

HIDDEN TREASURES AND SECRET LIVES

A Study of
Pemalingpa (1450–1521)
and the
Sixth Dalai Lama (1683–1706)

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For J. A. A.

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Preface

This study was researched and written at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, where I held a fellowship from October 1985 to August 1987. I am indebted to Wolfson College, Oxford, for leave granted to enable me to accept the post. I am particularly grateful to the former director of the Institute, M. N. Sinha, and the present director, Margaret Chatterjee, for the invaluable help they gave me in numerous ways. Neither my family nor I shall quickly forget the peace and good company we enjoyed in the former viceregal lodge and its incomparable surroundings where the Institute is located. My wife, who also held a fellowship at the Institute, and I both received many acts of kindness from the fellows and staff. Nor will our sons forget the wealth of non-human life inhabiting this great building. No ghosts of the viceroys were seen, but the flying foxes, monkeys, bats and lesser beasties enlivened their stay very much.

The book had its origins in a more general plan to review the main features of Tibetan Buddhist hagiography that would have concentrated not only on the lives of Pemalingpa and the Sixth Dalai Lama but also on such disparate figures as Dorjieff, the Buriat lama and agent of Russia (his verse autobiography having recently come to light) and the nineteenth-century Nyingmapa master from Amdo, Shapkar Tsokdruk Rangdröl (whose own autobiography is surely one of the greatest products of the literary tradition in Tibet). However, in the end they appeared such strange bed-fellows that I decided finally to concentrate on the two who formed a most natural pair. In pursuing them I was able to draw on my own travels and experiences in the districts of the eastern Himalayas where they were born. Those travels took place in what now seems like a previous life of my own, the period 1967–79. The friends and informants who assisted me in my enquiries at that time are too numerous to mention, but none are forgotten.

The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives at Dharamsala,

which lies fourteen hours by country bus to the west of Simla, gave me a great deal of assistance in locating some of the sources required for this study. It is difficult to thank my friends there sufficiently for their help, particularly the director, Gyatso Tsering, and the research officer, Tashi Tsering. I must also express my warm gratitude to Sangye Tendzin Jongdong and Tendzin Namdak, the abbot and the head teacher of the Bonpo Monastic Foundation at Dolanji, for providing much stimulation and hospitality.

Among our Simla friends who helped to make our time there a happy one I must particularly mention our dear neighbours Rameshwar and Hede Dayal, both stalwart supporters of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study since its inception, also our old friends Narottam and Sarala Sahgal, and likewise the Governor of Himachal Pradesh and his wife, Admiral and Mrs. Ghandhi.

Charles Bawden obliged me very much by identifying several of the Mongolian names and terms found in Tibetan rendering in the so-called "secret" life of the Sixth Dalai Lama. After my return to Oxford, Nick Allen and Hugh Richardson very kindly offered comments and encouragement on the final draft, and Jim Benson, Wlodzimierz Brus and Helmut Eimer helped me with points of detail. To all of them I offer my sincerest thanks. The views expressed, however, remain entirely my own.

Since one of the main purposes of this study is to communicate the human qualities of these saints to a rather broader audience than my fellow students of Tibetan culture (though I hope they will read it too), I have purposely avoided what is often regarded as a major obstacle to the wider appreciation of Tibetan studies, namely the rendering of Tibetan names in exact transliteration. Instead I have used a simple phonemic system of my own that should not cause much difficulty to the general reader. To satisfy the specialists, however, in the index I supply the original orthography of all names alongside my own renderings. Sometimes I found it difficult to avoid introducing Tibetan spellings in the body of the text. Where that happened I have tried to put them in italics within brackets, except for transliterated text titles which have not been isolated in that way. I can only apologize

for any inconsistencies that remain. For specialists I have also included two appendices containing chronological analyses of the life of Pemalingpa and the “secret” life of the Sixth Dalai Lama according to the principal sources.

While this book was still in press there appeared a most interesting article on Pemalingpa’s main residence at Tamshing: Yoshiro Imaeda and Françoise Pommaret, “Le monastère de gTam-zhing (Tamshing) au Bhoutan central”, *Arts Asiatiques*, xlii (1987), pp. 19–30. I have written a sequel entitled “The Temple-Palace of gTam-zhing as Described by its Founder”, which will appear in *Arts Asiatiques*, xliii (1988).

This book is dedicated to my father, John Arundel Aris, who some thirty years ago first set me on the path of Tibetan and Himalayan studies. He continues in his seventieth year to give me much help and encouragement.

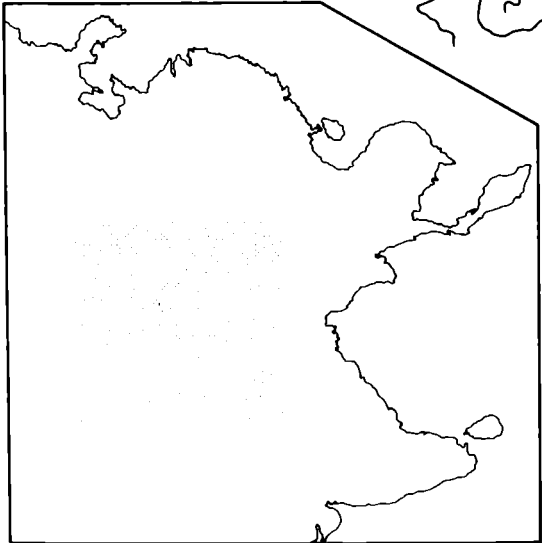
*Wolfson College
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Abbreviations

(For full details see the Bibliography, pp. 249–58 below.)

- BKYSR : Political history of Tibet by W. D. Shakabpa
BMYRS : History of the Nyö clan of Bhutan by Lam Sangak
BPNGG : Anonymous manuscript guide to the Ugyenling temple
BTHTT : Autobiography of Pemalingpa
DTHGY : History of the monasteries of Amdo by Könchok Tenpa Gyaltzen
GBKNG : Account of the discovery of the Sixth Dalai Lama by the regent Sangye Gyamtso
GYBDB : Biography of the Seventh Dalai Lama by Changkya Rölpai Dorje
LCBII : Religious history of Bhutan by Gendun Rinchen
LHTBR : The “secret” life of the Sixth Dalai Lama by Dargye Nomunqan
MPHDZ : Manuscript history of the Gelukpa school in Mönyul
OGGGK : Guide to the temple of Ugyenling attributed to the Sixth Dalai Lama
PKHRT : Lives of the incarnations of Pemalingpa by Kunzang Tenpai Nyima
RCHTT : Verse autobiography of Drondul Lethrolingpa
RPLZT : The collected “rediscoveries” of Pemalingpa
THCKH : The early life of the Sixth Dalai Lama by the regent Sangye Gyamtso
VCBKY : *Vie et chants de 'Brug-pa Kun-legs le yogin*, trans. R. A. Stein (Paris, 1972)



MONGOLIA

GOBI

Wang-ye-lu

Barun-hyt

ALASHAN

Jakrunq?

PARI

Sarkhok

Chuzang

Kumbum

Hsining

Kokonor

AMDO

Lanchow

ORDOS

Hwangho

Yellow River

Great Wall of China

Tsetung (Lulek)

CHINA

Machu

Nyachu

Ditchu

Dzechu

Tachenlu

Lifang
Bethang

Mekong

Saiween

BURMA

TIBET

Tengmior

Ngüichu

KONGPO

YARLUNG

Lhasa

Tsang-po

Shigatse

Nangkartse

Gyangtse

Yemdrok Iso

JAYUL

ARUNACHAL

PRADSH

EVEREST

SHIPATAE

MAHARASHTRA

GUJARAT

SIKKIM

BHUTAN

THANG

MONYUL

Tawang

Ugyenling

Berkhar

ASSAM

BENGAL

INDIA

Brahmaputra

Kathmandu

Bhatgaon

Yalu

Yangtze

MT. KALASH

INDIA

Introduction

SINCE THE TIME of Marco Polo the mysteries of Tibet have exercised an abiding hold on the western imagination. Even as Europe moved slowly towards science and rationality it retained the image of a high, forbidden plateau where esoteric skills were cultivated to the exclusion of almost everything else. When first-hand reports began to be transmitted back by the few travellers who finally succeeded in reaching the Roof of the World, the accounts of magic and mystery actually increased rather than diminished. Today there is still a minor industry devoted to cultivating that image. It has, however, been brought into much sharper relief now that Tibetans have become truly accessible. The dismantling of their traditional society at the hands of Communist China has forced many of the supposed miracle workers to leave their country and come right up to our doorsteps. But the only really significant modification to the popular conception of Tibet as the land of magic occasioned by these steadily increasing contacts since the late eighteenth century has been the humanizing one which has clothed the Tibetans in an abundance of warm emotion and sympathy.

The realization that the west has not been alone in spinning webs of mystery around Tibet comes when Chinese, Indian and Mongolian attitudes prevalent in certain periods are examined. Though less accessible and articulated, they tend to confirm the idea that the wonder-working image of Tibet seems to have developed in very different cultures in response to what looks like a universal fascination for the remote and inaccessible. At the same time one begins to wonder whether perhaps there is some genuine mystery at the core of Tibetan civilization since it attracted the independent notice of very different peoples in this way. Indeed one does not need to look very far into Tibetan literature of any period to see that every traditional account rests on a fundamental basis of magic. In fact there must be few parallels in world history to such a close harmony between the internal and external conceptions of a civiliza-

tion's character, at least on a popular level. It would be quite easy to demonstrate in the case of Tibet that the view from the outside has been determined to some degree by the view from within, that the Tibetan accounts of supernatural happenings provided inspiration for the foreign accounts. But the influence of the one on the other can only have occurred in the way it did if the ground was ripe for it.

This book is a study of a pair of mysteries manifested in the lives of two Buddhist saints from the eastern Himalayas. Both had their origin in an area which, for reasons of geography, language, and ethnic identity, lies outside and beyond the main centre of Tibetan culture. Nevertheless, much of the eastern Himalayas still participates in that empire of the Buddhist religion in its Lamaist form which subsumed so many peoples and regional cultures throughout high Asia. The homes of these saints now lie in the independent kingdom of Bhutan and in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Pemalingpa and the Sixth Dalai Lama suggested themselves as subjects for a case study in the mystique of Lamaism for various reasons. As already noted, they came from adjoining regions and so offer a reasonable basis for comparison. Moreover they are linked by genealogy, since the Sixth Dalai Lama was the direct descendant of Pemalingpa's youngest brother. The significance of the biological connection, however, is probably outweighed by their close cultural relation: both were born to families of hereditary tantric priests of the Nyingmapa school, which claims historical priority over all other schools in Tibetan Buddhism. It can also be argued with reason that Pemalingpa and the Sixth Dalai Lama were the most important and best-known religious figures to emerge from the eastern Himalayas. Still more important from the point of view of the coherence of my subject, the literature in Tibetan concerning these two figures allows the mysteries surrounding their lives to be subjected to a degree of historical analysis. On a more personal note, having myself had the chance of exploring their homelands and visiting their family temples in the Bumthang and Tawang regions, the literature came alive for me in a way that might not otherwise have been possible.

Although in all these respects Pemalingpa and the Sixth Dalai

Lama complement each other conveniently to form a single subject, in other ways they stand well apart. Broadly speaking, the mysteries of Pemalingpa were of his own making while those of the Dalai Lama were made by others. The former were in the nature of spiritual miracles while the latter were human puzzles, though there is an element of both in each. Their lives, moreover, were separated by over one and a half centuries, and whereas Pemalingpa spent most of his on the local level of isolated frontier districts long before Bhutan was unified, the Dalai Lama's fate was naturally conditioned by matters of state that lay at the very centre of Tibetan political life. Yet it is hoped these very differences will help to underline the broad dimensions and wide potential of the subject: the issue of mystery crops up almost everywhere one looks in Tibetan and Himalayan culture in all periods. It is both a condition and a tool, influencing attitudes, motivation and character. As a fitting subject for historical enquiry it belongs to the realm of *mentalités*, whose effect on the real process of history is now often held to have surpassed that of battles, kings and constitutions.

There are many theoretical positions open to the modern historian: structuralism, neo-structuralism, post-structuralism, nihilism, individualism, pragmatism and doubtless many others too. All are western constructs which developed out of conditions very far removed from those obtaining in the societies that gave birth to the mysteries studied here. To impose on oriental societies the models which these various schools have developed for the analysis of European societies can only lead to confusion, distortion or over-simplification unless those societies are first studied from their own viewpoints and through the products of their own great and literate cultures. But to what extent can the symbols, habits of thought and belief systems of one people be made truly intelligible to another whose own are very different? Many people today seem content to disregard this basic problem in epistemology when it comes to Tibet. Particularly the great number of westerners who now go through the motions of adopting the external forms of Tibetan Buddhism seem to believe that the myths, gods and symbols of Tibet can be transposed to a western setting and have precisely the same relevance, value and power there as in their land of origin.

Perhaps after all this is one way in which the mysterious process of acculturation sometimes operates in human society. It seems to me, however, that a serious respect for another people's culture must start with a real effort to understand it. But in trying to do that, all we can rely on to start with are our own cultural presuppositions and personal prejudices from which escape is difficult.

One key to the problem, I believe, lies in language—in the simple recognition that habits of mind and attitudes of belief are revealed not just through a choice of words but through tone and nuance. It is a question of trying to cultivate the ear to recognize formal clues at a semi-conscious or intuitive level. Even grammatical analysis depends on such intuitive grasp. This sort of fluency, which depends more on mental sympathy than on verbal dexterity, is not easy to teach and can really only be acquired by one's own efforts. In seeking to understand cultures as seemingly remote from our own as those of the Himalayan regions and Tibet I believe this approach will continue to yield more dividends than any amount of neo- or post-structuralism.

So I have tried to write this by paying close attention to what is heard in the original sources, though I readily grant that what I have heard is bound to be different from what others will hear. Often the language of Tibetan religious texts, particularly some types of hagiography, are so convoluted and abstruse as to elude me completely. At other times I think one can hear truly human voices speaking directly across the barriers of time and culture, and it is upon those that I have tended to focus. For Pemalingpa I have depended very heavily on his own autobiography. I read it in the hope that, true to the genre wherever it is found, the author would reveal more of himself in it than he ever intended. This proved to be the case and so some of my effort went into isolating a sub-text of unintended revelations. A large part of the secret biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama turned out to be taken from an invented autobiography, so the true tone of that work also demanded careful listening. Above all I have tried to reveal these saints as human beings rather than as gods. Though I certainly have no wish to displace them from the latter category, I believe their future reputation will

not benefit from the sort of uncritical adulation western devotees reserve for such figures. There one finds a conscious suspension of disbelief that is a contradiction both of traditional faith, which is deep and uncontrived, and of modern rationalism, which is our own heritage.

However, while seeking to disclose the human motivation in the lives of these saints I am conscious of having had to go to the other extreme by using some words that have pejorative connotations in any language: "charlatan", "rogue", "impersonator" and the like. No amount of verbal or mental wriggling can help one to escape the fact that the people to whom these descriptions apply sought to disguise their true nature in the interests of self-advancement. Nevertheless I would contend it is not unreasonable to look on them with compassion, sympathy, and even admiration—if only for the ingenuity of their stratagems. By their use of deception they not only enriched other people's lives besides their own, they surely also made a lasting contribution to the cultural and spiritual life of their regions. They did no harm to anyone. One could even argue that in a certain sense they became the people they pretended to be when accepted as such by their devotees. With that realization one begins to enter the peculiar area of twilight in which they operated to everyone's mutual profit. So I believe it is possible to regard them in terms other than the conventional one which would see them as monsters of iniquity. Instead Pemalingpa and the Sixth Dalai Lama's impersonator might perhaps be seen as angels in disguise. As for the true Sixth, he is a different case altogether. He strove against all opposition to be the person he believed himself to be. His rebellion against the role imposed on him by society was certainly one of the causes of his death.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that although deceptions form the recurring leitmotif to this study, it would have been easy to select the lives of other saints that convey a very different picture to the one given here. One has only to read the biographies of those lamas who were principally concerned with the insights of philosophical logic to become aware of another strand in Tibetan Buddhism that is only hinted at here. Nor should we fall into the trap of supposing that all those who

followed the esoteric path were necessarily frauds. Indeed it would be most presumptuous to try and pass value judgements of this sort. Where, however, the evidence appears to lead one directly to that sort of conclusion then it must be squarely faced.

While it is hoped the lives of these lamas can be appreciated on their own grounds as unfolding narratives, to understand the significance of their careers (and indeed the careers of many other powerful lamas who preceded and followed them) it is necessary to situate them briefly in the context of history. Pemalingpa in particular stands in that long period which extended from the so-called "time of fragmentation" following the collapse of the Tibetan empire in the ninth century until the Fifth Dalai Lama came to power in 1642. These centuries were filled with a number of rival and overlapping hegemonies linked to the rising schools of Tibetan Buddhism and their patron families. Several of these monastic schools (notably the Sakyapa, Tselpa, Drikhungpa and Karmapa) owed their secular ascendancy in large part to Mongol support and favour. The period of direct Mongol overlordship began in 1207 with Tibetan submission to Genghis Khan, and the relationship took on the character of "priest and patron" when firstly Sakya Pandita and then his nephew Phakpa were appointed viceroys of Tibet by the Mongol rulers. It was a relationship which all succeeding Chinese dynasties claimed to inherit from the Mongol emperors of the Yuan dynasty.

The period of the Sakyapa viceroyalty came to an end in 1358 when the leader of the Phamodrupa family, Changchub Gyaltsen, took over control from his capital at Nedong in the Yarlung valley. The succeeding heads of his family, which descended from an ancient clan known as the Lang, had occupied the throne of the prince-abbots of the Thel monastery and they had been appointed by the Sakyapa authorities to control the myriarchy of Nedong centred in the Yarlung valley. By playing on the rivalries of neighbouring myriarchies and by acting with great personal courage in a succession of bitter conflicts, Changchub Gyaltsen eventually brought all power into his own hands. The Phamodrupa rule which he instituted and which survived through several generations was similar to that

of the Sakyapas in so far as it was based on monastic principles, but it achieved a definite break with the past by "Tibetanizing" the hitherto Mongol character of government.

The Phamodrupa rulers were eventually displaced in 1481 by a line of their own ministers, the Rinpungpa. Pemalingpa's life spanned the transition and there are several references in his autobiography to the struggles accompanying the change-over. As we shall see, he was peripherally involved in these conflicts as a result of his search for the patronage of the Tibetan nobility, a quest which took him far beyond the confines of his home in the Bumthang district in what is now Bhutan.

The Rinpungpa were in turn supplanted in about 1565 by their own ministers, the governors of the Tsang province. Neither the Rinpungpa nor the Tsangpa families ever provided the hereditary incumbents to a powerful ecclesiastical estate in the manner of the Sakyapas and Phamodrupas, and to that extent they represent a return to the principles of lay rule which had disappeared with the early dynasty of kings. Both families, however, acquired at least part of their legitimacy from their religious aura as patrons of the great Karmapa lamas who stood at the head of the Kagyüpa ("School of Oral Transmission").

Ultimately it was the threat posed by the Tsangpa rulers to the growing power of the "reformed" school of the Gelukpa which occasioned the most fundamental change in Tibet's fortunes. In order to withstand the threat posed to this school by the Tsangpa rulers, the Dalai Lama known as "The Great Fifth" sought the alliance of the Khoshuud branch of the Oirat Mongols, who were settled in the Kokonor region under their powerful ruler G^üushi Khan. In 1642 G^üushi Khan defeated the last of the Tsangpa rulers and installed the Dalai Lama on the throne as the religious master of the country while in theory retaining the secular overlordship in his own hands. But the career of the Great Fifth gained its own momentum, the power of the Khoshuud declined, and it is clear that by the end of his long reign in 1682 the Dalai Lama had effectively united the whole country under his own personal rule and that of the school which he headed. It was this rule which his successor, the much loved Sixth Dalai Lama, was supposed to inherit in

full. The personal and political difficulties which attended that inheritance form the dominant theme to his life. Although in the end the problems which beset him on all sides triumphed and he was defeated by them, the institution he personified survived. Despite a long and difficult relationship with the Manchu dynasty of China, which claimed to provide the ultimate authority over Tibet, the reincarnating Dalai Lamas and their Gelukpa government were to continue into the second half of the twentieth century as the legitimate and undisputed rulers of their own country.

This thumbnail sketch of Tibetan history has had to emphasize those names and dates which figure most prominently in any account of the region's rise to statehood. At the same time it must be understood that much of what really occupied the lives of ordinary people had very little to do with the idea or institution of the nation state. National consciousness, in so far as it existed in any period, was limited to some of the inhabitants of the main Tsangpo valley and neighbouring districts to the north and south. For all the peoples on the periphery, both settled and nomadic, it would seem that the overriding claims of ethnicity, allied to a broad sense of belonging to a wider cultural empire that subsumed all ethnic groups, far outweighed any allegiance to a political state as we know it. Even at the centre, and particularly before the Fifth Dalai Lama came to power, if a corporate identity is expressed this is often done by referring to a particular region on the plateau where the same dialect was spoken rather than by speaking of "Tibet". Family histories, local chronicles, guides to individual shrines, rites for the placation of local deities and, most important, the lives of saints who gained fame in each locality—all these stand witness to the immense power of localism in all periods. At the same time there were writers who sought to depict the wider scene made up of these local fragments, or who took pains to put local happenings in a wider perspective that reflected the slow and difficult emergence of a national sentiment.

That sentiment was invariably expressed in exclusively religious terms: the land is described as "the field destined to be tamed" by the activity of *bodhisattvas* in their divine and human forms. Scriptures were systematically combed in search

of prophecies that retrospectively justified the human ascendancy of such *bodhisattvas*. In a tantric milieu where the “subjugation of the phenomenal world” by ritual means formed part of the legitimate activity of priests, it was but a small step to extend the meaning of this term to include not just the forces of nature, visible and invisible, but man and all his works. In the highly competitive arena where the various schools vied with each other for lay patronage, their struggles could sometimes therefore take on the character of divine battles waged between opposing gods and their human manipulators. Tactics and weapons were found in the fierce tantric methods of subduing the “self”, personified into the external world as the enemy who hinders the doctrine.

The unsavoury, not to say cruel, encounters between rival churchmen which could result from these situations seem very far removed from the true spirit of Buddhism. Their importance, however, should not be exaggerated: antagonism between schools was a particular feature only of those periods marked by the absence of strong central authority. Any number of lamas could then rise to fill the vacuum, and because the whole basis of their authority lay beyond the physical world (though encompassing it too) they provided far more convincing figures than the petty local rulers who were totally circumscribed by the confines of their little polities. Lamas were able to transcend those confines mainly by their travels, thus extending the reach of their own schools and of the whole cultural empire of which they formed a part.

Travelling was absolutely integral to their whole existence, whether for study or teaching, almsbegging or pilgrimage, the construction or restoration of temples. For many yogin types the activity of wandering and turning every good and evil encountered on the path to their spiritual advantage was actually prescribed by the traditions of their calling inherited directly from India. The rhythms of this peripatetic existence were punctuated by periods of stillness and immobility, when the lamas occupied themselves with meditation, study and teaching. But the lives of many of them give the impression that their retreats were secondary to their travels. Since both activities, however, were sanctioned by scriptural authority and supported

by custom and historical precedent, we find them assuming different importance at different stages in the lives of most lamas. The same is of course not true for the settled communities of monks attached to individual monasteries, who were by and large meant to stay put in one place throughout their lives. Even they could often find opportunities for legitimate travel in pursuit of their monastery's business, whether for secular or spiritual ends or some combination of these. However I am dealing here with their masters, free figures who by virtue of their individual prestige and attainments were able to travel everywhere at will. We shall see how Pemalingpa certainly conformed to this pattern, and though the Sixth Dalai Lama had the severest restraints placed on his movements, as soon as he won his freedom he embarked on what look like aimless journeys in central Tibet. The lama who came to impersonate him after his death was an incurable wanderer, both in his dreams and in actuality.

The literature disclosing these various themes in the lives of Buddhist saints depends for its conceptual basis on a peculiar and powerful paradox. On the one hand Buddhism teaches that enlightenment is only possible after eradicating the notion of the "self", construed as the cause of the "clinging" that leads to all suffering. On the other hand it is impossible to treat the life of any being credited with that accomplishment without first according some lasting value and status to him as a person—that is, to an impermanent entity fully imbued with the notion of "self". If written as a biography the work dealing with a saint must therefore reveal the individual's non-individuality. If written as an autobiography it is a self-glorification of non-self. These apparently overwhelming contradictions seem to be resolved through the doctrine of the *bodhisattva*, which looks to the saint as a fully enlightened being who has deferred his final *nirvāṇa* for the sake of all sentient beings. Like the lotus with its roots embedded in mud, the saint breeds on worldly attachments without being sullied by them. Through innumerable lives he assumes the character of a "self" in order to demonstrate, again and again, its final destruction. To achieve the full effect of that demonstration it has to be recorded as a model for future generations.

This is the theoretical rationale which appears to lie behind most forms of Buddhist hagiography (and “auto-hagiography” too, if that term can be used). Inevitably there is wide interplay between the imposition of the unchanging ideal and the ever-shifting circumstances of mundane reality found in the lives of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of lamas who achieved the status of saints. The socio-historical reasons for the development of this form of literature within Tibetan Buddhism to a scale unprecedented in other Buddhist cultures will only be found when its origins and internal development have been revealed and contrasted with other examples of the genre surviving both in neighbouring civilizations and in the west.

Meanwhile it is worth observing that the enormous body of writing devoted to saints served both to reflect and reinforce the unchanging (or very slowly changing) nature of Tibetan and Himalayan societies. The function of the literature as a model and stereotype meant that lamas constantly relived the lives of their predecessors. For this reason the traditional account of a saintly life composed in the latter half of the twentieth century is not qualitatively different from one dating from, say, the thirteenth century. The converse is also true, for no matter how long ago some saints may have lived, their lives are still read by a traditional readership as if they took place just yesterday. Far from being remote and inaccessible figures, the saints continue to populate the traditional Buddhist world even as it is assailed from all sides by external pressures in myriad forms. While Pemalingpa and the Sixth Dalai Lama continue to live and have meaning for that world, it is hoped this study will help a little towards bringing them to life in the world beyond.

PART ONE
Pemalingpa
and his
Hidden Treasures



WHETHER ONE takes the view that Pemalingpa was a fraudulent and unscrupulous deceiver of his credulous disciples, a view clearly shared by many of his contemporaries, or whether on the other hand one is inclined to give some kind of qualified credence to the Tolkienesque account of his “discoveries”, there is no question but that this Bhutanese “king of treasure-revealers” was an extraordinarily successful lama whose legacy is still with us today.¹ The “treasure-texts” which he claimed to have unearthed from their places of concealment both in Bhutan and Tibet fill twenty substantial volumes.² The tantric rituals they contain are still performed far beyond the borders of Bhutan, while in Bhutan itself they enjoy the status of official, government rites. Most of the Buddhist temples and monasteries he built or restored are still standing in central Bhutan, greatly hallowed by the saint’s memory. The sacred dances he and his relatives composed on the basis of the divine visions they experienced are performed in all the local and state festivals of Bhutan. Even his early training as a blacksmith, normally a despised profession, is recalled today when certain swords are claimed as the work of his hands.³

The strength of his legacy is particularly seen in the way his figure provided the genealogical source for the authority of rulers in Bhutan and Tibet. His descendants include not only the present royal family of Bhutan but practically the whole of that country’s nobility too. The Sixth Dalai Lama of Tibet acquired a respectable ancestry by virtue of his descent not from Pemalingpa himself but from someone who happened to have been his youngest brother. The legacy was further disseminated in Tibet and Bhutan by the multiple lineages of his and his son’s recognized reincarnations.

Like so many successful figures of history, Pemalingpa has been turned by the very strength of his posthumous role into a remote, iconesque figure. In the popular mind he is remembered more for his works of magic than for anything else. These are recalled not in the manner described in person by the saint himself but as distant legends similar in character to those told of every Buddhist saint. In the iconography of the paintings still produced of him, his short and rather corpulent figure sits appropriately swathed and crowned as no more than a symbol

of the man he was. Yet the possibility of filling that figure with real flesh and blood and hearing its own voice is much greater than for many who sit alongside Pemalingpa in the long gallery of Buddhist saints. Even if he had not become such an important figure in Himalayan life and culture, his autobiography would still be worth reading and studying for the insights it provides into the mind of the man and the society in which he lived. As it is, we can begin to see how he came to occupy the central place given to him by posterity: it followed naturally and triumphantly from the success he experienced during his own lifetime.

The Autobiography

I Peling shall write my biography
 Not to display my good qualities
 But with the benefit of others in mind
 And to engender happiness among the faithful.⁴

The opening verse of the autobiography echoes its title: *The Biography of Pemalingpa, the Treasure-Revealer of Bumthang: The So-Called Garland of Jewels which Beautifies Everything by its Light Rays, Written in a Manner Calculated to Engender Happiness among the Fortunate*.⁵ It is found in volume 14 of *The Recovered Teachings of the Great Pema Lingpa*, all of which appeared in 1976 in a new edition prepared at the behest of the present king of Bhutan's paternal grandmother, Ashi Phuntsok Chödön, and printed in traditional *pothi* format in Delhi. All works in the collection were recolligaphed for this edition, though it is unclear whether they were copied from surviving manuscripts or from xylographs printed long ago from the old woodblocks preserved at Künzangdrak in Bumthang. (These blocks are now almost totally destroyed by woodworm.) Dünjom Rinpoché, who was regarded as the head lama of the Nyingmapa school and who died in 1987, supervised the preparation of this edition and himself contributed a brief work⁶ on the later incarnations of Pemalingpa to follow on from the one written in 1873 by the saint's eighth "verbal incarnation", Künzang Tenpai Nyima (1843–91).⁷ The text of

the autobiography as it has come down to us appears trustworthy and authentic. There are, however, a few problems stemming from the way it was set down by the saint and completed by his patron and disciple Gyalwa Döndrup, who was the “prefect” (*nangso*) of Lhalung.

The events narrated by Pemalingpa in the first person cover the years from his birth in 1450 down to 1519, three years before his death in 1521. Thereafter the story is taken up in the third person by Gyalwa Döndrup and continued till Pemalingpa’s final funeral ceremonies, which were held ten months after his death in the first month of 1521. The whole circumstances are fortunately revealed in the colophon composed by Gyalwa Döndrup.⁸ He records a conversation which took place between Pemalingpa and himself at Tsampa on the twenty-fifth of the eleventh month in the year of the Dragon (1520). He begged Pemalingpa to bring his autobiography up to date by relating the events which had not so far been recorded. Pemalingpa explained that he had himself set down in writing everything that had occurred down to the time when he had been infuriated by a hen that had been interfering with the offerings arranged for a ritual performed for one of his devotees. Pemalingpa had thrown a stone pestle at it. The imprint of his hand had appeared on the stone, and the description of the event is duly found in a passage dealing with the year 1482 when Pemalingpa was thirty-two years old.⁹ Thereafter, he says, there had been no time to think carefully about what had followed, but in response to the repeated demands of the lama Tashi Gyalpo he had recounted his memories and that lama had written these down “exactly as recounted by the lord in person without minimizing or exaggerating”. There is no reason to doubt this, because the style and structure of the section actually written by Pemalingpa in his own hand for the years 1450–82 are identical to those for the years 1483–1518 which he dictated to Tashi Gyalpo. By contrast the break between the dictated account and the concluding section for the years 1518–21 composed by Gyalwa Döndrup is abrupt and immediately noticeable.¹⁰

In the same conversation Pemalingpa disclosed to his patron that in the section dictated by him to Tashi Gyalpo “the upper

and lower parts, the earlier and later events have become confused and important things have been omitted, and so there are many mistakes and faults".¹¹ He therefore gave permission to Gyalwa Döndrup to remove these blemishes and add an account of the remaining years. Gyalwa Döndrup finishes the colophon with the words: "I have composed the passage dealing with events after the meeting at Shingo [1518], and I have taken from the Collected Works certain discourses which he [Pemalingpa] gave on his life story. I have also collected together and included a few of the scattered accounts of divine revelations [composed by Pemalingpa himself] which had not been inserted in the autobiography. A full account would have been inconceivably long and, fearful of the amount of writing necessary, it has not been given here."¹²

Pemalingpa's admission of chronological problems in the dictated section covering the years 1482–1518 is confirmed by the actual reading of the text. It is clear that whatever efforts Gyalwa Döndrup may have taken to remove these problems, some certainly remain. Moreover it seems likely that he introduced further problems while interpolating Pemalingpa's own, separate accounts of the divine revelations which had frequently come to him in dreams and visions. The wording of these accounts suggests that Pemalingpa was in the habit of recording these as soon as they came to him. (For example, "... and after waking up I have written down just a brief account of this dream".¹³) Gyalwa Döndrup, on inheriting these notes by his lama, was hard pressed to decide where they should be inserted in the main narrative because except in seven instances the dates provided by Pemalingpa throughout his autobiography are identified in the sexagenary cycle only by one of the twelve animals and not by its corresponding element. For instance, in the eighth sexagenary cycle (1447–1503) the year of the Horse comes round five times, in 1450, 1462, 1474, 1486 and 1498, corresponding respectively to the elements Iron, Water, Wood, Fire and Earth. Thus in the next cycle the first Horse year would be the Iron Horse of 1510. In trying, therefore, to decide where a dream dated Iron Horse should be placed in the narrative, Gyalwa Döndrup clearly ignored the gratuitous information provided by the saint that he was sixty-one years old at the time

(sixty by western reckoning, that is 1510) and placed the event in a Horse year which lacked its identifying element and which can be calculated from the internal evidence of the text to correspond to 1486 when the saint was only thirty-seven (or thirty-six by western reckoning). In this way the reader is presented with the exasperating situation whereby he finds Pemalingpa aged sixty-one at folio 92a, and after an interval of many years, again sixty-one at folio 177b. But in this case the problem can be resolved, and in three cases where the corresponding elements have (unusually) been supplied they are clearly wrong but can also be corrected.¹⁴ Similarly the first Snake year¹⁵ in the narrative is realized to be 1473 and not 1461 only by working backwards from events in the next Monkey year which we know from other sources¹⁶ to be 1476 and not 1464. This is important because it presents us with something of a blank for the years 1458–73. Pemalingpa chose to keep rather quiet on the subject of his youth between the ages of nine and twenty-four: little is said and nothing can be dated.¹⁷ By contrast the years between 1490 and 1497 are so muddled it seems impossible to sort them out.¹⁸

The chronological difficulties are not so severe as to prevent one from discerning a dateable sequence covering almost the whole of Pemalingpa's life. The opportunity of fixing hard dates at regular intervals amidst so much else that is by nature fluid and slippery falls into combination with another feature of the autobiography which also helps to engender confidence, namely the treatment of its geographical setting. The names of even the smallest villages where Pemalingpa performed the most minor rites are all faithfully recorded along with the names of every region, temple, monastery and fortress he ever had occasion to visit. All the journeys he constantly undertook in and around his homeland in central Bhutan and across the Himalayas to central Tibet conform precisely to what is known from maps and the accounts of modern travellers. At the same time many of his contemporaries who find mention in the autobiography are known from other sources. Pemalingpa may have lived his life in a world of dreams, fancies and visions, counterfeit or not, but almost the entire temporal, spatial and human setting of his autobiography can be confirmed and

authenticated by what is independently known of the world he lived in.

