killed many, and sent an Indian king to meet his fate in China. Although Song-tsen Gampo is revered as an incarnation of the Bodhisattva All-Seeing Eyes (Skt., *Avalokiteshvara*; Tib., *Chenrézi*) by his nation, his Kashmiri, Nepalese, and Chinese contemporaries probably viewed him as a dangerous thug, the Saddam Hussein of his day.

After Song-tsen Gampo, Buddhism went into hibernation in Tibet, but national visions of grandeur did not. As mentioned above, Kashmir invaded Tibet in the early part of the eighth century and China sent another princess in 710 to try again to tame her neighbor. Trisong Détsen, perhaps the Chinese princess' son, inherited the throne. Although he had professed an interest in sponsoring the spread of Buddhism in his country, he continued business-as-usual in Tibetan military and foreign affairs. Here is what the Tang Dynasty Annals have to report concerning the state of affairs at Jincheng's death:

That year (741), the princess of Kin-tch'eng died. The next year, we performed [at the Court] memorial services [to mark her death].

A Tibetan envoy came to offer homage and used the occasion to ask for peace. We did not consent to this. The brigands then gathered 400,000 men and attacked Tch'eng-fong-pao, reached Ho-yuan-kiun, and entered from the west by the Tch'ang-ning Bridge.... The general of the cavalry Cheng Hi-ye, with 5,000 elite soldiers, defeated them. [The Tibetans] again invaded K'ouo-tcheou, where they captured a sub-district and massacred the officials and the inhabitants. (Pelliot, *Histoire Ancienne du Tibet*, p. 105; my translation)<sup>12</sup>

This is not the kind of record that Buddhist historians recount when writing of that period. Certainly the Chinese did not consider Tibet's kings and armies enlightened bodhisattvas; throughout, the dynastic annals spit at them as "brigands" or "barbarians." The worst insult to China's pride came in 764, when Tibet entered the capital, Chang-an (here written as Tch'ang-ngan), and overthrew the dynasty. The Chinese account again relates:

The next year (764), [the Tibetans] entered by the Ta-Tchen-Kuan [Pass], and occupied the Lan, Ho, Chan, and T'ao districts. From that point, we lost the whole Long-yeou territory. The *ts'eu-che* [of King-tcheou], who had surrendered [to the Tibetans], Kao Houei, took the district [main city] of Pin and entered Fong-t'ien. Vice-general Kouo Tseu-yi stopped him. The Tibetans, with 200,000 T'ou-yu-houen and Tang-hiang, ravaged Wou-kong in the east. The general of the mobile army north of the Wei, Lu Je-tsiang, attacked them west of Tcheou-tche and defeated them. Fighting again broke out in Tchong-nan; [Lu] Je-tsiang was forced to flee. Tai-tsong went to Chan. [Kouo] Tseu-yi retreated and reached the district of Chang. Kao Houei led the barbarians who entered Tch'ang-ngan, and proclaimed the Prince of Kouang-wou, [Li] Tch'eng-hong, emperor. He changed the name of the dynastic years, usurped the right to declare an amnesty, and named officials. All the dignitaries [of the legitimate dynasty] fled to the south, to King and Siang, or hid in mountain valleys. (*Ibid.*, p. 107; square brackets in the original)

The names and places are unfamiliar to us, yet it is clear that this is not a glorious page in Chinese history. Although the Tibetan-installed dynasty lasted only two weeks, fighting continued between the two armies until the Sino-Tibetan Treaty of 821. What is surprising in this story is that these wars with China and other neighbors took place during the visit to Tibet of Guru Rinpoché, the construction of Samyé Monastery, and the translation of Buddhist texts into Tibetan. For example, a reliable modern Tibetan historian situates the inception of Samyé's construction at 762, its completion four years later, and the initial ordination of Tibetan monks in 767.<sup>13</sup> Even after Trisong Détsen's conversion to Buddhism, he sent one army to India to wrest Buddhist treasures from their home and one of his sons led another to Bata-Hor to plunder its wealth. Nevertheless, despite the royal family's un-Buddhist behavior, Buddhist accounts of the time repeatedly mention "evil government ministers" who were intent upon undermining the progress of Buddhism in their country. Were they really evil, or were they merely sharp-eyed Tibetan nationalists determined to preserve Tibet's privileged place in the world, a position threatened by the pacifism and disengagement Buddhism seemed to encourage? Of what

good to patriotic Tibetans' dreams of remaining a Central Asian superpower were bright young men who became monks, who went to India not to conquer but to learn foreign languages and religions? Of what good to those who relished Tibet's military might was a king who hesitated to use it except to collect Buddhist artifacts? Who were the suspect foreign teachers who had such influence over the king and his immediate circle?

Guru Rinpoché, as we have seen, came from an area of India that Tibet had invaded a hundred years previously and which had invaded Tibet in return only a matter of years before: according to Indian histories, the Kashmiri incursion into Tibet occurred during the reign of Lalitaditya Muktapid (724–761); Tang Dynasty Annals record the enthronement of Trisong Détsen in 756. It is easy to imagine that attempts to mollify suspicions, such as explanations that Guru Rinpoché's Udyan was not precisely Kashmir, would fall on deaf ears. It was certainly close enough. In fact, according to Western historians, Tibet ruled Udyan at the time of Guru Rinpoché, a significant fact that no Buddhist historian has mentioned. Beckwith states:

One may also conclude that a major reason for so many Indian Buddhist sages coming to Central Tibet from Kashmir, and, notably, the famous Padmasambhava from Udyana, was the simple fact that Tibet then ruled much of this region. (*The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, p. 162, n. 119)

His stated source for this information is an article by Karl Jettmar, "Bolor—A Contribution to the Political and Ethnic Geography of North Pakistan." In a pertinent passage, Jettmar writes:

Under the rule of K'ri lde gtsug brtsan the lord of Bru-za was forced to render homage in 737. Three years later he received a Tibetan princess for a wife.

Nevertheless, K'ri sron lde brtsan (755–797) had to subject the countries of the west, sBal-ti and Bru-sal, once again. Even K'ri gtsug lde brtsan (815–838) had to reconquer this unruly region.

Again and again we are informed that this area was of considerable importance in religious and cultural affairs. Buddhists and Bon-po looked there for spiritual enlightenment. The language of Bru-za had a considerable role in the legends about Padmasambhava.

In fact, the Tibetan literature has no other name for the area of Gilgit in spite of contacts over many centuries. Evidently, sBal-ti means Balistan, the former Great Bolor. Bru-za must be identical to Little Bolor, as generally assumed. It seems that the Tibetans changed the official name of the state to the name of the local population. (*Zentralasiatische Studien* 11 (1977): pp. 430–431)

The three Tibetan kings mentioned here in Tibetan transliteration are Trisong Détsen, his father and grandson. That the Tibetan empire invaded and controlled Udyan before, during, and after Guru Rinpoché's visit certainly would have facilitated Tibetan officials' suspicions concerning his motives. In the end, the worst fears of the ministers were realized: the king, as well as his heirs, became increasingly distracted by Buddhism. Battles with neighbors were still fought and won, but the real battleground shifted to Tibet's internal struggles. One after another, Tibet's kings met with violent deaths as the nation's power plummeted. The horizons had changed: Tibet was becoming Buddhist, much to the relief of Central Asia, no doubt.

I do not intend to denigrate the memory of the Tibetan kings, particularly the three whom Buddhists have elevated to the status of bodhisattvas—Song-tsen Gampo (incarnation of the bodhisattva of compassion, All-Seeing Eyes), Trisong Détsen (bodhisattva of transcendent knowledge, Gentle Splendor, *Manjushri*), and Tri Ralpachen (bodhisattva of power, Vajra-in-Hand, *Vajrapani*). Impartial students of Tibetan history would agree that these three made vital contributions to Tibet's national identity. They were the midwives who assisted at the birth of Tibetans' modern sense of their land, their written language and sacred literature, and their spiritual life. Such lasting contributions to a people are the work of bodhisattvas, Buddhist or not. However, I *do* intend to call into question the wisdom of their military exploits, what Gendun Chöpel calls "our historical achievements." They are perhaps best left unmentioned, but this information is crucial if we wish to understand the stage that history had set for Guru Rinpoché's arrival in Tibet. It was not a sleepy land of simple yak herders. As strange as it may seem to us now, Tibet was then a rogue state and a dangerous superpower.

This period of history marked a turning point in Tibet's consciousness. The country awoke as a nation among others, imported the writing system it would use until the present, translated hundreds of foreign books from

India and China, and adopted a new religion that was eventually embraced by all classes of society. Such radical change did not occur without serious repercussions: everyone within and near the country suffered during the period of Tibet's growing pains. Given the degree of its upheaval—at a certain point, there were but three monks left in the country!—it is a wonder the nation and its new faith survived. The Tibetan nation lasted, but Tibetan dreams of empire did not.

As a historian more patriotic to Tibet than to Buddhism, Gendun Chöpel concluded that Guru Rinpoché was responsible for transforming Tibet from an imperial power to a pacifist, de-centralized state, a process he is probably right in identifying as the secular Tibetan empire's "destruction." He is quoted as having made the following statement, which voices an unpopular truth, that Tibet's Buddhists might regard with pride and its nationalists might recall with dismay, but both would attribute to Guru Rinpoché's overpowering influence:

Who destroyed Tibet, and when? India destroyed it during Padmasambhava's era. China, on the other hand, gave Tibet two of her daughters. Chinese influence in Tibet, during the Yarlung Dynasty, was considerable. Samyé, for example, means *sanyang* ["three styles" in Chinese], referring to the temple's stories in Tibetan, Chinese, and Indian styles. In that first Tibetan monastery, founded in the eighth century, there rests a statue of Buddha, very old, in the Chinese style. And if Padmasambhava had not come to Tibet, the Tibetans would have kept Changan [the capital of China they captured in 764]. (Heather Stoddard, *Le Mendiant de l'Amdo*, p. 258, my translation)

## India in Guru Rinpoché's Era

THE MAJORITY of Tibetan accounts introduce Guru Rinpoché as a child without parents, born on a lotus. They portray him both as a "second Buddha" and as a somewhat wild and imposing missionary-sorcerer, a semi-human being whose main work was to dominate the spirit world's gods and demons. While history has proved that Guru Rinpoché was the right man for the job of taming Tibet, the image of him in Tibetan accounts reflects what was relevant to Tibetans' present and future needs, not the depth and sophistication of Guru Rinpoché's own cultural background. He had come from a culture that was complex and cosmopolitan, even by modern standards. I feel it is important for us as Buddhists to appreciate that it is no accident that Buddhism's home is India, and that such a complex, diverse, and vibrant land fosters buddhas and bodhisattvas of the stature of Shakyamuni and Guru Rinpoché. If we study their cultural background, such enlightened beings become less like exotic visitors from outer space, and we gain appreciation for India, then and now.

In reading texts from the Buddha's time (more than 1,000 years before Guru Rinpoché's visit to Tibet), it comes as a shock to meet persons living centuries before the Christian era whose minds and problems seem not so distant from our own. For instance, in *The Book of Discipline* (Sanskrit: *Vinaya*), which lists the monks' and nuns' vows with the context for their first designation as rules of conduct, we read of the Buddha's gradual, patient imposition of order upon his Order in a place and time that seem to have had modern dilemmas: social function and dysfunction, depression, suicide, abuse of power, and a surprisingly wide gamut of sexual options. Although *The Book of Discipline* is a very specific legal document—the constitution for monastic life—we can read between the lines to see the world and people's lives as they were then. The Buddha demanded

unflinching honesty from his monks and nuns; this gives later followers of the monastic path very clear answers to every conceivable situation, and it gives the rest of us a transparent view of that time. In fact, the Western translator of the book (in three volumes, first published in 1940), I. B. Horner, confesses at a certain point that she did not include some passages deemed too explicit for a Western publication!

While the lives of ordinary people at the Buddha's time were recognizably complex, Buddhist culture at its inception was relatively simple. However, during the many centuries between the Buddha's lifetime and the era of Guru Rinpoché's travel to Tibet, Buddhism thrived in the rich soil of the wonder that was India. *The Canon of the Buddha's Word* grew to its present mammoth size, tens (if not hundreds) of Bibles long, and *The Collection of Treatises by Indian Masters*, which the Tibetans would translate in the wake of Guru Rinpoché's visit, was even longer and more wide-ranging. Buddhism grew more sophisticated as a faith, from the Lesser Way's simple renunciation, to the inclusive Great Way, and onto the heights of tantra's skillful techniques. Buddhism also developed a cultural dimension, to include poetry, medicine, art and architecture, astrology, and much more. Guru Rinpoché gave the Tibetans what they needed for Buddhism to take firm root in their country, and they have repaid his kindness with their constant devotion. Yet, he was like a brain surgeon who finds him/herself in an undeveloped country without the most rudimentary notions of medicine: he gave what he could—first aid—and laid the foundations for future medical practice that would include treatment of a complexity undreamed of by persons in that place and time. As exceptional as Guru Rinpoché was, he grew up in an exceptional country, and he reflected its culture as surely as the Buddha did in his own day.

In both India and China during the seventh and eighth centuries, the flowering of secular culture and the flourishing of Buddhism were accompanied by another phenomenon—the ascendancy of women. Both Indian and early Tang Dynasty Chinese art and sculpture celebrate a loving appreciation of the feminine. The Buddhist pantheon had grown to include female buddhas and bodhisattvas who were portrayed as vivacious and self-confident awakened women. They were honored with the same respect and devotion as their male counterparts. Female masters of tantric Buddhism in India were highly esteemed (at least one of Guru Rinpoché's tantric masters was a woman) and their writings were studied and preserved. This

acknowledgment of feminine awakening and enlightenment, in both the secular and religious contexts, must have had repercussions on the daily life of the women of the time. For example, the kingdom of Kashmir, a culturally enlightened country and military power in those days, was ruled three times by women: Yashovati, Sugandha, and Didda. The last ruled the country with her husband from 950 until his death in 980, and alone from that time until her death in 1003. This was India before the Muslim invasions and their cloistering of the feminine, and before the practice of *suttee*, a widow's self-sacrifice on her husband's pyre, became widespread. The Han Chinese, for their part, had yet to learn to bind the feet of the female half of their nation. Life for women of this period must have been looked back upon later as a time of relative happiness, freedom, and power. The Buddha is often portrayed flanked by his two foremost disciples, Shariputra and Maugalyayana, both men, whereas Guru Rinpoché's two star disciples were both women, the Indian Mandarava and the Tibetan Yeshé Tsogyal. These two women do not owe their status to the fact that they were their teacher's sexual partners: in that, they were far from unique. They were the best among Guru Rinpoché's disciples, men or women; their inclusion in countless paintings and sculptures of the master is a tribute to their personal enlightenment during an era of social enlightenment.

I feel strongly about this issue of the presence of acknowledged women teachers in Buddhism because my personal meditation practice has been based on teachings of reincarnations of Mandarava and Yeshé Tsogyal named Niguma and Soukasiddhi. These two Indian women (the first lived in Kashmir, the second attained enlightenment in Udyan, both during the late tenth and eleventh centuries) reached the highest levels of attainment and received instruction directly from the Buddha Vajradhara. From a tantric perspective, their teachings are complete as they include meditations on the phase of creation, the phase of completion (each of these women developed a cycle of Six Doctrines), and Great Seal (*Mahamudra*). The two traditional three-year retreats<sup>14</sup> in which I participated were focused almost exclusively on their instructions, ample time to contemplate what a golden age they lived in and what a dark age has followed, practically until the present day. That my cherished Buddhist spiritual forefathers are women, one of whom (Niguma) is remembered as dark brown, has made me sensitive to the absurdity of white, brown, or yellow men's self-assumed exclusive entitlement to enlightenment. Such a poisonous,

preposterous presumption does not seem to have infected tantric practice in Guru Rinpoché's India.

His era was also a fertile time for popular culture. We might appreciate the religious art and sculpture of the time, but what of the period's theatrical arts? Above, Gendun Chöpel mentioned Harsha (590-650; or 605-647), the Indian king whom the Chinese had tried to meet in Songtsen Gampo's time. Harsha is known as a poet and playwright; one of his plays is called *Nagananda* in Sanskrit, *The Joy of the Nagas*.<sup>15</sup> Here is its prologue; the speaker, called "the Stage Manager," addresses the audience as a master of ceremonies, to welcome them:

The Stage Manager:

Today, on this occasion of Indra's Festival, the council of kings from various regions, who bow at the lotus feet of the illustrious Shri Harsha, respectfully summoned me and made this request:

We have heard rumors that noble Shri Harsha has composed a play with an original plot, called *Joy of the Nagas*, based on a past life of the Awareness Holder [i.e., the Buddha]. We haven't yet seen this play. We ask you, out of respect for the king and out of consideration for us, to stage a performance of this drama.

Therefore, I have arranged all the colors and props for the stage and have completed the other preparations exactly according to their wishes.

"The minds of you in the audience will be completely satisfied!" I can say this for sure since Shri Harsha is a skilled poet, this audience appreciates talent, tales of bodhisattvas' lives enthrall the world, and we are capable actors. Any one of those things alone could bring me the success I aspire to: How can I express my flourishing luck that has united all these positive conditions!

Now I'll call my wife to perform the songs.

He moves about and looks around

My exalted lady, come here for a moment...

The Actress enters, crying.

Stage Manager, seeing her:

Noble woman, we are to perform the play called *Joy of the Nagas*. Why are you crying for no reason?

Actress:

My lord, how can I not cry?

Your father and your mother have become disenchanted with their old age. They have left to live in hardship in the forest with the thought, Now you must bear the burden of the family's responsibilities.

Stage Manager:

How could my parents leave for the forest, forsaking even me? (Thinks) Now what should I do? But how can I stay at home, relinquishing the happiness of serving my parents?

Like Jimutavahana,

I will forsake my hereditary wealth

To serve my parents:

I too will go to the forest!

Both leave.

End of scene.

I find the unexpected turn of events that disrupt the self-satisfied tone of the play's prologue a clever device to compel the audience (or reader) to further attention. It has proved effective in gaining wide-spread appeal, for the play in its entirety was translated into Tibetan and became part of *The Collection of Treatises by Indian Masters*.

Harsha's rule remains a fine example of the best of India immediately before Guru Rinpoché's travel to Tibet. As one historian records,

There are three known and surviving Sanskrit dramas from [Harsha's] own hand. To his reign and patronage are commonly assigned the work of Susruta in medicine, of the Vaisesika school in physics, Brahmagupta's anticipation of a gravitational theory, and in mathematics the calculation, much more correct than that of the Greeks, of a value for  $\pi$ . The Buddhist university of Nalanda, to which Harsha added a large new monastic building, had four thousand students in his day. (Francis Watson, *India: A Concise History*, p. 68)

The Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-Tsang spent eight of his fifteen years in India within the borders of Harsha's kingdom. At one point, Harsha, who had been a follower of the Lesser Way, listened to Hsuan-Tsang's teaching on the Great Way and decided to sponsor a great debate among all the traditions within his kingdom.

Inaugurated with enormous state, the debates ended in a triumph for the Chinese 'Master of the Law' and the teachings he supported, so that Harsha found it necessary to issue a stern warning against any attempt to injure him. (*Ibid.*, p. 68)

It is an extraordinary tribute to Harsha and his time that a foreigner could exercise such influence on a powerful ruler. Nevertheless, as the Tibetan king Trisong Détsen would find in the next century, Harsha discovered that monarchs paid dearly for their open-mindedness. Although Harsha managed to protect Hsuan-Tsang,

a conspiracy against the royal person was also uncovered, and five hundred brahmins were arrested. Having pardoned all but the ring-leaders, Harsha fell victim in 647 to a murder plot set going by a Brahman minister and carried out by the army. The rebel was defeated and killed by an invading force sent from Tibet at the instance of the Chinese Emperor, with whom Harsha had been on good terms. (*Ibid.*, pp. 68–69)

What is evident in any presentation of India's past is the antiquity of what we mistakenly consider our "modern" sense of self. We can discover in texts written in the Buddha's time, centuries before the Christian era, evidence that urban and rural dwellers alike thought and felt much like we do today. Ordinary people who lived during the Buddha's time are not portrayed as dim-witted farmers, superstitious pagans, or fundamentalist god-worshippers. Their lives were recognizably complex and their sensibilities were often sophisticated. They owned and enjoyed what, for Buddhists, distinguishes us as human beings as much as the use of tools or language—the possession of leisure.

The Buddha taught for those who had leisure and he taught how to value and use it. He did not attempt to graft a religion onto a social order, nor did he propose a new set of social-religious contracts to punctuate life, the kind of rites to mark birth, coming-of-age, marriage, and death that clutter most religions and governments. The Buddha did not teach "how to integrate faith in daily life," but taught his followers to treasure the hours they spent outside the daily grind. He claimed that a human being's leisure, our lack of total absorption in daily life, makes even a humble human birth more fortunate than that of the gods, whose perfect pleasures afforded them no free time and, consequently, no wakefulness of the kind we humans can offer ourselves when we set our cares momentarily aside. It is this cultivation of "quality time," time individuals can seize and make their own beyond obligations to gods, family, or society, that makes "ancient" India so modern and Buddhism still so relevant.

Although India has experienced bouts of intolerance and fanatic fundamentalism, the country's spiritual life and its secular culture have long been enlightened, in every sense of the word. Francis Watson comments on the *Kama Sutra* (written before the fourth century), one of India's famous literary exports:

The erotic compendium of Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra* cannot be later than the fourth century. *Its illumination of the life of cultured leisure of a citizen, if not the sole reason for today's worldwide circulation of the translated work, may well reflect the opulent and relaxed civilization considered in the Gupta period as an attainable ideal.* (p. 63, italics added)



If we consider two early treasures of Indian culture (both mentioned at more length in this book's appendices)—the secular work *Panchatantra* (second century B.C.) and the Buddhist *Flower Ornament Discourse* (the Chinese translation of which began in the second century), we find this same "opulent and relaxed civilization" in full bloom centuries before the *Kama Sutra*. Guru Rinpoché undoubtedly knew all these works well, but he did not teach secular culture in Tibet; he restricted himself to what was crucial at that moment—the essential elements of Buddhist wisdom culture. It is important to remember that what he brought to Tibet was not a new dogma or social organization, but quite the opposite. His wisdom culture was transplanted from Indian Buddhist leisure culture, the appreciation of human life not for what it could produce but for the insight a human being could cultivate when he or she was not on call to social demands.

India was fertile in all forms of culture and was a land of diversity and tolerance. Yes, in some of Guru Rinpoché's life stories we read of how he thwarted anti-Buddhist challenges, but then, as now, India and her people are naturally inclusive and accepting, as well as expressive and exuberant. If we observe India's history, the following short account from modern times could be said to represent less the exception than the rule. A reporter here relates a scene she witnessed at the end of the 1971 India-Pakistan war that created Bangladesh:

In the company of the Indian Jewish general who had written the terms of the cease-fire, I watched a Sikh general take the surrender of the enemy army, and with profound relief I saw that our young soldiers were obeying their Christian commanding officer and showing only respect to the Bangladeshi [Muslim] girls. (*Snakes and Ladders*, pp. 157–158)

The writer of those lines, Gita Mehta, writes beautifully of India's voluptuous soul that transcends and endures, defies set categories and confounds dire predictions. Mehta's meditations on India's present are always informed by love and respect for what she calls the rich compost heap of India's past. I have the impression that the India she describes is not far removed from the land of Guru Rinpoché:

Most Indians view most other Indians as foreigners, and with consid-

erable justification. The British governed only two thirds of India. The other third was made up of over five hundred independent kingdoms, so the geography, the races, the languages, the customs of India have less in common than their equivalents among the actually separate nations of Europe or the Americas.... India is the sum of a million worlds enclosed by oceans on three sides, the mighty Himalayas on the north....

The government of India officially recognizes seventeen major Indian languages in which state business may be conducted. Each of these languages possesses not only its own ancient and contemporary literature, its own newspapers, radio and television programs, and films, but also its individual script. Then we have the classical language of Sanskrit. On top of that we have over four hundred other languages, some written, some oral....

India is like a massive sponge, absorbing everything while purists shake their heads in despair. Other cultures have sought to expel all foreign-devil influences from their shores, but India has always shown an appetite for foreign devils matched only by her capacity to make them go native.

It is as though we are unable to conceive of a culture strong enough to destroy us. Unlike those of China or Japan, the gates of India have never been closed and perhaps this has given us a special stamina. (*Ibid.*, pp. 27–32)

Over the centuries, Tibet married and lived with China—its lamas acted as priests to the rulers of successive dynasties and were granted some measure of home rule in return. (It was only after Chinese imperial rule ended that the centuries-old relationship deteriorated and the Tibetans began to clamor for divorce.) Despite the fact that Tibetans co-habited with the Chinese for over a thousand years, they always remember their short but intense love affair with India. It is she the Tibetans call "the Land of the Exalted Ones," a tribute to buddhas and bodhisattvas, but applied to the country as a whole.

We in the West generally forget our debts to India. Sanskrit is a senior relative of most Western languages, in form and in content. The Indians gave us our numbers (including, most importantly, zero) and our universities, although we remember them as Arabic contributions to the West, as

it was they who transported them from East to West. We take a seven-day week as a God-ordained fact of life, whereas it was likely an early Indian astronomer-astrologer who dreamed up the relationship between the seven planets and seven days, the same as exists in Tibetan: Sun-day, Moon-day, Mars-day (our English Tues-day remembers Tiu, also a god of war), Mercury-day (not Odin's day as we say in English), Jupiter-day (not Thor's day), Venus-day ("Fri" is apparently an old translation of Venus), and Saturn-day.<sup>16</sup> Our "Western" astrology, for what it is worth, is also Made in India, the only difference in the twelve signs being Capricorn, which in India is represented as a dolphin. Many of our legends and children's stories as well have been borrowed from India. One has to wonder if even the concept of a Messiah as God's incarnation, not a belief that was part of Abraham's or Moses' faith, might also have been borrowed from the Hindu notion of avatars.

So much more could be said on the subject of how our basic orientation in space and time, concept and language, is a gift from Mother India. That it needs to be said, that we have forgotten our debt, is also an interesting subject for inquiry. What is clear is that the Tibetans inherited their writing system and much of their sacred and secular literature from India, and they never forgot that fact. They came to worship India, beginning with Guru Rinpoché.

Without Guru Rinpoché's influence, things could have turned out differently. It may seem ludicrous to imagine Tibet as a world power, a threat to civilization, until we answer what appears to be a trivia question: Which country ruled the largest empire of contiguous land ever known to humankind? We might think of European countries, but their rule was spread over disparate colonies. No, the surprising answer is Mongolia, whose hundred-year world-dominating empire has never been equaled. The same conditions that created the Mongolian empire pertained in Tibet, which in the seventh and eighth centuries began stirring westward toward Arabia, eastward into China, and, significantly, southward into Nepal and India, its direct neighbors. How was it possible that Mongolia achieved what no other nation managed before or since? How can we imagine that Tibet was once a vital empire which could have rivaled its neighbor but for Guru Rinpoché and Indian Buddhism's timely influence? I could give the short answer but I prefer to share with you a long passage by a master of the subject, René Grousset, from the Preface to his classic study *The Empire of the Steppes*.

He wrote (in 1939) of nations other than Tibet, but we need only keep Tibetans in mind as we read to realize that they too fit his description.

Attila, Jenghiz Khan, Tamerlane: their names are in everyone's memory. Accounts of them written by Western chroniclers and by Chinese or Persian annalists have served to spread their repute. The great barbarians irrupt into areas of developed historical civilization and suddenly, within a few years, reduce the Roman, Iranian, or Chinese world to a heap of ruins. Their arrival, motives, and disappearance seem inexplicable, so much so that historians today come near to adopting the verdict of writers of old, who saw in them the scourge of the Lord, sent for the chastisement of ancient civilizations.

Yet never were men more sons of the earth than these, more the natural product of their environment; but their motivations and patterns of behavior acquire clarity as we come to understand their way of life. These stunted, stocky bodies—invincible, since they could survive such rigorous conditions—were formed by the steppes. The bitter winds of high plateaus, the intense cold and torrid heat, carved those faces with their wrinkled eyes, high cheekbones, and sparse hair, and hardened those sinewy frames. The demands of pastoral life, governed by seasonal migrations in search of pasture, defined their specific nomadism, and the exigencies of their nomadic economy determined their relations with sedentary peoples: relations consisting in turns of timid borrowings and bloodthirsty raids.

The three or four great Asiatic nomads who burst upon us to rip up the web of history seem to us exceptional solely because of our own ignorance. For three who achieved the astounding feat of becoming conquerors of the world, how many Attilas and Jenghiz Khans have failed? Failed, that is, to do more than found limited empires comprising a quarter of Asia, from Siberia to the Yellow River, from the Altai to Persia—an achievement which one must nevertheless acknowledge to have been of some magnitude....

The problem of the barbarians must be stated precisely. The classical world encountered many kinds of barbarians, that is, people so designated by their neighbors. The Celts were barbarians to the Romans for a long time, as were the Germans to Gaul, and the Slav world to Germania. Similarly, the land afterward known as southern China

long remained a barbarian country to the original Chinese of the Yellow River. But because geographical conditions in all these regions imposed an agricultural way of life upon their inhabitants, they emerged from their backwardness to become increasingly identified with that life, so that by the second half of the Middle Ages almost the whole of Europe, Western Asia, Iran, the Indies, and China had attained the same stage of material civilization.

Yet one important area escaped this process—the wide belt stretching across the northern part of Central Eurasia from the borders of Manchuria to Budapest. This is the steppe zone, penetrated along its northern edges by the Siberian forest. Geographic conditions here allowed only a few patches of civilization, so that the inhabitants were forced to follow a pastoral, nomadic way of life, such as the rest of humanity had known thousands of years earlier at the end of the Neolithic age. Indeed, some of these tribes—those of the forest zone—remained at the cultural stage of the Magdalenian hunters. Thus the steppe and forest region remained a preserve of barbarism—not, be it understood, in the sense that the people living there were inferior human beings to the rest of mankind, but because local conditions perpetuated a way of life which elsewhere had long since passed away.

The survival of these pastoral peoples into an era when the rest of Asia had arrived at an advanced agricultural stage was a very important factor in the drama of history. It involved a sort of time shift between neighboring peoples. Men of the second millennium B.C. coexisted with those of the twelfth century A.D. To pass from one group to the other, one had only to come down from Upper Mongolia to Peking, or to climb from the Kirghiz steppe to Ispahan. The break was abrupt and fraught with perils. To the sedentary peoples of China, Iran, and Europe, the Hun, the Turkoman, and the Mongol were savages indeed, to be intimidated by a display of arms, amused by glass beads and by titles, and kept at a respectful distance from cultivated land. The attitude of the nomads may be easily imagined. The poor Turko-Mongol herdsman who in years of drought ventured across the meager grazing of the steppe from one dried-up waterhole to another, to the very fringe of civilization, at the gates of Pechili (Hopei) or Transoxiana, gazed thunderstruck at the miracle of sedentary civilization: luxuriant crops, villages crammed with grain, and the luxury of

the towns. This miracle, or rather its secret—the patient toil required to maintain these human hives—was beyond the comprehension of the Hun. If he was fascinated, it was like the wolf—his totem—when in snowy weather it draws near to the farms and spies its prey within the wattled fence. He too had the age-old impulse to break in, plunder, and escape with his booty.

The survival of a herding and hunting community beside a farming one—or, put differently, the development of increasingly prosperous agricultural communities within sight and contact of peoples still at the pastoral stage, and suffering the appalling famines inherent in steppe life in time of drought—presented not only a glaring economic contrast but a social contrast that was even crueler. To repeat, the problem of human geography became a social one. The attitudes of the sedentary man and the nomad toward each other recall the feelings of a capitalist society and a proletariat enclosed within a modern city. The farming communities that cultivated the good yellow soil of northern China, the gardens of Iran, and the rich black earth of Kiev were encircled by a belt of poor grazing land where terrible climatic conditions often prevailed, and where one year in ten the watering places dried up, grass withered, and livestock perished, and with them the nomad himself.

In these circumstances, the periodic thrusts of the nomads into the cultivated areas were a law of nature. It should be added that whether Turks or Mongols, they belonged to an intelligent, level-headed, practical people which, drilled by the harsh realities of its environment, was ever ready for the word of command. When the sedentary and often decadent communities yielded under his onslaught, the nomad entered the city and, when the first few hours of massacre were over, without any great difficulty took the place of the rulers whom he had defeated....

How is it that the adventure was nearly always successful, and that the same rhythm recurred throughout thirteen centuries—that period between the Huns' entry into Loyang and the Manchus' into Peking? The answer is that the nomad, retarded though he was in material culture, always possessed a tremendous military ascendancy. He was the mounted archer. The technical arm, which gave him almost as great an advantage over sedentary man as artillery gave modern Europe over

the rest of the world, was an incredible mobile cavalry of expert bowmen. It is true that neither the Chinese nor the Iranians neglected this arm. From the third century B.C. on, the Chinese adapted their dress for riding. And Persia, from the times of the Parthians, knew the value of a shower of arrows delivered by a whirl of retreating horsemen. But Chinese, Iranian, Russian, Pole, or Hungarian could never equal the Mongol in this field. Trained from childhood to drive deer at a gallop over the vast expanses of the steppe, accustomed to patient stalking and to all the ruses of the hunter on which his food—that is, his life—depended, he was unbeatable. Not that he often confronted his enemy; on the contrary, having launched a surprise attack upon him, he would vanish, reappear, pursue him ardently without letting himself be caught, harry him, weary him, and at last bring him down exhausted, like driven game. The deceptive mobility and ubiquity of this cavalry, when handled by a Jebe or a Sübötäi—Jenghiz Khan's two great generals—endowed this arm with a sort of corporate intelligence. Piano Carpini and Rubruck, who watched it in action, were much struck by this decisive technical superiority. The phalanx and the legion passed away because they had been born of the political constitutions of Macedonia and Rome; they were the planned creation of organized states which, like all states, arose, lived, and disappeared. The mounted archer of the steppe reigned over Eurasia for thirteen centuries because he was the spontaneous creation of the soil itself: the offspring of hunger and want, the nomads' only means of survival during years of famine. When Jenghiz Khan succeeded in conquering the world, he was able to do so because, as an orphan abandoned on the plain of Kerulen, he had already succeeded, with his younger brother Jöchi the Tiger, in bringing down enough game daily to escape death by starvation....

What put an end to this superiority? How is it that starting in the sixteenth century the nomad no longer had the sedentary peoples at his mercy? The reason was that the latter now met him with artillery, and overnight acquired an artificial ascendancy over him. An agelong position was reversed. The cannonades with which Ivan the Terrible scattered the last heirs of the Golden Horde, and with which the K'ang-hsi emperor of China frightened the Kalmucks, marked the end of a period of world history. For the first time, and for ever, military

technique had changed camps and civilization became stronger than barbarism. Within a few hours the traditional superiority of the nomad faded into a seemingly unreal past. (*The Empire of the Steppes*, pp. vii–ix)

It is this “seemingly unreal past” and this dynamic that we must keep in mind when imagining Tibet of yore—the campaign through Nepal into India in the mid-seventh century, the repeated subjugation of Udyan, and the occupation of the Chinese capital, to name but a small portion of Tibet's imperial exploits. China, Nepal, and India had all been successfully invaded and intimidated by the “brigands, barbarians” from the unassailable roof of the world.<sup>17</sup> Gendun Chöpel must have understood this better than any Tibetan historian before his time, as he ends his unfinished *The White Annals* with these lines in awe of his ancestors' military might, written I believe, with heartfelt pride. We can regard what he describes with pride or in dread, but his words do reflect the truth of that time:

Rushing out from the beautiful snow lands  
Like the inexhaustible winds of winter,  
Was it not true that these unconquerable bands of white lions  
Were a constant menace to the lords of men? (p. 94)

I find it hard to disagree with Gendun Chöpel that Guru Rinpoché's intervention in Tibet defused its imperial ambitions, created severe tensions within the country that undermined the state's military power and, ultimately, ended the line of centrally governing kings. To give an indication of the turbulence at the center of the Tibetan empire after Guru Rinpoché's visit to Tibet, some accounts relate that King Trisong Détsen's long rule (755–797) ended with his assassination. His successors, sons Muné Tsenpo and Tridé Songtsen, continued their fathers' policies favorable to Buddhism. The first was assassinated before two years of his rule had passed. The second ruled until his presumably natural death and was succeeded by the king Buddhists refer to as the great Tri Ralpachen (815–841). An eager patron of Buddhism, he instituted laws and customs favorable to Buddhist monks, but onerous for the people. In a country still close to the height of its powers, laws freeing monks from military service and forcing seven families to sponsor each monk were bound to strain the patience of

those who oversaw the empire. Ralpachen was murdered by anti-Buddhist ministers, and replaced by his older brother Tri Darma U-doum Tsen, who tried to return Tibet to her glory days by ridding it of foreign influences and the privileges of the Buddhist clergy. His reign lasted until 846, when he in turn was murdered, by a Buddhist. Members of the royal family continued to fight among one another for control of the throne until 869, when a popular uprising ended the dynasty.<sup>18</sup>

From that point until 1253, when the Mongol army unified Tibet under its power, no central authority ruled the country. The empire's loss was Buddhism's and Tibet's neighbors' gain: India and Nepal were never again invaded from the north, except by waves of Tibetans eager to learn Buddhism in the wake of the visit of another great Indian master, Atisha (a relative of Shantiraksheeta), who followed in Guru Rinpoché's footsteps and taught in Tibet for seventeen years, from 1040. In a twist of fate or forceful enlightened activity, Guru Rinpoché's influence transformed Tibet from civilized, Buddhist Asia's greatest threat in the eighth century to the world's greatest Buddhist preserve, treasure trove, and zone of peace.

## Guru Rinpoché Now—in Print

**H**OW HAVE WE BEEN introduced to Guru Rinpoché? I had always assumed that, for Anglophones, books played a major role in Guru Rinpoché's journey to the West. After having looked at the question a little more closely, I am not so sure.

I read of Guru Rinpoché for the first time in 1971, in a book many of us read then, *Be Here Now* by Baba Ram Dass. What a darling book by such a genuine bodhisattva! Yes, from any rational perspective the book is a sacred, unholy mess, but it was extremely timely and very helpful. There, on page 85 of the section called "From Bindu to Ojas," Ram Dass tells us,

The point is we have gone out & out & out & we have sought & sought & found so much but it hasn't been enough! & now by merely turning the process inward you go in & in & in until you come to the place where Guru Rimpoche sits.

And there in the text sits a picture of Guru Rinpoché. On page 7 of the next section of the book, "Cookbook for a Sacred Life," we read a short meditation called "Purification Exercise with Guru Rimpoche," an amalgam of a purification practice and an empowerment visualization, including Guru Rinpoché's mantra. The exercise ends with this paragraph:

7. Now allow that blue beam of light to become a broad avenue of light. Then you will see Padmasambhava come down that avenue and come directly into your heart. Here he will sit in your *hridayam* (spiritual heart). His mantra is: *Om Ah Hum Vajra Guru Padma Siddhi Hum*. This means three-in-one (the unmanifest, imminent manifestation, and manifestation) lightning-bolt **Guru** of unbearable com-

passion and infinite power who resides in my heart. To say his *mantra* is to keep Him in your heart . . . until finally you and He become One. [italics and bold in the original]

What follows to complete the session is also of some interest:

**The Four Bodhisattva Vows** (say three times)

1. I resolve to become enlightened for the sake of all living beings.
2. I will cut the roots of all delusive passions.
3. I will penetrate the farthest gate of *Dharma*.
4. I will realize the supreme way of Buddha.

This is what we could charitably call a loosely interpretive translation. However, I feel that these passages prove what is repeatedly said in Buddhism: It's the thought that counts. Baba Ram Dass had a pure intention to help and his words proved tremendously helpful. We can now find words that are far more technically accurate on the subject of Tibetan Buddhism, but how can his intention be improved upon? I read his words now, thirty years later, and feel only gratitude for his words and the pure motivation behind them; such motivation always bears pure, one hundred percent unharmed results.

If one had met Guru Rinpoché through Baba Ram Dass and wanted to read further on the subject, there was at the time only one option in English: *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, subtitled *Or The Method of Realizing Nirvana through Knowing the Mind*, edited by W. Y. Evans-Wentz, with a commentary by C. J. Jung. The book contains a partial translation of one of Guru Rinpoché's life stories. At first glance, the reader is sure to have stumbled upon a book issuing from the heyday of the British Empire, but no, Evans-Wentz wrote the preface in San Diego in 1952. What a difference a couple of decades makes, the nineteen years between Evans-Wentz and Ram Dass!

*The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* presents the reader with a snapshot of another moment of the East-meets-West saga. Carl Jung begins his commentary to the book with the title, "The Difference Between Eastern and Western Thinking," and he at one point concludes,

If you can afford to seat yourself on a gazelle skin under a Bo-tree or in the cell of a *gompa* for the rest of your life without being troubled by politics or the collapse of your securities, I will look favorably upon your case. But yoga in Mayfair or Fifth Avenue, or in any other place which is on the telephone, is a spiritual fake. (p. lvi)

Poor Jung: he had placed himself unwisely at the mercy of translators in judging Asian minds and spirituality. This, for example, is what he (and so many others) read at the outset of Evans-Wentz's introduction:

*General Introduction*

'To attain the Good, we must ascend to the highest state, and, fixing our gaze thereon, lay aside the garments we donned when descending here below; just as, in the Mysteries, those who are admitted to penetrate into the inner recesses of the sanctuary, after having purified themselves, lay aside every garment, and advance stark naked.' Plotinus (I. vi. 6)

*I. Reality According to the Mahayana*

Herein, in Book II, in the 'Yoga of Knowing the Mind in Its Nakedness,' otherwise known as the doctrine which automatically liberates man from bondage to appearances, is set forth, in aphorisms, an epitome of the root teachings of Mahayanic transcendentalism concerning Reality.

In common with all Schools of the Oriental Occult Sciences, the Mahayana postulates that the One Supra-Mundane Mind, or the Universal All-Pervading Consciousness, transcendent over appearances and over every dualistic concept born of the finite or mundane aspect of mind, alone is real. Viewed as the Voidness (known in Sanskrit as the *Shunyata*), it is the Unbecome, the Unborn, the Unmade, the Unformed, the predicateless Primordial Essence, the abstract Cosmic Source whence all concrete or manifested things come and into which they vanish in latency. Being without form, quality, or phenomenal existence, it is the Formless, Qualityless, the Non-Existent. As such, it is the Imperishable, the Transcendent Fullness of the Emptiness, the Dissolver of Space and of Time and of the *sangsaric* (or mundane) mind, the Brahman of the *Rishis*, the Dreamer of *Maya*, the Weaver

of the Web of Appearances, the Outbreather and the Inbreather of infinite universes throughout the endlessness of Duration.

Plotinus, the Platonic inheritor of this ancient oriental teaching, has concisely summarized it: 'The First Principle, being One, is transcendent over measure or number....The Supreme principle must be essentially unitary, and simple, while essences [derived therefrom] form a multitude.' The Great Guru, Padmasambhava, the author of our present treatise, in Book II, page 207, sets forth the same doctrine from the Mahayanic point of view: 'The whole *Sangsara* [or phenomenal Universe of appearances] and *Nirvana* [the Unmanifested, or noumenal state], as an inseparable unity, are one's mind [in its natural, or unmodified primordial state of the Voidness].' (pp. 1-2; all square brackets, etc., in the original)

Evans-Wentz was just warming up to his subject; this general introduction ends one hundred pages later. He then introduces the translation of Guru Rinpoché's biography:

In this Book, Padma-Sambhava is presented as the divine personification of Tibetan idealism, a Culture Hero greater than even the Buddha Gautama. The wonders of oriental myth, the mysteriousness of the secret doctrines of the Mahayana, and the marvels of magic enhalo him. Like the Celtic Arthur and Cuchullan, the Scandinavian Odin and Thor, the Greek Orpheus and Odysseus, or the Egyptian Osiris and Hermes, the Lotus-Born One is of superhuman lineage, transcendent over the pomp and circumstance and conventionalities of the world....

Probably nowhere in the sacred literature of mankind is there to be found a more remarkable parallelism than that existing between the accounts of the extraordinary characteristics attributed to Padma-Sambhava and to Melchizedek. (*Ibid.*, p. 103)

And so on. No wonder Jung arrived at the never-the-twain-shall-meet conclusions he did! In the context, we would tend to agree with him that for those "on the telephone" such "a yoga" amounts to a spiritual fake; in fact we would as well probably discourage those *not* on the telephone from taking the path as Evans-Wentz presents it.

Evans-Wentz's intention appears to have been to gain acceptability for Guru Rinpoché (among scholars?)<sup>19</sup> by installing him in a lineage of "the Celtic Arthur and Cuchullan, the Scandinavian Odin and Thor, the Greek Orpheus and Odysseus, or the Egyptian Osiris and Hermes," and Melchizedek (from the Bible's *Book of Hebrews*). This cut-and-paste in world mythologies was perhaps the best service he felt he could render Guru Rinpoché in that day and age. Evans-Wentz is faultlessly respectful to his subject, but he portrays Guru Rinpoché as a candidate for the distant veneration we reserve for obscure mythological figures of long-dead cultures. Ironically, it is Evans-Wentz who has been relegated to the hoary realm of distant, esteemed ancestors, and Guru Rinpoché who remains a vital, living presence.

That indigestible book was, however, the main source in English for information on the life of Guru Rinpoché from its publication in 1954 until the early 1970s. In 1971, these words rolled off the press of Dharma Publishing in the first issue of a magazine/booklet called *Crystal Mirror*:

Padmasambhava is not intended to be viewed solely as an historical person. His bodily form is like a pure reflection, the visible appearance of the mind and compassion of all Buddhas. Padmasambhava and Lord Buddha are identical. He is all the Buddhas, past, present, and future—timeless, beyond birth and death—but we can experience that same primordial essence within ourselves. In Vajrayana Buddhism, Padmasambhava is neither a deity nor a mythological figure—he is the gateway through which the powers and divine qualities of the Buddha can be received, the focal point of practices that lead the aspirant to liberation. Constant and mindful meditation on the pure essence of the Guru purifies body, speech, and mind, transforming ordinary consciousness into the highest wisdom and transcending ordinary forms. Vajrayana teaches that transformation can be accomplished in one lifetime.

This Sadhana, or spiritual practice, of Padmasambhava is especially important and effective in times plagued by excessive materialism and strong desires. Quite obviously, then, these practices have great practical relevance to our present age. This is the real meaning and significance of Guru Padmasambhava in the Vajrayana tradition. By practicing his teachings, we can benefit ourselves and others. It is the Precious Guru's promise:

"I shall come every morning and every evening to the abode of those who have faith in me. I shall come to this world for the sake of its people."

(*Crystal Mirror*, vol. 1, p. 18)

In terms of English-language publications that were widely distributed (*Crystal Mirror* was not an in-house or members-only publication; it could generally be found in bookstores among the books, not the periodicals), these words represent a watershed, the first lines to introduce Guru Rinpoché as he is. The short article was accompanied by reproductions of a series of woodblock prints of nine aspects of Guru Rinpoché, again a significant first. (The *Crystal Mirror* series continues to provide a priceless service to those who wish to understand and experience all forms of Buddhism, especially the Tibetan Nyingma tradition.)

In 1973, Dharma Publishing published *The Legend of the Great Stupa*, a book with two parts, the stupa's legend and "The Life Story of the Lotus Born Guru," translated by Keith Dowman, Tulku Péma Wangyal, and Nima Norbu. The Great Stupa stands at the center of the Tibetan Buddhist "capital" of Nepal, Baudhanat; its legend recounts the past lives of Guru Rinpoché and others, who constructed the stupa and made aspirations to take Buddhism to Tibet. The book's second part contains a short biography of Guru Rinpoché, according to a treasure text revealed by Chok-gyur Déchen Lingpa, one of the greatest treasure revealers of the nineteenth century.

This was the first readable translation of Guru Rinpoché's life to appear in English. The editors and translators seem to have let the translation speak for itself on the subject of Guru Rinpoché, as the introductions and concluding reflections do not bring Guru Rinpoché up to date, as the *Crystal Mirror* had. The major revelation of this text, apart from the words, is the series of very handsome line drawings by Glen Eddy. They are as striking and as pleasing today as they were when the book was first published.

*Crystal Mirror*, vol. 4 (1975), was devoted entirely to Guru Rinpoché, a preliminary for the main event, the publication by Dharma in 1978 of one of the major versions of Guru Rinpoché's life, *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava* (two volumes). This edition is a translation from French into English of a translation from Tibetan done in 1912 by Gustave-Charles Toussaint. Tarthang Tulku, in his Publisher's Preface, wishes aloud to do later another translation of the text from Tibetan, "dealing more accurately

with the philosophical terms and passages." This should not be taken as an admission of failure. As he says, the text is "clearly a precious jewel," and I believe he has been proved right in his statement, "It is more important to make this precious translation available now. Hopefully there will soon be other translations of this biography available." Most translators in the field of Tibetan Buddhism realize that our translations will be current for a short time at best. Our vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension have improved vastly over the last forty years (we might take Dr. Herbert Guenther's translation of *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* by Gampopa, published in 1959, as the first modern English-language translation from Tibetan); and as conditions continue to improve, our translations will be refurbished. It is a slow, collective, uncentralized process. *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava* still awaits a "version 2.0," but this slightly dated French-English translation of a Tibetan-French translation done before the First World War is still worth the time it takes a reader to absorb its message.

Tarthang Tulku politely included three prefaces before his introduction to the translation. When he finally speaks on the page, he provides the kind of contextualization that was missing from the translations of Guru Rinpoché's life stories mentioned above. He does not apologize for Guru Rinpoché's myriad forms and identities, nor for his actions, "Like the process that creates diamonds out of coal." Tarthang Tulku adds an essential introduction to Guru Rinpoché that allows the reader to meet him through the story. He speaks as a living teacher of Tibetan wisdom to those who wish to experience it. He writes a line that should echo back to Evans-Wentz and, I hope, far into the future: "We did not attempt to make a scholarly text out of what was not meant to be one."

In these paragraphs that close Tarthang Tulku's introduction, you can measure for yourself the distance spanned in the twenty-four years between *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* and *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*:

Padmasambhava is himself manifest in these [Nyingma] teachings, for he appears in any form which will help those who sincerely follow the enlightenment path. Thus, even Atisha, Gampopa, and Sakya Pandita are believed to be his emanations. Guru Padma is lama, yidam, and dakini; he is also Dharma protector. All Padmasambhava's different



forms, signs, symbols, and names are invitations to enlightenment. Thus, because of his many different aspects, Padmasambhava is known in Tibet by many different names: [list]. He is also known by the names of his eight manifestations: [list].

These multidimensional and at times almost "hidden" aspects of Padmasambhava are looked upon with perplexity by many scholars and historians who accept only what they feel has been historically proven about Padmasambhava's life—for instance, his relationships with King Trisong Detsen, with Abbot Shantiraksita, and with the Tibetan translators; they also accept Padmasambhava's own written works, as well as his translations and commentaries on Tantric texts.

But Padmasambhava's life is more than just this historical reality. It is the culmination of altruistic actions manifesting in perfect human form. His life also resonates with the qualities of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. All he does is done exclusively for the sake of others, and whatever he does will always help them....

His presence remains as potent and as real as ever through the power of the Vajrayana—for his blessings touch deeply all who come into contact with its teachings....

Padmasambhava, embodying the teachings of the Vajrayana, is both birthless and deathless. He may disappear in one form, but he will reappear again in countless others. His enlightenment lineage sheds its light throughout the world—and for each living being, past, present, and future, there will be a Padmasambhava. (pp. xxxiii-xxxiv)

Although *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava* was revealed as a treasure in the fourteenth century, it is not an archeological find or an obscure text. It remains one of the main sources of inspiration for modern Tibetan readers. For example, a friend of mine, a retired Tibetan man in Darjeeling, reads the book aloud to himself every month. He spends his days doing housework and cooking for his wife and son, and he works hard at what he wants to complete before he dies, a second one hundred million recitations of Guru Rinpoché's mantra. When his other children and grandson visit, they often ask to see the string of ivory beads given him by one of his spiritual masters, Jamyong Kyentsé Chökyi Lodrö. My friend used those beads to count his first one hundred million Guru Rinpoché mantras. Such intense use wore them down, sometimes to nothing. (This time he

uses a string of sturdier beads, which I regretfully suspect are plastic.) This man is not unique in his own culture, the Buddhist wisdom culture of the Himalayas.