Apart from the interpolated accounts of dreams and visions, copied from Pemalingpa's own notes, also a number of his songs, the autobiography as a whole is marked by a total absence of quotations from other texts. It is moreover quite free of the learned allusions and numerical categories which most Tibetan authors introduce into their writings. Nor has Pemalingpa seen fit to impose any sort of scheme onto his life by dividing it into chapters. Instead we are faced with a flowing succession of incidents, unpunctuated by longer reflection or hindsight. The whole continuum of his life is presented as an affirmation of his destined role as the earthly representative of the divine sage Padmasambhava. To the extent that no external device has been used to structure that continuum, the autobiography must surely reflect something of the natural rhythm of events, both major and minor, which occupied the life of its author.

The lack of scholastic preoccupation is matched by an absence of literary polish. This again is a real advantage, because the language can be taken to reflect the natural speech of common discourse in the *lingua franca* used throughout Lamaist society. Pemalingpa's own mother tongue was the archaic dialect of Bumthang,¹⁹ but what he used in his memoirs was a form of simple literary Tibetan intelligible to the whole range of his disciples from every corner of the Lamaist world. In particular the lama who took down his dictation for the bulk of the work seems to have been a native of central Tibet.²⁰ He may have had no knowledge of the Bumthang speech and it could be for that reason no dialect expressions from Bumthang are found in the work at all.

Pemalingpa quite often commits the solecism of using honorific expressions towards himself, though this is probably as much a fault of expression as a reflection of the certainty of his divine role. That role, as he saw it, never encompassed the qualities of a scholar. In his own list of his disciples, the scholars among them come last after all the various types of wonder-working yogins.²¹ Similarly in songs which allude by turn to all the different kinds of religious practitioners who made up the

religious society of that period, the scholars are usually accorded a low place.²² Pemalingpa is only once defensive when it comes to his lack of scholarly achievement. At the end of one of his songs he adds the apology: "May scholars not pour scorn on it."²³ Some of his contemporaries would certainly have looked on the language he used as a sort of semi-barbarous dog-Latin. The apology, however, has a clear note of warning: the words of the sage may be somewhat crude and untutored, but they come from a divine source which is not to be repudiated.

Antecedents

Pemalingpa was far more concerned to establish which bodies he had occupied in his previous lives than to describe the ancestry of the family he was born into during his present life. His former embodiments are explained in detail, while his family finds only passing mention. However, before examining his own account of his successive reincarnations (and this will give a clear picture of how he saw his role), the history of his family can be sketched from other sources.

Pemalingpa's paternal grandfather, Tenpai Nyima, was born in 1382 into the family of the hereditary Buddhist hierarchs of the Sombrang temple in the Ura valley of Bumthang.²⁴ This line of hierarchs belonging to the "Old School" of the Nyingmapa was founded by a lama of the Nyö clan, Demchok (alias Nyötön Trulshik Chöjé, 1179–1265), who had come south to Ura from Tibet in fulfilment of a prophecy.²⁵ His ancestors are traced back through seventeen generations of the Nyö clan to a legendary figure called Jathul Karpo, a divine son of the Gods of Clear Light.²⁶ The local branch of the clan in Ura seems to have pursued the same profession of hereditary tantric priests as the main branch in Tibet. They took some of their brides from a family living in the adjoining region of Kurtö which claimed descent from the famous treasure-hunter Guru Chöwang (1212–73). Later they married into the older lay aristocracy of Ura itself. Their religious authority seems to have derived both from their guardianship of a set of their own family rituals,

some of which they performed seasonally to control the guardian spirits of the region, and also from continuing contacts with the main centres of Buddhism in Tibet.

Tenpai Nyima and his twin brother Jamyang Drakpa Özer (1382–1442) lost their father when they were three years old.²⁷ Till the age of twenty-nine they took it in turns to sit on the family throne at Sombrang. Tenpai Nyima then embarked on a course of study in Tibet which brought him into contact with the most accomplished lamas of his day: the First Dalai Lama, Gendündrup (1391–1474), the Fifth Karmapa Lama, Deshin Shekpa (1384–1415), the author of the *Blue Annals*, Gö Shönupel (1392–1481) and the great bridge-building *mahāsiddha*, Thang-tong Gyalpo (1385–1464).²⁸ It was Gendündrup who is said to have persuaded him to accept only minor ordination to enable him later to marry and so perpetuate his “lineage of bodhisattvas”. After returning home to Ura at the age of thirty-five, his twin continued to occupy the family throne and he himself founded the monastery of Gön Langdrang. There he gathered many disciples, including a nun from the family of the Tsampa Lama in whom he is said to have perceived the physical qualities of a *dākinī*. He took her as his consort. After the birth of a daughter his disciples performed rites to ensure a male heir, “by making offerings above and giving alms below”. This is said to have resulted in the birth of Pemalingpa’s father, Döndrup Zangpo (the date of his birth is not known). Another son, Künzangphel, came later.

The monastery of Gön Langdrang suffered a disastrous fire during which all the family’s books, apparently kept there rather than at Sombrang, were destroyed. These included Tenpai Nyima’s own autobiography, several volumes composed by him in draft on the Nyö doctrines, together with the actual texts of these doctrines and those of the Phurba tantra which was regarded as the family’s special preserve. The continuity of the family’s original spiritual inheritance is therefore said to have come to an end with this fire. Thereafter their rites seem to have been based in large part on the revelations and compositions of the elder twin, Jamyang Drakpa Özer, who held the family seat at Sombrang. The ruins of the Gön Langdrang monastery

are said to be still visible, overgrown by forest at a place called Kyitrabung.

Döndrup Zangpo was about nineteen when both his parents died and the monastery burnt down.²⁹ He, his brother and sister then moved back to Sombrang, where they were cared for by their uncle. His sister, *Ashi* Drubthob Zangmo, eventually gained some fame as the consort of one of her uncle's teachers, the bridge-building saint Thangtong Gyalpo (see above). Her remains are still enshrined in a stupa at Sombrang to this day. The younger brother Kunzangphel became a monk and little else is known about him. The elder brother Döndrup Zangpo himself left Sombrang and went to the village of Chel in the Tang district of Bumthang. There he married a lady called Pema Drönma from a pastoral family related to his own mother's family at Tsampa. They had nine sons of whom the eldest was Pemalingpa, born in 1450.

Of his eight brothers, two of them (Dzömdar and Pema Tashi) are said to have died young, while almost nothing is known of four of them (Aphel, Alek, Chöbum and Gyamdar).³⁰ Guru, the brother born immediately after Pemalingpa, was married off according to the command of the ruler of Bumthang into the noble family of the *Dung* of Ngang, who lacked a male heir.³¹ Pemalingpa's youngest brother Ugyen Zangpo married into a family of religious nobility in the Tawang region, and the Sixth Dalai Lama descended from that union.³² That these two brothers should have been regarded as eligible husbands indicates the status the family enjoyed, but Pemalingpa's brief account of his youth makes it clear that the family was, at least in material terms, only slightly above the common peasantry. The difference between the religious nobility and the ordinary public in this period seems to have been less a matter of economics than of local standing and reputation.

Pemalingpa's religious calling in no way led to the severing of close ties with his family that is normally expected of a Buddhist master, because this is not always regarded as necessary for the lamas of the Old School. Indeed for those lamas who marry it is impossible to renounce formal contacts with the world. And so we find Pemalingpa's uncles, brothers and

cousins, and later his own consorts, children, nephews and nieces fully participating in his career. His rise was a family affair that was bound to affect them all.

The circumstances of his birth and family find only the most passing reference in the autobiography. He was born as the son of:

...my father Döndrup and my mother the pastoral lady Pema Drönma, in the Nyö clan, in the lineage of a family of tantric priests of the Nyingma school, in the centre of a place shaped like a triangular fire-pit situated in the middle of a pasture of *nama* grass in a valley called Chel, the headwaters of whose river faced north-west and whose lower reaches faced south-east, with the upper part of the valley looking like the fringe of a parasol, in the centre of the Chökhör district within Mön Bumthang.³³

The details of parentage here are subordinated to the axially of the birth itself, which takes place at the central pivot of the locality that provided the backcloth to Pemalingpa's life. There is no attempt to situate that locality in broader geography because for his audience it already lay at the centre of their world.

This comes after a long passage in which Pemalingpa explains all his previous embodiments.³⁴ The sequence is traced forward all the way from the spontaneous origin of the universe out of the uncreated palace of the primordial buddha, Samantabhadra. The divine emanations of Samantabhadra operate on three levels of revelation: outer, inner and secret, corresponding to the doctrines of the historical buddha Śākyamuni, those of the spiritual beings who uphold the Mantrayāna and, most important of all, the teachings of Padmasambhava, Lord of Ugyen.³⁵ It was with this last sage, whose name means "Lotus-Born", that Pemalingpa, whose own name means "He of the Lotus-Place", claimed the most intimate connection. His authority derived entirely from that connection and only incidentally from his human ancestry.

Padmasambhava appears to have been one of several Indian tantric sages who assisted in the conversion of Tibet to Buddhism at the time of King Trisong Detsen. He is said to have been born in the land of Ugyen, identified now with Uḍḍiyāna in the Swat valley of present-day Pakistan. He is associated parti-

cularly with the construction of Samyé, Tibet's first Buddhist monastery, in c. 779. In later history he became a cult figure of the greatest importance, particularly for the Old School of the Nyingmapa to which Pemalingpa's family belonged. This is true to the extent that he practically overshadows the historical buddha Śākyamuni. Above all he came to be recognized as the single person most responsible for promulgating the magical and mystical teachings enshrined in the tantras. A profusion of legends and esoteric rituals were credited to him.

Pemalingpa's version of the life of Padmasambhava combines a miraculous version, according to which he is born out of a lotus in the lake of Danakośa, and a "rational" version wherein he is the son of king Indrabodhi of Uḍḍiyāna.³⁶ Both accounts are found in biographies of Padmasambhava composed (or "discovered") prior to Pemalingpa.³⁷ The sketch of his life continues with the initiations he received in the human and divine worlds, some of which were conferred on him simply by the display of hand-gestures (*mudrā*). He then spreads the teachings received throughout the known world. All kinds of countries, real, mythical and paradisial, are included: India, China and Tazig (broadly Persia; cf. Tajikistan), Gesar (a country presumably named after Tibet's epic hero, Gesar of Ling), Asha, Drusha and Bheta (various Turco-Mongol tribes in contact with Tibet in the early period), Pemachen (a paradise), Thokar (Tokharistan?), Kamarupa (Assam), Marutse (a paradise?), Ugyen (Uḍḍiyāna), Shambhala (the mythical land where the Kālacakra cycle was promulgated), Zahor (perhaps Mandi in present Himachal Pradesh), Khaché (Kashmir), and Belpo (the land of the Newars in Nepal).³⁸ After visiting all these countries Padmasambhava was then invited to Tibet by King Trisong Detsen. The messengers who had come to fetch him are aghast when he throws the gold they offer him into the sky ("All appearances are of the nature of gold", he says), but they are placated and amazed when he turns sand into gold for them. On the journey to Tibet he subjugates the local spirits and demons and converts them to Buddhism. In particular the twelve *Tenma* goddesses and the twenty-one *Genyen* spirits promise in the future to supply the yogins with all their requisites and to guard them against

obstacles. The king describes his land in unflattering terms as never having previously been visited by a buddha. The foundations of the Samyé monastery are laid in the year of the Tiger and the final consecration takes place in the year of the Sheep.³⁹

The king has a daughter called Pemasel (“Clear Lotus”), born to his consort Jomo Changchub Drölma. The princess becomes enamoured of religion at the age of five and receives many teachings from Padmasambhava and others. At the age of eight she is struck down by illness caused by the local demons, and the King of the Sky comes to take her away. Padmasambhava explains to her father that her illness cannot be cured since it really derives from the evil karma amassed in a previous existence when, as the senior queen of King Bhimakutra of Makuta, she murdered the son of a junior queen. Padmasambhava touches her head with a box containing all his scriptures and makes an aspiration that she should fulfil them in her future lives. (The “treasure-texts” contained in the box were later hidden by Padmasambhava to be rediscovered by Pemalingpa as the incarnation of the princess Pemasel.⁴⁰)

Padmasambhava then reveals his prophecy to the king on how the princess will be reincarnated. She is to experience, firstly, five “impure” lives during which she will continue to work off the effects of the bad karma and, secondly, seven “pure” lives—“pure” because of the power of the teachings already conferred on her by the guru. During these last seven lives she is destined to reveal some of the treasure-teachings hidden by the guru and thereby accomplish the welfare of many sentient beings.⁴¹

At this point Pemalingpa introduces his own account of Pemasel’s future lives (his own past lives). The account is presumably to be taken as the product of his own memory of these lives, and so they carry his own authority in tune with the guru’s prophecy. The five “impure” lives fell to three successive beggar-women in the valley of Yarlung, then a white bitch-dog at the village of Ölka in Yarlung, and finally a ewe in Lhasa.⁴² These lives having cleared away the evil karma, the “pure” lives began with two existences as nuns.⁴³ Both were historical figures who became the tantric consorts of two of the most famous treasure-hunting lamas prior to Pemalingpa himself,

namely Nyang Nyima Özer (1124–1192 or 1136–1204) and Guru Chöwang (1212–73). It has already been noticed how some of Pemalingpa's ancestors had intermarried with a family descending from Guru Chöwang. A convincing detail is found in this brief account of that lama's union with the nun: one of their three sons was sent as a "hostage" to secure wood from the people of Mön Lungnag in what is now Bhutan. The wood, it seems, was needed to build the famous Guru temple in the Lhodrak province of Tibet.

The next embodiment was a certain Rinchendrak, hereditary tantric priest from Drongsar in the Tsang province of Tibet, who became the disciple of the next most important treasure-hunter, Ugyenlingpa (1329–67). It is said that "he made a minute examination of his own mind and so came to understand the profound meaning of the nature of mind itself".⁴⁴

Rinchendrak was followed by someone referred to only by his assumed or acquired name of Pema Lendreltsel, born in the year of the Iron Hare (1291?), but identified by Pemalingpa's eighth verbal incarnation as one Pagangpa Rinchen Tsuldor.⁴⁵ He is said to have been the product of an incestuous union of a tantric priest and his sister at a village called Drinthang south of the Loro and Nyel districts of south-east Tibet. He was born quite destitute, despised by all. One day a monk came to give him a scroll of paper and explained that if he studied its contents he would obtain magical powers. The monk vanished. The scroll was seen to contain detailed instructions as to where and when his destined "treasure-texts" were to be found. These are duly recovered, but on reaching home he is accused by his neighbours of perpetrating a fraud. He decides to wander off into the world and is accompanied by a small band of disciples. At the cave of Chimphuk above Samyé he has a vision of the goddess Vajravārāhī who commands him to go to Lhasa. There he meets the third Karmapa Lama, Rangjung Dorje (1284–1339), who asks him for a sight of his "treasure-texts". The saint explains he only has the original "yellow pages" of the texts since he has had no time to copy them out, but the Karmapa is delighted and takes their blessings on his head. That night the Karmapa dreams that a red lady wearing bone-ornaments commands him to request the full initiation of the texts, and so the next

day he receives from the saint the proper authorization for the cycle known as the “The Heart-Drops of the Skyfarers” (*mKha’-’gro snying-thig*). After further travels and teachings the saint meets a lady in the lower region of the Nyel district and for the duration of a month “he took care to have body-contact with her in conditions of secrecy”. He is twenty-five and it is an inauspicious year for him. That autumn he departs for a seasonal round of begging and in upper Nyel he dreams that the lady with whom he had practised the rites of sexual yoga was in fact a demoness. He is directed again to where she is staying and, realizing that she is indeed a demoness, he is covered with shame. The lady then tricks her husband and brothers into believing that the saint and his followers have stolen some of their belongings. They are pursued, one of the followers is killed and the saint is wounded. He persuades his attackers he will bring about his own death. They leave. Some days later he explains to his remaining three disciples how they will meet in a future life to complete the work of promulgating his “treasure-texts”. Then he departs to the heavenly realms.

What, it may be asked, has this strange and colourful story really got to do with the historical figure of Pemalingpa? There seem to be two answers. First the story appears to have served as a kind of prophetic and justificatory model for Pemalingpa’s own connection with the Karmapa lama of his day, for his dismissal of accusations of fraud and forgery, and for his affairs with unsuitable or dangerous ladies. The model demonstrated that the path of the “treasure-revealer” was subject to all kinds of obstacles and dangers and so it accounted for those which had arisen in Pemalingpa’s own life. For if such a pattern had manifested itself in a previous life, there was every reason for it to recur in his present life. Secondly, it is likely there was in Pemalingpa’s day a known connection between the life of Pema Lendreltsel and his next embodiment, Longchenpa: both were certainly concerned with the meditative cycle known as the “Heart-Drops of the Skyfarers”. So if at least this link in the chain of rebirths was a matter of common knowledge, then by introducing it into the sequence all the other links were given credibility too.

The next embodiment, Longchenpa (1308–63), is said to have come into the world five years after the death of Pema Lendreltsel.⁴⁶ Pemalingpa could not have pointed to a more famous or accomplished master as his incarnational forebear since Longchenpa (or, to give him his full name, Longchen Ramjam) was the greatest philosopher and saint ever produced by the Nyingmapa school. His given name was Tsultrim Dorje and his initiatory name was Drimé Özer, but he is best known as Longchenpa (“The One Possessed of the Great Expanse of Knowledge”). It was the name given to him by Taisitu Changchub Gyaltzen, the ruler of Tibet in this period, as a mark of his scholarly accomplishments. Despite his extraordinary renown, Longchenpa never acknowledged the importance of powerful people and only showed reverence to monks. He is said only to have valued the gifts presented to him by poor, humble people.⁴⁷ This was probably one of the reasons why he fell out with the Taisitu and spent some ten years in a kind of self-imposed exile on the southern borders of Tibet. The immediate cause is said to have been his desire to escape from the power struggle between the Phamodrupa and Sakyapa factions which threatened to involve him. In the area of present-day Bhutan he founded or took control of eight monasteries with the help of his local patron, Sonambum.⁴⁸ In one of these monasteries, that of Tharpaling in the Chumé district of Bumthang, he wrote some of his most enduring works in which he systematized the teachings of the Dzokchen (“Great Fulfilment”) school, in particular those of the “Skyfarer’s Heart-Drops” mentioned above. According to Pemalingpa’s account, a dream had led Longchenpa to one of his close disciples in his previous life as Pema Lendreltsel, a certain Lekpa Gyaltzen of Sho.⁴⁹ Lekpa Gyaltzen, as Longchenpa’s erstwhile disciple, argued that it was unnecessary to offer him the authorization to practise the teachings contained in the texts of which he, Longchenpa, was the master. Longchenpa, however, insisted that a fresh authorization and initiation had to be received in each lifetime even if it was he himself who had originally discovered the teachings and imparted them to his disciple. Having duly received the right to practise them again in his present life (the

rites being performed directly from the original “yellow paper”), Longchenpa then met the teacher Kumarāja from whom he received another set of “heart-drop precepts”, these ones formulated by the Indian sage Vimalamitra. (Longchenpa eventually obtained a further two such sets, all of which he later codified into the *sNying-thig ya-bzhi*, but Pemalingpa does not mention this work specifically, though he does discuss the equally famous *mDzod-bdun* and the *Ngal-gso skor-gsum*, which became the most basic texts for the system of the Great Fulfilment.)⁵⁰

Pemalingpa again takes pains to reveal what was known about Longchenpa’s mystical consort, a nun who was the sister of his patron Sonambum and whom he kept as his household servant at Tharpaling: “Outwardly wearing the habit of a monk, but inwardly a yogin of the Mantrayāna, he took that nun as his secret tantric consort so that nobody knew about it, and at a certain time she became pregnant with a child.”⁵¹ She gave birth to a daughter and Longchenpa persuaded the nun’s mother to pass the child off as her own. Five years later the nun became pregnant again and this time Longchenpa’s monk disciples came to know about it. Anxious lest they themselves became the subject of malicious gossip, they and the lama persuaded the nun to give birth away from the lama’s household in a forest south-east of Tharpaling. A son, Drakpa Özer, was born to her there. Eventually the secret came out that Longchenpa had fathered both children and so the nun departed unhappily for Tibet, her children remaining behind in Bumthang. On the point of death she left instructions to ensure that the teachings of the Great Fulfilment would be properly imparted to her son.⁵²

The two incarnations who followed Longchenpa and who immediately preceded Pemalingpa were little more than stop-gaps.⁵³ The first, Thökar, was born to named parents at a place called Demateng east of Tharpaling. All we are told of him is that he was killed at the age of seven by someone who threw a stone at him when he was stealing peas from the person’s field. He was followed by an unnamed person, the seventh of the princess’s “pure” rebirths, who died at the age of twenty-five after a visit to the heavenly palace of Padmasambhava. The

guru had commanded him to enter the body of one Pema, the rebirth of Shelkar Tsodrön (one of his consorts). After his birth in Bumthang he was to “... work for the welfare of sentient beings and, having acted as the master of my profound treasures, disseminate the treasure-teachings by skilful means’. Thus have I Pemalingpa, in accordance with the prophecy of the Guru, revealed the story of my past lives.”⁵⁴

The chronology is a little unconvincing. There is a gap of eighty-seven years between the death of Longchenpa (1363) and the birth of Pemalingpa (1450), but the joint lives of the intervening incarnations occupy only thirty-two years. Where was he during the fifty-five years which remain unaccounted for? Doubtless Pemalingpa would have had no difficulty explaining away this little problem had it been put to him. As we shall see, there is much in the life of the guru’s chosen one which lies beyond the ken of ordinary mortals.

Youth

The wonders which accompanied Pemalingpa’s birth in 1450 are described by him in the conventional terms appropriate to a great saint.⁵⁵ His mother’s pregnancy was blissful and light and in her dreams she saw many girls and youths playing around her. The sun and moon shone simultaneously, a phenomenon with overt tantric allusions to the mystical union of opposites. She dreamt that a turquoise-coloured girl carrying a vase (the most basic utensil used in any tantric initiation) entered the crown of her head. Meanwhile Pemalingpa’s father dreamt of a *mandala* filling the sky, which he also saw replete with many volumes of scriptures. For three days rainbows shone and everyone saw the baby encircled in light. He was named Penjor.⁵⁶

While still an infant a personal disciple of the late treasure-revealer Dorjelingpa (1346–1405)⁵⁷ called Chöyingpa visited the family house at Chel. The baby was making a nuisance of itself and when the lama saw the mother slapping him he told her to stop because the child was destined to accomplish much for the benefit of the Buddhist teachings and for living beings.

His mother continued to have extraordinary dreams in which she saw many girls gathering around the child in order to bathe him, cherish him on their laps, and sing and dance for him.

Pemalingpa's birth was soon followed by that of his brother, Guru. It was difficult for their mother to breast-feed both boys at the same time and so Pemalingpa was entrusted to the care of his maternal grandfather, a blacksmith called Yönten Changchub. He was reared by him on a mixture of flour and honey. At the age of three his grandfather took him to the little monastery of Mani Gömpa and continued to look after him with much affection. While they were living there the child was brought again before the lama Chöyingpa, who repeated his earlier statement, saying: "Blacksmith, take good care of this boy. He will benefit the teachings and living beings."⁵⁸

At the age of nine he was trained by his grandfather in the craft of the blacksmith and he learnt it without difficulty. Judging from the kind of work blacksmiths still undertake in Bhutan to this day, Pemalingpa would have learnt how to make knives and swords, agricultural tools, nails and so forth. There is no specific mention in the autobiography of weapons, but popular tradition in Bhutan still attributes certain named swords to the hand of Pemalingpa. This, however, is in conflict with his own statement that "if I saw anything to do with bows and arrows, or with armour, weapons and helmets I so disliked it I refused to let them touch my body".⁵⁹ He also learnt the more delicate and difficult art of metalwork by the "lost wax" method. He must have used this technique when he made the ladies' bracelets mentioned in this passage. This was a craft not usually taken up by ordinary blacksmiths but rather by professional silversmiths. He also learnt how to weave textiles and how to carve wood and work stone. All these crafts are normally pursued by quite different professions in Bhutan—apart from weaving which is a non-professional female craft, though the occasional male weaver is also found. Pemalingpa must have had an exceptional opportunity of learning all these crafts more or less simultaneously, which he says he did without any difficulty at all.

If he was later involved, as may be suspected, in the actual

production of the "treasures" which he claimed to have extracted from their places of concealment, then it is quite clear he possessed all the skills of a master craftsman necessary to do this. Books in the form of scrolls formed only one class of these "treasures": others took the form of metal images, ritual instruments and the like, cast from metal and worked over with hard tools. As will be seen later,⁶⁰ the malleable medium of wax itself seems to have played an important part in the whole process of revealing the treasures; the possibilities of its use would have been familiar to him from making the wax models around which moulds are formed in the "lost wax" casting method. That he was accustomed to using chisels on stone is made clear from his own account of some of his "extractions". Chisels could just as well have been used by him to incise the mark of his footprints on stones: there are many references in the autobiography to their spontaneous and miraculous production, but the true explanation may be found here in Pemalingpa's early training in stonework.

Like his birth, his activities as a child are also described in terms appropriate to a saint.⁶¹ He says he took no interest in secular songs, the playing of flutes and so forth. So much did he dislike such songs he says he wanted to kill anyone singing them: hardly a Buddhist sentiment, but the statement is meant to emphasize his sense of revulsion from the world and its ways. Wherever he stayed, whether in the mountains or in the village, he particularly enjoyed gathering a crowd of children and playing with them by pretending to build temples, stupas and religious thrones, also by going through the motions of giving them sermons and initiations, by erecting prayer flags, writing scriptures out on leaves, and by performing the movements of sacred dances. There is no particular reason to discount this part of the testimony since playful activities of this sort are certainly part of village life in Bhutan to this day. They can be invested with the air of portents when the person described as playing in that way later takes up a religious life in earnest. One senses in the account something of his later activity when he again gathered round himself large numbers of his contemporaries and won all their attention, not to say devotion, by the

performance of astonishing deeds. One may well wonder if a certain element of play and pretence was present then as it had been earlier.

Pemalingpa was by his own account a wayward, difficult and wilful child:

Apart from directly pursuing whatever fancies came to mind, I did not listen to what my parents said . . . I left undone whatever anyone entrusted me to do. Moreover, without heeding my parents' commands, I gave away to anyone who came whatever I got from others. As this went on my parents turned from using words of endearment to me and gave me nicknames that alluded to my faults. My father called me Protruding Navel, my mother called me Exhausted Merit and the people in general called me Döndrupgyal the False Joker. Everyone, whether close or distant, kept me out of their affections.⁶²

A little later Pemalingpa uses the second element in the last nickname, Döndrupgyal, in referring to himself: it means literally "The King who Achieves his Purpose". Some significance may attach to the name for its suggesting a person with "royal" pretensions who knows his own mind and goes his own way. Unlike the other element in the nickname, False Joker, this element carries no immediately pejorative associations. From what was soon to follow, however, it seems it was as False Joker that people knew him best at this stage of his life. (The name might be rendered just as accurately as "The Joker who Perpetrates Deceptions".) In all other ways Pemalingpa's account of his waywardness conforms to the expected behaviour of yogins, who are not bound by the ordinary conventions of human society.

He received no formal training in the religious life at all, and this definitely sets him apart from what we know of all other Buddhist saints. He learnt what he did entirely by himself, untutored and rather surreptitiously. He recounts two incidents which make this clear.⁶³ First, while staying at Mani Gömpa a monk-disciple of a neighbouring lama happened to come with a book containing the text of a ritual composed by Dorjelingpa which he was engaged in committing to memory. Pemalingpa quietly borrowed the book from the place where the monk slept and, though he says he had never even learnt the Tibetan alphabet previously, he memorized the whole work in just five

mornings. The monk had spent a month trying to do this but had not yet succeeded. The second incident took place when his mother's maternal uncle took him to a place near Chel to worship the "gods of the world" (as distinct from the great supramundane divinities). Pemalingpa's task was to carry a bundle of juniper, the smoke from which is an essential offering in certain rites. A priest of the Bönpo school skilled in these rites came to officiate and Pemalingpa decided to watch him closely to learn the technique of the ritual. He wanted to borrow the book containing the liturgy from the priest so as to memorize it, but the priest refused. Pemalingpa therefore borrowed a copy from another lama and did so. Thereafter he was able to perform Bönpo rites himself.

These are the only occasions during his entire life when we find Pemalingpa actually studying anything. Later in life he admitted with some pride to the mad saint Drukpa Kunley: "I have no lama and am not myself a disciple."⁶⁴ The only authority he recognized was the divine sage Padmasambhava and what he learnt from that master came to him directly in dreams and visions. But we have no reason to doubt the assertion that he had a wonderful facility for memorizing long texts. It could have served him very well later when it came to composing his own textual "discoveries", since he would have carried in his head a great stock of religious formulas capable of being rearranged into new texts.

It is probably significant that one of the two texts we know he committed to memory as a youth was a "discovery" of the treasure-hunter Dorjelingpa, since this would have familiarized him with the genre early in life. In fact Pemalingpa received the full authorization to practise the teachings of Dorjelingpa when he became the son-in-law of a neighbouring lama at Rimochen called Chokden.⁶⁵ That lama had probably received the authorization directly from an immediate disciple of Dorjelingpa himself, perhaps Chöyingpa. However it may have been, Lama Chokden felt it incumbent on himself to pass on the authorization to his son-in-law and so Pemalingpa received it in full. (The ritual of authorization takes the form of a high-speed reading of the texts by the lama to the recipient.) Pemalingpa then explains how his marriage to the lama's

daughter ended in separation, "...and so we were not so friendly thereafter". He does not appear to have received any other authorizations, nor is he later found imparting any but those for his own "discoveries".

The first dateable event in Pemalingpa's life took place in 1473 when his grandfather, the blacksmith Yönten Changchub, fell sick.⁶⁶ Pemalingpa, who was then aged twenty-three, was called to Mani Gömpa to look after him, but the old man was dying and his last wish was that he, Pemalingpa, and a nun called Döndrup Zangmo, should care for the little monastery which he had looked after with much difficulty. Failing that, it should be entrusted to the care of the lama of Yuwashing, who may have been connected with the ruling family of Bumthang. Pemalingpa himself performed the funeral ceremonies for his grandfather and he stayed on in the monastery from time to time, the nun taking over full control.

The Treasure of the Burning Lake

Two years later in 1475 he had the first of his dreams.⁶⁷ Many girls came up to him and declared he should stay in the monastery. This accorded with his own wishes and while staying there he had another dream. He found himself sitting on a pile of corpses in a cemetery. The place was full of dancers. He was offered nectar from a skull-cup and the dancers prostrated themselves before him and circumambulated him. He then proceeded to the summit of a mountain and from there he saw the four continents filled with light and laid out before him. The sun and the moon were shining simultaneously (as they had done at his birth) and when they descended towards him he picked one up and put it in the pouch of his robe and the other he placed on his lap.

It seems these dreams are to be taken as auguries pointing to the discovery of his first treasure. In the seventh month of the same year the nun left Mani Gömpa and went home, leaving him in charge. Feeling lonely one day, he went off to look for some mushrooms in the woods behind the monastery. Having returned, he was sitting by the side of the main shrineroom

when a dirty-looking Khampa, a man from eastern Tibet, arrived. Pemalingpa paid little attention to the man and both fell asleep in the sun. But he was woken by a voice telling him to get up and looking around he saw a monk wearing a ragged yellow robe. (It seems the Khampa had turned into the monk.) He was evasive about where he had come from but said that he had specially come to see him. Pemalingpa decided he should cook him a meal, and as he was leaving to do this the monk gave him a scroll of paper and told him to look at it carefully. Without reading it Pemalingpa went straight to the kitchen and prepared the meal, using the mushrooms he had just collected and butter stolen from the nun's store. When the meal was ready he called out to the monk, but he had quite disappeared. Pemalingpa sat down in the sun and looked at the scroll he had been given. He read: "During the night of the full moon this month take five companions with you and go to fetch your destined wealth from the rock called Naring which lies at the bottom end of your valley."⁶⁸

The next day he went down to the family home of Baribrang at Chel and showed the scroll to his father and a nun called Delek, who was perhaps a relative. His father said: "He's faking again. It's just a trick." But the nun was less sure: "Who knows if it's a fake? Such a thing previously happened to the treasure-revealer Ratnalingpa." That night Pemalingpa fell sick and lost consciousness. In that state, he says, "many skyfarers descended and spoke many things".⁶⁹ It is the first mention of the "skyfarers" (*dākinī*), the heavenly beings from the divine palace of Padmasambhava with whom he was from now on to have the most intimate contacts. Their "descent" on this occasion looks very much like a description of oracular possession, though it is not made clear whether their words were heard by Pemalingpa alone in his state of trance or whether they were spoken through his mouth and heard by his family. Many other features of his later visions and dreams point in the same way to Pemalingpa's role as a medium or shaman rather than as a Buddhist priest, though these became united in his person. We shall return to this point later.