The last life story of Guru Rinpoché to have appeared in English (in 1993) is in fact, surprisingly, the first complete version of Guru Rinpoché's life translated directly from Tibetan to English: *The Lotus-Born*, translated by Eric Pema Kunsang. This version comes highly recommended—it is the one Jamgon Kongtrul chose to present Guru Rinpoché in the first volume of his 111-volume *Treasury of Rediscovered Teachings*—and the translation does it justice. What a relief to be able to sit down and read a treasure in which we can have full confidence, both in the words and the meaning. Although Eric Pema Kunsang is one of the most able and prolific Western translators, he kept relatively silent in this work, as is his custom. He put Guru Rinpoché's life into meaningful context by including with his translation a foreword by Dilgo Kyentsé Rinpoché and a short work by Tsélé Natsok Rangdrol, a master of the seventeenth century.

We can draw two conclusions from this outline of the coming of Guru Rinpoché to the Western world of print. First, it has been a slow but sure process of embodiment, from the ethereal realms of history and myth, to a vivid presence in and relevance to our spiritual lives. Second, and what astonished me as I collected material for this small study, is that so little has appeared on the subject of this master. I expected to find much more, as Guru Rinpoché looms large in every tantric practice center of Tibetan lineages I have visited in Asia, Europe, or North America. Modern practitioners of countless backgrounds other than Tibetan are deeply devoted to Guru Rinpoché. What seems clear from the books mentioned above is that, if the reader is attentive, he or she can find Guru Rinpoché in the printed word, but that the printed page must be considered a secondary source.

The primary source for Guru Rinpoché's presence in the West cannot be found in media of any kind, but in the direct teaching of spiritual guides steeped in Himalayan tantric Buddhism. It remains an oral or even a non-verbal transmission, passed from one human being, a qualified teacher, to another, a worthy disciple. I suspect that published translations are used, as the original texts always were, as complements to a teaching given directly, in person. It had been that way in my own experience, but that it is still this way for most practitioners was for me a startling discovery. As a translator for one manifestation of Guru Rinpoché, Kalu Rinpoché, I often felt

that he could have been reading from the Tibetan Yellow Pages for all that the audience tuned in to his words. I didn't blame his words, my translation, or the auditors. They were not asleep, quite the contrary. They were riveted by his presence, which spoke so much louder than mere words. In his case, as with so many other living Guru Rinpoché's of recent memory, people of all cultures and languages in the audience are way ahead of their own linguistic or technical sophistication. They are receptive to a mind-to-mind, heart-to-heart transmission of wisdom, or to a symbolic transmission, through gestures or gazes, etc. I suppose that as a professional word-person I should be aghast at this, but in fact I am delighted for everyone concerned, teachers and students alike. It seems much more meaningful to meet Guru Rinpoché in person than through a book. Now that he is among us, in books and in person, the nature of the relationship we make with him is the subject of the next section.

## Timeless Guru Rinpoché and Wisdom Bridges to the Present

TO SAY ONLY that Guru Rinpoché was an Indian master who visited Tibet in the eighth and ninth century and that he established tantric Buddhism throughout the Himalayan region is "just so twentieth century." Such statements, while true, render too much to History and far too little to the reality of Guru Rinpoché's place in tantric Buddhists' spiritual lives. More than ten centuries later, do we consider him on a par with the eighty-four *mahasiddhas*, the great accomplished masters of Indian tantric Buddhism? Or with Atisha, Pa-dampa Sangyé, and other Indians who taught in Tibet? Or with Marpa, Kyungpo Naljor, and other Tibetans who sought masters in India and brought their teachings back home to Tibet? No, a very emphatic no—he flies far above them all.

Consider a statement by Dudjom Rinpoché in his monumental *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*. His Holiness' work touches everything in the breadth and depth of the Nyingma tradition, rendering the pages he devotes to the subject of Guru Rinpoché's life (vol. 1, pp. 512-521) seemingly few. Yet at the end of the book, when he identifies himself as the author, Dudjom Rinpoché provides three of his own names, one fact concerning his ancestors, and this line, to sum up his qualifications as a writer: "The sunlight of [Padmasambhava] the great master of Oddiyana's compassion having penetrated my heart, I may boast that the lotus of my intellect did blossom a little." (p. 972) In other words, His Holiness credits his genius as a writer (he is generally acclaimed as among the very best) to Guru Rinpoché's blessing.

Sogyal Rinpoché writes:

For us Tibetans, Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoché, embodies a cosmic, timeless principle; he is the universal master. He has appeared count-

less times to the masters of Tibet...I have always turned to Padmasambhava in times of difficulty and crisis, and his blessing and power have never failed me. When I think of him, all my masters are embodied in him. To me he is completely alive at all moments, and the whole universe, at each moment, shines with his beauty, strength, and presence. (*The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, pp. 144–145)

Dilgo Kyentsé Rinpoché writes:

There is no manifestation of the Buddha that is not inseparably one with Guru Rinpoché, and so to pray to him is the same as praying to all the buddhas.

If we can pray with real fervor to Guru Rinpoché, he will remove all obstacles and enable us to progress along the path. All buddhas have the same compassion and the same love for sentient beings, but Guru Rinpoché has for countless kalpas [eons] made powerful prayers to benefit the beings of this difficult, degenerate age, who are victims of so much torment. If we pray fervently to him, he will look on us as his only child, and he will come at once, from the land of the *rakshasas* [cannibal demons] in the south-west, to appear before us.

Whenever we pray to Guru Rinpoché, we should not just mouth the words, but pray one-pointedly from the core of our heart, from the marrow of our bones, and with a devotion that consumes our mind.

To attain the omniscient state of buddhahood, it is necessary to realize the empty nature of all phenomena, through which the wisdom inherent in our fundamental buddha nature is unveiled. In the Root Vehicle of Characteristics, it takes three great kalpas of accumulating merit to achieve such realization. But through the path of devotion to the teacher, even an ordinary individual will achieve realization in one lifetime, thanks to the power of devotion and the blessing of the guru. On the other hand, to expect realization without faith and devotion is the same as hoping that the sun will rise on a cave that faces north.

We should constantly keep in mind that Guru Rinpoché is our sole refuge, whether in happiness or in sorrow, whether in the higher realms of samsara or in the lower. Without any second thoughts, we should give our whole mind to him, like throwing a pebble into a lake. (*Guru Yoga*, pp. 49–50)

Non-Tibetans can now meet Guru Rinpoché, but the encounter can only be meaningful with faith. Our faith and devotion provide the only access possible to the timeless, ever-present Guru Rinpoché, and this faith and devotion must begin in relation to a human spiritual master and a lineage. For some people this is an impossible task, which should not be a problem unless they imagine they want to practice tantra. Persons who cannot force themselves to board an airplane cannot fly; people who cannot accept a relationship based on faith and devotion cannot practice tantra. Dzongsar Jamyong Kyentsé Rinpoché writes in the same book:

The purpose of Dharma practice is to attain enlightenment. Actually, attaining enlightenment is exactly the same as ridding ourselves of ignorance, and the root of ignorance is the ego. Whichever path we take, whether it's the long and disciplined route, or the short and wild one, at the end of it the essential point is that we eliminate ego.

There are many, many different ways we can do this, for example through Shamatha [tranquility] meditation, and they all work to one extent or another. However, since we have been with our ego for so many lifetimes and we are so familiar with it, every time we take to a path in our efforts to eliminate ego, that very path is hijacked by ego and manipulated in such a way that rather than crushing our ego, our path only helps to reinforce it.

That is the reason why, in the Vajrayana, guru devotion, or Guru Yoga, is taught as a vital and essential practice. As the guru is a living, breathing human being, he or she is able to deal directly with your ego. Reading a book about how to eliminate ego may be interesting, but you will never be in awe of a book, and anyway, books are entirely open to your interpretation. A book cannot talk or react to you, whereas the guru can and will stir up your ego so that eventually it will be eliminated altogether. Whether this is achieved wrathfully or gently doesn't matter, but in the end this is what the guru is there to do, and this is why guru devotion is so important. (*Ibid.*, pp. 17–18)

I believe that all tantric Buddhists should be as frank as this master about their path and what sets it apart from the other Buddhist paths: faith and devotion to the spiritual master. In Sanskrit they say, "Guru Yoga"; in English we might say, "communion with the spiritual master's innate wisdom

mind." Tantra takes pride in its plethora of practices; it aims to answer everyone's needs with easy, accessible, and efficient ways to enlightenment. Yet every single one of those skillful means depends on the spiritual master, a human being from whom we receive transmission of empowerment, the lineage, and guidance; and, after we receive instruction, our success or failure depends not on our diligence, not on our goodness, and not on our intelligence, but on our faith and devotion to our spiritual master. Tantra cannot be all things to all people. Some of us have serious issues with a relationship grounded in the intense devotion tantra demands. It is in no way a judgment of those individuals or of tantra to say that they were not made for one another. Tantra is not to everyone's taste, nor can it ever be made to be.

Guru Rinpoché is for most Himalayan Buddhists the second Buddha, the Buddha of every form and teaching of enlightenment, with an accent on the tantras. Just as the Great Way teaches us to identify our enlightened nature and call it "buddha-nature," tantra teaches us to first see our teachers as Guru Rinpoché. Then we see all phenomena as Guru Rinpoché, down to every atom of our own body, every atom of all beings equally, and every atom of every blade of grass, every grain of sand. Finally, when we recognize our own innate, timeless awareness, it as well is none other than Guru Rinpoché. Dzongsar Jamyong Kyentsé Rinpoché writes:

The first stage of guru devotion, then, is to awaken and enhance our devotion, until it becomes sound and strong and we can actually look upon the guru as the Buddha.

Gradually we will reach the second stage, where we don't simply think the guru is the Buddha, we *see* he is the Buddha. As our devotion becomes stronger still, it is with a growing sense of joy that we begin to rely entirely on the guru for everything. An inner confidence arises, an absolute certainty that the guru is the only source of refuge. No longer do we have to create or fabricate our devotion—now it comes quite naturally.

Then, all our experiences, good or bad, are manifestations of the guru. Everything we experience in life becomes beneficial and has a purpose; everything we encounter becomes a teaching. Total trust and devotion for the guru is born within our heart, and the blessing of the guru dissolves into our mind.

With this, we reach the third stage, which is when we realize that our mind is none other than the guru whom we have seen as the Buddha. (*Ibid.*, p. 19)

This Guru Rinpoché, while timeless, is introduced to us thanks to a lineage of masters who have passed on their wisdom in an uninterrupted stream to the present. In the preface to *Masters of Meditation and Miracles*, Tulku Thondup makes a statement that should be repeated in every Tibetan translation: "It was improper and indeed impossible for me to try to avoid the typical characteristic of Tibetan biographies, namely the inclusion of endless lists of teachers, teachings, and disciples of the masters, even though those lists might be boring for readers who are not Tibetan." (p. xiv) He then traces the lineages from Guru Rinpoché and other great masters down to the present, each an essential link. Each deserves to be honored by our attention. How many of us learned (or still learn?) the names of members of sports teams, or of rock bands, or of political parties, during their fleeting moments of fame and fortune? We definitely have the capacity to learn the names and personal histories of the enlightened individuals who have contributed to the wisdom bridge that reaches us.

Lineages of wisdom have been compared to electricity that flows from a power plant to our homes: if the flow is interrupted or faulty at any point, the flow of electricity stops. The members of lineages from Guru Rinpoché should not be faceless, nameless persons: they have kept real and alive what is most important to us—the full presence and blessing of Guru Rinpoché. Different masters reflect the needs of their time on a superficial level, and thus might seem foreign to us, but the wisdom-electricity we receive from our teachers has passed through them and, thanks to them, is exactly the same as it was a thousand years ago.

Guru Rinpoché first appeared as an Indian, a guise that caused his expulsion from Tibet. Yet, with some more reflection over time, Tibetans came to worship Indian spirituality and Indian masters. To the present day, the focus of Tibetan Buddhism remains fixed not upon indigenous Tibetan masters, however impressive they were, but upon non-Tibetans, Buddha Shakyamuni and Guru Rinpoché.

These days, Guru Rinpoché first appeared to us primarily in a Tibetan guise. The Tibetan masters' priceless gift to us has been to introduce foreigners worldwide to Guru Rinpoché's timeless wisdom in such ways as to

make it comprehensible, attractive, and accessible. They have had to confront in their new students many non-conducive attitudes, such as distrust, self-seriousness, and solemnity, but they disarmed and relaxed us with their light humor, gentle warmth, and sincere concern (or love, to be more precise). Not only did they bring Guru Rinpoché into our lives, they made it seem that the most natural, clear-headed, and light-hearted thing to do is to discover eternal Guru Rinpoché within ourselves. What we saw as insurmountably distant proved to be innate, and what intimidated us proved to be child's play.

Modern spiritual masters of all races now bring Guru Rinpoché to our level, but that is not to say that it would not be wise for us, on our part, to rise to the occasion. If you feel the urge to do yourself an enormous favor, attend any lecture by the Dalai Lama (or so many other tantric masters I could name) when he visits your continent. Or plunge into *Journey to Enlightenment*, Matthieu Ricard's book on the life of Dilgo Kyentsé Rinpoché. Or read Sogyal Rinpoché's account of life with Dzongsar Kyentsé Rinpoché and Khandro Tsering Chödrön in *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. Who are these unfathomable beings if they are not Guru Rinpoché?

I cite them because they are persons of living memory, whom we can meet in person or in photographs or in words spoken directly in English, and I mention them because they present us with a paradox. On the one hand, our recognition of our inner nature must accompany us on a "kitchen-sink level," as Trungpa Rinpoché used to remind us, and yet our inner Guru Rinpoché's positive qualities are what we call, for lack of better words, inconceivable and inexpressible. These masters, who introduce us so surely and gently to what has always been our nature, making it seem so familiar and close, provide living proof of the wondrous qualities of that same nature's manifest expression, which surpass all measure and understanding.

Nothing is easier than to bring others down to our level, particularly in cultures where it is taken as a sign of keen intelligence to view every person and situation as a challenge to "name the ten things wrong with this picture." The presence of Guru Rinpoché in so many forms in our world makes us question life in a way pre-1959 persons rarely had to. Life isn't the same after meeting the Dalai Lama or Kyentsé Rinpoché and others. We can't erase them from our minds, as inconvenient as these open doors to

to enlightenment might be. We had other plans; we didn't ask to see so vividly another totally different horizon.

The question, How can I integrate this into my daily life? doesn't plumb the depth of the inquiry. I have translated for lamas in North America, Europe, and Asia, and have found this to be the typical North American question. I think the best answer is, You can't; don't even try. But I have to wonder about the question itself. What do you do when an event or an encounter changes your life? If you won a \$10,000,000 jackpot, if a dear friend dies, or if you fall deeply in love, do you ask, How can I integrate this into my daily life? Some events change us, are earth-shattering, and are not meant to be integrated into what can sometimes feel like a rat race existence. Meeting Guru Rinpoché is one such event.

In the interest of keeping their spiritual lives as "simple" as possible, some Buddhists seem to want Buddhism without the Buddha or Guru Rinpoché (in either male or female, Asian or non-Asian forms), and especially not in flesh and blood forms, with minds and voices of their own. Perhaps too much has been made of the Zen master's pointing-out instruction, "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!" It is a piece of advice probably given to those whose spiritual practice is maturing, but who have become distracted by outer virtuous practice, and who should focus on inner, ever present enlightenment.

Nevertheless, this is not helpful guidance to those who meet the Buddha or Guru Rinpoché for the first time. How good, how wise, how compassionate, how strong can we imagine another person can be? How important is it for us to associate with such a person? What room do we have for change in our lives besides that which will be forced upon us in sickness, aging, and death? How much have we undermined our lives so far by control and compartmentalization, by "integrating" anything new into our daily life to the point that it becomes another unchallenging piece of decor? When we lie on our death bed, do we really imagine that we will think, I should have spent more time at the office, I should have spent more of my hard-earned money on my car, mortgage and gadgets, and I was right to regard those seemingly better than me with suspicion or complacency and those below me with contempt or apathy, so I could spend my life worrying about myself.

I personally see no evidence of a decline in tantric Buddhist wisdom lineages, or of a lessening of Guru Rinpoché's living presence. For example, in

the first part of the twentieth century, Jamyong Kyentsé Chökyi Lodrö (1893-1959) appears to have been the master of every lama. In the second half, everyone in the tantric community seems to have gathered at the feet of Dilgo Kyentsé Rinpoché and Dudjom Rinpoché. These days, Chadrak Rinpoché, Dongsé Thinley Norbu Rinpoché, Dodrupchen Rinpoché, Sakya Trizen, Karmapa, Tai Situpa, Bokar Tulku, and many, many others offer gateways to Guru Rinpoché's timeless and enduring presence in the world. It is my hope that the biographies and supplications below will evoke equally for the reader both Guru Rinpoché and his modern wisdom manifestations.

## Translations of Tibetan Texts on Guru Rinpoché



*Guru Rinpoché*

**T**HIS PART OF THE BOOK contains a collection of translations of Tibetan texts that relate different versions of the life of Guru Rinpoché, the master who towers far above all others in Himalayan tantric Buddhism:

1. *A Biography of Guru Rinpoché* by Jamgon Kongtrul.

This text is drawn from a long work (*History of the Sources of the Profound Treasures and the Treasure Revealers*) that provides details of the lives of Guru Rinpoché, his twenty-five disciples, his consorts, and Tibet's treasure revealers. It offers an excellent short introduction to Guru Rinpoché. Kongtrul used it to start his book; His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoché borrowed from it in his *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* (vol. 1, pp. 512-521), and Eric Pema Kunsang included a translation of it in *Dakini Teachings* (pp. xv-xxiv). Although I discovered these other translations after I had completed my own, I decided to include this account here for the same reason these authors did—Kongtrul's writing gives us an excellent short introduction to Guru Rinpoché.

2. *The Immaculate White Lotus* by Dorjé Tso

This short biography of Guru Rinpoché was written by a Tibetan disciple, Dorjé Tso, and concealed as a treasure text, to be unearthed centuries later by an incarnation of Yeshé Tsogyal, Sera Khandro Déwé Dorjé (1899-1947).<sup>20</sup> Sera Khandro writes at the end of this treasure text that she revealed it at the age of twenty-eight. This treasure is still popular in eastern Tibet, where she spent most of her life.

3. *The Indian Version of the Life of Guru Rinpoché* by Taranata

The official title of this book is *Threefold Confidence*, a reference to its sources outside the treasure tradition. The book's subtitle (by which it is most often referred to in Tibetan), *The Indian Version [of the Life of Guru Rinpoché]*, testifies to the main interest the book held for Tibetan readers—its account of Guru Rinpoché's life before coming to

Tibet and after his departure was unknown before this work. Taranata (written *Taranatha* in Tibetan, 1575–1634), a Tibetan master with an Indian name, wrote it at the age of thirty-six, based on accounts he heard from his Indian masters, which he supplemented with information he gleaned from Tibetan histories. He paints a picture of Guru Rinpoché's life very different from what we are accustomed to reading in treasure texts. The author aims to be objective, but he is not a nihilist; the miracles he admits as historical fact challenge any materialist's belief system. In fact, Taranata had deep faith in Guru Rinpoché and believed himself to be a treasure revealer who missed his calling. Jamgon Kongtrul included this text in the first volume of his *Treasury of Rediscovered Teachings*.

4. *The Bön Version of the Life of Guru Rinpoché*  
by Jamyong Kyentsé Wongpo

Another account of Guru Rinpoché's life that Kongtrul included in the same treasury is this one, written by a famous Buddhist master, Jamyong Kyentsé Wongpo (1820–1892), Kongtrul's master and friend. Not all Tibetan Buddhists are Tibetans, and not all Tibetans are Buddhist. There are many patriotic Tibetan non-Buddhists, be they Communist, Christian, atheist, Muslim, or Bönpo. The last of these have a symbiotic relationship with the country's Buddhists: each spirituality has borrowed extensively from the other, although they remain separate. Some fundamentalist Buddhists might view with discomfort the hazy border between Bön and Buddhism, but many Bön practitioners are happy to explain that the entirety of Buddhism's 2,500-year history is just the tip of the iceberg of Bön's cosmic time and enlightened activity. Jamgon Kongtrul himself converted to Buddhism in his late teens but retained a deep respect for his birth religion.

5. *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters*  
by Guru Rinpoché

This treasure text contains Tibet's best-loved prayers to Guru Rinpoché. As Erik Pema Kunsang states, "The daily practice of these supplications embodies the entire life story of Padmasambhava, all his lineages of transmission, and all levels of his teaching." (*The Lotus-Born*, p. 225) Jamgon Kongtrul asked his retreatants to recite all seven

supplications daily during their three-year, three-fortnight retreat. Each prayer was recited at a different moment, to punctuate meditation sessions with inspiration from the supplications and visualizations of Guru Rinpoché.

6. *Visualizations to Accompany the Supplications*  
by Jamgon Kongtrul

This collection begins and ends with words written by Jamgon Kongtrul. He dictated this text in the last year of his life (1899), after he was too weak to lift his pen. In his introduction to it, Kongtrul makes it clear he believes that the *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters*, however important they may be, should be accompanied by visualizations. He did not invent these meditations—they too come from treasure texts—but he gave them a convenient, practical format. Although on the page they might seem ornate, they take life when joined to their respective supplications.

This book ends with three appendices:

Appendix 1 includes translations of short biographies by Jamgon Kongtrul of the five individuals who received the *Supplications* from Guru Rinpoché. Further, I have written a short overview of each supplication, to introduce its content for those unfamiliar with tantric Buddhist terminology.

Appendix 2 contains musings on the subject of poetry in Buddhism and Buddhism in poetry. I wish to draw the attention of those concerned with Buddhism as it appears in Western languages to the fact that we translators, myself included, have not adequately addressed the issue of poetry in our books. Thus, Western Buddhism lags far behind its Asian counterparts in the aesthetic pleasure afforded by its liturgies and sacred literature.

Appendix 3 holds a long passage from *The Flower Ornament Discourse* (*Avatamsaka Sutra*), one of the most important Buddhist scriptures, translated by Thomas Cleary. This text, which predates Guru Rinpoché's visit to Tibet by many centuries, relates a story of a lotus-born enlightened being. In this case, however, the Lotus-Born Master in question is a woman.



A Biography of Guru Rinpoché  
*by Jamgon Kongtrul*

## Introduction

IN THE FOLLOWING TRANSLATION of Jamgon Kongtrul's biography of Guru Rinpoché, and in other versions of his life, I have written the words "biography" or "life" or "life story" where the term "complete liberation" appears in the Tibetan text. "Complete liberation" or "freedom" translates the Tibetan *nom-tar* (*rnam thar*), an honorific word to indicate that the subject of the biography is an individual who has reached a state of freedom, either before or during the lifetime described. Jamgon Kongtrul, in his autobiography, which he designates a "[life story of] complete liberation" explains the term:

*Nom-tar* [*rnam thar* in Tibetan] is *vimoksha* in Sanskrit, meaning "complete freedom" or "complete liberation." It is the recounting of the story [of the attainment of complete freedom]. In the case of an ordinary person, [*nom-tar* indicates] complete freedom from life in the miserable existences attained through pure faith. In the case of an above-average person, it indicates complete freedom from the ocean of cyclic existence attained through pure disengagement [from worldly concerns]. In the case of an exceptional person, it indicates complete liberation from the extremes of cyclic existence and attainment of perfect peace through pure higher motivation [to help others]. In brief, a *nom-tar* is the telling of the most sublime story—that of attainment of complete freedom from suffering and its causes and of subsequent acts which liberate others from their limitations. (*The Autobiography of Jamgon Kongtrul*, p. 4a)

One of the main interests Kongtrul's *Biography of Guru Rinpoché* holds for readers, Tibetan or non-Tibetan, is the importance of Kongtrul's writ-

ing on any subject. In this case, we find in his words the best expression of a mature Buddhist's orientation toward Guru Rinpoché. Kongtrul acknowledges the many versions of the Lotus-Born Master's life and manages to find room for them all, while he presents what seems to be his personal preference, the lotus-birth account. Kongtrul's view is always pertinent for tantric Buddhists, particularly for those of the Kagyu or Nyingma persuasion. We can read him to learn the best, most sophisticated non-sectarian view on any subject. Even if we cannot accept his perspective, we read him in the confidence that his views have provided a major influence for the Himalayan region's finest minds since his time to the present day.

## A Biography of Guru Rinpoché by Jamgon Kongtrul

**L**OTUS-BORN MASTER, the second Buddha, appeared in this land of Tibet as a spiritual leader who guided an infinite number of disciples by means of general instruction in the heart of the Buddha's doctrine, the Vajra Way of Secret Mantra, and in particular by means of the profound treasures' enlightened activity. This great master was neither an ordinary individual who gradually traversed the spiritual path nor an exalted bodhi-sattva who reached a stage of awakening. He was an embodiment of enlightenment made manifest by the Buddha Infinite Light [*Amitabha*] and by the incomparable [Buddha] Shakyamuni to guide to enlightenment in myriad ways human and non-human beings who are otherwise disinclined to spiritual life. Although it could be said that the recounting of a mere fraction of his life story surpasses the powers of even spiritually advanced persons, a brief account of his life follows.

Within the body of ultimate enlightenment's pure land, Radiant Vajra Essence, Guru Rinpoché gained original, natural, manifest awakening within the primordially pure ground of liberation. His name is renowned as the original lord protector, [Buddha] Immutable Light [also known as Buddha Ever-Excellent].<sup>21</sup>

In the self-manifest pure land of enlightenment's perfect rapture, Drum-beat of Brahma, Guru Rinpoché spontaneously appears in infinite displays endowed with the five certainties, and is known as [Buddha] Brimming Lake [commonly known as Buddha Illuminator or *Vairochana*] of the five families' enlightened wisdom.

His creative display produces measureless arrays of pure lands and bodies of enlightenment's five families, gathered in the outwardly-manifest, semi-apparent pure land of enlightenment's intrinsic manifest body, Great

Brahma Eon.<sup>22</sup> [These bodies and pure lands,] which appear to lord bodhi-sattvas of the tenth stage of awakening, are cloud-like patterns of Guru Rinpoché's continuous wheel of inexhaustible adornments of wisdom. He is thus known as Lotus Who Holds All.

To guide beings, he emanates miraculous displays of enlightenment's manifest bodies, which appear in infinite pure lands throughout the ten directions. Specifically, in our world-system alone, called Endurance, he appears in specific, manifest forms as one hundred teachers of the discourses and tantras, and illuminates fifty world-systems. In worlds adjacent to each of these in every direction, eight sublime forms of Guru Rinpoché manifest to guide beings to enlightenment.

Furthermore, the dakini Yeshé Tsogyal witnessed a special display of his forms. According to her account, the eastern Guru Vajra Brimming Lake's every pore contains one hundred billion pure lands, each of which contains one hundred billion world-systems. In each of these, one hundred billion of the Guru's forms appear and each of these creates one hundred billion emanations. Each of these guides one hundred billion disciples to enlightenment. Yeshé Tsogyal said that at the center and in the other directions he manifests similar unlimited displays, such as Teachers [i.e., Buddhas] of the four other families of enlightenment.

In particular, in [our world] Land of Jambu alone, where his manifest form of enlightenment appears in a single region to guide beings, different ways of seeing Guru Rinpoché have been reported, based on differences in his disciples' fortunes and capabilities. Among these descriptions, those found in the Canon's transmission of Vajra Dagger [Sanskrit: *Vajra Kilaya*, Tibetan: *Dorjé Purba*] and other [old tantras], and most accounts that originate in India, relate that he was born the son of Oddiyana's king or government minister. Most treasure texts only relate accounts of his life beginning with a miraculous birth. Some accounts even relate that he appeared in this world from a lightning bolt on the summit of the meteorite mountain of Malaya. Each story tells of his amazing life; none is definitive and infinite numbers of such stories are possible. As he said,

For the benefit of persons in the future who preserve tantric commitments, I will write and conceal nineteen hundred accounts of my life.

This passes far beyond the conceptual limits of ordinary persons. However, based on the experience of some of his disciples, I will relate a mere outline of the best-known account from the treasure texts, his life beginning with a miraculous birth.

Great oceans lie in each of the eastern, southern, and northern directions from the land of Oddiyana, situated to the west of India. Southwest of Oddiyana, there lies an island in a lake close to the land of cannibal demons. There, by the Buddha's blessings, a multi-colored lotus grew. In its center, a young child of eight years of age appeared from a golden vajra marked by the [Sanskrit] syllable *Hri*, itself emanated from the heart of the lord protector of Blissful Pure Land [Buddha Infinite Light, *Amitabha*]. The marks and signs of perfection adorned the boy's body. He held a vajra and a lotus while he taught Buddhism to the island's gods and dakinis.

At the same time, Indrabhuti, ruler [of Oddiyana], made offerings to the Three Jewels because he had no heir. After his generosity exhausted the treasury, he traveled to the island to retrieve a wish-fulfilling jewel. On the return journey, his minister Krishna Dhara first saw the child. When the king met the child, he adopted him as his son and invited him to the palace. The king gave him the names Lotus-Born [Sanskrit: *Padmakara*] and Lake-Born Vajra [Tibetan: *Tso-kyé Dorjé*]. The king asked the child to accept a seat on a throne produced by the wish-fulfilling jewel. The jewel also provided a rain of food, clothing, and gems that satisfied everyone's needs.

The child's exuberant play led countless disciples to spiritual maturity. [At adulthood] he married the dakini Light Bearer and assumed guardianship of the kingdom of Oddiyana, which he ruled according to Buddhist law. He was known as King With Hair Drawn Up in a Crown.

At that time, he realized that if he continued to rule the kingdom, he would not accomplish a prodigious wave of activity for others' benefit. He asked his father's permission to abdicate, but this was not granted. Therefore, while dancing playfully, he pretended to lose his grip on a trident that pierced the son of an evil government minister. As punishment for killing the boy, he was exiled to the charnel grounds. In Cool Grove, Grove of Delight, and Sosa Place, he engaged in the conduct of tantric discipline. The dakinis Vanquisher of Demons and Preserver of Peace blessed him by bestowing empowerments. When he brought the dakinis of the charnel

grounds under his control, he was known as Preserver of Peace [Sanskrit: *Shantaraksheta*].

He traveled to an island in Lake Danakosha, where he practiced meditation following the symbolic instructions of the dakinis of Secret Mantra and brought the island's dakinis under his control. His tantric activity in the Grove of Turmoil led [the female Buddha] Vajra Sow [Sanskrit: *Vajravahni*] to reveal herself and to bless him. He bound under oath the ocean's *nagas* and the heavens' planets and constellations. The three locations' spiritual heroes and dakinis bestowed accomplishment upon him; he was known by the name Fierce Vajra Adept [Tibetan: *Dorjé Drakpo Tsal*].

He then traveled to Vajra Seat [Bodhgaya], where he displayed various miracles. Everyone asked, "Who are you?" "I am a self-manifest buddha!" he declared, but no one believed him and all reviled him [as an impostor]. For this and many other reasons, he journeyed to the land of Zahor, where he accepted monk's vows from the master Prabha Hasti. He became known by the name Lion of the Shakyas [Tibetan: *Shakya Sengé*].

He received the transmission of the yoga tantras eighteen times and saw those tantras' deities in visions. He accepted empowerment from Kungamo, the dakini Secret Wisdom who appeared as a fully ordained nun. She transformed him into the [Sanskrit] syllable *Houng* and swallowed him. While he was inside her body, she bestowed the full outer, inner, and secret empowerments upon him and then ejected him through her lotus [i.e., vagina]. He thus demonstrated the purification of the three obscurations.

India's erudite and accomplished masters granted him the transmissions of discourses, tantras, and all subjects of study. Principally, the eight awareness holders gave him the Eight Great Sacred Circles of Deities; Buddha Guhya gave him Great Illusion, and Shri Singha gave him Great Completion [Tibetan: *Dzok-chen*]. In his display of study and training he became learned in each instruction after merely a single [period of study] and he had visions of deities even without having meditated upon them. He became known by the name Intelligent Supreme Desire [Tibetan: *Loden Chok-sé*] and demonstrated consummate attainment of the state of a fully mature awareness holder.<sup>23</sup>

Mandarava, daughter of Arsadhara, king of Zahor, was a woman who showed all the signs of being a dakini. The Master seduced her and accepted her as his consort and companion in spiritual practice. After three months of longevity meditation in Maratika Cave, the lord protector Buddha Infi-

nite Life [*Amitayus*] appeared in person, bestowed empowerment, and blessed them as inseparable from him. When the Buddha imparted a billion tantras of longevity, they attained accomplishment of the state of an awareness holder who controls longevity. Their bodies became adamant, beyond birth and death.

To guide the kingdom of Zahor on the path to enlightenment, he traveled there and became a beggar. The king and his ministers decided to execute him by burning him, but he performed a miracle, appearing with his consort on a lotus in the center of a lake of sesame oil. This inspired faith [in the king and his ministers] and he converted them all to Buddhism. [His instruction] led them to the stage of irreversible departure from the wheel of life.

To guide the kingdom of Oddiyana on the path to enlightenment, he traveled there as a beggar. The people of the kingdom recognized him and the evil government minister [whose son he had killed] and others tried to burn him on a pyre of sandalwood. He again demonstrated a miracle by appearing with his consort on a lotus in the center of a lake. As a symbol of liberating beings from the wheel of life he wore a garland of skulls. Thus he became known as Lotus Skull-Garlanded Adept [Tibetan: *Péma Tö-treng Tsal*].

He remained [in Oddiyana] as spiritual advisor to the king for thirteen years, during which time he converted the entire kingdom to Buddhism. He bestowed teaching, related to *The Collection of the Canon: An Ocean of Spiritual Instructions*, which brings disciples to spiritual maturity and liberation. All those who had a karmic connection with him, including the king and queen, attained the state of a sublime awareness holder. He was known as Lotus King [Tibetan: *Péma Gyalpo*].

As predicted in *The Miraculous Sphere of Activity Discourse*, he manifested as a fully ordained monk called Indrasena to guide King Ashoka on the path to enlightenment. After the monk inspired Ashoka to incontrovertible faith, the king constructed in one night throughout the continent of Jambu, ten million stupas containing the essence of the Transcendent Buddha's relics.

To defeat some powerful non-Buddhist kings who threatened the Buddhist doctrine, the Master used a variety of means, including forcible transfers of consciousness. One king offered him [food mixed with] poison, but it had no effect. [Some people] threw him into the Ganges River, which

then flowed upstream and he danced in space. He became known as Youth Who Soars in Space Like a Garuda.

Further, he assumed many physical forms and names, including the master Sarouha, who brought *The Tantra of Adamantine Joy* into this world; Brahmin Saraha; Dombi Héruka; Virupa; and the great Krishnacharin. He appeared in the great charnel grounds, such as Complete on Enlightenment's Form, where he imparted the instructions of Secret Mantra to the dakinis. Outer and inner arrogant spirits gave him their vitality mantras and he installed them as guardians of the Buddhist doctrine. At this time he was known as Radiant Sun [Tibetan: *Nyima Özer*].

At Vajra Seat [Bodhgaya], five hundred non-Buddhist teachers disputed the Buddhist teachings. The Master challenged them to a debate and a show of powers; he emerged victorious. When they retaliated by reciting destructive mantras, he reversed their effect with a forceful mantra offered to him by the dakini Vanquisher of Demons. A great bolt of lightning struck, forcibly liberating the non-Buddhist teachers [i.e., forcibly transferring their consciousnesses to a pure realm]; their village was burned and the remaining teachers converted to Buddhism. On this occasion, when he raised aloft Buddhism's victory banner, he was known as Lion's Roar [Tibetan: *Sengé Dra-drok*].

To this point, he had demonstrated the exhaustion of the three sources of contamination and completion of the sublime path of an awareness holder with control of longevity.

At the cave of Yonglé Shö [Parping, Nepal], on the border of India and Nepal, he accepted the Nepalese princess Shakya Devi, daughter of the Nepalese King Punyadhara, as his companion in meditation practice. When he engaged in supreme practice based on the meditation of the glorious Yongdak Héruka, demons, cannibal demons, and powerful spirits created obstacles: rain did not fall for three years, and diseases and famines spread. He sent to India for instructions from his masters for overcoming obstacles; just the arrival of two persons carrying the tantras and transmission of Vajra Dagger was sufficient to cause the obstacles to become pacified naturally. Rain fell, and the diseases and famines ceased. Both the Master and his consort attained supreme accomplishment: they displayed the form of an awareness holder of Great Seal. He concluded that although meditation on Yongdak Héruka confers great accomplishment, it resembles a trader who must confront many obstacles. An escort like Vajra Dagger is essential

[for the meditation's success]. Therefore, he composed many texts combining the meditations of Yongdak Héruka and Vajra Dagger. He also bound under oath all male and female worldly spirits, such as the sixteen dagger guardians, and installed them as guardians of Buddhism.

At other times he taught Buddhism according to his disciples' fortunes in lands adjacent to Oddiyana, such as Hurmuju, Sikadhara, Dhamakosa, and Ruk-mala; in Taru kingdoms, such as Tira-huti; and in places such as Kamarlu. He helped many beings by his display of common accomplishments: he found springs where there had been no water and he diverted the course of large rivers underground.

Images of non-Buddhist deities spontaneously appeared in three regions of India—the east, south, and center—and caused serious harm to the Buddhist doctrine. All three images were destroyed by the power of his mastery of Vajra Dagger. The Buddhist community grew widely in the land of Kaccha, but the Turkish king gathered his army to invade. As they crossed the Nili River in boats, the Master made a threatening gesture that caused five hundred of the army's boats to sink. The Turks never again threatened the country.

It cannot be clearly ascertained when the Master appeared in the land of Damido, but he gradually brought to the path of enlightenment non-human beings—such as the dakinis—and the humans [of that country], and he had them build temples. Even to the present day, this master's tradition of instructions for the study, explanation, and meditation of the four classes of tantras—particularly the meditations of Joyous Vajra [Sanskrit: *Hévajra*], Circle of the Secret Moon, Yongdak Héruka, Horse-Neck [Sanskrit: *Hayagriva*], Vajra Dagger, and King of the Mamos—has remained and spreads there. Accounts from Damido relate that he left that country for the land of the cannibal demons in the southwest. The above stories originate in Indian histories and are well-known.<sup>24</sup>

In general it has been said that he lived in India working for the benefit of Buddhism for 3,600 years. Apparently, some learned persons explain this as a calculation based on half years [as years] or simply as an indication of many years [without it being precise].

In addition, in order to bring Mongolia and China to the path of enlightenment, he assumed the forms of a clairvoyant king and a powerful yogi. Furthermore, in Zhong-Zhoung he assumed the form of a spontaneously appearing child called Tavi Hricha, who bestowed the instructions of the

aural lineage of Great Completion, leading many fortunate persons to accomplish a body of light.

These provide examples of how his enlightened activity's myriad forms, suited to the needs of lands of different races and languages, led all individuals to the path of freedom. Such enlightened activity exceeds all measure.

How he came to this land of Tibet is described as follows. At the age of twenty, the Buddhist king of Tibet Trisong Détsen, an emanation of Bodhisattva Gentle Glorious Melody [*Manjushri-gosha*], developed the wish to spread Buddhism far and wide in Tibet. He first invited from India the monastic preceptor Bodhisattva [also known as Shantiraksheeta]. This master taught the subjects of the links of causation and the ten virtues. At the age of twenty-one, the king laid the foundations for a temple, but Tibet's gods and demons prevented its construction from continuing. Heeding the preceptor's prophetic advice, the king dispatched five messengers as envoys to invite the great Master to Tibet. The Master also knew that the time had come [for his activity in Tibet] and began his journey from Nepal to Tibet. On his way, he passed through Mong-youl to Ngari, and on to Ü [central Tibet], Tsang [western Tibet], and Do-Kham [eastern Tibet]. In a display of miraculous powers, his feet touched all parts of Tibetan soil. During the course of his travels, he bound under oath all the powerful non-human spirits—principally the twelve *tenma*, thirteen hunting gods, and twenty-one *genyen*—and received their vitality mantras. He and the Lord of Tibet [i.e., the king] first met in the Tamarisk Grove at Red Rock.

At Hépori Mountain, he gathered all gods and cannibal demons under his command. When the construction on the foundations of Samyé resumed, gods and demons lent their help. In five years glorious Samyé Mingyur Lhun-gyi Drup Tsouk-lak Kong [Inconceivable, Changeless, Spontaneously-Built Temple] was completed. Its design is based upon the features of our world-system: Mount Meru, the four continents, the satellite continents, the sun, the moon, and the circular chain of iron mountains. It also includes three shrines of the three queens. Five marvelous signs appeared during the temple's consecration ceremony.

The Lord of Tibet then decided to fully establish the Buddha's doctrine by sponsoring the translation of Buddhist texts. Gifted young Tibetans were trained as translators, and other masters who preserved the collections of the Buddha's teachings were invited from India. Monastic ordination was gradually introduced, beginning with the experiment of seven

persons who received monastic ordination from the learned preceptor [Shantiraksheeta].

The preceptor and the Master, along with the [visiting] scholars [from India], worked together with the translators Bérotsana; the trio of Kawa Paltsek, Chokro Lu'i Gyaltzen, and Shang Yeshé Dé; and others to translate into Tibetan the entire Canon of discourses and tantras, and the most important treatises of commentary.

Bérotsana and Namké Nyingpo were sent to India, where Bérotsana received instruction in Great Completion from Shri Singha and Namké Nyingpo received instruction in Yongdak Héruka from Humkara. Each attained accomplishment in these meditations and spread them widely in Tibet.

The king beseeched the Master to bestow the Vajra Way instructions that lead to spiritual maturity and liberation. Thus, at Chimpu near Samyé, he revealed the arrangement of the Eight Great Sacred Circles of Deities to the king and eight subjects, and brought them to full maturity [within that sacred circle]. Each of the nine persons was entrusted with a [separate] transmission and all attained accomplishment related to their [designated] meditation. Furthermore, in Lhodrak, Karchu, Shotö, Tidro, and other locations, the Master conferred extraordinary, profound teachings related to the three yogas [Mahayoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga] to fortunate persons—the king, his children, and twenty-five subjects in particular.

[The account that the Master] stayed in Tibet for one hundred and eleven years is based on calculations of half years [as years]. According to that style of calculation, the Master arrived in Tibet when King Trisong Détsen was twenty-one years old. The king died at sixty-nine. It is said that the Master stayed for a few years after the king's death before he left for the land of cannibal demons. Therefore, he stayed for fifty-five years and six months—forty-eight years while the king was alive, and seven years and six months after his death.

Evil ministers fearful of the Master's powers asked him to leave Tibet. Although after eight years at Samyé he appeared to depart by flying from the top of a mountain at Mong-youl, this constituted [only the appearance] of an emanation. He continued to consult in private with the king; his real form traveled all over Tibet with Yeshé Tsogyal and the circle of disciples who had a karmic connection with him. There is no area of Tibetan soil larger than a horse's hoof left untouched by his feet. He consecrated all the

snow mountains, cliffs, hills, and lakes as places for meditation practice. At each location—twenty snowy cliffs of the Ngari area, twenty-one meditation places of Ü and Tsang, the twenty-five areas of sacred ground in Dö-Kham, and the hidden lands of upper, lower, and central Tibet (called the “three kings”), along with five valleys, three provinces, and one park—he designated a root, branch, flower and fruit.

The Master foresaw that the king’s grandson would be a manifestation of evil, who would cause the decline of Buddhism; therefore, he gave the king many prophecies concerning the future. After he conferred with the king, they decided to avert the decline of the Secret Mantra doctrine, to ensure the continual appearance of disciples, and to prevent the disappearance of the Master’s blessing, which cannot be restored once contaminated by evil persons. For these and other reasons, he concealed countless named and unnamed treasure texts, principally the hundred vital treasures of the king,<sup>25</sup> five great heart treasures, and twenty-five great profound treasures. For each he provided such details as a prophecy concerning the time of its retrieval, the person who would retrieve it, and the chief of the teaching who had a karmic connection to it.

In thirteen places named “Tiger’s Den,” such as Néring Sengé Dzong in Mönka [Bhutan], he took the form of an uncontrollably wrathful deity, bound all the major and minor arrogant gods and cannibal demons of Tibet under oath, and entrusted them with guardianship of the treasure texts. At that time he was known as Vajra Sagging Belly [Tibetan: *Dorjé Drolö*].

To inspire belief in later generations, he left imprints of his body [in stone] at places such as Dorjé Tsékpa in Boomtang [Bhutan]; imprints of his hands at Nomtso Choukmo and other places, imprints of his feet in White Cliff at Paro [Bhutan] and other locations, and countless amazing arrangements of the Master and his consort’s hand prints, footprints, and other [signs in stone] at all places he consecrated for meditation practice.

The prince Murub Tsépo was sent to attack the monastery of Bhata Hor. After the prince plundered the buildings of their possessions, the *gyalpo* spirit Shing Ja Chen pursued him. The Master manifested in the form of Wrathful Guru, bound the spirit under oath, and placed him in charge of guarding Samyé’s treasury.

After Trisong Détsen passed away, Mutik Tsépo assumed the throne. At Tra Drouk Temple the Master performed a great practice session of the Union of the Eight Great Sacred Circles. He then entrusted profound teach-

ings to Prince Son of Heaven and predicted that during the course of thirteen reincarnations, the prince would appear exclusively as a retriever of treasure texts and would guide beings on the path to enlightenment.<sup>26</sup>

The number of disciples the Master brought to spiritual maturity in Tibet exceeds all reckoning. The principal ones include the king and twenty-one subjects in the beginning [of the Master’s stay in Tibet], the king and twenty-five subjects during the middle, and the king and seventeen and twenty-one subjects at the conclusion of his stay. His disciples also included eighty at Yerpa who accomplished a body of light, one hundred and eight outstanding meditators at Chu-wo Ri, thirty mantra practitioners at Yong Dzong, fifty-five realized persons at Shel Drak, twenty-five dakinis, seven yoginis, and others, individuals such as Amé Jong-choub Dré-kol, Gyu Jong-choub Shoon-nu, Rok-ben Namka Yeshé, Nyong Déshin Shekpa, Pong-dzé Tsen Trom, Shami Gocha, Ngob-mi, Ngob-dré, Ché Gyatso Drak, Dré Sherab Drak, and others; and accomplished masters who appeared continuously within such clans as Long, Dok, Kön, Rok, Gö, Pong, So, Zur, Noob, Gyu, and Kyo. The many outstanding individuals who appeared later in the New Schools of Translation were all descendents of persons who had bowed reverently at the feet of this great master.

As the time approached for the Master’s departure to tame cannibal demons in the southwest, the king with his ministers and subjects implored him to postpone his departure, but he refused. He gave lengthy pith instructions and affectionate advice to each person. At the top of the pass at Goung-tong, he mounted a lion or the finest of horses and left for Tail-Fan Island [*Camardvipa*] amidst an infinite number of offerings prepared by the gods.

At the summit of the Copper-Colored Mountain, he transferred the consciousness of the cannibal demon king, Raksha Tötren [Cannibal Demon Garlanded in Skulls], from that body and then entered it himself. He emanated a palace of unimaginable design, called Lotus Light. On each of the eight islands of cannibal demons, he manifests as a king and teaches Buddhism, including [the practice of] the Eight Great Sacred Circles of Deities. He has thus saved the humans of this continent of Jambu from mortal danger.

At present, as an awareness holder of the final path of enlightenment’s spontaneous presence, he acts as the regent of the sixth [Buddha Vajradhara]. He will continue [this enlightened activity] steadfastly until life in



this world-system ceases. He continually considers Tibet with his compassion and works for its benefit through emanations. Even when the practice of monastic discipline comes to an end, one of his emanations will appear in each group of mantra practitioners. Many persons with a fortunate connection to him will accomplish a body of light. It is said that in the future, when the Victorious Buddha Loving-Kindness [*Maitreya*] appears in this world, the Master will manifest himself as the Victorious Buddha's heir, Guide of All Beings, to teach the instructions of Secret Mantra to fortunate persons.

This concludes a partial account [of the Master's life], based on the experience of some of his ordinary disciples. (*History of the Sources of the Profound Treasures and the Treasure Revealers*, pp. 7a-14b)

## The Immaculate White Lotus The Life of the Master from Oddiyana

by *Dorjé Tso*

*From [the treasure cycle called]*

The Dakini's Secret Treasury  
of the Nature of Reality

*revealed by*

*Sera Khandro*

## Introduction

THE FOLLOWING BIOGRAPHY of Guru Rinpoché is a fairly typical example of his brief life stories that appear in treasure texts. Dorjé Tso, a Tibetan woman and disciple of Guru Rinpoché, wrote and concealed it, to be retrieved one thousand years later by a reincarnation of Yeshé Tsogyal, Sera Khandro.

As is common in the treasures, the account is short on cold, hard facts. We find Guru Rinpoché the disciple of such great Buddhist teachers as Ananda and Nagarjuna; he comes to Tibet, succeeds in establishing Buddhism there, then leaves for the land of cannibal demons. Apart from a spare recital of Guru Rinpoché's activity, the point of the text seems to be to present a supplication to the Master, and to address what we would now call "abandonment issues." By most accounts, Guru Rinpoché left Tibet, leaving Yeshé Tsogyal and the rest of his disciples to fend for themselves. The question to Guru Rinpoché here is, How should we cope with your absence? His reply is two-fold: regardless of his present location on the globe, he continues to bless his followers, and they should recognize and regard with pure vision his many emanations among them.

Different stories of the Lotus-Born Master's life bring into focus specific aspects of his activity suitable for a specific day and age, which we must assume is the reason for the concealment of treasures intended for one era and not another. Yet one constant theme in Guru Rinpoché's histories is tension and resolution related to the awful fact of his departure. The treasures simultaneously remind each century's followers of Guru Rinpoché's overpowering presence and his enormous absence, and like this treasure text, they often provide solace in the form of a supplication and the advice to see the Master everywhere.

This treasure is, in Tibetan measure of time, very modern, having been

retrieved in 1927, according to the date supplied by Tulku Thondup for the birth of Sera Khandro (1899).<sup>27</sup> Sera Khandro was a prolific treasure revealer: four hefty volumes of her treasures are preserved in their modern edition. She also composed texts, including two autobiographies, which I have not had the good fortune to read.

Her homeland was central Tibet, but she journeyed to eastern Tibet, where she became known by a nickname that recalled her foreign status, “Wee-mo,” the local pronunciation of “Ü-mo,” Lady from Central Tibet. Her consort was the son of Dudjom Lingpa (1835–1904), one of the greatest treasure revealers of the nineteenth century. Dudjom Lingpa returned as the spiritual master who led the Nyingma tradition for many years, His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoché (1904–1987). Dudjom Lingpa’s son returned as the son of Dudjom Rinpoché, Thinley Norbu Rinpoché; and, according to Tulku Thondup, Sera Khandro lives among us again as Saraswati, daughter of Chadral Rinpoché.

## The Immaculate White Lotus: The Life of the Master from Oddiyana

### CHAPTER ONE

How wonderful!  
The hearts of Buddha Infinite Light and Buddha Shakyamuni  
Emanated the second Buddha, Lotus-Born,  
Who manifested this life for the benefit of his disciples.

In ignorance, sentient beings of the six kinds wander through the  
wheel of life  
And those of degenerate times partake of the five poisons without  
restraint.  
To guide such beings so thoroughly disinclined to spiritual life  
You took birth in the sea at the tip of a lotus.  
The marks and signs of physical perfection adorned your amazing  
body of manifest enlightenment.

At your birth, dakinis of five classes, and spiritual heroes and heroines  
Sang, danced, and scattered auspicious flowers;  
Clouds of five-colored rainbows filled the skies.  
Gods, *nagas*, and other beings were overjoyed and paid their respects  
to you—  
They bowed, prayed, and showered your body with praises.

When news of this reached the king of Oddiyana,  
He went to extend an invitation to you, a young child,  
And offered this praise to your manifestation of enlightenment:

“Enlightenment manifest, child of the buddhas of the three times,  
 You were born in the sea and now appear in Oddiyana.  
 Unsullied by any stain, born at the tip of a lotus,  
 Your radiant body is endowed with every quality of the marks and  
 signs of physical perfection.  
 To see you is meaningful, Lotus King—to you I offer praise.”

After singing this tribute, he led you to his palace  
 And installed you on a jeweled throne with silk brocade cushions.  
 He offered you many gifts, such as those pleasing to your eyes,  
 And set before you many delicious foods, such as the three white foods  
 and the three sweets.  
 Eight goddesses presented offerings to you;  
 They sang, danced, and provided entertainment;  
 And they proclaimed their infinite appreciation for your emanated  
 form.  
 You accepted Light-Bearing Goddess as your wife  
 And assumed dominion over the realm.  
 You repeatedly witnessed birth, aging, sickness, and death  
 And thus gradually abdicated your rule and left for India,  
 Where you became outstanding in the study of all the arts  
 and sciences.

This concludes Chapter One from *The Immaculate White Lotus: The Life of the Master from Oddiyana*: How He Came to this World and His Education in the Arts and Sciences.

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

## CHAPTER TWO

How wonderful!

Then you met the Buddha Shakyamuni's  
 Supreme attendant, Ananda,

From whom you took ordination.  
 You assumed the attributes of a fully-ordained monk.

In the presence of the master Prabha-hasti,  
 You trained in the three yoga [tantras].

From such masters as Garab Dorjé, Buddha-guhya,  
 Shri Singha, Manjushri-mitra,  
 Humkara, Vimalamitra,  
 Dhana Sanskrita, and Nagarjuna  
 You received the transmissions, meditation techniques, empower-  
 ments, and pith instructions  
 For the Heart Essence of Great Completion,  
 The Secret Essence Tantra [Sanskrit: *Guhyagarbha*], the tantra of  
 Great Sublime [Tibetan: *Chemchok*] Héruka,  
 The tantra for enlightenment's body, Gentle Spondor [Sanskrit:  
*Manjushri*];  
 For enlightenment's speech, Lotus;  
 For enlightenment's mind, Yongdak;  
 For enlightenment's qualities, Ambrosia;  
 For enlightenment's activity, Vajra Dagger [Tibetan: *Dorjé Purba*];  
 The tantra of Offering and Praise;  
 And the tantra of the Curse of Wrathful Mantras.  
 Further, from many accomplished masters  
 You received the full instructions for outer and inner Secret Mantra  
 practice.  
 The qualities of your training were outstanding and you gained  
 accomplishment.

This completes Chapter Two from *The Immaculate White Lotus: The Life of the Master from Oddiyana*: Reliance on Spiritual Masters, Receiving Instructions, Ending Doubts, and Gaining Secret Spiritual Liberation.

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

## CHAPTER THREE

How wonderful!

Then you meditated in India's eight sacred charnel grounds,  
Where you saw the deities and received their prophecies.  
Having reached perfection, you demonstrated various signs of  
accomplishment.  
You eradicated demons and defeated challenges from non-Buddhists.

You traveled to Zahor, where you induced Princess Mandarava  
to enter the gate of your teachings.  
The king's punishment was to execute you in fire.  
That pyre turned into a lake; you demonstrated many miracles.  
You had attained a vajra body; nothing at all could harm you.  
The king, in amazement, was moved to faith and respect,  
And acknowledged regretfully his wrongdoing.  
You then converted the whole kingdom of Zahor to Buddhism.

At Maratika Cave you meditated to gain immortality.  
You perfected the practice of longevity and met Buddha Lord of  
Infinite Life.  
Birth and death lost their hold on you; your body matured into  
immutability.

You journeyed to the five families of enlightenment's pure lands,  
such as Dense Design,  
And there you consulted with the Joyful Buddhas:  
"Apart from this mind, there is no Buddha," they said.  
You meditated upon Great Seal in Parping  
And attained accomplishment of Great Seal.

While you meditated in Yari-gong,  
A debate with non-Buddhists was held in Vajra Seat [Bodhgaya].  
The dakinis advised the five hundred great scholars there  
To invite you and your entourage to Vajra Seat.  
With miraculous power you subdued all the non-Buddhists,

Established the true doctrine in India,  
And preserved the Way of Secret Mantra at Vajra Seat.

This completes Chapter Three from *The Immaculate White Lotus: The Life of the Master from Oddiyana: Preserving the Doctrine in India and Converting the Land to Buddhism*.

*Om Ah Hounq Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Hounq*

## CHAPTER FOUR

How wonderful!

Then, by the strength of your forceful previous aspirations,  
When the Buddhist king Trisong Détsen was unable to tame the land  
for the temple construction at Samyé,  
The great scholar Bodhisattva  
Foretold that inviting you, the Master from India, [would lead  
to success].  
Important messengers were sent to you with gold and  
proclamations.  
Upon meeting the messengers, you discussed the matter  
And decided that the time was right to go to Tibet.  
You sent the king's three messengers on before you.

When you reached Nepal, gods and demons  
Created many crises, miraculous appearances, and obstacles.  
When you reached Mong-youl, great difficulties arose.  
You meditated upon [the deity] Bitotamma for seven days  
And all the obstacles dissolved naturally.  
You bound under oath the gods and cannibal demons of Tibet:  
Some acknowledged their faults and prayed,  
Some offered you their vitality mantra,  
Some made promises, some paid respect,  
Some accepted responsibility to protect the doctrine,

Some revealed their [invisible] forms [to human beings], and  
some kept their vows.

When you reached Tsang-rong, gods and humans greeted you;  
In Tö-loong, everyone welcomed you.  
You performed miracles; ambrosia flowed from the water of your  
accomplishment.

All who met you were moved to faith and confidence.  
At Ombu Grove, the king received you.  
Although the king was Gentle Splendor incarnate,  
His intense arrogance prevented him from making obeisance to you.  
You sang the song of your own greatness and power,  
And performed miracles, moving the king to faith.  
He prayed and prostrated before you, and invited you to sit on a  
golden throne.  
He presented you with precious things and wondrous offerings.  
All gods and humans of Tibet paid homage to you.  
Evil government ministers created foul obstacles;  
Religious government ministers consulted with you and were helpful.

This completes Chapter Four from *The Immaculate White Lotus: The Life of the Master from Oddiyana: The Invitation from the King of Tibet and Binding the Gods and Demons Under Oath*.

*Om Ah Houg Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houg*

## CHAPTER FIVE

How wonderful!

Then you, Lotus-Born Master,  
Assumed the form of Great Powerful Héruka,  
Proclaimed, "Houg! Houg!," and brought gods and demons under  
your control.

You suppressed them with orders and seals, and bound them under oath.  
You consecrated the ground for the construction of Samyé.  
The Four Great Kings directed the work.  
During the day, humans worked; during the night, gods and demons.  
Samyé's walls look like an unusual being.  
The monastery's design replicates Supreme Mountain, the four main  
and four adjacent continents.  
Samyé's qualities are inconceivable.

On the temple's three levels—above, below, and between—  
Statues of the peaceful and wrathful deities were sculpted.  
During the consecration, when you scattered auspicious flowers,  
The deities spoke and a rain of medicine fell.  
Flames rose from the commemoration pillar; sculpted copper dogs  
barked.  
The entire place was filled with amazing, auspicious signs,  
Gladdening the king, his ministers, his subjects, and the court.  
The land of Tibet became endowed with auspicious portents, virtue  
and happiness:  
Samyé's benefits are inconceivable!

This completes Chapter Five from *The Immaculate White Lotus: The Life of the Master from Oddiyana: Construction of the Samyé Temple and its Consecration*.

*Om Ah Houg Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houg*

## CHAPTER SIX

How wonderful!

Then the scholar and you, the Master, consulted with one another,  
"This land of Tibet resembles a land of cannibal demons;  
Like animals, the people don't know how to practice virtue

Or how to reject negative acts;  
 Evil government ministers have **intense jealousy and create many**  
 obstacles."

You prepared to return to your homeland,  
 But the king heard of your plans, became **heartbroken and wept**.  
 He offered countless attractive *mandalas* of gold,  
 Bowed his head numerous times in prostration  
 And wailed this mournful lament:

"Alas! Kind living Buddhas, listen to me!  
 Kind scholar and Master, consider my situation!  
 I, Trisong Détsen, have big plans,  
 But this country of Tibet resembles a land of **cannibal demons**.  
 We have neither religion nor virtue,  
 And we wander endlessly in the wheel of life.  
 Scholar and Master, please don't be displeased with us, **show us**  
 your love!  
 You, enlightenment manifest, have come to this **virtueless place**:  
 Care for us with your compassionate mind of awakening!"

The two masters considered this request  
 And told where Tibetan children of good talent could be found.  
 They called for the scholars of India to teach Buddhism  
 And brought them and Secret Mantra teachings here to Tibet.  
 They established widely the doctrines of study, teaching, and  
 meditation practice.  
 In so doing, they successfully fulfilled Trisong Détsen's wishes.  
 He made thanksgiving offerings to the masters, translators  
 and scholars  
 To repay their kindness and to proclaim Buddhism's greatness.

In the dark land of Tibet, the Buddha's doctrine spread;  
 The translators and scholars returned to their homelands  
 And the doctrine of the truth rose like the sun.

This completes Chapter Six from *The Immaculate White Lotus: The Life of the Master from Oddiyana*: Invitation to Translators and Scholars and Translation of Discourses and Tantras into Tibetan.

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

How wonderful!

Then you, the Master, meditated at Chimpu,  
 Where the king and his subjects offered you a *mandala* of turquoise  
 and gold  
 With the request for teachings easily practiced but imbued with great  
 blessing.  
 You revealed the sacred circle of the Union of Joyful Buddhas,  
 Bestowed empowerment, and had each of us throw flowers to indicate  
 our personal meditation practice.  
 When we went to meditate alone,  
 Each of us saw the deity and produced signs of accomplishment.

Further, when you revealed the sacred circles that gather the doctrine,  
 You led us to spiritual maturation and liberation  
 Within an infinite number of sacred circles, including  
 The Spiritual Master's Enlightened Vision, The Deities' Enlightened  
 Vision,  
 The Dakinis' Enlightened Vision, and The Protectors' Enlightened  
 Vision.  
 Each of the persons who participated, the king and his subjects,  
 meditated in his or her own residence;  
 The doctrine of meditation practice thus spread throughout Tibet.

This completes Chapter Seven from *The Immaculate White Lotus: The Life of the Master from Oddiyana*: Bestowal of Instructions that Bring Spiritual

Maturation and Liberation to the King and His Subjects and Their Attainment of Signs of Accomplishment.

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

## CHAPTER EIGHT

How wonderful!

Then you, Lotus-Born Master, thought,  
Here in Tibet, I have translated into Tibetan  
The teachings of the discourses, tantras,  
Secret Mantra's outer, inner, and essential profound teachings,  
And all the pith instructions.  
I have spread widely the doctrines of study and of meditation practice.  
Now, I the Master and my circle of disciples, the king and his subjects,  
Have condensed these texts into magical letters  
And concealed them in major and minor sacred places.  
I have foretold the persons who will retrieve them in the future.  
I have written the commentaries in categories,  
Sealed them with the mark of the doctrine, and made prayers for each.  
In the future, for the degenerate time when [the body's prime is  
reached at] twenty years of age,  
I give these treasure lists for finding the concealed teachings.  
As my testament, I, Péma, leave these words from my heart:

First, challenges and tests related to the treasures will arise.  
Don't contrive; remain in the natural state.  
The dakinis and protectors will help you and bestow accomplishment.  
Don't tell anyone; hide this deep in your heart.  
Be energetic in maintaining the three levels of vows' ethical conduct.  
Worldly activity has the intrinsic nature of suffering.  
Don't waste your free and bountiful human life; practice virtue.  
Pray to your spiritual master and the Three Jewels.  
Don't mistake what you are to do, virtue;

Nor what you must renounce, negative acts: be cautious!  
As your heart-practice, recite *manis* and *Vajra Guru* mantras.  
Pray to me at the six times of the day and night.  
Every morning and evening, I will actually arrive.  
Allow your mind to rest uncontrived, relaxed, and open.  
Within the expanse of radiant awareness, you will meet me.  
Realize the result within yourself—enlightenment's three bodies.  
Whatever prayer you use to pray to me, Lotus-Born Master,  
Is like gaining a wish-fulfilling gem:  
In this life, the next, and the intermediate state, I will be sure  
to shelter you.  
Don't be doubtful or hesitant, Tibetan subjects!  
Develop faith and all-inclusive pure vision.  
Construct representations of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind.  
Give money to ransom of the life of animals and release them.  
On the tenth day of the waxing moon and the tenth day of the  
waning moon,  
Offer vajra feasts and lamps, and give gifts.  
In the pure thought that others are more important than yourself,  
Protect sentient beings of the six kinds with your mind of awakening.

Due to pure intentions for the future  
On the part of the present king and his subjects,  
One hundred treasure revealers, chiefs of the doctrine, will appear.  
In each valley, a treasure revealer will appear;  
For each, a meditation on me, and a treasure place;  
In each region will live a householder patron,  
An accomplished meditator, a fully-ordained teacher,  
And a realized tantric practitioner who tames demons.  
All of these will be my emanations:  
Followers of the future, develop pure vision!

This completes Chapter Eight from *The Immaculate White Lotus: The Life of the Master from Oddiyana: Concealment of the Treasures, Presentation of Final Advice, and Prophecy of the Treasure Revealers*.

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*



## CHAPTER NINE

How wonderful!

Then you, the Master, said,

“I have shown my kindness to Tibet, but it has not been understood.  
I have completed my guidance to Tibet in this, my true form.  
Now I won’t stay any longer, but will go to tame the cannibal demons.  
If I don’t subdue them all,  
No one has predicted another master with the capability to counteract  
them.  
I will gather the cannibals skillfully under my control and lead them  
to happiness.”

The king was saddened when he heard this.  
Pained at heart, he cried mournfully, and tried to **delay your departure**.  
Yeshé Tsogyal followed him and lamented,

“Alas Guru Rinpoché!  
Now, as a woman, who can I possibly approach as a spiritual master?  
You’re leaving all the Tibetans, the king and his subjects, behind;  
Who should they trust and ask for pith instructions?  
Who will provide them with refuge and a place to put their hopes?  
Who will relieve the Tibetan people’s suffering due to their bad  
karma?  
Who will dispel their misunderstandings in the view, meditation,  
and conduct?  
In whom should I confide the words in my heart concerning my  
meditation experience?  
Who has the true measure of heat in their experience  
and realization?  
Alas, Guru Rinpoché, hold us in your compassion!  
Don’t leave us Tibetans behind! Guard us with your love!”

With these mournful words, she made her request. The Master **replied**,

“Worthy consort,  
You will never be separated from me.  
Always meditate that I sit at the crown of your head or deep in  
your heart.  
In the future, you will meet me again in Lotus Light.  
Particularly for the benefit of the king and his subjects,  
And for beings of the future,  
I have made prophecies, representations of my physical presence;  
Concealed treasures, representations of my speech;  
And nurture with my mind’s intention those who have a karmic  
connection with me.  
If those of the future who have not met me  
Read my life story, copy it,  
Follow it correctly, and make it the object of **veneration**,  
They will later be reborn in my pure land.”

These words relieved the king and his subjects’ despair.  
Then the Son of Heaven, the king’s subjects, and Yeshé Tsogyal  
conferred,  
Offered a gold and turquoise *mandala* and a large vajra feast,  
And together made this request:

“We request a prayer of aspiration,  
To recite when thinking of your qualities,  
A prayer of few words but profound meaning,  
To pacify negative circumstances in this life  
And to have us gain rebirth in a pure land,  
Reunited with you as master and disciples.”

You, the Master, were pleased with their request and **recited this**  
prayer, saying,  
“Recite this prayer, remembering me!”

How wonderful!

Sublime regent of past buddhas,  
Impressive source of future buddhas,

Supreme manifestation of present buddhas.  
 Buddha of the three times, manifest enlightenment, Lotus-Born  
 Master:  
 I pray to you, please bless me!  
 Pacify my outer, inner, and secret obstacles!  
 Nurture me with your compassion!  
 Remain inseparably with me in this life, in the next, and in between!

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houg*

Your knowledge of all that exists pervades everywhere, like space.  
 Your loving compassion protects all beings as if they were your children.  
 Your power is limitless, precious master from Oddiyana.  
 I pray to you, please bless me!  
 Pacify my outer, inner, and secret obstacles!  
 Nurture me with your compassion!  
 Remain inseparably with me in this life, in the next, and in between!

*Om Ah Houg Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houg*

Sublime epitome of the Three Jewels: Buddha, Teaching, and  
 Community;  
 The Three Sources: spiritual master, deity, and dakini;  
 And the mind's essence, nature, and compassionate energy—  
 Vajra Bearer from Oddiyana, you are the supreme refuge.  
 I pray to you, please bless me!  
 Pacify my outer, inner, and secret obstacles!  
 Nurture me with your compassion!  
 Remain inseparably with me in this life, in the next, and in between!

*Om Ah Houg Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houg*

You dispel the darkness of ignorance and perpetuate the doctrine's  
 vital core.  
 You overpower with your brilliance the demon hordes of dualistic  
 experience.

Lord protector of beings, you have laid the foundation of Secret  
 Mantra.  
 Second Buddha, kind Master from Oddiyana,  
 I pray to you, please bless me!  
 Pacify my outer, inner, and secret obstacles!  
 Nurture me with your compassion!  
 Remain inseparably with me in this life, in the next, and in between!

*Om Ah Houg Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houg*

The epitome of enlightenment's body is Gentle Splendor Héruka;  
 The epitome of enlightenment's speech, Lotus Héruka;  
 The epitome of enlightenment's mind, Yongdak Héruka;  
 The epitome of enlightenment's qualities, Great Sublime Héruka;  
 The master of enlightenment's activity is Vajra Youth—  
 You are their essential union, powerful Skull-Garlanded Adept.  
 I pray to you, please bless me!  
 Pacify my outer, inner, and secret obstacles!  
 Nurture me with your compassion!  
 Remain inseparably with me in this life, in the next, and in between!

*Om Ah Houg Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houg*

Your physical regents will actually appear;  
 Your speech representatives you concealed as treasures;  
 Your enlightened intention you entrusted to your faithful children.  
 In great love, you watch over the people of Tibet.  
 Guru Rinpoché, your kindness is incomparable!  
 I pray to you, please bless me!  
 Pacify my outer, inner, and secret obstacles!  
 Nurture me with your compassion!  
 Remain inseparably with me in this life, in the next, and in between!

*Om Ah Houg Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houg*

To the Master, wish-fulfilling jewel, I pray.  
 For us, your followers, and your future child-disciples,

These are our whole-hearted prayers:  
 Bestow the blessing of your changeless body upon our body!  
 Bestow the blessing of your ceaseless speech upon our voice!  
 Bestow the blessing of your faultless mind upon our mind!  
 Make our experience and realization manifest  
 And have us reach enlightenment in this lifetime!

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

Don't forget to recite this prayer!  
 You will meet me in person, have no doubt about that!

This concludes Chapter Nine from *The Immaculate White Lotus: The Life of the Master from Oddiyana: Plans to Tame the Cannibal Demons*, the Request by Yeshé Tsogyal, and Bestowal of the Supplication.

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

## CHAPTER TEN

How wonderful!

Then you the master and your disciples went to Goung-tong in  
 Mong-youl,  
 Where you celebrated the gathering of a vajra-feast circle.  
 They offered countless *mandalas* of turquoise and gold,  
 Corrected mistakes in their understanding of the teachings,  
 And received pith instructions, written guidance, and profound  
 teachings.

You, the Master, said, "Faithful Tibetan subjects,  
 In the future, teachings that resemble treasures, but which are false,  
 will appear.  
 Some will claim to be my emanation but will commit many  
 unvirtuous acts.  
 Deceiving themselves, deceiving others, they will act carelessly,

Disregard karma and its effects, and speak falsely of emptiness.  
 Those who have transcendent knowledge and qualities will understand  
 [their errors]."

You gave these and many other prophecies for the future.  
 Dakinis of the four classes came visibly to greet you;  
 You mounted the miraculous, supreme horse,  
 Turned your face toward the southwest, and disappeared.

The king, his subjects, and Tsogyal  
 Returned home in sadness and meditated, each in their own retreat  
 place.

This completes Chapter Ten from *The Immaculate White Lotus: The Life of the Master from Oddiyana: Bestowal of Prophecies and Departure to Suppress the Cannibal Demons*.

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

## COLOPHON

This story of the Master's life was written after these events and concealed  
 as a treasure by Dorjé Tso.

*In the future, may this text meet with a karmically connected person  
 And once it meets that individual, may it bring infinite benefit to  
 sentient beings.  
 Haughty guardians of the doctrine, keep this profound teaching!  
 Don't let it fall into the hands of persons who have broken their  
 tantric commitments!*

*Samaya! Gya Gya Gya! Guhya! Dha Tim! Ka Ka! Iti!*

This treasure, from [the cycle called] *The Dakini's Secret Treasury of the Nature of Reality*, was transcribed by the holder of the name appropriate  
 at this time, Souka Vajra [Blissful Vajra], in her twenty-eighth year [1927].

The Indian Version of  
the Life of Guru Rinpoché  
*by Taranata*

## Introduction

TARANATA'S (1575–1634) present renown outside the Tibetan world is due mainly to his *History of Buddhism in India*, which he wrote in 1608. However, that volume amounts to a tiny fraction of his literary output, and his writing represents a small part of his wide-ranging life. Taranata was a master of the tantras, which he put into practice, and of the highest philosophical view, that of “extrinsic emptiness.” His life was a lion’s roar that many of his contemporaries in Tibet found disconcerting; many people would probably find him highly controversial today. His life deserves far more attention than it has yet received in Western languages.

During Taranata’s lifetime, Tibet arrived at a turning point, and it must have seemed for a while that it was he and his followers who would lead the country. His main patron, the king of western Tibet (Tsang), was one of Tibet’s most powerful leaders. Yet in the life-and-death struggles that erupted soon after Taranata’s death, those on his side lost everything: his patron was imprisoned and executed, the network of monasteries which Taranata had led, the Jonang, was forever wiped from the map of central Tibet; his reputation was slandered publicly; and his books, as well as those of Jonang masters before him, were banned and put under lock and key, where they remained for over two centuries. Readers curious about the Jonang tradition and its unconventional views can read Cyrus Stearns’s wonderful book, *The Buddha from Dolpo*.

Taranata seemed to have understood the critical nature of the time in which he lived; he knew that Tibet was about to change. He wrote a number of histories, including this one, to define or redefine the major signposts in Tibetans’ spiritual and cultural lives. In his previous lifetime, as Kunga Drol-chok (1495–1566), he collected teachings from all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, to be transmitted together as *The Hundred Instructions*. This

was a pioneering, ecumenical work. Taranata continued this distillation of Tibetans' knowledge of their Buddhist heritage.

In the end, it was Taranata's nephew who seized the opportunity of Tibet's turning point and became the ruler of the land: the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682). He took full power in 1658 and soon rewarded his late uncle's followers with resounding defeat and lasting suppression. Tibetans remember the two, uncle and nephew, with a proverb that warns, "A goat's horns can grow to poke out its eyes; a nephew can grow to destroy his uncle."

Here we read Taranata's attempt to write the story of Guru Rinpoché in a manner consistent with stories that he had heard from his Indian gurus (thus its subtitle, *The Indian Version*) and with eyewitness accounts recorded in early Tibetan chronicles. It seems an ideal version of Guru Rinpoché's life for persons who are Buddhist and can manage to believe in miracles performed by saints, but whose faith is not equal to the challenge of lotus births. We can sense Taranata's ire with those who present histories based in faith and pure vision as if they were hard facts. He finishes this book with a blistering colophon, which includes these lines:

Some small-minded persons, equipped only with the faith of fools,  
have written many fabricated histories to inspire others.  
Most people are so foolish that such fraudulent and unsound words  
and meanings might in fact increase their faith,  
But when wise readers see or hear of these books, they are startled  
and amused and, for this reason,  
Develop doubts in all pure teachings and individuals. Such books are  
the work of demons: what could be more harmful?

I do not intend to exaggeratedly praise this present work of wonderful  
stories, which is beyond suspicion and very accurate,  
Yet this small text is a hundred times more impressive than huge  
volumes of fabrications.

We read within the body of the text his own basic approach to writing on  
the subject of Guru Rinpoché:

On the subject of the duration of [Guru Rinpoché's] stay in Tibet,  
some texts report it as three years, some as six, others as twelve, or as

eighteen, and so on. Some treasure texts relate a stay of at least fifty years, while most speak of it as more than one hundred years. In another context, if we consider the experience of disciples with pure vision, he still lives here among us and always simultaneously demonstrates his enlightened form in every pure land. Therefore, from that perspective, we could say that any measure given is correct. However, such a perspective is inappropriate in such contexts as linear histories: *here we must confine ourselves to recording what could be experienced in the common perception of ordinary human beings who lived at a specific point in time.* (italics added)

If we recall the lines from Taranata's pen that Kongtrul quoted in his *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, included above in the Introduction, we realize that what Taranata attempts in this account of Guru Rinpoché's life is what he identifies as history according to Buddhism's Common Way, that of the Listeners (*shravaka*). He restricts himself to viewing Guru Rinpoché's life through the eyes of a historian, rather than through the kaleidoscope of pure vision. Yet the reader never loses sight of Taranata's faith in Guru Rinpoché, his acceptance of the Master's many miracles, and his firm belief that he surpassed all conventional bounds of time and space.

The one major question that remains in this work is the location of the land Taranata calls Damido, which seems to lie close to India and to have had a distinct tantric tradition that lasted until his time. I have not yet found a Tibetan master who will hazard a guess on that subject, although one asked, in all innocence, whether or not I thought that the island of cannibal demons to which Guru Rinpoché went "to prevent them from taking over the world" was in fact England!

Inspiration to Three Forms of Trust:  
Words to Elucidate the Life Story  
of the Great Master Lotus-Born

*also known as*

The Indian Version of  
Master Lotus-Born's Biography

*Om Swasti!*

*Spiritual master, to you I bow!*

*The victors' speech that knows no interruption, a sea of songs,  
sometimes assumes the form of a spiritual teacher,  
Who fills all points with the light of sacred teachings, and sometimes  
demonstrates the forms of innumerable sacred circles,  
While never moving from the luminous vajra heart of enlightenment:  
Lotus-Born, to you I respectfully bow.*

*Without adding any fabrications, I will now record here the full  
extent of what is truly known about him.*

**D**URING A PERIOD that the true and perfect Buddha, our Teacher's, doctrine of fruition [i.e., tantra] spread widely, King Dévapala ruled the dominion of the supreme land, Magadha, and King Hayalila reigned in accord with religious law in the glorious region of Oddiyana.<sup>28</sup> At that time, there lived a man named Srado, an educated member of the aristocracy, who made the Three Jewels his spiritual master. (*Srado*, a name in Oddiyana's language, can be translated into Sanskrit as *Srigadhara*, meaning

Bearer of a Flower Garland.) To him was born a son, endowed with marks of physical perfection. He was white with a reddish hue; lines in the shape of a lotus were visible on his ring finger; his eyes and lips were like blossoming lotus flowers; his body's skin bore virtuous signs, such as lotus flowers, lilies, hooks, and lassos. His birth was richly celebrated with a birth festival.

Brahmins examined the signs: some foretold that he would become a monarch; some predicted that he would govern a minor province; and some foresaw that he would live in a charnel ground and bring misfortune to his family. Thus, many varying positive and negative prognostications were made, none of which was conclusive. However, all agreed on one point: it would be difficult for anyone to surpass him. A well-trained yogi appeared and his opinion was asked. He replied, "This child will be a supreme practitioner of Secret Mantra. Because he bears all the marks of the lotus family of enlightenment, the Buddha Boundless Light will bless him. Therefore, his name should be Padma Avabhasi, shortened to Padmavabhasi." And so it was.

As the child grew, he learned without difficulty and became adept in the alphabet, grammar, logic, medicine, crafts, the eight forms of analysis, and all other minor subjects of common culture. In a temple in the city called Kanragaka, from a person who preserved monastic discipline, he took refuge and the five [vows] that comprise the basis of Buddhist training. He became learned in the Collection on Knowledge [*Abhidharma*] and many texts of the Buddha's discourses. From one teacher, the mantric practitioner Shantirakshapa, he received empowerment into many sacred circles of deities belonging to the three [lower] tantras—action, activity, and yoga. The flowers [which he threw during the empowerment process] always landed on the deities of the lotus family of enlightenment. In a similar manner, he relied upon and received teachings on inner Secret Mantra from a merchant's son called Soukadéva, an accomplished master inseparable from the exalted Bodhisattva All-Seeing Eyes [Sanskrit: *Avalokiteshvara*, Tibetan: *Chenrézi*]; and from a prostitute named Soukadhari, who had gained great accomplishment in Oddiyana and received instruction directly from the Buddha Vajra Bearer [*Vajradhara*].

In a forest, he performed [the stages of tantric meditation called] familiarization, proximate familiarization, accomplishment, and great accomplishment. At first, his meditation caused various discordant portents to

appear, such as thunderous noises, various frightful forms, a fire in the forest, and the destruction of his retreat place. However, he did not succumb to their influence, continued to meditate, and accomplished awareness mantras. In his dreams, he met many buddhas and bodhisattvas, principally the Transcendent Buddha Boundless Light [*Amithaba*]. In waking life, he saw the king of wrathful deities, Horse-Neck [*Hayagriva*]. Dakinis and minor spirits worked as his servants.

Before long, the time came for him to assume his family's work consistent with his father's caste activity, that of a Brahmin counselor to the king. He had to visit the palace often, to concern himself with government, and to give prognostications based on astrology, etc. Not long before, King Hayalila's son, named Akchalila, had been enthroned as ruler. Padmavabhasi wished to convert the kingdom to the Sacred Teachings and encouraged the king to undertake major virtuous projects. The Master constructed in the forest a temple and a residence for the Spiritual Community, surrounded by stupas and many circles of iron fences.

During that period, the Master had three helpers: one was the king's secretary; two others, government officials. They developed a negative attitude, and discussed in secret, "Let's do what we can to take over this kingdom for ourselves!" Once, the secretary spoke to the king, "Padma Avabhasi really intends to usurp the kingdom. He and the thousand renunciates who live in the forest are skillful at fighting enemies and are all warriors in battle. That forest [temple] will become his palace." The secretary told many lies, "In fact, such things as that circle of strong iron fences were built to serve in battles with the king." The king questioned his officials: the two officials, in fear and in jealousy, confirmed the reports. The king dispatched the officials with his army.

At that time, the kings of Oddiyana had no law that permitted the execution of Brahmins, virtuous practitioners, or scholars, so he ordered the Master, "Counselor, you and the recipients of your offerings, the Spiritual Community, must give up your possessions and go to another country." The community left and the Master began on his way as well. However, the officials said, "If we don't kill him, he could later return to harm us," and they sent many murderers after him. When they bound the Master with ropes and chains, his awareness mantras cut the ropes and shattered the chains. When they beat him with weapons, the Master's body remained unharmed, but the weapons shattered into many pieces. They put him in a



fire, but he was unburned; they threw him into the water, but he floated like a waterfowl; they heaved him over a cliff, but he was unharmed; they buried him in the earth, but he emerged from a cave far from there and they were unable to catch him. After this, the Master went to no villages, but engaged in meditation practice, traveling from charnel ground to charnel ground in other regions. The charnel-ground demons and cannibal spirits aided him; in the space of a week, the king's secretary, the officials, and the murderers all died: some died when their houses caught fire, others committed suicide. The king was bitten by a poisonous snake and passed away.

The Master remained for a long time in the charnel grounds and became a companion to the very powerful beings there, such as ghouls, cannibal spirits, and dakinis. Through his diligent practice of recitation of awareness mantras, he was able to see the faces and hear the voices of all vajra family wrathful deities, including Victor Over the Three Realms and Slayer of the Lord of Death [Sanskrit: *Yamantaka*]; he could speak to Mahakala and the seven *mamos* as if he were conversing with human beings; he employed the *nagas* and evil harm-bringers as his servants; and he gained mastery of ten million worldly and transcendent wrathful mantras.

During this time, he used his mantra recitations' miraculous power to travel regularly with mighty non-human spirits to the eight major charnel grounds that have existed in the world since time immemorial. In those charnel grounds he met the eight divine masters who have lived since time immemorial and he attained each of their common accomplishments:

In Andhakara Charnel Ground, under the guidance of the master called Dhanuskrita, he attained the sword accomplishment. In Dense Forest Charnel Ground, under the guidance of Master Son of the Earth, he attained accomplishment of pills. In Dense Flames Charnel Ground, under the guidance of Master Son of the Sun, he attained accomplishment of eye medicine. In Calling the Terrifier Charnel Ground, under the guidance of Master Amritaprabha, he attained accomplishment of boots. In Attratrahāsana Charnel Ground, under the guidance of Master Shivamkara, he attained accomplishment of medicine that cures every ailment. In Glorious Forest Charnel Ground, under the guidance of Master Vararuchi or Sublime Desire, he attained accomplishment of extraction of the elixir of immortality. In Murmuring Charnel Ground, under the guidance of Master Naked One, he attained accomplishment of the treasure vase. In Extremely Wrathful Charnel Ground, under the guidance of Master Abandoned Evil, he

attained accomplishment of the alchemical substance that changes [metals] to gold.

Having gained attainments, he became an awareness holder. He thought, Now that I've done this, I should attain enlightenment! In his dreams, the Buddha Boundless Light told him, "You haven't glimpsed the ultimate. Thanks to these wrathful warrior activities devoid of clairvoyance, you create severe impediments to the accomplishment you desire. This is not the way you will gain accomplishment of Great Seal [*Mahamudra*]!" The Buddha foretold, "The master with whom you have a karmic connection is Buddha Shri Jnana. Meditate as he instructs you!"

He examined himself and understood that although he had gained great power, it undermined his ultimate meditation on the nature of mind. Thus, he journeyed to the central country of Magadha. By that time, Dharmapala had ruled for many years as king of Magadha. The venerable Master Buddha Jnana had attained accomplishment and had just begun to accept disciples when the Master arrived. In Sprout of Truth Monastery, Buddha Jnana served as preceptor when the Master took full renunciate vows in [the tradition of] the Large Gathering [*Mahasanghika*] monastic community.

When he heard one holder of the discipline recite once the hundred thousand topics of the discipline, he understood their meaning. When he heard the teachings of transcendent knowledge from Master Buddha Jnana his view became equal to the bounds of space. Although other students found it extremely difficult to receive empowerments from this master, [Guru Rinpoché] was able to receive every empowerment. A disciple of Master Buddha Jnana, Buddha Guhya, also gave him empowerment into the yoga tantras and their teachings. From Master Buddha Jnana, he received all tantras and teachings, including the five inner tantras—Gathering [of Secrets], Web of Illusion, Circle of the Secret Moon, Buddhas' Union in Equanimity, and Garland of Activity. In the course of these teachings, he recognized correctly the empowerments' wisdom and he gained stability in profound and clear non-dual realization. When he had reached the fundamental nature of mind, he asked, "Now, what should I do?" Venerable Master Buddha Jnana replied, "In the eastern land of Bangala, on the northern side of the city of Pandruva, there lies a forest called Parshi, where small hills rise. Meditate upon the glorious Héruka there." He journeyed there as he was told and effortlessly found a lotus family *mudra* [sexual companion for tantric practice]. For six months he performed [the stage of

meditation called] great accomplishment, integrating creation and completion phases. He continually saw the faces of the buddhas of the ten directions and asked them questions. Before long, he attained supreme accomplishment of Great Seal and actualized an adamantine body.

He then thought to himself, Now I should do whatever I can to help sentient beings. He went to Tirahuti and other regions of the Taru kingdom, and northern lands, such as Kamaru and Nepal. For a few years, according to the fortune of those he met, he used spiritual teachings, alchemy, medicinal elixir, and other means to help many thousands of persons, extending their lives, increasing their possessions, finding water for those who were without it, making passages underground for water when rivers ran too high, and many other deeds. Even today, in regions such as the Taru kingdom, the Champa area, and Khasya, traces of his activity still exist, such as springs that represent signs of his accomplishment and underground water passages. In Chemvarna, in a single day, he made an underground passage for a great river called the Bhati and, in the course of a single morning, he made similar passages in two other places.

During this time, in South India, near Trilang-ga, at the Trimala sandalwood forest near the sacred place of Lachamana, there was a cubit-length, self-arisen *linga* [phallic symbol] of Vishnu, called Shivastana. Each day, offerings of slaughtered animals' blood were made there and non-Buddhists spoke wrathful curses which, just by having been voiced, caused in Buddhist meditation places many misfortunes, such as epidemics. Trimala was a fine region with many Buddhists, who provided the majority of offerings for glorious Odantapuri Monastery, itself seriously harmed by this [non-Buddhist] sacred image. Moreover, in the east, close to Bengal, in southwest Valendra, a small lake newly formed in the region of Vagala. An evil *naga* partial to non-Buddhists made the lake his home. Merely by making offerings to the lake, non-Buddhists acquired unlimited wealth, such as gold, silver, pearls, and precious stones. They used these articles to build many new non-Buddhist monasteries throughout the five eastern regions. The immense miraculous powers of that *naga* harmed Buddhist institutions. Further, in Rajgir, Magadha, non-Buddhist deities and Brahmins' spirits lived in a crystal boulder; they bestowed clairvoyance of sight, hearing, and divination to individuals without their having to engage in arduous spiritual practice.

Because not a long time had passed since these [negative influences had

begun], the Master decided to subdue them. He made a meditation hut at Vajra Seat and inaugurated six major sacred circles to control awareness deities. His meditation on the glorious Héruka's awareness mantra produced twenty-one signs of accomplishment, such as blazing fires and laughter. Of the three daggers of stability that appeared, the Master himself took the dagger of the wrathful deity King of the Three Realms, and with his miraculous powers arrived instantly at the southern place, Trimala. With his dagger, he struck the *linga* and a nearby tree; the surrounding forest burned and half the *linga* dissolved into dust. After that, no harm befell the Buddhists of the region and their offerings to Odantapuri resumed.

His consort in this meditation on the sacred circles of deities, a yogini known as Discrete [in Tibetan, *ngang tshul can*], took [the second] dagger, that of the wrathful deity Swirling Nectar. She used it to strike the lake in Bengal. She thereby reduced the *naga* and his court to dust, caused the lake to dry up in one week, and destroyed the non-Buddhist temples.

The Master's meditation attendant, a yogi named Ratnashila from Kamaru, took a small [third] dagger and struck the crystal boulder in Rajgir, shattering it. This also helped the Buddhists. As these two individuals had accomplished the state of awareness holder, they were able to become invisible or, when they wished, to appear in an emanated form.

The Master stayed for a short while in Trimala, where he sculpted in sandalwood an image of the exalted Bodhisattva All-Seeing Eyes. In Vikramashila, he constructed a small temple dedicated to Tara. He also traveled to the glorious land of Oddiyana, where he gathered as many disciples as had such fortune, and he built a temple there as well.

During that time, in Kachha, a land close to Oddiyana, Buddhist temples had spread and were of good quality, and the ruler had become a lay scholar. In the land of Molatana, in the city of Pagada, the king was a Turk from Iran [Takzik], whose armies invaded Kachha and destroyed some Buddhist temples. At a time when many temples were threatened with destruction, the army came rowing in boats and swimming across the Nili River. On the far bank, the Master made a ferocious gaze and gesture that caused seven large ships, five hundred small boats of the same wood, and the swimmers to sink, killing the Turkish warriors. After that, for many generations, no harm from the Turks befell the land.

The Master's renunciate name was Padma Akara, Lotus-Born. His secret name when empowered into a sacred circle was Padmasambhava, Lotus

Source. Previously, the people of Oddiyana had given him the common name Kamalakulisha, Lotus Vajra, because his forehead bore lines in the shape of a blossoming lotus marked with a vajra. The family name he bore when young was Padma Avabhasé, Shining Lotus. His disciples respectfully addressed him as Shri Mahasouka, Illustrious Great Bliss. When he later returned to Oddiyana, he became known as Padma Vajra, since his acts resembled those of a previous master known as illustrious Great Bliss Padma Vajra.

The Master acted in suitable ways to benefit beings in the eastern, western, southern, and central regions of India, as the above account of his principal acts indicates. Compared to these, he did more to help beings north of the Ganges River, up to Nepal. Further, he contributed even more to the land of Damido [in Tibetan, Dro-ding; 'gro lding], where he was the first to bring spiritual guidance to that country and where many pure followers of his teachings can still be found.

#### THE MASTER'S ACTIVITY IN TIBET

The Master's activity for others' benefit in Tibet was even greater than his work in Damido. Since his time until the present day, there doesn't seem to have been a single individual among the human beings and non-human spirits here in Tibet who has not been a disciple, either directly or through a lineage of masters, of this manifestation of enlightenment in his specific form, using his specific names.

If we take [the indescribable activity of] his form and name here in Tibet as an example, how can anyone possibly express the bounds of his acts elsewhere, in lives during which he attained the state of integral union? This Master's principal enlightened activity consists of subduing non-human spirits; compared to all that has been related so far, his deeds to help non-human beings in such locations as the sub-continent of Tail-Fan Island [*Camardvipa*] are vastly more impressive. This is because the acts mentioned previously were performed in short-lived countries, to help a few persons, [with an impact that lasted] for short periods of time, a matter of a few hundred or a few thousand years, whereas his later acts are immeasurable in terms of their impact on countries, of their duration, and of the numbers of persons he helped.

Indian histories record only that this master went to the Himalayan

region, subdued all *nagas* and evil, harm-bringing spirits there, and inspired the king and others to faith with his miraculous powers. Apart from this, no detailed account of his time in Tibet appears [in Indian sources]. Further, it is unclear whether his conversion of Damido occurred before or after his sojourn in Tibet. Tibetans believe that he left Tibet for the cannibal demons' island; the people of Damido believe he went to Tibet from their country. While it would not be contradictory to say that he manifested two forms of himself at the same time [in different places], if we examine the period when some of his disciples and their students lived in Damido, it appears that he traveled to Damido after leaving Tibet.

Many stories of his sojourn in Tibet can be found in accounts of his life and in [various] testaments; however, we shall put them aside for now, in a spirit of neutrality. Within what is known as the Nyingma Canon, the accounts found in *The Garland of Instruction in the View*, and in the instruction cycles of such deities as Vajra Dagger and Horse-Neck, seem reliable in their common, general outline, but they contain a tremendous number of differing details. They contain any number of records of his birth, such as from a lotus, from a womb, or from either. On the subject of the duration of his stay in Tibet, some texts report it as three years, some as six, others as twelve, or as eighteen, and so on. Some treasure texts relate a stay of at least fifty years, while most speak of it as more than one hundred years. In another context, if we consider the experience of disciples with pure vision, he still lives here among us and always simultaneously demonstrates his enlightened form in every pure land. Therefore, from that perspective, we could say that any measure given is correct. However, such a perspective is inappropriate in such contexts as linear histories: here we must confine ourselves to recording what could be experienced in the common perception of ordinary human beings who lived at a specific point in time.

Therefore, I have read what are called the three letters of the King's will: the main text, *Ba's Testament*; its supplement, which enlarges on the early spread [of Buddhism] and the Kadampa period; and *The Lama's Testament*. I have also read some old documents which record stories that constitute the main content of *The King's Testament*. Apart from minor differences in length, these accounts share what seems to be an identical core. Moreover, all genuine, sublime scholars have confidence in the validity of these three texts. Further, the stories of Master Padma found within them appear to

generally correspond with histories found in the Canon's texts [translated by] the Original School of Translation. (The texts called *Wa's* [dba'] *Testament* and *Ba's* [rba] *Testament* are identical, except for the spelling of the title. It is said that one book called *Ba's* [spelled 'ba'] *Testament* exists, but I have never seen one with that title; it is possibly a spelling mistake for *rba*.) If these texts are examined and used as the basis of an historical account, it will be very reliable.

To return to our narrative: at that time, the king who was a manifestation of enlightenment, Trisong Détsen, decided to propagate the Sacred Teachings in Tibet. He invited the master called Acharya Bodhisattva (also known as Shantiraksheeta or Master Dharmashantighosha) and erected a silk tent on the highest roof of Loung-tsouk Palace as a residence for the teacher. There, over a four-month period, the master taught Buddhism, beginning with the ten virtues, the twelve links of causation, and the eighteen psycho-physical constituents. This event infuriated Tibet's demons: the Pong-tong Palace was carried away by a flood, lightning struck Marpo-ri [Red Hill, later to be the site of the Potala in Lhasa], diseases of humans and of animals flourished, and incidences of frost and hail greatly increased. These calamities were said to be retribution for the Tibetan people's practice of Buddhism.

Unable to practice Buddhism, the king and five of his Buddhist ministers, including Ba Sal-nong, went to the Acharya and offered him a *dré* [measure] of gold powder. After they had made three such offerings, they said, "Acharya, could you go for a while to Nepal? During that time, the king will proclaim that Tibetan people are permitted to practice the Sacred Teachings and he will skillfully deceive the anti-Buddhist ministers. When we are again able to practice Buddhism, we will invite you to return."

The Acharya replied, "To subdue the evil demons and cannibal spirits of Tibet, you must invite the tantric master Padmasambhava, the most powerful master now alive." He took a handful of the gold powder, saying, "I have to offer this to the King of Nepal," and gave the rest back to the king. As he left Tibet, it appeared to the public as if he had been expelled.

Long Dro-nong and Ba Sal-nong accompanied the Master Acharya to Nepal. On his return, Ba Sal-nong's spiritual vision increased. He went with thirty officers on a religious mission to China. During that time, [the king] gathered all the anti-Buddhist ministers and laid the groundwork for Buddhist practice. While the Master Acharya was not in Tibet, the officers

[who had gone to China] returned with great gifts of honor for each [of the ministers] and ten thousand bolts of silk for the king on behalf of the Chinese ruler.

Ba Sal-nong then went to Nepal to invite both masters [Bodhisattva and Padmasambhava]. At this point, *The Testament of Ba* records, "Three persons—Acharya Bodhisattva, Master Padmasambhava, and a capable temple-builder—had already prepared for their journey to Tibet. Of the three, Acharya Bodhisattva took the faster, main route, whereas Master Padma, the builder, Nepali sculptors, and others went from village to village. They went to many regions, to subdue non-human spirits and to analyze the land." *The Testament of the Lama* states, "I went to invite Acharya Bodhisattva, who came quickly to Dren-zong. He consulted with the king, who declared that it would be good to invite Padmasambhava to subdue the gods and demons. Thus, Ba-mong Sal-nong, Song-go Lha-loung, and five servants were sent to invite him. The Master, knowing that they were coming, had come as far as Mong-youl." While these two accounts do not contradict one another, the former seems more credible.

As Master Padma crossed [the Tibetan border] at Kyi-drong, Tibet's gods and demons caused a fierce blizzard. The snow became a wall, joining the mountains, and the persons accompanying the master rested while the Master went ahead into the mountains to bind the gods and demons under oath. From that point forward, he subdued non-human spirits as he went. He also often traveled by boat on the Brahmaputra. He traveled straight on from O-youk and said, "As we cross this pass, we'll find many occasional hells: foster compassion!" They saw some beings in intensely boiling hot springs. The Master considered them and the water became still. "This is just a display of the power of a practitioner's loving kindness, but when karma must definitely be experienced, not even the Buddha can prevent it," he said. When he relaxed his attention, the water boiled as before.

He came to the district border, where [the local god] Gong-kar fled in terror. When he reached Nam, the Master said, "I must subdue Tong-lha," and he went in that direction. In a copper pot, he cooked meat from a dead sheep and donkey. One man named Lu-tsa said, "What's this?" When he heard the explanation, he exclaimed, "Ha! Ha! Look at this way to subdue harmful spirits!" The Master said, "This is a red stove for large harmful spirits," and he kicked the copper pot and knocked it over. At that, Tong-lha became furious, and made a thunderous sound in the glacier. A dark cloud

formed and continual thunder, hail, and lightning stormed, practically unbearable to most humans. The Master made a pointing gesture at the mountain, melting most of its glacier, known since as Tong-lha Yar-shu [Tong-lha Melted from Above].

The Master declared, "In the center of this mountain, there lives an evil *naga* who will not permit religious practice." When he thought to subdue the *naga*, it fled to the far ocean. In a cave, the Master constructed five sacred circles and meditated for three days. The noise of the glacier subsided, the region became gentle, and the *naga* and Tong-lha were bound under oath and converted to Buddhism. Furthermore, at that time, he subdued infinite numbers of gods and demons, including those of Lake Manasarovar and Mount Everest.

He went from there to Lé-shö. He remarked, "Pen-youl is a bad place; its valley looks like a horse's split corpse." Without going there himself, he bound its gods and demons under oath. He descended through Yal Ralmo in Tö-loung. There, where a hill had fallen, he made a pointing gesture and it straightened itself. On the Queen's Chest Cliff, he said, "The summit's rock looks like a dancing, dreadlocked Hindu yogi. If it is not broken off, Tibet will fill with non-Buddhists." So saying, he broke it. In Zhong-pa, he said that the merchants would find wheat. "But there's no water!" he was told. He struck the ground with his staff randomly and seven springs arose, known as the divine water of Zhong. "In this dark fort, a powerful *naga* resides: I must subdue it," he said. On the cliff, he made an image of Buddha Vajrasattva. "Can Tibetan rock be used for sculpture?" he asked. A Nepali artist sculpted a deer. When he arrived in Dam-shö, he constructed and consecrated five stone stupas at Khar-da.

Then he went to Tamarisk Grove at Red Rock Palace, where he met the king [of Tibet]. Officials indicated to the Master that he should bow before the king. The Master replied, "The noble king could not bear my homage." He bowed toward a boulder, which split open. He then bowed toward a cloak that the king was not wearing and it caught fire. At this, the ruler bowed at the Master's feet.

Previous to this, a temple built on the model of the Chinese temple Go'u Dé-shan had been constructed at Song-shi Drak-mar Dren-zong; however, the inauguration had not been held. When the great Master was invited there to consecrate the temple, the king and his ministers did not attend, but high officials and the court's guards came to watch. The Master treated all

the large statues like human beings; he invited them to the place of festivities, then left the temple. [The spectators] did not believe that the Master had done anything. At midnight, they carried lamps to check the temple. None of the earthen statues remained; the temple was empty. They used a staff to reach the surfaces of the statues' thrones, but it touched nothing solid; they began to believe. In the morning, they spied through cracks in the door and saw the statues where they had been before. They witnessed Master Padma making offerings and the deities eating and talking among themselves. That day, incense and lamps lit themselves; music played by itself; gongs emitted sound; five banners that were placed in decoration multiplied to five hundred; and two handfuls of grapes that had been placed on a plate were eaten by people gathered there, but however much they ate, the number of grapes remained the same. Everyone was amazed at these events.

That morning, one servant, Lha-loung Tso-shé, performed a divination called "good or evil." The goddess Radiant One possessed him and spoke, naming all of Tibet's wild gods and *nagas*. She revealed, "Shampo was responsible for the destruction of the Pong-tong [Palace] by water; Tong-lha, for the lightning on Marpo-ri; the twelve *ten-ma* sisters, for the diseases among humans and animals; and the nine Tibetan hunting gods, for the frost and hail." From that morning, many children of good families became oracles for [the beneficial gods called] the Four Great Kings; they saw directly the harmful spirit Fire God; and they related [in trance] the names, abodes, and activities of Tibet's evil gods and *nagas*. Then, to inspire confidence in the king, his ministers, and others, now that human oracles had revealed the general list of unruly gods and demons, the Master gestured wrathfully and trapped the spirits, taught them, and bound them under oath. The spirits offered the Master their vitality mantras and rituals for their propitiation. He subdued untamed spirits by various other means, such as burnt-offering rituals. The Master performed all these [rituals for taming gods and demons] twice, then remarked [to the king], "From now on, you can engage in any spiritual practice you wish and you can build the temple according to your plans. I have already placed the gods and *nagas* under oath twice and I will do so once more."

He then went to the Zur-phu Kyong-bu Tsal Palace, where he subdued all the *nagas*, including Mal-dro Zi-chen, who said, "On the land, King Trisong Détsen is the most powerful; under the ground, I am the most powerful: we two should be friends. I will offer fourteen mule-loads of gold powder for

the temple the king is to build. Come to the gold mine at Longpo-na to get it." This was the only source of the gold for the temple construction.