The trance must have been an impressive one because it encouraged the family to try and see if there was any truth in

the scroll's cryptic message. As the full moon approached they did their best to persuade Pemalingpa to go in search of the treasure. He says he refused, declaring it to be inconceivable that someone like him should be involved in a true hunt for spiritual treasure. So his family used a stratagem. They said they had been joking about the treasure, but they all needed to go to the village of Tangsbji to fetch back a stolen yak-cow belonging to the family. But this was simply a pretext to take Pemalingpa past the destined rock at the appointed time of the full moon.⁷⁰

When night fell he set off with Sonamphel (the husband of his maternal aunt) and with his younger brothers Guru, Aphel, Chöbum and Alek. He perhaps chose to ignore the fact that the party thus included the five companions stipulated in the scroll. At least he tries to give the impression of being quite ignorant of the ruse that was being played on him. On reaching the hill where the rock of Naring was to be found, rain was falling very heavily. The rock itself was on the opposite side of a river and when it came in view they saw a great number of people assembled around it. His companions explained these were the people bringing the stolen yak-cow from Tangsbji, but we are supposed to understand that a rumour of the treasure hunt had spread and people had come to satisfy their curiosity. Pemalingpa says he then fell down in a swoon and while still in a state of trance he removed his clothes and left them on the road. He plunged naked into the riverine lake and reached the rock on the opposite side. There he found an opening leading to a cave that could hold about a hundred people. It was called the "Long Cave of Glory". A throne stood there and upon it was found an image of the buddha the size of a man. To the left of the image were many book chests. A girl with a single eye in her forehead picked up the chest containing the text of the *gSang-ba yang-bcud* ("The Quintessence of Secrets"), gave it to him and said "Run!". He left and on hearing the roar of the river he regained consciousness. Wondering how he was going to get to the other side, he found himself crossing the river "like a bird's feather blown by someone's breath". His five companions came up, he put on his clothes and taking the book chest

with them they arrived home at Baribrang half way through the night.⁷¹

The chest was kept by the family shrine for some days and offerings were made to it. After various consultations it was decided the contents should be shown to a certain Namgyal Zangpo whose title of *drungné* suggests he may have been an official of some sort. But Namgyal Zangpo could not read the writing and advised Pemalingpa first to pray to the Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha) and then look at the writing carefully. Pemalingpa took the text to Mani Gömpa and inspected the “yellow pages” with great care. Among them was a “scroll of prophecy” and at the bottom end of the scroll he found the Tibetan alphabet with its subjoined and superscribed letters and vowels. Immediately below these were written out the corresponding letters in “the writing of the treasure-teachings”. Using this key he was then able to transcribe the title of the work from the original treasure-script (referred to in other works as “skyfarers’ sign-script”) into the standard Tibetan letters, and so he was able to read it as *Klong-gsal gsang-ba snying-bcud*. The first element, *Klong-gsal* (“The Clear Expanse”), was added here to the title as introduced earlier, “The Quintessence of Secrets”. Clearly it was not necessary to translate the document, only to transcribe it from one script into another. We may take it that Pemalingpa is supposed to have used the same method in treating all his later “discoveries”. Having obtained just the title of his first find, he then read in the *kha-byang* (“Entrance Certificate”) of the same work (presumably by using the same conversion key as for the title) that after transcribing the whole work he should bestow its initiation in the Pig month (i.e. the tenth month of the lunar calendar, but the phrase has been corrupted as “the Pig month of the third month”). After further consultations and a prophetic dream he succeeded in finding the right scribe, a man from the Ura valley, to copy out the text. But since the man could not read it, Pemalingpa had to dictate it to him from the original scroll (presumably again using the conversion table as before). When the work was half finished the ink ran out and the light failed, but both were replenished miraculously.⁷²

A lama from the lower end of the valley called Rinchenpel came to say he was willing to act as patron for the occasion when Pemalingpa would expound the text to the public. This put Pemalingpa into something of a quandary since although the text of the work itself had been obtained he had no experience at all of the tunes with which it was supposed to be chanted, nor of the sacred dances which were meant to accompany it. Indeed he knew nothing at all about how the text was supposed to be performed as a ritual. He was worrying about this one night at the hermitage of Künzangling when he fell asleep and had a dream during which the divine consort of Padmasambhava, Yeshé Tsogyal (herself a “skyfarer”) appeared to him and said: “‘Do the chants of the scripture like this’, and she sang the chants of each chapter, turn by turn, and then she said ‘Do the Descent of Blessings for the sacred dances like this’, and she demonstrated the sacred dances of the Five Classes of *Dākinīs*. When I awoke everything remained clear in my mind and so I put it all into practice and showed it in stages to my disciple followers.” This was a sort of dress rehearsal for the real thing, which took place at the village of Dungkhabji and lasted for twenty-one days. Again, we are told, the skyfarers came to him every night to instruct him in how to perform that part of the initiation and expounding which was due to take place on the following day. On the fifteenth day of the month, heralded by another dream of the skyfarers and by the arrival of another dirty looking Khampa (perhaps the same one as before), he had a dream of the treasure-revealer Ratnalingpa, who showed him great reverence and said that he, Pemalingpa, had been his master during three of his former lives. He explained that he was departing for the heaven of Padmasambhava and exhorted Pemalingpa to bring to full completion the welfare of the teachings and of living beings. Later this turned out to have happened on the day when Ratnalingpa died.⁷³ We are meant to take the dream as a confirmation of Pemalingpa as the true successor of Ratnalingpa, the best and most accomplished of treasure-finders.

After the rites of the *Klong-gsal gsang-ba snying-bcud* had been completed there occurred on the twenty-fourth of the same month the event for which Pemalingpa is best remembered

by posterity. He returned to the Naring rock, scene of his first discovery, where a huge crowd had assembled to witness another treasure hunt, called here “the extraction of a crowd-treasure” since it seems to have been aimed specifically at convincing the people of the truth of his former exploit. In front of everyone Pemalingpa climbed the rock with a lighted butter lamp in his hand and swore the oath: “If I am the emanation of a demon, may I die in this river. If I am the heart-son of the Guru [Padmasambhava], may not even this lamp be extinguished and may I return after obtaining the required wealth.” And he leapt into the river holding the lamp. Some believed he had actually committed suicide in shame. Others were convinced he would in any case die and said this to his father, who was also there. From within the riverine lake Pemalingpa says he extracted an image of the Buddha a fist in height and a sealed skull filled with miraculous substances: “As I took these out without any sort of injury and quitted the lake, everyone was struck with wonder.”⁷⁴ Though he does not say it in so many words, we are supposed to understand that the lamp was still lit as he emerged dripping from the lake. The event came to be interpreted as fulfilling the following prophecy contained in the *Padma thang-yig*, “discovered” more than a century earlier by Ugyenlingpa (1329–67):

One called Ugyen Pemalingpa will come forth;
 And the treasure-trove hidden at the Burning Lake will be removed
 Having revealed the sign that it is not to be left but extracted.⁷⁵

Pemalingpa never alludes directly to this prophecy and, as we shall see,⁷⁶ he claimed that his name was conferred on him by Padmasambhava in a later vision, not by any overt “borrowing” from the prophecy; the allusion to the prophecy was perhaps so obvious there was no need to spell it out. It is still not quite clear at what stage its significance for him became apparent, though his construction of a three-storey monastery actually called Pemaling immediately after the treasure hunt at the Burning Lake would suggest he was already aware of the prophecy.⁷⁷ For many it came to provide the ultimate confirmation of his divine role. Many of the text-discoverers who preceded and followed him acquired their *-lingpa* names

retrospectively from the famous prophecies contained in the *Padma thang-yig*. In this respect and in many other ways Pemalingpa operated within a very well established tradition.

The Treasure Hunt Continues

Having started on his career as a treasure-hunter with such success, Pemalingpa now took it up with enthusiasm. The greater bulk of his discoveries took place in the ten years from 1475 to 1484. These were followed by a few scattered finds in the later years.⁷⁸ To give an idea of how he described this activity, here is his account for the year 1477, which seems to have been almost wholly taken up with the business of treasure-hunting:

Again at that time, on the full moon day of the first spring month in the year of the Bird [1477], I took with me my maternal uncle Kunga Samdrup, *Jowo* Kunga Penjor and Tseten Dorje, each of us riding a horse, and I recovered the *Thugs-rje chen-po mun-sel sgron-me* (“Mahākarūṇa, the Lamp which Dispels Darkness”) from the treasure-hoard at Rimochen in Bumthang. That night after returning to Pemaling I sorted out the treasure, whereupon a lady called Chölamo died on account of the *btsan* spirits [who had been disturbed by the extracting of the treasure].

Then in the month of the Hare a prophecy was revealed that there was treasure to be extracted from the Lion Rock (Sengedrak) in lower Bumthang and so we, lord and disciples, went there on the tenth day of the Hare month after performing the ritual of burnt offerings five times. Moreover many members of the public, male and female, gathered there, so there were about a hundred people. That night I stayed at the foot of the Lion Rock, supplicated the Triple Gem and offered a black sheep with a white head to the Treasure Master [the guardian spirit of the treasure]. I gave the teachings on the Arising Stages of Vajrapāṇi to the public and made them conjure up the deity’s essence. Half way through the night there was a rain of stones and the corpse of a dead monkey was even flung [into the gathering]. The following day after dawn when the sun was warming up I extracted the “crowd-treasure” (*khrom-gter*) right in the middle of the assembled public. There appeared a chest filled with yellow paper and an image of Guru [Padmasambhava]. Immediately the whole sky was filled with rainbows and at that time I gave the blessings [of the treasure] to the public [by touching their heads with it]. Lama Gyamtsodar gave me a sheep and a load of butter to offer to the

Treasure Master. Then on the way back I gave an initiation at Dungkhabji and another when I reached Pemaling on the following day. [He then made a trip to Kurélung where one of his patrons, unnamed, mistook the auspices by serving him an insufficient quantity of ale needed for ritual purposes: the patron's bull was killed by wolves and the patron himself died within the year.] . . . Otherwise much work of conversion was achieved.

With Lama Gyendor of Gönsar and his brother acting as patrons I extracted from the rock at Rimochen a vase containing nectar and three yellow pages of the *dGongs-pa bla-med* ("The Unsurpassed Mind").

Then I went off up in the direction of Latö and came to the village called Yimja. Since the people there were my father's maternal uncles and said they wanted a display of my miraculous powers, I left them my handprint [on stone].

Returning from there in the Horse Month I came to Bumthang and after staying there some days I went off on the fifth day of the Monkey month to extract treasure from the Lion Skyfort Rock (Sengé Namdzongdrak), a place where the three rivers of lower Bumthang meet and where the lower ends of their three valleys conjoin.

As I was returning, having extracted the text of the *rTa-mgrin dpa'-bo gcig-pa* ("Hayagrīva, the Single Hero") and five hundred pills of Brahmin-flesh the size of peas, *Jowo* Palden Döndrup asked me to stay. So I stayed there that night and gave them an initiation. The next day I returned to Pemaling and gave another initiation. Then I had a bamboo hut erected on the hill called Sershong above the monastery and while we, the lord and disciples, were staying there I made the disciples attend to their training. While I was staying in retreat there for three months I had a sight of the whole world like a myrobalan flower placed in the palm of one's hand, entirely clear and pure. Then as soon as I completed a begging tour when the wheat had been harvested, I began expounding the *Klong-gsal* ("The Clear Expanse") at Pemaling and so a month went by.

Then on the day of the new moon in the winter Bull month I recovered the text of the *Nor-bu lam-khyer* ("The Jewel Taken on the Path") from beneath a cliff shaped like a pile of nine skulls at the Bodyprint Rock (Kujédruk) in Bumthang. At that time the people said "He's a fake!", and so there were very few who showed faith in me.⁷⁹

The themes disclosed in this passage are present in varying degrees in most of Pemalingpa's accounts of his treasure-hunts: the extremely dangerous nature of the treasure itself; the direct involvement of the public in their extraction; the way

certain close disciples and patrons came forward or were chosen to assist in the whole process of discovery and dissemination; the interruptions caused by seasonal begging rounds and other similarly prosaic activities; and the accusations of fraud.

Unless the auspices were exactly as stipulated in the prophecy foretelling each discovery, all kinds of injuries would befall those involved in the quest, though Pemalingpa himself seems to have been relatively immune from these troubles. Not so his brother Aphel: he and another man called Dönpo succumbed to an outbreak of smallpox caused when Pemalingpa recovered a treasure from Leuchung in Tibet which had not been the subject of prophecy.⁸⁰ Again in 1487 a whole series of calamities befell those who came into contact with the unpropheied treasure recovered from Samyé Chimphuk. Not only did humans die, but animals as well. Pemalingpa eventually succeeded in countering the evil spell of this particular treasure by performing a huge number of placatory rituals.⁸¹ It was in fact vital in all circumstances to placate the spirits who had been charged by Padmasambhava with the guardianship of the treasure, the so-called Treasure Masters (*gter-bdag*). There is a strong suggestion of blood sacrifice in the offering of a sheep in the passage quoted above, something which conflicts directly with the ostensibly Buddhist purpose of the whole enterprise. Again in 1480, when recovering the *Bla-ma drag-po dpa'-bo gcig-pa* ("The Fierce Lama, the Single Hero") from Senge Khyitsuk, Pemalingpa's paternal uncle Künzangphel was struck with a sudden illness, "so that he could not speak above or pass water below". Just as Künzangphel was about to die Pemalingpa received a vision of Padmasambhava, who scolded him severely for not paying attention to the instructions given in the "entrance certificate" (*kha-byang*): he should have offered a large sheep to the guardian spirit, the demon Rinchendzö. As soon as this was done, his uncle recovered.⁸² Less dangerous were the terrific storms which often accompanied the treasure-hunt: Pemalingpa says he brought these under control simply by explaining the truth of the whole matter to the guardians. But it seems that even with the correct prophecy to hand and the proper auspices duly arranged, some treasures were so powerful and dangerous there was little that

could be done to avert their evil influence. Thus at Mönkharteng in 1489 three of Pemalingpa's companions were struck down. One of them, a yogin called Künril, contracted leprosy, but he died with no regrets saying it was the retribution of the guardian spirits and the fulfilment of his own karma. Indeed the experience of the disease actually engendered within the yogin an increase in faith for Pemalingpa. On the same occasion the incarnate lama of Zablung got a cataract in one of his eyes and the *nangso* of Lhalung came out in abscesses and blisters. Pemalingpa managed to cure the latter.⁸³

He twice claims to have himself suffered riding accidents as a result of mistaking the auspices. Once this happened when, contrary to the instructions received in a dream, he bestowed the blessings of some "yellow paper" he was engaged in transcribing on a group of women from the village of Batheldrong. Not only did the paper mysteriously disappear but he fell off his horse that evening and badly injured the socket of his left hip-bone. That night he was scolded in a dream by the same person who had earlier told him not to bless the women with his discovery. He was told he might lose his life if he did so again. After the usual placatory rites the next day he recovered from his injury. Moreover the treasure-text turned up again just as mysteriously as it had disappeared.⁸⁴ Again in 1504 he fainted on his horse as he rode back from extracting a treasure-image of the Buddha from Rimochen. He says it took eighteen days of continuous rites to cure himself.⁸⁵

The worst case of error and mistaken auspices occurred to Pemalingpa's ultimate profit.⁸⁶ An earlier text-discoverer who lived in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, Sherab Membar, had been forced by his lay patron to extract texts which were properly destined to be revealed not by him but rather by Longchenpa, Pemalingpa's previous incarnation.⁸⁷ The patron had threatened to cut off Sherab Membar's head and throw it into a river if he failed to recover the text in question, the *rGyud-bu-chung* ("The Little Son Tantra"), a cycle belonging to the teachings of the Great Fulfilment. Despite the evil portent of a snake issuing from the rock where the treasure was said to be concealed, Sherab Membar recovered a chest containing the text. Three days later the patron was killed by

the people of the Chökhör valley in Bumthang. After transcribing the text, Sherab Membar returned the original to its place of concealment at Rimochen. He then took the transcript to a place called Bel, which seems to have been located in what is now western Bhutan, and there he died as a result of “great magical disturbances”. His son was afflicted with similar trouble and so he decided to take the transcript itself back to Rimochen. But as he lay dying he left a testament according to which the text had to be recovered yet again by a certain Lama Khamchung. From him it was passed into the hands of another lama called Özer. The latter came to Pemalingpa in 1490 with a request, saying: “It is difficult to read the pages with ease and since I am myself being disturbed by great magic, please offer them back to the Master of the Teachings [the guardian spirit].” Pemalingpa says he took the volume to compare it with the original text hidden at Rimochen, but it had deteriorated so much it was not of much use. After employing a scribe to make a copy of the transcript Pemalingpa returned it to Lama Özer. Shortly afterwards, while staying at his own monastery of Künzangdrak, he gave its full authorization to his disciples. As the incarnation of Longchenpa, the only person permitted to promulgate the text, Pemalingpa was himself fully qualified to do this.

Another historical source⁸⁸ locates the place of discovery of the *rGyud-bu-chung* by Sherab Membar at Dramar Namgo (“The Sky-Door of the Red Rock”), which seems to be situated in the Paro valley of western Bhutan rather than at Rimochen in the Tang valley of Bumthang as Pemalingpa claims. In the oral accounts told of Pemalingpa’s adventures in Bhutan to this day he is sometimes conflated with Sherab Membar. In particular the story of the forced extraction of treasure is recast in local legend with him as the (this time successful) treasure-revealer and with his patron, the ruler of Bumthang (known as the Chökhör Pönpo), acting the part of the wicked instigator. No such story is found in the autobiography, although some parallels are found in an incident which occurred in Tibet in 1483 when a group of officials persuaded Pemalingpa to extract treasure.⁸⁹ But the story that is found in the autobiography about Pemalingpa’s remote connection with Sherab Membar as out-

lined above need not be wholly discounted. There is no particular reason to doubt that a text traditionally associated with the earlier figure did come to him by the hand of the lama mentioned. It now forms one of just three texts of the Great Fulfilment in Pemalingpa's collected rediscoveries, which are otherwise taken up less with meditational philosophy and more with grand ritual cycles. There is no doubt that, temperamentally speaking, ritual suited Pemalingpa far better than philosophy, though the two were bound to overlap in many ways.

The web of fear which had been woven around the whole tradition of "spiritual treasure" in the centuries leading up to Pemalingpa played into his hands as a weapon that guarded and reinforced his position. Thus when sudden illness and misfortune coincided with his activities it was easy to point to the treasure and his inescapable duty to recover it as the cause. Evil, according to this viewpoint, was therefore a necessary by-product of good. It had to be endured or averted as best one could, but its occurrence was beyond moral judgement. Above all it served to demonstrate the power and efficacy of the treasure and its revealer.

But there are many clues pointing to the fact that not everyone was hoodwinked. It has already been seen how Pemalingpa himself records the accusations of fraud and forgery which punctuated his life from the time of his early youth. He seems to do this in order to twist the charges round to his retrospective advantage, turning the tables on the disbelievers with hindsight. He could do this late in life as he wrote his autobiography from the unassailable position he had won as a result of great patronage and wide acclaim. By then he must have enjoyed practically universal acceptance. Any reference he chose to make in his autobiography to earlier scepticism served therefore only to underline the triumphant vindication of his role.

On one occasion he dismisses an accusation of charlatantry levelled against him by the lamas of Bumthang on the grounds that they were motivated by spite and jealousy.⁹⁰ The episode was sparked off by the visit to Bumthang in 1480 by the fourth Shamarpa hierarch, Chökyi Drakpa (1453-1524), an extremely prestigious dignitary who wanted to found a new

monastery in the region. A bitter quarrel developed on the question of where the new foundation should be located, with rival lamas doing their best to win the honour of having it built near their own villages. The final choice of Thangkhabji in the district of upper Chökhör so incensed the Ura lamas that they “spread false accusations among the people about the [Shamarpa] hierarch”. This led to what is described as a “war” between the forces of the Shamarpa and those of Ura, during which the latter were defeated “. . . and great disgrace fell upon them”. Pemalingpa, it would appear, had failed to use his influence with the Shamarpa to prevent the conflict, with the result that he became most unpopular: “Putting a false imputation on this [the defeat of the Ura party], it became the cause of jealousy on the part of the lamas of Bumthang and so it was even said about me that “He is a fake who has used tricks’.” The allusion can only be to his manufacturing of treasure. At this stage of his life their production seems to have reached the level of a minor industry.

But the tide of scepticism gradually ebbed away as Pemalingpa perfected his technique. Three years later during his second visit to Tibet in 1483 he was to demonstrate it with terrific aplomb after a meeting with some local officials in a willow grove at a place called Gedo in the Lhodrak province:

While we three were sitting there having tea, *Nangso* Gyalwa commanded: “Although I had heard that a treasure-revealer had appeared in Bumthang, this is the first I’ve seen of him. Since you’re here now you must extract a treasure that I can believe in.” “But there’s no treasure to be extracted”, I replied. He insisted: “Not only is it mentioned in Dorjelingpa’s prophecy, but there’s also mention of it in Guru Chöwang’s prophecy. So at all costs you must extract it from this rock of Dramotrang.” Looking at the ‘entrance certificate’ (*kha-byang*) I saw that it was written: “There is the design of a vermilion swastika one handspan in size situated at a spot thirteen fathoms down from the top of the cliff. If a distance of three cubits is measured down from there, there is a protruding stone shaped like a dice. On breaking it open there will be revealed the book-chest containing the *rTa-mgrin lcags-ral-can* (“Hayagrīva of the Iron Braids”). Extract it!” So I said to the *nangso*: “It looks as if there is a design of a vermilion swastika in the centre of that cliff. If it is seen, then it would appear there is a treasure to extract. I’ll look.”

We left and on coming to the foot of the rock I was placed between the *nangsos*, father and son, since it was feared I was about to commit a fraud, and I was separated from my monks [of whom it was suspected they might assist in a fraud]. Reaching the foot of the cliff and looking up, the lord Wangyal said, pointing: "The design of the vermilion swastika is up there." Looking carefully, I saw it there and at that time, while I was investigating the site, a great crowd assembled. Then I Pemalingpa together with the *nangsos*, father and son, and their retinue went to the top of the cliff. The old *nangso* said to me: "Oh great treasure-revealer, how will you approach the face of the cliff if you go that way?" To this I replied: "I can do it any way you like." The *nangso* said: "As there is a great crowd today it's possible there may be some impediment. We'll fix a rope and let you down." Thereupon I was made to remove all my clothes and put on the under-trousers of Sonam Tashi, the master of metaphysics of Lhalungphu [in case I should try to secrete a treasure in my own clothes]. He smelled of sweat and so the odour [of his under-trousers] was unbearable.

Then I wound much rope around my waist, judging the length sufficient to reach the spot, and I set off down carrying an iron chisel and a circular stone mallet. On reaching the area of the treasure-door I measured out the secret distance to the protruding dice-shaped stone there on the cliff. Striking it with the chisel, the dice stone came out to quite a depth, about a forearm down. I put my hand into the cavity and got hold of the treasure-chest. As I was bringing it back with me the people on the rocky outcrops saw it and fell to arguing noisily. The noise was misunderstood as an instruction to pull the rope, so it was pulled from above in such a way that I had no time to close up the treasure-door. Moreover I had to abandon on a rocky shelf the *vajra* I had intended to place as a substitute for the treasure [to appease the guardian spirits]; later the *vajra* treasure-substitute was found by a hunter.

On reaching the top of the cliff I bestowed the blessings of the treasure-chest on all the public assembled there headed by the *nangsos*, father and son. I immediately placed a "hat of the pandits" on the head of the *nangso* and thereby arranged the auspices for [making him my] patron. That night at Gedo I performed the initiation of a guru's votive cake and on the following day the *nangso* said to me: "Oh great treasure-revealer, previously some people were saying you were a fraud while others were saying you were [truly] a treasure-revealer. So on account of doubt there were few who believed. It was for that reason I asked you on this occasion to extract a treasure. From now on the people will believe in you and venerate you. From today you must act as my lama too. I shall trust you as my refuge in

this life and the hereafter.” And again it was said: “Today at all cost we, the lord and disciples, must go to Lhalung.” So after the day warmed up we left for Lhalung where I was received with all kinds of musical instruments and then came to the hall of the great chamber.⁹¹

How did he manage to pull it off? The only rational explanation is that he had previously got wind of the nobles’ intention to ask him to find the treasure and so he had contrived to put it in position before the hunt began. What was actually contained within the chest at the time of its “discovery” did not much matter since it was the custom not to open it immediately but rather to wait till the appointed time according to further instructions in the “prophecy”. This would give the “discoverer” plenty of time to concoct the contents for future dissemination. The whole point was to recover the chest itself in the presence of independent witnesses. The phrase “crowd treasure” (*khrom-gter*), in the sense of a treasure extracted in the presence of a crowd of people who then receive the blessings of the treasure-chest on their heads, carries a conscious allusion to the parallel phrase “crowd initiation” (*khrom-dbang*), which is an activity all important lamas engage in from time to time. The treasure-hunt thus simply becomes an extension of the lama’s customary role in society, fully justified by doctrine and historical precedent.

The incident in 1483 narrated above was exceptional in that it occurred at the behest of the civil authority. Normally the quest lay under the complete control of Pemalingpa himself, who was free to manipulate all the circumstances of place and time governing the extraction of his treasures. This was done ostensibly by referring to the prophecies contained in the “entrance certificate” (*kha-byang*) which he claimed to have acquired all the way back at Mani Gömpa in 1475, a document which lay in his hands alone and which could never be independently verified. Other “certificates” containing similar prophecies were said to have been found appended to each treasure-text as it was discovered. They contained detailed directions known as “keys” (*lde’u-mig*, literally “the eyes to the riddle”). These documents were further reinforced or supplemented at will by the dreams or visions in which the

skyfarers gave him their specific instructions. By their very nature these could never be checked or questioned.

The treasure chests are often described as boxes or amulet cases made of *la-bse* (or *la-bswe*),⁹² which seems to be a combination of shell-lac (*la-cha*) and “varnished leather” (*bse-ko* = *ko-ba rtsi-can*). On one occasion in 1479 the treasure took the form of a donkey made of wax (*la-cha'i bong-bu*), which only later turned out to have ribs of gold: the gold was used for the restoration of the Chökhör temple.⁹³ Another time, in 1504, the treasure had the shape of “a cylinder of wax” (*la-cha'i ril-ril gcig*) which, when later opened, revealed an image of the buddha within.⁹⁴ In both cases Pemalingpa implies he lost face with the crowd on discovering just the wax, but was fully vindicated when there turned out to be treasure hidden inside. However, the wax was never broken open in public but only later in conditions of some privacy. As a malleable substance easily shaped into a covering, the uses to which the wax could be put must have been obvious to the treasure-hunter, particularly one like Pemalingpa whom we have seen was familiar with the “lost wax” method of casting since his youth and whose technique depended on introducing an interval between the public discovery of a receptacle and the private disclosure of its contents. At other times Pemalingpa says he used burning charcoal to split a rock open to procure the treasure inside:⁹⁵ again he would have been familiar with the uses of charcoal from his early training as a blacksmith. Sometimes the treasure itself is said to have been found embedded in a mixture of sand and charcoal.⁹⁶

Of more interest to the historian than the *how* of the matter is the *why*. Why indeed should Pemalingpa have perpetrated these complex deceptions and sustained them over such a very long period? This is ultimately a far more mysterious and interesting question than that of the treasures themselves and the manner of their revealing. The answers surely lie in the elusive realm of character and motivation, also in the external forces and pressures which descended on the treasure-hunter from society as a whole. Some attempt to identify these areas will be made below,⁹⁷ but before doing that it will help to see just how

far Pemalingpa was prepared to go in presenting the rationale and defence of his activities.

To legitimize the treasure, in full knowledge that they were his own fabrication, Pemalingpa had to create an upside-down world, one which could accommodate all the contradictions in his own position. He wrote a defence of his role, a work he called “The Discourse of Pemalingpa by which Those Possessing Wrong Views Are Refuted, [Entitled] the Roar of the Lion.” The main purpose seems to have been to insist that it was impossible for someone as enlightened as he was to perpetrate deceptions: “It seems that I am the Holder of the Buddha’s Teachings in the degenerate age. Through my previously developed good karmic propensities, my treasure teachings on the profound essential mind of Ugyen [Padmasambhava] eliminate the need for evil actions and illuminate the nature of mind; thus have I realized the dream-like illusory nature of all phenomena in existence.” He argued that if he were indeed a fraud, the crime would be immensely serious: “If I am only claiming to have great realization, the leaves of the five poisons would be rife. . . . If, though posing as a great yogin, I am swayed only by the eight *dharmas* [of the world], it would be gross [deception].” It would therefore be inconceivable for him to indulge in such behaviour. In an attempt at irony he calls himself by all the pejorative epithets applied to him by his detractors: “emanation of a demon”, “chief of fakers”, “chief of madmen”, “false joker”, “chief of beggars”, “subjugator”, “beggar devoid of religion”, “perpetrator of cunning”. (Elsewhere, in a similar vein, he sang a song built around the refrain “According to the false teachings of Pemalingpa”.) He balances these epithets with a string of verses in which he refers to himself as “the lama (the yogin, the meditator, the monk, even the Bonpo) of the end of time”. The accusations are thus countered by pointing to his own apocalyptic qualities, which are inevitably misjudged by the faithless.⁹⁸

A similar inversion was created in the mythological realm when Pemalingpa wrote about the “fraud Padmasambhava” in his guide to the hidden land of Khenpalung, another of his treasure texts. Here the great sage is addressed as fraud by the demonic figure Khyikha Rathö (“Dog-Mouth Goat-Skull”),

born to a Tibetan queen who had copulated with a dog and a goat. One implication behind the story is that if the great guru were regarded as a fraud by this execrable figure, then those who took the same view of the guru's "heart-son" Pemalingpa must also stand utterly beyond the pale.⁹⁹

Dreams and Trances of a Buddhist Shaman

If his account is to be believed, Pemalingpa frequently dreamt or fell into a trance. His dreams were of two kinds. Firstly there were those in which the celestial spirits who acted as his guides and assistants appeared to him briefly in order to give their instructions on the location of treasure or else to point out to him persons destined to act as his lay patrons or to warn him of other persons who might do him harm. Secondly there were the dreams in which the same celestial beings made their appearance with the specific intention of leading him to the heavenly realms, in particular to the divine palace of Padma-sambhava where he is initiated and confirmed in his role as a treasure-revealer. The narrative accounts of these dream adventures make up the "pure revelations" (*dag-snang*) which, having been recorded in writing by Pemalingpa in almost every case as soon as he woke up, were later incorporated into the autobiography by his disciple Gyalwa Döndrup in the manner already described. What is important to understand is that Pemalingpa, and his readership too, regarded these heavenly trips as having actually taken place. The fact that they occurred while he was dreaming in no way detracted from their reality: on the contrary, for Pemalingpa and others like him their dreams are intended to disclose a world that is more real, sacred and permanent than the transient world of illusions encountered in the waking state.

Eight accounts of these extended dreams are found in the autobiography, dateable to the years 1481, 1485, 1499, 1501, 1505, 1508, 1510 and 1516.¹⁰⁰ Only those of 1485 and 1499 break the pattern set by the others: on those occasions Pemalingpa did not experience a dream journey. Instead, in 1485, he was approached by a local demon in the form of an aged yogin

who told him to clear off, threatening to “pound up some demon poison and pour it into your mouth”. Pemalingpa scorned the demon in verse, claiming a higher power. In the dream of 1499 he met with a group of mad monks, the disciples of the famous Holy Madmen of Ü and Tsang. The monks performed various “mad acts” with their hats, inspiring Pemalingpa to sing a song in which he pronounced even the illusions experienced by sentient beings to arise from the play of the *dharmakāya*. Similar philosophical asides making the same point in different ways are found in the other dreams. The main purpose in narrating them, however, seems to be to tell the adventure of the dream journey itself and to point out its significance for Pemalingpa rather than to indicate general religious truths, which are introduced only in a sort of incidental manner. Since the dreams are all much the same, each following a similar paradigm, a single example will suffice to convey their structure and flavour.¹⁰¹

One night in 1508 while he was staying at the monastery of Nengön, a hermitage established by Guru Chöwang in southern Tibet, Pemalingpa dreamt that an old man riding a white wolf appeared with about forty attendants. The wolf-rider dismounted, prostrated himself before Pemalingpa and said he had been sent to summon him. Pemalingpa tried to put him off, saying he would come after he had finished giving the initiations of two of his treasure-texts to those who had assembled for this purpose at the monastery. But the man insisted he should leave immediately. He laid out a length of white silk and Pemalingpa, losing consciousness, found himself being carried off on the silk to the foot of the mountain of Khari (literally the “Sky Mountain”, an actual peak on the Bhutan-Tibet border due north of Bumthang). From there he was taken further off to a beautiful green valley set between two mountains, the flanks of which were covered with fields and herds of domestic animals. A rainbow shone across the central mountain, and a wall was seen to enclose a village of seven houses on its peak. On enquiring he was told the valley was called Tsangma Gyesum and the village Tashi Dönden. The inhabitants of the village had been planted as “human seeds” for the future, and similar races descending from the mountain god Masang Yapangkye

were to be found in Tibet on the sacred peaks of Ha'u Gangzang and Nöjin Gangzang. Pemalingpa was able to see the inhabitants of Tashi Dönden but they could not see him.

Again he was taken further off, still carried on his magic carpet of white silk, and so he came to a fine mansion surrounded by a wall which turned out to be the home of the wolf-rider. (Later it is made clear that the wolf-rider is himself the eponymous mountain god of Khari, whose task it is to serve his master, Padmasambhava.) Two gate guards led the party into the mansion and at the top of a staircase they were welcomed by a lady wearing a turban into which peacock feathers had been fixed and a necklace of little bells and mirrors. She took Pemalingpa by the hand and brought him into a hall where the mountain god sat himself down on a fine throne. He scolded the lady, who turned out to be his sister, for not receiving them at the gateway, but she excused herself saying she had been so occupied cleaning the place she could only reach the top of the stairs when word came of their arrival. She then plied Pemalingpa with food and drink and asked him for a religious discourse. He responded in verse as follows:

Faithful lady, listen to me!
 The mind, the great self-begotten sky,
 Is the self-begotten site of the non-composite.
 The mind of all the buddhas
 Is not different, not separate [from one's own mind].
 Put this into the meditations of your mind.