The Master also subdued the *gyalpo* spirit Pékar. When the Master practiced a sacred configuration to tame Pékar and the spirit came to watch, the Master wielded his dagger and struck his eyes. When the spirit listened to the mantra, the Master struck his ears; when he mimicked the sound of the mantra, he struck his tongue. When the spirit wanted to flee, the Master pinned his limbs with daggers and he was unable to move. "Now I'm going to burn you!", the Master threatened. The spirit, in terror, swore on his own life, and was bound under oath. Following this, as the Master went to subdue the god Shampo, the god poured a river toward the Master. The Master drew a vajra from his cloak, brandished it, and sent the water back uphill to the god's lake. He threw his vajra into the lake, the water boiled, and one third of Shampo's glacier melted. The god sat at the top of the glacier and said, "Look at what you've done to me!" "You've done as much to me already! If you don't take an oath, I'll burn you!" the Master replied. At that, the god bowed at the Master's feet. "I belong to an evil class of gods, so it's not possible for me to practice your religion, but I promise not to harm anyone in the future," he vowed. Thus, in the course of six months the Master bound most of the non-human spirits under oath.

Then the Master announced, "For the benefit of the kingdom and Tibetan people in general, I will perform a major burnt-offering ritual." In preparation for the festivities, the king said that he would wash his hair. Acharya Bodhisattva told him that springs always flow on Supreme Mountain's [Mount Meru, the world's central mountain] northern face. If such water were used to wash the king's hair, he would gain long life, his family line would flourish, and their grand dominion would always remain. "Who can draw such water?" the king asked. "The tantric master has that capability," Bodhisattva replied. [The king] asked the Master, who placed a golden vase, the spout plugged by a white silk cloth, at the center of a *mandala*. When the Master recited a mantra, the vase rose into space, higher and higher, until it disappeared from sight. In the time it took to eat a mouthful of food, the vase returned suddenly in front of the Master. The king took the vase to wash his hair, but the ministers inspected it. Inside, the water seemed gray and unclear; they took it to a meeting of all the ministers. "This is probably water of madness from Mön," they said, "Throw it out!" The water was poured out and lost, a great misfortune.

The Master then gave the king and his fortunate subjects empowerment into Kriya [action] Tantra and into inner Secret Mantra practice. Further, to the king and many subjects, he taught *The Garland of Instructions in the View*, and any suitable meditation texts and instructions for such deities as Vajra All-Conqueror and the hundred thousand topics of Vajra Dagger. The Master predicted that if he were able to stay a long time in Tibet, he would fill the entire land with happiness, but later, due to the primary cause of sentient beings' collective karma, and the contributory condition of the evil, malicious gods and demons entering the hearts of the king's ministers, this did not come to pass.

In the documents of the king's will, there are no written records following this declaration that the Master's prolonged stay would improve the Tibetan land. This lapse in the account seems to be to avoid public declarations of private accounts of tantric practice. In these texts, tantric empowerment is indicated by the code word "service." In the past, Secret Mantra practice was customarily secret; even the meaning of the word "empowerment" was divulged to insiders only, not to the public. This symbolic word "service" appears in many old documents.

The following stories appear in common within the old histories of *The Garland of Instructions in the View*, in O-dren Pal-gyi Yeshé's *Guide for the Sessions of Vajra Dagger Group Practice*, and in other disparate, reliable histories.

When the Master was serving [i.e., giving empowerment to] the king, the supreme queens, including Tsé-pong clan lady Métok Drön and the Dro clan lady Tri Gyalmo Tsoon (later known by her renunciate name, Jong-choub-jé), asked to act as offering consorts in the sacred circle. The Master said that they were not the only ones who had such fortune and foretold that both the Chim clan lady Lhamo Tsen and the Khar-chen clan lady Tso-gyal shared their fortune to act as offering consorts. He was asked how they could possibly attend, since they lived at such a great distance. "Without difficulty!" he replied, and entered a meditative state. In an instant, the two women arrived at the outer edge of the circle. Further, those two developed the spontaneous presence of enlightened mind, and later renounced worldly activity to devote themselves to meditation. The three *Testaments* record that the two women went to practice meditation in their youth and therefore left no temples in their name [unlike the other queens], a fact explained by the above story.

At the completion of the empowerment, the king's personal attendant, called Ma the Elder, told the evil ministers [about the miraculous event], but they did not believe him: "He can't have that much power!" they reasoned. During this time, when the Master performed the ground-pacification ritual for the king's temple, lines of cord to demark the edges of the deities' palace had to be held, a task that required the two most beautiful, pure women in the Tibetan land. As Tibet was a huge country, it was not known who these women would be. At this, [the ministers] said, "They say that the tantric practitioner has the power to summon them. If it's true, bring the women here!" The Master entered into a meditative state and, after a moment, Chok-ro-za Bu-choung-men and Chok-ro-za Lha-bu-men appeared without anyone having noticed from where they had come. They were blessed with the presence of the wisdom deities and arranged the cords [around the configuration]. It was said that when all Tibetan people were later assembled, no women more beautiful than these two could be found among them.

The ministers then met secretly and said, "Is this tantric practitioner going to take Tibet's beautiful women and all its wealth to India?" One minister, named Kyung Tak-tsa, had no faith whatsoever in Buddhism and thought, "We must burn Red Rock Dren-zong [Guru Rinpoché's residence] and this tantric practitioner!" Once, when he came into the Master's presence, the Master declared in front of the minister and many others, "Isn't this what you're thinking?" The minister was mortified, left the room, and said, "This man from the southern border regions knows everything!" Another [minister], Dawé Dong-zik, had an extremely negative attitude toward Buddhism. The Master said, "Before long, he'll gain power and prevent Buddhism from spreading. It's time to put an end to him." The Master meditated for a moment and at the very same time, blood poured from the man's body and he died. Having seen such power in subduing humans and non-human spirits at that time and previously, the ministers became extremely cautious about their private negative acts and thoughts, and they concentrated their plans only on means to have the Master leave for India.

During this time, the Master spoke to the king, "Sovereign, make your land a land of excellence. Make Ngomshö's sandy grove into grassy meadows. Send water to all areas that have none, from Dra, Dol, and Tala, up to the central region. When these sandy plains become fields, they will feed Tibet. Take the riches of Vaishravana [a wealth god] and make Tibet the

storehouse of the world's wealth. Control the flow of the Brahmaputra; I've controlled the flow of a river even greater than this." He gave the king much counsel, such as, "Bring all the rulers of China, Mongolia, and other lands under the dominion of Tibet." When the king asked whether these things could really happen or whether the Master was just testing him, the Master erected a sacred circle and meditated for one morning: at a dry place at Red Rock, a great spring emerged. It was called Lu-dzing [*Naga Pond*]. "Do some more," the king asked. Thus, at Red Rock's Tsomo-gu the previously sandy area suddenly became green with grass. That afternoon, at the top of the cliff, a great forest instantly appeared. It was called La [*cypress?*] Grove. The following morning, the Master meditated and at the top of the valley in Zoung-kar, where there had been no water, a great river flowed. "Now you can have fields wherever you want," the Master said.

Since the king was persuaded that this could surely happen, he went to have a small meeting with his ministers. They said, "If you want fields, those at Yarloung should suffice. We believe this tantric practitioner will improve the land with the intention to give it to India. It's best if you cancel your projects and we banish this child of the southern borders to his own land." The very powerful ministers decided among themselves and spoke to the monarch, "Our sole lord! This man from the southern borders is very powerful. Monarch, your mind is possessed by Buddhism, and it's possible that this Indian will steal your dominion. Please make him leave." They said many similar divisive words and gave many mistaken reasons why each of the Master's past suggestions was unfeasible. They repeatedly demanded, "Now, we should offer many gifts and honors to the Acharya [*Shantirak-sheeta*] and the tantric practitioner and ask them to leave for India." When the ministers themselves made that request to the Master, the king became upset. He offered a full measure of gold powder to the Master, bowed and did circumambulations around him, and related his own feelings.

The Master replied, "I didn't come here for gold. I came here to subdue the evil demons and spirits of the outlying region of Tibet, to propagate Buddhism, to make this land a better place, and to lead its people to happiness. If I wanted gold, I only have to do this" and he touched the rocks around him, turning them to gold. However, out of respect for the king, he accepted a handful of gold, and said that he would use it to make offerings at Vajra Seat [*Bodhgaya*]. He gave the rest back to the king, with these words:

Your good intentions have brought catastrophe;  
 Your long-term kindness has become the cause of **hatred**.  
 The sovereign's ship is steered by the ministers,  
 The very evil, minister-demons of Tibet.

Sentient beings' evil deeds  
 Can impede even the Buddha's power.

And he did as the ministers had ordered.

[During empowerment, the flower the king tossed to indicate his meditation deity] fell upon the five deities of the exalted Bodhisattva All-Seeing Eyes; later the king accomplished the inner form of the five deities, Horse-Neck [*Hayagriva*]. It is said that a horse's neighing sound emerged from the image of Horse-Neck at Arya-palo Ling and was heard by two-thirds of the world. That image of Horse-Neck at Arya-palo Ling is the same one described in *The Net of Illusion Tantra*.

During this time, the Master gave a summing-up of his teaching based on *The Garland of Instructions in the View*:

In my teachings, the view must accord with the body of ultimate enlightenment; conduct, with bodhisattvas' conduct. If conduct is determined by the view, it becomes nihilism, will know neither vice nor virtue, and cannot be corrected later. If the view is determined by conduct, one becomes bound by material forms and will not gain liberation. In my teachings on the mind, the view predominates. In the future, there will be those who understand the meaning of the words but have not gained confidence through experience, and will want to try many different ways to help sentient beings.

The Master did not complete his entire transmission of pith instructions; his project of performing a burnt-offering ritual to increase the power of the king's family line was abandoned; and he did not finish the third binding of gods and *nagas* under oath. Nevertheless, because he could see the future, he gave many wrathful mantras to his disciples, and concealed many texts of wrathful mantras and teachings in clay containers. In general, he used his miraculous power to emanate forms of himself, which concealed in various

regions major treasures of instructions and wealth, one hundred and eight in all. At the time of concealment, he would repeatedly recite this prayer:

In this and any future lifetimes,  
 May I and my unfailingly generous patron  
 Enjoy the result of Great Way yoga practice  
 In the sublime, holy place called Highest Pure Land.

He gave much personal counsel to each of his disciples, then suddenly departed for India, leaving by the road through Ru-lak. He took one horse and was accompanied until Mong-youl by two faithful ministers, Loté Guna-gong and Zhang Nyong Tong. However, some ministers conferred among themselves, "That tantric practitioner's power is really strong: if we don't kill him, he'll send evil spells to Tibet." They secretly sent eighteen fierce warrior horsemen after the Master to murder him.

When the Master arrived in Mong-goung, he warned, "In the morning, persons wanting to harm us will come." The next day, as the departing party reached the Dong-bab Path, the eighteen killers appeared with weapons hoisted. As soon as they began to lunge toward the Master, he made a gesture and they became immobile like clay statues, unable to speak. The Master with his escorts continued over a few passes in the region until the Master told them to return. He said these final words:

I should have subdued Tibet's evil demons, cannibal spirits, gods, and *nagas* three times but I've left one undone. If I had completed it, the king's life would be long, his dominion would have increased, his royal line would have been mighty, and Buddhism would have endured long in the country. I keep in mind that this was left undone.

One cycle of Buddhist teaching will be completed, yet one major period of turmoil will occur. These *nagas* and *gyalpo* spirits harbor negative intentions. Even the king's family line will not respect the law and will shatter.

"Sprinkle these on those men who attacked us yesterday," he said, and handed them a full jar of mustard seeds. "I'm going to subdue the cannibal demons of the southwest." He turned his horse in that direction, and



flew off into the sky. Everyone there saw his robes fluttering through the clouds and heard the sound of the wind whistling around his staff.

The location of his departure is said by Tibetans to have been at the Goung-tong pass, but as it is reported that it was on the far side of Dongbab Path, it must have been a mountain on the border between India and Tibet.

The Master's escorts returned and sprinkled the mustard seeds on the killers: they regained their powers of speech and movement. The two messengers repeated to the king what the Master had said and the king was plunged into deep regret. Then, to receive the teachings the Master had not given, it is said that he invited the Pandit Vimalamitra and Shantigarbha. It is said in *The Supplement to Ba's Testament* that, following this, the king constructed his temple, although this appears to be an order determined by the constraints of the narrative [and not the strict order of events as they occurred]. All the ancient documents of the Nyingma tantras appear to relate in unison that the Master consecrated the Arya-palo Ling temple and performed the ground-blessing ritual at Samyé Monastery, and this seems valid to me. Further, the above-mentioned story of placing the cords for a temple construction seems to refer to Arya-palo Ling.

*Ba's Testament* states that the Master spent eighteen months in central Tibet; *The Supplement to Ba's Testament* concurs that he stayed eighteen months in Tibet, whereas *The Lama's Testament* does not provide a precise calculation of the months. Ancient documents said to have been written based on the content of *The King's Testament* state that the Master lived for eighteen months at Red Rock in central Tibet. Therefore, on the subject of the duration of his sojourn, apart from minor details [in these accounts], there is a general consensus. Nonetheless, many great ancient documented histories of the Nyingma tantras state that the Master consecrated the completed Samyé Monastery, and even the sublime scholar Butön [1290-1364] wrote a similar account. As the Master had an inconceivable number of emanations, it could be said that this is true, but because of the number of disciples to whom he appeared, we cannot know what [each experienced].

Don't think that since he stayed such a short time, his many acts, such as travel to every region, overt teaching in those places, concealment of many treasures, visits to each place, sojourns and departures, could not have happened: he had mastery of infinite miraculous powers. Even after his departure, he appeared in the common perception of one or many fortunate

persons. It is even possible that he visited in his actual form regions inhabited by groups of such fortunate persons. In the exalted land of India, such masters as Virupa, Luyipa, and Jalandharipa appeared many times and continued to appear in later periods; Guru Rinpoché has done the same.

#### THE MASTER'S ACTIVITY IN DAMIDO

The place where the Master said he had to go [from Tibet] is called Damidodvipa. A small island in the middle of the sea, it can be reached by boat straight west, from south India. In the past, it was filled entirely with cannibal demons and dakinis who traveled by soaring in space, thus its name Damido, or "travel by soaring." Moreover, at that time it was mainly populated by women called Mantra Bearers, evil dakinis who recited many awareness mantras. Many men there were ghouls with human bodies.

Master Lotus-Born went there to subdue the land's people and took residence in a mountain cave. When the Master concentrated, he used his meditative absorption to summon the land's chiefs (the monarch's queens—sixty-four Mantra Bearers, emanations of the sixty-four *mamos*). He overpowered them with wrathful gestures and mantras—they fainted, became paralyzed, and were cut to the quick with intense pain. "I'm going to burn you in my burnt-offering stove!" he threatened. With this, they surrendered and promised to obey the Master's every command. They gathered all remaining chief Mantra Bearers and the Master taught the entire group. This marked the first binding under oath of these beings.

One time, when the Master lived in a town, he saw some Mantra Bearers leading many human beings from the Land of Jambu to the place where they would be [slaughtered and] eaten. He went to a cave where he erected a large circle of wrathful deities. He drew the dakinis there against their will and threatened them. When they tried to escape, he pinned their limbs with daggers and forced them to swear that they would never again harm humans from Jambu. He gave them vows of the mind of awakening. This marked the second binding under oath of these beings.

On another occasion, the Master went to an inn where he saw many women boiling water in pots. Looking to see what they were doing, he saw that into the pots they poured blood, some fat, sperm, human flesh, butter, molasses, grains, alcohol, and other ingredients. He asked the women, who didn't recognize him, what they were cooking:

"We're extracting the essence of human bodies and of food," they replied.

"Didn't you make sworn promises in the presence of Master Padma Akara?"

"Our mistresses swore, but we didn't."

In the same cave, as before, the Master gathered the main Mantra Bearers and their followers, said to number 1,200,000. He received from them all their vitality mantras and their means of propitiation. He had the main dakinis enter the sacred tantric circle of empowerment and gave mind of awakening vows to the rest. All of them swore solemn oaths. This marked the third binding under oath of these beings. In that country as well, he subdued evil harm-bringing spirits, cannibal demons, and *nagas*.

That country's king was a starving spirit named Varabré, an evil, violent male deity. The Master knew that in subduing him, he would subdue others at the same time. He decided that to propagate the Buddha's doctrine he had to guide human beings as well. He took up residence in a forest close to the king's palace. Using his meditation, he repeatedly summoned all the king's concubines to serve as offering consorts in his sacred circle. When the king realized that his concubines were leaving, he took an ordinary human form, followed them outside, and spied upon the Master from a safe distance. The next morning, the king and his soldiers, carrying many weapons, came to defeat the Master. The Master threw mustard seeds at them: the king and his company's armor and weapons burst into flames, all the humans' limbs dripped blood and became paralyzed; their voices became mute and their minds deranged. The Master left them like that for three days. At the point when they were about to die, they begged the Master to do something. He washed them with water from a ritual vase and they returned instantly to health.

The king and his company bowed at the Master's feet. When they promised to do the Master's bidding, he told them, "Establish the Buddha's teaching here!" From the central region of Magadha, they invited a preceptor of the collection of teachings on monastic discipline [*Vinaya*], a preceptor of the collection of discourses [*Sutra*], and a preceptor of the collection of teachings on knowledge [*Abhidharma*]. Three temples were built—Bingha, Ardha, and Sudha—and consecrated by the Master. The foundations of the study and practice of the Three Collections were thereby established.

In that country, the Master did not teach extensively, apart from the Way

of the Discourses. To the king and his court he gave many profound teachings, and to six fortunate disciples he taught the six tantras and many instructions on the stage of completion and enlightened activity. Those six disciples gained accomplishment. In separate regions, in the course of one hour, Guru Rinpoché is said to have built five temples at the same time.

It is said that in all the Master stayed in the country for twelve years. Finally, he spread his outer cloak like wings, and left, circling through the sky, on his way to Tail-Fan Island, the cannibal demons' island in the southwest. I think that what are said to be twelve years might in fact be half-years.

These days, in the Damido Isle, the extent to which *The Glorious Tantra of the Circle of the Secret Moon* continues to be taught and practiced represents the tradition that originated with this Master alone. The same can be said for *The Major Tantra of the Vajra Essence Ornament*; as well as tantras of such deities as Vajra-in-Hand [Sanskrit: *Vajrapani*], Vajra *Gandari*, Slayer of the Lord of Death, Horse-Neck, Great Black One [Sanskrit: *Mahakala*], and Seven *Mamos*; and many minor meditation texts. In that land, it seems that there is a group of practitioners called Mahaga, who follow only the teachings of the venerable Master Buddha Jnana. Since they place unique value on teachings from Venerable Buddha Jnana and his four heart-spiritual heirs, they have spread widely the Lotus-Born Master's tradition of Joyous Vajra [*Hévajra*]; the Illustrious Sublime, Original Buddha [i.e., *Kalachakra*]; and the other deities mentioned above. Further, it seems that they preserve treatises related to tantras and pith instructions on Gathering of Secrets composed by the Master.

The place where the Master first bound the dakinis under oath is called Lam-past'a, where the stove made by the Master's hands can be seen in the rock. The place where the second two oath-bindings took place is called Al-past'a, where there are a thousand imprints [in stone] of the daggers the Master used to strike the dakinis. As the practice daggers do not remain within the domain of ordinary persons' perception, all have disappeared except for one, left by the Master to instill confidence in persons of the future. The wisdom deities dissolved into the Master's body and he left behind what is said to be the material dagger, made of a substance not identifiable as stone, wood, copper, or iron, etc. It is of an unusual design, like a self-manifested form, especially large, the width of three human beings. [To relate its story,] at the beginning, the Master had a small dagger made

of wood, which grew greatly during his meditation practice. It took the dimensions he wished, and moved, spoke, etc., like the actual deity [it represents]. The dagger became a circle of flames. When the main *tramen* Mantra Bearer transformed her own body to the size of the Sovereign Mountain, and began to flee, the dagger became as large as a mountain and pierced her. Later, after the wisdom deity dissolved into the Master's body and the material dagger's light and fire died down, this dagger is said to have been left as it remains.

### CONCLUSION

This concludes the story of this Master according to some well-known Indian transmissions, including that from the speech of the great, accomplished Master Shanti-gupta; and more detailed and extensive accounts through the Damido [Travel-by-Soaring Island] Master Source of the Gods. I heard these stories from these two masters' direct disciples. The stories of the Master's benefit for beings in Tibet represent my presentation of the consensus from many old, authoritative documents in which I have total confidence. I have also received some of this Master's instructions originating in Damido and transmitted through a lineage of Indian scholars. We have not actually seen the texts of the Indian stories, but our teachers, both scholars and meditation masters, have read many stories of this Master in books concerning their own masters' lineages, and in accounts of Buddhism's spread to Damido. These are all in accord with the untainted spoken records transmitted in an aural lineage passed between holy erudite and accomplished individuals. Therefore, nothing whatsoever written here should be abbreviated or discarded, whereas much should be repeated as true, meaningful, and wonderful.

In the accounts from the Land of the Exalted Ones [India], it is also stated that this Master traveled to and benefited beings on the island of Hurmuju, and in places such as Sikadhara, Dhanakosa, and Ruk-mala. However, I have not found the corresponding accounts. Further, although I have read many marvelous stories of this master related to individual, special profound Tibetan teachings, I have not written them down as they are too long to include here.

### CONCLUDING VERSES AND COLOPHON

*Some small-minded persons, equipped only with the faith of fools,  
have written many fabricated histories to inspire others.  
Most people are so foolish that such fraudulent and unsound words  
and meanings might in fact increase their faith,  
But when wise readers see or hear of these books, they are startled  
and amused and, for this reason,  
Develop doubts in all pure teachings and individuals. Such books are  
the work of demons: what could be more harmful?*

*I do not intend to exaggeratedly praise this present work of wonderful  
stories, which is beyond suspicion and very accurate,  
Yet this small text is a hundred times more impressive than huge vol-  
umes of fabrications.  
By the virtue of having written it, may I attain the state of this lord  
protector and lead all beings to freedom.  
That I have composed this pure, lucid, and reliable text is surely due as  
well only to this lord's blessings having entered my heart!*

*I do not write this with any hope  
That those who accept the general consensus concerning reality or  
who take slander seriously will be interested in it.  
My writing was induced by faith, my own and of those who heed my  
words:  
It is ambrosia for the minds and ears of wise readers.*

*Inspiration to Three Forms of Trust*, this story of the life of the great Master from Oddiyana, Lotus-Born, manifestation of Transcendent Buddhas' vajra speech, was requested by my travel and living companion, Tsangnyon Kunga Pol-zong. Thinking that such a work would nourish my own faith, I, Taranata the wanderer, wrote this at the age of thirty-six [1610],<sup>29</sup> in the Nak-gyal Retreat at Jonang.

*May virtue increase!*

The Bön Version of  
the Life of Guru Rinpoché  
*by Jamyong Kyentsé Wongpo*

## Introduction

**I**N THE MODERN WORLD, we have accustomed ourselves to borders and boundaries in many dimensions, including those related to our inner spiritual path. Yet to choose one faith to the exclusion of all others may not be the most enlightened approach to our spirituality.

My teacher, Kalu Rinpoché, was a sincerely ecumenical master whose openness extended beyond the borders of Buddhism to include all religions. I translated for him throughout Asia, where he would typically begin a talk with the observation that all spiritual paths led to the same goal, held many truths in common, and contained similar wisdom. He would include not only non-theistic Taoism or Shintoism in his list of religions that shared common ground with Buddhism, but such theistic faiths as Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He even emphasized the latter when in Malaysia, where state law does not allow Muslims to attend Buddhist teachings. Regardless of the Muslim opinion of Buddhism, he encouraged Buddhists to consider kindly their brothers and sisters on a parallel spiritual path. This message was not always warmly received. Too often, people seem far more comfortable inside the I-am-a-Buddhist box than exploring the I-am-a-Buddha space.

In 1995, I had the pleasure of attending a talk given by the Dalai Lama to close to five thousand people, in which he spoke not a word on the subject of Buddhism. Instead, he asked his audience to preserve their family values, language, and wisdom culture in the face of the foreign invasion and occupation that their once-sovereign nation had been forced to accept. At the close of his speech, some questions were taken from the audience, but His Holiness skirted any invitation to speak of his own spiritual path. He wanted to encourage the faith and human values of others, in this case those of native Hawaiians.

Such open-mindedness begins at home: the Dalai Lama regularly invites participation from representatives of the Bön faith in his Kalachakra empowerments and Kalu Rinpoché himself gave Bön empowerments, explaining that their faith was different only in form and language, not in essence, from the Buddhist path.

The Bönpos are usually more ecumenical than Buddhists. They accept the entirety of Buddhism as a new form of an old religion—their own. They consider themselves inheritors of a wisdom culture old beyond reckoning and every bit as deep as the 2,500-year-old faith that shared the Tibetan plateau with them. Buddhism has not always been a polite guest in Tibet: it borrowed lavishly from its host's religious forms—in language, ritual, and dress—without acknowledgment, and sometimes demonized the entire Bön faith instead of restricting its self-righteous judgment to some of Bön's less enlightened customs.

Jamgon Kongtrul was born into a Bönpo family—both his biological and adoptive fathers were Bön lamas. Although he converted to the Buddhist faith and often congratulated himself for that choice, he didn't turn his back entirely on his parents' faith. It was he who included Bön empowerments and teachings in *The Treasury of Rediscovered Teachings*, thus giving all future generations of masters and disciples the opportunity to share the Bön inspiration during the transmission of that important cycle of teachings. Within it, he included the following account of Guru Rinpoché's life from the Bön perspective, written by his spiritual master and friend, Jamyong Kyentsé Wongpo (1820-1892). The great Kyentsé here signs his work with a Bön-sounding name—Mi-shik Yoong-droung Joung-né Tsal (Indestructible Source of Swastikas Adept)—different from his Buddhist treasure-revealer name. Jamgon Kongtrul's own Buddhist treasure-revealer name reveals his Bön antecedents—Ten-nyi Yoong-droung Lingpa (Place of the Swastika of the Two Doctrines). In this context, the two doctrines refer to Buddhism and Bön. (The swastika, a symbol common to Buddhists, is practically the trademark of the Bön. In Sanskrit, *swastika* means "auspicious mark," but given the circumstances of its use during the Second World War, it could not be more inauspicious.)

Kongtrul and Kyentsé belonged to a long tradition of masters who were not hard-line Buddhists. From the time of Guru Rinpoché, many Tibetan masters were, to use Anne-Marie Blondeau's apt term, "ambivalent." Bön claims to have been native to Central Asia since the dawn of time; certainly

Tibet's first Buddhists first steeped in the Bön faith. It is fair to ask if many of them really felt the need "to convert" in the way we understand that term, even though they participated in the translation of Buddhist texts into their language. These days we feel the need for "clarity" and "integrity" in our choice of religion, whereas such borders may not have existed in the popular imagination of other times and places. In adopting Buddhism, it is possible that Tibet's original Buddhists did not feel they had excluded themselves from Bön. In Tibet, Bönpos and Buddhists were equally *nong-pa* (*nang pa*), the curiously ambivalent Tibetan word that Buddhists commonly use to identify themselves as Buddhists. *Nong-pa* literally means "person of inner spiritual cultivation" and signifies a person practicing non-theistic spirituality, rather than Buddhism per se. It is an inclusive designation for Tibetans, and it allowed some of the early stellar figures of Tibetan Buddhism, including Bérotsana (the greatest Tibetan translator), to shine in both worlds of Tibetan spirituality.

Kyentsé identifies the source of his story of Guru Rinpoché as the "overt" Bön tradition. According to Blondeau, the word "overt" refers to a system the within Bön schools; Haarh, on the other hand, identifies it as the first of a three-tiered synthesis of Tibetan spirituality as the Tibetans themselves described it. The Bön religion was the outer, overt form. This is not to relegate it to superficiality, I believe, but to situate it in the Tibetan world, where its forms, rituals, and worldview dominated public religious practice. Buddhism was designated the secret form, and the world of the local gods and spirits was the occult (literally, inner secret) form.

Such a seamless integration of outer and inner forms of spiritual life might never be possible between Buddhists and Western theists, yet it would seem plausible or even natural between Tibetans and Native Americans. Tibetan Bön and Buddhism's first host culture in North America was that of young, white college students, not the most obvious marriage of cultures. In 1974, I heard Trungpa Rinpoché state that the only persons he had ever met who lived and embodied what the Tibetans had understood through tantra were Native Americans. He spoke glowingly of some wise individuals he had encountered who were on a par with the realized masters of his home country. Some years before, in 1970, the first book of the foremost Western writer on Native American spirituality, Carlos Castaneda, had been required reading in a university anthropology class I took, and I continued to read and enjoy his work.

Still, it was a shock to later discover some incredible parallels between Tibetan and North American wisdom culture. For example, in retreat under Kalu Rinpoché's guidance, I read the following lines from our sixteenth century Tibetan textbook, describing a visualization for dreamers who have gained some familiarity with lucid dreaming.

Visualization number 23:

Imagine that a deep chasm, a mountain cliff for instance, yawns below where you stand. Further, imagine that you are suspended in space, one arrow's length above the ground at the mouth of the chasm. Looking down, you have a sudden feeling of vertigo. [...] Reflecting that there is nothing to be afraid of in a dream, you allow yourself to plummet, but just before hitting the ground, you imagine that the scene disappears; or you fly up to the top again, returning to your point of departure. Train in this repeatedly. [...]

It is also taught that you can keep one of your bodies at the top of the cliff and have another body, connected [to the first] by a cord of light, fall and then return.<sup>30</sup>

I remember feeling that I had read that scene before, in Castaneda's words (see, for example, *Tales of Power*, Castaneda's fourth book, pp. 222-226 and 259-260). From that day, I took Bön more seriously, specifically its claim that a wisdom culture existed in this world long before our historical era.

Where did tantra originate? Or Great Completion, or Great Seal meditations? Could it be that the Bönpos are right, that such wisdom existed long before the Buddha attained enlightenment in Bodhgaya and that the Buddha, Guru Rinpoché, and others skillfully tamed, refined, and wove pre-existing tantra into the fabric of Buddhism? Could it also be that Native Americans brought with them much of the content of the same inner wisdom culture when they crossed the Bering Strait so many centuries ago? I do not believe a definitive answer will ever be found to the question of the origins of Central Asia's rich spiritual culture. Yet in asking myself the question repeatedly over the years, I have gained more appreciation for Bön and Native American practices, albeit from a distance, and have found

this respect in no way detrimental to my attempts to cultivate merit and wisdom following the traditional Buddhist recipes.

This is how Kongtrul justified his inclusion of Bön empowerments and teachings in *The Treasury of Rediscovered Teachings*:

For the benefit of ordinary persons who harbor conceptual partiality toward specific schools of spiritual philosophy, such as theist or non-theist, Buddhist or Bön, the buddhas' compassion is impartial and immeasurable. For example, [buddhas] manifest to guide theists as gods with forms and attributes that correspond to their religions. In fact, in the three worlds, the victors' enlightened activity is present in even the most minor form of virtuous spiritual paths. Specifically, here in the Himalayas, there is not a single being who is left unguided, either directly or through a lineage, by the exalted, sublime Bodhisattva All-Seeing Eyes and Guru Rinpoché Padmakara. Thus, we read in *The Life Story of Padmasambhava* precise prophecies of masters who principally preserved the enlightened activity of Bön treasure texts, masters such as Aya Bönpo, Lha-boum (also known as Ta-nak Guru Non-tsé), Kusa Menpa, Ku-tsa Da-ö, and Bönpo Drak-tsa.

Further, such [well-known treasure revealers who are usually identified as Buddhist as] Guru Chöwong [1212-1270], Rikzin Gödem [1337-1409], Dorjé Lingpa [1346-1405], Ten-nyi Lingpa [1480-1535], the later Long-sal [1625-1692], Chöling [1682-1725], and Yong-gé [b. 1628 or 1641] discovered many Bön treasures, received Bön oral lineages, and were generally of great benefit to the Bön tradition. Moreover, some Bön treasures seem to be united with [i.e., intended for simultaneous use as] Buddhist treasures. Therefore, I have gained firm confidence in the amazing, inconceivable life of the second Buddha from Oddiyana, and in the excellent manner in which his mysterious, magical display of skillful means impartially guides his disciples. As an auspicious connection to the impartial unlocking of his unbounded enlightened activity, I have included just its essence in this collection. (*Catalogue of the Treasury of Rediscovered Teachings*, pp. 174b-175a)

In that work, Kongtrul lists the lineages of these essential Bön teachings. In them we find the names of Jamyong Kyentsé Wongpo and Chokgyur Déchen Lingpa (1829-1870), Kongtrul's direct masters and closest

colleagues. Further, among the first names in those lineages, we sometimes discover the characters we read of below: Drenpa Namka (Memory Sky), the Tibetan (Zhong-Zhoung) father of Guru Rinpoché; Nyima'i Nyingpo Ö-bar-ma (Flaming Light from the Sun's Core), his Indian mother; Yoong-droung Dön-sal (Swastika Clear Meaning), his older brother; and Péma Tong-drol (Lotus Who Liberates on Sight), Guru Rinpoché's Bön name. It will be obvious to any reader that the star of this version of the tale is Guru Rinpoché's father, Drenpa Namka, a great Bön master. Nevertheless, Drenpa Namka is not unknown to Tibet's Buddhists, as he numbers among his son's twenty-five principal disciples. The *Crystal Mirror* records this account (with Drenpa Namka here spelled Ten-pa Nam-kha):

Ten-pa Nam-kha was present at the debates between the Bön-pos and Padmasambhava's disciples and indicated that a person who had attained realization had no need to make any distinction between the Bönpos and Buddhists. Rising up in the sky, he struck the moon and sun together like a pair of cymbals. "There is no need," he said, "to introduce distinctions into the shining knowledge of the mutual sphere of sentient beings." Revered by the Bönpos as a manifestation of their founder, Ten-pa Nam-kha thereupon cut off a lock of his hair with a gold razor and was initiated into the circle of the Mantrayana by Padmasambhava. (Vol. 4, pp. 63-64)

In the notes to the following translation, I make reference to another translation of the same book into French by the great scholar Anne-Marie Blondeau. (That translation appeared with the title "mKhyen-brtse'i dbang-po: la biographie de Padmasambhava selon la tradition du dsGrag-spa Bon, et ses sources.") Her work helped in elucidating some of the more puzzling passages in the tale.

## A Concise Version of the Life of the Victors' Son, Lotus-Born, According to the Overt Bön Tradition

Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng

*Known as Lotus Who Liberates on Sight and Lotus-Born,  
You use your mastery of miraculous powers as skillful means  
to guide those disinclined to spiritual life.  
You show incomparable kindness to the beings of Tibet.  
Wondrous manifestation of enlightenment, to you I bow.*

*This Master's life story is both profound and wide-ranging,  
Like the ocean's depths and the sky's far bounds.  
Only enlightened ones can fathom his life;  
It exceeds the domain of ordinary individuals.  
Nevertheless, to give a partial indication  
Of how his life story appears to common disciples,  
I will express here a fraction  
Of what is written in the overt Bön transmission.*

### CHAPTER ONE: THE BIRTH OF HIS FATHER, THE GREAT MASTER MEMORY SKY

The land like that of the gods, Zhong-Zhoung,  
Holds a city called Gathering of All That is Desired  
to Please the Victors.



At its center stands the palace of accomplishment, Garuda Valley  
 Silver Castle.  
 There, the fortunate heir to the throne was the noble Gyu-yar Mu-kö.

Although the sovereign had married,  
 The couple's union had borne no children.  
 Therefore, he offered as much gold powder as an elephant can carry  
 To the eight translators and scholars of both Zhong-Zhoung and Tibet,  
 And requested from them empowerment and their positive  
 aspirations.

Thus, Ever-Excellent's radiant compassion took the form of a white  
 syllable Ah  
 That melted into light and became a pure, immaculate child,  
 Who conformed to common appearances, in the form of a human  
 being  
 With all the marks, signs, and qualities of physical perfection.  
 He was born as the king's son.<sup>31</sup>

His complexion was like the clear, pure sky.  
 He had three beautiful eyes of vivid transcendent knowledge.  
 His heart was marked with a golden, eight-petalled lotus;  
 The sole of his left foot, with an eye of wisdom.

He saw the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities  
 And bound humans and non-human spirits under oath.  
 With his miraculous power, he journeyed to all sacred places and  
 regions,  
 Where all assemblies of dakinis served him food  
 And wild animals gathered around him.

As he could clearly, unimpededly recall five hundred past lives,  
 He was named Memory Sky [Tibetan: *Drenpa Namka*],  
 Known to be in his last life within the world, chief of all awareness  
 holders,  
 He was an accomplished awareness holder who shone like the sun.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE IMPRESSIVE QUALITIES OF HIS FATHER, A GREAT MASTER

A great spiritual master such as he  
 Was in fact a supreme manifestation of enlightenment—  
 He had no need to undergo the hardships of education and training,  
 But due to the awakening of previous positive karmic connections  
 And to show an impressive example to his disciples,  
 He received the heart-essence of eight scholars of Zhong-Zhoung and  
 Tibet,  
 Including the great scholar Tami Tégé.

He bowed at the feet of nine Indian scholars  
 And freed his intellect by means of study of all subjects of Sanskrit  
 grammar, logic, scripture, and culture.  
 He gained mastery of tantra's secret conduct  
 And was therefore known as the very accomplished master Virwapa.

He journeyed to the land of Tak-zi [Iran].  
 There, in the presence of the great *Shin-gyi sem-pa*<sup>32</sup> Color of the  
 Sky's Light,  
 He received infinite teachings from the discourses and tantras.  
 From the great scholar Swastika Clear Intellect  
 He received the entire transmission of the outer tantras, discourses,  
 And collections of teachings on knowledge and discipline.

In the presence of the illustrious son, Nga-tsa Kyol-po,  
 He received profound instructions in the grand mysteries of union and  
 liberation.  
 During that time, in the major monastery Demon-Taming Mantra,  
 He was known as Swastika Unchanging King.

From the great master Thousand Tantras Great Magician  
 He learned wrathful magic and miraculous swift travel  
 And trained to become a translator of twenty-one languages.  
 In the land of Oddiyana's eight charnel grounds

He manifested as the eight classes of spiritual warriors, the grand *ging*,  
Gave vows to gods and cannibal demons, and led vajra feasts.

In southwest Zhong-Zhoung  
He defeated in debate the logic and scriptures of five hundred heretical  
teachers and their followers.  
He stemmed their contradictory philosophies, established the Buddha's  
doctrine,  
And was known as Collector of Songs, Lion of Speech.

In middle Zhong-Zhoung, the three circles of Ngari,  
He founded the large monastery Pure Discipline.  
During this time that he planted the victory banner of the Buddha's  
doctrine,  
He was known as the great scholar Miraculous Wisdom.

For the ruler who had dominion over Tibet's four regions,  
Outer Zhong-Zhoung, he became the state-sponsored spiritual master.  
In all, he traveled to India seven times  
And to inner Iran five times.

He gained mastery over the meditation on eternal life,  
Placed all worldly gods and demons under oath,  
Blessed one hundred awareness holders of future generations,  
And explicitly foretold of future individuals who would have a **karmic**  
connection to his teaching.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE BIRTH OF TWO SONS, MANIFESTATIONS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Specifically, to spread the Buddha's doctrine  
And to suppress the cannibal demons in the Southwest,  
[Memory Sky] recalled his previous profound commitments  
And traveled to Bhisha in India at the time of a large market-gathering.

There, he met the Brahmin Joyous Excellent One's daughter,  
Named Flaming Light from the Sun's Core.  
She had every positive characteristic: he took her as his karmic partner.  
From their play of skillful means without attachment  
Two impressive princes, manifestations of enlightenment, were born.

The elder son's color was clear like crystal  
And he had a swastika design at the center of his brow.  
He knew clearly and effortlessly the present, past, and future.  
Never distracted, he lived alone peacefully.  
He took the name Swastika Clear Meaning.

The younger son had a dark-brown, radiant face.  
His eyes were intense; his nose wrinkled in wrath.  
His triangular mouth was open; his arms moved forcefully.  
His legs danced as he moved:  
His father gave him the name Lotus Who Liberates on Sight.

### CHAPTER FOUR: THE MOTHER'S AND TWO SONS' ATTAINMENT OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

Swastika Clear Meaning went to Radiant Lion Grove,  
Where he practiced the General Collection and the Cycle of  
Awareness-Holders:  
He gained accomplishment, attained the state of an awareness holder  
of longevity,  
And became a great bodhisattva on a stage of awakening.

Lotus Who Liberates on Sight received the sublime empowerments  
Of the Thirteen Miracles and of Wrathful Magic.  
He then went to the large western charnel ground of Wrathful  
Harm-Bringers,  
Where he practiced meditation to the point that his meditative heat  
and signs reached their full measure.

Their mother went to the cave of Secret Cliff,  
Where she practiced the secret familiarization practice of [the deity]  
Gé-khö:

She gained the same fortune as the secret deity.  
Then the mother asked the father,  
“Highest chief who rules sacred circles of one hundred families of  
enlightenment,  
Matchless lord of victors,  
Epitome of the knowledge of the appearing phenomena of the wheel  
of life and transcendence,  
I am a dakini of worldly activity.  
I have gained accomplishment in the secret practice of Gé-khö,  
But I did not reach the full stage of true wisdom.  
If I reach that stage during this lifetime,  
I will take rebirth in the northeastern celestial realm of Swastika Play  
As the noble Woman of the Sphere of Mysteries  
And I will lead ten thousand dakinis encircling me.  
To accomplish this, I will go to the southwestern Unchanging Grove,  
Where there lives a sublime, seven-times born Brahmin named Jewel,  
Who will end his life for others’ benefit and who is praised and hon-  
ored by everyone.<sup>33</sup>

I too will go there to offer him my praises.  
You who overpower existence’s gods and demons,  
Don’t let your majestic mind’s compassion grow faint!”

Once she had said this and left, the father forgot [to help her with his  
powers].

The mother went to the southwestern Unchanging Grove,  
Where she requested the accomplishment of the Brahmin’s flesh.  
A southwestern dakini, Manifest Complete Master of the Expanse,  
Received it before her.  
She grabbed at it, but could not hold on to any part,  
Except for a single strand of hair, which she ate.

When she returned home, she asked the father,  
“Due to my past negative karma, I was born a woman;

Then, due to karmic connections, I met you.  
Finally, perhaps due to my habitual patterns’ obscurations,  
I have not accomplished my goals.  
Up to now I have been your tantric partner, connected to you through  
our two sons.  
Now, don’t think of me as such; give up that thought.  
Let our two sons leave with their mother.”

To this request, the father replied,  
“Listen, Flaming Light:  
If you don’t have power over your own karma,  
Blaming others is meaningless.  
[Children] need both a mother and father to be conceived and raised:  
Let both boys stay with me.  
You, their only mother, can do whatever meditation you want.”  
Thus, he didn’t give his permission [for their divorce and her custody  
of the children].

The two children discussed among themselves;  
The elder, Clear Meaning, stayed to live with his father;  
The younger, Lotus Who Liberates on Sight, left with his mother.  
The mother and her son paid final homage to the father,  
Made prayers of positive aspiration, and departed for India.

When they reached the Isle of Joyous, Lovely Flowers,  
The son hid in a blossoming lotus.

The mother saw that a dakini in Oddiyana  
Was performing a vajra feast of seven-born-Brahmin flesh.  
She went there, collected the remains, and ate them.  
Instantly, she became a leader of vajra feasts  
For western, lotus-family dakinis, and reached the stage  
of consummate wisdom.

CHAPTER FIVE:  
THE FORTUNE OF BECOMING THE SOUTHERN KING'S SON

At that time in southern India,  
In the capital city of Spontaneous Jewel,  
A destined and fortunate royal couple,  
The husband Ever-Virtuous  
And the wife Illuminating Radiance,  
Were disheartened from not having children to love.

When they prayed to the Three Jewels and cultivated the accumulations,  
A Brahmin named Excellent Wish-Granter told them,  
"Listen, great king who cultivates merit,  
To stabilize your dominion  
Go tomorrow with your court  
To the Isle of Joyous, Lovely Flowers.  
Your queen, this true gem,  
Will definitely gain the fortune of having a child!"

As advised, the next day,  
The sublime occasion on the eighth lunar day of the Tiger Year,  
When the major planet General and the star Large Horse rose,  
The king, queen, and court  
Went to the Isle of Joyous, Lovely Flowers,  
Carrying as many offerings of divine substances as they could,  
And made abundant offerings to the Joyous Buddhas.

During that time, the king and queen  
Saw one flower stalk move.  
They became amazed and looked more closely:  
There lay a child whose body bore signs.

The child's skin was white with a reddish glow;  
His eyes stared intently; his nose had a frowning wrinkle.  
His triangular mouth was open wide; his hands moved forcefully.  
He sat with one leg extended, the other bent.

Everyone was filled with wonder and rejoiced.  
They returned to the capital, Spontaneous Jewel.

CHAPTER SIX:  
THE SOUTHERN KING GIVES AUTHORITY  
OVER THE LARGE CAPITAL

Both the father and mother were extremely delighted  
And they announced, "The queen has given birth to a child  
Who exhibits marvelous signs!  
All our subjects must gather!"

Everyone assembled and made boundless gifts  
Of gold, turquoise, silks,  
Cattle, elephants, horses,  
And many precious things.

A Brahmin with knowledge of signs was called to examine the child.  
He said, "This prince, a true gem,  
Has, in general, all the qualities of a buddha  
And, in particular, his white and red flesh  
Indicates his forceful command of mundane gods and demons.  
The wrathful wrinkle on his nose  
Indicates he will suppress hordes of cannibal demons that are difficult  
to tame.  
The triangular shape of his mouth  
Indicates that he will lead the *mamo* dakinis."

With this prophecy the child was installed as ruler of the capital.

CHAPTER SEVEN:  
HIS OUTSTANDING MIRACLES

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

Then, on one occasion, to demonstrate miracles,  
The prince threw a rock,  
Which hit a government official's son on the top of the head and  
killed him.

The official asked that the prince be punished.  
The king paid a penalty of the correct amount in jewels,  
But the official would not relent.  
Everyone threw the prince into a lake of poison—  
He did not sink, but became even more radiant.  
They rolled him down from the summit of a mountain of poison,  
But this did not harm him.  
Poisonous snakes could not grab him; they tried to bite him,  
But could not break [his skin]: his body was not pierced in the  
slightest.

They burned him in a fire of sandalwood and sesame oil,  
But the mass of flames became a lake, in the center of which  
He sat in a blossoming lotus, cool and calm, brilliantly radiant.

At this, everyone gathered was startled and exclaimed,  
"This sublime being has not the slightest fear  
From great dangers and cannot be harmed!  
Before, he was found inside a lotus flower.  
Therefore, it's sure that this individual  
Is a supreme emanation of the perfect Buddha!"

Everyone praised him, paid homage, acknowledged their wrongdoing,  
Prayed, and made offerings to him. When they reinstalled him,  
He became commonly known as Lotus-Born.

CHAPTER EIGHT:  
GAINING ACCOMPLISHMENT  
OF THE PROFOUND TREASURES

Then Prince Lotus-Born  
Went to attend a vajra feast led by his mother.  
When he joined the feast-circle gathering,  
His sublime mother, the great dakini, gave this command,  
"Prince, go from here to the South.  
There, at the cliff known as Flaming Jewel,  
You will find an inconceivable number of treasure teachings.  
Take them and practice them yourself.  
Gain accomplishment, then transmit them to others."

As she had foretold,  
The prince, great Lotus-Born,  
Went south, to Flaming Jewel Cliff,  
Where he retrieved five containers of profound treasures  
From Leaping Lion Tomb.

From a jeweled iron container  
He took the tantras and pith instructions of Vajra Dagger.  
From a clay container he took the three tantras of Discourse, Illusion,  
and Mind.  
From a crystal container he took the tantra and transmission  
of Yongdak.  
From a copper container he took the cycles of *Mamo* and the Lord  
of Death.  
From a bone container he took [the teachings of] the performer of  
activity, Arrogant One.  
Thus, every cycle of Secret Mantra appeared.  
By the blessing of the spiritual masters, deities, and dakinis,  
He understood every word and meaning merely upon seeing the texts.

CHAPTER NINE:  
PERFECTING MEDITATION AND PERFORMING  
ENLIGHTENED ACTIVITY

Following the prophecy given by his sublime mother, the dakini,  
He went south, to the Wrathful Cave of Poison Mountain,  
Where he single-mindedly meditated upon Vajra Dagger.  
As signs of accomplishment he pierced rocks unimpededly with  
his dagger.

In the southern Cannibal Demon Cave  
He meditated upon Great Completion: his signs of accomplishment  
reached culmination.

In the northern Intense Turmoil Cave  
He meditated upon *Mamo* and Lord of Death: he gave orders to the  
arrogant spirits.

In the eastern Fullest Depth of Mystery Cave  
He meditated upon Yongdak and attained the wisdom of bliss.  
In the center, on the great place Gathering of Jewels,  
His meditation practices, such as Discourse, Illusory Manifestation,  
and Mind,  
Preserved the victors' line and led him to the accomplishment  
of a body of light.

He hoisted the victory banner of both study and meditation;  
And placed infinite numbers of disciples, both human and  
non-human beings,  
In the state of freedom through the sight of him, the sound of his  
voice, or the thought of him.

CHAPTER TEN:  
HE SHOWS SPECIAL KINDNESS TO THE LAND OF TIBET

In particular, he stayed at the nine fearsome mountains of Tibet  
And there bound all male and female arrogant spirits under oath.  
He tamed the hundred hordes of aberrant *rudra* demons.

He consecrated one hundred major sacred places for meditation  
practice  
And inaugurated one thousand and eight minor sacred places.

He brought auspicious portents to the land  
And increased the majesty of its inhabitants and environment.  
He concealed inconceivable numbers of treasures in mountains, rocks,  
and lakes,  
And miraculously left imprints [in stone] for everyone to see.

He gave prophecies to the eight awareness-holding meditators,  
Bestowed empowerments, blessings, instructions, and permissions,  
And acted as the spiritual hero in secret union with one hundred  
dakinis.

His union practice reached perfection:  
His enlightened intention remained changeless and stable.  
His liberation practice reached perfection:  
He tamed the arrogant spirits of dualistic appearances.  
His tantric discipline reached perfection:  
He bestowed mastery of supreme and common accomplishments upon  
all his disciples.

CHAPTER ELEVEN:  
HIS PRESENT ACTIVITY OF SUPPRESSING  
THE RED-FACED CANNIBAL DEMONS

Then, in the southeast region of angry *rakshas* [cannibal demons],  
Ten-million billion man-eating cannibal spirits filled the land.  
If their power were to increase,  
Like great swirling seas at land's end,  
All the red-faced cannibal demons would increase their dominion.

Flying through the sky, rising from the depths of the water,  
Unobstructed by rocks and mountains, running like the wind,  
They would fill all major and minor regions of the world,

Killing all men, eating their raw flesh and blood,  
 And raping all women, increasing their cannibal-spirit offspring.  
 In the end, this world would become a land of demons,  
 Filled with evil countries devoid of virtue.

He saw that others could not guide beings so difficult to tame,  
 Only he himself, Lotus-Born.  
 Soaring like a magnificent garuda, he left for the isle of cannibal  
 demons.

He transferred the consciousness of the *raksha* demon king  
 And entered the empty shell of his body,  
 To remain there until the end of cyclic existence.

With skillful means, unceasing enlightened mind, and excellent  
 conduct  
 He tames the cannibal demons and brings happiness to this world.  
 His amazing kindness is magnificent.

## COLOPHON

*Om Ah Hounng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Hounng*

*In this work, I have taken a hair tip and drawn a drop of water  
 From the ocean of the life  
 Of Guru Lotus-Born.*

*I have written a concise version of the essence  
 Of what appears in disciples' fleeting perceptions,  
 The story as related in the overt Bön transmission.  
 By its virtue may all those who have connection to it through sight,  
 sound, recollection, or touch  
 Quickly attain the state of the Lotus Who Liberates on Sight!*

Mi-shik Yoong-droung Joung-né Tsal wrote this account according to previous life stories told in Bön treasure texts. May this prove virtuous!

*Ta-tshoun Mu-tshouk Mar-ro*

Supplications to Guru Rinpoché  
in Seven Chapters  
*by Guru Rinpoché*



## Introduction

### COMPOSITION OF THE SEVEN SUPPLICATIONS

GURU RINPOCHÉ composed the *Seven Supplications* in response to the requests of five close Tibetan disciples. They asked a simple question, one which is central to most persons' spiritual lives: "How should I pray?" He replied with supplications according to the needs of each, featuring himself as the main character. Humility is as much a virtue in Buddhism as in other faiths: How could a Buddhist compose prayers to himself? Guru Rinpoché responded to his disciples' need for prayers and, because they were tantric Buddhists, supplications to their spiritual master constituted a vital technique for spiritual renewal. Although it may strike us as odd, he was just being practical, if we can call such inspired work practical.

This 1,200-year old collection of supplications has had an influence on the spiritual life of the Tibetan people far out of proportion to its modest size. These prayers were composed by and for extraordinary individuals at a critical juncture in Tibetan and Asian history. Their enduring popularity attests to the fact that the supplications continue to occupy a central part of many Tibetan-speaking Buddhists' spiritual lives.

The basic circumstances of their composition were straightforward: five people gathered around their spiritual master, then requested and received supplications according to their individual needs. But, as mentioned above in the general introduction, this was more than a simple prayer meeting: King Trisong Détsen, leader of the group and king of Tibet, was a person undergoing a major change in life. Although he had professed an interest in sponsoring the spread of Buddhism in his country, he continued aggressive policies in Tibetan military and foreign affairs. In 764, just three years before these supplications were composed, King Trisong Détsen had brought

China to her knees. His armies had surrounded the capital (Chang-An) and he had installed a puppet emperor on the imperial throne. He would later, as mentioned in his short biography included in the first appendix below, send an army to India to wrest Buddhist treasures from their home.

Therefore, when Guru Rinpoché advises the king (in the text of the supplications below), "Great king! Do not fall under the influence of the fame, fortune, and distractions of this present life. Pray continually," it is close to being subversive advice, given the context. The king eventually heeded his foreign master's counsel; his change of heart was to have a lasting effect within the country and throughout Asia.

The second member of the group had been one of the king's wives until he offered her to Guru Rinpoché in thanks for religious instruction. She became the master's foremost Tibetan disciple, named Yeshé Tsogyal, Queen of the Lake of Wisdom. She is referred to in this text as a dakini (it is translated into Tibetan as *khandro*, literally "sky-walker," that is, a being who moves freely through the space of timeless and boundless awareness). In this case, the title acknowledges Yeshé Tsogyal as an enlightened woman. Tibetans consider her to be the incarnation of the female bodhisattva of learning and music, Melodious One (*Sarasvati*), and she is said to have had a perfect memory. Buddhists today revere her for the many books she wrote and for her continued spiritual influence. Although Tibet followed the rest of Asia in later restricting women's role in the social and religious life of the nation as the power of male-only monasteries increased, Yeshé Tsogyal was never forgotten as one of the most extraordinary masters Tibet has ever produced.

Third, Namké Nyingpo was a fully-ordained monk. He was a gifted young man who, had he been born fifty years earlier, would perhaps have joined Tibet's government service. Instead, he chose to dedicate his life to Buddhist contemplation. He learned Indian languages, journeyed to India, met masters there, and returned to Tibet with meditation instructions that have become a significant and lasting contribution to Buddhist practice in the Himalayan region.

Fourth, Dorjé Doodjom followed his family's tradition and became an official in Trisong Détsen's court. The king sent him to India to invite Guru Rinpoché to Tibet. On Guru Rinpoché's arrival, Dorjé Doodjom resigned his post and devoted his life to meditation. He is portrayed in written accounts and in portraits as a long-haired tantric practitioner.

The last person present at the gathering was one of the king's sons, Prince Mutri Tsépo. The last two of the seven supplications were given to him. The difference between the circumstances of the two is indicative of the changing times. On the first occasion, Mutri Tsépo was young and the reader cannot discern his character. Years later, when the responsibilities of the monarchy had been thrust upon him, he seems overwhelmed by his position as "Son of Heaven." (This title would seem to be an affectation borrowed from Chinese imperial usage.)

His father, Trisong Détsen, remained in power until (according to one account) he was killed by an assassin's arrow fired from the crowd as he passed in a parade. Thus, Mutri Tsépo was suddenly forced to accept the leadership of Tibet. He tried, like his father, to be a Buddhist king and embarked on a scheme to fairly redistribute the wealth of the country among his subjects.<sup>34</sup> His heartfelt lament addressed to Guru Rinpoché that we read in the second supplication given him, *The Supplication for the Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes*, bears articulate witness to the awful strain he felt. His reign was short-lived, however; he married one of his father's young wives, and his mother, in a fit of jealous rage, poisoned him.

The last character who made a significant contribution to the supplications in this collection is the second son of Trisong Détsen, Prince Murub Tsépo (referred to by his Buddhist name Yeshé Rolpa Tsal, Adept of Wisdom's Display), who requested *The Supplication to Dispel Obstacles on the Path*. (Although this is a much later supplication, it has become very popular and is so linked in the common imagination with the *Seven Supplications* that Kongtrul includes it in his series of visualizations, *Ambrosia from My Heart*, translated below.) Although theoretically next in line for the throne on the death of Mutri Tsépo, he had been disqualified some years before by murdering a government minister who had the misfortune of answering the door to a meeting from which Murub Tsépo felt he had been unjustly excluded. He later made an odd choice of vocation for someone of his impetuous temperament: he became a translator of Buddhist texts.

Guru Rinpoché and those gathered around him were unique individuals living at an extraordinary place and time. They shaped their era and indelibly influenced the lives of all Tibetans until the present day; it was through them that Tibet became both a Buddhist and a pacifist state.

## THE HISTORY OF THE SUPPLICATIONS

At the conclusion of the *Seven Supplications*, Guru Rinpoché announced that he would conceal the text and prayed that a future disciple would unearth it. King Mutri Tsépo made similar aspirations at the end of *The Supplication for the Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes*. Thus, these texts lay hidden until 1362, when a treasure revealer named Tulku Zongpo Drakpa retrieved them and passed them to Rikzin Gödem Chen (1337–1408), asking that he translate them into Tibetan from the dakinis' secret language of the yellow parchment treasure texts. They became part of what are known as the Northern Treasures. Jamgon Kongtrul relates the following brief account of Tulku Zongpo Drakpa's career as a treasure retriever:

Tulku Zongpo Drakpa, an emanation of the prince Mutri Tsépo, was born in the southern district of Latö. He accepted the vows of a fully-ordained monk and entered the practice of the Oral Instruction Lineage [*Kagyü*] teachings. He gained expansive realization through single-minded meditation at such places as Gyalgyi Shri, the hermitage at Mong-lam, and Gongbu Lé.

[The local deity] of Gongbu Lé appeared to [Tulku Zongpo Drakpa] as a young boy wearing a turban, and encouraged him to become a revealer of treasures. He did not take this vision seriously, thinking that it had arisen from his own meditation. The great Master from Oddiyana then appeared to him as an extraordinary yogi who said that he had meditated at Nyilam. He gave Tulku Zongpo Drakpa a list of treasures [he was to retrieve] and taught him. These directions led him to [recover many treasures]. From Gyong Temple at Rulak Dram he retrieved the practice texts for Horse-Neck [*Hayagriva*] and Loving-Kindness [*Maitreya*], and the cycle of pith instructions given to the King of Goung-tong. From Yönpö Valley, he retrieved some practice texts, including that of Vajra-in-Hand [*Vajrapani*]; three heart instructions (long, medium-length, and brief); a guide to the region's sacred ground and a declaration concerning it; *Seven Supplications to Guru Rinpoché*; *The Flaming Wheel to Prevent Obstacles*, and other texts.

Tulku Zongpo Drakpa gave the declaration and the heart instructions to Rikzin Gödem Chen, who retrieved a great treasure from

Zong-zong Lhadrak based on directions provided in these texts. This master also wrote down the definitive version of *Seven Supplications to Guru Rinpoché* from the [original treasure texts'] yellow parchment. These have spread throughout central Tibet, western Tibet (Tsang), and eastern Tibet (Kham). All the people in these regions have raised their voices to recite these supplications; the enlightened activity of Tulku Zongpo Drakpa has filled the bounds of space. (*History of the Sources of the Profound Treasures and the Treasure Revealers*, pp. 118b-119a)

As stated here, these supplications spread far and wide, to every Tibetan-speaking area of the Himalayas. In modern terms, we could say that they have been firmly in the Tibetan Top Ten for the last six centuries and show no signs of slipping down the chart. However, their popularity and wide distribution led to differences in their printed editions. The present translation is based on the text that appears in *The Treasury of Rediscovered Teachings* published by Dilgo Kyentsé Rinpoché. At the end of this version of the supplications, the editor remarks:

Since *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters* has proved extremely useful to people of every region, the proliferation of differing editions of the text has led to errors and many different versions of these supplications. Rikzin Tséwong Norbu [1698–1755] considered making a definitive edition based on the original yellow parchment, which Zongpo Drakpa had given to Gödem Chen. Although this text is said to have been re-concealed in the Master from Oddiyana's meditation cave at Polbar Mountain in Mong-youl, Tséwong Norbu found the circumstances unpropitious for its retrieval. Therefore, these days, no uncorrupted text is available to us. However, I recently gathered versions of the *Seven Supplications* from every available source: old and new editions, hand-written and woodblock prints; and from such Tibetan-speaking areas as Ngari, Tsang, Ü, Lho, Mönka, Dawkpo, Kongpo, Amdo, and Kham. Further, I have consulted all available "definitive editions" of these versions, produced by discriminating scholars of varying levels of capability and have thoroughly compiled the pertinent information available in Péma Wong-gyal's [also known as Ngari Penchen, 1487–1543] *Full Gathering of the Awareness*

*Holders.* These have all provided a wealth of reliable sources; nothing whatsoever has been added by the editor. What is written here is true to the original; this is a particularly accurate version. (*Seven Supplications*, pp. 24b-25a)

This note was left unsigned but elsewhere Kongtrul mentions the editor's name—Pawo Tsouk-lak Gawa (the Seventh Pawo Rinpoché, 1718–1781), one of the main masters of the Oral Instruction Lineage of the Karmapas (Karma Kagyu), one of Kongrul's teachers, and a treasure revealer in his own right. In spite of his meticulous work, other versions of the supplications continue to be reprinted and distributed. For instance, I have counted more than one hundred variations, large and small, between the version I used in this translation and another one commonly circulated in the present day.

The reader might ask why, if the approximate location of the original version is known, someone does not retrieve it and resolve any doubts concerning the correct version of these prayers? One answer could be that treasure texts are concealed—or reconcealed in this case—with a specific future circumstance and person in mind. Those who reveal treasures do so only if they are the destined individual and if the circumstances are propitious. It would seem that such conditions have not been favorable for many centuries. Thus, true to the discipline of a treasure revealer, Tsouk-lak Gawa collected and compared many versions of the text rather than trying to locate the original.

This Tibetan edition includes *The Supplication for the Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes* as part of the *Seven Supplications*. Tulku Zongpo Drakpa retrieved both texts, that of the first six supplications and this latter one, but from different sites. They are often printed separately, with the text of the first six prayers usually given the title *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters*, despite the fact that only six supplications can be found in such an edition. This has led some readers to look for seven supplications within the covers of a book that in fact contains only six. Kongtrul comments on this dilemma and its comical results:

The main text of the [first six] supplications and *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes* were not retrieved from the same treasure site, so we can hear talk that *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes*

should not be considered as part of *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters*. Furthermore, because *The Supplication to the Spiritual Master's Three Bodies of Enlightenment* was bestowed to the group as a whole, and each of the five disciples who requested a prayer was given one in response, some count just six supplications. The seventh is said to be the instructions in how to recite the supplications (beginning, "My followers..."), which is supplemented by other verses and turned into a supplication. There is absolutely no need for this.

All of the yellow parchment retrieved by Mong-lam Zongpo Drakpa was given its definitive form by Rikzin Gödem Chen. At that time he wrote the title, *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters*, on the text which was deemed to contain all seven supplications because of the words at the end of *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes*, "The Son of Heaven stated, ....The supplication spoken to the King of Goung-tong [i.e., *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes*] should be recited at noon, during rest, etc...." This provides obvious proof that this last prayer is counted as one of the *Seven Supplications*. Persons who say otherwise are misguided; don't believe them! (from the text *Ambrosia from My Heart*, translated in full below)

The popularity of the seventh of the supplications, *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes*, received an added boost in the nineteenth century when Chok-gyur Déchen Lingpa, a colleague of Jamgon Kongtrul, retrieved an almost identical version of this prayer from its place of concealment in eastern Tibet. In this case, the supplication stands alone as a prayer and forms part of a series of instructions for meditation on Guru Rinpoché called *The Heart-Meditation on the Master, A Wish-Fulfilling Jewel*. This modern version of the supplication is recited more often these days and is sometimes printed, incorrectly, in place of the older version as one of the *Seven Supplications*.

The last supplication in this translation, *The Supplication to Dispel Obstacles on the Path*, was also retrieved by Chok-gyur Déchen Lingpa and has enjoyed immense popularity since its introduction during the nineteenth century. Although it has no relationship to the *Seven Supplications*, this prayer spread alongside Chok-ling's version of *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes* and has thus become closely related in popular practice

to the *Seven Supplications* in spite of the five centuries separating their respective appearances. It is indicative of the prayer's status as almost-one-of the *Seven Supplications* that Kongtrul included a description of a visualization to accompany its recitation in his work *Ambrosia From My Heart* without having felt it necessary to explain why the eighth supplication was included in his text.

Some persons question whether these supplications were actually spoken by Guru Rinpoché as recorded in this text. I accept that they were. Although he was not Tibetan, I believe that Guru Rinpoché could have mastered the language to the extent of writing or speaking such poetry. Regardless of which account of his life one feels is credible, any thoughtful person would agree that he had a complete education in India before his journey to the Himalayas. His training would have included poetic composition, albeit in Indian languages, and this would have allowed him to master poetry in Tibetan, an ideal medium for the style of verses in these prayers. Another reason that leads us to accept Guru Rinpoché as the author is that no one else has made that claim. In any event, although the words of Guru Rinpoché are held in extremely high regard, these supplications have become well-loved primarily due to their content, not their composer.

These supplications remain a vital part of the spiritual legacy of Tibet. The majority of Tibetans do not think of Guru Rinpoché as a master who passed away and is remembered fondly, though dimly, after many centuries. He is considered to be alive and vividly present for those who regard him with intense devotion and steadfast faith. Monasteries, retreat centers, and homes where Guru Rinpoché's presence is invoked ring daily with the sounds of these supplications. No affirmation of this is as eloquent as the wall-paintings chosen to decorate the temple where the preserved body of His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoché (1904–1987) rests in Baudhanat, near Katmandu, Nepal. Dudjom Rinpoché, a universally loved and respected master, served as the head of the Ancient Instruction Lineage (Nyingma). His final resting place, built in the late 1980s, is surrounded with wall-paintings that reproduce Jamgon Kongtrul's descriptions of the visualizations to accompany these supplications.

## Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters

### CHAPTER ONE: THE SUPPLICATION TO THE SPIRITUAL MASTER'S THREE BODIES OF ENLIGHTENMENT

*Guru Nama!*

(Homage to the spiritual master)

**D**URING THE MONTH of the Victor [the twelfth lunar month] of the Male Fire Horse Year [767], large vajra feasts were offered in glorious Samyé Monastery. Five disciples—the fully-ordained monk Namké Nyingpo, King Trisong Détsen, Dakini Yeshé Tsogyal, Nanam Dorjé Doo-djom, and Son of Heaven Mutri Tsépo—prostrated before the great spiritual master Lotus-Born and circumambulated him. They offered him the universe in a symbolic form made of jewels, then made this request:

Oh Great Master! Among the Secret Mantra teachings you enunciated, you identified preservation of the tantric commitments as the most important. You said that among those commitments, supplications to the spiritual master count as supreme. Therefore, on our own behalf and on behalf of your future disciples, we ask you, the Buddha himself, to compose a short yet meaningful prayer of supplication to be recited morning and evening. This supplication should inspire us to lucid faith and impart strong spiritual blessing. By paying close attention to the words of the supplication, ordinary unsophisticated persons should be able to invoke the presence of Secret Mantra deities and receive the blessing of you, the spiritual master.

The Master replied:

Listen to me, fortunate people of Tibet! The appearance of the Secret Mantra Way in this world is a rare event. When the previous Buddha, Guardian of the Light, turned the wheel of the Teachings, he did not proclaim this Vajra Way of Secret Mantra. Eighty-four million buddhas of the past did not teach it, neither will future buddhas teach this path. Why is this so? It is because beings of those periods are not suitable recipients for it.

Previously, during the first eon, called All-Inclusive Pattern, the doctrine of a buddha known as Original Monarch included an extensive proclamation of Secret Mantra. Secret Mantra appears as part of the doctrine of the present Buddha Shakyamuni. After one million eons have elapsed, during an eon called Flower Design, a buddha known as Gentle Melody will appear whose instructions will resemble mine today: he will teach Secret Mantra extensively. Such teachings appear during these three eons because the beings of those times are suitable recipients for it. Apart from these three eons, Secret Mantra will never appear.

Therefore, now that this doctrine flourishes, it is essential that those who have gained free and fully endowed lives as human beings, and who have entered the practice of Secret Mantra, not fall prey to sloth or complacency. They must now acquire the four essential teachings for the practice of Secret Mantra. If these are incomplete, their tantric commitments will deteriorate and they will wander within the wheel of life's realms and surely fall into miserable rebirths. Why is that? It is because the buddhas of the past, present, and future never declare that spiritual awakening can be attained by indulging in the obscuring emotions.

The four essential teachings are these: First, you need the pith instruction in how to forcefully sever the bonds that cause you to reassume conventional experience in body, voice, and mind. Second, when the five poisonous obscuring emotions erupt within your mind, you need the pith instruction of knowing how these five poisons can be liberated within themselves. Third, if you fall prey to distracting activity, you need the pith instruction to recognize hope and fear as obstacles to your spiritual life. Fourth, to preserve the tantric commitments purely, you need the pith instruction that resembles those given a person drawing a bow.

Furthermore, the Secret Mantra Way resembles an *udumvara* flower:<sup>35</sup> it doesn't ever appear, but once it has, it doesn't last. This is because beings are not suitable recipients for such teachings.

Listen to me now, those of you led by the king. It is essential for the practice of these teachings that all who have obtained a free and fully endowed human life, who have entered the practice of Secret Mantra, and who wish to attain awakening during this lifetime should preserve purely the principal and secondary tantric commitments. If you do not keep them, it will be as if your search for life-sustaining medicine has led you to poison that is fatal to the touch.

To keep the tantric commitments you need faith, effort, and transcendent knowledge. Without faith, you become an unsuitable candidate for Secret Mantra. Without effort, you will reassume your conventional experience as an apathetic individual. Without transcendent knowledge, you will be unable to comprehend the import of Secret Mantra's profound view and conduct. Secret Mantra has appeared for the benefit of those who have faith and respect.

Therefore recite the following supplication thinking that the spiritual master who has taught you Secret Mantra is, in fact, the Buddha:

*É Ma Ho!*

In the pure land of the unformulated absolute expanse,  
 Within the nature of reality that neither comes into being nor ceases  
     in the past, present, or future,  
 The body of enlightenment's great bliss, effortless and spontaneously  
     complete,  
 Brims with compassion as impartial as space.  
 Spiritual master, body of ultimate enlightenment, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the pure land of spontaneous great bliss,  
 Enlightenment's body that unites joyful buddhas,  
 Endowed with the five wisdoms of body, speech, mind, qualities, and  
     activity,  
 Appears in myriad forms, in the spectrum of compassion's display.  
 Spiritual master, body of enlightenment's perfect rapture, to you  
     I pray.

Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In this pure land of the world Endurance,  
Your great compassion moves you to appear for beings' benefit  
And to work for them skillfully according to their needs  
In the past, future, and present.  
Spiritual master, body of manifest enlightenment, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Guru Rinpoché said, "Repeat this prayer continuously."

## CHAPTER TWO: THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO THE KING

King Trisong Détsen then made this request:

Oh Great Master! I request for myself and for the future faithful a teaching to be repeated morning and evening as a supplication that we might obtain the blessing of all the joyful buddhas of the three times [past, present and future], that this life's obstacles be cleared away, and that we eventually attain the supreme accomplishment of Great Seal [*Mahamudra*].

Guru Rinpoché replied, "Great King, listen well":

*É Ma Ho!*

In the buddhas' outstanding, inconceivable doctrine,  
Three especially exalted teachings appear.  
Within Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings,  
The Secret Mantra Vajra Way has appeared.  
Precious doctrine, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the Highest Pure Land's spontaneous palace,  
Joyful buddhas of the three times  
Saw the six kinds of beings' suffering and distress  
Caused by Matram Rudra's disdain for the doctrine's commands.

Amazing compassion, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In Alakavati's sacred palace,  
All transcendent buddhas conferred;  
The aberrant demon's doctrine had to be tamed  
By means of pacifying, enhancing, magnetizing, and overpowering  
activity:  
Transcendent buddhas of the three times, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

At the blazing meteorite summit of Mount Malaya,  
Buddhas forcefully liberated demon Matram Rudra  
And united with the female cannibal spirit assembly.  
This marked the origin of the Secret Mantra teachings.  
Special disciples of this teaching, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the boundless, pervasive pure land of the nature of reality,  
The father whose heart gives birth to all buddhas,  
Is ultimate enlightenment, who neither comes into being nor ceases  
at any time,  
Whose qualities are pure, primordial, and spontaneously present.  
Body of ultimate enlightenment, Buddha Ever-Excellent, to you  
I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the central pure land, Rich Design,  
Within stupidity purified—wisdom of the absolute expanse—  
Buddha Illuminator is the form of enlightenment's perfect  
rapture,  
Encircled by deities of enlightenment's sublime body.  
Buddha family deities, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the eastern pure land, Joyous,  
Within anger purified—mirror-like wisdom—

Buddha Vajrasattva is the form of enlightenment's perfect  
rapture,  
Encircled by deities of enlightenment's sublime heart.  
Vajra family deities, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the southern pure land, Splendid Beauty,  
Within pride purified—wisdom of equanimity—  
Buddha Source of Jewels is the form of enlightenment's perfect  
rapture,  
Encircled by deities of enlightenment's sublime qualities.  
Jewel family deities, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the western pure land, Blissful,  
Within desire purified—wisdom of discernment—  
Buddha Boundless Light is the form of enlightenment's perfect  
rapture,  
Encircled by deities of enlightenment's sublime speech.  
Lotus family deities, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the northern pure land, Completion of Acts,  
Within jealousy purified—all-accomplishing wisdom—  
Buddha Accomplisher of Aims is the form of enlightenment's  
perfect rapture,  
Encircled by deities of enlightenment's sublime activity.  
Action family deities, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the majestic celestial palace of the display of the absolute **expanse**,  
On a seat that crushes the five poisonous emotions,  
Stands the sovereign wrathful deity, Great Sublime Héruka,  
Encircled by the five families' joyful buddhas.  
Ever-Excellent Héruka's deities, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the celestial palace of a blazing dark-blue triangle,  
On a seat that crushes Matram Rudra,  
Stands the epitome of enlightened mind, Vajra Héruka,  
Encircled by blood-drinking deities of blazing wrath.  
Great Glorious Héruka's deities, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the wrathful celestial palace that arises from a dark-blue  
syllable É,  
On a seat that crushes Lord of Death and a water buffalo,  
Stands Gentle Splendor, Yamantaka, Slayer of the Lord of Death,  
Encircled by arrogant wrathful killers.  
Deities of Slayer of the Lord of Death, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the powerful celestial palace of a dark-red triangle,  
On a seat that crushes male and female evil demons,  
Stands the king of power, Lotus Héruka,  
Encircled by wrathful deities of the Lotus family.  
Powerful Horse-Neck's deities, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the celestial palace that burns like the fire at the end of time,  
On a seat that crushes an arrogant male demon,  
Stands great, glorious Vajra Youth,  
Encircled by ten demon-suppressing wrathful *tra-tab* deities.  
Vajra Dagger's deities, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the celestial palace of compassion's display,  
On a seat that crushes an arrogant female demon,  
Stands the perfectly manifest king, Great Sublime Héruka,  
Encircled by *mamos* of wisdom, activity, and worldly acts.  
Great Glorious Héruka's *mamo* deities, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.



In the celestial palace of lotus power,  
 On a seat of a brilliant lotus of non-attachment,  
 Sits the Honored Lord Protector, Infinite Wisdom and Longevity,  
 Encircled by immortal deities of longevity.  
 Deities of vajra longevity, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the charnel ground of an awesome, terrific display,  
 On a seat that crushes a prone corpse,  
 Stands the wrathful great mother, Vajra Sow,  
 Encircled by many *mamos* and *dakinis*.  
 Vajra Yogini's deities, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the palace of India's Vajra Seat,  
 He aided the world by teaching the truth of cause and effect  
 And planted the Three Collections' victory banner,  
 Encircled by Listeners and Bodhisattvas.  
 Manifest enlightenment, Shakyamuni, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the *naga* palace at Lake Danakosha,  
 He compassionately came into the world to help beings  
 And brought the six classes of beings to self-liberation, the victors'  
 intention.  
 Manifest enlightenment, Garab Dorjé,  
 Encircled by many *dakinis* of the five classes, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the palace at China's Five-Peaked Mountain,  
 Encircled by bodhisattvas of enlightenment's body,  
 Buddhas' physical manifestation, Gentle Melody,  
 Uses his body to help beings above, below, and in the four directions.  
 Exalted Gentle Splendor's deities, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the palace at Potala Mountain,  
 Encircled by bodhisattvas of enlightenment's speech,  
 Buddhas' verbal manifestation, All-Seeing Eyes,  
 Uses his voice to help beings above, below, and in the four directions.  
 All-Seeing Eyes' deities, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the palace at the sublime place of Alakavati,  
 Encircled by bodhisattvas of enlightenment's mind,  
 Buddhas' mental manifestation, Vajra-in-Hand,  
 Uses his mind to help beings above, below, and in the four directions.  
 Vajra-in-Hand's deities, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Above, in the Mansion of Total Victory,  
 Secret Mantra reached the residence of the Lord of Gods, Indra,  
 By exalted Gentle Splendor's enlightened intention—  
 One hundred thousand gods attained manifest enlightenment.  
 Awareness holders among the gods, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Below, in the depths of the ocean,  
 Secret Mantra reached the residence of the *naga* king, Jokpo,  
 By powerful All-Seeing Eyes' enlightened intention—  
 One hundred thousand *nagas* attained manifest enlightenment.  
 Awareness holders among the *nagas*, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

At the summit of Sovereign Mountain, which blazes with towers  
 of flames,  
 Secret Mantra reached the residence of King Ja,  
 By exalted Vajra-in-Hand's enlightened intention—  
 One hundred thousand destined persons attained manifest  
 enlightenment.  
 Awareness holders among humans, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the powerful palace of the western land, Oddiyana,  
 The manifestation of joyful buddhas' body, speech, and mind  
 Came to the Land of Jambu to help beings,  
 Encircled by many awareness-holding dakinis.  
 Lotus-Born Master's deities, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

To ultimate enlightenment, its perfect rapture and its manifestations;  
 To buddhas, awareness holders, and bodhisattvas  
 Of the ten directions, and of past, future, and present,  
 We pray respectfully in body, speech, and mind,  
 Without doubt or hesitation.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you we pray.

Guru Rinpoché said:

Great king! Do not fall under the influence of the fame, fortune, and distractions of this present life. Pray continually!

The root of Secret Mantra is preservation of the tantric commitments. The roots of preserving those commitments are devotion and effort. Their root is supplication to your spiritual master and to your meditation deity. If a person endowed with diligence puts this advice into practice, he or she can attain the supreme accomplishment of Great Seal during this very lifetime.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO YESHÉ TSOGYAL

Dakini Yeshé Tsogyal then made this request:

Oh Great Master! In general, the appearance of the Great Way's Secret Mantra in this world, Shakyamuni's pure land, reveals the Buddha's deep kindness toward all beings. The essence of the body of all Secret Mantra's deities is you, Vajra Skull-Garlanded Adept. You guide beings through your speech, the Great Way's profound teachings. The pro-

found and masterful vision born of your enlightened mind resembles sunlight filling the sky. You, Lotus-Born Master, Padmasambhava, embody the union of all joyful buddhas. A Buddha greater than you is something that someone like me, Yeshé Tsogyal, will never find wherever I look. This I've understood. Therefore, please give me a short but meaningful supplication, both profound and of great spiritual influence. By invoking you, spiritual master, may my supplication be able to move your blessings like clouds in the sky. If we ordinary people repeat this supplication in Tibet after you depart to Oddiyana, may it have the power to make you return from the land of the dakinis in Oddiyana and to compassionately appear before the Tibetan faithful, blessing us.

Guru Rinpoché replied:

Listen to me, Lady Tsogyal! All beings of the three worlds have lost themselves in discursive thoughts due to the force of their obscuring emotions. In doing so, they become deluded and cling to thoughts of dualistic appearances.

All buddhas of the body of ultimate enlightenment have blessed me and all the buddhas of the body of enlightenment's perfect rapture empowered me. All buddhas and bodhisattvas of manifest enlightenment conferred among themselves and decided that I should appear in this world, the southern continent, Jambu. Particularly, I have come to spread the Buddha's doctrine in the dark land of Tibet and to lead beings through instruction in the path of the result, Secret Mantra. For this reason I came into this world as self-manifest enlightenment, first appearing on a lotus in a jeweled lake.

If any person endowed with faith and a spiritual connection to me prays with yearning, the force of my special aspirations and the relation between cause and effect will ensure that my compassionate response to his/her supplication will be quicker than that of any other buddha.

Then he turned, gazed toward the southwest, and donned various ornaments of jewels and of bone. He played a skull hand-drum with his right hand; he placed his left hand on Lady Tsogyal's head, then sang this prayer:

*É Ma Ho!*

To the southwest from here  
Or to the northwest from the **supreme sacred place of Vajra Seat**,  
Lies Tail-Fan Island, land of **cannibal demons**.  
Special, sublime place,  
Blessed by buddhas of the three times, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

*Houng!*

In the primeval first eon of the past,  
Eight substances from Matram Rudra's liberation  
Consecrated eight locations where Secret Mantra would appear;  
His heart fell to the land of Oddiyana.  
Special auspicious connection, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In this sacred place blessed by Vajra Sow,  
Where all *mamos* and *dakinis* gather,  
Secret Mantra's symbols resound of themselves.  
Just by reaching this sacred place, one gains awakening.  
Special, sublime sacred place, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain is heart-shaped,  
Its base is planted in the *naga* king's realm,  
Its slopes rise resplendent through *dakinis'* lands,  
And its summit rivals Brahma's heavens.  
Special sovereign mountain, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

At the glorious mountain's blazing summit  
(The eastern side of which is the color of crystal; the **south**, of beryl;  
The west, of ruby; and the north, of emerald)  
There stands a luminous celestial palace, without **exterior or interior**—  
Special castle, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

The palace's four sides, four intermediate points,  
Above, and below, are all fashioned of jewels.  
It has courtyards and walkways; its sculpted lines  
Gleam with the colors of enlightenment's four families and  
activities.

Spontaneously-appearing celestial palace, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Five precious gems decorate the walls,  
Tiles, ledges, lattice-work, and balconies.  
Various jewels beautifully adorn  
Its four gates, wheels of the doctrine, and ornaments.  
Precious celestial palace, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Wish-fulfilling trees, springs of nectar,  
And five-hued rainbows gather like clouds, **without and within**.  
Light from lotus flowers fills the horizon.  
Just to think of this place induces great bliss.  
Celestial palace, Lotus Light, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Within this celestial mansion,  
On a throne of an eight-sided jewel, the flat discs of sun and moon,  
And a brilliant stem of a passion-free lotus  
Sits Lotus-Born, embodiment of all joyful buddhas.  
Self-manifest enlightenment, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

You ponder acts to pacify, enhance, magnetize, and overpower,  
Thus your color and hand-implements change;  
Yet you shine with the brilliance of a thousand suns,  
With more majesty than the massive, sovereign mountain.  
Wondrous body of manifest enlightenment, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

With skillful means born of love for beings you work for their welfare.  
 Smiling, glowingly handsome: how amazing!  
 Your voice, more impressive than a thousand dragons' thunder,  
 Reverberates with Secret Mantra's profound teachings.  
 Resonance of Brahma's voice, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Your mind's emanations disperse to fill the world.  
 As you gaze, your eyes circle like the sun and moon.  
 Your compassionate activity is faster than lightning;  
 Your profound intent embraces the bounds of space.  
 Special compassion, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

At the eight points, cardinal and intermediate, around your manifest  
 form,  
 On thrones that suppress misleading enemies and obstructers,  
 Stand demon-taming wrathful deities, the five families' joyful  
 buddhas,  
 The body, speech, mind, qualities, and activity of enlightenment.  
 Eight great deities, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

At the four cardinal points, on lotus thrones,  
 The four families' *gings* and dakinis stand in playful posture.  
 All wear charnel ground dress  
 And beautiful ornaments.  
 Male and female wisdom dakinis, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

The courtyards, walkways, and edges on the great castle's four sides  
 Are filled with awareness-holding dakinis  
 And many gods and goddesses massing like clouds,  
 Carrying myriad outer, inner, and secret offerings.  
 Hosts of awareness-holding dakinis, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

On the precious celestial mansion's ledges  
 Offering goddesses gather like rain clouds,  
 Filling the world with gifts that delight the six senses.  
 They present Ever-Excellent's offerings to the joyful buddhas.  
 Assembly, source of noble qualities, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

The four classes of the divine Great Kings  
 Guard the four gates on the palace's four sides.  
 The eight classes of gods and spirits act as servants and messengers,  
 Reducing demons and heretics to dust.  
 Assembly of protectors and guardians, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

*Houng!*

Arise, Lotus-Born, with your host of dakinis!  
 Joyful buddhas of the ten directions and three times, think of me!  
 Great noble one, Lotus Skull-Garlanded Adept,  
 Come here from the abode of awareness-holding dakinis!

Your beautiful hair is swept up in a crown.  
 Your many precious ornaments jingle.  
 Your human bone charnel-ground ornaments clatter.  
 Sound and music thunders.

Assemblies of deities resound with *Houng!*  
 Dakinis of the five classes swirl in dance.  
 Great *gings* stamp the warrior dance.  
*Mamos* and dakinis gather like clouds.

Protectors, the eight classes of active spirits, race about.  
 Their thousand armors clatter.  
 To the right, male tantric deities appear;  
 To the left, female tantric deities.

Fluttering silks fill the entire horizon.  
 Delicious fragrance of incense wafts.

The dakinis' secret symbolic language resonates.  
The great warrior *gings'* songs of power roar.

Many melodies of *Houng* rumble.  
The wrathful symbolic sound "*Pé!*" pierces the din.  
Look compassionately upon all sentient beings and me  
And come here, I pray!

Once your compassionate intent leads you here,  
For us all, until we reach awakening,  
Please subdue what impedes, misleads, or obstructs us,  
And grant us ordinary and supreme accomplishments!

Guru Rinpoché said:

Tsogyal, pray like this with devotion. I, Padmasambhava, have no other role than to work for the common good. I will come to Tibet through the power of tantric commitments and will give my prophecy directly to those who have faith in me.

First create a lucid state of mind by reciting the story of the supplication and engender faith by understanding the prayer's qualities. Then, in reciting the supplication with the faith of a mind opened to the spiritual master, you will receive the Master's blessing. When your mind is free from any doubt, you will accomplish your wishes.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO NAMKÉ NYINGPO

The fully-ordained monk Namké Nyingpo then made this request:

Oh Great Master! Please give me a prayer of supplication to the spiritual masters of the lineage; a prayer to see phenomena clearly as gods and goddesses, to understand all sounds as the speech of meditation deities, and to experience the liberation of any discursive thought into the nature of reality.

Guru Rinpoché replied:

*É Ma Ho!*

Victor Ever-Excellent, great unformulated bliss;  
Vajra Bearer, sixth buddha, lord of enlightenment's five families;  
And the body of great awakening, who works for beings' benefit—  
You are enlightenment's three bodies.  
Lineage passed between the victors' minds, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Renowned supreme protector, harm-bringing spirit, Shooting-Star  
Face;  
Intelligent and skillful *naga* King Jokpo;  
Destined King Ja, known to be faultless;  
Indra, awareness-holding lord of gods—  
Lineage of awareness passed between awareness holders, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

The intent of ultimate enlightenment, Buddha Ever-Excellent,  
Blessed masters from Vajrasattva and Garab Dorjé  
Until Shri Singha,  
Masters of the Great Completion lineage  
In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

The intent of the victors' ultimate enlightenment  
Blessed masters from the five families' joyful buddhas and the lord  
bodhisattvas of the three kinds of beings  
Until Buddha Guhya,  
Masters of the Illusion Tantra lineage  
In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

The enlightened mind of Gentle Splendor, Slayer of the Lord of Death,  
Blessed masters from the great Manjushri-mitra  
Until Rolang Déwa,  
Masters of the body of enlightenment's lineage

In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Lotus Héruka's enlightened mind  
Blessed masters from Goddess of Power and Nagarjuna  
Until Lotus-Born,  
Masters of the speech of enlightenment's lineage  
In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Vajra Héruka's enlightened mind  
Blessed masters from Garab Dorjé and Manjushri-mitra  
Until Humkara,  
Masters of the mind of enlightenment's lineage  
In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Great Supreme Héruka's enlightened mind  
Blessed masters from the emanated dakini and many awareness  
holders  
Until Mingyur Namka,  
Masters of the qualities of enlightenment's lineage  
In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Great, glorious Vajra Youth's enlightened mind  
Blessed masters from the awareness holder of spontaneous Great Seal  
Until Vajra Skull-Garlanded Adept,  
Masters of the activity of enlightenment's lineage  
In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Manifest Consummate King, great supreme Héruka,  
Blessed masters from the goddess of the female tantras,  
Yong-kyu Déma,  
Until Dhana Samskrita,  
Masters of the Worldly Goddess lineage

In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Honored Subduer of All Arrogant Ones' enlightened mind  
Blessed masters from Rombu Guhya Chandra  
Until Lion of the Shakyas,  
Masters of the Offering and Praise lineage  
In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Great, glorious Powerful Black Deity's enlightened mind  
Blessed masters from great Shanti-garbha  
Until Vajra Sagging Belly,  
Masters of the Wrathful Mantra lineage  
In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

The Lord Buddha Infinite Life's enlightened mind  
Blessed masters from Goddess Chandali  
Until the immortal Lotus-Born,  
Masters of the lineage of longevity  
In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Vajra Sow's enlightened mind  
Blessed masters from Lion-Faced Dakini  
Until Wrathful Vajra Adept,  
Masters of Secret Mantra's female lineage  
In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Vajra Blood-Drinker's enlightened mind  
Passed from manifest enlightenment, Lotus-Born,  
To the world's karmically destined Tibetans.  
Masters of the combined lineages of tantra  
In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Past buddhas' enlightened mind  
 Passed from Buddha Shakyamuni  
 To the master Bodhisattva.  
 Masters who teach the meaning of cause and effect  
 In past, future, and present, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Awareness-holding bodhisattvas' enlightened minds  
 Blessed karmically destined individuals.  
 From that time until the final five hundred years  
 Committed persons practice the Secret Mantra teachings.  
 Oral lineage passed between individuals, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

All that appears to my eyes—  
 The outer world, the beings within it, all material phenomena—  
 I see, but do not take as real, and rest.  
 Dualistic experience purified is the sacred body of appearance and  
 emptiness.  
 Spiritual master of self-liberated anger and desire, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

All sounds that reach my ears,  
 Pleasant or unpleasant,  
 I hear, but listen to as sound and emptiness, free from thought and  
 expression.  
 Sound and emptiness, without origin or cessation, is the victors'  
 speech.  
 Spiritual master of self-liberated sound and emptiness, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

All that moves within my mind,  
 Even thoughts of the five poisonous emotions,  
 I'll not alter with anticipation of the future or with retracing the past.  
 Left to itself, mind's movement self-liberates within ultimate  
 enlightenment.

Spiritual master of self-liberating awareness, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

What seems to be outer, the domain that is grasped, is pure;  
 What seems inner, the grasping mind, is empty;  
 What seems to lie in between is luminosity—may I recognize it!  
 Joyful buddhas of the three times, look to me with compassion!  
 Bless beings such as me with liberation!

Guru Rinpoché said:

Namké Nyingpo, pray continually in this way. Hold fast to the fortress  
 of your awareness! Without ever separating yourself from me, travel  
 to the domain of great bliss.

#### CHAPTER FIVE: THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO DORJÉ DOODJOM

Nanam Dorjé Doodjom then made this request:

All buddhas in your body clear,  
 Your voice is theirs for all to hear,  
 Their wisdom's gathered in your mind—  
 The buddhas' presence: master kind.  
 No one exceeds you, Lotus-Born;  
 You are the victors' single form.  
 Help me and those of later dates:  
 Your birth and acts to us relate.  
 Now lucid faith inspire in us;  
 Instill devotion and deep trust:  
 Please give a prayer by your speech **blessed!**

Guru Rinpoché replied:

O yogi of the tantric paths,  
 My life of freedom and my acts  
 Mere words and concepts far exceed.  
 What can be said describes these deeds:  
 My emanations' benefit  
 Throughout this world and in Tibet.  
 Now listen to me carefully;  
 Recite this prayer continually!

*É Ma Ho!*

In the southwest Tail-Fan Isle, land of cannibal spirits,  
 Upon Sindhu's dancing sea,  
 Above the mansion of *naga* King Jokpo,  
 You were born at the tip of a brilliant lotus.  
 Self-manifest wondrous one, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Enlightenment manifest, child without parents,  
 You appeared without cause or condition, in the sea's expanse.  
 For sentient beings misled by their own ignorance, a glorious guide,  
 Emanation from the joyful buddhas' body, speech, and mind.  
 Enlightenment manifest, Lake-Born Vajra, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

The destined one, King Indrabhuti,  
 Came to the island in the dancing sea to find you.  
 In faith, he invited and enthroned you as ruler.  
 You led his realm to happiness through religious law.  
 Turbaned King, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

You abdicated the throne and entered tantric conduct  
 In the southern charnel ground of Cool Grove.  
 Your realization of *tana-ghana*, union and liberation,  
 Brought *mamos* and dakinis under your control.  
 Guardian of the Peace, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In all four directions' charnel grounds you engaged in conduct,  
 Blessed by wisdom dakinis.  
 You saw Vajra Sow, gained accomplishment,  
 And employed the great planets of space as servants.  
 Wrathful Vajra Adept, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In Red Rock's Garuda Park Cave  
 You met Master Prabha Hasti,  
 Trained in the yoga tantras,  
 And saw their deities.  
 Lion of the Shakyas, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

At great areas of sacred ground in the four points of India  
 You met many awareness-holding accomplished masters,  
 Trained in the three yogas,  
 And resolved your questions concerning the Causal Way of  
 Characteristics.  
 Learned, Intelligent Sublime Desire, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the sacred place of Highest Pure Land, the charnel grounds Great  
 Secret Display,  
 Complete on Enlightenment's Form, Sosa Ling, and other places  
 You dwelt near self-manifest stupas  
 And taught assemblies of *mamos* and dakinis.  
 Guru Radiant Sun, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

When you went to convert the land of Zahor,  
 You helped ignorant, confused beings enter the Teachings  
 And you demonstrated amazing, outstanding miracles—  
 The whole country filled with Buddhism.  
 Padmasambhava, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.



In Maratika cave  
 You accomplished the state of an immortal awareness holder.  
 The protector Boundless Life blessed you,  
 And your body became adamantine, transcending birth and death.  
 Immortal Lotus-Born, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

When you went to convert the land of Oddiyana,  
 Murderers tried to burn you in the center of a pyre.  
 The flames turned into a lake, your miracle,  
 And King Indrabhuti entered the path to awakening.  
 Sublime heir, Lotus King, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

When you went to convert South India,  
 Dakini Demon Subduer blessed you.  
 You defeated five hundred non-Buddhist teachers' debates  
 And liberated with lightning heretical teachers of evil mantras.  
 Exalted Lion's Roar, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In Nepal's Parping Cave  
 You accomplished Yongdak, essence of the joyful buddhas.  
 You liberated obstacles with Vajra Dagger  
 And attained accomplishment of Great Seal.  
 Vajra Skull-Garlanded Adept, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

When you went north to help the King,  
 You bound Tibet's harmful spirits under oath.  
 You consecrated Samyé and fulfilled the king's wishes—  
 Tibet filled with Buddhist practice.  
 Enlightenment manifest, Lotus-Born, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

At Samyé-Chimpu's Red Rock  
 You erected the eight deities' sacred circles.

You brought the destined king and subjects to spiritual maturity  
 And spread the doctrine of the result, Secret Mantra.  
 Inconceivably kind master, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

At Tiger's Nest, Fulfillment of the Lion's Wishes,  
 You subdued evil, non-Buddhist demons and *damsi*,  
 And concealed treasures in sacred places and snowy cliffs,  
 Compassionately caring for sentient beings of future, degenerate  
 times.  
 Vajra Sagging Belly, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

You meditated at Tibet's four great snow mountains;  
 You made the eight large mountain caves your isolated retreats.  
 In cliffs in four directions you emanated footprints in stone,  
 And at the four famous grand lakes you left your handprints.  
 Purifier of the six realms' obscurations, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the south, at Mönka Rock, you left your body's imprint in stone.  
 You bestowed five sacred statues as Tibet's treasures.  
 You spread the Buddha's doctrine in the border regions.  
 Sole god of Tibet, glory of all beings,  
 Especially exalted compassionate one, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In the southwest, at Tail-Fan's Glorious Mountain summit,  
 You act as king to many awareness-holding dakinis  
 And bind cannibal spirits under oath  
 As you look continually with compassion to Tibet.  
 Kind manifestation of enlightenment, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

In this last period of five hundred years, sentient beings of Tibet  
 Suffer continuously due to their negative karma.  
 If we recall your life of freedom and pray to you,

Look compassionately on all sentient beings and me  
And grant us your blessing, I pray.

Guru Rinpoché then said:

Listen to me, Dorjé Doodjom,  
Keep in mind my life of freedom!  
Recite this prayer: I will you bless  
Both in this life and in the next.  
Illumination will be yours—  
Of this you can be fully sure!

#### CHAPTER SIX: THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO PRINCE MUTRI TSÉPO

Son of Heaven Mutri Tsépo then made this request:

Oh Great Master! You have said that in the future, when the degenerate time of the final five hundred years arrives, the power of beings' negative acts will force them to experience only suffering. I request a supplication that will draw your compassionate attention to those beings and which has the power to shelter them from suffering.

Guru Rinpoché replied:

Listen to me, Mutri Tsépo! Without the ground of the field of faith, the stem of awakening cannot grow. If you don't open your mind with trust in the spiritual master, the blessing of the Three Jewels will seem distant. Listen, Son of Heaven! Buddhas and bodhisattvas work continually for the good of the world, but the six kinds of beings' self-centeredness due to the five poisons is so strong that cyclic existence continues unabated. Son of Heaven, if you want to protect your future Tibetan subjects from suffering, promulgate the decree that they should develop stable faith with a mind opened to the spiritual master and that they should place their trust in the Three Jewels.

Always recite this supplication with devotion:

*É Ma Ho!*

In the western Blissful Pure Land  
The protector Boundless Life compassionately considered  
The welfare of the Land of Jambu's beings.  
Buddhas of the ten directions blessed you.  
Their regent, my lord, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

On an isle in Sindhu's dancing sea,  
Upon the stem of a brilliant lotus flower,  
Without father or mother, you were self-arisen,  
Not produced by cause or condition, you appeared for beings' benefit.  
Wondrous self-manifest one, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Manifestation of all buddhas' bodies,  
Endowed with self-arisen marks and signs of physical perfection,  
Your form outshines a thousand suns.  
Your emanations fill the world.  
Wondrous manifest enlightenment, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Manifestation of all buddhas' speech,  
Born at the tip of a lotus of non-attachment,  
Your voice overpowers a thousand dragons' thunder  
With the reverberation of the Great Way's teachings for beings'  
benefit.  
Unceasing speech of enlightenment, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Manifestation of all buddhas' minds,  
You were born in seas of boundless breadth and depth.  
Your compassionate activity is quicker than lightning;  
Your profound thought is as wide as the sky.  
Ever-lucid mind of enlightenment, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

Your wish-fulfilling body appears for others' benefit;  
 Just to hear your name calms distress.  
 Like a rainbow's colors, your qualities are distinct;  
 To recall them for an instant leads me on awakening's path.  
 Source of all qualities, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

The power of your compassion's blessing benefits beings  
 As enlightened activity—pacifying, enhancing, magnetizing,  
 and overpowering—  
 Skillful means to subdue sentient beings with deep-rooted emotions.  
 Your acts are inconceivable, like the stars of space.  
 Ocean waves of enlightened activity, to you I pray.  
 Lotus-Born Master from Oddiyana, to you I pray.

You work for beings in every direction, above and below,  
 Yet you gaze with compassion on the snowy land of Tibet.  
 Toward Tibet's ruler and all its people  
 Send your blessing continually in the three times!  
 Free us from the wheel of life's sea of suffering!

## CONCLUSION

The five disciples who requested the supplications presented a large vajra feast offering to Guru Rinpoché, prostrated before him and circumambulated him. Then they made this request:

Oh Great Master! You have been very kind to give us these special supplications. These prayers should not be sung to the fanciful tunes of ordinary persons. In the future, when suffering threatens us and we think of you, what melody should we use to accompany our prayers?

Guru Rinpoché replied:

My followers who wish to leave  
 The wheel of life, a sea of grief,

Should pray with faith, respect, and trust,  
 Ever intent, with music thus:  
 Like children's cries to parents dear,  
 Like flute or guitar, sweet to hear.  
 With pleasing songs of yearning, pray  
 In all six sessions, night and day.

At a later age, the final time,  
 A hidden yogi, disciple mine,  
 Will in the West great numbers aid  
 And have toward me a special faith.  
 He'll have few doubts and in that age  
 He'll save the royal lineage.

He of such good propensity  
 At dark times will come: his destiny—  
 To retrieve for all this treasure trove  
 I now conceal for him with love.

## SA MA GATA

In the Male Water Tiger Year [1362], Tulku Zongpo Drakpa retrieved this treasure from the retreat cave of the Master from Oddiyana at Drompa Gyong, Rulak. He entrusted it to the great Rikzin Gökyi Demtru Chen. This great awareness holder translated it from the yellow parchment.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE SUPPLICATION FOR THE SPONTANEOUS FULFILLMENT OF WISHES

*Namo Guru!*

When Master Lotus-Born was about to depart for the southwest land of the cannibal demons, he arrived at Goung-tong. There, Son of Heaven Mutri Tsépo prostrated before the Master and circumambulated him. He touched the Master's foot to his head, then clutched the edge of the Master's robe.

Tears welled up in his eyes and he wept as he addressed these mournful words to the Master:

Alas, Guru Rinpoché!  
 In the final five hundred years  
 My family's home is established here  
 At Mong-youl, on the Goung-tong plain,  
 Beside the range of snow mountains.  
 If we lords lose rank, find suffering,  
 How pitiful, Tibetan kings!  
 To whom can my family turn!?

Wars and battles: the nation's life.  
 Hills and dales are with bandits rife.  
 If hermitages empty stand,  
 No time for practice through the land,  
 Both the masters and their patrons  
 Will be totally disheartened.  
 To whom can the future faithful turn!?

Temples are all transformed to forts.  
 Buddha's body, speech, and mind's supports  
 One and all will be destroyed,  
 Things sacred by profane enjoyed.  
 Bön chants *so* from retreats arise.  
 If the dreadful time arrives  
 Of Buddhist monasteries' destruction,  
 The sacred forms will be disheartened.  
 To which guardian can we turn!?

High nobles are killed by poisoned food.  
 Threats are made to great men's livelihood.  
 The best to lowest rank descend  
 By malice done. When seeming friends  
 Prove deceptive, sinister,  
 How pitiful Tibet's high ministers!  
 To whom can the King give his trust!?

Sickness, arms, and famine spread.  
 Neighbor's armies toward our heartland head.  
 Wild demons, forces of the elements  
 Will sudden, harmful mischief send.  
 If unwished-for tragedies should happen,  
 How pitiful the poor Tibetans!  
 To whom can these unfortunate people turn!?