After reciting this he was given a crystal vase and borne off again on the silk, this time towards the west, and so he reached a great palace on top of an unnamed peak. In the courtyard he was welcomed by people bearing parasols, victory banners, musical instruments and incense. He entered the palace and ascended to its middle storey by first climbing a stone staircase, then a sapphire ladder and finally a copper ladder. There he found a great throne prepared for him, surrounded with canopies and awnings. The old wolf-rider explained how the initiation of the *Bla-ma gsang-'dus* ("The Lama, the Collection of Secrets") had previously been bestowed upon him by Padmasambhava himself and now he wanted to receive it again from Pemalingpa. So a maṇḍala was prepared and a puja per-

formed that night. When the actual initiation was being given at dawn on the following day, all the deities of this ritual cycle appeared in the sky just as their “recognition” was being bestowed. (Pemalingpa says he made a drawing of them based on this vision which was later copied onto a thangka by an artist he used to employ called *Pön Tsering*.) It was only at this point that the wolf-rider introduced himself to Pemalingpa as the mountain-god Khari and told him the names of his three sons, daughter and wife. He then invited Pemalingpa to watch a spectacle arranged for him in the palace and took him through the middle floor whose walls were “painted with real flowers”. He was taken to a throne in another room, but just as he sat upon it an old master of metaphysics wearing monk’s clothes but with his hair hanging in long braids and wearing a “lotus hat” (that is, a “monastic yogin”) came up and scolded him for sitting on his master’s throne. He explained that his name was Tsurton Chöjé (one of the disciples of the poet-saint Milarepa) and that his master was Padmasambhava; the room was the guru’s treasury and he was the treasurer. Pemalingpa asked him what wealth he was guarding: the treasury appeared to be empty and it was known that Padmasambhava had no attachment to riches. In reply the old treasurer showed him a great number of boxes containing precious objects (presumably more “spiritual treasure” destined to be revealed in the future).

Pemalingpa was then told to climb up to the roof of the palace (for what turns out to be a lesson in the cosmology of Buddhist paradises). From the roof Khari pointed out to him all the major heavens, starting with a triangular shaped island called Cāmara (*rNga-yab-gling*) in the centre of an ocean to the south-west. The Glorious Copper-Coloured Mountain (*Zangs-mdog dPal-ri*) which rose from the surface of the island was identified as the divine palace of Padmasambhava himself. Thinking that the guru must be in residence, Pemalingpa prostrated himself three times in that direction. Khari next indicated a great plain to the south-east filled with ripened paddy fields. From its centre rose the Mountain of Five Peaks (Wutaishan in China, the palace of Mañjuśrī). Pemalingpa was then told to look towards the north and he saw there a white land of even surface, circular in shape. From its centre rose a square white

mountain with a crystal stupa on its peak, the heaven of Potala (the palace of Avalokiteśvara). After that Khari told him to look south and he saw a red and black triangular shaped land. Flames were issuing forth from the mountains, cliffs, water and trees. In the middle of this land there was a lake from whose centre there rose up a black mountain with a blue palace on its summit. The sun, the moon and the stars appeared to be falling on it. It was explained to be Alkavatī (*ICang-lo-can*, the heaven of Kuvera, god of wealth). Finally Pemalingpa was instructed to look straight up in the sky and he saw there a palace made of rainbows. On its roof there stood a throne upon which he saw a blue buddha seated with his right hand touching the ground and the other in the mudra of meditation, surrounded by a great concourse of monks. This was the Akanisṭha ('Og-min) heaven and the buddha was Vajradhara. Pemalingpa wondered how it could be that this buddha could be found here in the "body of emanation" (*nirmāṇakāya*) because according to his attributes he properly belonged to the "body of enjoyment" (*sambhogakāya*). (It looks as if Pemalingpa has got the two "bodies" confused here: the buddha *was* in the "body of enjoyment", i.e. paradise, rather than in the "body of emanation", i.e. the world.) Khari immediately perceived his thoughts and explained to him how there is no certainty in the colour and attributes of the buddhas and that one's perception of these depends on one's own predisposition. Believing this to be true, Pemalingpa entreated Vajradhara in verse with fierce devotion to lead him to final salvation.

After this tuition in Buddhist cosmology Khari led him back to the throne he had been sitting on earlier. There he begged him for a discourse on "the collected essence of spiritual practices". This was followed by the arrival of people bearing all manner of gifts and food. Khari offered Pemalingpa a turquoise as a token gift for the spiritual instructions he had received and also gave him directions on how to recover a skullful of gold from beneath a flat stone marked with a chequer-board design at a place in the Lhodrak province called Mönkharteng. He further promised to give him in stages all the wealth of the local rulers of Tibet. Pemalingpa was finally conducted on his way with music and he awoke. (The skullful of gold, however,

turned out to belong not to Khari but to a different Treasure Master, and that spirit told Pemalingpa to leave it well alone. But the local rulers of southern Tibet do appear to have made over a great deal of their personal wealth to him.)

The dream was only unusual in so far as no direct meeting with Padmasambhava took place, but by this stage in his career Pemalingpa had already met the divine guru many times in his dreams, had received countless teachings from him and could afford to extend his cosmological horizons. In the very first of his extended dream journeys, in 1481, he had been taken to the heaven of Pema'ö, where his "secret name" of Pemalingpa had been conferred on him directly by the guru.¹⁰² On another occasion, in 1501, the guru had bestowed his "symbolic teachings" (*brda-chos*) on him through signs and gestures.¹⁰³ On three occasions the mode of conveyance is described as a "silken palanquin" (*dar-gyi 'do-li*):¹⁰⁴ it is presumably the same "length of white silk" used in the dream of 1508 summarized above. On it he finds himself "flying like a bird".¹⁰⁵ The divine messengers and assistants who lift its corners are usually beautiful ladies, the "skyfarer" *ḍākinīs*. They are so closely associated with Padmasambhava as his intermediaries with the world that the guru's heaven of Cāmara is usually designated the "Happy Land of the Skyfarers" (*mKha'-'gro bde-ba'i gling*).

The mountain-god Khari is a definite survival from the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet.¹⁰⁶ He and the sacred mountain itself take their full name of Kulha Khari (*sKu-lha mKha'-ri*) from the "body-gods" or "personal gods" (*sku-lha*) who were intimately associated with the mythology of the ancient kings before and during the time they introduced Buddhism to their country. The Kulha mountain-gods not only acted as the divine guardians of royalty but just as their peaks brought sky and earth together so did the gods of these mountains connect the world of humans with the world of the gods. While the ancient royal associations of Khari are no longer to be found or even expected in Pemalingpa's account, the god's role of providing a direct link with the heavens is still so obvious it hardly needs comment. The heavens are, needless to say, all Buddhist ones by this late point in history. Khari's own palace has been transformed into a Buddhist heaven too, for in another

dream, this one of 1505, Pemalingpa was taken there to meet his uncle Rinchenpel who had died some years earlier. Rinchenpel sang to him this song:

Pemalingpa, listen here!
 The nature of the whole world of existence,
samsāra and *nirvāṇa*
 Is the *dharmakāya*, primordially pure.
 Self-begotten stainless knowledge
 Is the self-begotten buddha residing within one.
 Since it's there, don't search elsewhere!¹⁰⁷

The Buddhist teachings particularly attractive to the autodidact Pemalingpa were those which, as here, insisted on the validity and sufficiency of his own spiritual realizations. After all, the seed of enlightenment lay within his own being and nowhere else. There were good doctrinal justifications for this view to be found in the theory of the *tathāgatagarbha* ("The Embryonic Essence of the Buddha").¹⁰⁸ But Pemalingpa, unlike so many other masters, never seems to have spent any time meditating let alone studying; it is by these methods that the seed of enlightenment is normally supposed to be brought to fruition. Moreover the word "compassion" scarcely forms part of his vocabulary, appearing no more than two or three times in the whole of his autobiography. Nor does he ever voice any concern for issues of common morality. And at no point in his life does he subject himself to any form of austerity. In fact several of the activities and qualities traditionally associated with Buddhist saints find no mention or expression at all in the story of his life. Instead what we find is a constant and heavy insistence on the strength of his supernatural powers. While these powers too form one of the attributes of most Buddhist saints in all periods, the other qualities normally associated with true saints are so marked by their absence in his own life that one wonders if "saint" is for him the right designation after all. Tantric Buddhist developments can serve to account for the importance of miracles, but in trying to understand Pemalingpa it may be more helpful to think of him as a wonder-working "Buddhist shaman" than as "Buddhist saint".

Mircea Eliade has sought to identify several features of

Lamaism as remnants of shamanism in Tibet.¹⁰⁹ None of those features, however, seem to come quite as close to the classical forms of central and north Asian shamanism described by him as do Pemalingpa's dream journeys. They were inspired precisely by that "original underlying ideology" which characterizes this "archaic technique of ecstasy", namely "belief in a celestial Supreme Being with whom it was possible to have direct relations by ascending into the sky".¹¹⁰ Although it is conceded that shamanism and Tantrism came to overlap and penetrate each other at many points in their aims and techniques, one is left with a distinct impression that the former was mainly concerned with attempts to penetrate a sacred realm by leaving the body, while the latter sought to bring that realm down upon the body. Paradoxically, the role of the oracles and mediums who are possessed by divine beings in Tibet would seem, according to this classification, to be less shamanistic and more tantric. On the face of it this looks quite wrong because the oracular tradition must certainly have predated the arrival of tantric Buddhism, yet the tradition cannot easily be accommodated into Eliade's conception of shamanism since Tibetan oracles do not leave their bodies. Perhaps the term shamanism is after all not very useful in the Tibetan context since it is difficult to extend its meaning to include the oracles and mediums who are so much a part of religious life there, both at the level of the village and the monastery, without doing severe damage to Eliade's broad definition, which otherwise seems to fit the contexts he describes.

Despite these reservations one cannot fail to be impressed by Pemalingpa's shaman-like behaviour: the way he fell sick and entered a trance at the very start of his career when the *dākinīs* "declared many things"; the involuntary nature of his flights to paradise; the activity of the familiar spirits who assisted him at every stage; the revelations he received in paradise and his narration of them on returning to the world of men. Moreover, it was seen how the music and dance accompanying the ritual cycle of his first discovery was revealed to him in a dream by the consort of the divine Padmasambhava. Pemalingpa's re-enactment of the dances performed for him by the heavenly attendants in Padmasambhava's heaven reminds one immediately

of the central Asian shamans whose dances also reproduce those which they witnessed in their dream journeys. Many of Pemalingpa's dances are still performed in Bhutan by men dressed as animal spirits, and this again seems to provide a direct link with the shamanism of the north. One of the clearest accounts of his compositions of dance relates to 1505 when he was about to perform the consecration of his new temple at Tamshing in the Chökhör valley of Bumthang.¹¹¹ On that occasion, he says, he had "a dream in which five tantric brother priests appeared and declared: 'For the consecration of your temple, do a sacred dance like this'. Even after I awoke the movements of the sacred dance were still very clear in my mind and I showed them to the disciples. The movements were clearly set out in the dance-code (*rtsa-tshig*) of the *Phur-ba srog-gi spu-gri* ('Kila, the Life-Razor') and performed for the consecration [of the Tamshing temple]." Pemalingpa was by no means unique in his composition of shaman-type dances. That he operated within a well-established tradition is clear because several members of his own family composed dances in the same way both before and after his own lifetime.¹¹²

Another activity relevant to Pemalingpa's shaman-like behaviour was his control of the weather. In 1481, for example, he was accused by a rival lama of using his powers to prevent him from stopping a downpour of unseasonal rain. The lama had been unable to bring the rain to a halt and had tried to exonerate himself in the eyes of the villagers who were employing him by blaming Pemalingpa's superior powers. Pemalingpa was accordingly forced to take an oath in the temple of Samtenling and swear that he had not interrupted the lama's attempts.¹¹³ On several occasions he maintains that great storms of hail and wind blew up after he had extracted treasure and he managed to bring these under control by placating the Treasure Master spirits.¹¹⁴ At the end of his life when his patron, the *nangso* of Lhalung, used to come south over the mountain passes to meet him, Pemalingpa several times ensured good weather on the road by commanding the spirits of the high passes to clear away the threatening storm clouds.¹¹⁵ His major undertakings, particularly those of a ritual nature, were always accompanied by freak weather conditions: thunder resounding through

cloudless skies, countless extraordinary rainbows, “flower rain” and so forth.¹¹⁶ The whole of the natural world responded to his actions.

The miracles he performed are all conventionally termed *siddhi* (*grub-pa*, “perfections”) in the tantric Buddhist parlance of the text, but in the cases described above their true nature would appear to owe more to shamanic or para-shamanic influence than anything encountered in Buddhism as such. It causes no surprise to find several mentions of trance-like states alongside all the accounts of dreams, for here we move still closer to what is recognized as the psychopathology of shamans. The vocabulary used to describe these states is obscure, difficult to translate and markedly unbuddhist. The wording is suggestive of a swirling, darkening, burning, inebriated, uncontrollable condition.¹¹⁷ These states came upon Pemalingpa when fully awake as he was approached by the spirits of the treasure or else on the point of finding one, also when he was about to dance or sing a song, and twice just before he left the imprints of his hand on stones.¹¹⁸

Did Pemalingpa counterfeit his dreams and trances in the same way he appears to have manufactured his treasures? The question is finally unanswerable and we can only speculate. It is undoubtedly true that the dreams fall into the category described as “public” or “cultural” as opposed to the one termed “private” or “universal”.¹¹⁹ Perhaps fragments of actual, private dreams were embellished in waking fantasies by incorporating elements from the traditional, shared mythology that was so much a part of the air Pemalingpa breathed. This could have been done even as the dream was being recorded in writing. It is even possible that the act of embellishment was a more or less unconscious process. Another possibility lies in the mind’s infinite capacity for self-deception: Pemalingpa may have truly succeeded in convincing himself that the dreams had come to him even when they had not. They do seem so closely associated with the whole business of his spurious treasure hunts and, unlike the real dreams of ordinary people, so overly logical and neat that anyone born outside that world of faith to which they were narrated is surely entitled to voice the possibility of their being entirely contrived. If that

view is taken, then one is inevitably led to the conclusion that Pemalingpa drew not only on Buddhist elements in forming his fantasies but shamanic ones too. If, however, for the purposes of our analysis the distinction between Buddhist and shamanic is a useful one, it is unlikely that Pemalingpa himself would have been troubled by such niceties: his religious life was a seamless garment. But the wearer is now beginning to look a little shady.

Enemies and Patrons

It is in the account of his rather tempestuous personal relationships that Pemalingpa reveals himself as the forceful and charismatic figure he undoubtedly was. Indeed there is little evidence that he ever tried to cultivate the Buddhist qualities of equanimity and dispassion in his relations with people. Rather he entered into these relations with a wholehearted gusto and seems to have pursued them, for better or worse, with much enthusiasm and no regret. Many of the ties were formed in the face of intense competition to win public recognition and the patronage of the nobility. He was certainly just as much at ease among the humblest peasants as among the highest nobles and priests of his time. What he seems to have desired more than anything was their universal acclaim.

Feuds once started were difficult to settle, though there were traditional methods of achieving reconciliation if both parties were willing. Often, however, conflicts could last for years. The lama introduced above who accused Pemalingpa in 1481 of interfering with his attempts to control the weather is found two years later writing a letter to the people of Saphuk encouraging them to refuse to transport Pemalingpa's baggage on his return from a second visit to Tibet. According to Pemalingpa, the lama was simply jealous. It was only with difficulty that the Saphuk people were finally persuaded to recruit fifty of their number to carry the loads, which contained the numerous gifts received by Pemalingpa on his travels in Tibet.¹²⁰ The lama perhaps had good cause to be jealous.

A far more serious antagonism developed between Pemalingpa

and a certain Lama Namkha from the Shang district of Tibet. In 1479 the lama had come to meet Pemalingpa at his monastery of Pemaling, the first of his foundations.¹²¹ They got off to a bad start when the lama mistook someone else for Pemalingpa, greeting that person instead. When the right introductions had finally been made, the lama requested Pemalingpa for teachings in a very offhand and laconic manner: “I myself have teachings. If you have some to give me, I’ll have them. If you don’t, then I dare say I won’t get more than just those I’ve had already.” Pemalingpa commented with hindsight on this lack of good manners: “Just by saying this the auspices were reversed”. The lama stayed on for three years, but matters came to a head when he was asked if he had come across some missing pages from the original “yellow paper” of the treasure-guide to Chimphuk. (Pemalingpa claims to have been busy at that time transliterating this text from the secret script in which all his treasure-texts were written.) The lama took the query as an accusation of theft and retorted: “I have stayed here this long and haven’t even *seen* any such yellow paper. What can I possibly have to give you?”. He left the monastery in a huff and went around the districts of Kurélung and Kharchu spreading malicious gossip about Pemalingpa’s charlatanry, “. . . so that the people were turned to a path of malice and they amassed causes for being reborn in the lower conditions of existence.” Though Pemalingpa says the missing pages later turned up, he does not hesitate to call Lama Namkha “this disciple of a demonic emanation”. He even came out with a “secret prophecy” about him:

A holder of a tantric lineage,
the rebirth of the Bönpo minister Takna,
Will appear from the direction of Shang
With the name of Namkha.

This vow-breaker will reverberate in all directions
The dharma-sound of the Five Poisons.
White without and black within,
The seed of hell will issue forth.
Whoever has contact with him
Will be led to the lower conditions of life.¹²²

The ferocity of this imprecation suggests the full intensity of

Pemalingpa's aversion for the lama. The verse was probably composed after their next meeting some six years or so later, when their enmity came fully into the open.¹²³ This happened at the village of Shamling in the Kurélung district, where Lama Namkha had meanwhile been spreading doubts about Pemalingpa's authenticity. In spite of the rumours Pemalingpa had been invited by the ladies of the village to expound one of his treasure-texts. They had told him they were fit recipients, "since we are not people from an outer barbarian region". On the day the teachings were due to start Lama Namkha turned up with a group of his own disciples, determined to cause a disturbance and motivated, according to Pemalingpa, by feelings of pure jealousy. He demanded that two thrones should be erected, one for each of them; he would give his teachings in the afternoon while Pemalingpa would give his in the morning. Some of the locals, however, under the influence of the earlier rumours, demanded that firstly a public debate should be held between the two lamas in the presence of competent witnesses to establish Pemalingpa's credentials and prove that he was not "the emanation of a demon". If Pemalingpa refused, then he would be forced to share the stage with Lama Namkha as demanded by him. Pemalingpa did refuse and he wrote a letter to the lama asking him to leave the place.

The situation got steadily worse to the point where Pemalingpa's party feared an actual physical attack, and so they decided to sleep in their tent in full armour in case of a night raid. Pemalingpa himself took refuge in the house of his local patron. For about four days he tried to give his teachings in the face of constant harassment from his enemies. Finally the headmen and patrons tried to intervene, pleading with him to give up and promising he could return at any time to resume the teachings since he lived close by. But Pemalingpa was determined to see it through. To resolve the deadlock he insisted that both he and Lama Namkha should be subjected to an ordeal by fire. In his letter to the lama he wrote: "You don't believe in other signs shown to you, so let us both leap into a fire. If I am burnt then it will benefit the doctrine since it will mean I have been done away with as a fraud. If you are burnt it will benefit the doctrine since it will mean you have been done away with as

a jealous person. Whichever one of us is consumed, it will benefit the doctrine of the Buddha.” On receiving this letter, Lama Namkha immediately fled to Tibet with his disciples. He eventually got his just deserts, according to this account, by dying horribly of leprosy after continuing to execrate Pemalingpa, still insisting he was a charlatan.

Those who had supported Lama Namkha in Kurélung had their crops destroyed by hail and many fell sick. Pemalingpa says they attributed this to his own spite, but he implies it was actually caused by the workings of divine or karmic retribution. At all events the teachings he had tried to give at Shamling could now continue over the next thirteen days without further interruption. He says that to mark his victory over the lama a relic was spontaneously produced from one of his teeth (“... as a sign of my having overcome the obstacles and fulfilled the welfare of beings”) and he gave it to one of his disciples to encourage his devotion. That year he received as gifts from the public of Kurélung three copper vessels, five pieces of serge, nine iron hearths, two strings of turquoise, sixty rolls of woollen cloth and eighty measures of butter: “Thus were the sentient beings of the barbarian borderlands established in the field of conversion.”¹²⁴

One factor in the dispute with Lama Namkha was the threat posed to Pemalingpa by the lama’s superior book-learning. The public debate which had been proposed, and which Pemalingpa had declined on the feeble excuse that the auspices were wrong and he was “a little unwell”, was meant to be conducted specifically in the classical “language of religion” (*chos-skad*), the equivalent of scholar’s Latin. The same factor seems to have been behind Pemalingpa’s story of a dream of 1481 in which he says he was warned not to bestow an initiation on a certain lama from eastern Tibet because he was a member of the Gelukpa school, a growing power by this date and renowned for its scholasticism. As events turned out he could not avoid initiating the man, though with much reluctance on his part. The effects of this, he says, were disastrous: the man became mad and his servant died; after trying to kill Pemalingpa he fled and later cut off the nose of another of his servants: “Such was the power of the displeasure of the protective deities.”¹²⁵ This is the only

hint of sectarian prejudice to be found in Pemalingpa, who was otherwise perfectly willing to deal with the monks and followers of any school.

It was his treasure hunts which led to conflicts more than anything else, though not always because their authenticity was suspect. On at least two occasions trouble arose precisely because they were believed to be genuine. In 1488 or 1499 he claims to have recovered the guide to the hidden paradise of Khenpalung after one of his impressive exploits with rope and chisel. The local community was so incensed by what they saw as the theft of their treasure that they surrounded the village where Pemalingpa was staying. He summoned his own "soldiers" (armed villagers), took a prisoner and drove the rest off. He then agreed to settle the injury done to him (at this stage he regarded himself as the aggrieved party) either by executing the prisoner or by receiving proper compensation in the form of a cow. The cow was duly produced, the land of Khenpalung was made over to Pemalingpa, the community became his patrons, the prisoner was released, and all were reconciled without loss of life (except for the cow, which was eaten in a feast).¹²⁶

A year or two later, in 1490, a similar conflict arose but this time with very different results. He was accused by a lady who had been possessed by an "Indian demon" (*rgya-'dre*) of having removed a turquoise from behind the image of Vairocana in the temple of Chökhör. It became the subject of much talk in the valley among the village chiefs and headmen, the lamas and the public, since it was feared that "the lives of humans and the prosperity of wealth" would decline unless the treasure were returned: the turquoise was thought to act as a sort of talisman for the whole community. Pemalingpa was compelled to take an oath in the temple, swearing that he had been commanded by Padmasambhava to recover the turquoise as his destined treasure. The procedure seems to have been regarded as ignominious and damaging, for Pemalingpa expresses the same disquiet and unease he had earlier shown when forced to swear a similar oath at the temple of Samtenling. On this occasion he was even inspired to compose an unhappy song entitled "The Billowing of the Cloud of Renunciation" in which he complained of "The year when the beggar is struck by malicious gossip, /

The year when the people are overpowered by demons". He laments the presence of many useless priests belonging to eleven separately listed grades of religious specialization, devoting a verse to each and ending up with a twelfth category, "the kings of sin" (*sdig-rgyal*), presumably to be identified with the local chiefs and headmen who had sided against him in this matter.¹²⁷

On one occasion in 1514 a rumour was spread around Bumthang that he had performed a ritual murder. He had dressed up an effigy of a *dam-sri* demon in human clothes and had used a standard exorcism ritual to "slay" the effigy, which to some people looked exactly like a real human victim. And so the wave of "malicious gossip" (*mi-kha*) spread about.¹²⁸

Violence and dispute was certainly part of the everyday world Pemalingpa lived in. In 1493 there is incidental mention of a chief whose sons are engaged in killing each other and of another blood feud which caused damage to the Chökhör temple.¹²⁹ In 1506 Pemalingpa was so preoccupied with a series of lawsuits over many issues that he says he gave few teachings that year. The next year also saw "a great turmoil at home, and because of its strength I was disturbed by having to act as the mediator in the dispute and so performed no instructions or initiations at all".¹³⁰ Again in 1520, the year before his death, Pemalingpa pleaded his inability of travel to Tibet on the grounds that he was having to act as mediator in a conflict which had arisen between his chief local patron and the Ngalong people of western Bhutan.¹³¹ Here we see how his growing prestige in the area caused him to assume one of the roles expected of a grand lama, namely that of conciliator in cases of civil dispute, though it is disappointing that the cause and nature of these conflicts are never explained. It is clear, however, that he used his power and wealth to good effect in arranging settlements. (As we shall see, he also used magical means to avert the threat of war.¹³²) Thus in Tibet in 1508 he was able to free some prisoners by accepting their release in lieu of a "fee" for an initiation bestowed on the generals who had captured them in battle.¹³³ In 1511 he gave the people of Tsampa one of his horses to help them pay off a fine for manslaughter.¹³⁴ In the same year he gave the lama of Chakhar a horseload of cloth to enable him to barter back the principal image of his family

temple which had been plundered in battle by “the army of the east”. Pemalingpa reconsecrated the image and the grateful lama gave him seasonal gifts of grain every year thereafter.¹³⁵ Cash played no part at all in these transactions, which were conducted entirely within the limits imposed by the barter economy of the period.

There was and still is a widespread belief that certain people were professional poisoners; if they succeed in poisoning someone rich and successful, it is held that the fortune and glory of the victim is magically transferred to the poisoner. It is this belief which lies behind Pemalingpa’s story of how at the age of sixty-one in 1511 he succumbed to a dose of poison administered to him in a cup of ale by a lama at Tsanglung in the Kurélung district. He was saved from death by Padmasambhava himself and his skyfarer attendants. His disciples were eager to rush off and fight with the alleged poisoner, but Pemalingpa managed to restrain them by saying they would have to kill him first since there was no greater object of pity than the poisoner.¹³⁶ It is almost the single expression of compassion to be found in his autobiography.

* * *

Pemalingpa’s relations with the civil authorities who gave him their patronage throw some light on this confusing era when no single figure is seen to hold universal power, either in Tibet or in “proto-Bhutan”. On the local level in his home district of Bumthang there were two brothers, Thubpa Tashi (usually called Künthub) and Chökyi Tashi, who are termed chiefs (*dpon-po*) and who had their seat at a place called Yuwashing.¹³⁷ Künthub was the senior of the two and is found convening meetings of the public and holding court cases in a manner which suggests he was regarded locally as the highest authority. Later works of history call his successors the “Governor of Chökhör” (*Chos-’khor sDe-pa*) after the name of the main valley in Bumthang.¹³⁸ But it is never made clear whether the office was hereditary or by appointment. To some extent at least the incumbent of Pemalingpa’s day was subject to the superior authority of the Tibetan officials north of the

Himalayan range, in particular to the *nangso* (“prefect”) of Lhalung. When the *nangso* came south to attend Pemalingpa’s funeral ceremonies in 1521, he gave orders that taxes in Bumthang should be reduced that year to compensate for the great burden which the ceremonies had imposed on the public.¹³⁹ It can be assumed the taxes were ultimately paid to the Tibetan rather than the local authorities. This is the only unequivocal evidence we have that Bumthang actually formed part of the Tibetan polity in this period. Everything else suggests that the local inhabitants managed their own affairs through a system of local headmen (termed *mi-dpon* and *gtso-bo*) who were under the immediate authority of the “chief”, Künthub. It seems that when litigation took place this was conducted on the most local levels according to the principles of traditional folk law: if that failed, the case could be heard by the chief on his own authority without reference to Tibet.

When we turn to the next rung up the ladder, namely the *nangso* of Lhalung, the picture is not much clearer. Several incumbents held office during Pemalingpa’s lifetime and they all appear to have been related to each other, suggesting that the post was hereditary within the same family.¹⁴⁰ The monastery of Lhalung had been founded as long ago as 1154 by Düsum Khyenpa (1110–93), the first of the Karmapa “Black Hat” incarnations.¹⁴¹ It appears to have become a joint Nyingmapa and Kagyüpa foundation and during this period it also acted as the seat of the *nangso* and the administrative headquarters for the whole province of Lhodrak. The *nangso* of Lhalung was therefore also termed the *Lhodrakpa nangso*, and it is made clear that he was the governor of all the southern districts bordering on what is now Bhutan. It seems likely that the family were appointed to office sometime during the period of the Phamodrupa hegemony in Tibet (1358–1481),¹⁴² though it is conceivable they came to power earlier during the period of Sakya rule. In 1483, just two years after the Phamodrupa were ousted by the next succeeding hegemony, that of the Rinpungpa, we find the *nangso* voicing his fears that the Rinpungpa forces are going to defeat him. Pemalingpa reassured him with one of his prophecies, which held that there was nothing to fear from the Rinpungpa. As events proved, all the districts except that of

Lhalung were defeated.¹⁴³ Twenty years later, in 1503, a later incumbent to the position of *nangso* again complained to Pemalingpa about the Rinpungpa threat, saying he needed Pemalingpa's "advice on means, auspices and counsels". This time Pemalingpa performed a tantric ritual to repulse the enemy forces (*dmag-zlog*)—with complete success.¹⁴⁴ Again in 1505 the *nangso* confided his fears to Pemalingpa, who on this occasion "prayed to the Triple Gem and gave him virtuous counsels as best I could".¹⁴⁵

That he was willing to accept the patronage of any noble irrespective of his political sympathies is suggested by the fact that in the very year he performed magical rites to avert the threat of the Rinpungpa to his patron he accepted an invitation to visit the Karmapa hierarch conveyed to him through the Rinpungpa party. The hierarch, Chödrak Gyamtso, was obviously keen to meet Pemalingpa and had used his own strong connections with the Rinpungpa to arrange the meeting. On his return Pemalingpa had even been invited to call on the strong man of the Rinpungpa, Dönyö Dorje, but for reasons not made clear the meeting failed to take place, though gifts of meat and grain were received. Pemalingpa was clearly disappointed because he had gone to the trouble of preparing one of his "prophecies" which held that Dönyö Dorje, who would "subjugate the entire region of Ü, Tsang and Lhorong", was destined to become one of his own patrons. But, alas, "the auspices were mistaken and the contact of priest and patron failed to come about".¹⁴⁶ We are left wondering how the most devoted of all his patrons, the *nangso* of Lhalung, would have reacted had he known that Pemalingpa was ready to court his powerful enemy. On the other hand the *nangso* must have known that Pemalingpa was a law unto himself. He may therefore have been prepared to excuse or make allowances for an attitude which others would have taken as a clear sign of bad faith.

Pemalingpa appears to have been constantly manipulating his prophecies in order to win the patronage of the nobility or to reinforce existing relations. They are found in his work entitled "The Mirror which Illuminates All Prophecies", another of his treasure-texts.¹⁴⁷ This one must have been sub-

jected to continuous revision as the circumstances of his relations altered month by month and year by year. In each prophecy the actual or potential patron is identified by his former incarnation during the ancient royal period, by one of his present names and by the area over which he holds sway. It is then explained how his attainment of a specified Buddhist heaven depends on how he serves Pemalingpa and his teachings. A single example will suffice, this one relating to Tashi Dargye, the famous myriarch of the Ja district:

The translator Pel Yeshé in his present life
 Will be born in the chief's lineage of Nyel, Loro and Ja.
 He called Tashi, of strong resolve,
 Will serve the Incarnation and receive the *Drag* meditation.
 His dominion will prosper and the teachings will be spread.
 It's possible an obstacle will arise when he's fifty-three.
 If that obstacle fails to befall him and
 If he performs the meditation of the *Drag*
 He'll attain happiness at the Glorious Mountain of Pema
 After subjugating Dakpo, Ngari, Ü and Tsang.¹⁴⁸

The promise of both secular and spiritual success would have appealed strongly to someone like Tashi Dargye, one of the most munificent patrons of his day. His family is traced back to the time of the kings, when they appear to have headed the clan of the Ja in lower Yarlung. Later in history they were appointed the hereditary myriarchs (*khri-dpon*) of the Ja district south of Yarlung and other adjoining districts by the Phamodrupa rulers of Tibet. Tashi Dargye himself was confirmed in office by Phamodrupa Dorje Rinchen.¹⁴⁹ Some five years or so before Pemalingpa's visit in c. 1486 Tashi Dargye had provided the means for the preparation of the huge woodblock edition of the *Blue Annals* by Gö Shönupel in 485 folios, one of the most important landmarks in Tibetan historiography. The final section containing a brief history of Tashi Dargye's family confirms the broad picture gained from Pemalingpa's account of this provincial ruler's ambitions, spiritual and profane.¹⁵⁰ Pemalingpa's visit to his court, the first one he paid to a figure of national stature, was typical of later trips to other nobles. It is worth recounting in some detail for the pattern it established.¹⁵¹

That winter two emissaries arrived in Bumthang to summon

Pemalingpa to the myriarch's court. He set off with a party of no less than sixty of his disciples, though the figure very likely includes porters and other camp-followers. The route took them first to what is now Bhutan's easternmost extremity, then north through the Tawang valley, and thence across the main Himalayan watershed to the Loro district in south-east Tibet. In all the villages and temples along the way Pemalingpa performed rites of various kinds and received loads of gifts which included perishables such as butter, grain, yak meat, also gold, silver and textiles. However, he admits that in one village no "service" was done to him because a certain yogin who lived there had doubts about him. The journey was not without difficulties: crossing one pass, some of the party were affected by snow blindness. At another place he says he left one of his magical footprints on stone, which his female porters actually licked in their extreme devotion. (By his own admission these feats were not involuntary: on another occasion he produced a footprint specifically "in order to counter the abuse and malevolence of the locals".)