Trisong Détsen to the heavens rose.  
 The Guru to Oddiyana goes.  
 Mutri Tsépo's abandoned in Tibet!  
 My father's life was short: so be it!  
 My Guru's love is faint: so be it!  
 My merit is trifling: so be it!  
 Buddha's Way and temples are being destroyed: so be it!  
 Tibet's happiness has reached its end: so be it!

When my father and guru were by my side  
 Why did I, Mutri Tsépo, not die!?

Now whom can I trust?  
 Now who will give me their concerned counsel?  
 Now whom can I ask for spiritual teachings?  
 Now who will transfer my consciousness when I die?  
 Now who will relieve my suffering between lives?  
 Now who will purify my obscurations after death?  
 Oh my! Alas! Your heart is so small!

With a great sob the Son of Heaven fell into a faint. Then Master Lotus-Born spat into the King's ear to revive him, took the Son of Heaven's head onto his lap, and spoke these words:

Listen, Tibetan king, faithful one,  
 Devoted, destined spiritual son,  
 King Trisong Détsen, your father,  
 Reached his life span's farthest border.  
 Let your noble heart not be distressed,

Heaven's Son, ruler of Tibet.

I'll still serve Tibetans' needs—  
To the faithful I'll appear and teach.  
Let your noble heart not be distressed,  
Heaven's Son, ruler of Tibet.

Your faults and selfish acts have been erased  
For certain, just on seeing my face.  
Let your noble heart not be distressed,  
Heaven's Son, ruler of Tibet.

In this life, the next, and in between,  
We'll meet—I'll dispel your suffering.  
Let your noble heart not be distressed,  
Heaven's Son, ruler of Tibet.

For seventeen lifetimes more you'll strive  
For others' good and then arrive  
At Oddiyana, dakinis' isle.  
Let your noble heart not be distressed,  
Heaven's Son, ruler of Tibet.

Those who at this Himalayan slope  
At Goung-tong, Mong-youl, your lineage hold  
In future will unerringly  
Of your royal family be.  
Guardians of the Buddhist kingdom, they,  
Watched always by my loving gaze.  
Let your noble heart not be distressed,  
Heaven's Son, ruler of Tibet.

Those who practice in seclusion,  
Suffused with faith and true devotion,  
Disciples the Buddha's Word respect  
My loving blessing will protect.  
Let your noble heart not be distressed,

Heaven's Son, ruler of Tibet.

Sorry souls whose acts and view  
Belong to demons and pursue  
Criticism and destruction,  
Are negative by inclination,  
Will not enjoy my kind protection,  
Just their wretched acts' fruition.  
Now even these evil ministers  
Who your, their ruler's, mind disturb,  
Who've broken with me every link,  
Will surely to three low realms sink.  
And yet, because they saw my face  
And heard my voice, they'll find their place—  
Once all their evil acts atoned,  
As my disciples they'll be born.  
Let your noble heart not be distressed,  
Heaven's Son, ruler of Tibet.

When bad times' darkest hours arrive,  
From Trazong Mountain's eastern side,  
A hidden yogi will, by wishes brave,  
My treasure find, your family save.  
Let your noble heart not be distressed,  
Heaven's Son, ruler of Tibet.

Those of the last and darkest age,  
Led falsely by corrupt adage,  
Will toward the swamp of wrong views turn  
In great doubt, true teaching not discern.  
A hidden yogi, virtuous one,  
From Trazong Mountain's slopes will come.  
To the Great Way Secret Mantra's norms  
As instructed, he will conform.  
He will certainly protect  
The King of Goung-tong and his subjects:  
Let your noble heart not be distressed,

Heaven's Son, ruler of Tibet.

Then, to relieve the King's anguish, he gave him teachings, *Spontaneous Liberation from the Obscuring Emotions*. Guru Rinpoché then said:

Son of Heaven, you work for the good of your subjects with affectionate concern as if they were your own children. I will bless and compassionately give refuge to all your royal descendants until the most extreme period of the degenerate age. Son of Heaven, I leave your children—all your subjects—this final counsel:

This radiant lineage divine  
 Of highest standing, a noble line,  
 From Mutri Tsépo till its end  
 In its last royal descendant  
 My concern will always nurture.  
 But evil friends and ministers'  
 Bad counsel must be eschewed  
 And kings' laws improved by Buddhist views.  
 At dark times, some uncultured men,  
 Wild, corrupt, full of deception,  
 Will appear. To end their cause,  
 Proclaim your land's religious laws.  
 The kingdom's happiness will thrive  
 When religious life is kept alive.  
 If your power's robbed, your life is threatened,  
 Your rank from king to subject lessened,  
 Ask the gods and spirits' heed  
 To end these crises with their deeds.  
 For Goung-tong kings, I've great affection.  
 For dark age rule, I've left instructions.  
 Their mid-mountain slopes' concealment place  
 Looks like a heap of poison snakes.  
 To save the Son of Heaven's royal line,  
 When strong doubts trouble every mind,  
 Do not fall prey to corrupt views—  
 Do as I've commanded you!

This will to success your wishes bring—  
 I'll never save an evil king!

Guru Rinpoché continued:

In Goung-tong of Mong-youl, at the time of your royal lineage's last member, my treasure teachings will save your family line. This will be a time of misery for Tibet, when what is never wished for will occur. Above, gods and cannibal demons will be in turmoil. Below, *nagas* and *nyen* spirits will be in turmoil. Between, local deities will be in turmoil. An evil king will be in turmoil. Ordinary, common people will be in turmoil. Families will be in turmoil due to fights between parents and children. That will mark the time that Buddhism reaches its end—the accomplishment bestowed by the meditation deities will dissipate, dakinis and protectors of the doctrine will turn their gaze toward Supreme Mountain [i.e., away from humanity], and beings' store of happiness will be exhausted. The King of Goung-tong, the patrons of Buddhism, and the people should all follow my instructions and practice the treasure teachings. My compassion responds quickly and is very potent. It will appear at that time. Pray continually to me!

*É Ma Ho!*

In the western Blissful Pure Land,  
 Buddha Infinite Light's compassionate blessing stirred  
 To bless manifest enlightenment, Lotus-Born,  
 Who came to this world to aid the beings of Tibet.  
 Compassionate one, who unceasingly aids the world,  
 Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
 Grant my wish spontaneously.

From King Trisong Détsen  
 Until the end of the royal lineage of Buddhist kings,  
 You bless each ruler continuously,  
 Sole friend of Tibet's religious kings.  
 Compassionate one who lovingly protects spiritual sovereigns,  
 Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
 Grant my wish spontaneously.

Your body subdues cannibal spirits in the southwest  
 While your compassion turns toward Tibet.  
 Glorious leader of sentient beings lost in ignorance,  
 You skillfully guide beings with deep-rooted emotions.  
 Compassionate one whose loving affection never ceases,  
 Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
 Grant my wish spontaneously.

In evil times, when degeneration reaches its depths,  
 You will come to Tibet at dawn and dusk,  
 Riding the sunlight's brilliant rays.  
 On the tenth days of the waxing and waning moons you'll visibly  
 appear.  
 Compassionate one who works forcefully for others' benefit,  
 Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
 Grant my wish spontaneously.

In the degenerate time of conflict, the final five hundred years,  
 All sentient beings' five poisonous emotions will coarsen.  
 When those poisons churn within me,  
 Be loving toward me, Guru!  
 Compassionate one, who leads the faithful to higher realms,  
 Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
 Grant my wish spontaneously.

When I am surrounded by Mongolian hordes  
 Ready to destroy Buddhist institutions,  
 To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
 Master from Oddiyana, circled by gods and demons' eight groups,  
 You'll turn back the ruthless armies.  
 Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
 Grant my wish spontaneously.

When disease strikes sentient beings' illusory form,  
 Bringing overwhelming intense pain,  
 To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
 Inseparable from the Medicine Buddha of Oddiyana,

You'll surely dispel these obstacles and ensure that my life does not end.  
 Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
 Grant my wish spontaneously.

When the elements rise as enemies and the earth is polluted,  
 Bringing danger of sickness and famine,  
 To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
 Divine Wealth God of Oddiyana with your assembly,  
 You'll surely dispel hunger, thirst, and poverty.  
 Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
 Grant my wish spontaneously.

When destined persons reveal treasures for beings' benefit,  
 Armed with the fierce confidence of having kept their commitments  
 guilelessly,  
 To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
 Master from Oddiyana, inseparable from the deity,  
 Your children will surely retrieve their father's wealth.  
 Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
 Grant my wish spontaneously.

When I wander in hidden, densely forested, isolated regions  
 And raging blizzards block my way,  
 To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
 Master from Oddiyana with your circle of powerful local deities,  
 You'll surely guide practitioners on the path.  
 Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
 Grant my wish spontaneously.

When I encounter wild animals, such as tigers, leopards, bears,  
 or poisonous snakes,  
 In the fearful wilderness on open plains,  
 To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
 Master from Oddiyana with *ging* warriors and guardians,  
 You'll surely chase savage beasts away.  
 Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
 Grant my wish spontaneously.

When obstacles of the elements—earth, water, fire, or wind—  
Threaten to destroy this illusory body of mine,  
To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
Master from Oddiyana, with the four elements' gods,  
You'll surely calm the elements within themselves.  
Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
Grant my wish spontaneously.

When I walk along a narrow, fearful passage  
And murderous thieves and bandits threaten me,  
To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
Master from Oddiyana, skilled in the four gestures,  
You'll surely destroy those savage men's greed.  
Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
Grant my wish spontaneously.

When I am surrounded by killers,  
Who will strike me with sharp weapons,  
To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
Master from Oddiyana with a vajra tent,  
You'll surely make the killers drop their weapons and flee.  
Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
Grant my wish spontaneously.

When my life ends and death arrives,  
And the intense suffering of my extinction torments me,  
To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
Master from Oddiyana, emanation of Buddha Infinite Light,  
You'll surely lead me to Blissful Pure Land.  
Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
Grant my wish spontaneously.

Once this borrowed illusory body has died  
And I suffer from delusionary appearances after death,  
To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
Master from Oddiyana, compassionate knower of the three times,  
You'll surely free delusion within itself.  
Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
Grant my wish spontaneously.

At any time, when karma or conditions  
Lead me to suffer from overt attachment to delusionary appearances,  
To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
Master from Oddiyana, essence of the king of great bliss,  
You'll uproot my suffering caused by delusion.  
Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
Grant my wish spontaneously.

When suffering overwhelms the six realms' beings  
And, in particular, when Tibet's ruler and people suffer,  
To you I pray with no doubt or hesitation:  
When I pray with intense faith, respect, and devotion,  
Master from Oddiyana, continually watch over me with **compassion**.  
Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
Grant my wish spontaneously.

Master from Oddiyana, your disciples who wish to leave  
the wheel of life  
Turn to you with single-minded devotion;  
Like children calling their parents with heartfelt songs,  
We pray to you during the six times of the day and night.  
Master Lotus-Born, please bless me—  
Grant my wish spontaneously.

Having recited this supplication, Guru Rinpoché considered the Son of Heaven with affection and gave him thirteen pith instructions that resemble wish-fulfilling jewels. The Son of Heaven then respectfully offered prostrations and circumambulations to the Master. Guru Rinpoché turned his gaze toward Oddiyana, mounted a ray of sunlight, and departed.



Son of Heaven Mutri Tsépo took the pith instructions of *Spontaneous Liberation from the Obscuring Emotions*, teachings that resemble wish-fulfilling jewels, and Guru Rinpoché's last counsel, and concealed them as treasures on Mong-youl's mountain that resembles a mound of jewels. He entrusted these treasures to the four sister-goddesses of medicine, who served as treasure guardians. He made this prayer:

When the final time has come,  
When my royal line succumbs,  
A destined one will then arrive  
From Trazong Mountain's eastern side.  
He will then this treasure find:  
May he protect my royal line!

SA-MA-T'A

Son of Heaven Mutri Tsépo said:

To all my children, my subjects endowed with faith and respect: Recite *The Supplication to the Spiritual Master's Three Bodies of Enlightenment* whenever you remember your refuge, your spiritual master. Recite the supplication given to my father, the King, in the evening, the time of wrath. Recite the supplication given to Lady Tso-gyal in the morning, the time of enhancement. Recite the supplication given to the fully-ordained monk Namké Nyingpo at dawn, the time of peace. Recite the supplication given to Nanam Dorjé Doodjom in the afternoon, the time of power. Recite the supplication given to Son of Heaven Mutri Tsépo at midnight, in darkness. Recite the supplication given to the King of Goung-tong at noon, during rest. In general, recite these supplications whenever you feel threatened with suffering.

A destined king of flawless line,  
Whose acts the Buddha's Way defines,  
I have by buddhas all been blessed  
Through their common, great kindness.  
Of all, the deepest kindness shown,

Beyond compare, the Guru's own.  
To me, Buddhist guardian king, give heed:  
E'er pray to him devotedly!

In the Trampa Gyong Temple at Rulak, Son of Heaven Mutri Tsépo concealed this supplication spoken to the King of Goung-tong, *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes*. He entrusted it to the goddess who rides a mule, to act as its treasure guardian.

SA-MA-T'A-T'A-T'A SAMAYA GYA-GYA-GYA

In the Male Water Dragon year [1352], Tulku Zongpo Drakpa retrieved this treasure from the Gyong Temple at Rulak. He gave it to the great Rikzin Gökyi Demtru Chen and this great awareness holder translated it from the yellow parchment.

Seal of Treasure Seal of Concealment Profound Seal

#### THE SUPPLICATION TO DISPEL OBSTACLES ON THE PATH

*Namo Guru!*  
(Homage to the spiritual master!)

On the tenth lunar day of the first winter month of the Male Earth Monkey Year [768], the embodiment of the body, speech, and mind of the indestructible wisdom of all buddhas of all times, the great Master from Oddiyana, Lotus-Born, lived in the resplendent, auspicious place that provides a source for any spiritual teachings one desires, the grove dense with tamarisk trees at Red Rock. On this occasion, the Master sat in the room called Shining Turquoise, on the second of the three stories of the great, glorious Samyé Monastery.

His face radiated with a smile of pleasure; his body's dazzling marks and signs of perfection outshone any other appearance. His voice, melodious as Brahma's, opened innumerable gateways to spiritual paths. His mind never wavered from the limpid depths of the non-material expanse of primordial purity, yet his talents, based in wisdom, love, and capability, spontaneously

accomplished all forms of enlightened activity. He appeared as a great sovereign of all beings within the wheel of life and of enlightened ones within the realm of perfect peace.

At that time, a group of us with pure propensity gathered in Guru Rinpoché's presence: the sovereign of supreme understanding, the Buddhist king Trisong Détsen; the one who embodied Glorious Héruka, Namké Nyingpo; he who embodied Gentle Splendor Héruka, Sangyé Yeshé; he who accomplished Great Power, Gyalwa Chok-yong; he who gathered the four rivers of Secret Mantra's transmissions, the monk Drimé Dashar; the powerful magician, Longdro Translator, Konchok Joungné; the lord of all those who carry ritual daggers in Tibet and Kham, Dorjé Doodjom; he whose wisdom equaled that of the Master, Illuminator of Form, Bérotsana; the princes who were emanations of great bodhisattvas, the sons of Heaven; and she whom the Master chose as vajra consort, me, Yeshé Tsogyal. Together we offered prostrations to the Master and in unison made this request:

Oh Great Master! You unite the mysteries of all buddhas' body, speech, and mind, and you reign as the chief of infinite sacred circles of deities. Therefore we request that, without reference to other tantric transmissions and meditations, you bestow upon us tantras and teachings that arise directly in spontaneous wisdom from the great luminous expanse of your mind.

Guru Rinpoché laughed with a glowing happy smile and with the melodious voice of Brahma replied:

It's very good that you see things in this way and make such a request! You worthy ones led by the king can ask for whatever you wish: I'll answer your questions.

These words moved us to respect, joy, and supreme self-confidence. We asked further:

Oh Precious Master! You are exceedingly kind to agree to bestow upon us your vajra word tantras in the form of pith instructions. Therefore we ask this: For those who practice Buddhism now and in

the future, how can obstacles that arise be dispelled? How can attainments be accomplished? How can all spiritual paths be traversed?

Guru Rinpoché replied:

Although those who practice correctly the authentic spiritual teachings might face myriad forms of obstructive forces, supplications to the spiritual master constitute the only means to dispel them. Better advice than this has never been given, is not given, and will never be given, even by all buddhas of all times. The removal of obstructive forces brings attainment and that accomplishment will lead you to traverse all spiritual paths. Therefore, from the outset, it is essential to beseech the spiritual master to dispel all your outer, inner, and secret obstacles.

At that moment, Son of Heaven Yeshé Rolpa Tsal was inspired by the inconceivably great power of his previous pure acts and aspirations. He offered the Master a large *mandala* of gold and precious jewels, upon which he arranged heaps of shining turquoise. He prostrated before the Master respectfully many times, then made this request:

Oh Great Master! Although in general we are sure to receive whatever we wish when we pray to the spiritual master, we now need a supplication that expresses the essence of our wishes. Please give us a special way of praying to you, Guru Rinpoché, so that you will dispel all our outer, inner, and secret obstacles.

Guru Rinpoché replied:

Very good, very good, Son of Heaven! In general, any master who shows you the spiritual path is the sole embodiment of all buddhas' activity. Specifically, the spiritual master who gives you instruction in Secret Mantra is greater than the buddhas of all times; if your devotion to him or her is insincere, your spiritual life will rot at its core. In particular, I am the sole spiritual master of all who practice Buddhism in Tibet. My mind is inseparable from all buddhas' ultimate enlightenment; all buddhas of perfect rapture radiate from me and

are reabsorbed into me; my wisdom, one with that of all buddhas' manifest body, reveals itself in different appearing forms that guide others throughout the world in general and in this land of red-faced people, Tibet, in particular.

Therefore those who are alive today—the Buddhist king, translators, scholars, and other outstanding individuals—and those of the future—holy persons who uphold the Buddha's doctrine for as long as it lasts in Tibet—all appear from my, Lotus-Born's, great wisdom in a magical display to guide others.

Remember to pray to me continually, considering me as the embodiment of all the Buddhist sources of refuge, a single form that unites all your root and lineage masters. If such prayers do not result in the accomplishment of the attainment you wish, I will have deceived all buddhas of all times. In particular, recite this supplication to dispel every obstacle.

He then placed his right hand on the king's head, his left hand on mine [Yeshé Tsogyal], and touched his forehead to that of the Son of Heaven. In the innate indestructible sound of the melody of the nature of reality, he spoke this supplication:

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

Boundless Light, body of ultimate enlightenment, to you I pray.  
Great Compassion, body of perfect rapture, to you I pray.  
Lotus-Born, body of manifest enlightenment, to you I pray.

My spiritual master, this wondrous manifestation of enlightenment,  
Was born in India, where he studied and contemplated.  
When he came to central Tibet, he subdued the arrogant spirits.  
Now he dwells in Oddiyana, where he works for beings' benefit.

Bless me with your compassion!  
Lovingly guide me on the path!  
Grant me accomplishment!  
Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
Dispel outer obstacles without;

Dispel inner obstacles within;  
Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

When your amazing body was first seen,  
Your right hand made the sword-gesture;  
Your left, the gesture of summons.  
Your mouth was open; your teeth bared; your gaze raised.  
Victors' heir, you are beings' lord protector.

Bless me with your compassion!  
Lovingly guide me on the path!  
Grant me accomplishment!  
Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
Dispel outer obstacles without;  
Dispel inner obstacles within;  
Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

When you received the precious, sacred Teachings,  
Your body was luminous and brilliant.  
You bore the Three Collections' texts in your right hand;  
Vajra Dagger's text in your left.  
Learned one of Parping,  
You gained comprehension of the profound Teachings.

Bless me with your compassion!  
Lovingly guide me on the path!  
Grant me accomplishment!  
Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
Dispel outer obstacles without;  
Dispel inner obstacles within;  
Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

In the sublime sacred place of pure delight,  
 You bound guardians under oath.  
 When you arrived at the border of India and Tibet  
 To give your blessing,  
 On the sweet-smelling Fragrant Mountain  
 Flowers bloomed, even in winter,  
 And springs flowed with the nectar of awakening.  
 In that happy, sublime sacred place,  
 You wore the religious robes of a sublime person.  
 In your right hand you bore a nine-pronged vajra;  
 In your left, a jeweled container  
 Filled with *rakta* nectar.  
 You bound dakinis and spirits under oath,  
 Saw the deities, and gained accomplishment.

Bless me with your compassion!  
 Lovingly guide me on the path!  
 Grant me accomplishment!  
 Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
 Dispel outer obstacles without;  
 Dispel inner obstacles within;  
 Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
 I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houg*

When you established the Victor's doctrine,  
 You meditated in Yari Mountain's forest.  
 Your practice dagger rose in space.  
 With a vajra gesture, you grabbed and rolled it.  
 Rolling it, you flung it to a sandalwood forest.  
 It burst into raging flames, and the lake dried up.  
 The land of evil non-Buddhists burned  
 And noxious harm-bringing spirits were eradicated.  
 You are an incomparable slayer of demons.

Bless me with your compassion!  
 Lovingly guide me on the path!

Grant me accomplishment!  
 Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
 Dispel outer obstacles without;  
 Dispel inner obstacles within;  
 Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
 I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houg Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houg*

While suppressing cannibal spirits,  
 You appeared as a young manifestation of enlightenment—  
 A wonderful, excellent body, with fine complexion,  
 Straight teeth, and beautiful golden hair—  
 A youth of sixteen years of age.  
 You wore rich jewelry.  
 You suppressed demons and spirits  
 With a bronze dagger in your right hand.  
 You protected your devoted spiritual children  
 With an acacia dagger in your left hand.  
 At your throat you wore an iron dagger,  
 Indivisible with the deity.  
 You are non-dual manifest enlightenment, ornament of the world.

Bless me with your compassion!  
 Lovingly guide me on the path!  
 Grant me accomplishment!  
 Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
 Dispel outer obstacles without;  
 Dispel inner obstacles within;  
 Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
 I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houg Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houg*

When you cared for the demons' land,  
 They made a blazing pyre  
 Which you filled with a lake an arrow-shot wide.  
 On the lake, in a cool lotus  
 You sat, meditating.

Known by the name of Lotus-Born,  
You are truly the perfect Buddha incarnate,  
A marvelous manifestation of enlightenment.

Bless me with your compassion!  
Lovingly guide me on the path!  
Grant me accomplishment!  
Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
Dispel outer obstacles without;  
Dispel inner obstacles within;  
Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

When you brought sunlight to Tibet,  
You acted as the illustrious leader of the faithful.  
You presented yourself in ways to guide beings.  
On the pass at Tsong-kha  
You bound under oath the *genyen* war-gods.  
In the region of Tsawa Tsashö  
You bound under oath  
Twenty-one arrogant *genyen* gods.  
At Mong-youl, in a cloud of love,  
You bestowed accomplishment upon four monks.  
You are an outstanding, sublime awareness holder.

Bless me with your compassion!  
Lovingly guide me on the path!  
Grant me accomplishment!  
Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
Dispel outer obstacles without;  
Dispel inner obstacles within;  
Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

On the splendid plain of Pol-tong  
You bound the twelve *tenma* goddesses under oath.  
At Tibet's Kha-la Pass  
You bound Gong-kar Sha-mé under oath.  
Beside the Lha-bu Nying at Dam-shö  
You bound Tong-lha Yar-zhu under oath.  
On Hépori Mountain  
You bound all gods and cannibal spirits under oath.  
Among the gods and demons,  
Some offered you their vitality mantra;  
Some vowed to guard the doctrine;  
Some promised to serve you:  
Your magic and miracles are so powerful!

Bless me with your compassion!  
Lovingly guide me on the path!  
Grant me accomplishment!  
Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
Dispel outer obstacles without;  
Dispel inner obstacles within;  
Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

When you established the sacred Teachings,  
As if planting a victory banner,  
Samyé Monastery was not built;  
It was completed spontaneously—  
You fulfilled the king's wishes.  
You assumed three sublime names:  
One was Lotus-Born;  
One was Padmasambhava;  
And one was Lake-Born Vajra.  
Your secret name is Wrathful Vajra Adept.

Bless me with your compassion!  
Lovingly guide me on the path!

Grant me accomplishment!  
 Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
 Dispel outer obstacles without;  
 Dispel inner obstacles within;  
 Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
 I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

When meditating at Samyé-Chimpu,  
 You prevented misfortune and bestowed accomplishment.  
 You placed the king and his ministers on freedom's path  
 And made the Bön doctrines' demon-rites disappear.  
 With the doctrine of the pure precious body of ultimate enlightenment  
 You placed fortunate beings in the state of enlightenment.

Bless me with your compassion!  
 Lovingly guide me on the path!  
 Grant me accomplishment!  
 Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
 Dispel outer obstacles without;  
 Dispel inner obstacles within;  
 Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
 I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

You left for Oddiyana,  
 Where you now suppress cannibal spirits.  
 You are wonderful, greater than a human being.  
 Your amazing conduct is exemplary.  
 Your magic and miracles are very powerful.

Bless me with your compassion!  
 Lovingly guide me on the path!  
 Grant me accomplishment!  
 Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
 Dispel outer obstacles without;  
 Dispel inner obstacles within;

Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
 I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

Endowed with enlightenment's body, speech, and mind,  
 You have relinquished any obscuration.  
 You know clearly the three realms.  
 You have attained supreme accomplishment.  
 Your body is one of sublime bliss.  
 You will surely dispel my obstacles to awakening.

Bless me with your compassion!  
 Lovingly guide me on the path!  
 Grant me accomplishment!  
 Dispel our obstacles with your power!  
 Dispel outer obstacles without;  
 Dispel inner obstacles within;  
 Dispel secret obstacles to the absolute expanse.  
 I respectfully bow and take refuge in you.  
*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Houng*

*Om Ah Houng Benza Guru Péma Tötreng Tsal Benza Samaya Siddhi  
 Pala Houng Ah*

## COLOPHON

The indisputable, great treasure revealer appropriate for this time, Orgyen Chok-gyur Déchen Lingpa, drew from under the foot of Great Glorious One at the gate of Da-nyin Rong the treasure text *Oral Teachings, the Heart Proclamation, Wish-Fulfilling Jewel*, part of the *Heart-Meditation on the Spiritual Master, Dispelling All Obstacles*. This supplication constitutes the outer stage of that meditation. May this fully dispel the obstacles and frailty of the doctrine and beings, and may it be a cause for the complete accomplishment of the benefit of others and myself.

*Ambrosia from My Heart*

Visualizations for Supplications  
to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters

*by Jamgon Kongtrul*

## Introduction

TWO TIBETAN WORDS have often been translated as the word “prayer”: *mön-lam* (*smon lam*) and *sol-dep* (*gsol 'debs*). In the first, we formulate positive intentions, such as “May I become enlightened to be able to serve all beings until each and every one is entirely freed from suffering.” Such prayers of aspiration are central to the Great Way of spiritual development (*Mahayana*) within Buddhism. In the second kind of prayers, we invoke the presence of an enlightened individual and supplicate him or her. *Seven Supplications to Guru Rinpoché* provides a perfect example of this latter category, central to tantric Buddhism.

We don't need to search further than the words of Guru Rinpoché in the text just translated to find testimony of the importance placed on such supplications within tantric Buddhism:

The root of Secret Mantra is preservation of the tantric commitments. The roots of preserving those commitments are devotion and effort. Their root is supplication to your spiritual master and to your meditation deity. If a person endowed with diligence puts this advice into practice, he or she can attain the supreme accomplishment of Great Seal during this very lifetime.

Further,

Although those who practice correctly the authentic spiritual teachings might face myriad forms of obstructive forces, supplications to the spiritual master constitute the only means to dispel them. Better advice than this has never been given, is not given, and will never be given, even by all buddhas of all times.



In tantric Buddhism, the spiritual master acts as the dynamic representative of the enlightened ones of all places and times. Any external form of buddhas, bodhisattvas, deities, dakinis, or protectors are regarded as clothes covering an identical essence, that of the spiritual master. Ideally, tantric Buddhist practice does not hark back longingly to buddhas of the past nor live in rapt anticipation of masters yet-to-come. The human individual we accept as our spiritual master becomes the sole source of every aspect of the Buddha's Way to awakening, even to the point that he or she is considered as the Buddha incarnate. As Yeshé Tsogyal remarked in the text of the supplications:

You, Lotus-Born Master, Padmasambhava, embody the union of all joyful buddhas. A Buddha greater than you is something that someone like me, Yeshé Tsogyal, will never find wherever I look.

Guru Rinpoché described above the relationship we should have to the spiritual master:

In general, any master who shows you the spiritual path is the sole embodiment of all buddhas' activity. Specifically, the spiritual master who gives you instruction in Secret Mantra is greater than the buddhas of all times; if your devotion to him or her is insincere, your spiritual life will rot at its core.

In this context, prayer seeks to invoke the spiritual master's enlightened presence and to request his or her blessing. While the requests formulated in some prayers might strike the reader as woefully mundane, invocation of enlightenment by prayer represents the first step in tantric Buddhism toward the discovery of the same enlightenment within our own mind. Jamgon Kongtrul warns (in the text below) against isolating prayer from the subsequent stages of spiritual practice, "You can merely repeat the words of the supplications many hundreds or thousands of times but not be touched by their blessing."

In Buddhist tantric meditation, supplication is considered meditation's "outer" stage; meditation on the spiritual master in the form of a deity, the "inner" stage; and meditation on our own body as the deity, on our voice as the deity's speech, and on our mental activity as an expression of the

deity's wisdom, the "secret" stage. What begins as supplication, invocation of the spiritual master's presence, ends with the full flowering of the awareness of the same awakened mind within us. Kongtrul here uses a very apt term to situate prayer within tantric meditation practice: familiarization. In prayer, we begin to familiarize ourselves with the qualities of enlightenment:

Although there exist many varieties of meditation practice on the second Buddha, the teacher of Secret Mantra, Guru Padma, the best known among them mainly present the outer stage of meditation as familiarization through supplication to the spiritual master, the inner stage as accomplishment through the transformation of Guru Rinpoché into a meditation deity, and the secret stage as application of enlightened activity through meditation on the configuration of one's own body as the deity, breath retention, recitation of mantras, sending and gathering light, and so forth. In themselves, *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters* from the Northern Treasures represent the outer supplication to the spiritual master.

In the case of these supplications, the later stages of meditation related to them are found in a cycle of instruction collectively known as *The Full Gathering of Awareness Holders*, retrieved as a treasure text by Péma Wong-gyal (also known as Ngari Penchen, 1487–1543). Kongtrul used that text as his primary reference to compose the visualizations to accompany these supplications. Kongtrul felt very strongly that prayer should be complemented by visualization, as if prayer by itself is incomplete, a letter written without an envelope, stamp, and clear address. Kongtrul comments, "Most people recite the supplications as if repeating the six-syllable mantra..." The six-syllable mantra refers to *Om Mani Pémé Houg*, mantra of Bodhisattva All-Seeing Eyes, ubiquitous wherever Himalayan tantric Buddhism has spread. However, Kongtrul here despairs that the *Seven Supplications'* popularity had led them to be repeated as reflexively and as thoughtlessly as this most famous mantra often is. He saw visualization, a step beyond simple prayer, as essential. To visualize, to imagine an array of masters or deities before us as we pray, certainly puts more demands upon us, but it provides a focus for the faith and devotion that motivate prayer. Prayer gives wings to faith; visualization gives direction

and intensity to prayer. Kongtrul commends the practice in this way:

If a meditator concentrates on these visualizations with the understanding that in essence they represent Guru Rinpoché transformed in appearance into different deities, achievement of enlightened activity and accomplishments will be exceedingly rapid. This has been specifically affirmed in other treasure texts.

Despite the skillful tool of visualization, supplication within tantric Buddhism, as in any path of spiritual development, is basically an expression of faith, devotion, and trust. After having encouraged the use of visualizations, Kongtrul concludes with this advice:

Recite the supplications thinking of your principal spiritual master as inseparable from Guru Rinpoché. Place your wholehearted trust in him: ask him to be aware of whatever you do at all times, during this life and the next. You need have no doubt that by just one recitation of a supplication with such intense heartfelt devotion, respect, and yearning, you will receive the Master's blessing.

## *Ambrosia from My Heart* Visualizations for Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters

*Namo Mahaguru Sarva Siddhi Houg*

*The single epitome of the conquerors and their spiritual heirs'*

*Three mysteries and enlightened activity*

*Is Guru Padma: to you I offer respectful homage*

*To begin this composition of concise visualizations that accompany  
the supplications.*

**A**LTHOUGH *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters* of the Northern Treasures spread widely throughout Tibet, apart from the traditions of Dorjé Drak and Minling Monasteries' addition of a concise, supportive visualization, no tradition accompanies the supplications with a preliminary or concluding service [that would have included visualizations]. Moreover, this treasure's revealer, Mong-lam Zangpo Drakpa, and its translator from the yellow parchment, Rikzin Gödem Chen [1337-1408], did not initiate any transmission of visualizations.

*The Full Gathering of Awareness Holders*, a treasure cycle later revealed by Ngari Penchen, does in fact constitute a cycle of meditation practice for *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters*. Nevertheless, in the context of that treasure, the supplications are presented as the outer meditation of approach; meditation on the circles of deities, as the inner meditation; and changes in visualizations and mantras, as the secret application of enlightened activity. This framework renders daily practice of the prayers unreasonably difficult.

A series of very complicated visualizations, said to be the oral transmission of [Karma] Chakmé Rinpoché [1613-1678], has great blessings. Nevertheless,

he was a Kamtsang Kagyu lama who, apart from his own tradition and the treasure cycles of Sangyé Lingpa [1340-1396] and Ratna Lingpa [1403-1479], did not study or reflect upon the Nyingma Lineage's Canon or treasure transmissions. He was therefore relatively unfamiliar with the canonical teachings and the source texts of Vajra Yogini, Slayer of the Lord of Death, and Vajra Dagger. Moreover, what is referred to as his oral transmission originated well after these treasures were revealed, during the lifetime of the chief of the Northern Treasures, Tashi Tobgyal [1550-1602]. When the tantric practitioner Tashi Wong-chouk asked this master for visualizations to accompany the supplications, he replied with whatever came into his mind [i.e., he made an original composition, as opposed to transmitting an existing lineage of teaching]. Tashi Wong-chouk taught these visualizations to his son, the tantric practitioner Péma Wong-drak, who in turn gave them to his son, Karma Chakmé, who spread them widely. However, those visualizations are so complicated that it is difficult for them to be useful.

Therefore, with the intention to help persons of average capacity, I write here a valid series of visualizations based mainly on *The Full Gathering of Awareness Holders* and complemented by other reliable treasure teachings.

To begin, take refuge while repeating this prayer three times:

*Namo!*

*Until I attain awakening,*

*I take refuge with all sentient beings*

*In the spiritual master, embodiment of all joyful buddhas*

*And epitome of the Three Jewels.*

Develop the mind of awakening while repeating this prayer three times:

*I develop this intention for the benefit of sentient beings:*

*I vow to accomplish the spiritual master's enlightenment,*

*Then liberate all sentient beings*

*With enlightened activity that guides each skillfully.*

Create this visualization to support the recitation:

*I am the great powerful one, Horse-Neck [Hayagriva], red in color,*

*In union with the consort Vajra Sow [Vajravarahi].*

*We hold curved blades and skull-cups*

*And wear charnel-ground ornaments.*

*The horse whinnies and the sow squeals.*

*We stand entwined, one leg extended, the other bent, on a lotus  
and sun seat.*

#### VISUALIZATION TO ACCOMPANY THE SUPPLICATION TO THE SPIRITUAL MASTER'S THREE BODIES OF ENLIGHTENMENT

On three levels in the sky before me rest thrones of a lotus  
and a moon.

On the highest level, you, my spiritual master, appear as the  
primordial lord, Immutable Light,

Radiant blue, hands in the gesture of equanimity, sitting cross-legged,  
Inseparably entwined with [the female Buddha] Ever-Excellent,  
expression of your own radiant nature.

The masters of the mind-to-mind transmission among the victors  
surround you.

On the middle level, you appear as Kasarpani, radiant white in color.

Your right hand shows supreme generosity; your left rests on the  
throne, holding the stem of a white lotus.

You wear the attributes of enlightenment's perfect rapture.

You sit in bodhisattva posture, surrounded by the masters of the  
transmission through symbols.

On the lowest level, you appear as Lotus-Born Master, holding  
a vajra and a skull-cup.

You wear a lotus crown, a cloak, and the three Buddhist robes.

You carry a trident at your side and sit in the posture of royal ease,  
Surrounded by awareness holders, masters of the aural transmission.

An infinite assembly of the Three Jewels and Three Sources,  
Gathered like masses of clouds in an expanse of rainbow light,  
surround all three.

VISUALIZATION TO ACCOMPANY THE SUPPLICATION  
GIVEN TO THE KING

In the sky before me rests an eight-petalled lotus.  
On its central stamens lies the flat disc of the moon,  
Where sits the union of all the Three Sources, you, my spiritual master Quintessential Secret.  
You are radiant blue; your hair is drawn up in a crown and you wear bone ornaments and a tiger-skin robe.  
You hold a vajra and bell as you embrace Mandarava, white in color.  
You sit cross-legged, within an expanse of five-colored rainbow light.

Above your head, on a lotus and moon, sits Buddha Ever-Excellent  
[Sanskrit: *Samantabhadra*],  
Radiant blue, hands in the gesture of equanimity.  
He is entwined with the female Buddha Ever-Excellent.  
In front of them sits Illuminator of Form [Sanskrit: *Vairochana*]; to the east, Unmoving [Sanskrit: *Akshobhya*];  
To the right, Source of Jewels [Sanskrit: *Ratnasambhava*]; behind, Boundless Light [Sanskrit: *Amitabha*];  
To the left, Accomplisher of Aims [Sanskrit: *Amogāsiddhi*].  
These buddhas wear the attributes of enlightenment's perfect rapture, Hold their characteristic implements, and sit cross-legged on a lotus and moon.

On the eastern petal, above a sun, moon, and Rudra,  
Stands Yongdak Héruga, dark blue, holding a vajra and bell.  
On the southern petal, above a water buffalo, sun, and moon,  
Stands Slayer of Lord of Death, blue, holding a wheel and pointing threateningly.  
On the western petal, above a water god, sun, and moon,  
Stands Horse-Neck, dark red, holding a vajra and bell.  
On the northern petal, above Indra, sun, and moon,  
Stands Vajra Dagger, dark blue, clutching a dagger of Mount Meru.

On the southeast petal, above a female demon, sun, and moon,  
Stands Consummate King, dark blue, holding a vajra and hammer.  
On the southwest petal, above the eight main animals, sun, and moon,  
Stands Great Supreme Héruga, dark blue, holding a vajra and a conch shell full of blood.

On the northwest petal, above a moon, sits the lord protector of beings, Infinite Life, red in color.  
His hands are placed in the gesture of equanimity and hold a vase of immortality.  
He wears the attributes of enlightenment's perfect rapture.  
On the northeast petal, above a sun, stands Vajra Sow, red in color.  
She holds a curved blade and a skull-cup.  
She dances, one leg straight, the other bent.

To the right of Buddha Unmoving sits Buddha Shakyamuni, the color of gold.  
His hands make gestures of earth-witness and equanimity.  
He wears the three Buddhist robes.  
To the left sits Garab Dorjé, his complexion a radiant white.  
His hands make the gesture of the wheel of teaching.  
He wears the clothes of manifest enlightenment.

In front, on a lotus and moon, sits Gentle Splendor, orange in color.  
He holds a sword and an *udumvara* flower, upon which rests a text.  
To his right, on a lotus and moon, sits Powerful All-Seeing Eyes, white in color.  
His hands show the gestures of supreme generosity and giving refuge, while he holds the stalk of a white lotus.  
To the left, on a lotus and moon, sits the honored Lord of Secrets.  
Dark blue, he holds a vajra and bell.  
All three bodhisattvas wear the attributes of enlightenment's perfect rapture  
And sit in half-lotus posture.  
Around them sit the awareness holders of the realms of gods, *nagas*, and humans,

With their hundreds of thousands of disciples.

Oceans of the Three Jewels and the Three Sources surround them all,  
like masses of clouds:

They bless me with their wisdom's vision.

**VISUALIZATION TO ACCOMPANY THE SUPPLICATION  
GIVEN TO YESHÉ TSOGYAL:**

In the middle of an ocean before me stands the heart-shaped Copper-  
Colored Mountain.

On its wide and level summit rises the grand celestial palace, Lotus  
Light,

Made of jewels, three-tiered, and brilliantly luminous.

Its four doors, one on each side, are elaborately decorated with  
ornamental arches.

Lakes of nectar, wish-fulfilling trees, various flowers, and parks  
surround the structure.

The chiefs of the six families of buddhas sit at the excellent palace's  
upper level.

Skull-garlanded masters of the five groups sit at the middle level.

In the center of the lowest level, on a human corpse, lotus, and sun,

You stand as the leader of the dance of manifest enlightenment,

Raksha Tötrenge Tsal, Cannibal Demon Garlanded in Skulls.

You are dark maroon in color, with dark-brown hair drawn up on  
your head.

You bear a vajra in your right hand, a skull-cup full of blood in  
your left.

You wear a dark maroon cloak, a cape of human skin, and bone  
ornaments.

You stand in a self-confident posture, with one leg straight,  
the other bent.

The Eight Great Deities surround you in the cardinal directions and  
the interstices.

Behind them, great *gings*, dakinis of the five groups,

Spiritual heroes, and yoginis sway and dance.

Goddesses carry pleasing gifts and present offerings in great clouds.

The Four Great Kings and their proud assembly guard the four gates.

All appear clearly and vividly before me.

May my intense prayers of devotion and respect move you—

Through the power of your commitment

May you come here from Tail-Fan Island

In a prodigious, incomparable display of miraculous power.

May you think of me lovingly with your compassion

And grant me your blessing and empowerment!

**VISUALIZATION TO ACCOMPANY THE SUPPLICATION  
GIVEN TO NAMKÉ NYINGPO**

In the center of this place, a pure land of the buddhas,

Stand three levels of thrones fashioned of lotus stems,

Which flourish with branches, leaves, flower petals, and fruit.

Canopies of wisdom's light intersect in every direction.

The gods create a great cleansing rainfall of flowers.

Many goddesses sing and shower clouds of offerings.

Birds break into song, bees hum delightful melodies.

In the center of the highest lotus sits Buddha Ever-Excellent,

With Vajra Bearer to his right and Vajrasattva to his left.

Before him sits Indrabhuti in regal dress,

A volume containing the eighteen tantras in his hands.

To his right sits Gentle Splendor, behind him All-Seeing Eyes,

And to his left, Vajra-in-Hand.

Around them cluster the five representatives—awareness holders

From the realms of gods, *nagas*, harm-bringing spirits, cannibal

demons, and humans—<sup>36</sup>

Each surrounded by a gathering of beings from the same realm.

In the center of the middle lotus sits Garab Dorjé.  
 Before him is Manjushri Mitra, to his right Shri Singha,  
 To his left Vimalamitra, and behind is Buddha Gupta.  
 Masters of the lineage of awareness holders surround them.

On the lowest lotus stalk, upon a moon,  
 You sit as the embodiment of all buddhas, Guru Vajra Dharma,  
 Dark blue, wearing silks and ornaments of jewels and bone.  
 You hold a vajra and bell as you embrace red Vajra Sow.  
 You sit in vajra posture in the midst of rainbow light.

Around you, in each of the cardinal directions and interstices,  
 lies a moon:

On the eastern one Yongdak Vajra, Humkara,  
 Radiant white, holds a vajra and bell.  
 In the south Gentle Splendor, Manjushri Mitra,  
 Light maroon, wields a club and points threateningly.  
 In the west Supreme Horse, great Nagarjuna,  
 Orange, wears the attributes of manifest enlightenment, his hands  
 in the gesture of teaching.  
 In the north Vajra Youth, Prabha Hasti, light green, holds a stick  
 and a text.

In the southeast Unsurpassed, Dhana Samkrita,  
 Red-maroon, holds a skull-drum and a lotus cup filled with nectar.  
 In the southwest Wisdom Dakini, Chandali,  
 Lotus color, holds a five-pointed vajra and a vase of immortality.  
 In the northwest Vanquisher of Arrogance, Guhya Chandra,  
 Red, makes a gesture of a hook with both hands.  
 In the northeast Powerful One, great Shanting Garbha,  
 Red-maroon, brandishes a wheel and holds aloft a curved blade.

All wear a crown, a cloak, the Buddhist robes, and bone ornaments.  
 Outwardly they appear as the eight bodhisattvas,  
 Inwardly they are the eight awareness holders.  
 In essence they are the perfect embodiments of the Eight Sacred  
 Circles' great glorious deities.

Above, below, and in the eight directions from each of the three levels  
 Assemblies of awareness holders,  
 Spiritual heroes, great *gings*, dakinis, and oath-bound protectors  
 Appear vividly within a radiant expanse of fire and rainbow light.

#### VISUALIZATION TO ACCOMPANY THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO DORJÉ DOODJOM

In space before me appears a fully blossomed lotus.  
 Its top petals form two concentric circles of eight petals each.  
 A sun and moon seat rests on each petal.

In the center you sit as the union of the Three Jewels, my lord  
 spiritual master,  
 Wish-Fulfilling Jewel, exuding great bliss.  
 Pink in color, you smile peacefully; your round eyes gaze.  
 Your two hands rest in the gesture of equanimity,  
 Holding a skull-cup filled with nectar.  
 You wear a lotus crown, an inner cloak, the Buddhist robes, and a cape.  
 You sit in vajra posture.

At your heart sits the body of ultimate enlightenment, Quintessential  
 Secret,  
 Surrounded in the four directions by Buddha, Jewel, Lotus, and Action  
 Skull-Garlanded Adepts.  
 Each embraces his consort, expression of his own radiant nature.  
 They wear the attributes of enlightenment's perfect rapture  
 And hold their own characteristic implements.

On the eastern petal, Master Lake-Born Vajra, white,  
 Holds a vajra and skull-cup and sits in half-lotus posture.  
 On the southern petal, Lotus King, brilliantly red,  
 Wears royal attire and holds a jewel and golden wheel.  
 On the western petal, Guardian of the Peace, glowing red-maroon,  
 Holds a tantric staff and skull-cup.  
 He wears the dress of a yogi engaged in tantric conduct.

On the northern petal, Lion of the Sakyas, Intelligent Supreme Desire,  
the color of gold,  
Shows the gestures of earth-witness and meditation.  
He wears the attributes of manifest enlightenment.

At the east of the next circle, Lotus-Born, glowing pink,  
Embraces his consort Mandarava and holds a vajra and vase of  
immortality.  
In the south, Lotus Vajra, his expression showing wrath and desire,  
Holds a vajra and bell and is in union with his consort, expression of  
his own radiant nature.  
In the west, Lion's Roar, sky-blue, wears all the attributes of a  
wrathful deity.  
He holds a vajra with one hand and points threateningly with  
the other.

In the north, Garuda Master, clear blue, wears ornaments of jewels  
and bone.  
He holds a vajra with one hand and points threateningly with the  
other.  
In the southeast, Radiant Sun, vermilion,  
Carries a tantric staff and the rays of the sun, while he drinks alcohol  
from a skull-cup.  
In the southwest, Vajra Skull-Garlanded Adept, glowing pink,  
Holds a vajra and bell, and wears silks and jewels.  
In the northwest, Padmasambhava, glowing pink,  
Holds a vajra and skull-cup, and wears an erudite scholar's attire.  
In the northeast, Vajra Sagging Belly, a fierce red-maroon,  
Flourishes aloft a vajra dagger and is resplendent in the dress of an  
oath-bound wrathful deity.

This varied sacred circle that appears clearly before me expresses  
wisdom's display  
And reveals its forms in whatever way will guide beings to  
enlightenment.

### VISUALIZATION TO ACCOMPANY THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO MUTRI TSÉPO

The world and all beings appear in their natural radiance,  
Interconnected with rainbow light.

In the sky before me there rests a lotus and moon seat  
Upon which you sit, resplendent union of the enlightened body,  
speech, mind,  
Qualities, and activity of all buddhas:  
Great spiritual master, Lotus-Born.

Your complexion is glowing pink, you smile peacefully and exude  
charm.

On your head you wear the crown called Lotus that Liberates on  
Sight,

Decorated with a mirror, a golden vajra, and vulture feathers.

You wear a dark-blue inner cloak,

The Buddhist robes, and a brocade outer cape.

Your right hand holds a five-pointed vajra to your heart;

Your left rests in the gesture of equanimity, holding a skull-cup

Filled with nectar that swirls around a vase of immortality marked  
by a lotus.

At your left elbow is a tantric staff with three points,

Ornamented by a hand-drum, a bell, tiger-skin patterned material,  
and silk pendants.

You sit unmoving in vajra posture.

Your body naturally pervades the buddhas' pure realms.

Your speech, the indestructible melody of spiritual teaching, resonates  
unceasingly.

Your enlightened mind wisdom comprehends your disciples' needs.

Your talents are inconceivable; your enlightened activity effortless.

You appear clearly as the embodiment of all sources of refuge.

### VISUALIZATION TO ACCOMPANY THE SPONTANEOUS FULFILLMENT OF WISHES

In the sky before me rests a rainbow cloud of five colors  
That supports a jeweled celestial palace, complete in every detail.

In the center of this unsurpassed palace of lotus nets  
Rests a beautiful lotus with circles of eight and four petals.  
At its center is a throne of a lotus, sun, and moon upon which you  
stand,  
Great Supreme Master, dark maroon in color, brilliantly radiant.

In your right hand you hold a skull-club; in your left, a skull-cup.  
Above your head, at the center of a lotus, sun, and moon,  
Sits the Master Great Bliss, glowing pink.  
His two eyes gaze, staring into the expanse of bliss and emptiness.  
His hands rest in the gesture of equanimity, holding a skull-cup filled  
with nectar.

A white letter *Vam* marks the nectar's swirls.  
On your head you wear a splendid crown of a young deer's skin.  
You wear an inner cloak, the Buddhist robes, and a great, flowing  
brocade cape.

You sit in vajra posture in the midst of rainbow light.  
By merely hearing your name, my wishes are spontaneously fulfilled.  
You represent the chief embodiment of the splendor of the world and  
all life,

Both in common existence and in perfect peace.

Four lotus petals surround the center:  
On the eastern petal, Master King of Healers, lapis color,  
Holds with both hands a skull-cup filled with the nectar of Buddha  
King of Healers.

On the southern petal, Master Wealth God, gold color,  
Holds a jewel in his right hand, a wish-fulfilling skull-cup in his left.

On the western petal, Master Meditation Deity, ruby color,  
Holds a lotus in his right hand, a treasure chest in his left.

On the northern petal, Master Fulfiller of Hopes, emerald color,

Lifts a banner with his right hand and brandishes a dagger with  
his left.

Eight petals form the outer circle:

On the eastern petal, Master Great *Ging*, brilliant white,  
Plays a drum with his right hand and holds a skull-cup filled with  
nectar in his left.

On the southern petal, Master Controller of the Four Elements, blue,  
Carries a vase, Mount Meru, fire, and a lasso of wind.

On the western petal, Master Expeller of Savage Beasts, red,  
Lifts a hooked lasso and rings a bell made of chains.

On the northern petal, Master Vajra Armor, yellow,  
Holds a sword in his right hand, a hook in his left.

On the southeast petal, Master Protector from the Fear of Death, red,  
Shows the gesture of perfect generosity with his right hand and carries  
a begging bowl filled with nectar in his left.

On the southwest petal, Master Vanquisher of Delusion after Death,  
red,

Carries a vajra-mirror and a peacock feather.

On the northwest petal, Master Purifier of Birth, red-green,  
Holds a curved blade in his right hand, a skull-cup filled with nectar  
in his left.

On the northeast petal, Master Refuge for the Six Kinds of Beings,  
light green,

Holds a nine-pointed vajra and a tantric staff.

All wear a lotus crown, and over their inner garments,  
A great dark blue cloak and the red Buddhist robes.  
They stand surrounded by an assembly of their emanations.  
They produce a rain of accomplishment and radiate blessings.

### VISUALIZATION TO ACCOMPANY THE SUPPLICATION TO DISPEL OBSTACLES ON THE PATH

Before me in the expanse of space thick with rainbow clouds  
Stands a jeweled celestial palace, perfect in every detail.



At its center rests a lotus with concentric circles of four and eight petals.

At the center of the lotus stands a lion-supported throne,  
On which rest a lotus, sun, and moon.

You sit on the throne, Lotus Skull-Garlanded Adept,  
Whose Brilliance Overwhelms Existence's Appearances.

Your lustrous complexion is pink. You smile wrathfully, wearing a lotus crown.

An inner cloak, the Buddhist robes, and a bright outer cape cover your body.

Your right hand points as you brandish a five-pointed vajra.

Your left hand rests in the gesture of equanimity, holding a skull-cup containing the vase of immortality.

Your secret consort, in the form of a tantric staff, leans at your left, against your chest.

You sit in the posture of royal ease.

Above your head sits enlightenment's perfect rapture, white  
All-Seeing Eyes;

Two hands are folded at his heart, another holds a crystal rosary,  
the last a lotus.

He wears the attributes of enlightenment's perfect rapture.

Above his head sits ultimate enlightenment, Infinite Light and Life,  
red in color.

His hands rest in the gesture of equanimity and hold the vase of immortality.

He wears silks and ornaments of jewels.

Around them, on four lotus petals, in a clockwise arrangement,  
Stand Heir to the Victors' Lineage, radiant white, wearing bone ornaments.

He brandishes a sword and a hook, and stands with one leg straight,  
the other bent.

Lion of Speech, white, in an erudite scholar's attire,

Makes the gesture of giving teaching and holds an *udumvara* flower,  
upon which rests a book.

Sublime Being of Excellent Bearing, the color of gold, wears  
a scholar's crown and the three Buddhist robes.

He holds a vajra and treasure chest.

Great Slayer of Demons, light maroon, holds a dagger.

He wears a lotus crown, a dark blue cloak, and the Buddhist robes  
with a splendid demeanor.

On the eight surrounding petals, in all the directions and interstices,  
starting from the east,

Are Supreme Ornament of the World, dark blue,

Who rolls and grasps his dagger for the intensive practice of  
enlightened activity.

He wears a long cape and bone ornaments, and stands in active  
posture.

Lotus-Born Master, light blue, embraces his consort, holds a vajra  
and bell,

Wears silks and ornaments of jewels and bone, and sits in cross-  
legged posture.

Especially Exalted stands brilliantly white, holds a vajra and tantric  
staff,

And wears a lotus crown, a blue cloak, and the Buddhist robes.

Very Powerful Magician, red-maroon, wears the attire of an  
oath-bound protector,

Brandishes a vajra and a dagger, and stands handsomely on a tiger.

Fierce Vajra Adept, dark red, embraces his consort, Vajra Sow,

Holds a vajra and an iron scorpion, and wears the full attributes of  
a wrathful deity.

Guide of the Fortunate, dark blue, embraces his consort,

Bears a vajra and conch shell full of blood, and wears bright attire.

*Raksha* Skull-Garlanded Adept, dark maroon, embraces his consort,  
wears charnel-ground ornaments,

And holds a vajra and conch shell full of blood.

King of Bliss, light red, embraces his consort,

Holds a vajra and bell, wears ornaments, and dances with one leg  
straight, the other bent.

At the four doors of the palace spiritual heroes of the four classes stand with their consorts.

The Three Sources' Buddhist protectors gather in every space, like clouds.

All appear vividly as the embodiment of wisdom, the union of appearance and emptiness.

### EMPOWERMENT AFTER THE SUPPLICATIONS

After the supplications, receive empowerment as follows: >

*The surrounding deities dissolve into the central figure.  
At his four centers the syllables Om, Ah, Houg, and Hri  
Diffuse white, red, blue, and yellow lights,  
Which dissolve into my body's four centers.  
I thereby receive the four empowerments—  
My four obscurations are purified,  
I am empowered to meditate on the four paths,  
And I gain the fortune to attain the result, enlightenment's  
four bodies.  
The spiritual master melts into light and dissolves inseparably  
into me.*

If you are able to do this practice in its most extensive version, add this empowerment at the end of each supplication and then begin the visualization for the following supplication. If you cannot do that, recite this empowerment at the completion of each supplication. You may also perform a more extensive version of the empowerment, as it appears in *The Full Gathering of Awareness Holders*:

*At the forehead of the Guru who appears vividly before me  
An Om stands on the flat disc of the moon.  
From it white light radiates, makes offerings to all enlightened  
conquerors,  
And gathers their bodies' blessings.  
Together, these dissolve into the Om at my forehead.*

*White light fills my body and purifies my [body's] karma and  
obscurations.*

*I receive the vase empowerment: the body of enlightenment's  
blessings enter me.*

*My body becomes appearance and emptiness, the magical body  
of wisdom.*

While imagining this, mentally recite Guru Rinpoché's heart mantra and retain your breath.<sup>37</sup> When you can no longer hold it, exhale and think that all faults of your tantric bonds with the body of enlightenment are purified into the clear and empty expanse of space. View the true meaning. Repeat this process following the next two stages.

*At his throat an Ah stands on a lotus flower.  
From it red light radiates, makes offerings to all enlightened  
conquerors,  
And gathers the blessings of their speech.  
Together, these dissolve into the Ah at my throat.  
Red light fills my channels' letters and purifies my voice's karma  
and obscurations.  
I receive the secret empowerment: the speech of enlightenment's  
blessings enter me.  
My voice becomes sound and emptiness, the indestructible vajra sound.*

As you exhale after reciting the mantra while holding your breath, all faults of your tantric bonds with the speech of enlightenment are purified.

*At his heart a Houg stands on the flat disc of the sun.  
From it blue light radiates, makes offerings to all enlightened  
conquerors,  
And gathers their minds' blessings.  
Together, these dissolve into the Houg at my heart.  
Blue light fills my constituents and purifies my mind's karma and  
obscurations.  
I receive the wisdom-transcendent knowledge empowerment: the  
mind of enlightenment's blessings enter me.  
My mind becomes awareness and emptiness, immutable great bliss.*

As you exhale after reciting the mantra while holding your breath, all faults of your tantric bonds with the mind of enlightenment are purified.

*From three centers of the spiritual master before me  
Forms of himself diffuse and dissolve into my three centers.  
My body, speech, and mind unite in supreme equality  
With the wisdom-essence of his enlightened body, speech, and mind.  
The obscuration of knowledge is purified. I receive the fourth  
empowerment:  
The essence of my body, speech, and mind becomes manifest wisdom.  
Enlightenment's three families appear vividly in my heart.  
I gaze at the nature of reality, the circle of wisdom beyond  
formulation.*

Mentally recite the heart mantra, then rest in meditative equanimity.

## CONCLUSION

Although there exist many varieties of meditation practice on the second Buddha, the Teacher of Secret Mantra, Guru Padma, the best-known among them mainly present the outer stage of meditation as familiarization through supplication to the spiritual master, the inner stage as accomplishment through the transformation of Guru Rinpoché into a meditation deity, and the secret stage as application of enlightened activity through meditation on the configuration of one's own body as the deity, breath retention, recitation of mantras, sending and gathering light, and so forth. In themselves, *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters* from the Northern Treasures represent the outer supplication to the spiritual master. Its actual source text is [Ngari] Penchen's treasure *The Full Gathering of the Eight Transmissions*.<sup>38</sup> In that context, the supplications are presented as the outer meditation of approach, while the supportive visualization is taught as merely the style [of creation phase meditation on the spiritual master called] "union in a single gem." This concurs with the Dorjé Drak and Minling Monasteries' [traditions of] group spiritual practice, which provides just a brief visualization of the support followed by the supplications. Their recitation is accompanied by many embellishments, such as melodies.

In this region [eastern Tibet] these supplications have spread far and wide, but such details as the visualizations for the support follow no fixed custom. Most people recite the prayers as if repeating the six-syllable mantra and many have not even seen the text of *The Full Gathering [of the Eight Transmissions]*. In that text it appears that the sacred circles for the inner meditation correspond to the circle of deities related to the supplications. Thus, if a meditator concentrates on these visualizations with the understanding that in essence they represent Guru Rinpoché transformed in appearance into different deities, achievement of enlightened activity and accomplishments will be exceedingly rapid. This has been specifically affirmed in other treasure texts. Therefore, with the intention to help faithful persons of average capability, I have collected, clarified, and condensed from the main text of *The Full Gathering [of the Eight Transmissions]* and other authentic treasure texts this series of visualizations that correspond to the words of the supplications.

You can merely repeat the words of the supplications many hundreds or thousands of times but not be touched by their blessing. Since the sole source of the prayers is *The Full Gathering [of the Eight Transmissions]*, recite the supplications thinking of your principal spiritual master as inseparable from Guru Rinpoché. Place your wholehearted trust in him: ask him to be aware of whatever you do at all times, during this lifetime and in the next. You need have no doubt that by just one recitation of a supplication with such intense heartfelt devotion, respect, and yearning, you will receive the Master's blessing.

The main text of the [first six] supplications and *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes* were not retrieved from the same treasure site, so we can hear talk that *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes* should not be considered as part of *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters*. Furthermore, because *The Supplication to the Spiritual Master's Three Bodies of Enlightenment* was bestowed to the group as a whole and each of the five disciples who requested a prayer was each given a supplication in response, some count just six supplications. The seventh is said to be the instructions in how to recite the supplications (beginning, "My followers..."), which is supplemented by other verses and turned into a supplication. There is absolutely no need for this.

All the yellow parchment retrieved by Mong-lam Zongpo Drakpa was given its definitive form by Rikzin Gödem Chen. At that time, he wrote on

the text which contained all seven supplications the title *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters* because of the words written at the end of *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes*, “The Son of Heaven said, “...The supplication spoken to the King of Gung-tang [i.e., *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes*] should be recited at noon, during rest....” This provides obvious proof that this last prayer is counted as one of the *Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters*. Persons who say otherwise are misguided: don’t believe them!

#### DEDICATION AND COLOPHON

*If in this work some good be found,  
May readers by love’s hook be bound  
And travel by the Guru’s grace  
To Vajra Peak, the highest place:  
Awake, may their activity  
Make dry all life’s great churning sea!*<sup>39</sup>

With the intention to help persons of average capability who are diligent in recitation practice, I, Péma Garwong Lodrö Tayé, who gives the false impression of being an awareness holder, composed this text in my eighty-seventh year [1899]. My attendant Sang-ngak Tenzin acted as scribe.

## Appendix 1:

### *Notes to Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters*

THIS APPENDIX includes short biographies, written by Jamgon Kongtrul, of the individuals who requested the supplications from Guru Rinpoché. To these I have added a short overview of each supplication. I do not intend this to replace the in-depth commentary to the supplications that many living Buddhist masters are eminently qualified to provide.

#### 1. THE SUPPLICATION TO THE SPIRITUAL MASTER’S THREE BODIES OF ENLIGHTENMENT

##### *Overview:*

This supplication introduces two concepts central to tantric Buddhism: the spiritual master and three forms of enlightenment. Used loosely, the title “spiritual master” (*guru* in Sanskrit; *lama* in Tibetan) can refer to any woman or man who makes a significant contribution to our spiritual life. More precisely, we accord the title to individuals capable of guiding us through stages of spiritual development until full and complete enlightenment. In Tibetan, one way to define the word “lama” shows how he/she personifies Buddhism: the word “la” in Tibetan means spirit; the spirit of Buddhism is wisdom. “Ma” means “mother” and indicates compassion; thus, a lama personifies wisdom and compassion. Realization of ultimate wisdom and compassion implies that a genuine spiritual master embodies the three bodies of enlightenment. Many Buddhist books contain many wonderful but complex elucidations of these three aspects of enlightenment. A very simple explanation uses the metaphor of the sky, clouds, and

rain to delineate the three: The body of ultimate enlightenment [*dharmakaya*] is likened to the sky or to space. This is formless enlightenment, its experience is primordially pure, unbounded, timeless awareness. This is nothing but the nature of our minds, who we are, who we have always been. Although we might be unfamiliar with Buddhist technical terms, it is entirely possible that a flash of recognition would accompany anyone's encounter with this aspect of our being. However, that same nature in its breadth and depth exceeds the grasp of our earth-bound conventional mind like the sweep of the sky defies our perceptual and conceptual limits.

This ultimate body of enlightenment, our true (or "buddha") nature, is not just empty, neutral space. It is brimming with wisdom, love, and creative potential. These innate qualities produce the body of enlightenment's perfect rapture [*sambhogakaya*], aspects of our enlightened nature that convey to others glimpses of enlightenment's sumptuous, magnificent splendor. We cannot fathom the limits of the sky or space, yet we can measure in some way the clouds that appear from the sky and dissolve back into it. Forms of enlightenment's perfect rapture include all tantric Buddhism's so-called "meditation deities," each of which permits the viewer to glimpse in an idealized, anthropomorphic form some of the qualities of enlightened mind: wisdom, understanding, compassion, equanimity, vitality, creativity, etc. Each form is imbued with enlightenment's tangible qualities, but none stands apart from the subtle sphere of intangible enlightenment beyond our dualistic patterns. On a mundane level, this body of enlightenment corresponds to the common modes of experience that all beings share—waking life, dream, deep sleep, etc. These modes are vital and vivid, yet non-manifest and non-material.

From the sky, clouds appear; from the clouds, rain falls to earth. From the ultimate nature of mind, rapturous forms of enlightenment appear; from them, enlightenment manifests [*nirmanakaya*] in this world for the good of all. These manifestations can appear as human beings, as animals, or even as inanimate objects—medicine, food, bridges, etc. In any of its forms, manifest enlightenment serves the needs of others, either materially or spiritually. Just as rain falls impartially, bringing life to all that grows, Buddhism considers that these forms of enlightenment serve the needs of all beings and provide well-being and an uplifting influence in all cultures, Buddhist or not.

## 2. THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO THE KING BIOGRAPHY OF THE KING OF HUMANITY, TRISONG DÉTSEN BY JAMGON KONGTRUL

As predicted in *The Root Tantra of Gentle Splendor* (in the section called *Prophecy of the Excellent Light of the World*), Trisong Détsen was born as the son of King Mé Ak-tsom (fourth in the royal lineage from Song-Tsen Gampo) and his Chinese wife, the "later princess." He was born on the eighth day of the spring month of the Male Water Horse Year [742], under the constellation Gyal.

Until his seventeenth year, Trisong Détsen mainly attended to the duties of the monarchy. Then he awoke to his sacred family [i.e., that of the bodhisattvas] and decided to construct a large temple. He consulted with Gö, a Buddhist minister of his government, who used subterfuge to gain everyone's approval for the temple's construction. The king invited the great scholar Shantiraksheeta, a second mighty Buddha Shakyamuni for Tibet, to tame the earth [where the temple would be built]. Due to the needs of the occasion, this preceptor pretended to be unable to do so and predicted [success if] the great Master [Guru Rinpoché] were invited to Tibet. The brilliance of the Master's fierce gestures suppressed the destructive evil spirits of the Tibetan land and they became obedient subjects [of Buddhism]. He used Vajra Dagger's sacred circle of deities to make the ground suitable [for the construction]. The foundations were laid wherever his shadow fell while he performed a vajra dance in the sky. Human beings worked during the day and spirits during the night; the structure and the contents of the three-styled<sup>40</sup> [Inconceivable,] Changeless, Spontaneously Built Temple [Samyé Monastery] were built without interruption in the course of five years. When flowers were strewn during the consecration [ritual], the Master displayed great miraculous powers.

As the great Master had foretold, when Bérotsana and two others, Kawa Paltsek and Chokro Lu'i Gyaltzen, were summoned and given training as translators, they learned effortlessly. Seven persons, including Ba Yeshé Wongpo, were selected to take monastic ordination as an experiment. This event marked the founding of the Buddha's Way [in Tibet]. Moreover, a great number of discourses and tantras, such as the ten royal discourses, were translated.

Bérotsana, Namké Nyingpo, and others were sent to India, where they received instruction in Buddhism; they returned to Tibet with the gift of the Teachings. In particular, three messengers—Kawa Paltsek, Chokro Lu'i Gyaltsen, and Ma Rinchen Chok—were dispatched [to India] to invite the great scholar Vimalamitra. Bérotsana journeyed to Gyalmo Tsarong [in eastern Tibet], then returned to central Tibet.

One hundred great erudite scholars, including the preceptor, the Master, and Vimalamitra, gathered [in Tibet]. These were joined by one hundred and eight translators—great organizers, translators, and assistants, such as Bérotsana, Kawa Paltsek, and Chokro Lu'i Gyaltsen. By translating, elucidating, teaching, and studying together, they produced definitive Tibetan translations of the collections of the Buddha's Word, tantras, and treatises of commentary. Their inconceivably great kindness has had a lasting effect on the practice of the entire corpus of the Buddha's teachings in Tibet.

Some specific accounts, such as the history written in the Canon [the collection of the Buddha's discourses and tantras] and *Ba's Testament*, relate that [while in Tibet] the Master did nothing apart from conferring the empowerment of the glorious Quintessence of Secrets upon the king and his ministers, teach *The Garland of Instructions Concerning the View* and, with the king, conceal many texts of teachings and wrathful mantras. It could be said that this was in fact what his common disciples witnessed. Upon the ruler, the inner circle of subjects, and other special, fortunate disciples, Guru Rinpoché bestowed an infinite number of general and specific teachings, including those on the trio of the Master, Great Completion, and Bodhisattva Great Compassion; and those on the Eight Sacred Circles of Deities. [These constitute a few] examples to illustrate his conferral of tantras, pith instructions, and vajra feasts for accomplishing enlightened activity, [teaching] related to the infinite expanse of the Three Sources' [deities] and the doctrine's guardians. In most cases, the Master and the king decided to seal the teachings as treasures in anticipation [of the needs] of future times.

In particular, at the Treasure Cave of Red Cliff at Samyé-Chimpu the king received the empowerment of The Gathering of the Joyful Buddhas of the Eight Deities. On that occasion, the ruler's flower [thrown during the empowerment] fell in the center [of the circle of deities]; he was given the secret name Tsangpa Lha'i Métok [Divine Flower of Brahma]. He received the transmission of The Gathering of the Joyful Buddhas of Great Supreme Héruka. [While meditating,] he remained still within absorption; the experience of

spontaneous presence arose [in his mind]. After the king received instruction in the discourses from the preceptor Bodhisattva, the realization of the perfection of transcendent knowledge was born in his mind and he composed many treatises, such as *The True Measure of the Teachings* and a commentary on the long discourse of the perfection of transcendent knowledge.

On one occasion, Trisong Détsen dispatched an emanated army of twelve million soldiers to obtain the Transcendent Buddha's relics from Lotus Stupa in India. He also constructed one hundred and eight temples [around Tibet]. This Buddhist king was the leader solely responsible for bringing the sun of the Victorious One's doctrine to this cold and snowy land. The boundless positive aspirations and enlightened activity of [the bodhisattva] Gentle Splendor [*Manjushri*], freely manifesting as this ruler of humanity, have been of inestimable kindness to the land of Tibet.

Many different accounts exist of the time of the king's passing away to other pure lands, but the king's extensive biography states that he passed away at the age of fifty-nine. In any case, he continued a series of rebirths in this world: the expression of his perfect fruition of the body of enlightenment was Nyong Ral Nyimé Özer [1136–1204]; the expression of his enlightened speech was Guru Chöwong [1212–1270] (these two are identified as the former and later treasure retrievers); the expression of his enlightened mind was Ngari Penchen Péma Wong-gyal [1487–1542]; the expressions of the qualities of his enlightenment were Né-sarma Do-ngak Lingpa Kyentsé Wongchuk [1524–1568] and the illustrious master Tashi Tobgyal [1550–1602]; and the expression of his enlightened activity was the Fifth Dalai Lama, Dorjé Tokmé [1617–1682]. These facts are well-known. It has also been said that his enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activity each produced seven emanations, and that the full extent of his emanations is infinite.

In brief, Guru Rinpoché declared that most individuals who retrieve the treasure texts are emanations of this ruler and his sons, or of the great translator Bérotsana. Thus, he epitomizes a life of spiritual liberation that exceeds the bounds of human understanding. (*History of the Sources of the Profound Treasures and the Treasure Revealers*, pp. 15a–17a)

### *Overview of the Supplication:*

King Trisong Détsen asked Guru Rinpoché for a prayer that would lead to the eventual attainment of enlightenment, here referred to as Great Seal

[*Mahamudra*]. Guru Rinpoché replied with a supplication that might remind the reader of the sort of guided tour to which a head of state is treated on a visit to a foreign country. Trisong Détsen is introduced to all the magnificent aspects of the realm of enlightenment in which Guru Rinpoché is king: the history of tantric teaching, the principal peaceful and wrathful buddhas, the buddhas who have appeared in human form, the three main bodhisattvas and their activities, and Guru Rinpoché himself in the context of this, his kingdom of enlightenment.

This tour begins with a short history lesson that describes the somewhat indelicate origins of tantra in the world. Kongtrul fills in some of the details of this story in another text:

According to *The Great Discourse of Enlightened Vision* and other scriptures of the Original Translations, in the past there lived a person named Rudra Evil Freedom, who persisted in an aberrant understanding of his spiritual master, of the view, and of conduct. He, his wife, and their followers took control of the entire world and oppressed beings with perverse behavior. Therefore all buddhas' compassion united in the form of a blood-drinking *héruka*, whose overt dance of great, fiery wrath liberated<sup>31</sup> the male Rudra and scattered pieces of his corpse over the Land of Jambu. The locations where these fell to the ground became palaces of Secret Mantra practice, such as the eight great charnel grounds, sacred places, sacred regions, etc., pure manifestations of naturally existent primordial sites. (*Sacred Ground*, pp. 171–172)

Although Buddha Shakyamuni's teaching of the Vajra Way of Secret Mantra is mentioned in this supplication, the event of Rudra's subjugation pre-dated the Buddha and was an essential precursor to the later teaching of tantra. While this story of Rudra originates in the Original Tantras of Guru Rinpoché's era in Tibet, the Later Tantras relate a story which describes a different set of characters, but similarly relates the Buddha's teaching of tantra to the subjugation of demons in the distant past.

Once the stage of tantra has been set by this tale, the supplication continues by introducing the buddha of ultimate enlightenment, Ever-Excellent, and the chief buddhas of enlightenment's five families. Each of the five buddhas reigns in a pure land of his own creation at one of the cardi-

nal points and each personifies one of the five wisdoms, latent within the five poisonous emotions. Each buddha is surrounded by an awakened assembly of bodhisattvas and other deities who express the perfect qualities of the form, speech, mind, talents, or acts of enlightened mind. These deities are not worldly gods but dimensions of awakening.

The wrathful deities, the next feature of Guru Rinpoché's kingdom, belong to a collection of meditation practices called the Eight Sacred Circles of Deities. The six mentioned in this supplication are five transcendent deities and one that is both worldly and transcendent, called Consummate King of the *Mamos*. (*Mamos* are powerful female spirits who can be beneficial, benign, or harmful toward Buddhist meditators.) Each of the wrathful deities stands within a celestial palace and crushes underfoot forces detrimental to the meditator. Later supplications of this series mention specifically that these fierce buddhas are none other than the peaceful buddhas in wrathful guise. Their appearance is not meant to express anger as much as the Buddha's determination to conquer all manner of obstacles to enlightenment. The name for deities of this class is *héruka*. This is a Sanskrit term, which has been translated into Tibetan as "blood-drinker," signifying that they gain strength from confronting and overcoming forces which prevent spiritual awakening, in the same way the Buddha defeated the forces of Mara immediately before his enlightenment.

Names have a way of proliferating in tantric Buddhism. In many of these verses we address the deity by one name at the beginning of the verse and by another at the end. For example, Vajra Dagger and Vajra Youth refer to the same deity. Most buddhas and bodhisattvas have such a range of names that it seems impossible for a translator and impractical for the reader to render them all in Sanskrit or Tibetan.

This section of the supplication includes a verse addressed to Infinite Life (*Amitayus*), the peaceful buddha who is invoked to overcome untimely death, and Vajra Sow (*Vajra-varahi*, also called Vajra Yogini in this verse), a lively female buddha representing unfettered awakened wisdom. She earned the unflattering name "sow" because her wisdom and activity are said to be direct, unambiguous, and unequivocal, like a pig that moves without looking to the right or left. Vajra Sow is often depicted with a sow's head emerging from the back of her own.

Among the buddhas mentioned in the supplication thus far, only Ever-Excellent is considered to represent the ultimate body of enlightenment; all

the rest express enlightenment's perfect rapture. The next two persons addressed in the prayer, Shakyamuni, the historical buddha, and Garab Dorjé, first human lineage holder of the teachings of Great Completion, are human beings, enlightenment manifest in the world.

The supplication next mentions three bodhisattvas: Gentle Melody (*Manjushri*), All-Seeing Eyes (*Avalokiteshvara*), and Vajra-in-Hand (*Vajrapani*), first described as personifying the energy of the body, speech, and mind of all buddhas for the good of the world, resident in their respective homes—Five-Peaked Mountain (U-Tai Shan) and Potala Mountain in China, and Alakavati in the heavens. The next three verses describe their activity in spreading the teachings of Secret Mantra to the realms of gods, *nagas* (the most plentiful species of the animal realm, often pictured as having a human torso and the lower body of a snake), and humans. A ruler of each realm is mentioned—Indra, King Jokpo, and King Ja—and that one hundred thousand individuals of each realm attained the state of an enlightened master, an awareness holder.

The supplication ends with an invocation of Guru Rinpoché, the Lotus-Born Master, both in his personal domain and as the epitome of all of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and deities.

### 3. THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO YESHÉ TSOGYAL

THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE BODHISATVA  
MELODIOUS ONE [SARASVATI], YESHÉ TSOGYAL  
BY JAMGON KONGTRUL

Many diverse accounts of Yeshé Tsogyal's birthplace, her parents' names, etc., have appeared, but according to *The Clear Declaration* she was born in a large village in Drak as the child of Namka Yeshé (her father) and Noobma Géwa Boom (her mother) of the Karchen clan. In her home area there are imprints of her footprints in stone and a small sacred lake, both dating from her childhood. She was originally a queen [of Trisong Détsen], but the king offered her to the Master as thanksgiving for an empowerment and she thus became the Master's consort. Many different versions of her first meeting with the Master have been recounted.

[During the empowerment of The Gathering of the Joyful Buddhas of

the Eight Sacred Circles,] her flower fell on Vajra Dagger's circle of deities. She achieved accomplishment in that meditation and saw the assembly of deities. Consequently, she vanquished a *zadré* [evil spirit who tormented] her family.<sup>42</sup> She accomplished the power of restoring the dead to life and was able to revive a dead person who had been killed by weapons.

At Tidro in Shotö the great Master from Oddiyana gave her instruction in *The Heart Essence of the Dakinis* and, at all the major places of accomplishment, she similarly received an infinite number of profound instructions. Her practice of them led her to a sublime state of accomplishment.

An evil government minister called Shata, who had obstructed Buddhism during Yeshé Tsogyal's youth, was reborn in the hell realms. To release him from the hells, she traveled there. Beside an iron house [of torment] she created the sacred circle of the peaceful and wrathful deities of [the meditation called] Emptying the Hell of Uninterrupted Torment. The hell's iron house broke into pieces; Shata led all suffering hell-beings away from the hells and that realm lay empty for a time.

Yeshé Tsogyal compiled the full extent of the teachings from the great Master's secret, inconceivable speech. She worked for the good of all in Tibet for two hundred years and then, without leaving her body, she journeyed to the pure land on this earth, Copper-Colored Mountain, where she dwells as the Guru's heart-consort. Her kindness to the people of Tibet is incomparable: she is their only mother, a wish-fulfilling jewel.

The time of her leaving [Tibet] and other details of her life have been recounted elsewhere in various ways. This account has been based on the best-known stories of her life.

This wisdom dakini was responsible for the concealment of most of the Guru's complete teachings that were hidden as treasures. She has thereby spiritually nurtured, foretold, empowered, and encouraged the major manifestations of treasure revealers. Her unlimited number of emanations includes the intimate companions of some [of the great treasure revealers]. Her recognized reincarnations—Jomo Menmo Péma Tsokyi [1248–1283], Kandroma Kunga Boom [15th century], and others—were outstanding women who revealed treasures and who passed away to the celestial realms without leaving their bodies. Yeshé Tsogyal was an inconceivably marvelous master. (*Ibid.*, pp. 21a-22a)



### *Overview of the Supplication:*

This supplication is one straight from the heart. Yeshé Tsogyal was Guru Rinpoché's most gifted Tibetan disciple, the main recorder of his instructions, and one of the greatest meditation masters Tibet ever produced. She was his principal intimate companion during his stay in Tibet and one of his main representatives after his departure. Her question that inspired the supplication could be phrased, "Once you've gone, what words can I say that will make you return?" The prayer is his reply.

The supplication which the king received was filled with tantric pomp and circumstance; this one given to Yeshé Tsogyal is an intimate invocation of Guru Rinpoché. It features a lengthy contemplation of his present surroundings and reaches an emotional crescendo in a impassioned plea for him to appear. Kongtrul directed those who were learning meditation under his supervision to accompany the last portion of the supplication with the sound of a hand-drum and bell, adding intensity to an already charged passage.

We imagine Guru Rinpoché sitting in his celestial palace, Lotus Light, situated at the summit of Copper-Colored Mountain on Tail-Fan Island, his destination after leaving Tibet. We first give our attention to the setting, a sacred place, its sacredness due to the story of Rudra and the origins of tantra mentioned in the last supplication. The palace is described in detail, followed by verses focused upon Guru Rinpoché and his entourage, and an invitation of heartfelt longing.

## 4. THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO NAMKÉ NYINGPO

BIOGRAPHY OF THE FULLY-ORDAINED MONK,  
NAMKÉ NYINGPO BY JAMGON KONGTRUL

Namké Nyingpo was a member of the Noob clan. His birthplace is located in lower Nyal, at the foot of Dakar in the Nyong [district of western Tibet].

He received monastic ordination from the preceptor Shantiraksheeta; specifically, he accepted full monastic ordination. When the great Master [Guru Rinpoché] gave him the empowerment [of The Gathering of the Joyful Buddhas of the Eight Sacred Circles], his flower fell on the heart deity, Yongdak Héruka. He achieved signs of accomplishment—he rode the sun's rays.

After the successful completion of his training as a translator, he journeyed to India, where he met the master Humkara and many other erudite and accomplished masters. He received numerous empowerments and pith instructions, then returned to Tibet. Due to Bön government ministers' divisive speech, he occasionally went to Karchu in Lhodrak. Once he stayed in a cave called Red Cliff near his home country. His younger brother, a layperson, came to see master [Namké Nyingpo], when he had no seeds with which to plant crops. Namké Nyingpo remarked, "If a person like you who lives in the world has no seeds, where is a person like me who stays in a hermitage supposed to get them? Anyway, you can plant these and continue farming, but you'll be ashamed to do so." He gave [his brother] a full sack of pebbles. The younger brother did as he was told and his harvest grew more abundantly than others in his region.

At another time, Namké Nyingpo left that area for the foot of Géri Mountain in lower Nyal by flying through the sky. On his way he dropped his prayer beads, which fell on the plain of Kar in lower Nyong. From the sky he miraculously extended his hand to retrieve them. Where his five fingers touched the ground, five flowers grew. There, the five classes of dakini and the goddesses of the four elements built five stupas; they still stand today.

When Namké Nyingpo lived in the Red Wolf Cave at Gyé Mountain, many young people from Pédri [a village?] on the slopes of Gyé Mountain came to sightsee in the mountains, carrying many kinds of food. They met the monk and asked him to make a vajra feast offering with the food. As they were leaving, he gave each of them a few red stones and told them, "This is a blessing." Most threw the stones away. One man placed a stone in his arrow holder; after his return, he tried to draw an arrow from the holder and discovered that it was full of turquoise. He realized that the stones the master had given were [a material form of] his accomplishment. When he told the others, they regretted throwing away the stones and went to request blessed objects. When they peered inside the cave, they saw a red wolf in the place of the master. Thus the cave became known as Red Wolf Cave. It is said that the [pieces of] turquoise became known with names such as the six red skulls, the eight white *tsépo*,<sup>43</sup> and the four star-eyes.

Another story recounts that a girl offered the master a container of yogurt every morning. Once the master returned the container filled with

stones. The girl knew that these were blessed objects, so she carried them home. After a few days she checked them—the stones had all turned into turquoise.

Namké Nyingpo practiced meditation in the Glorious Long Cave at Karchu in Lhodrak and other places. He saw many deities and achieved the state of an awareness holder of Great Seal. He passed away to the celestial realms without leaving his body.

Many emanations of Namké Nyingpo have appeared as revealers of all kinds of treasures. These reincarnations include Jong-choub Lingpa Palgyi Gyaltsen and the later awareness holder Tséwong Norbu [1698–1755]. In the long biography of Shel-kar Dorjé Tso, [Namké Nyingpo's?] secret consort who accomplished [rebirth in] the celestial realms, it states clearly that [one of] Namké Nyingpo's emanations was Norbu Gyatso, the spiritual master of Péma Lingpa [1450–1521]. (*Ibid.*, pp. 19a–20b)

### *Overview of the Supplication:*

To speak of a monk as a rebel and a risk-taker might seem to be a contradiction in terms, but Namké Nyingpo was no less daring than the other members of this group. He accepted monk's vows at a time when such a career was unusual in Tibet, then he learned foreign languages and journeyed to India in search of Buddhist teaching. If he had lived one hundred years later, Namké Nyingpo would have fit well into Tibetan society. As it was, he lived the life of a pioneer. He is remembered in painting flying through space; whether one can accept this literally or not, the success of the enormous gamble of his life and times—Buddhism's search for a foothold in the Himalayas—must have left him with soaring exhilaration.

Namké Nyingpo asked Guru Rinpoché for a prayer of supplication to the masters of the lineages of meditation practice. Did he ask this because in becoming a monk-follower of a foreign religion he had cut himself off from the conventional Tibetan society of his day? Did he identify more with the community of masters than with his homeland? It is easy to speculate that this was the case, for Buddhism in Tibet had yet to become *Tibetan Buddhism*.

The continuity of lineage remains a crucial element in tantric Buddhism. Each meditation must find its source in the Buddha's teachings, in a fully realized master's vision, or in treasure texts retrieved after years or cen-

turies of concealment. These sources validate the instructions; the line of masters through which they have been passed to the present day ensures their vitality. Tantra is meant to be alive, fresh, up-to-date, not arcane long-forgotten wisdom of ages past discovered in a dusty tome from an obscure library. In modern terms, Namké Nyingpo was networking, asking for the names of the men and women who made up the enlightened community in his day, and how each had contributed to the meditation techniques available to him. For him, the supplication must have been enthralling. To a reader for whom the meditations listed are as foreign as the names, this prayer can be stunningly tedious, saved only by the last four verses, Guru Rinpoché's answer to Namké Nyingpo's request for meditation instruction. These lines have remained very significant meditation teachings over the centuries and have often been repeated by masters to their students as crucial guidance given for the discovery of the nature of the mind.<sup>44</sup>

The three main styles of lineages mentioned in the supplication are the victors' wisdom lineage, the mind-to-mind transmission of teachings passed among buddhas; the lineage of awareness, transmission by means of symbols among awareness holders; and the aural lineage, transmission by means of words among human masters.

As we become more familiar with and appreciative of the lineages, we begin to recognize and treasure these names as Namké Nyingpo did before us. Among the sea of names in this supplication, the most significant are Garab Dorjé and Shri Singha of the Great Completion lineage; and the eight awareness holders, Guru Rinpoché's teachers:

Vimalamitra  
Nagarjuna  
Manjushri Mitra  
Hungchen Kara  
Dana Sanskrit  
Rombu Guhya Chandra  
Shintam Garbha  
Prahba Hasti (not mentioned in this prayer).

Each provided the source of a meditation among the Eight Sacred Circles of Deities. These eight wrathful deities are mentioned in this supplication, again under a variety of names. The most common names (and common alternatives) of the eight are:

Yamantaka (Slayer of the Lord of Death)  
 Horse-Neck (Lotus Héruka)  
 Yongdak Héruka (Vajra Héruka)  
 Great Sublime Héruka  
 Vajra Dagger (Vajra Youth)  
 Consummate King of the *Mamos*  
 Worldly Praise and Offering (Arrogance Tamer)  
 Wrathful Mantra (Black Forceful One).

Of the other names listed as lineage masters in this supplication, four are forms of Guru Rinpoché:

Lion of the Shakyas (Shakya Sengé)  
 Vajra Sagging Belly (Dorjé Drolö)  
 Lotus-Born (Padmakara)  
 Fierce Vajra (Dorjé Drakpo).

## 5. THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO DORJÉ DOODJOM

THE BIOGRAPHY OF NANAM DORJÉ DOODJOM  
 BY JAMGON KONGTRUL

Nanam Dorjé Doodjom was born in the Rong area of Tsang [western Tibet], in the Nanam family of Zhang government ministers. As a young man, he served as a Buddhist government minister [in the court of] the Buddhist king, Trisong Détsen. Later, after entering mantra practice with the great Master, he became a great adept of the mantra path. He achieved accomplishment in meditation on Vajra Dagger. The impression he made with a dagger in rocks can still be seen at the upper cliff of Hépori Mountain. During Samyé Monastery's consecration by the preceptor, the Master, and the Buddhist king, Dorjé Doodjom witnessed the event from afar by his clairvoyance and pressed the dagger he wore at his throat into the rock. Through control of his circulating energy and mind, he passed unobstructedly through the tiny crevice and arrived directly at Samyé. That crevice in the rock can still be seen today.

He performed innumerable amazing feats, such as circling the four continents in an instant while miraculously flying unhindered through space.

His meditation place was known as Red Cliff Treasury, located between

Rong Chen in Tsang and Yar-drok. It has become well-known as the Rong Red Cliff Treasury.

His main emanations have been a series of lives as awareness holders including the awareness holder of the Northern Treasures, Rikzin Gödem Chen [1337–1409]; Jamyong Lama; and the awareness holder, noble Lekden [b. 1512]. Furthermore, it is evident that he has appeared until the present day as hidden or known treasure revealers, such as Balpo A-Houng. (*Ibid.*, pp. 24b-25a)

### *Overview of the Supplication:*

Dorjé Doodjom was the yogi of this group of five disciples. He addresses his request for a supplication in verse, unlike the others. He asked Guru Rinpoché for his life story, which Guru Rinpoché calls my “life of freedom,” a term used to describe the life of a great master or for the recorded story of that life. Most of the events mentioned in the supplication are described in Kongtrul's biography of Guru Rinpoché included above. In fact, it is tempting to speculate that Kongtrul used this prayer as the model for his writing on the subject.

## 6. THE SUPPLICATION GIVEN TO MUTRI TSÉPO

THE SONS OF KING TRISONG DÉTSEN  
 BY JAMGON KONGTRUL

The following account of the sons of King Trisong Détsen is the best known among the many versions available.

It is certain that the king had three sons: the eldest son was [known by two names]—Mutri Tsépo and Muné Tsenpo; the middle son was called Murum Tsépo or Son of Heaven Damdzin Rolpa Yeshé Tsal; and the youngest was called Mutik Tsépo or Séna Lek-jing. All three became heart-sons of the great Master.

It has been said that reincarnations of Muné Tsenpo include Rinchen Puntsok [1509–1557], king of the spiritual instructions of the Drigung Kagyu Lineage; and, later, Yong-gé Mingyur Dorjé [b. 1628 or 1641]. [The second son,] Murum Tsépo, known as “Son of Heaven translator,” is said to have been both erudite and accomplished and to have dissolved into light

at the end of his life. In any case, his many reincarnations include the awareness holder Sang-gyé Lingpa [1340-1396]; Lhatsun Ngonpo [11th or 12th century]; Zhikpo Lingpa, Ösel Gyuma [?1403-?1479]; and Chok-gyur Déchen Lingpa [1829-1870]. Reincarnations of [the third son,] Mutik Tsépo, include Guru Jo-tsé.

Mutik Tsépo had five sons; of these, Ralpachen assumed the responsibility for the rule of the Buddhist kingdom. [During his reign,] he supervised a revision [of the translations] of the Excellent Speech of the Buddha using modern language. Furthermore, he promoted a great development of Buddhism [in Tibet] through such acts as constructing temples made of stone. This king, known as Gyalsé Lhajé or Ngak-chang Chok-drup Gyalpo [the king who bears mantras and is supremely accomplished], was proclaimed by the great Master from Oddiyana to be a reincarnation of the king of Zahor, Arsadhara. He became the Master's inner heart-son and was entrusted with the collection of an ocean of teachings. Some also claim that he was a reincarnation of King Trisong Détsen, who took rebirth immediately after his death.

It is said that when Ralpachen passed away, his body shrunk in size. Due to the outstanding compassion of the great Master, he took rebirth in a series of twelve reincarnations, who were all revealers of concealed treasures. [These included] the first among all treasure revealers, Sang-gyé Lama [1000-1080]; Gya Lotsawa, Dorjé Zongpo; Nyima Seng-gé from Mong-youl; and those [masters in a series] from Orgyen Lingpa [b. 1323] to Chöjé Lingpa [1682-1725]. The thirteenth is said [by some] to be Garwong Chimé Dorjé, or is also said to be the awareness holder, Jikmé Lingpa [1729 or 1730-1798]. However, according to the clear declaration in vajra texts, [this thirteenth incarnation] is undoubtedly the crowning jewel of all erudite and accomplished masters of the Himalayas, the sovereign of the seven transmissions, the precious lord spiritual master, Péma Ösel Dongak Lingpa [Jamyong Kyentsé Wongpo, 1820-1892]. (*Ibid.*, pp. 17a-18a)

### *Overview of the Supplication:*

Mutri Tsépo was probably a very young man when he asked for this supplication from Guru Rinpoché: it is the shortest, simplest, and most straightforward of the series. In it, the body, speech, mind, talents, and acts of Guru Rinpoché are praised in turn.

Mutri Tsépo was the crown prince; he asked Guru Rinpoché for advice on how he could help his people. As a Buddhist teacher, how could Guru Rinpoché answer? Buddha Shakyamuni, Guru Rinpoché, and Yeshé Tso-gyal had all given up positions of power as royalty; Dorjé Doodjom had resigned from his career as a government minister; and Namké Nyingpo had turned his back on life within the confines of what was then non-Buddhist Tibet. Guru Rinpoché tried to steer King Trisong Détsen and Prince Mutri Tsépo toward Buddhist pacifism and detachment. For him the key to the Tibetan people's happiness was not to be found in the exercise of power, no matter how wise or compassionate. No proximity to the blessings of the Buddha can ensure the continuation of a kingdom, a state, or a people. Even Buddha Shakyamuni lived to witness the extinguishing of the kingdom whose throne he had abdicated—the land of the Shakyas was overrun; his family and people, many of whom had become his followers, were slaughtered.<sup>45</sup> Guru Rinpoché advised Mutri Tsépo to tell his subjects to give their heart's allegiance to the Buddha. And to pray. Not for the material or political advancement of their country, but for spiritual liberation. The supplication's concluding lines, "Toward Tibet's ruler and all its people Send your blessing continually in the three times! Free us from the wheel of life's sea of suffering!", provide what seems to be the only honest answer a Buddhist teacher can give to questions of political power—that kings, queens, or politicians cannot lead a people to ultimate freedom and happiness.

## 7. THE SUPPLICATION FOR THE SPONTANEOUS FULFILLMENT OF WISHES

### *Overview of the Supplication*

What a difference a few years made! In asking for the last supplication, Mutri Tsépo innocently asked how he could help his people. Now he pleads for help for himself, and wishes he had died before having the throne's responsibilities thrust upon him by his father's death. Mutri Tsépo does not seem equal to the demands of the day, but Guru Rinpoché leaves him nonetheless, with promises of continued vigilance toward the affairs of Tibet and those of Mutri Tsépo and his family in particular. Both were doomed: dates of Mutri Tsépo's death are conflicting, but none credits him with ruling much longer after Guru Rinpoché's departure. What we read

here are some of the last words from an obviously well-meaning ruler swamped by the tumultuous currents of his time. After his mother cut his life short, his youngest brother assumed the throne, followed in turn by that brother's third son, Ralpachen. Ralpachen's rule represented early Tibetan Buddhism's golden years, during which Buddhism became more integrated with indigenous Tibetan culture. Even the translations of Indian Buddhist Mahayana texts made just a few years previously (during Trisong Détsen's time) were re-edited, using words and terms more accessible to the common people. King Ralpachen was succeeded by his older brother, Long Darma (*glang dar ma*), the second son of the family, whose tempestuous nature had first disqualified him from the monarchy.

This family continued to rule Tibet for only a few more years as its authority and standing never recovered from Long Darma's rule. He waged a campaign that almost eradicated Buddhism in Tibet. After his assassination (by a Buddhist monk), only three fully-ordained monks could be found in eastern Tibet, whereas five are needed for full monastic ordination to be given. Two Chinese monks joined their group, ensuring the continuity of the original transmission of the monk's vows in Tibet. (This line continues to the present day within the Nyingma and Géluk monastic systems.) No account exists of the extent of the destruction visited on Buddhism during Long Darma's rule, but this well-known story of there being just three monks left in Tibet gives a chilling indication of the depth and extent of the repression.

The anguish of Mutri Tsépo, his dark foreboding, and the gloomy predictions of Guru Rinpoché could be read by modern readers as foretelling the disaster of the Cultural Revolution; however, it would seem more likely that Mutri Tsépo and Guru Rinpoché foresaw the entirely made-in-Tibet tragedy soon to befall the country.

Tulku Zongpo Drakpa, retriever of these texts, arrived on the scene too late to save Mutri Tsépo's family's rule.

## 8. THE SUPPLICATION TO DISPEL OBSTACLES ON THE PATH

### *Overview of the Supplication*

*The Supplication to Dispel Obstacles on the Path* recounts events in Guru Rinpoché's life; its verses of non-uniform length are separated by a refrain

sometimes longer than the verses themselves. The supplication invokes Guru Rinpoché's blessing and asks for his help in removing impediments to spiritual practice. These obstructive forces are called "outer, inner, and secret" obstacles or hindrances. In the tantric schema, "outer" refers to any force or phenomena external to the person; "inner" refers to body and health; "secret," to inner life—feelings, emotions, thoughts, etc. As Guru Rinpoché explains in the introduction to the supplication, once impediments on these levels have been removed, spiritual life can blossom.

The most common mantra associated with Guru Rinpoché follows each repetition of the refrain. I have transliterated it here in the manner most Tibetans have pronounced it since Guru Rinpoché's time—incorrectly. *Houng* should be *Hum*; *Benza* should be *Vajra*; and *Péma* should be *Padma*. But I am no purist and feel comfortable mispronouncing mantras after the fashion of millions of Tibetans, including my teachers. Pronouncing this or any other mantra correctly is not wrong, of course, just very rare within the Tibetan-speaking Buddhist community. The "v" sound does not exist in spoken or written Tibetan, so is impossible to represent in writing and difficult for native speakers to pronounce. Other words, such as *Hum* and *Padma*, are transliterated in Tibetan according to their Sanskrit form, but habitually read by Tibetans according to Tibetan rules. In the same way, the accepted pronunciation of the names of such American cities as Detroit and Des Moines follows the rules of American English. To insist that they be pronounced otherwise, correct as one might be in theory, seems pointless.

Some persons not among the first group of disciples around Guru Rinpoché were present for the bestowal of this prayer. Of these new names, only the second son of Trisong Détsen, Murub Tsenpo, here called by his Buddhist name, Yeshé Rolpa Tsal (Adept of the Play of Wisdom), makes a significant contribution to the event. Within the text of the supplication, certain names, such as Heir to the Victors' Lineage, correspond to forms of Guru Rinpoché that appear in the meditation of *Dispelling Obstacles on the Path*, of which this supplication forms the outer practice of supplication and familiarization.

## Appendix 2:

### *Buddhism and Poetry*

ALTHOUGH BUDDHISM can sometimes seem downright morose on the subject of life's myriad sufferings, it has brought to its many host cultures a wealth of aesthetic pleasure. Perhaps Asians came to love Buddhism for the color it brought to their everyday lives, in art, sculpture, music, dance, architecture, clothing, fabrics, legends, and poetry. Despite its reputation, and often its self-image, as a sober and austere spiritual path, Buddhism offers a feast for the senses.

Many aesthetic pleasures of Buddhism are available to new Buddhists worldwide, except for one that has been central to the Buddhist experience, that of poetry and song. Many of Buddhism's source texts, the discourses and tantras, were written down in poetry, the preferred vehicle for the Buddhist transmission of its teachings and its experience. For over two thousand years, Buddhists have sung their spiritual heritage. Not droned, like solemn Christian monks, but sung in verse with a regular meter. These verses are not hymns, in the sense of supplementary, semipopular devotional songs. They constitute Buddhism's central source texts, its many Bibles, recorded to facilitate their memorization and repetition in full-hearted melody. Of the many aesthetic pleasures available to practicing Buddhists in Asia, poetry usually numbers among the most profound and personal practices the faithful perform each day, to renew their orientation upon and commitment to the spiritual path. This experience remains unavailable to those who do not speak or understand a Buddhist language.<sup>46</sup>

*Supplications to Guru Rinpoché in Seven Chapters* were concealed soon after their composition and not retrieved from their hiding place for six hundred years. Since their reappearance during the fourteenth century, they have become perennial favorites among Tibetan-speaking Buddhists

throughout the Himalayan region. Their lasting popularity is partly due to the obvious poetic genius of their composer; in the original Tibetan version, these prayers soar beyond mere liturgy into the realm of poetry and song. The person who reads or sings these prayers is effortlessly transported to the spiritual world of the composer.

Can we believe that simple lines on a page can transport or transform us? Many of us have had that experience on a mundane level. We hear by chance a few bars of a once-loved song that we haven't heard for many years. The whole song, along with memories connected to it, floods into our mind, temporarily suspending the flow of our thoughts. Simple songs contain so much power for us; verses of poetry set to music can move us profoundly. So it is for a Tibetan-speaking person who knows and loves these prayers.

The supplications translated in this book are first and foremost poetry. Each line in their original Tibetan text uniformly contains but nine syllables. Moreover, the first three pairs of syllables and the remaining trio of syllables are joined in meaning. This style of composition might be illustrated by a verse in English, translated from the *Panchatantra* (mentioned in more detail below).

As shade and sunlight interbreed  
So twined are doer and his deed.

In this case, the lines are eight syllables long; the first two syllables, the next three, and the last three are joined in meaning. As in:

As shade / and sunlight / interbreed  
So twined / are doer / and his deed.

Almost without exception, the verses of supplications in this collection (in their original Tibetan version) follow a similar set pattern: 1-2 / 3-4 / 5-6 / 7-8-9. This regularity lends itself to memorization and to song. This format is by no means unique: any Buddhist library in a Buddhist language is brimming with such poems that require only a tune and devotion to lend strong wings to a practitioner's faith. For example, someone in a gathering of Tibetans waiting for a religious event to begin might sing aloud the first line from *Twenty-One Praises to Tara* with the confidence that each man and woman present would know and join in that long prayer. Every monk

or nun beyond childhood knows by heart the last pages of *The Flower Ornament Scripture*. Many such passages from the Buddha's discourses are indelibly inscribed on our brains in both words and meaning, thanks to their form as poetry, not prose.

Consider the most simple, fundamental Buddhist adage, generally translated as

Do no harmful deed;  
Act with perfect virtue;  
Thoroughly discipline your own **mind**:  
This is the Buddha's Teaching.

We can immediately understand the point and retain the meaning of these lines, but not the words. There seems little point, as the message appears to be the meaning alone. This is not the experience of a person who can understand Tibetan. Both the words and their meaning become lodged firmly in our minds. Can we play with the four lines in English, remain close to the meaning, and produce a similar effect?

These words the Buddha's Teachings span:  
Leave acts that harm behind,  
Make every perfect virtue yours,  
And master your own mind.

This is not Poetry as we conceive of it these days; it is more a Dharma ditty. Yet the popularity of Asian Buddhism has depended upon the immediate accessibility of its words, in poetry and song, to common people. Most Indians, Tibetans, Mongolians, Chinese, Koreans, or Japanese, for whom Buddhism was taught and preserved, were not the equivalent of our modern Ph.D. students. What sometimes appears in Western languages as Buddhism is colored by its sources—masters or doctoral theses—or the output expected of those vying for the academic iron rice-bowl of professorial tenure. In itself, however, Buddhist language is usually direct, accessible, and straightforward. And enjoyable: like Buddhist art and sculpture, it provides immediate and lasting aesthetic pleasure while opening the horizons of awakening.