On approaching the palace of Chögyal Lhunpo a local monk warned him not to expect the myriarch to make obeisance by prostrating before him: "Tibetan rulers and important lamas do not prostrate themselves before a teacher until they have received teachings and initiations from him." Instead Pemalingpa should simply touch his head to the myriarch's head. But against all expectations the myriarch duly made his prostrations, and after Pemalingpa had greeted him with the customary touching of heads he was taken by the hand and led to the great hall on the top floor of the three-storeyed palace. Two fine thrones had been arranged there, one with five cushions and a lower one with three cushions. Not knowing which one was intended for him and hesitating to move in either direction, someone came forward and made him sit on the higher one. The myriarch then arrived surrounded by his officials, but when he saw the three cushions arranged for him he gave a black look to the man responsible for making the arrangements, who immediately gathered them up and placed a single carpet in their place. Seating himself at this most humble of levels, Tashi Dargye then presided over the formal tea of welcome.

After one serving he began to ask the conventional questions of a host receiving a traveller from afar: “Were you not tired on the way? How long did the journey take?”. Pemalingpa explained it had taken a full month to come from Bumthang, but had he travelled quickly the journey could have been done in twenty days. The two emissaries who had accompanied him then filled in the details. After three servings of tea, a final “dismissal tea” was served to the company and Pemalingpa was then conducted to a separate guest chamber prepared for him. On visiting him there the myriarch explained how a former prophecy delivered by a certain Kongpo Raga Trulku had led him to invite Pemalingpa to his court and that he wished to receive from him the initiation of the *Bla-ma drag-po yang-gsang bla-med* (“The Wrathful Lama, Extremely Secret and Unsurpassed”), which he had recovered from the rock of Kujé in Bumthang. Pemalingpa therefore “opened the *maṇḍala*” of this cycle on the following day and bestowed its full initiation and authorization on the myriarch. The latter responded with gifts of gold and silver objects, turquoises, seven bronze vessels, a fine horse, thirteen porcelain cups, thirty-one platters or dishes of various kind, a brick of tea and a full set of robes, while the monks in the party each received a gift of serge cloth and a cup. Pemalingpa declined an invitation to stay for seven months on the ground that it was the season when his monks needed to go off on their begging trips, and he ended up staying just seven days.

At this point in the narrative Pemalingpa introduces his “prophecy” as given above, and he comments that from then on he began to receive annual gifts from the myriarch. He goes on to explain how he was instrumental in having the myriarch’s son, Jamyang Chökyi Drakpa (1478–1523) recognized as the true incarnation of the great Gyalwang Chöjé (1428–76) of the Drukpa school.¹⁵² Tashi Dargye was himself at first sceptical of his eight-year-old son’s claims to be this embodiment, but encouraged by Pemalingpa he summoned a local monk skilled in recognizing new incarnations who duly confirmed the claim. Pemalingpa further identified this son in one of his prophecies but regretted having been unable to accept the numerous invitations extended to him in later life to return as

the son's own guest. The distance had been too great. At the end of his stay the myriarch accompanied him part of the way and he returned to Bumthang by almost the same route taken on the outward journey. Despite heavy snowfalls and some landslides which forced him to leave behind the fine horse given to him by the myriarch (the horse had at one point succeeded in leaving behind its own magical hoofprint on a flat stone), he arrived back home as the barley was ripening to maturity. (This was well timed, for presumably his monks could then set off at once on their seasonal begging trip just as the harvest was being brought in. It is not clear whether on this occasion Pemalingpa went with them as he often did.) The journey did much to extend the range of Pemalingpa's influence for, quite apart from the important precedent it set for other members of the Tibetan nobility to extend their patronage to him in the future, it brought him into contact with diverse humble people who became his immediate followers.

It seems he developed a keen eye for questions of etiquette and precedence thereafter, for here lay the open and visible evidence of the power he held over his lay hosts. On almost every occasion he visited the nobility he is quick to mention the number of cushions arranged on the throne prepared for him, the deference of their greetings and the pomp and quality of their receptions. As seen in the case of the Ja myriarch, these questions form a very sensitive area bound by traditional rules of protocol. The rules, however, can be stretched or broken with impunity and to great effect if the circumstances warrant it, as on that occasion. It was in this arena that the subtlest manoeuvrings between the secular and spiritual powers were conducted for all to see. The whole question of protocol is rich in symbolic value, and not without paradox, for the deeper the act of self-abasement, the greater the honour accruing to both priest and patron: reciprocal benefits seem to increase in proportion to the distance placed between them. This is seen again in 1511 when Pemalingpa was invited to Gyantse by the hereditary governor of that place, the *Dakchen* Döndrup Phakpa, who said to him: "However many lamas there are residing in Tibet, both in the Ü and the Tsang provinces, I have neither prostrated myself before them nor have I requested their bless-

ings. But now one like you, Hierarch, is a second Ugyen [Padma-sambhava] and so I have faith and devotion.”¹⁵³

One of the most interesting accounts of the patronage extended to him by a lay ruler is the one describing his invitation to the court of King Jophak Darma of Shar Dongkha in 1507.¹⁵⁴ This petty kingdom of the “Eastern Mönpas” lay in part of what is now the Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh. From the description given by Pemalingpa it appears the king’s court had a quasi-Indian character. It was there that Pemalingpa met the refugee raja of Kāmata. I have identified this figure elsewhere as Nilambar, the last ruler of Kāmata before its conquest in c. 1501–5 by Ḥusayn Shāh, the Moslem nawab of Bengal.¹⁵⁵ Fleeing his own kingdom to this inaccessible part of the eastern Himalayas, Nilambar must have made an ally of the local king of the Eastern Mönpas, who was acting as Pemalingpa’s host on this occasion. Pemalingpa says that when Nilambar came to see him he thought he should rise to greet him, “since he was a most powerful king of India”. The raja, to Pemalingpa’s surprise it seems, touched his feet in obeisance in the Indian manner. The brief and accidental meeting was his only direct contact with the Indian world. It was certainly superseded in importance by the relations which developed between him and his host, King Jophak Darma, who showered a profusion of gifts on him and became a most faithful follower in later years.¹⁵⁶ Following Pemalingpa’s visit to his court, the king abstained from making blood sacrifices to Śiva. Pemalingpa further implies he himself was responsible for ensuring the birth of a male heir to the king as a result of rituals performed at his court. Implicit in all these accounts of his contacts with his lay patrons is their attribution of secular boons to his good influence. As one of them said explicitly on a different occasion: “The happiness and peace of these regions is due to your kindness.”¹⁵⁷

* * *

A different set of conventions applied when two lamas met. Here the question of precedence was more fluid and complex because their relative status depended on factors which were far more variable than those which determined the relations of

a priest and his lay patron. When in 1488 during his sixth visit to Tibet Pemalingpa first met Tsultrim Penjor, the abbot of Ney, the circumstances did not seem to augur well for their future relationship: he was peremptorily summoned to the lama's house, the lama made no obeisance to him, observed none of the appropriate "worldly conventions" (*mi-chos*), sat him on a single cushion and served him just a single cup of ale. But the abbot must have been deeply impressed during the conversation which followed, since he soon became one of Pemalingpa's most steadfast supporters.¹⁵⁸

His meeting with the seventh Karmapa hierarch Chödrak Gyamtso in 1503 was a clear case of a junior meeting a senior, for that lama not only possessed the oldest incarnational lineage in Tibet but also huge estates and, as we have seen, he enjoyed the special patronage of the ruling hegemony of the Rinpungpa. He was perhaps the most powerful churchman of his day. Earlier Karmapas had patronized certain text-discoverers, and this embodiment's invitation to Pemalingpa was a conscious move to maintain the tradition. The account of their meeting is worth giving in full:¹⁵⁹

I was told to come right away, so I went. On being received I made prostrations and when I requested his [the Karmapa's] blessings he touched my forehead with his hands and I was given a triple-cushioned seat in the right-hand row [of monks before him], also a lap-cover. Having sat there for a serving of tea, he said: "What sort of yellow paper [of your treasure-texts], relic pills and prophecies have you got with you?"

I replied: "I've brought some yellow paper, relic pills and 'external' prophecies. I shall show them to you tomorrow. As for the "secret" prophecies, though some people like them, others don't, so I don't show them to anyone."

He said: "It's the very nature of the world that some people should like something while others don't."

I said: "Some people say I am a fake while others say I'm the emanation of a demon. But to my mind I think I'm one who fulfils the actions of Ugyen [Padmasambhava]. Now since you, Precious Lord, are a buddha who knows the past, present and future, you must say clearly what I am."

But he gave no reply at all.

"Is it the case that we have had contact during three of our lifetimes?", I asked.

“That is correct”, he said.

Then on the eleventh day of the month the incarnate lama [of Zablung] came and said: “The Omniscient One commands that he wants a sight of the books.”

I said: “I’m coming with them”. After offering to his [the Karmapa’s] hands the volumes of the *dGongs-pa kun-’dus*, the *Klong-gsal*, the *Mun-sel sgron-me*, the *Bla-ma drag-po*, the *Nor-bu rgya-mtsho*, the *Lung-bstan kun-gsal me-long*, and my spiritual songs, I went to the tea-row before him and then offered him . . . [various relic pills] and he was extremely pleased.

On the evening of the fifteenth of the Monkey [seventh] month he summoned me and I went alone to his tent. There was nobody there but us, the teacher and disciple, while the incarnate lama guarded the door to the tent. He told me to sit down on a carpet to the left [of his throne] and then said: “I want you to initiate me in all these volumes.”

I replied: “Maudgalyāyana never rushed around in front of Śākyamuni [giving him teachings].”

But he said I had to at all cost, so I took up all the volumes and delivered them into his hands.

He said: “Start by giving me the account of the lineal authorizations and then proceed right down to the words empowering me, stage by stage.”

I therefore did so, and after offering [the initiations] to him he said: “There’s not much peace here now because of all the patrons. I’ve got to go from here to Lhasa as quickly as I can. Let’s go together so we can have detailed discussions.”

Then I replied: “I have this temple [of Tamshing] in Mön which I am in the course of building. I have to leave for there tomorrow, just as soon as I can.” [The Karmapa agrees to his departure and gives him many parting presents.]

Particularly interesting here is Pemalingpa’s unsuccessful attempt to have the Karmapa give a public declaration of his authenticity as a text-discoverer; also his willingness to adopt a humble attitude in the Karmapa’s presence even though he was playing the teacher’s role on this occasion. Certainly he does not appear to have made obeisance before anyone else during the whole course of his life. Although the conventions were different, in every other respect the meeting with the Karmapa looks very similar to all those which took place with his lay patrons. The same holds for his contact with the many lamas occupying less exalted positions than the Karmapa who invited him to bestow his treasure-texts on them. All of them, high or low, spiritual

or secular, were his patrons. Their single, prophesied *raison d'être* was to support him and promulgate his teachings.

The Later Years

The only discernible pattern or progression which overlays the perpetual round of village rites and seasonal begging tours, dreams and miracles, which punctuated the whole of Pemalingpa's life was the gradual movement that took him away from close involvement in the mechanics of revealing his "treasure" and towards the extensive patronage brought to him by the dissemination of that treasure. Despite the persistent accusations of charlatanry already noted, they tail off in his autobiography and this must surely reflect his growing triumph. In his later years he became a supremely confident and popular figure of the religious establishment. Nine thousand people attended one of the public initiations he gave in Tibet the year before his death, a number which must represent practically the entire population of the district where this event took place and many from beyond too.¹⁶⁰

Pemalingpa's early and unsuccessful marriage to the daughter of the lama of Rimochen seems to have produced no children, but he went on to beget six sons by three different ladies in a span of just eleven years between 1499 and 1509: he was as old as forty-nine when the first was born and fifty-nine when the last was born. There was also a daughter, but nothing is known about her except her name: Ugyen Zangmo. These details are gleaned not from the autobiography but from other surviving sources which deal with his progeny.¹⁶¹ Of his three consorts, we know two of them were at his deathbed in 1521, though only one is named: Budren, the mother of his third and fourth sons and perhaps others too.¹⁶² The names of the other two consorts are found elsewhere; Trimo, mother of his first son, and Sithub whose children cannot be identified among the remaining sons.¹⁶³

Pemalingpa must have enjoyed a complex and varied love life and there are hints of this in the autobiography. In 1501, two years after the birth of his first son, he records a dream in

which he found himself copulating with a black woman “to satisfy her lust”, but he was dragged off by another woman who said the black lady was dangerous to have sex with since she was a flesh-eating *ḍākinī*. It would be better to join himself to her instead: if he did, her life would be extended by three years, she claimed. Pemalingpa complied. The next day, “just as it had occurred in the dream”, two women came to meet him, one good and the other evil: “Recognizing them, I explained to the lamas assembled there everything I had dreamt about the good one. Leading her off to Künzangling, I attended on her there and it turned to the profit of my mind. As for her, the obstacles to her life were cleared away.”¹⁶⁴ Nothing is said about the flesh-eating *ḍākinī* in human form who had also entertained designs on Pemalingpa, but it will be seen later how his death in 1521 was blamed on his sexual contact with a witch, a relative of one of his consorts.¹⁶⁵

It seems Pemalingpa enjoyed more or less free access to the women of his choice, and the reasons for this are here plain to see. There still exists a popular belief, particularly in the communities of eastern Bhutan, which holds that women having sexual relations with holy men are so blessed by the contact that their illnesses are removed and their lives prolonged. For their part the priests and meditators who are not bound by the vows of fully ordained monks are often looking out for women “possessed of the marks of a *ḍākinī*” who can serve them as fitting partners in the rites of sexual yoga. That at least is the justification put forward for their amorous pursuits. The ceremonies performed by these priests in the villages give them ample opportunity to select their partners. In particular there is a belief that “treasure-revealers” cannot hope to fulfil their destiny unless they have a tantric consort. The literature devoted to the treasure cult makes it clear that all those who played a part in it had at least one such partner and several of them had many. Nevertheless, despite a long tradition of non-celibate religious practices fully condoned by society, some residual feeling of disapproval that any religious professional, even a text-discoverer, should have anything to do with the opposite sex is still sometimes expressed. In 1505 Pemalingpa had a first meeting with Karpo Kunga Drakpa, a Kongpo lama

who was closely involved in the restoration of old temples and who claimed proficiency in magic (*mthu*). When Pemalingpa asked him: “Should you, Kongpo lama, be considered good just because you are expert in magic?”, he gave the smart retort: “Should you, a good Mönpa lama, be considered good just because you have a wife?”. The lama suffered for his mockery: a hair grew on his tongue and he fell grievously sick, but as soon as he confessed his sin he recovered. He later became one of Pemalingpa’s chief supporters.¹⁶⁶

In 1511, two years after the birth of his last son, Pemalingpa made a joke about his non-celibacy—a rare example of humour. He had been complaining to his chief patron, the *nangso* of Lhalung, about the stupidity of the locals of the Lhodrak province attending his teachings. They had been quite unable to follow what he was trying to put across. His patron, however, was rather put out by this unfavourable opinion of his own subjects. To mollify him Pemalingpa came out with a little ditty alluding to the characteristic faults of all those peoples who made up the world they knew:

The people of Kham have no homes.
 The people of Ü and Tsang have no imagination.
 The nomads have no virtue.
 The people of Lhodrak have no understanding.
 The people of Mön have no vows [of celibacy].¹⁶⁷

The punch line at the end must surely allude to Pemalingpa’s own affairs with women: the implication is that he could not really help himself since this was a failing common to the people of Mön. The other lines allude to the well-known wandering habits of the Kham people, the inability of the Ü and Tsang people to think about the sufferings of others, the readiness of the nomads to butcher their animals, and the dullness of the Lhodrak people which had just been manifested. The joke and its self-mocking tone expresses a rather tolerant view of the common human failings which had come to be associated with regional characters. It restored the *nangso* to good humour.

There are glimpses of Pemalingpa as a family man in the last decade of his life. Some of his sons, the eldest of them in their late teens, are seen accompanying him on his final journeys to Tibet. They are referred to collectively with affection as

the “heart sons” (*thugs-sras*) and they are made to sit in a line directly to the side of his throne whenever he gives an initiation or blessing.¹⁶⁸ As will be seen, the account of his deathbed scene leaves no doubt about the strength of his attachment to them.¹⁶⁹

We catch a glimpse of the lady who seems to have been his chief consort in just one external source, the verse autobiography of Lethrolingpa.¹⁷⁰ When this aspiring treasure hunter first called on Pemalingpa at Tamshing, he found the lama would only touch his forehead to his own but would say nothing to him at all in greeting. Bumdren, Pemalingpa’s consort, was present on the occasion. She told him not to be disturbed by this, that he should not misunderstand the silence since it was Pemalingpa’s intention to give him the initiations he wanted. Here she was playing one of the customary roles of a lama’s wife, smoothing the ground between her husband and his disciples.

Lethrolingpa’s account of his relations with Pemalingpa, whom he seems to have regarded as his main teacher, are valuable because they provide a rare, independent view of our subject. He arrived at Tamshing as Pemalingpa was giving the initiation of the “Great Fulfilment” teachings according to the text of one of his discoveries.¹⁷¹ People had assembled for it from central, eastern and south-eastern Tibet and among them was a skilled and intelligent female meditator called Dechen Karmo, who was reckoned to be an incarnation of the female *bodhisattva* Tārā in her white form. Lethrolingpa found himself sitting next to her in the assembly and a close accord seems to have developed between them. While expounding the text Pemalingpa explained the need to distinguish between mind (*sems*) and knowledge (*rig-pa*), also between discursive thought (*rnam-rtog*) and the *dharmakāya*. He invited the devotees to question him on the subject. Dechen Karmo wanted to put a query, but she felt inhibited and asked Lethrolingpa to put a question first. However, he declined. Some days later, while the text was being read in order to confer its authorization on the devotees, these words were heard: “Be certain and believe that discursive thoughts are to be recognized as the *dharmakāya*.” This seemed to several of the company to

conflict with what Pemalingpa had earlier explained. In the discussion which followed the problem could not be resolved, so Dechen Karmo suggested to Pemalingpa he should have Lethrolingpa explain his solution. Lethrolingpa was therefore asked to sing his explanation in the form of a spiritual song. He did so, to everyone's complete satisfaction. That night Dechen Karmo did him special honour in the form of a tantric feast (this may just be a circumlocution for "dinner") and had him sing another song specially for her on the "recognition of the *Mahāmudrā*". Again during the celebrations marking the conclusion of the initiation he was asked by Pemalingpa to sing "a song about whatever is in your mind". He did so in the form of an invocation to Pemalingpa himself, which greatly pleased the master. He then followed the master to the Dechenling monastery where a long programme of initiations ensued. Six different "treasure cycles" were conferred—"an ocean of profound and extensive doctrines, and special entrustments, prophecies and spiritual counsels. The essence of these initiations, doctrines and counsels made my body and mind happy. Putting them into practice in meditation, which is the root of religion, blessings were gained." Lethrolingpa went on to pass a retreat at the sacred shrine of Kujé in Bumthang from where Pemalingpa had recovered several of his treasures. He had an extraordinarily long and detailed dream there of Padmasambhava's heaven which he immediately set down in writing just as Pemalingpa says he used to do. From there he went to Longchenpa's old monastery of Tharpaling, which was practically in ruins, and while meditating there for three months he had a vision of two *ḍākinīs* with whom he copulated in a rite of sexual yoga.

He then had a further meeting with Pemalingpa, who encouraged him to stay and meet some lamas who were coming to receive initiations from him.¹⁷² One of them was Tashi Gyalpo from his own ancestral temple at Sombrang in the Ura valley, a disciple of the Shamarpa and almost certainly the person to whom Pemalingpa dictated most of his autobiography. The other lama was the famous "mad saint" Drukpa Kunley (1455–1529), with whom it is clear Pemalingpa had several encounters. On this occasion all the lamas took turns to sing spiritual songs to each other. Drukpa Kunley composed one in

which he offered his body, conceived as a *maṇḍala*, as a “fee” for the teachings on the Great Fulfilment which Pemalingpa was imparting to them. Pemalingpa responded with a song in which he explained how he was unable to practise “the religion of the gods” but instead he depended entirely on the recognition of his own mind, self-begotten and pure, as the perfect enlightenment, the Great Fulfilment, primordially free of all attributes. Whatever is manifested in the mind is the play of the mind’s own dexterity. In this state the “religion of the gods” (here to be understood as conventional religious practices, as opposed to “the religion of men”, that is worldly conventions) has the most transient value until it is brought into alignment with the Great Fulfilment. Pemalingpa then requested Lethrolingpa to expound his own experiences in the quest for the “religion of the gods”. Lethrolingpa’s response is worth giving in full as an example of the spontaneous mystical outpourings that took place in Pemalingpa’s milieu:¹⁷³

Obeisance to the guru!

I beseech the Triple Gem to bless me.

When I the beggar, the wandering yogin devoid of religion,

First had a mind to practise the religion of the gods

I devoted myself at the start to the study of words

But I went on my way having lost the religion of the gods

In the cracks where truth apprehended in words had fallen.

At a time when I was searching again and again for the religion of the
gods

I had a realization of the doctrine devoid of writing.

Then I studied the teachings on the vehicles of philosophical systems

But I went on my way having lost the holy religion of the gods

In the cracks where the refuting or proving of philosophical systems
is done.

At a time when I was searching again and again for the religion of the
gods

I had a realization of the doctrine devoid of philosophical systems.

Then I studied the teachings on the Arising Stages of the concourse of
gods

But I went on my way having lost the holy religion of the gods

In the cracks of many colours, ornaments and robes.

At a time when I was searching again and again for the religion of the
gods

I had a realization of the doctrine devoid of images.

Then I studied the teachings on meditating in immobility
But I lost the religion of the gods in the cracks left by meditating on
things recollected and apprehended.

At a time when I was searching again and again for the religion of the
gods

I had a realization of the nature of mind devoid of faults and virtues.

By means of the teachings thus gained by practising this religion of
the gods

I was released from being bound by the purposeless bonds of self-
hood.

The religion of the gods was no longer needed and on leaving Tibet
I met in person the master of religion devoid of religion
[Pemalingpa].

Then the root of all *dharmas* was cut.

By the power of the profound essence gained when that root was cut
Whatever was manifested of the religion of the gods was [then seen as]
devoid of love and hate, and

Whatever arose of various thoughts [from the mind's own] dexterity,
their single taste and their

Self-originated and unchanging nature was perceived,

Whereupon all *dharmas* came to be understood.

I offer to the ears of all these wondrous persons who are quickly gain-
ing the most excellent goal

This account of performing the religion of the gods which I thus
practised.

Lethrolingpa was warmly congratulated for this account of his
quest. Drukpa Kunley said it cut down all obstacles and errors
on the spiritual path; Tashi Gyalpo maintained it was better
than a formal exposition; and Pemalingpa compared its
insights to those of the third Karmapa lama and of Longchenpa
himself. Lethrolingpa then found himself invited to give his
own teachings at the temples of several of the most important
Nyingmapa families in Bumthang—at Sombrang and
Shingkar in the Ura valley, Chakhar in the Chökhör valley,
and the unidentified Garngen, also at the home of
Pemalingpa's chief patron, the district governor Künthub. He
then returned to Tamshing and there Pemalingpa gave him an
initiation empowering him to act as his special representative
and to disseminate his treasure-texts.¹⁷⁴ Clearly Pemalingpa

did not regard this young colleague, who had already discovered his own first treasure at Domtshangrong in the Mönyul district, as a rival but looked on him instead as a potential ally. That he acted towards him with real generosity is apparent from the fact that he introduced him later to his own benefactor, the myriarch of Ja and his son, Jamyang Chökyi Drakpa, whose recognition as the rebirth of Gyalwang Chöjé Pemalingpa had assisted. Pemalingpa wrote to them asking them to assist Lethrolingpa, and besides the usual presents he received a certificate from the myriarch, probably to facilitate his journeys.¹⁷⁵ The *nangso* of Lhalung also gave him patronage after receiving from him one of Pemalingpa's teachings which he had till then failed to obtain.¹⁷⁶ Pemalingpa counted no less than six "treasure revealers" among his disciples, but Lethrolingpa does not appear to be among them unless he is disguised under another name.¹⁷⁷

Another person who provides a contemporary and independent account of Pemalingpa is the "mad saint" Drukpa Kunley whom we just met above in the song party. Pemalingpa himself briefly records two meetings with him. The first, in 1511, occurred on his return from Gyangtse where he had been entertained by the hereditary governor of that town. Drukpa Kunley met him at a place called Rogo and, presenting him with a piece of iron, requested the authorization for the cycle of Kīla ("The God of the Magic Dagger"). Pemalingpa refused.¹⁷⁸ Indeed the request may well have been one of Drukpa Kunley's mad jokes, this one intended to tease Pemalingpa about his "treasure". Perhaps Drukpa Kunley wanted to convey the idea that any piece of iron he had found would serve for a magic dagger just as well as one which Pemalingpa claimed to have discovered in the form of "treasure". Certainly Drukpa Kunley was a radical sceptic when it came to the "treasures" of the Nyingmapa school. In his own words: "...the tantrists of the Nyingmapa school have numerous revealed books ('treasures'), but have they written sources which attest their authenticity? The doctrines of those people are a great pretence".¹⁷⁹ Drukpa Kunley was always one to call a spade a spade.

On the occasion of their next meeting, in 1515, Drukpa

Kunley was present when Pemalingpa met the abbot of Chölung and the *nangso* of Lhalung, but no details are given. Pemalingpa counted Drukpa Kunley first in a list of eight of his disciples qualified as *mahāsiddhas*. It is disappointing therefore that he says so little about their meetings.¹⁸⁰

Two such meetings are described by Drukpa Kunley himself—one is found in the standard Tibetan autobiography and the other in one of the “secret” Bhutanese biographies. Interestingly, in both of these texts Pemalingpa is styled not by his assumed name but instead in the form of “the treasure-revealer, the religious hierarch of Bumthang”. Both accounts are taken up with a description of spiritual conversations between Pemalingpa and Drukpa Kunley. The Tibetan text recounts one such exchange in prose and the Bhutanese text records another in verse. Neither of them can be dated. Since they are already accessible, respectively in French and English translations, no more than a summary is given here.

In the Tibetan text¹⁸¹ Pemalingpa is found commenting on the words credited to the primordial buddha: “I, Samantabhadra, the Buddha; I, Samantabhadra, the Hell”. The commentary Pemalingpa offered is cryptic and takes the form of questions: dirt on hands can be made to vanish, but how can the hands themselves disappear? So also with clouds and sky, with discursive thoughts and spontaneous gnosis. The implication seems to be that the unity of good and bad, or subject and object, in primordial buddhahood is finally transcended in a state where a positive element remains and a negative element disappears. Drukpa Kunley objected, claiming that this interpretation was only valid in “an ordinary religious conversation”: all phenomena have different forms but their essence is one and the same just as he, Drukpa Kunley, could be known as “general” if he wages war, as “singer” if he sings songs, or as “religious hierarch” if he preaches religion, but his real nature is single and undivided. Similarly from the standpoint of the Void, both the state of enlightenment and the round of transmigration are but one and the same thing. It is impossible to separate the Void of the Buddha and the Void of living beings. The ripples of a river and the turbulence of a river are the same because of their watery nature. To this Pemalingpa responded: “For me,

who have no lama and am not a disciple, for me that's just right and I am much comforted by it."

The account in the Bhutanese text,¹⁸² which clearly does not relate to the same meeting, is set in Bumthang where Pemalingpa was preaching from his throne to a crowd in the open air. Drukpa Kunley gathered some children, put himself on top of a boulder and started to copy Pemalingpa's behaviour, using the children as his mock devotees. When Pemalingpa saw this, he asked: "What are you doing, beggar, while I'm here expounding the view, meditation and practice of the Great Fulfilment?" Drukpa Kunley took up the cue and produced a song about the "view, meditation and practice of the Great Fulfilment"; the subject is explained through similes, the most pungent of which contrasts "the many tantric consorts (*gzungs-ma*) of the treasure-revealer" with the "[even more] numerous beloved little nuns [who maintain their vows]"; similarly the sutras are set against the profundities of the path of secret mantras. In fact this does not sound much like the real Drukpa Kunley of the Tibetan text, who is altogether more subtle and sophisticated. Indeed the whole Bhutanese tradition of this "mad saint" appears to be the product of the folk culture of village bards rather than the authentic memory of the saint.¹⁸³ The episode recounted here then continues with a further exchange in verse on the same subject which so impressed Pemalingpa that he doffed his hat to Drukpa Kunley and declared him to be an exceptional being. In reply to further questioning Drukpa Kunley explained his training and practice, his religious and human ancestry and his name: the whole encounter is presented as their first meeting. It was followed by several days during which Drukpa Kunley was entertained handsomely by Pemalingpa and they continued to have religious discourses.

Although we can be practically certain these exchanges never took place and that the whole encounter has assumed a legendary form, it still does tend to corroborate the general picture of their relationship gained from the other sources discussed. As was noticed above, Drukpa Kunley was an unashamed sceptic when it came to the cult of "treasure" and his contact with Pemalingpa revolved around the experience of the Great Fulfilment rather than the ritual cycles which

Pemalingpa claims to have revealed. From the brief account of their meetings, actual or legendary, it seems that Drukpa Kunley's perception of the Great Fulfilment was keener and more incisive than Pemalingpa's, even though he was trained more particularly in the meditative techniques of the Great Seal (*Mahāmudrā*) of the Kagyüpa school than in the Great Fulfilment of the Nyingmapa.¹⁸⁴ Yet there is no reason to suppose that either Drukpa Kunley's critical views on "treasure" or his greater meditational insight prevented cordial relations developing between them. As for Pemalingpa, despite his uncompromising and somewhat overbearing nature, he does seem to have had the gift of friendship. His friends, however, were reckoned among his faithful disciples: friendship was not enjoyed for its own sake but rather as a confirmation of his spiritual powers.

The final independent testimony on Pemalingpa is the one provided by Gyalwa Döndrup in the passage he composed to complete the unfinished autobiography, covering the last two years of the master's life from 1518 to the first month of 1521.¹⁸⁵ Although the writer does not say so specifically, it is probable that he himself witnessed most of the events he describes and the conversations he recorded. Most of these concern the unrelenting pressure put on Pemalingpa by his patron, the *nangso* of Lhalung, to accept further invitations to visit him across the border in Tibet. In 1519 Pemalingpa pleaded that the auspices were wrong, but after a long exchange of letters he compromised and agreed to meet the *nangso* south of the Mönla pass at a pasture called Shingo.¹⁸⁶ He promised to arrange for good weather on the pass and, despite much opposition from his own officials, the *nangso* eventually made the journey down from Tibet. Nine days were spent camping at Shingo during which Pemalingpa bestowed a series of initiations on the party from Tibet and his own followers, a total of about three hundred people. The teachings included a recitation of his own autobiography. For the sacred dances which usually accompanied Pemalingpa's initiations, costumes and musical instruments were borrowed from the temple at Tsampa. Pemalingpa took the lead in one of these dances, whose purpose was to exorcize the *dam-sri* spirits, and while doing so he explained the

meaning of the dance's symbolic gestures (*mudrā*). Again while performing the dance which followed a ritual of "burnt offerings" (*sbyin-sreg*), he explained the accompanying visualizations and meditative practices.