Buddhism's Asian format is also very useful, or as we say in Buddhist terms, skillful. Indian and Tibetan masters used the words in verses of

tantras or discourses as a “root” text, to be memorized. This bite-sized mnemonic device becomes the terrain for commentaries that elucidate multiple levels of meaning. A student retains the original verses verbatim, while the understanding gained by means of a master’s commentary gives the verses new meaning. I offer the following whimsical example, with apologies in advance to masters of the past, present, and future. If the following verse were culled from a tantra,

Row, row, row your boat  
Gently down the stream.  
Merrily, merrily, merrily,  
Life is but a dream.

it could be commented upon as follows:

The first *row* refers to the tantric meditation practice called the phase of creation; the second *row*, to the phase of completion; and the third *row*, to Great Seal or Great Completion.

*Boat* refers to our fundamental enlightened nature, buddha-nature, the basis of tantra.

*Down the stream* refers to tantra’s path, which corresponds to our nature, thus the word *gently*.

The first *merrily* refers to the path of the phase of creation, non-dual appearance-emptiness; the second *merrily*, to the path of the phase of completion, non-dual bliss-emptiness; and the third *merrily*, to path of Great Seal and Great Completion, non-dual timeless awareness-emptiness.

*Life is but a dream* refers to tantra’s result, enlightenment in the world, non-dual compassion-emptiness that enters existence, as we would a lucid dream, for others’ benefit.

Although this is a fanciful composition, commentaries to the tantras use this format, sometimes with results as unpredictable as in the above example. A master uses easily memorized verses to reveal any number of meanings, overt, implied, or concealed. Once a student had absorbed a commentary, the initial abbreviated teaching in verse could be summoned from memory and would contain new, important meaning.

## POETRY IN TRANSLATION

I trust that, thanks to the diaspora of tantric masters from the Himalayas, many non-Tibetan-speaking Buddhists have learned, experienced, and realized the message of the tantras. Yet many have done so without retaining the adamantine verses composed by buddhas and bodhisattvas and known as discourses and tantras. Some persons have held their noses and ingested lines of perfectly accurate but remarkably unappetizing text in English. “Reading some Buddhist books in English is like drinking sand!,” mourns one elderly Tibetan reincarnate master, who is an avid reader of Buddhism in both Tibetan and English.

The quandary in which most Anglophone readers of Buddhism find themselves can be illustrated by the multiple translations of an indispensable manual of Indian Buddhism, Shantideva’s *Bodhicharyavatara*. Two translations of this text appeared in 1997, one entitled *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, the second *The Way of the Bodhisattva*. Both were done by very competent, experienced translators who had a wealth of examples to draw upon—their books represent the sixth and seventh versions of this text to appear in English. Here are some excerpts to compare the results; please note that the original text in Sanskrit and its translation into Tibetan were composed in metered verse. The first passage is one that many Buddhists who renew their bodhisattva vows know by heart:

From *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life* (Chapter 3):

20. Like the great elements such as earth and space, may I always serve as the basis of the various requisites of life for innumerable sentient beings.
21. So may I be in various ways a source of life for the sentient beings present throughout space until they are all liberated.
22. Just as the Sugatas of old adopted the Spirit of Awakening, and just as they properly conformed to the practice of the Bodhisattvas,
23. So I myself shall generate the Spirit of Awakening for the sake of the world; and so I myself shall properly engage in those practices.



24. Having joyfully adopted the Spirit of Awakening, in order to apply and increase it, an intelligent person should exalt this mind like this.
25. Now my life is fruitful. Human existence is well obtained. Today I have been born into the family of the Buddhas. Now I am a Child of the Buddha.
26. Now, by every means, I shall behave in accordance with this family, and it should not be as if I have contaminated this flawless noble heritage. (pp. 35–36)

The same verses from *The Way of the Bodhisattva*:

20. Like the earth and the pervading elements,  
Enduring as the sky itself endures,  
For boundless multitudes of living beings,  
May I be their ground and sustenance.
21. Thus for every thing that lives,  
As far as are the limits of the sky,  
May I provide their livelihood and nourishment  
Until they pass beyond the bonds of suffering.
22. Just as all buddhas of the past  
Embraced the awakened attitude of mind,  
And in the precepts of the bodhisattvas  
Step by step abode and trained,
23. Just so, and for the benefit of beings,  
I will also have this attitude of mind,  
And in those precepts, step by step,  
I will abide and train myself.
24. That this most pure and spotless state of mind  
Might be embraced and constantly increase,  
The prudent who have cultivated it  
Should praise it highly in words such as these:

25. "Today my life has given fruit.  
This human state has now been well assumed.  
Today I take my birth in Buddha's line,  
And have become the buddhas' child and heir.
26. In every way, then, I will undertake  
Activities befitting such a rank.  
And I will do no act to mar  
Or compromise this high and faultless lineage." (pp. 51–52)

The entire text is a lode of such instruction on the mind of awakening. I will cite only two other short sets of verses, from Chapter 8, universally known among Tibetans:

129. All the joy in the world comes from the desire for others' happiness, and all the suffering in the world comes from the desire for one's own happiness.
130. Enough of much talk! Note the difference between the fool who seeks his own benefit and the sage who works for the benefit of others.
131. One who does not exchange his own happiness for the suffering of others surely does not achieve Buddhahood. How could one find happiness even in the cycle of existence?
134. If all the harm, fear, and sufferings in the world occur due to grasping onto the self, what use is that great demon to me?
135. Without forsaking one's own self, one cannot avoid suffering, just as without avoiding fire one cannot avoid being burned.
136. Therefore, in order to alleviate my own suffering and to alleviate the suffering of others, I give myself up to others and I accept others as my own self. (p. 106)

The second version:

129. All the joy the world contains  
Has come through wishing happiness for others.  
All the misery the world contains  
Has come through wanting pleasure for oneself.
130. Is there need for lengthy explanation?  
Childish beings look out for themselves,  
While Buddhas labor for the good of others:  
See the difference that divides them!
131. I do not give away  
My happiness for others' pain,  
Enlightenment will never be attained,  
And even in samsara, joy will fly from me.
134. All the harm with which this world is rife  
All fear and suffering that there is,  
Clinging to the "I" has caused it!  
What am I to do with this great demon?
135. If this "I" is not relinquished wholly,  
Sorrow likewise cannot be avoided.  
For if he does not keep away from fire,  
A man cannot escape from being burned.
136. To free myself from harm  
And others from their sufferings,  
Let me give myself away,  
And cherish others as I love myself. (pp. 128–129)

As vital as this seventh century text remains, as accurate as these translations are, I can commend neither version as a candidate for memorization. We can absorb the ideas, which provide us with a lifetime's food for contemplation, but I cannot help but feel frustration at our inability after seven published versions of this text to share with our sisters and brothers the

pleasure we derive from the poetry of the original. Particularly in the second version above, where the lines are formed as Shantideva composed them, I have the feeling, "So near, yet not close enough."

The challenging question of how to adequately render in translation both the message and the atmosphere of a poem is not confined to the world of Buddhist translators. Consider this short poem by Rilke, which rhymes at the end of every verse in its original German.

### *Buddha in Glory*

Center of all centers; core of cores  
almond self-enclosed and growing sweet—  
all this universe, to the furthest stars  
and beyond them, is your flesh, your fruit.

Now you feel how nothing clings to you;  
your vast shell reaches into endless space  
and there the rich, thick fluids rise and flow.  
Illuminated in your infinite peace,

A billion stars go sprinting through the night,  
blazing high above your head.  
But in you is the presence that  
will be, when all the stars are dead.

(Stephen Mitchell, translator and editor.  
*The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, p. 69)

The translator has done an admirable job that takes a step beyond the examples cited above (including my own translations). Nevertheless, translators of Buddhist texts cannot measure themselves against such talented, modern, secular colleagues; we must remember the examples of truly great Buddhist translator-poets of the past, whose work has provided endless pleasure to scholars and lay Buddhists alike. Some Western translators have not shrunk from the stringent demands of reproducing the full music as well as the meaning of Asian poetry. A laudable example is Arthur W. Ryder (1877–1938), who translated the following verses. They represent a tiny sampling from his outstanding 400-page translation of the *Panchatantra*, a Sanskrit text dated 200 B.C., much of which is in verse:

The body, born, is near its doom;  
 And riches are the source of gloom;  
 All meetings end in parting: yes,  
 The world is all one brittleness. (p. 225)

and,

The lord of seven continents,  
 Beset by crawling greed,  
 Is but a beggar; he who lives  
 Content, is rich indeed.

No treasure equals charity;  
 Content is perfect wealth;  
 No gem compares with character;  
 No wish fulfilled, with health. (p. 205)

The *Panchatantra* is neither a tantra in the way we Buddhists understand that word, nor is it a Buddhist text. It is a treatise on the art of living a good human life, albeit a resolutely secular one. At one point the author tells the story of an infatuated weaver, whose passionate contemplation of his lover pokes fun at both Hindu and Buddhist beliefs:

In the middle air I see my love,  
 On earth below, in heaven above;  
 In life's last hour, on her I call:  
 She is, like Vishnu, all-in-all.

All mental states, the Buddha said,  
 Are transient; he was wrong:  
 My meditations on my love  
 Are infinitely long. (p. 74)

This book provides another example of the richness of Indian culture; the book is thought to have originated in Kashmir two centuries before the Christian Era. Every Buddhist master who arrived in Tibet, including Guru Rinpoché, had probably enjoyed these tales as children or as adolescents.<sup>47</sup>

Ryder's translation may not qualify as High Poetry but it certainly doesn't reek of 2,000 year-old Sanskrit. His verses sound as if they were first composed in English, not a foreign language, and he makes writing them seem to be the most natural thing in the world. But for most translators like myself, such feats are clearly the stuff of aspirations for a future life. Mr. Ryder completed his translation of the *Panchatantra* in 1925. Compare a passage from his work with a translation of the same passage published as part of the Penguin Classics series in 1991 (Chandra Pajan, translator):

The 1991 version:

What is not predestined,  
 Do what you will,  
 Can never happen:  
 What is not predestined,  
 Will even come into your hand  
 And yet slip away:  
 But what destiny has planned  
 Will surely come to pass  
 Without your help:  
 For destiny and action  
 Go hand in hand,  
 The one is as much a part of the other,  
 As light and shade.

As a calf will find out its mother  
 Amongst a thousand cows,  
 So destiny selects its performers  
 From among the masses. (p. 113)

Here is the same passage in Mr. Ryder's version:

What shall not be, will never be;  
 What shall be, follows painlessly;  
 The thing your fingers grasp will flit,  
 If fate has predetermined it.

As shade and sunlight interbreed  
So twined are doer and his deed.

A calf can find its mother cow  
Among a thousand kine:  
So good or evil done, returns  
And whispers: "I am thine." (p. 206)

These two versions obviously agree as to the content of the verses; yet the former version transmits the message without grace or wit, whereas Mr. Ryder's lines are probably faithful to both the word and the spirit of the original. We can glimpse in his work the aesthetic pleasure denied us by translations that are accurate, yet unmemorable. Which rings in your mind?

If you have a mind to go to Hell,  
act as a family priest  
for just one year:  
Or better still become the Master  
of a monastery  
for three days only. (Penguin Classics, p. 212)

Or,

A certain course for hell to steer,  
Become a chaplain for a year;  
Or try more expeditious ways—  
Become an abbot for three days! (Ryder, p. 183)

I include these excerpts here because many modern translators seem to have concluded that rendering Tibetan verses in readable English poetry is an impossible task. I submit Mr. Ryder's work as proof that what we face is our own sad lack of talent, not intrinsically insurmountable obstacles. I am in awe of Mr. Ryder's remarkable reconciliation of what are often thought to be mutually exclusive qualities—precision in translation and the charm of English-language poetry. It is my hope that someone, someday, will do similar justice to the power and beauty of Guru Rinpoché's poetry, and that in the meantime, by simply drawing attention to these

prayers, this work will serve as a small step in that direction.

It is possible that Buddhist translation into Western languages will be a two-staged work. If we take the translation of the *Bodhicharyavatara* as an example, we might conclude that after seven versions in English, the text has been accurately translated and that now is the time for flat-footed translators to step aside, to let nimble poets do their part. If we do not give the Muses a chance to breathe life into Buddhist texts in English, we risk confining our faith to a linguistic zone of academic solemnity, antithetical to the Buddhist spirit and tradition. And we will impede our ability to memorize texts, an effort facilitated by meter and, in our language, rhyme.<sup>48</sup>

American Buddhist lore has it that Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoché's first declaration upon setting foot in the New World was the question, "Where are the poets?" I have always imagined that his interest in poetry was not a personal eccentricity, but reflected the fitting concern of a Buddhist master dedicated to implanting his faith in a new culture. Perhaps he searched for poets but found Poets, in the same way as one might search for those who could preserve Tibetan sacred art but find only Artists, when competent craftpersons or artisans would do. Judging by the state of most modern Buddhist translations, the question, reworded, remains, "Where are the wordsmiths?"

## Appendix 3:

### *A Lotus-Born Master before Guru Rinpoché*

IF THIS WORLD and this age provide a suitable environment in which bodhisattvas can appear to demonstrate enlightenment, they are called an epoch of illumination. Otherwise, they are designated an age of darkness. In this there seems to be no middle ground: it is one or the other. Since the time of Buddha Shakyamuni, those who cultivate his inner path to enlightenment have celebrated this world and time as one in which the illumination of awakening can fully flower. Buddhists take an exuberant delight in the world and in their human birth because the enlightenment of buddhas and bodhisattvas has had a lasting impact, that of opening for us the dimension of enlightenment, a scope far beyond what we conceive of as common human goodness.

One of the Buddhist texts that best expresses this exalted, extravagant vision of our world and our enlightened nature is *The Flower Ornament Scripture*. Its pages invite us to witness the splendor and the unfathomable scope of illumination gained by men and women throughout ages past. Yet the book can also be read as a spiritual challenge: what room does our worldview allow us to experience the enlightenment that manifests in this world? Can we conceive of the men and women, children, adolescents, or adults, animals or spirits who traverse this world as bodhisattvas? This book also presents us with a literary challenge: the text is written in a deliberately repetitive form, so much so that some of the book's message seems to be conveyed in its non-linear style. Can we cut ourselves free from the need to cull information or to be entertained? Can we allow ourselves to become absorbed within another worldview?

*The Flower Ornament Scripture* is beloved in Tibet and China, where it appeared in translation and became one of the cornerstone source-texts of

the Great Way (*Mahayana*), and it was undoubtedly adored in its country of origin, India. Guru Rinpoché had surely read this text and it was among the works translated in Tibet under his supervision. (Its translation into Chinese began in the second century A.D.)

If we judge Guru Rinpoché's life only from the perspective of what we consider sober and sophisticated views, it might be wise for us to step into what was the Buddhist worldview long before he appeared, the universe of *The Flower Ornament Scripture*. There we make at least one major discovery: Guru Rinpoché's lotus-birth in this world resembles that of another enlightened being before him, a woman.

I have included below the passage that describes her to provide a bridge from a traditional Buddhist text to the life of Guru Rinpoché. This classic Buddhist story is written in a style very different from our get-to-the-point-I-don't-have-all-day modern media. Its inclusion here is also a wonderful opportunity to bring to everyone's attention the existence of a superb translation of *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, available since 1984, thanks to a truly marvellous translator, Thomas Cleary. English-speaking Buddhists owe it to themselves to read this book.

The following passage covers 14 pages in Cleary's translation. Lest this seem too lengthy, consider that the whole book spans 1,643 pages! The section of *The Flower Ornament Scripture* from which this passage is drawn tells the story of an intrepid seeker, Sudhana, who approaches a series of enlightening beings (Cleary's translation of *bodhisattva*) for guidance on his journey to enlightenment. Here he meets Gopa, wife of Prince Siddharta, who became the Buddha Shakyamuni.

#### GOPA'S ACCOUNT TO SUDHANA OF HER PAST LIVES

Then Sudhana asked Gopa, "How long ago did you attain this liberation?"

She replied, "As many eons ago as atoms in a hundred buddha-lands, there was a world called Producing Fearlessness. In that world was an age called Superior Conduct. In the middle of that world was a set of four continents called Safe. On the southern continent was a metropolis called Magnificent Trees, the greatest of eighty-four billion cities. Each of the cities was built on a ground of blue lapis lazuli and was surrounded by walls made of seven precious substances and seven moats of fragrant water with gold

sand on the bottom, covered with red, white, and blue lotuses as big as cart-wheels radiating brilliant webs of light and beautiful scents. They were also surrounded by seven networks of railings made of jewels and seven rings of palm trees, and abounded in groves of trees made of seven precious substances. Above, they were covered with networks of clouds. The grounds of the cities were like jeweled checkerboards, the plots evenly divided by arrays of various jewels. Groups of mystic adepts lived and roamed there, and birds filled the air with pleasing song. The cities were adorned with millions of parks, and they were prosperous and wealthy. Hundred of thousands of happy men and women populated them. There were constant showers of beautiful flowers, stirred by the wind. Hundreds of thousands of earth spirits lived in them. Furthermore, from the golden nets of wind chimes adorning all the trees came happy voices saying, 'Bathe, drink, eat, practice the Teaching, arouse the determination for enlightenment, realize mastery of the stage of nonregression; happiness to you!'

"At that time, in the capital city Magnificent Trees, there was a king named Lord of Wealth, ruler of the region. He had eighty-four thousand women in his palace. He also had five hundred ministers, and also five hundred sons, all of whom were brave, powerful warriors, handsome and well built. His queen, the foremost of the eighty-four thousand women, was named Lotus Born. She had a son named Lord of Glory, who was very handsome and bore the thirty-two marks of a great man, pleasing to the sight of all.

"Once, as a youth, this prince went, with the permission of his father and mother, to go see one of the parks of the city, called Clouds of Light on a Mountain of Fragrant Plants. He went together with twenty thousand girls, projecting a great aura of felicity, glory, energy, splendor, and beauty, admired by men and women all around. They got into a golden vehicle with four huge diamond wheels and unbreakable diamond axles set in the finest sandalwood. It was ribbed with well-arranged diamonds of all fragrances, splendidly adorned with flowers of all jewels, draped with nets of all jewels, with a lion seat set in the middle of the interior, arrayed with great jewels. The reins, strings of jewels, were held by five hundred girls, and it was drawn by a thousand thoroughbred horses fleet as the wind. Overhead was a beautiful sloping canopy made of white lapis lazuli, with a flawless, immeasurable luster, supported by tall poles of blue lapis lazuli, adorned with all kinds of arrays of rare jewels, held by hundreds of thousands of people surrounding the vehicle, singing and playing music, scat-

tering flowers and burning incense. The eight-lane road was level and free of gravel, set on a bed of all precious substances, spread with gold sand, decorated with flowers of various jewels, lined on both sides with rows of jewel trees and railings of various gems. Above, it was covered with nets of golden bells, adorned with canopies of various jewels, and arrayed with many thousands of jeweled banners, pennants, and streamers. Rows of jewel buildings were arrayed on either side.

"In some of those buildings were precious vessels filled with various jewels, to be given to those in need. In some buildings were all kinds of precious ornaments, for those in need of ornaments. In some buildings were wish-fulfilling jewels, to fulfill the wishes of all beings. In some buildings were vessels filled with all kinds of food and drink, to be given to whoever needed them. In some buildings were celestial foods of all the most pleasant appearances, fragrances, savors, and textures. In some buildings were various delicious celestial fruits. In some buildings were millions of fine celestial garments, for those in need of clothing to use as they wished. In some buildings were all kinds of the finest celestial fragrances, for those who wanted perfume, to use at will. In some buildings were all kinds of utensils for people to use as they wished.

"At that time there was a courtesan named Beautiful in that metropolis, with whom the king consorted. She had a lovely daughter named Splendor of Delight in Virtuous Conduct, who was neither too tall nor too short, neither too stout nor too lean, neither too heavy nor too light. She had black hair and eyes, a pleasant face, and a clear voice. She spoke sweetly and kindly, she was wise, versed in all arts and sciences, clever and diligent, dignified and serene, kind-hearted and gentle, always pleasant to be with. She had scarcely any desire, aversion, or folly; she was modest and conscientious, soft and sincere, free from guile and deceit, self-controlled. She and her mother, accompanied by many girls, got in a jeweled chariot and rode out of the city before the prince Lord of Glory. Looking for the prince, going according to the king's directions, when she saw the prince she became greatly enamored of him. Bound by the excessive affection she conceived for the prince, unable to control herself, she said to her mother, 'If you do not give me to the prince Lord of Glory, I will die or suffer torment equal to death.' Her mother said, 'Do not think this way. This prince has the marks of a supreme ruler, and it is obvious that after his father passes away he will succeed to the throne and become king. At that time a special

woman will appear from the sky. Furthermore, we prostitutes give pleasure to everyone; we do not serve one person all our lives as a rule. We have set out to attend the prince Lord of Glory at the command of the king Lord of Wealth. Do not hold fast to this wish of yours, for it is unattainable.'

"Now, at that time a buddha named Supreme Sun was appearing in the world, a saint, perfectly enlightened, complete in knowledge and conduct, gone to felicity, supreme knower of the world, tamer of humans, teacher of celestials and humans, awake, blessed. He was at an enlightenment site called Light Emerging from the Cloud of Teaching in the park Cloud of Light on a Mountain of Fragrant Plants, where he enjoyed his first seven days since attaining enlightenment.

'The girl, who was reclining in the chariot, saw that buddha in a dream. When she awoke, a goddess who had been a relative in a past life told her that the buddha was in the park, in his first week of enlightenment, surrounded by a group of enlightening beings, before a crowd of all kinds of spirits, and that all the deities of earth, space, water, fire, wind, oceans, rivers, mountains, night, dawn, forests, trees, plants, grain, cities, foot tracks, sanctuaries, bodies of light, habitations, the sky, and all directions had gathered to see the buddha Supreme Sun.

"Emboldened by seeing the buddha and hearing of the buddha's virtues, finding a favorable opportunity, the girl then spoke these verses before the prince:

I am known in the world for beauty,  
Renowned everywhere for virtues.  
None compares to me in the power of **knowledge**;  
I know all arts, amusements, and magic.

Hundreds, thousands of men  
Look on me with lust,  
But I have no desire  
For people of the world.

I have no ill-will,  
Neither am I pleased by anyone.  
I have neither anger nor hatred;  
I delight in the welfare of all.

When I saw you, young man, excellent  
 In form and strength, endowed with virtue,  
 All my senses were delighted,  
 And immense joy arose in me.

Your complexion is like a pure shining jewel,  
 Your hair is black and curly,  
 You have a fine brow and nose;  
 I offer myself to you.

You have excellent features.  
 Resplendent, you are like a mountain of gold.  
 In your presence I do not shine;  
 I am like a pile of charcoal.

Your eyes are large and dark,  
 Your jaw is like a lion's, your face like the full moon.  
 The fine sound of your voice is irresistible;  
 Please take me in.

Your tongue is long and broad,  
 Coppery red, soft, shining like a jewel;  
 With your superb, clear voice  
 You delight people when you speak.

Your teeth are even, shining white,  
 Clean and well spaced;  
 When you show them as you smile,  
 You delight people, O hero.

Your body has the thirty-two marks  
 Of greatness, brilliantly shining, pure.  
 Adorned with them, you will become  
 A sovereign ruler of men.

"Then the prince Lord of Glory said to the maid Splendor of Delight in  
 Virtuous Conduct, 'Whose daughter are you, whose ward? I cannot make  
 another's ward my own.' Then he spoke these verses:

O lovely one, endowed with beauty of form,  
 With fine features and a pure body,  
 I ask you to tell me this—  
 Whose ward are you?

Have you father or mother,  
 Brother, husband, or master,  
 Or someone else who thinks of you  
 As his, treating you kindly?

I hope you are not vicious,  
 Do not steal,  
 Are not promiscuous,  
 And do not lie.

I hope you do not cause discord,  
 Do not slander others,  
 Do not covet others' goods,  
 And are not hostile toward anyone.

May you not stand on the wasteland of views;  
 Let your intelligence not be taken away by habits;  
 May you not exert bad influence on people  
 By guile or deceit.

Do you love and respect your parents,  
 Relatives, friends, and elders?  
 Does your heart reach out  
 To give to the poor to help them?

Are you well disposed toward spiritual benefactors  
 Who tell you about religion at the appropriate time?



Are you truly healthy and capable  
In body and mind?

Do you respect the buddhas  
And love the enlightening beings?  
Do you know the supreme Teaching  
From which the enlightening beings are born?

Can you abide by the supreme religion  
And not do any wrong?  
Do you have higher love and respect  
For the infinite ocean of virtues?  
Are you kind  
To the helpless and lost?  
Are you really compassionate  
Toward evildoers?

Are you most happy  
To see the success of others?  
Are you indifferent, by the power of wisdom,  
To those who annoy you for no reason?

Seeing people in the slumber of ignorance,  
Do you firmly seek supreme enlightenment?  
Would you not weary of endless ages  
Of spiritual practice?

“Then the supreme courtesan Beautiful, mother of the maid Splendor of Delight in Virtuous Conduct, said to the prince Lord of Glory, ‘This daughter of mine, who was spontaneously born from within a lotus, has never before gone out of the house.’ Then she spoke these verses:

Listen to what I say, O prince,  
About my daughter, of whom you ask.  
I will tell you of her birth  
And how she grew up.

On the very same morn as your birth,  
My daughter too was born,  
Generated spontaneously in the calyx of an undefiled lotus,  
All her limbs complete, with nice big eyes.

In springtime, the best of seasons,  
When the crops and herbs are growing,  
In my beautiful grove of sal trees  
I utterly forgot myself.

The branches were blooming with most beautiful flowers,  
The fruiting trees were like dense clouds;  
Amid the trees with singing birds  
I roamed, joyful, free from care.

I was with eight hundred girls,  
Adorned with garlands of flowers,  
Wearing various precious cloths,  
Well versed in song and speech.

I sat on the bank of a pond  
Filled with lotuses of various scents;  
The area around, strewn with flowers,  
Was filled by those well-cultivated girls.

In the middle of the water appeared  
A supremely fine lotus with a thousand petals;  
Its stem was lapis lazuli, its petals were diamond,  
Its pericarp was pure gold.

It had a multitude of stamens of the finest fragrant jewels  
And had a brilliant golden sheen:  
The people were confused—  
How could the sun rise at night?

Then, the night ended, from the rising sun,  
Stimulating with its glow,

There emanated light and sweet sounds,  
Foretelling the birth of this girl.

Then this precious girl appeared in the human world,  
Pure in the best of conduct.  
No deed is lost to the doer; she was the fruition  
Of good actions in the past.

With dark hair, lotus-blue eyes,  
A clear voice and golden complexion,  
Finely clad in garlands, she emerged  
From the lotus, resplendent as pure light.

Her limbs are bright, her body evenly balanced;  
Her limbs are complete, her body well proportioned.  
She shines like a golden statue adorned with jewels,  
Illumining all directions.

The finest fragrance of sandalwood wafts from her body,  
Filling the air around her;  
As she speaks, with celestial sweetness,  
A scent like blue lotus comes from her mouth.

Whenever she smiles,  
Heavenly music plays;  
This treasure of a woman should **not be abandoned**  
To the control of the vulgar.

In the world of men no one can be found  
Who is worthy to be her husband, except you,  
A resplendent figure with the marks of greatness—  
Therefore, please accept this girl.

For she is not short or too tall,  
Not stout or too thin;  
She is slender at the waist, full-breasted,  
Suitable for you, with an impeccable body.

She has perfect knowledge of calculation,  
Writing, symbology, and technical literature;  
She has mastered all the arts and crafts  
In the whole world.

She is expert in archery  
And always hits her mark;  
Pacifying opponents by her power of attraction,  
She is ultimately successful everywhere.

All her limbs are like pure jewels;  
She radiates an aura of light.  
Adorned by the virtues she has accomplished,  
She is fit to be your companion.

She knows the cause of all illnesses  
That afflict living beings,  
And she is able to cure them  
By correct use of medicines.

She has mastered all the different languages  
Of the people on the continent  
And the variety of customary usages  
Of society everywhere.

She knows the articulation of sounds  
And the means of differentiation among them,  
And she is expert in all  
The songs and dances in the world.

She is not jealous or envious,  
She is not lustful or ill-tempered;  
She is taciturn, honest, and gentle,  
Free from anger and harshness, very intelligent.

She is diligent, well behaved, not argumentative,  
Always obedient to the worthy;

She is respectful, seeking to do whatever is good.  
She will do as you ask.

She is always compassionate toward the elderly,  
Toward the sick and the poor,  
Toward the suffering, the blind,  
And toward the helpless.

She is always thinking of the welfare of others,  
And never thinks of benefit for herself;  
Seeking the welfare of the whole world,  
She is adorned with superior virtues of mind.

She is never careless, always mindful and aware,  
Whether standing, sitting, reclining, or walking,  
Whether silent or speaking;  
She is always remembered and honored.

This virtuous one shines in all ways,  
And is always loved by people;  
None would tire of looking at her,  
But she has no attachment to the world.

Respectful of spiritual friends,  
She wants always to see you;  
This far-seeing, uncorrupted lady has a pure mind,  
Stable as the polar mountain.

Ever-adorned with her own virtues,  
She has no enemies at all;  
She has no peer in knowledge.  
She is fit to be your bride, O prince.

“Then the prince, having entered the park, said to the maid in the presence of her mother, ‘I have set out for supreme perfect enlightenment, whereby I may gather the infinite stores of omniscience, cultivate the prac-

tice of enlightening beings for infinite eons and perfect all the transcendent ways, serve the buddhas for endless eons, uphold the teaching of all buddhas, purify all buddha-lands, perpetuate the lineages of all buddhas, develop all groups of sentient beings to maturity, stop the pains of the mundane whirl for all sentient beings, lead sentient beings to ultimate bliss, clarify the eye of knowledge in all sentient beings, strive for the attainments of all buddhas and enlightening beings, abide in the equanimity of all enlightening beings, accomplish all the stages of enlightening beings, purify all sentient beings, cultivate total giving to put an end to poverty for all sentient beings, practice transcendent giving for endless eons and satisfy all sentient beings with gifts of food and drink, and satisfy all beggars by giving away all goods. As I practice total relinquishment, everything internal and external is to be given away—I am to give away my sons, daughters, wife; I am to relinquish my eyes, head, hands and feet, all my limbs. You will hinder my giving, you will become unhappy at the relinquishment of beloved children, you will feel much physical and mental pain, you will resent my determination to give up everything. When I cut off my limbs to give them to beggars, you will be pained and grieved. And there will come a time when I leave you to go forth into the tutelage of a buddha; at that time you will be unhappy.’ Then the prince spoke these verses to the maid.

I am going to fulfill the immeasurable ocean  
Of provisions for perfect enlightenment;  
Therefore, with compassion for all,  
I have set forth forever for enlightenment.

For infinite eons, measureless as air,  
I will purify my vow;  
For endless eons I will perform the preparations  
Of the initial stage of the buddhas.

I will learn the paths of transcendence  
From the buddhas of past, present, and future  
And perfect the path of supreme enlightenment  
By the great means of unexcelled knowledge.

I will purify all  
 Defiled lands everywhere;  
 I will remove all difficulties  
 And evil ways from all worlds.

I will purify all beings  
 Who are wrapped up in afflictions, blind with delusion;  
 Developing them by various means,  
 I will bring them into the path of omniscience.

I will accomplish the unobstructed stages  
 And serve the buddhas for myriad eons;  
 Generating kindness toward the world,  
 I will give all gifts.

As I am engaged in giving all  
 To beggars who come,  
 Do not become depressed  
 Or sad or unsympathetic.

Seeing benefit for one who wants my head,  
 A wise person would delight in lofty conduct;  
 You would be tormented,  
 So hear my purpose and become firm.

You would be grieved at my giving  
 My severed hands and feet to beggars  
 And speak bitterly, faint and distressed;  
 So hear my purpose and think about it.

I will give away my prized possessions,  
 Even my children, yet I want you;  
 Hear my aim and if you do not despair,  
 All shall be as you wish.

"The maid replied to the prince, 'Let it be as you say. I will do as you wish. I am at your service and will accompany you wherever you want to go. I will always stay with you and be diligent in all tasks. I will behave as you wish. I will exert myself properly and act in harmony with you.'" Then she spoke these verses to the prince:

Even if my body should be burnt to death  
 In the fires of hell,  
 I would endure it for myriad lifetimes  
 As your companion in practice.

Even if life after life for endless lives  
 My body were cut asunder,  
 I would endure it with a steadfast mind  
 If you were my husband.

Even if the mountains should crush  
 My head for endless ages,  
 I would endure it unfazed  
 If you became my husband.

In infinite lifetimes you may cut off  
 Your own limbs and give them to others;  
 Lead me to control of my thoughts  
 And make me firm in my duty.

I give you my body completely,  
 O prince of men;  
 Performing spiritual practice for myriad ages,  
 Give me to whoever wants me, and I will be happy.

You have set out for supreme enlightenment,  
 With infinite compassion for beings;  
 Having taken all beings into your care,  
 Take me in too with compassion.

It is not for enjoyment  
 Or wealth or sensual pleasure  
 That I want you, best of men, for my husband,  
 But to share the same spiritual practice.

You look upon all beings  
 With clear eyes and kind heart;  
 Being compassionate with undefiled mind,  
 You will surely become a king of sages.

As you walk along, a jewellike glow  
 From your footsteps remains on the earth, pure;  
 Endowed with the marks of greatness,  
 You will surely become a sovereign king in the human world.

In a dream I saw the enlightenment site  
 Illumined by clouds of true teaching in this kingdom;  
 With the buddha sitting at the foot of the best of trees,  
 In the company of many enlightening beings.

That exalted buddha Supreme Sun  
 Is like a mountain of finest rose gold;  
 In my dream he patted my head,  
 And I awoke then, full of joy.

A pure-bodied goddess named Light of Delight,  
 Who had been a companion in the past,  
 Told me the buddha was here,  
 Staying at the supreme site of enlightenment.

I had been thinking before that I wanted  
 To see the prince Lord of Glory,  
 And I was told by the goddess  
 I would see the prince soon.

Now I have seen the buddha in a dream,  
 And have seen you, the perfect man;

My wish is fulfilled, and I am happy;  
 With you now I will honor that supreme sage.

“Then the prince, having heard the name of the buddha Supreme Sun and having thus gotten the opportunity to see the buddha, became very joyful; he showered the maid Splendor of Delight in Virtuous Conduct with five hundred jewels, gave her a shining crown of jewels, and covered her with a precious robe the color of fire blazing with jewels. And she, thus honored, neither rejoiced nor wept, nor did anything but gaze steadily at the prince with palms joined in respect.

“Then the prominent courtesan Beautiful spoke these verses to the prince:

For a long dark time I have wished  
 To give this girl to you;  
 Now this beautiful maiden  
 Of virtue and quality is yours.

There is no girl in the world  
 Equal to her, much less superior;  
 By virtue of her conduct, intellect, and other qualities,  
 She is the best of women in the world.

Born of a lotus, there is no question of her class;  
 She cannot be called impure.  
 Her mind is free from the taint of all faults;  
 She is capable of sharing your practice.

Her limbs are extremely soft,  
 Conveying the finest pleasures of touch;  
 The sick are instantly cured  
 By her touch.

The pure fragrance of her body  
 Excels all the finest perfumes;  
 All men who smell it  
 Become pure in conduct.

Her body shines like gold,  
 Undefined like a lotus;  
 Angry and cruel people  
 Become kind when they have seen her.

She speaks kindly, sweetly, pleasantly,  
 A delight to people who hear;  
 When they have heard her, the darkness of evil disperses,  
 And none wants to do anything bad.

Her mind is pure, her heart untainted;  
 There is no guile at all in her.  
 What she says is just what she thinks,  
 And thus she makes people happy.

She does not fool anyone by deceit,  
 Nor does she lead people on for gain;  
 She is modest and discreet,  
 Always respectful to old and young.

She is not fascinated by class  
 Or looks or followers  
 She has no conceit or arrogance;  
 She is always humble toward all.

"Then the prince and the maid, with her retinue of twenty thousand girls, left the park and went to the site of enlightenment where the buddha was, to see, pay respects to, make offerings to, and attend the buddha. Going by vehicle as far as the vehicle would go, the prince got off the vehicle and approached the buddha on foot; even at a distance he saw that the buddha was serene, a sight to behold, senses tranquil, mind quiet, senses under control, like a tame elephant, his heart like a clear, still pond. When he saw the buddha, the prince's mind became settled, and with a clear mind he developed great joy, well-being, and energy that derives from seeing a buddha. With his mind full of great joy, energy, serenity, and rapture, he paid his respects to the buddha, and together with his whole company, including the young woman, covered the buddha with five hundred thousand great

jewel lotuses, and made five hundred sanctuaries of jewels for the buddha and adorned each one with five hundred thousand diamonds.

"Then the buddha, knowing the prince's strong determination, expounded a scripture called *Lamp at the Door of the Universal Eye*, upon hearing which the prince attained ten oceans of concentrations absorbed in all principles of the Teaching: he attained ways of concentration such as those called 'light produced from the oceans of vows of all buddhas,' 'path of illumination of past, present, and future,' 'going forth into the circle of all buddhas,' 'entry into the highest range of awareness of all beings,' 'attainment of the scope of knowledge of the causes that produce all worlds,' 'lamp illumining the oceans of faculties of all beings,' 'cloud of knowledge to save all beings,' 'lamp leading to the development and emancipation of all beings,' 'communicating the cycles of teaching of all buddhas,' and 'multitude of undertakings to purify the practices of universal good.' Beginning with these, the prince attained ten oceans of concentrations absorbed in all the principles of the Teaching. The young woman attained a meditation called 'filled with an ocean of invincible knowledge' and became irreversible in progress toward supreme perfect enlightenment." (*The Flower Ornament Scripture*, pp. 1406–1419)

## Notes

- 1 According to a modern Tibetan historian, Doung-kar Lo-zang Trinlé, Shanti-raksheeta was the older brother of Mandarava, one of Guru Rinpoché's main consorts, and related by family to Atisha, who would later spread Buddhism in Tibet. See *The Collected Works of Doung-kar Lo-zang Trinlé*, p. 109.
- 2 The six styles of explanation are based on the general meaning, concealed meaning, ultimate meaning, grammatical structure, the meaning of the words, and the meaning of the pith instructions. The six parameters refer to a text's literal meaning, definitive meaning, unimplied meaning, not literal meaning, provisional meaning, and implied meaning. The four methods of interpretation present the meaning of the words, the general meaning, concealed meaning, and ultimate meaning.
- 3 On the subject of Guru Rinpoché, the Chinese are silent, since his visit did not concern them.
- 4 Here, I assume Karmay uses a Chinese word, written in Tibetan "sha—cu," to indicate the imperial annals.
- 5 Herbert Guenther states forcefully that he disagrees with this commonly accepted version of the location of Guru Rinpoché's homeland. See *The Teachings of Padmasambhava*, p.4, n.6.
- 6 From *The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear*, p. 257. The poem contains twenty-two such lines and is furnished with recitation instructions: "The proper way to read the verses is to make an immense emphasis on the monosyllabic rhymes, which indeed ought to be shouted out by a chorus." To answer the question the poem irreverently asks, the Akond was the Sufi ruler of Swat defeated by the English; he passed the ownership of the land to his son. Swat came fully under the control of the Pakistan government only in 1969.
- 7 For an excellent picture of the many religious and cultural influences that leavened Chinese (and, perhaps, Tibetan) culture during this period, read Richard C. Foltz's *Religions of the Silk Road* and Edward H. Schafer's *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*.

- 8 Empress Wu has inspired many books and her reputation has only recently undergone a revision. She was once characterized as immoral, deluded, and unencumbered by a conscience (see Lin Yu-tang's *Lady Wu: A True Story*). Some modern scholars, however, point to the fact that, at worst, she acted like most rulers of China before and after her, and at best, studies prove her to have been an outstanding administrator. They also point out that each leader of a new dynasty must prove the last dynasty to have been unworthy of the mandate of heaven, a task that calls for considerable amounts of character assassination. For a fascinating study of the possible modern character assassination of the only other woman to rule China, read Sterling Seagrave's *Dragon Lady*.
- 9 This account is the best known in Tibetan sources, but unfortunately is very cogently contested by modern research. See Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, Chapter 2, "The Chinese Mother of Tibet's Dharma-King," for a summary of the new evidence against this old, popular tale.
- 10 This translation is taken from Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung, *The Orchid Boat: Women Poets of China*, p. 4.
- 11 Tibet before Buddhism may in fact have been home to a well developed indigenous civilization, but one cannot learn of it from most of Tibet's historians. "The traditional Tibetan historians' conceit of viewing early Tibetan history negatively has, with few exceptions, been taken literally by most modern historians of Tibet." (Beckwith, p. 174, n.2)
- 12 Readers must suspect that the numbers of Tibetan "brigands" cited here is not to be taken literally, but such exaggeration does give us an impression of how the Chinese felt when faced with their enemy.
- 13 See *The Collected Works of Dzung-kar Lo-zang Trinlé*, p. 509.
- 14 In Tibetan Buddhism's Kagyu and Nyingma schools, a three-year, three-fort-night retreat constitutes the primary institution for formal training in meditation. Many programs exist for such intensive retreats, yet each likely introduces the participants to the complete range of tantric meditations—phase of creation, phase of completion, and Great Seal or Great Completion—offered in a specific lineage. For a view of one such institution, see *Jamgon Kongtrul's Retreat Manual*.
- 15 The entire play has been translated from Sanskrit into English by a Korean woman, Kun Bae Bak, as *Utter Delight of the Nagas*, part of *Sri Harsa's Plays*, pp. 49–223. I have translated the passage here from Tibetan.
- 16 This is a good example of my pro-India bias. To research this book, I read a single book on the development of calendars and was prepared to believe that our sense of time had come from India. I have since found this to be wishful thinking. Yes, ancient Hindu scriptures contain reference to the creation of the week, "When Brahma had fashioned the universe, he placed his seed in Savitri, his best wife. When she was ready to give birth, she bore the year, the month, the days of the week, the seven Pleiades" (from the *Brahmavaivarta Purana*). Yet the Hindus borrowed this divinely ordained seven-based universe from the same source as the Hebrews did for their seven-day creation story: the Sumerians of Mesopotamia. For an excellent article on the subject, read "The power of seven" (*The Economist*, Dec 20, 2001, pp. 98–99; [www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com)).
- 17 Some historians believe that the Tibetans fought in a more classical manner than the Mongolians: "early Tibetan methods of warfare were totally non-nomadic: warriors wore full suits of heavy iron mail, and dismounted to do battle." (Beckwith, p. 13, n. 1). Beckwith quotes a Chinese writer of that era: "The men and horses all wear chain mail armor. Its workmanship is extremely fine. It envelops them completely, leaving openings only for the two eyes. Thus, strong bows and sharp swords cannot injure them." (*Ibid.*, p. 110). It is difficult to argue this point, but my guess is that we can profitably read such reports as accurate indications of how Tibet's opponents felt, in the same vein as the absurdly inflated numbers of soldiers in annals of the same period. Not one suit of Tibetan armor as described here has survived to the present day, although this cannot be taken as evidence that it did not exist. What any visitor to eastern Tibet during summertime can still see is continued mastery of horsemanship.
- 18 The dates of Ralpachen's and Darma U-doum-tsen's assassinations, and of the popular uprising, are according to *The Collected Works of Dzung-kar Lo-zang Trinlé*, pp. 520, 523, and 527.
- 19 It seems that Plotinus (205–270) enjoyed some popularity during the twentieth century. In *A History of God*, Karen Armstrong states, "Plotinus has been described as a watershed: he had absorbed the main currents of some 800 years of Greek speculation and transmitted it in a form which has continued to influence such crucial figures in our own century as T. S. Eliot and Henri Bergson." (p. 101) And, we are to assume, Evans-Wentz. His first footnote exults, "Frequent reference is herein made to Plotinus, because he is the outstanding exponent in the West of the same yogic doctrines as those which form the basis of this volume.... In Plotinus, East and West cease to be twain and become one, as in reality they have been and will be increasingly, when the Sun of the approaching New Renaissance, which shall be worldwide, rises, and waxes in brilliance and power, and dissipates the darkness of Ignorance." (*The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, p. 2, n.1)



- 20 The author of the text signs her name Dorjé Tso, which I once assumed to be a name adopted by Yeshé Tsogyal. Sarah Harding informs me that other texts in which Dorjé Tso is a main character seem to indicate that she was a disciple of Guru Rinpoché but not Yeshé Tsogyal, although this is not explicitly mentioned. In this book's first appendix below, Dorjé Tso is mentioned as "Shel-kar Dorjé Tso," a "secret consort who accomplished [rebirth in] the celestial realms." The text, written by Jamgon Kongtrul, does not mention the name of her companion, but the context would suggest that it was Namké Nyingpo, or perhaps Guru Rinpoché.
- 21 Kongtrul relates enlightenment's three bodies to their respective pure lands in this way:
- The three bodies of enlightenment's appearances are known as three distinct pure lands. The body of ultimate enlightenment's pure land is called Radiant Vajra Essence; the self-manifesting body of enlightenment's perfect rapture's pure land is called Drumbeat of Brahma; and enlightenment's manifest body's pure land is called Great Brahma Eon. (*Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. 1, p. 318)
- 22 Kongtrul explains the *semi-apparent* manifest form of enlightenment as follows:
- The great body of ultimate enlightenment rests within the nature of reality's inner luminosity. Its spreading innate wisdom radiates outward into a self-manifest expanse, like the five colors that shine within a crystal touched by sunlight. [This wisdom's] appearing aspect, infinite forms of enlightenment and pure lands, sacred configurations emanated to the place of rapture, is called the semi-apparent body of enlightenment's perfect rapture. (*Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. 1, p. 322)
- 23 The account of Guru Rinpoché's display of the attainment of the four levels of awareness holder—fully mature, who controls longevity, of Great Seal, and of the spontaneous presence of enlightenment—is woven into this story. This represents the first of the four.
- 24 See Taranata's account of Indian histories below, most likely Kongtrul's source for this information.
- 25 According to Yudra Tulku, the hundred vital treasures of the king (*rgyal po'i blagter brgya*) were treasures (mainly objects, rather than texts) concealed around the Himalayan region to consecrate the land. They represent the spirit or vital life-force infused in the region by Guru Rinpoché. Unlike other treasures he concealed, these were intended to remain without being retrieved at a later date.
- 26 Although the course of this narrative seems to indicate that Prince Son of Heaven is Mutik Tsépo, Kongtrul in his short biographies of the sons of Trisong Détsen gives the same name, Prince Son of Heaven, to Ralpachen and mentions that he took rebirth thirteen times, culminating in his life as Jamyong Kyentsé Wongpo; see below Appendix 1, Part 6, The Supplication Given to Mutri Tsépo.
- 27 Sera Khandro's birth year is according to Tulku Thondup in *Masters of Meditation and Miracles* (p. 297). (The identity of Sera Khandro's reincarnation as Chadral Rinpoché's daughter can be found on the same page.) I was present at a conversation during which Chadral Rinpoché, Sera Khandro's main disciple, was asked how old she was at her death. "Forty-nine," he replied. Subtracting the year that is added to Tibetans' ages, I thus assume she died in 1947.
- 28 Doung-kar Lo-zong Trinlé identifies the period of Dévapala's reign as 730-777. See his *Collected Works*, p. 117.
- 29 Although Taranata states that he wrote this text at the age of thirty-six, we generally assume that this refers to his thirty-sixth year, thus 1610, not 1611.
- 30 Hoping to encourage interested readers to consult with qualified teachers, I have not included the reference for this quotation.
- 31 Blondeau supplies a parallel, more explicit account, in which the letter Ah appears in the mother's dream and melts into her heart. She bears the child nine months later. (p. 134)
- 32 *Shin-gyi sem-pa* is the Bön equivalent for bodhisattva (*jong-choub sem-pa* in Tibetan).
- 33 This is a very unusual passage, to say the least. The whole meaning hinges on one word, *bshigs*, which is both the future and past form of the transitive verb to destroy. Thus, the four words "*gro don sku bshigs*" could be either "will destroy" or "did destroy" his body for others' benefit. The flesh of a seven-times born Brahmin is said to confer great accomplishment, as the story makes clear. Blondeau translates this, "Norbu [Jewel] is cutting his body into pieces for the good of beings," (p. 116) but in a parallel text she cites, the Brahmin had already died from unnamed causes. (p. 144)
- 34 According to one pair of modern scholars, Mutri Tsépo's dates are 762-797. By that measure, he would have been but five years old at the time Guru Rinpoché gave him this supplication and close to thirty-five at the time of *The Supplication for the Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes*. They explain the long-recounted tale of Mutri Tsépo's three attempts to equalize his subjects' wealth as credible, since they believe that Trisong Détsen abdicated in 780 to devote

- himself to meditation. They do not cite their sources for this information. See Joung-né, Ko-shul Drak-pa and Gyal-wa Lo-zang Ké-drup, *The Compendium of Names of Himalayan Scholars and Adepts*, pp. 1288–1299.
- 35 This flower appears only when a Buddha lives in the world.
- 36 These five representatives are the god Renowned Eminent Protector, the *naga* king Jokpo, the harm-bringing spirit Shooting Star Face, the cannibal demon Skillful Intelligence, and the human Vimalakirti.
- 37 How to hold the breath without harm must be learned in person from a competent Buddhist tantric guide. To not seek such instruction and to perform this meditation while holding the breath will, sooner or later, prove severely (and usually incurably) detrimental to health and well-being.
- 38 This is the only place Kongtrul refers to this treasure as *The Full Gathering of the Eight Transmissions* (*bka' brgyad yongs 'dus*); he first refers to it by its more common title, *The Full Gathering of Awareness Holders* (*rig 'dzin yongs 'dus*). The complete title in fact includes both Eight Transmissions and Awareness Holders: *bla ma bka' brgyad rig 'dzin yongs 'dus*. Beyond this point in the text, he uses a simplified version—"Full Gathering" (*yongs 'dus*).
- 39 In this prayer, "Guru" probably refers to Guru Rinpoché, as Kongtrul used this Sanskrit word for spiritual master, rather than the Tibetan *lama*. "Vajra Peak" refers to the highest stage of awakening.
- 40 As mentioned in this book's general introduction, according to Stoddard (p. 258), Gendun Chöpel considered these three styles of the levels of Samyé Monastery—Tibetan, Chinese, and Indian—to be the source of its name, a mispronunciation of the Chinese *sanyang*, three styles. Needless to say, this interpretation is at present unpopular.
- 41 The word "liberated" here is a tantric code word for forceful separation of consciousness from the body and its transference to a pure realm, thus liberation.
- 42 This story can be found in Dudjom Rinpoché's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 1, pp. 710–711.
- 43 The word in the text is spelled *rtsad po*; my lama-consultants cannot guess its meaning.
- 44 Jamgon Kongtrul provides an inside account of the vital importance of this supplication's final passage within the Karma Kagyu transmission. In explicit reference to it he reports, "[The Ninth Tai Situpa] explained that this [passage from the supplication] contained the essence of the meaning of the hundreds and thousands of instructions concerning the nature of the mind spoken by Guru Rinpoché. In the past, the noble [Eighth Tai Situpa] Chökyi Joungné had bestowed it upon the powerful victor Düdul Dorjé as an instruction pointing out the nature of mind and then entrusted his lineage to [the Karmapa]. This master, the noble Thirteenth Karmapa, in turn bestowed this pointing-out instruction and then entrusted the lineage to him [the Ninth Tai Situpa, Péma Nyinjé Wongpo]." See *Jamgon Kongtrul's Retreat Manual*, p. 40.
- 45 See *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, pp. 119–120.
- 46 A Buddhist language is one into which the Buddhist Canon has been translated. That event may have a great impact on the language, as is the case in Tibetan, or remain a secondary, enriching presence, as in Chinese and Japanese. Nevertheless, the determining measure is that the entirety of the Buddha's Word (as it is determined by specific traditions) be available to speakers/readers of a specific language. *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* states, "In Dharma terms, a central place is wherever the Dharma—the teaching of Lord Buddha—exists. All other regions are said to be peripheral." (p. 23) In this technical definition, "the teaching of Lord Buddha" refers to the entire corpus of his teaching.
- 47 According to the 1991 version of the *Panchatantra* (pp. xvi and xix-xx), the first printed version of this book appeared in Europe in 1483, in Germany, soon after the invention of the printing press. La Fontaine stated in the second edition of his *Fables* (1678) that he owed most of his new material to the *Panchatantra*.
- 48 Fittingly, in Greek legend, the Muses who inspire poets were daughters of Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory.

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