The next year the *nangso* insisted Pemalingpa should keep a promise he made to visit him again.¹⁸⁷ Pemalingpa tried to get out of it this time by saying he was having to act as a mediator between his patron Künthub and the Ngalong people of western Bhutan. But a stream of messengers came down to tell him that the yogins who had assembled in Tibet for his teachings had waited so long for his arrival that their provisions were nearly exhausted and they were facing severe difficulties. So Pemalingpa set off on what turned out to be his twenty-fourth and final journey across the border to Tibet, meeting his patron first at Saphuk and then proceeding on a triumphant progress which took him first to Lhalung and thence to Ney, Talung and Nangkartse for a long round of teachings and initiations. At every monastery he visited the monks came out to perform dances of welcome, and performances of some of his own compositions were also staged. On at least two occasions, at Tsoyul Phukring and Lodrö Dzong, he again gave recitations of his unfinished autobiography and also conferred the authorization for his collected rediscoveries. Four thousand people assembled at the monastery of Ney to hear his teachings, with nine thousand gathering there for the concluding blessings. The rulers (*sde-pa*) of Talung and Nangkartse welcomed him with the finest possible receptions. During his return journey to Bumthang he had a further meeting with the *nangso* of Lhalung and arranged to meet him later that year very privately at Tsampa, the first village south of the Mönla pass, in order to confer on him a special initiation of the *Phyag-rdor gtum-po* ("The Fierce Vajrapāṇi"). For this initiation he promised to use either the original "yellow paper" of this treasure-text or else a first-hand copy. The *nangso* explained how in future he would have to travel south of the Himalayan watershed to meet him since he was constantly being scolded by the master's family for subjecting him to these long and difficult journeys. Pemalingpa entirely agreed with his family in this and claimed that during the long periods of absence from home he had been

unable to minister to members of his family who were sick or dying. No one else in Mön knew how to perform curative rites. His younger brother, Pema Tashi, would not have died if he had been there, so also his eldest son, Dawa. Pemalingpa twice used a play on words in venting his pique: “Your shame (*zhabs-'dren*) is greater than your service (*zhabs-tog*).” Maintaining that “there is no pleasure in wealth without people”, and with increasing petulance he told the *nangso*:

Throw all these gifts into the river. Tomorrow I'll leave with just two or three attendants for Umataktse and then I'll go off to the east to whatever place I reach. . . . If I die, there won't be suffering: I can reside in the line of the *vidyādhara* [in heaven]. If you lot were to die you'd have to wander around in *samsāra*. If I die in the mountains I'll provide a corpse for the birds. If I die in the valleys I'll provide a corpse for the dogs. It would be the result of listening to you in the past. Wherever I end up, I must leave at all cost. If you're going to arrange horses and a group to accompany me as far as Saphuk, do so. If not, keep them here. I have a horse myself and I'm leaving tomorrow.¹⁸⁸

He was in high dudgeon and refused to listen to his sons who did their best to calm him down. Eventually Künthub, governor of Bumthang and Pemalingpa's chief local patron, prevailed on to intervene since he was said to be the only person he would listen to. He said: “Hierarch, you're no different from a child. It just won't do to talk like that. That elder son of yours was a bit sick some time ago but apart from that he's now quite recovered. There's really no need for such an uproar. We take full responsibility that no danger will come [to him].” Pemalingpa was finally pacified, but said: “If you'd be happier if there was no one to scold you, it will soon be so.” These words were later interpreted as a prophecy foretelling his approaching death. It was followed by many portents and dreams pointing to the same event.¹⁸⁹

Gyalwa Döndrup goes on to describe the two last occasions he reckoned of importance in Pemalingpa's life, but none are as interesting as this tantrum which he seems to have described with real ingenuousness. The first was the annual festival at his own temple of Tamshing, which by this time had come to assume the scale and function of a regional gathering. He was

persuaded by Künthub to hold it on a grander scale than ever before because it was a time when they were both in good health, when Pemalingpa's "converting activities" were flourishing and so too was the rule of Künthub over the whole region: "No happier time will ever come forth." The festival took the form of a distribution of gifts to the public, a cavalcade of horses with Pemalingpa splendidly mounted in the centre, a performance of sacred dances and the antics of clowns: "The enjoyment was similar to that of the gods." While this was going on, a messenger arrived to remind him of his promise to bestow the treasure of the *Phyag-rdor gtum-po* on his patron, the *nangso*. Again he prevaricated, this time claiming that when making the promise he had mistaken the year and had only realized the mistake on reaching home and re-examining the prophecy which foretold the event. He would give the *nangso* the initiation some time in the future in Tibet, but he would not come to Tsampa now. This led to a further exchange of letters, Pemalingpa insisting that he was not inventing an excuse to escape having to make a copy from the original "yellow paper" of the text in question. He assured his patron he would come the following year. Eventually, however, he gave in and agreed to meet him at Tsampa (just a full day's journey north from his residence), but he would stay for just two days since he had to perform an urgent ritual at the village of Dur and then make a journey westwards to the Ngalong region. Pemalingpa cleared away the storms which were threatening his patron's journey over the high mountains on the border and they duly met at Tsampa according to plan for what turned out to be his last major undertaking. Yak-hair tents were pitched and the initiation was conferred. Of interest are two conversations which took place between Pemalingpa and his patron on this occasion. In one of them the patron asked him whether Chokden Gönpö, a lama well known to both of them, was the true incarnation of the treasure-hunter Dorjelingpa. Pemalingpa replied that even if the lama killed his parents or was found living among fishermen he was definitely the true incarnation. It could be that he had not yet discovered any treasure because of his wild nature, or else because he had taken a consort too early in life. Pemalingpa said he would not take the blame for the lama's

failure to recover treasure even if it were known by the public that he, Pemalingpa, had pronounced him the true incarnation.¹⁹⁰ (Here we gain a glimpse of the informal trade union which brought these treasure-seekers together and protected their common interests.) The second conversation dealt with a much more practical matter. Pemalingpa asked his patron how he might succeed in recovering books or parts of books which had been misappropriated by certain yogins he had had dealings with. His patron suggested it would be best not to accuse them directly of theft, but simply to ask them to return the books if they happen to have them.¹⁹¹

It was Pemalingpa's habit never to look back after taking leave of people, but it is said he did so this time. The clear implication is that he knew his end was in sight and would never see his faithful patron again. While stopping for a meal on his return he saw a large black cloud hanging over the Mönla pass, and again he commanded the spirits to clear it away to enable his patron reach his home safely.¹⁹²

Having returned to Tamshing Pemalingpa made ready to leave for the western region of Ngalong, but he fell sick. He was attacked by a demoness in the form of one of his lady friends, a close relative of his consort Budren. She had "rendered him service" but then had refused to continue doing so. It was alleged that the same demoness, who was herself the incarnation of the wicked queen of King Trisong Detsen of Tibet, had brought about the deaths of Pemalingpa's earlier incarnations when he had lived as Pema Lendretsel and Longchenpa. Her wealthy husband had lost his riches and had killed a chief, such was the power of her malevolence. Moreover all her siblings died without issue. On the ninth day of the eleventh month of the Dragon year (1520), some four or five days after she had attended on Pemalingpa, all the passes and valleys were blocked by a great snowstorm. Some old people remembered how a similar storm had last been seen at the time Ratnalingpa died. (It will be recalled that he was the famous treasure-hunter who died in 1476. Pemalingpa claimed to be his direct successor in the profession). Convinced of his approaching death, Pemalingpa advised his son Drakpa Gyalpo to cure himself of his wild behaviour and make friends with the two chief patrons and heed

their counsels. He was to summon his two eldest brothers, his sister and the chief Künthub. The next day Pemalingpa explained that there were further treasures to be unearthed at his birthplace at Chel and that he, Drakpa Gyalpo, could discover them if he prayed to Padmasambhava. Otherwise they would be found by one of his own future incarnations. The sound of cranes was heard in the temple and Pemalingpa said he heard a voice telling him he had been attacked at Tsampa by the wife of a *gza'-bdud* demon who had cut his tongue.¹⁹³ When all his family were finally gathered round his deathbed, he said to them:

Now you brothers are here and the chief is here too. After I am dead don't divide up or sell off my ritual objects and dance costumes. If you do sell them there'll be bad talk and it will be said: "The children of the treasure-revealing lama are selling off his ritual objects". Keep them as common property and use them for rituals as and when they are needed. They shouldn't be possessed by one alone.

You children must have faith in the *nangso* and the chief. But the *nangso* is far off and it's difficult for him to benefit you quickly. The chief must help you as best he can. . . . Use your wits in making friends with the two of them. And be on good terms with each other.

While I yet live there is no happiness, and after I'm dead the lives of lamas and spiritual friends in Tibet will be shortened, also those of the rulers and officials. I am like the pillar of a house, the handle of a parasol. If you take out the handle, the ribs collapse. So will the lives of the upholders of the doctrine be shortened. And there is talk of the image of the Jowo [the crowned buddha in Lhasa] being carried off by water any day now, of the designs in the temple of Changchubling at Samyé fading, of the Chökhör temple of Bumthang burning down, the keepers of the Jampa temple dying out, and the temple of Pel being emptied. While I yet live there is no happiness and after I'm gone there's no certainty sicknesses won't come to sentient beings. In fact sicknesses will come so suddenly the doctors won't be able to effect cures. For nine years there'll be famine and strife. I do not grieve at my death. How I pity sentient beings! . . . Now I'm under the force of obstacles. It's the result of not listening to the commands of the father, Ugyen [Padmasambhava]. I shan't escape this illness. If I do, then I can manage another three years, but you children have not made me gifts and have only done things which brought me no satisfaction. Whatever wealth I have been given does not satisfy me. There is nothing for it but to grieve. I shall be happy when I'm residing

on the level of the ‘wisdom-holders’ in front of Ugyen, the Precious One. Sentient beings are pitiful!¹⁹⁴

But the death did not come at once. While the family and disciples were trying to cure him with rituals, he demanded to be brought a certain piece of glass from his chest, intending to use it to commit suicide by means of the technique called “the transference of consciousness” (*’pho-ba*). (It is not clear what function the glass has in this technique.) He said there was no point in bearing such pain, but his sons refused to fetch it. He tried to explain to them that if ordinary people commit suicide by performing *’pho-ba* it leads to five hundred years of bad karma during which their bodies suffer terrible impurities. But as for him, he was not going to be reborn, he was off to the stage of the “wisdom-holders”, and so there was no crime in committing suicide in this way. Still his sons refused to fetch the glass, thinking “there is a lot of difference in a day or two”. He seems to have reconciled himself to a natural death. He gave his son Drakpa Gyalpo minute instructions on how to perform the last rites, saying he did not want a lot of weeping and lamenting. His last intelligible words were addressed to his whole family:

I’m glad you’ve come. I’m not well and won’t recover. You must love each other when I’m no longer here. You two mothers [his consorts] quarrelled previously when there was no need to quarrel. While I’m still here now, make friends. Don’t you listen to the slanders spread around by the monks and nuns.¹⁹⁵

Thereafter he could no longer eat or speak, and had to write his messages down on a slate. The final moments are described as follows:

Then on the morning of the third day of the first month in the year of the Snake [1521], just as the day was getting warm, he sat up straight, placed his feet into the lotus posture and put his right hand into the *mudrā* of counting his rosary. His son Dawa thought he meant to indicate he wanted to say his prayers, so he put a skull-cup and ritual dagger into his hands. But he returned these to Dawa’s lap. Lama Dawa said: “Father, where are you going after you’ve abandoned us? For the sake of sentient beings, please stay.” Weeping he made this entreaty. Till this point Pemalingpa had been unable to speak, but

now he uttered many sounds of “A, A”. With his eyes on Drakpa Gyalpo he took up his right hand and placed it into the hand of his son Dawa. Dawa said: “For the sake of sentient beings, please stay on and don’t pass into *nirvāṇa*.” He replied: “Eh, eh”, nodding his head three times. And then his mind was absorbed into the *dharmakāya* of Samantabhadra.¹⁹⁶

It was, finally, an exemplary death. Pemalingpa had given clear directions to his sons not to split their inheritance and to seek the help and advice of his patrons in case of difficulties. He had reconciled his consorts and at the end, in his final moments, he had appeared to assure his family that he would not disappear into *nirvāṇa* but return in his future lives for their benefit and that of all mankind. But he had also shown himself to be all too human in his dissatisfaction with the piles of gifts he had received throughout his life, which could avail him nothing in his last hour. And he had wanted to commit suicide to escape the pain of his final illness. In the sad and recriminating tone of his dying words we surely hear the true and failing voice of the real man as he faced his inescapable end. Even in extremity he saw himself as the very centre of the known world, “the pillar of a house, the handle of a parasol”. Without him that world was destined to collapse and all but disappear. But he would have found some solace if he could have seen the extraordinary strength of his legacy in the centuries to come.

The Man, his Cult and Legacy

There is a peculiar reluctance on the part of many modern scholars to recognize the entirely fabricated nature of the Tibetan “treasure-texts”. It is as if their enthusiasm for things Tibetan and Himalayan has blinded them to an obvious truth. There is no evidence whatsoever to support the claim that any of the “rediscovered” texts of the cult actually date from the period claimed for them. The most that has been found are some genuinely archaic elements in parts of a single collection, the *bKa’-thang sde-lnga* (“The Fivefold Set of Authoritative Scrolls”), which Ugyenlingpa claimed to have recovered complete.¹⁹⁷ Yet some modern scholars go so far as vehemently to insist on the cult’s entire dependence on the physical redis-

covery of texts originally composed in the eighth century, with only the minor proviso that there were a few imposters who jumped on the band wagon.¹⁹⁸ Some writers avoid the issue altogether, presumably for fear of bringing Tibetan Buddhism into disrepute.¹⁹⁹ Others hold that the self-proclaimed discoverers obtained genuine texts in the way they described, but then subjected these to a process of heavy editing.²⁰⁰ Even two of the foremost and most respected authorities maintain that: "No imaginative and roguish group of Tibetans sat down to invent all the stuff out of their heads."²⁰¹ But a reading of Pemalingpa's autobiography suggests that this is precisely what did happen. His head was in any case so filled with the "rediscoveries" of his predecessors in the cult that it would have been easy to invent more in that vein. Most important of all, many of Pemalingpa's contemporaries were of the opinion that he was basically a fraud. If they, with the radical and brilliant sceptic Drukpa Kunley among them, not to mention numerous later scholars of the "reformed" Gelukpa school, were capable of holding that view, then surely the rational and critical scholars of the twentieth century can do so too.

To recognize that the whole cult depended on conscious pretence and fraud does not mean we should therefore take an unsympathetic view of its prime members or of its ultimate purpose. After all, the evidence suggests that Drukpa Kunley was capable of befriending Pemalingpa while knowing him full well to be a rogue—an amiable rogue, but nonetheless a rogue. Again, if Drukpa Kunley was capable of taking that view surely we can too. Apart from Pemalingpa's endearingly human weaknesses (not forgetting his qualities of strength too), there is the undoubted fact that his activities as a whole greatly enriched the cultural and spiritual life of his homeland and the regions beyond. The texts he produced, the dances he composed and the works of art he commissioned are among the real cultural treasures of Bhutan to this day. Moreover, if on the one hand the authenticity which is claimed for the origin of these treasures is entirely suspect, on the other hand and on a different level surely they carry their own authenticity as the genuine product of an inspired and highly imaginative character, rogue though he was.

But what was the motivation behind this long deception and

where did its strength come from? Everything leads one to believe that Pemalingpa truly regarded himself as someone extraordinarily special who stood in closest association with the divine guru Padmasambhava. This conviction appears so overwhelming and so uncontrived in the midst of everything else that is fabricated that it must stand as the prime moving force in his life. But if this is true, then the plot only thickens. For how could he look himself in the face and still engage in the conscious charlatanry of manufacturing his treasures? The answer to this basic problem must be found in the psychology of his personality which, like that of all humans, was largely formed in the circumstances of his earliest childhood.

As it was seen, Pemalingpa descended on his father's side from the longest and most venerated line of hereditary Nyingmapa priests in the eastern Himalayas.²⁰² They stood high above both the local peasantry and the lay nobility of Bumthang while still fully participating in the common life of the region. Pemalingpa's father was the first cousin of the ruling incumbent to the family throne at Sombrang: close enough to have fully inherited the glory of the family's name, but not close enough to reap its material benefits. On his mother's side the situation is more complex. She is described as a "nomad lady" (*'brog-mo*) from a family with its permanent settlement in the Tang valley of Bumthang where Pemalingpa's father had settled. Her family would have had some fields in the main valley but their principal resource would have been herds of yaks pastured near the Tibetan border, moving south to warmer climes in the winter. Such communities, which survive in the region to this day, are looked on by the fully sedentary peoples of the valleys as belonging to a different racial stock. They speak a different dialect and observe different customs, particularly in regard to their religious rituals. More important, a certain stigma attaches to anyone from outside their community who marries into it, though not to the same degree which attaches to someone marrying into the family of a blacksmith. But Pemalingpa makes it abundantly clear that his maternal grandfather *was* a blacksmith. We are forced to the conclusion, then, that his mother's family combined yak-herding in the northern pastures with the work of smiths at their permanent

base on the floor of the Tang valley. Having myself lived for many months in a village of smiths in Bhutan, I can testify to the way they are looked down on by the rest of society: there was evidence of inbreeding and not a single man from the village had been enrolled as a monk or government official within living memory.²⁰³

It will probably never be known what induced Pemalingpa's father to break with all conventions and marry into a family of semi-nomadic blacksmiths, but we can be sure that it resulted in a stigma that was especially strong in view of his own priestly character. We are told that his wife came from the same family as his own mother, a nun from the northern pastoral district of Tsampa.²⁰⁴ Some of the tensions faced by Pemalingpa were therefore perhaps inherited from his grandparents' generation. But those tensions would not have been anything like as severe if his own father had not married the daughter of a blacksmith. If anything the stigma attaches with even greater strength to the issue of such marriages than to those who contract them.

Here then we begin to see some of the difficulties in Pemalingpa's origins which engendered in him a sense of his utter separateness. What is more, as the first-born of this union he would not have had the help provided by the example of elder siblings who had adjusted to their difficult role. But he cannot have become fully conscious of his position until he reached the age of reason, and meanwhile we have his own testimony that his mother was forced to reject him in favour of the next son born to her.²⁰⁵ Her inability to suckle both children at the same time compelled her to deliver her first-born to the care of her own father, the blacksmith Yönten Changchub. Though close bonds of affection were to develop between grandfather and grandson, the child's forcible separation from his mother when he was two years old must have been traumatic. (Children in Bhutan to this day are often still found at their mother's breast when they are as old as five or six.) Signs of his waywardness and wilfulness began to be manifested from the age of seven, along with his growing skills in all forms of craft, including metalwork, stonework, woodwork and weaving. It could be said that these two elements—on the one hand his separation from ordinary society while fully participating in it

and on the other hand his use of the skills of fabrication—dominated the whole of his life. In particular it was seen that the specific accusations of faking can be traced back to his childhood.

One hesitates to impose a modern psychological interpretation on a figure as remote as Pemalingpa, but it does seem he suffered from a split personality that was constantly trying to transcend the irreconcilable tensions in his parentage. This he did firstly by always looking to the divine Padmasambhava as his true father. The relationship they enjoyed cut through and superseded all the circumstances of his real parentage, which find only the most passing mention in the autobiography. Infinitely more important was the long line of his own previous incarnations connecting him backwards directly to Padmasambhava.²⁰⁶ It was noticed how he projected back to that line certain features of his own life, such as his relationship with his consorts. But more significant was his division of those lives into the categories of “pure” and “impure”, surely a direct allusion to the conflicting forces in his own make-up. One of the “pure” lives was even said to have been the result of an incestuous union: the taboos in this case were far greater than those surrounding Pemalingpa’s own parentage, and yet it is never suggested that they damaged that person’s role as a genuine treasure-hunter despite all the execrations which he, like Pemalingpa, suffered in his youth.

When in 1503 Pemalingpa commissioned a portrait of himself on the walls of his new temple and home at Tamshing, he therefore conceived of himself as a great saint surrounded by his former incarnations, but omitting the five “impure” lives when he had lived first as three beggar women and then as two animals.²⁰⁷ Statues were also made of him in his own lifetime, and these too were surrounded by those of his former incarnations.²⁰⁸ As the “son” of Padmasambhava he is invariably depicted in such paintings and statues wearing the crown of his divine father.²⁰⁹

It was not sufficient to reveal his divine origin. It had to be confirmed, demonstrated and actualized for all to see. Since he undoubtedly *was* the son of Padmasambhava, all means were open to him—fair or foul, honest or dishonest—in pursuit of

his goal. Padmasambhava himself was constantly appearing to him in visions, telling him to use all his wits in promulgating the revelations. If this meant indulging in a little deception by planting the treasures which were revealed to his mind at their places of concealment in advance of their discovery (or at least the sealed containers which were supposed to hold them), why should this matter? It increased the glory of Padmasambhava and showed sentient beings the true path to enlightenment. Those who prevented sentient beings from reaching that path by declaring the fraudulent nature of the treasure were obviously demons in disguise. What appeared to others as an act of fraud was very far from the whole truth: it was the operation of “skilful means” (*thabs, upāya*), and the end justified those means.

We can only speculate on how Pemalingpa and those who preceded and followed him in the treasure cult rationalized their use of deception. Since in this area lay the most secret of all their many secrets, perhaps hardly breathed even to themselves, absolute certainty will never be reached. Yet it is only in the light of the thought process suggested above that one can reconcile the tone of complete and ingenuous sincerity permeating the whole text of this autobiography with the writer’s constant use of deception in his daily life. The observation Pemalingpa made in his final conversation with his patron concerning the would-be treasure-revealer, the incarnation of Dorjelingpa, is in this respect most revealing: even if that person were to kill his parents it would not alter the fact that he was the true incarnation of Dorjelingpa and therefore a genuine “heart-son” of Padmasambhava and a potential text-discoverer.²¹⁰ What might appear to some as the most evil form of murder would in reality be something altogether different, inspired by the noblest of motives.

All this talk of fraud, murder, demons and the like has taken us to a point at some remove from Buddhism in its better known aspects of tolerance, equanimity and compassion. Moreover it could be said that Pemalingpa’s constant self-assertion runs directly counter to the Buddha’s triumphant self-denial. However the human institutions and followers of every major world faith are only the product and reflection

of the societies which gave them birth: they express, echo or play to all the tensions and conflicts inherent in those societies while trying to resolve them and point beyond. Two elements in Tibetan Buddhism particularly assisted this process in the life of Pemalingpa. The first was the tantric aim to transmute negative emotions by directing their force towards the attainment of enlightenment. The second and more pertinent element was the way in which the pre-Buddhist tradition of singing one's own praises, as evinced in the oldest folk literature, appears to have continued into the Buddhist period and survived not only in the national epic of King Gesar but also in the songs and narratives of countless Buddhist yogins.²¹¹ To a western audience much of this literature looks like bombast and bragging. For the traditional audience, however, it is the necessary proof and vindication of divine achievement won in the face of all kinds of competition or opposition, physical and non-physical: a hero must sing his own triumphs. This is the main purpose of Pemalingpa's autobiography and it quite overshadows the original aim of the genre, which is to provide an exemplary model to inspire the faithful: his life was so completely unique and special it is never suggested others might try to emulate it.

It was also seen how the primacy and self-sufficiency claimed for Pemalingpa's own spiritual realizations found support not only in the Nyingmapa teachings of the Great Fulfilment but also in the pervasive subculture of shamanism, which accords truth to the experience of dream flights and trances.²¹² These elements combined in a more or less unconscious manner to persuade Pemalingpa and his devotees that the "discoveries" he revealed had as much validity as the Buddhist canon itself since they came from the same divine source—a source which lay not only in the natural world where the treasure-texts are supposed to have been found but also in the true nature of the revealer himself. Pemalingpa and his colleagues in the cult thereby won supreme authority for their activities in the eyes of the faithful in an age when rival religious schools and contending secular authorities had failed to produce a universally accepted standard of authority. Paradoxically, however, the promoters of the treasure cult never rose to acquire great secular and institutionalized powers in the manner of the other rising

schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The cause of this failure surely lay in the personalized nature of the cult itself, where the whole emphasis is placed on the historical role of its main protagonists while they lived. True, the treasure-texts lived on after the deaths of their revealers to be further codified and disseminated, but their main purpose was to involve the faithful in the extraordinary drama of their discovery. The treasure hunts answered a fundamental and popular need in Himalayan and Tibetan societies for immediate access to the supreme authority of a divine source, unmediated through scholars and their commentaries and equalling if not actually surpassing all previous revelations.

* * *

Close to the temple of Kunzangdrak which Pemalingpa built in his home valley of Tang stands the ruins of an old smithy where the saint is said to have made his famous swords. Known as *nagpophala*, these swords are easily identified by the imprint of his thumb just below their handles: he is said to have impressed these marks in the red-hot metal while forging the weapons. Knives known as *khurlang* and ritual daggers (*phurba*) of various sizes are also attributed to his hand, quite separate from all those treasure-objects he is supposed to have discovered. It is further claimed that he excavated his own iron ore and that the remains of the ore after smelting out the iron are still to be seen strewn around the ruins of the old smithy. Within the main temple of Kunzangdrak is preserved an object of great symbolic force, a stone anvil with a footprint in it which Pemalingpa is said to have left as a mark of his decision to renounce the work of a blacksmith. His activity as a stone mason is recalled when certain millstones in the villages of Bumthang are pointed out as his handiwork.²¹³ There also exists in the courtyard of the old Tsilung temple (now called Könchosum) a mysterious stone fragment resting on a stepped plinth with the design of a lotus incised on its top surface: the local legend holds that Pemalingpa made it in order to block up the entrance to a lake from where he recovered some of his treasures.²¹⁴ The only crafts learnt in his youth which are not still commemorated in oral tradition today are woodwork and weaving. Perhaps he

himself wove the cloths he quaintly describes as “pieces of the seamless and profound pantaloons” of Padmasambhava’s consort, Yeshé Tsogyal, which he claims to have found as treasure.²¹⁵ At all events an important part of Pemalingpa’s legacy is the continuing memory of his technological skills. As one Bhutanese scholar comments on them, he used “a great many means to benefit the common folk of the world”. In this respect he can be compared only with his uncle by marriage, the great bridge-building saint Thangtong Gyalpo.

Confirmation of the extraordinary reputation he and his teachings came to enjoy within his own lifetime turns up in the biography of an exact contemporary of his from a remote district of northern Nepal.²¹⁶ Sonam Lodrö (1456–1521), who was abbot of a monastery called Margom in the Dolpo region, records how he received from a lama called Kunga Gyamtso the initiations of “altogether a very large number” of Pemalingpa’s treasure-texts. They are the only teachings he specifically mentions among all those obtained from thirty different lamas. It is a good example of the great distances which could be covered in the rapid diffusion of popular teachings, just a few years after their being first promulgated. In the long list of his close personal disciples, divided according to their regional origins, which Pemalingpa himself composed, some came from as far east as the districts of Tsawarong and Gyalmorong bordering on the Chinese province of Yunnan and others from as far west as Ladakh, with the vast majority from all over Tibet proper.²¹⁷ There is no reason to doubt that several of them spread his revelations to their homelands. Though the continuity of their transmission seems to have died out in Ladakh, which has never been a strong preserve of the Nyingmapa school, I have heard that in the eastern Kham province they were still widely known and practised till the 1950s. We have Kongtrul’s testimony from the nineteenth century that he helped to disseminate them there.²¹⁸ This he did not only by passing on their initiations, but more importantly by including many of Pemalingpa’s revelations in the great collection he formed of the treasure-texts of all periods, namely the *Rin-chen gter-mdzod* (“The Treasury of Jewels”).

The area of greatest diffusion remained those parts of Bhutan

and Tibet where the saint had been active in his own lifetime and where his incarnational successors soon became established.²¹⁹ The line of his “verbal incarnations” (known as the *Peling Sungtrul*) had their seat at the monastery of Lhalung where his chief patron had lived, across the border from Bhutan in Tibetan territory. His eldest son Dawa Gyaltsen (b. 1499) produced an incarnational lineage called the *Lhalung Thuksé*, also based at Lhalung. Dawa Gyaltsen in turn had a son, Pema Thrinley, whose incarnations became established as the lamas of the Gangteng monastery in western Bhutan. The second in this line, Tendzin Lekpai Döndrup (1645–1726), was responsible for winning formal admittance of Pemalingpa’s teachings into the state rites of the sub-school of the Kagyüpa known as the Drukpa, under whose aegis Bhutan had achieved unification by the mid-seventeenth century. The fact that Pemalingpa had himself been born within the area of what came to be Bhutan must have made the official acceptance of his teachings by the first government of the country much easier. Indeed the movement which brought his rites into the curriculum of the state monasteries of the Drukpa school reflected a growing national sentiment which gave more and more emphasis to institutions of local rather than Tibetan provenance. The same movement was responsible for incorporating into the state festivals the large repertoire of sacred dances known as the *Peling tercham* whose composition is credited to Pemalingpa and his descendants.²²⁰ Today he is regarded as the Bhutanese text-discoverer *par excellence*. It seems to be forgotten sometimes that he lived in an age long before the country came into existence.

Outside the monasteries Pemalingpa’s legacy was to have a profound effect on the social history and organization of many villages and hamlets in central and eastern Bhutan. So prestigious was Pemalingpa’s name that his sons, grandsons and great-grandsons became highly sought after as husbands throughout the area. They married into the lay and religious nobility of the clans and families claiming descent either from earlier Buddhist teachers or from the remote figure of Tsangma, a refugee Tibetan prince of the early ninth century. Thus at least ten of the most important houses headed by religious hierarchs (known as

chöjé, “Lords of the Dharma”) trace their descent from three of Pemalingpa’s sons, namely Dawa Gyaltzen (b. 1499), Kunga Wangpo (b. 1505) and Sangdak (b. 1509), or from their own direct descendants. This new aristocracy more or less supplanted the earlier one into which it had married. Their success appears to have been due partly to the sheer vigour of their activities on the local level and partly to a parallel movement on the state level where they were soon recruited into the theocratic government of the dominant Drukpa school as high officials and regional governors. When the long disintegration of the theocracy finally came to an end in the early years of the twentieth century, its replacement by a lay monarchy descending from Pemalingpa therefore came as no freak or accident of history. The first king of Bhutan, Ugyen Wangchuk, enthroned in 1907, came from the house of the Dungkar Chöjé, an offshoot of the house of the Khouchung Chöjé founded by Pemalingpa’s fourth son, Kunga Wangpo.²²¹

It would be simplistic to attribute the whole success of this movement solely to the magnetic attractions of Pemalingpa as an ancestral progenitor. At the same time it is difficult to see how the movement could have begun without him. His posthumous role as the catalyst which brought together many forces to create a new order in society was probably even more important than the extraordinary role he played in his own lifetime. In Bhutan today the emergence of the present monarchy and its achievements in the Bhutaneṣe kingdom are certainly regarded as one aspect of Pemalingpa’s legacy, stretching like a broad highway from the past to the present. But that legacy perpetuated itself along countless by-ways too. One of them came to an end in a strange cul-de-sac in the sands of the distant Alashan desert of central Asia. It is towards that tortuous and forgotten track we now turn.



1. Copper-gilt statue of Pemalingpa at Künzangdrak, Bumthang, central Bhutan



2. Modern wall-painting of Pemalingpa at Tamshing, Bumthang



3. Clay statues of Pemalingpa (*centre*) and two of his sons at Gangteng, western Bhutan



4. Clay statue of the Sixth Dalai Lama in his mother's house at Berkhar, Arunachal Pradesh

IT IS DIFFICULT TO think of a more enigmatic and elusive figure in Tibetan and Himalayan history than Tsangyang Gyamtso, the Sixth Dalai Lama.¹ The direct descendant of Pemalingpa's youngest brother, and separated from those brothers in time by more than a century and a half, the sparse details of his life are surrounded by a complex of riddles and mysteries which exercise a fascination surpassing even those of the great treasure hunter which have already been examined. Tsangyang Gyamtso was elevated to the highest position in the Tibetan state, but his importance lies less in the world of politics which controlled his destiny and more in the sphere of the posthumous legends which grew around his figure and captured the popular imagination of Tibetans for all time. Those legends can be shown to lend themselves to historical analysis in the same way as the hard facts of his brief career, but even when critical enquiry has done its worst, something of the enigma remains. The mysteries tend at that point to detach themselves from the man and move closer towards the society which gave them birth.

The most important historical development which took place in the long period between the death of Pemalingpa in 1521 and the birth of Tsangyang Gyamtso in 1683 was the formation of theocratic regimes headed by reincarnating monk rulers in Tibet and Bhutan.² The forms of government established by the Fifth Dalai Lama in Tibet and by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in Bhutan survived many external attacks and internal revolts and lasted right down to the twentieth century. Despite the puppet-like nature of most of the later Dalai Lamas of Tibet and the Shabdrungs of Bhutan, their role in providing the source of final authority in their countries was unquestioned for as long as the theocracies lasted. The Bhutanese theocracy came to an end in 1907 with constitutional changes that introduced the direct rule of a hereditary monarchy. For Tibet the old order ended with the armed intervention of China in the 1950s. Yet the grand lamas of Tibet and Bhutan both continue to survive outside their own countries. While the Dalai Lama appears to enjoy massive support from all his own people, support for the present claimant to the Shabdrung's position in Bhutan appears to be limited to a few of the monks of the state monasteries.

One of the reasons why the institution of reincarnating priest-rulers was so attractive was that the first incumbents were highly forceful personalities whose achievements could not fail to be noticed by all succeeding generations. Their success in uniting Tibet and Bhutan under their personal rule and in introducing effective systems of government was felt long after they had passed into new and less resilient bodies. Nevertheless, the moment of transition from one body to the next, and the process whereby recognition was accorded to their new incarnations, was fraught with potential danger to the regimes they had founded. Nowhere are these dangers better illustrated than in the extraordinary attempts to prolong the lives of the Fifth Dalai Lama of Tibet and Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal of Bhutan. The lamas' deaths were both kept secret by pretending they were in spiritual retreat and not to be disturbed. In the case of the "Great Fifth", as he is still known, the pretence lasted for fifteen years from 1682 down to the year 1697 when our subject Tsangyang Gyamtso was finally proclaimed to be his incarnation.³ Meanwhile in Bhutan all the evidence so far examined suggests, incredibly, that the Shabdrung's death was concealed for more than fifty years from 1651 to c. 1705: in his case the secret was of a more or less "open" nature, but still not formally disclosed until circumstances permitted the official recognition of an incarnation.⁴

It was the weight and prestige of the Fifth Dalai Lama which, allied to the political constraints and exigencies of the day, gave rise to three levels of secrecy in the life of his incarnation, Tsangyang Gyamtso. First, since the death of the Fifth was concealed for fifteen years it naturally followed that the birth of the Sixth had also to be kept from public knowledge throughout that period. Secondly, because the Sixth was enthroned so late, long after his character as a layman had been formed, a tradition developed that he had to express his true nature in circumstances of secrecy lest open discredit be brought to his priestly office. Thirdly there is the tradition that his "official" death in 1706 never took place and that instead he lived on in secret for another forty years. These three strands in the life of our subject follow, overlap and intersect each other at several points. At other points and from various angles they clash and contradict

each other. The task in hand is therefore to separate the strands by disclosing their cause and origins and then try and reassemble them to form a coherent whole. While we are thus concerned firstly with establishing or denying the historicity of each strand of secrecy, it must at the same time be recognized that the power of legend and myth operates at a level of reality whose truth stands quite independent from the one revealed by pursuing the necessary and mundane concern for “what really happened”.

Even if a tradition is shown to be unhistorical, its study can sometimes uncover more of a people’s inner history than any number of concrete facts. The exercise also serves to restore to history its lost uncertainties, for we can be sure that the past was just as insecure and muddled as the present. The tendency not only of traditional chroniclers but also of modern historians to produce unilinear and monolithic versions of the past has to be resisted if we are to recapture something of its true nature and original flavour.

Ancestry and Homeland

The family and home of the Sixth Dalai Lama can be described with some accuracy not only because of the interest which chroniclers inevitably showed in the circumstances of his birth and antecedents, but also because fortunately there is a passage in Pemalingpa’s autobiography which describes the marriage of his youngest brother Ugyen Zangpo from whom the Sixth Dalai Lama descended. In the first month of the year of the Earth Bird (1489) Pemalingpa made a journey eastwards from Bumthang to accept an invitation from Ugyen Zangpo, who had settled at a temple appropriately called Ugyenling located at the centre of the Mönkyul region. It seems that Ugyen Zangpo had already formed a liaison with a local girl there, but their marriage had not yet been formalized for reasons which Pemalingpa makes clear in the account of his meeting at Ugyenling with the girl’s father:

Then *Jowo* Döndrup, who was Ugyen Zangpo’s father-in-law (*gyos-so*), came to see me bringing a length of red silk and a conch shell. He

said to me: "My daughter Dordzom has been taken by your [brother] Ugyen Zangpo, and so there has been a lot of malicious gossip to the effect that I've given her to someone of a different race. Now it's good that someone like you, hierarch, should have come here since you are a lama [equal to those] of India and Tibet. The bad gossip about me will now decrease."

In reply I said to him: "Whether or not there is bad gossiping about you, [I might tell you] there's evil word going around about me too, that I've formed a marriage alliance with a border race. But it looks as if you and I have a karmic connection from our previous lives. Don't you take heed of the bad gossip either, but instead do what is needful for the girl and her groom." I gave him a golden volume and a turquoise. Then he took me to his home at Rübukhar where a good wedding celebration (*mag-ston*) was held.⁵

In the accounts written while Tsangyang Gyamtso was still alive, but on what authority it cannot be said, the girl is explained to have already had an affair with or been married to Tashi Dargye, the myriarch of Ja whom we met above as Pemalingpa's first patron among the Tibetan nobility and who, it is claimed, had authority over this region.⁶ If this part of the story is true, and there is no particular reason to doubt it, then Ugyen Zangpo may perhaps have met the girl at the court of the myriarch if he accompanied his elder brother there two years earlier or so. However it may have been, Pemalingpa's account of his discussion with the girl's father is a fascinating example of how religious prestige served to cut through and triumph over the ethnic divisions and suspicions among the peoples of the eastern Himalayas. In particular the social barriers to marriages contracted between different races could easily be eroded if an important lama gave his blessings to the union.

It is clear from Pemalingpa's words that although his own people of Bumthang lived south of the great cultural centres of Tibet, they nevertheless regarded themselves as definitely superior to the girl's race, the Mönpa, whom they looked on as a semi-barbarous "border people". From the Mönpa point of view the union was opposed simply because it linked them to a *different* race, neither superior nor inferior to their own. And yet of all the medley of peoples inhabiting the eastern Himalayas, the Bumthang people and the Northern Mönpa have some of the closest affinities. In particular their languages can be traced

back to a common prehistoric source in “Proto-East Bodish”.⁷ However, with all the Tsangla-speaking peoples of eastern Bhutan interposed between them, allied to all the difficulties of geography, the inhabitants of Bumthang and northern Mönnyul had good reason to regard each other as quite distinct.

We learn nothing from Pemalingpa about the girl except the name, title and home of her father, but that is sufficient to allow us to identify the family. *Jowo* Döndrup of Rübukhar must have descended from a certain *Jowo* Gyalpodar who settled in that village, perhaps in the thirteenth century.⁸ The title *Jowo* (roughly “Lord”) was also the name of his clan which, like several others, traced its pedigrees back to the figure of *Lhasé* Tsangma, a brother of King Tridé Songtsen of Tibet, who is supposed to have fled south to this region as a refugee in c. 836. The *Jowo* clan appears to have provided the Mönpas with a hereditary lay nobility. Their pedigree as preserved in a Bhutanese chronicle of 1728 extends over twenty generations, the lower half of which seems to reflect historical reality rather than pure legend.⁹ One branch of the clan settled at the village of Berkhar and descended from *Jowo* Lhundrub, brother to *Jowo* Gyalpodar. It was that branch which seems to have been almost singly responsible for introducing the school of the Gelukpas to the region. Several small monasteries and temples of the school were established by a line of local Gelukpa masters headed by Lobsang Tenpai Drönmé (1475–1542) and his brother Tsangpa Lobsang Khetsün.¹⁰ They were the sons of *Jowo* Dargye of Berkhar, himself the local patron of the bridge-building saint Thangtong Gyalpo.

Two centuries later Tsewang Lhamo, the mother of the Sixth Dalai Lama who was to be elevated to head the whole Gelukpa school which ruled Tibet, was born to the same family in Berkhar that had established the local branch of the school in the area of Mönnyul. Although the regent Sangye Gyamtso (a key figure whom we shall meet properly in the next section) took great pains to trace the descent of the “royal family” of Berkhar into which she was born, the significance of the family as the first patrons of the Gelukpa in the area escaped his notice. The family’s designation as “royal” alludes to its descent from Tsangma, the refugee Tibetan prince of the ninth century

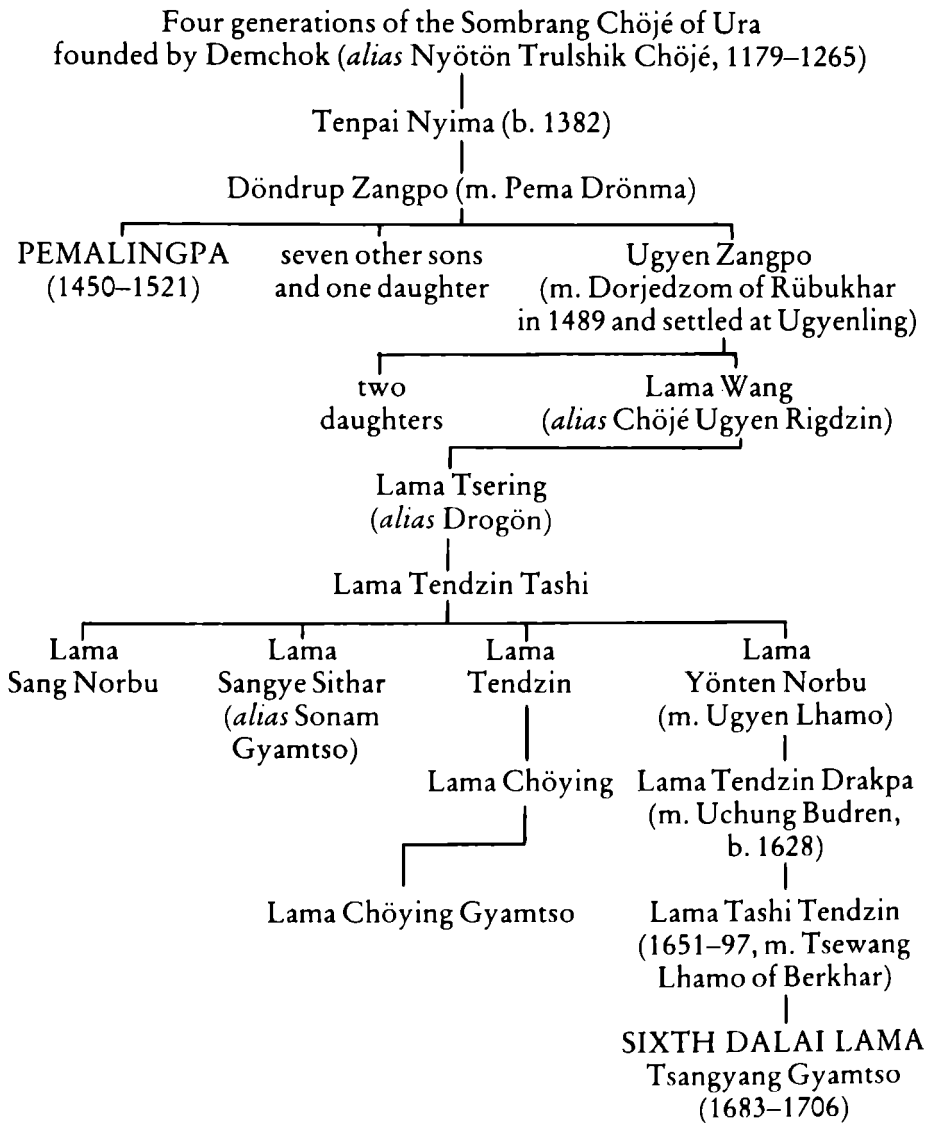
described above who served as the fountainhead for all the local nobility of the *Jowo* according to the Bhutanese chronicle of 1728. While the pedigree of the Sixth Dalai Lama's mother as recorded by the regent over thirteen generations agrees in every particular with the one given in the Bhutanese chronicle, he does differ from it in looking not to Tsangma as the ancestral progenitor but instead either to Nyatri (one of the three sons of Drigung Tsenpo, the last of the "prehistoric" line of Tibetan kings) or else to another figure described as "a descendant of the Religious Kings having the mouth of a stray dog and the skull of a goat who was exiled to Mön because he was known to be inauspicious". The story of this latter figure, known in Bhutanese legend as Khyikha Rathö ("King Dog-Mouth Goat Skull"), had been described in one of Pemalingpa's rediscovered texts, the guide to the "hidden land" of Khenpalung.¹¹ What is important to understand in all this is that the regent had no need to invent a fictitious pedigree for the Sixth Dalai Lama since real genealogical sources substantiating both his mother's and father's descent actually existed.

Returning now to Ugyen Zangpo at his temple of Ugyenling, which lies some fifteen miles or so from Berkhar up the valley of the Dangma (or Tawang) river, the only contemporary reference to him outside his brother's autobiography is found in Lethrolingpa's verse autobiography. Two daughters of Ugyen Zangpo are mentioned receiving Lethrolingpa hospitably with a serving of ale at the home of their famous uncle Pemalingpa at Tamshing in Bumthang, where they had come for a visit. The girls were clearly delighted to meet the lama, who had visited their own home district in Mönnyul.¹² Apart from this homely vignette and Pemalingpa's account of the earlier formalization of the marriage, Ugyen Zangpo is elsewhere completely obscured by legend. The work which purports to be the Sixth Dalai Lama's own description and code for the restored family temple at Ugyenling turns his remote ancestor into an emanation of the deity Hayagrīva who flies through the sky from Bumthang to found the family temple at a spot shaped like the privy parts of a *dākinī* or an upturned tortoise.¹³ In addition to Ugyenling he is credited with founding two other Nyingmapa temples in its close vicinity,

those of Sangyeling and Tsogyaling. However, we know for certain that the former of these already existed before his arrival.¹⁴ An interesting local guide to the temple which appears to predate its restoration, but which is also of a legendary character, has Ugyen Zangpo introducing cattle (perhaps yaks) to the region for the first time. The guide enumerates all the summer and winter pastures claimed by the family. Ugyen Zangpo had “meadow huts” for the herdsmen built there for the first time. He introduced agriculture to the region too, establishing barley and building water mills to grind the harvested grain in the style of those at his birthplace in Bumthang. He is also credited with introducing fledgling “lake-spirits” (*mtsho-sman*) to grow at the site of the Tsogyaling temple.¹⁵ A section of the same guide records the oath which is said to have determined the relations between Ugyen Zangpo and his family’s hereditary serfs (described as “patrons”). The contract was to last “. . . as long as the day is white and the night is black, for as long as possible in our own lifetimes and thereafter through the lives of our sons and their issue”. the serfs were called the Tsidrekpa, possibly after the name of an adjoining village where they lived. The oath has all the appearance of something concocted much later in history in an attempt to prevent the further erosion of rights and privileges which the family had come to regard as their legal due.¹⁶

The relationship of the Sixth Dalai Lama to Pemalingpa and his descent through seven generations from Ugyen Zangpo is set forth in Table 1, which is based mainly on information contained in works by the regent Sangye Gyamtso describing the transition from the Fifth to the Sixth Dalai Lamas and the early life of the Sixth.¹⁷ The regent must have made detailed enquiries in Mönnyul to establish the pedigree and he almost certainly questioned the relatives of the Dalai Lama about their ancestors. His text adds little information to the names beyond the fact that the brothers Lama Yönten Norbu and Lama Tendzin both went to Bumthang to study under a certain Lama Tendzin Chökyi Gyalpo who had control of Pemalingpa’s seat there. The younger of these brothers went on to the Lhodrak province of southern Tibet (almost certainly to the monastery of Lhalung) for further studies before returning home to Ugyenling,

TABLE 1
The Relationship of the Sixth Dalai Lama
to Pemalingpa*



*Sources: GBKNG, fos. 92a–99a; THCKH, fos. 74b–76b; BMYRS, pp. 105–233, 394; BTHTT, fos. 113b–114a; RCHTT, fo. 160b; cf. OGGGK, fos. 65a–67b. (“m.” signifies “married to”, and “b.” signifies “born in the year”.)

which he controlled jointly with his brother Tendzin. It seems likely that contact with the source of the family's spiritual inheritance in Bumthang was maintained over several generations. Certainly the Dalai Lama's grandfather (the son of the younger brother, Yönten Norbu) behaved in at least one respect in a very Pemalingpa-like fashion. He, Tendzin Drakpa, is said to have "... visited the Copper-Coloured Mountain [the heaven of Padmasambhava] in his dreams and received profound instructions there from the Great Teacher. He became a great and powerful yogin, having many visions of the gods and so forth."¹⁸ He lived till eighty and spent much time meditating at two shrines sacred to Padmasambhava at the northern end of the Mönyul region, namely Domtsang and Karpozang.¹⁹ His wife was still alive, aged sixty-five, when the regent wrote the account of his grandson's discovery as the Sixth Dalai Lama.²⁰ Information on Lama Tashi Tendzin, father of the Dalai Lama, is even more sparse. We are told about his great virtue but that is about all.²¹ The Dalai Lama's mother Tsewang Lhamo, as we have seen, came from the noble family of Berkhar. There is nothing unexpected about this union between an old Nyingmapa family and a noble family which had acquired Gelukpa sympathies, for there is little evidence of open sectarian rivalry between the two schools in this period. On the contrary, the Fifth Dalai Lama as head of the Gelukpa had been greatly inspired by his contacts with the Nyingmapa.

The same was not the case for the Fifth Dalai Lama's relations with the now dominant Drukpa sub-school of the Kagyüpa in Bhutan, which proved to be a thorn in his side. Even before he came to rule the whole of Tibet with the help of the Khoshuud Mongols in 1642, the new state which Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal of the Drukpas was creating in Bhutan had been invaded three times by the rulers of Tsang.²² (The Tsangpa hegemony had succeeded the earlier hegemonies of the Phamodrupa and Rinpungpa which had held sway during Pemalingpa's day.) Soon after the Fifth Dalai Lama came to power he mounted two military campaigns against the Drukpas of Bhutan, in 1644 and 1649, with the help of his Mongol allies. Both invasions were unsuccessful and the new Bhutanese state continued on its path towards nationhood without serious obstruction.²³ As

part of this movement towards the formation of a new state, in the 1650s the Drukpa authorities conducted a military campaign aimed at winning a great deal of new territory in the east which had previously come under some form of sporadic Tibetan control.²⁴ This included the whole area east of Tongsa, and took in the Bumthang, Kurtö, Shongar, Tashiyangtse and Tashigang districts. What sparked off the campaign was a local dispute between two of the ruling families over their claims to Indian territory in the plains to the south. The dispute was referred to Tibetan arbitration. During the attempts to reach a settlement a Tibetan officer deputed by the Gelukpa government was attacked and severely wounded in a drunken brawl over girls. It is interesting to note here that one of the interpreters used by the Tibetan officials just before the brawl happened was a cousin of the future Sixth Dalai Lama's grandfather. He is the Lama Chöying Gyamtso who figures in the genealogical table.²⁵

The man who had stabbed the official, a certain Lama Namsé, feared reprisals from the Tibetan government and fled westwards to the court of the Drukpa governor of Tongsa, who in turn despatched him as a potential ally to the Shabdrung, founder of the new Bhutanese state. When the military expedition finally got under way, Lama Namsé acted as guide and agent to the Drukpa army as it took over district after district in its move eastwards, defeating or winning over all the ruling clans of that area claiming descent from Prince Tsangma. One of the chief local opponents of Drukpa expansion was the Gelukpa lama of Mera called Nakseng whose monastery had been founded by a disciple of the lama from Berkhar we have already met, Lobsang Tenpai Drönmé.²⁶ The Drukpa defeat of the mixed Tibetan and local force left the whole region east of and including Mera under the control of the Bhutanese government in whose hands it has remained ever since.

At this point the Tawang records which speak of the annexation of Mönyul by the Gelukpas throw light on the sequel to the annexation of eastern Bhutan by the Drukpas.²⁷ The decision of the Gelukpas to move into Mönyul was ultimately precipitated by the forced departure of the lama of Mera from his monastery, which now lay in the easternmost area of Bhutan.

This lama was not Nakseng but another by the name of Lodrö Gyamtso (unless perhaps the two names apply to the same person, which is plausible). He retreated to another Gelukpa monastery called Sangphel on the other side of the new border. There he found himself hard pressed by the forcible encroachments made into this territory by the Dzokchenpa, Karmapa and Drukpa schools. The Drukpa representatives in this case do not seem to have been from Bhutan. Instead they were local offshoots of the main Tibetan branch of the school and therefore owed allegiance to a cousin of the Fifth Dalai Lama called Pasam Wangpo, who was the rival in Tibet of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in Bhutan. Appeals from both sides to the local population for support seem to have led to a stalemate. Eventually Lodrö Gyamtso requested aid from the nearest Tibetan official, the governor of Tsona on the other side of the main Himalayan range. The governor, a military officer called Namkhadrük, sent his subordinate called Gamo Shongwa to burn down some forty temporary structures made of bamboo. These had been built by Lodrö Gyamtso's enemies as a first step towards founding their rival monasteries on the land claimed by the Gelukpas. This action only exacerbated the conflict to the point where Lodrö Gyamtso and the Tsona governor had to make a direct appeal to the Fifth Dalai Lama to annex the whole area permanently to the new Gelukpa government of Tibet. It was the latter's policy to try and secure stable borders for Tibet and a decisive move into Mönnyul would contribute to that goal. So in 1680 an edict was issued to establish the new regime there.²⁸ Lodrö Gyamtso was placed in a position of authority over the region with responsibility to the Tsona governor, and the imposing monastery of Tawang (called Ganden Namgyal Lhatse) was founded as the spiritual and administrative centre of the Gelukpa government of Mönnyul.

The edict was issued just two years before the death of the Fifth Dalai Lama and three years before his successor was born in the heart of Mönnyul. In the eyes of the regent Sangye Gyamtso, who stage-managed the long interregnum between the death of the Fifth and the recognition of the Sixth, it must have been a perfect site for the appearance of the new embodiment. The area was so far removed from the Tibetan capital as

to escape all the imbroglios and potential hazards at the centre of the country's political life. Moreover the birth in this remotest of districts would be easier to keep secret till the time was right for an announcement. Located on the outermost confines of the new Tibetan state, it was yet sufficiently under the control of the government to permit a secret search there for the new incarnation. Indeed the Fifth Dalai Lama's edict of 1680 which sought to legalize this control could almost have been issued with just such an eventuality in mind as the birth there of his successor three years later.

This is not the place to explain in detail what happened to the Mönyul region later in history, but a very brief summary helps to put the Sixth Dalai Lama in his full context. The Tibetan government appears to have been quick to realize that the area had great strategic and economic importance. Not only did it provide the only direct corridor to the Indian plains lying completely within Tibetan territory, but the whole region was extraordinarily rich in natural products unobtainable on the Tibetan plateau. It formed a natural staircase of different ecological levels stretching from the plains of Assam through dense subtropical forests in the foothills to the Alpine regions above and the high plateau beyond. Apart from the trans-Himalayan trade through the corridor which the government could carefully control to its advantage, the whole area was easily exploited for those natural products which lay in such heavy demand in Tibet.²⁹ These included loads of grain, particularly rice, collected as taxation twice a year; rare medicinal herbs for the medical college in Lhasa; bamboo pens and paper made from the bark of the daphne tree for the offices of the Tibetan government; the skins of wild animals hunted by the Aka, Miji and other tribals who formed part of the district; sheep wool from some areas; butter from the pastoralists of the north; and a variety of fruit for certain privileged government officers. Whole orange trees complete with the ripened fruit were delivered every year to the Dalai Lama himself. It is not known whether this last custom began in the lifetime of the Sixth but it is well remembered today.

Apart from odd skirmishes with the Bhutanese to the west and the tribals to the east, little seems to have happened in the

region until the British arrived on the scene in the late nineteenth century. Prior to that the only event of some international significance occurred in 1714 when one column of Lajang Khan's 1714 campaign against Bhutan invaded from the direction of Tawang.³⁰ As will be seen, the khan had deposed the Sixth Dalai Lama seven years earlier and I believe the destruction of the Dalai Lama's restored and enlarged family temple at Ugyenling occurred during this campaign as an attempt to obliterate his memory. In local legend the destruction is blamed on a Mongolian called Sokpo Jomkhar who, if my interpretation is correct, would have been Lajang's commanding general in the area. The temple built later on the original site and still standing is a very modest affair. It is in the hands of the family's present descendants, though the details of their descent are not known. As it now stands, the temple was perhaps reconstructed during the reign of the Seventh Dalai Lama. It was he who was responsible for ennobling the family of the Sixth's mother at Berkhar. They were granted the title of *Depa Kushang* (roughly "Ruler Uncle"), and confirmed in their estates. At the same time they were exempted from the payment of taxes and the rendering of labour service.³¹ All this can be assumed to have happened after the posthumous reinstatement of the Sixth as the true incarnation of his predecessor, as we shall see.

The rights which the Tibetan government won over certain tracts in the Assamese plain at the foot of the Mönyul corridor, or which were perhaps inherited from the local rulers whom the Tibetan government displaced in Mönyul, were ceded to the British in 1844 in return for an annual subsidy.³² During the Simla Convention of 1914, signed by Great Britain and Tibet (and initialled but never ratified by the Chinese), the entire region was made over to British India.³³ However, the transfer was never fully implemented on the ground and when India won its independence in August 1947 it found part of what it regarded as its own territory still under the control of Tibetan officials. After Communist China had fully annexed Tibet, it was soon realized that independent India had by then consolidated its claim on an area of Tibet which China had traditionally regarded as its own. And so the seeds of a long

conflict were truly sown. The Sino-Indian border war of 1962–3 resulted in the defeat of the Indian army in the area but left the *status quo* intact, with half of the Mönpas continuing to live under Indian control south of the main watershed and the other half north of it, where they are classed today as one of China's smallest national minorities. Despite an uneasy truce the conflict continues to flare up from time to time. Even as these lines are written in 1987 there are renewed hostilities.

That the Sixth Dalai Lama was born in the disputed area will always serve to remind the Chinese that for many centuries it lay under the control of what they persist in calling "the local government of Tibet". For the Indian government the birth of the Dalai Lama there will perhaps always be something of an embarrassment. For the old Tibet the area is, like that whole country, lost beyond hope of recovery. From the point of view of the inhabitants of the area itself, the very last of their many acts of service to the old Tibet was to provide an escape route for the Fourteenth Dalai Lama as he fled from the Chinese south to India in 1959. The route took him straight past the family temple at Ugyenling where his sixth embodiment had been born nearly three hundred years earlier.

From Rebirth to Recognition

The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyamtso, died in the Potala Palace at the age of sixty-eight on the twenty-fifth day of the second month in the year of the Water Dog (1682). It is claimed with reason that he was the first ruler to have united the whole of Tibet under a single government since the collapse of the early Tibetan empire in the ninth century. The extraordinary prestige surrounding this powerful scholar-statesman, who stood at the head of the "Yellow Church" of the Gelukpa school, won him the support and veneration of practically all the Mongol tribes to the north and north-east of Tibet during a period which saw their wholesale reconversion to Buddhism brought to conclusion. In particular the Dalai Lama owed his political triumph in great part to the military intervention on his behalf of the Khoshuud tribe of the Mongols. In 1642 their

leader Güüshi Khan had defeated the Dalai Lama's enemies in the Tsangpa hegemony. Although the Khoshuud chiefs thereafter designated themselves as "kings" of Tibet, they vested all their power directly in the Dalai Lama and his regents. From then on the success of the Great Fifth, as he came to be known, lay mainly in the skilful choice of his regents. This is especially evident in his appointment of the layman Sangye Gyamtso in 1679, some three years before his own death.

Sangye Gyamtso (1653–1703) was the nephew of the Dalai Lama's second regent, Trinley Gyamtso (regn. 1660–68).³⁴ He had been educated and groomed for power mainly by the Dalai Lama himself, serving him as an attendant from the age of eight. He was to become the most accomplished lay scholar Tibet ever produced and this must have been due mainly to the early influence of the Dalai Lama, himself a very great scholar. Sangye Gyamtso's surviving works on medicine and astrology are still regarded by Tibetans as the classical treatises on these subjects. He also wrote on poetics and grammar, history and politics, but his interests ranged even further over many non-scholastic pursuits to include archery, chess, folksongs and instrumental music. He had two official wives, and it is also said that "of the noble ladies of Lhasa and those who came there from the provinces, there was not a single one whom the regent did not take [to bed]".³⁵ This is presumably exaggeration, but it is sure that his was a complex and sophisticated mind for whom the traditional boundaries between worldly and religious pursuits and between the consolations of the flesh and those of the spirit tended towards fuzziness. In the political realm he is remembered for the extraordinary energy with which he oversaw the whole process of government during the remaining three years of the Fifth Dalai Lama's life and for twenty years thereafter.

Sangye Gyamtso concealed the death of the Dalai Lama for fifteen years from 1682 to 1697. As I have commented elsewhere: "The period of concealment coincided with the very much longer one of the Shabdrung [of Bhutan], and so we are faced with the odd situation that during these years the Tibetan and Bhutanese states were both ruled by corpses, in a manner of speaking."³⁶ In both cases the deception was maintained by pretending that the aging lamas were in strict retreat

and not to be disturbed. All kinds of stratagems were used to give the impression that they were still alive. The continuity of their personal rule was kept up by forging their commands. In the case of the Fifth Dalai Lama the deception was taken a step further by having a monk act the part of the dead ruler on those occasions when it was impossible to avoid admitting certain Mongol patrons to private audiences. This trick was also used, it seems, to dispel the growing doubts felt by some government servants and those aroused by the state oracle of Nechung. The monk who was forced to play the role was chosen from the Dalai Lama's own monastic college in the Potala, the Namgyal Dratsang. He had some physical resemblance to the late Dalai Lama, but would hide the differences by wearing an eye-shade of horse hair. It is said he had to be alternately bullied and begged into acting the role all those years, for it seems he was actually confined to the dead lama's apartments for the duration of the secret. An account has come down to us of the regent and one of the Dalai Lama's closest spiritual confidants, the "text-discoverer" Terdaklingpa of Mindröling, entering into a conspiracy to have this monk ordain Terdaklingpa's son in private in such a way that the doubts of the public would be dispelled.³⁷ The son, Pema Gyurmé, was not party to the secret of the death, and the description he subsequently gave of the lama who had ordained him convinced everyone that it was indeed the Dalai Lama.

It is not clear what was done with the physical remains of the Great Fifth, but it is likely they were secretly mummified. Meanwhile his tomb in the form of a great golden stupa housed in its own temple in the Potala was prepared by the regent at vast expense. By nicely twisting the real state of things he explained that the construction was intended to secure by its blessings the Dalai Lama's long life and the general welfare of the country. Again it is not clear at what point the remains were transferred from the private apartment to the tomb. The real purpose of the stupa, known as "The Single Ornament of the World", was not revealed till 1697 when the regent simultaneously proclaimed his discovery of the Sixth Dalai Lama.³⁸

Meanwhile the construction of the Potala itself was being completed. It was intended to be the outward confirmation of

the fact that the Dalai Lama was the emanation of the bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteśvara, and that he lived here on earth in a model of his divine abode for the benefit of all beings and those of Tibet in particular. Erected on the foundations of a palace of the early kings, the building was also a conscious allusion to Tibet's former period of greatness. One of the reasons for hiding the death of the Dalai Lama lay in the fear that the great palace would never be completed if it became known that its chief occupant had died. But the regent always said the main reason for the secret was because the lama had himself expressed the need for it as he lay dying, and this had later been confirmed by oracle and portent.³⁹ The actual command given by the lama to those gathered at his deathbed as chronicled later by the regent called for keeping the secret "for a certain time",⁴⁰ though other works claim the order was for a specific period of twelve years.⁴¹ All the troubles which later befell his successor and the new Tibetan state were blamed on the extension of the secret beyond the stipulated twelve years: "The wise scholars of those times said this had caused the auspices to be broken."⁴² The regent himself later justified the duration of the secret by pointing to historical precedent: the death of the early king of Tibet, Trisong Detsen, had been concealed for fourteen years, he said.⁴³ Perhaps he also remembered stories of how when his uncle had been appointed regent in 1660, the previous regent's death had been kept secret for just a year and its disclosure had immediately been followed by a serious rebellion.⁴⁴ If that had happened when the death in office of a mere regent had become known, how much worse might the rebellion be if it was known that the Great Fifth himself had expired? The strength of the new Tibetan state depended on the figure of its founder. Without the personal bonds of devotion which linked the subjects to their ruler, the entire fabric of the state might collapse. More specifically it has been suggested that the unity of the Mongol tribes which the regent was seeking to promote in order to reconquer Tibetan land on the eastern border that had been lost to the Manchus would have quickly come to nothing had the Mongols known the Dalai Lama was dead.⁴⁵ It was feared the Manchu emperor would exploit the death to the profit of China by playing on the chronic divisiveness of the

Mongols, whose fragile semblance of unity in this period was achieved only by virtue of their common veneration for the Great Fifth.

Some element of self-interest can also surely be attributed to the regent. He more than anyone stood to lose if the death of his master were known. At the same time there is no reason to doubt he genuinely believed that until the future was secure the only way to preserve a stable and legitimate government for his country was by pretending that the founder of the new nation was still alive. As in the lives and stratagems of all successful politicians, there thus appeared for the regent a happy coincidence of public good and private advantage. But the strain and difficulty of maintaining the deception over so many years should not be underestimated, for it had to be kept on three levels at the same time—"outer, inner and secret", to use the traditional phrase. The agility with which he operated simultaneously and successfully on these different levels perhaps echoes the way he moved with such ease as a scholar from subject to subject and as a lover from wives to mistresses. Some of the arts of deception cultivated while pursuing the latter may have served him well as he strove to hide the greatest state secret of Tibet.

Sangye Gyamtso had the foresight to conduct an almost immediate search for the new incarnation of the Dalai Lama. This too had to be done under conditions of utmost secrecy. He needed a ready-made solution to the problem of the succession when the time was judged right for disclosing the death of the Fifth. Without such a solution to hand, like the Bhutanese officials who guarded the secret of the Shabdrung's death he would have been forced to experiment later with various awkward solutions and theological justifications in the quest for an acceptable successor.⁴⁶ The regent instead kept all the initiative on his side. His was the most daring course, for it meant that not only the death of the Fifth had to be concealed but also the birth of the Sixth. That he managed to keep both from public knowledge is a testimony not just to the strength of his political cunning but also to the way he could instill a sense of urgency and fear into those who guarded the two secrets with him for so long. Posterity remembers him as having a very "forceful

disposition", a phrase which suggests he usually got his own way in everything big and small.⁴⁷

The regent's account of the early life of the Sixth Dalai Lama is contained in a work which he called *The First Volume of the General "Outer" Biography of the Sixth Omniscient One, Lobsang Rinchen Tsangyang Gyamtso: A Continuation of the Dukūla [Entitled] the Clear Golden Corn-Ear*.⁴⁸ The work thus purports to deal only with the external and mundane facts of the Dalai Lama's spiritual life rather than with his "inner" or "secret" revelations. In fact there are constant references throughout the work to the author making a separate account of the dreams and visions which the young Dalai Lama experienced and which were subsequently reported to him. If these accounts were ever compiled into a book, it has not survived. The *Dukūla* in the title of this "outer" biography is a reference to the general title of the multi-volume autobiography of the Great Fifth: the regent conceived his work to be its natural continuation. Indeed he did all he could to mould his image of the Sixth in the form of the Fifth, not only in his writings but certainly also in those circumstances of the lama's life over which he had direct control. The story he unfolds narrates the life of the Sixth down to the last day of the tenth month of 1701, when the Dalai Lama was eighteen years old.⁴⁹ The date of its composition is not given, but it can be assumed it was finished shortly after the final events described. It was clearly intended to be followed by subsequent volumes dealing with later events. Perhaps the behaviour of the Dalai Lama after the age of eighteen made this impossible, as we shall see, and in any case the regent was to die just four years later. The work he did leave behind is panegyric of the highest sort in which the personality of the young lama is totally obscured by eulogy, miracle and portent. Where concrete events are introduced, particularly those which tended to have political or secular significance, the language is so obscure and oblique as to be practically incomprehensible. Still the main sequence of events can be discerned and some of the pressures to which the young Dalai Lama was subjected can be identified. Any attempt at a summary, such as the one which follows, has to be highly selective.

Six days after the death of the Great Fifth the regent addressed

special prayers to his corpse to be reborn quickly and he ordered the inner coterie of officials and attendants who were guarding the secret of his death to keep careful note of any dreams they had which might indicate the circumstances of rebirth.⁵⁰ He himself experienced dreams which gave clues to the necessary rituals that should be performed to secure a quick rebirth and he also had a sign that the mother-to-be of the new incarnation was then aged thirty-seven. Three days later an oracle foretold that the birth would take place in an area of south-east Tibet somewhere between Dakpo and Namseling.⁵¹ The oracle of Samyé was questioned in the name of the dead lama. The answers he gave seemed to indicate he knew of the death, and again the signs pointed to the south-east and specifically to the lineage of Pemalingpa.⁵² On the tenth of the fourth month the regent entered into a retreat to try and discover more. It was revealed to him that the new incarnation would come in the year of the Pig (1683) and he had a detailed vision of the house where the birth would take place. On waking up he wondered where it might be and suddenly heard a voice saying “Tsona”.⁵³ The next day the Nechung oracle was consulted about the dream and declared there was no mistake about the direction. Two of the attendant monks who were sharing the secret, Jamyang Drakpa and Lobsang Chöphel, also had prophetic dreams, and the regent heard how a monk from Drepung who was not in the secret had had a dream in which he saw the Fifth Dalai Lama with an image of Amitābha emerging from his head: the image represented his rebirth, who was to be named “Tsangyang”. The “text-discoverer” Terdaklingpa also reported his dreams.⁵⁴

With the benefit of hindsight the regent then described the birth as he was to learn about it some years later. His account is preceded by a long discussion of scriptural prophecies, the region where the birth took place, and the parentage of the child.⁵⁵ He commented that the area was not included in the “four horns” of Tibet proper, that the appellation “Mön” indicated “a place where there is reputed to be not much ability to distinguish virtue from evil”. The area, however, had been blessed by the visits of many holy beings in the past just as Kuśinagara, an outer barbarian district, had been sanctified by

the Lord Buddha when he chose it as the place to attain his nirvana. Moreover the Fifth Dalai Lama, he wrote, had caused his government to take control of the district of La'ok Yulsum, close to Padmasambhava's "hidden land" of Khenpateng, precisely because it was there, in the temple of Ugyenling, that his rebirth was destined to appear.⁵⁶ The boy's ancestors on both his father's and mother's sides were carefully described with full pride of place accorded to Pemalingpa, whose autobiography the regent had evidently read with great interest. The pregnancy and confinement of Tsewang Lhamo, the boy's mother, and all the marvels which accompanied his appearance in the world, also the extraordinary signs noticed on his body—all these features were described by the regent at enormous length in wholly conventional terms. Suffice it to say that the boy was born on the first day of the third month in the year of the Water Pig (1683), a year and six days since he had died in his last body.

The first piece of concrete information we come across about the child is that he would not drink his mother's milk for three days after the birth: it is explained he was fasting. He was named Sangye Tendzin by his grandfather and Ngawang Norbu by his father. When his face began to swell with an infection and he could hardly open his eyes, two local diviners were summoned. They prescribed purificatory rites and said his name should be changed to Ngawang Gyamtso. His recovery was credited by the regent to the intervention of the Dalai Lama's own guardian deity, Dorje Drakden. The grandfather dreamt that the child was constantly being protected by heavenly beings. The mother dreamt, as she took a rest from her weaving, that a great company had arrived to take him off. His paternal grandmother dreamt of two suns shining in the sky. The Gelukpa monks of Tawang had extraordinary visions.⁵⁷

The child's first words were: "I'm not someone insignificant, but rather *Gyalwa* Lobsang Gyamtso, the Refuge of the Three Worlds." Also: "I'm from Lhasa and the Potala and must go up there soon. The regent and many monks will soon arrive and I'll also see the image of the Crowned Buddha [in the Jokhang of Lhasa]." On another occasion he declared that his previous embodiment had come flying down from the Potala

to the roof of the family temple at Ugyenling and that he had then entered his mother's womb as she drank some water. He promised to bring riches to all the poor relatives around him, that he had power over everyone and that many thousands of Mongolians would do him service. The Khoshuud "king" Dalai Batur would honour him. A certain dance called "The Vase of the Conqueror" would be performed for him.⁵⁸ It is not made clear at what age the child is supposed to have made these utterances, nor in what language. But the report of such unequivocal statements would have been more than sufficient to convince the public of the boy's genuineness.

Meanwhile in Lhasa the regent carefully studied the lives of the previous Dalai Lamas and noticed how all of them had been born about a year after the deaths of their predecessors and recognised in their new bodies a year or two later. The Sixth should therefore be found in the year of the Wood Bull (1685), and so he made secret preparations to begin the search. He despatched two monks, Zilnön Dorje the hierarch of Kharek and one Dopa Sonam Gyaltzen, to look for the child under the pretence of searching for the incarnations of two recently deceased lamas, namely Ngawang Nyendrak Pelzang of Dingpoché and the Sharkhang Nomunqan. They were to conduct their secret search by visiting all the major shrines in central Tibet and make offerings in each for the general welfare of the country while making enquiries in the surrounding districts. He gave the two monks clear directions as to their "outer, inner and secret" responsibilities and sent them off on the fifth of the sixth month of 1685.⁵⁹

In Mönyul the wonders accompanying the birth of the child had given rise to all kinds of rumours which were gradually reported to the regent by different people. The boy's mother, Tsewang Lhamo, was involved in a long-standing legal battle over questions of land with some of her distant relatives, particularly with two men called *Jowo* Nadzompa and Phuntsok. These men had reported to the Tibetan officials across the border the stories they heard about the incarnation and especially the interest which the Bhutanese were beginning to take in the child. There was a fear that he would fall into the hands of these enemies of the Gelukpa government, notably the governor of

the Bhutanese fortress of Tashigang at Bengkhar. Rites of black magic were said to have been performed there against him. When some people came from that direction to ask for the child's blessings, they were refused by his mother. Hearing about this, the abbot of Tawang went to investigate. He was given a grand reception at Ugyenling, but it was said the boy strongly objected to this. Why, he asked, should the abbot, a mere monk, be welcomed with such honour while he, the Dalai Lama himself, received none? At one point (the timing is unclear) the abbot actually captured two yogins who were being employed by the Bhutanese official Maja Tashi to spy on the child. This was all duly reported to the regent. He also got a worrying letter from a lama called Sargyalpo from a place called Ayédong (apparently within Mönnyul) saying that some Bhutanese in the guise of traders were making secret investigations into the new incarnation at Ugyenling. He warned the regent that while the death of the Great Fifth was not known in central Tibet, it was common knowledge in the south and meanwhile serious trouble might come to the new incarnation. How the lama had heard all this is not made clear. Finally the two governors of Tsona who were involved in trying Tsewang Lhamo's lawsuit reported that the child had declared: "I own the whole of the Ü and Tsang provinces [of central Tibet]. I'm going to the Potala. I have a regent." Wild rumours were said to be stirring up the Mönpa people and it was necessary to bring them to a halt, they said.⁶⁰ (These two officials, Jayakpa of Shün and Pushupa of Chongye, were to play a key role in subsequent events.)

On getting their letter the regent decided it was time to act in case the boy turned out to be the right one. In his reply to the two governors he said it was possible the Bhutanese would dispatch a secret force to capture the boy, that they should take the utmost care of him because he might be the incarnation of the abbot of Shalu, Sonam Chokdrup. There had been a prophecy that the abbot would appear in the vicinity of Kuśinagara. (The Tibetans and eastern Himalayan peoples mistakenly identified the Hindu temple of Hajo as Kuśinagara. This temple lies due south of Mönnyul, close to Gauhati in Assam.) The governors should use gentle means and not legal proclamations to ensure

that the rumours died down: the whole business should be conducted “loose without and tight within”. He was sending them some sacred pills which should be served to the boy for his own protection.⁶¹

Before the regent’s letter was received the governors took the initiative to move the boy to a place where he would be safer from the Bhutanese. After much discussion the shrine of Sha’uk was chosen, partly it seems because the boy said he would go nowhere else since this place lay directly on the route north to his own palace in Lhasa. His mother dreamt that many monks wearing yellow hats came to lead him away. When the regent’s letter finally arrived together with the pills for his protection, he strongly denied he was the incarnation of the abbot of Shalu, insisting he was none other than the Dalai Lama. He said: “I’m going to the Potala and not staying here. I’m more powerful than anyone”. He was delighted to be leaving and gave directions for packing up the religious objects he used as toys.⁶²

The party left on the seventeenth day of the eleventh month of 1685 when the boy was just two years and eight months old. The journey to Sha’uk took two days and they were met on the way by one of the governors, Jayakpa. On arrival at Sha’uk the party was confined in a building used as a staging-post or caravanserai. Some members of the party were sent home and other travellers were prevented from having contact with those who remained with the boy. Some who heard about his confinement spread rumours that he was about to be murdered by the authorities. His father had rites performed for his safety back at Ugyenling, though whether in reaction to these rumours or on his own initiative it is not clear. Meanwhile the boy amused himself by making clay and dough models of the Potala, the city of Lhasa, and of the great monasteries of Sera and Drepung. He comforted his mother by saying he would later give her precious objects.⁶³

At no point in their confinement at Sha’uk nor during the many years the family spent later at Tsona did the two governors suspect that the boy was the true incarnation of the Great Fifth. Instead they appear to have been content to believe, as the regent intended, that he was the incarnation of the Shalu

abbot. But the interest which the regent was obviously taking in the whole case appears to have done little to endear them to the child. On the contrary, in his account of the whole affair the regent makes it clear that the governors used every opportunity to make conditions for the family as difficult and as uncomfortable as they could. The reason for their odd behaviour towards the family, it is explained, lay in their having been prejudiced against them by the enemies of the boy's mother, her own distant relatives. The implication behind the very oblique language used by the regent in describing the trouble seems to be that these enemies had bribed the governors to favour their own side in the case over the disputed land. The regent commented that many of the greatest spiritual beings of Tibet had been similarly afflicted by evil relatives. Milarepa had been dispossessed by a wicked uncle and aunt. The Fifth Dalai Lama's father had had his estate at Chongye turned over to the Tsangpa ruler by his aunt. And now these relatives of the Sixth tried to do something similar by influencing the civil authorities. At all events the family was locked into the staging-post at Sha'uk and subjected to all kinds of indignities which they were never to forget. The governors had been led to suspect they might try to flee to the Bhutanese side, and a crony of the governors, the steward of the Gelukpa monastery of Gönpatse close to Tsona, was heard to refer to the boy as a bastard.⁶⁴

The regent came to hear of the party's arrival at Sha'uk and immediately sent word that they should be moved to the district headquarters at Tsona on the other side of the main Himalayan range. The letter, accompanied by suitable gifts, arrived on the eleventh of the twelfth month and made it quite clear that the regent still regarded the boy as the incarnation of the Shalu abbot. The governor Pushupa came with the letter to the staging-post on the following day. Recognizing the seal on the letter as his own, the boy told everyone to receive its blessings. (Did the regent use the Dalai Lama's seal on his own letter? Or else did he forge a letter in the name of the Dalai Lama and affix the latter's own seal to it? This is not clear.) On the thirteenth the family was led off under guard to Tsona and they arrived there the next day.⁶⁵

The family was to spend the next twelve years in a form of

imprisonment there, a place described by modern travellers in the '30s of this century as “filthy, wind-swept Tsona”, “a filthy village of close on a hundred hovels hardly fit for human habitation”.⁶⁶ It seems the family was accommodated for most of the time in the government fortress overlooking the village,⁶⁷ in an eight-pillared room. The boy’s father Tashi Tendzin and the single servant they were allowed to keep, Samten by name, were deprived of their weapons as soon as they arrived. It was the height of winter and they were not permitted to light a fire. Watchdogs were tied to their door and guards posted around. For many days they had to put up with very little food and no water. Little was said to them, but they got wind of a rumour that the boy was going to be secretly killed. The whole family would then be blamed for the death and exterminated. At this point, still a few days after their arrival, the mother’s milk dried up. She was comforted by the skyfarers while the boy continued to amuse himself by building models of his palace in the Potala from mud and stones. On the seventeenth of the first month of the next year (1686) a letter arrived from the regent, but purporting to be from the Great Fifth, enquiring into the health of the boy, still addressed as if to the incarnation of the Shalu abbot. This resulted in the governors opening just one of the windows in their room. It seems the family was allowed some limited movement during the day but were locked in at night and guarded as before, “. . . and so the time passed as if they were in the prison-pit of the Lord of Death”. The governors, it is claimed, deliberately ignored the regent’s order to show proper respect to the family. Moreover, they were told to supply the family with adequate food rations and to render accounts for this to Lhasa, but the accounts were never received. Sometimes the food improved after letters were received from Lhasa, but it soon deteriorated again. To begin with the boy would receive a superior grade of barley flour called *zhib*, the father would get a middling grade called *barzhib*, while the mother, a daughter born later called Sonam Dzompa and the servant Samten would get the coarsest grade called *tsing*. Later they were all reduced to *tsing*. They also got a small barrel of water every two days and a little firewood, which often ran out. The room they occupied seems to have been a chapel. The boy

insisted on sitting on the lama's throne there and nowhere else, but not when the governors Jayakpa and Pushupa or their servants were looking. Back at their home in Ugyenling the family members left behind there heard rumours that the whole party had been wiped out and that their turn would come next. Their neighbours were told to have nothing to do with them, but it seems some friends advised them to flee to Bhutan, though there was apparently no attempt to take up the suggestion.⁶⁸

The next month the two lamas who had been sent off by the regent to conduct the secret search for the new incarnation arrived back in Lhasa after eight months on the road. Their journey had taken them all over central and south-eastern Tibet and they had a detailed report to make to the regent. The senior of the two, Zilnön Dorje, explained how they had passed from district to district, examining every possible candidate they heard about. On arrival at Nangkartse they first got wind of the child at Ugyenling and decided to go there. They had found the road south from Tsona blocked by guards under orders from the governors, but on producing the official document authorizing them to search for the incarnation of Sharkhang Nomunqan they were allowed to proceed. On arrival at Ugyenling they heard all the details of the boy's birth but the parents expressed doubts about him being an incarnation. They tried to prevent the lamas seeing him, claiming he was sick, but the lamas insisted. The meeting, however, was not a success. The boy was quite indifferent, appeared confused, and failed to recognize a rosary owned by the Great Fifth which the lamas showed him. They decided immediately the boy could not possibly be a proper candidate and left. But Zilnön Dorje fell sick on the return journey north and he dreamt that the investigation at Ugyenling had not been carried out correctly. The rosary had not been properly displayed to the boy. Nevertheless they went on their way and passed through all the districts of the south-east including Loro, Ja, Nyel, Dakpo, Ölkha, Kongpo, Tsethang and Chongye. When they came to the great monastery of Samyé they asked the keeper of the Gyama chapel there to perform divinations and all the signs indicated that the boy of Ugyenling was the right one after all. The regent therefore

sent them back to Tsona this time to make the most exhaustive examination of the boy.⁶⁹ He sent with them “an official letter as if from the Peak” (that is, from the Dalai Lama’s office in the Potala) together with appropriate gifts and ceremonial scarves.

The lamas left Lhasa on the tenth of the fourth month and reached Tsona on the fifth of the following month. In the face of persistent scoffing and contempt shown by the two governors they proceeded to examine the boy. Each day for the duration of a week they supplicated the guardian divinities and then presented the boy with an object which had been in the possession of the Great Fifth together with one or more substitutes. On each occasion the boy grabbed the correct object and insisted it was his. In this way he identified by turn a small ritual dagger which the Fifth had worn round his neck, an image of Padma-sambhava in union with his consort, a book called “The Cow’s Udder”, a crown, a knife, a “sorcerer’s horn”, and finally a porcelain bowl. Moreover on being asked who the figure was in a portrait of the Great Fifth, he pointed to himself and said “Me!”. They noticed too that when taking his food he always offered some first to the gods as the Fifth had used to do. And so “the two examiners shed tears involuntarily as happiness and sorrow vied with each other”, for they were now totally convinced they had found the right boy.⁷⁰

The Years of Waiting

The modern sceptic, in seeking to understand this strange story of the boy’s recognition as the Dalai Lama, might point to the great pressure exerted by the regent upon the two examiners to identify him without further delay. Moreover the accounts of the boy’s behaviour from birth are at best second or third hand. Be that as it may, the examiners had now achieved certainty, but they let it be known to the governors of Tsona that the tests had not yet proved conclusive. It seems they still sought to give the impression that the boy might be the incarnation of the Shalu abbot rather than the Dalai Lama. At no point in the next eleven years did they dispel this impression. The boy was therefore destined to spend almost the whole of his youth in a sort of

twilight, halfway between the greatest honours and remote oblivion. Messengers from the regent followed each other at short intervals insisting on the need for secrecy. It is never made clear when the child's own alleged certainty about his identity was officially confirmed to him, but his recognition as the Dalai Lama was definitely kept from his family till 1696 and from the civil officials at Tsona till 1697. It is difficult, however, to imagine how the possibility of his being the Dalai Lama did not occur to some of them. For was it not said that the boy himself continually insisted on it? And was not all the flurry from Lhasa clearly aimed at recognizing him as the rebirth of some lama or other? In the atmosphere of complete uncertainty surrounding the case, the chance that he was the Dalai Lama would surely have been one among several possibilities in the minds of the puzzled onlookers. But how could he be the Dalai Lama if there was another still alive in the Potala who kept sending gifts and correctly sealed letters to Tsona?

For the moment the examiners arranged for the boy to be moved to a separate room away from his family, partly because he was not in good health at the time and they wanted to arrange for better care, also because they felt it was time he got used to sleeping away from his mother in case he should be summoned quickly to occupy his waiting throne. Nine years later the mother still bitterly recalled the anguish she felt at this sudden separation.⁷¹ The examiners appointed two of their own monks to act as the boy's personal attendants at all times, "... and so he no longer looked to see if his parents were around him and his mind became contented". He was given sugar-cane and other things he liked. Some people from Tibet and Mönkyul whom the governors vouched for were permitted access to him, but the governors were warned they would have to take full responsibility if the boy died. At the same time measures were taken to improve the living conditions of the rest of the family. But the parents remained unhappy despite the fine robes and better food they were given. Again it is not made clear when they regained full liberty. Very likely they were carefully watched at all times. Their deep grievance against the governors for the treatment received at their hands never abated. Particularly hard to bear were the gratuitous insults inflicted on them. Much

later it was remembered how one of the governors had remarked that a certain leper who had come to the hot springs at Tsona closely resembled the boy's father.⁷²

Between 1686 and 1697 the regent kept close watch on the boy and his family. The two examiners, Zilnön Dorje and Sonam Gyaltzen, took turns making the long journey from Tsona to Lhasa at least twice a year to report on the boy's condition and progress. The route was covered in about a week of hard travel. On these occasions the regent would expect a detailed account of everything the boy and his family had been up to. He took an especially close interest in his studies once they had begun. The lamas always returned with minute instructions on what the boy should wear and the further studies he should pursue. Gifts of suitable clothes for each season were regularly sent to him and his family, and fruit from distant places on the borders of Tibet were also dispatched according to the time of year.⁷³

The studies began just before the boy's fourth birthday with an introduction to the alphabet and numbers.⁷⁴ Eight months later he was introduced to the "Perfection of Wisdom" texts in their various redactions, also the so-called "Guide" (*Lam-yig*) of Atīśa and a standard life of Padmasambhava. It can be assumed that his lessons consisted in merely listening to a recitation of these texts, perhaps with a simple commentary. A new tutor was appointed for this, a physician called Namkha Chöden, since the senior examiner was not known for his learning.⁷⁵ The same reason was given for appointing another tutor in 1690, a monk from the monastery of Drubgyeling called Lobsang Ngödrup: the examiner was skilled in tantric knowledge but not in the arts of scholarship, and "it was high time his studies started [in earnest], taking account of his age and all other considerations".⁷⁶ The following year he was made to begin on astrology, using as a textbook the regent's own colossal and extremely complex treatise on the subject completed in 1685 entitled "The White Lapis Lazuli" (*Baidurya dkar-po*), further augmented by its commentary and continuation completed in 1688 (the *Baidurya g.ya'-sel*). It is difficult to see quite what an eight-year-old child was expected to make of it all. That same year he wrote to the regent in his own hand for the first time,

causing him inexpressable delight.⁷⁷ In 1693, two years later, we find among the texts he is supposed to be learning a mention of the first volume of his predecessor's autobiography (the *Dukūla*), arguably the most difficult piece of autobiographical literature ever produced in Tibet.⁷⁸ Of compelling interest to mature scholars, it is not easy to see what inspiration a ten-year-old boy would have found in its tortuous and allusive prose even if it did speak of his previous embodiment's early years. Also in 1693 he is said to have written his first composition, a *sādhana*-ritual dedicated to the deity Hayagrīva.⁷⁹ It was copied out for him by his tutor Lobsang Ngödrup and delivered to the regent by Zilnön Dorje. The work was greeted with floods of joyful tears, for it reminded those in the know how the Great Fifth had constantly produced similar works. It is presumably to be identified with one of the two Hayagrīva texts attributed to the Sixth Dalai Lama in a list of six works credited to him, none of which have yet come to light.⁸⁰ But did he actually write it himself? What role did his tutor play in its composition? The next year, 1694, the boy was made to listen to a recitation of the catalogue which listed all the teachings the Great Fifth had received in the course of his long life.⁸¹ In 1695 he is found reading the Fifth's own account of his visionary experiences, "The Secret Biography [Entitled] the Sealed One" (*gSang-ba'i rnam-thar rgya-can-ma*).⁸²

Though there were other works studied too, it would appear from all this that the regent was trying to re-create something of the scholarly atmosphere he had known in his own youth when he had sat at the feet of the Great Fifth, also later when they had together poured forth the most weighty and enduring works of scholarship. Because of the constraints imposed by secrecy and distance, the only way the clock could be turned back to those times was by imposing on the boy the weight of dead letters. The mere recitation of these was supposed to rekindle the spark of learning and wisdom. At no point are we afforded a glimpse of what was really going on in the mind of the young boy. However, it can perhaps be guessed that the efforts to mould him into the form of his predecessor were felt to be just as constraining as the walls of the fortress where he was confined. In seeking explanations for his future behaviour

as an alleged “libertine” or “profligate”, it is often said that he was not “caught” early enough to be properly trained for his difficult role, on the mistaken understanding that his training only began when he reached his palace in Lhasa in 1697 at the age of fourteen.⁸³ The evidence from the regent’s own account, however, suggests by contrast that it was the early timing and nature of his “capture” which may have been the key factor in his later rebellion.

The description of the years between his secret recognition and his final enthronement is otherwise mainly taken up with incidental information on the comings and goings between Lhasa and Tsona, the occasions when he acted in a manner to confirm their belief in his identity, and the rites performed for his safety.⁸⁴ The latter sometimes took a symbolic and practical form, as in 1692 when the roads and bridges of Tibet were mended to “clear the obstacles” to his life.⁸⁵ This would presumably have been done on some pretext other than the one intended, and the regent was by now a master at disguising his real purpose. The liturgical rituals for the boy’s security were those specified in the Fifth’s *Dukūla*.⁸⁶ One glimpse of spontaneity is had when he reacts joyfully to the regent’s gift of paintings, though he declared it would be unlucky to display them except during the New Year.⁸⁷ In 1694 he is said to have been depressed on hearing that the regent was unwell and he recited prayers for his recovery.⁸⁸ By 1695 it is clear he enjoyed some local standing, though not as the Dalai Lama, for in that year he was asked to give ordination names to some new recruits for the Gönpatse monastery at Tsona.⁸⁹ But the events of real consequence for his future were taking place in Lhasa.

In 1694 the state oracle of Nechung entered into trance and indicated the time for revealing the secret had not yet arrived. Further divinations were held to try and establish when that time would come, but the results were inconclusive. An outbreak of smallpox presented another danger and rites to ward off the epidemic were duly performed. The following year the regent gathered together the six closest attendants of the Great Fifth who shared the secret and together with them addressed prayers to his corpse, begging permission to bring his incarnation to Lhasa and to perform the conservation of his tomb in the

year of the Rat (1696). But the portents were unclear.⁹⁰ Later that same year the group reassembled before the door leading to the remains of the Fifth. Offerings were arranged and the same request was made, this time with positive results. The new incarnation could be brought to the plain of Nyethang during the tenth month of the Bull year (1697) on his way to Lhasa. It was at Nyethang, a short distance from the capital, that nearly eighty years ago the Fifth had first been welcomed by his first regent, Sonam Rabten. The new Dalai Lama was immediately informed, presumably by the senior examiner Zilnön Dorje who was one of the group. The joy with which the boy, now aged twelve, is said to have received the news appears quite unfeigned, even though his final departure for Lhasa was not planned for another two years.⁹¹ He must have been told to keep the news strictly to himself, for it was only in the fifth month of the next year (1696) that his parents along with a paternal aunt who happened to be at Tsona at the time and the faithful servant Samten were at last officially put in the picture. Their reaction is not recorded.⁹² They too must have been told to keep quiet about it, but the news would probably have been shared with their people back in Mönyul. A party of relatives from Ugyenling and Berkhar, also some of Samten's people, arrived three months later and the Dalai Lama spent three days with them.⁹³ A little later the father dreamt that his son was driving a huge herd of yaks towards Ugyenling, a symbol of the riches that would soon come to the family with the boy's enthronement. Many other auspicious dreams were also recorded, but danger came when the boy was infected by smallpox. The illness, however, does not seem to have been serious for only a few pustules appeared on his face.⁹⁴

In 1696 the regent heard the news that Galdan, chief of the Oirat Dzungars, had been defeated and killed by the Manchu forces. Galdan had once been a monk in Lhasa and had conceived great faith in the Dalai Lama. The most ambitious of all the Mongol chiefs, he had hoped to create a Buddhist empire that would include all Mongols and Tibetans under the leadership of the Dalai Lama. He never seems to have been told of the Dalai Lama's death and the regent was able to play on his sympathies throughout the interregnum. But Galdan was set

on a course of collision not only with other powers within Mongolia (notably the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu and the Tushetu Khan) but also with the Manchu newcomers to the imperial throne in China. For a time Galdan and his appeal for Mongol unity posed a real threat to the ascendancy of the Manchus, but by the time of his death in 1696 he had already suffered a disastrous defeat at the battle of Jai Modo and his cause was lost.⁹⁵ The emperor K'ang-hsi himself recorded how he learnt from prisoners taken in that battle:

... the strange story of how the Dalai Lama had in truth been dead for over nine years [actually fifteen years], and how the Tipa [*khri-pa*, the regent] had covered this up and forced the Panchen Lama to go along with him, and how they had issued a false prophecy in the dead Dalai Lama's name: "Galdan will be successful if he goes to the east".⁹⁶

The emperor sent a mission to Lhasa headed by a Manchu official called Booju to reprimand the regent in severe terms. He was told to give a full explanation of why he had concealed the Fifth's death, to arrange for the Panchen Lama's visit to the emperor, and to hand over Galdan's son-in-law and a lama who was said to have helped Galdan with his plots. The regent replied in guarded terms. He offered his congratulations on the victory over Galdan and disclosed the secret to the emissaries, promising a full report to the emperor through a mission of his own, but he prevaricated over the Panchen Lama's visit and surrendering the allies of Galdan.⁹⁷

To lead his mission to K'ang-hsi he chose a lama called Nyimathang Shabdrung who had had previous dealings with the Chinese court. He instructed him to request the emperor to delay a formal proclamation of the secret until the tenth month of 1697. K'ang-hsi appears to have agreed to this but soon changed his mind when he learnt that the regent was himself making selective disclosures. However, K'ang-hsi's own proclamation which followed (in the third month of that year) almost certainly did not reach Tibet proper. Nyimathang Shabdrung arrived back in the eighth month with confirmation of the news which the regent had already heard from imperial messengers, namely that the explanations offered had served to satisfy the emperor though his first reaction had been one of annoyance. The regent was told to announce the secret with-

out further delay to all the Oirat tribes. He was also told that the emperor was sending a new mission headed by the Changkya Khutuktu to congratulate the new Dalai Lama on his installation.⁹⁸

Until this news was received there seems to have been a real fear of invasion either by the Manchus or by Mongol chiefs disgruntled with the regent or by some combination of their forces. There are constant references to rites performed to counter the threat of war on the border, though the exact nature of the threat is never specified. That no invasion did occur was attributed to the efficacy of these rites, which included full use of the skills of the heterodox Bönpo school and their magical “bombs” (*btso*).⁹⁹ The regent was indeed lucky to have survived a serious threat of war caused by several diplomatic errors. However, no rites were capable of preventing his eventual downfall.

He was surer in his grasp of internal politics than foreign relations, and his mastery of the former is especially evident in the way he chose to disclose the old secret to the officials and public of Tibet and to his Mongol patrons at carefully timed intervals. He composed for this purpose an official account of the whole circumstances of the interregnum from the death of the Great Fifth to the discovery and recognition of the Sixth, a work he called “The Extraction of Aural Essences” (or, less literally, “A Feast for the Ears”, *rNa-ba’i bcud-len*).¹⁰⁰ It existed in three versions: extended, middling and short. The extended version must be the one that was later published in blockprint form in Lhasa. The only copy I have seen is in a private collection in Tawang. The other two versions do not appear to have survived at all. They were intended to be recited in public for the official disclosure of the secret in a carefully staggered and stage-managed fashion. Thus on the nineteenth of the fourth month of 1697 it was read to the governors of Tsona who had been entrusted all these years with the safety and comfort of the young incarnation and who were still officially unaware that he was the Dalai Lama. Two days after the formal recitation the governors and their servitors scrambled to make gifts to the boy in order to “obliterate their faults”, though this did nothing to mitigate the punishment that was eventually to come to them for their mistreatment of the family.

They were told to keep the news to themselves for the moment.¹⁰¹ The partial disclosure of the secret at this stage entailed the performance of further rites to avert the “malicious gossip” (*mi-kha*) which it was expected to cause.¹⁰²

It was only four months later that the secret was explained to the Dalai Lama’s own college in the Potala, the Namgyal Dratsang, and some days later to the high abbots of the great monasteries of Lhasa and the government officials. The recitation of the “Feast for the Ears” in its middling and short forms was greeted by everyone with uncontrollable tears. Relics of the Fifth, including clay moulds of his famous ritual dagger, were presented to the most senior persons present. Small clay replicas of his portrait called “The Dalai Lama” were distributed to everyone else. That same evening the text was recited in its short form to all the thousands of monks of Sera, Drepung and Ganden, and again the moulds were distributed. Simultaneous readings also took place before the whole public of Lhasa and at Tashilhunpo, seat of the Panchen Lama. The regent noted with pride the reaction of some old ladies in Lhasa who declared: “Thank you! For all these years the lord regent has alone carried the burden for the humans of this world while the Omniscient Conqueror [the Great Fifth] was not alive. And he has overseen all matters to do with the religious and secular spheres. Not realizing there was darkness we saw the sun shining!” The grateful thanks of the monks and their officials were expressed more formally, but the lay servants of government said nothing good or bad, biding their time.¹⁰³ One account holds that some officials “made bad faces and sniffed, saying: ‘He’s kept it secret right till now!’”.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless it is quite clear that popular sympathies were entirely on his side and that for the present at least he had won the day. Some would say that he had cynically manipulated the credulous public to his political advantage, but that would be to misunderstand the strength of his own faith in divine oracles and portents and his confidence in their interpretation. The timing he imposed on the disclosure of his own actions, which were wholly guided by his reading of the auguries, was but the operation of “skilful means”.

Meanwhile the boy had been brought under conditions of semi-secrecy from Tsona to Nangkartse on the first stage of the

journey to Lhasa and enthronement. There is nothing to suggest that during the twelve years he spent at Tsona he had ever been permitted to leave the confines of the fort there, though he probably visited the neighbouring monastery of Gönpatse. This was therefore to be the first journey since he had left home at the age of two. The effect on the child, now aged fourteen, can only be imagined. He was accompanied by his parents in a cavalcade with a cavalry escort led by the Oirat chief Tashi Gyamtso, a great hero whose presence was thought necessary for protection against possible Bhutanese attack. Although at this stage there was no panoply of banners and oboes, the boy's identity must have been known or suspected since huge crowds assembled at points along the way to greet him. On the far side of the first mountain pass some of his family members and the two governors of Tsona took their leave. He was met there by the regent's own son Ngawang Samten, who had been deputed to act as the boy's personal servant. After a journey of ten days the party arrived at Nangkartse on the fourth day of the fifth month.¹⁰⁵

It seems this place had been chosen because it was the private estate of the Fifth Dalai Lama's maternal uncle, whose support and discretion the regent knew he could depend on. The party spent five months here while the most elaborate preparations for the enthronement were being made in Lhasa and throughout the whole country. A hundred monasteries of the south were granted special tea servings; war gods were invoked in all ten fort-districts; prayer flags were put up on the peaks and flanks of three hundred sacred mountains; and the boy soon to be raised to the highest position in the land himself ordered scarves to be offered in all the major shrines of the capital. The regent presented the scarf intended for the central shrine of the Jokhang and the rest were offered by Zilnön Dorje, who had been mainly responsible for finding and recognizing the child. Meanwhile new apartments were being prepared in the Potala, with a whole set of new images for its chapel that included those of the Great Fifth and the regent himself. Among the rites performed to secure the best of auspices were those contained in the treasure-texts of Pemalingpa, thought to be most appropriate for the installation of his collateral descendant.¹⁰⁶

There was also time to try and groom the boy by introducing him to people who had been most influential in his previous embodiment. Foremost among these were the text-discoverer Terdaklingpa of Mindröling and the abbot Pema Thrinley of Dorjedrak, both of whom had been deeply involved in stimulating the Nyingmapa interests of the Great Fifth. They now proceeded to Nangkartse and began initiating his incarnation in several of the treasure-cycles he had favoured in his previous existence. Among the abbot's gifts was a "meteoritic thunderbolt" said to have been discovered by Pemalingpa himself. He also received the blessings of the ritual dagger which this abbot had received from the hands of the Fifth and which he habitually wore in his belt. The text-discoverer too blessed the boy with a miniature dagger he wore around his neck. These were deeply symbolic gestures reconfirming the ties of "treasure" which had linked all three of them before the boy came to occupy his present body. But there is a nice informality too in the account of their first meeting. The boy asked the old treasure hunter why he wore his hair tied into a top-knot in such a strange fashion, and the abbot and the boy took turns playing the cymbals in a playful manner, giving each other their symbolic interpretations of the sounds they produced. The abbot cured the boy of an effusion from his cheek, perhaps the remains of the attack of smallpox. During one of the initiations he was given the "secret" name of Dorje Thométsel which Terdaklingpa had also bestowed on him in his previous life.¹⁰⁷

The boy's father, Tashi Tendzin, was fated not to witness the enthronement that was about to take place. After more than three months at Nangkartse he died of a sudden illness that none could cure. Since arriving at Nangkartse he and his wife Tsewang Lhamo had begun to be raised to their rightful place at the head of the nobility, but still under conditions of semi-secrecy. Before he died he composed a will, also a detailed list of accusations against the Tsona governors which his widow later presented to the regent. His funeral was performed by the two Nyingmapa lamas engaged in initiating his son, and lamps and scarves were offered on behalf of the deceased in all the

Buddhist shrines of central Tibet. Nothing is said about how the boy took the death of his father.¹⁰⁸

Two and a half weeks later and five days before leaving Nangkartse he was ordained as a novice monk by the Panchen Lama, who had travelled from Tashilhunpo for this purpose. The lama had been his disciple in his previous life and now the roles were reversed according to an accepted custom followed in all periods. While having his hair washed just before the ceremony of tonsure the boy broke down weeping. "This auspice", said the regent, "was difficult to understand." With all the benefit of hindsight, however, it is not difficult for us to see that the boy simply did not want to become a monk. The ordination, even the one which now imposed on him only the minor vows of a novice, meant the end of all freedom, the severance of all ties with the world whose attractions had been denied him during all those years of semi-imprisonment at Tsona. He must have realized that his life from now on was to be even more restricted than ever before. At the same time he was going to be surrounded on all sides by the most exciting yet untouchable diversions.¹⁰⁹

The monastic name he now received from the Panchen Lama was "The Omniscient Lobsang Rinchen Tsangyang Gyamtso", but he is known to posterity by the last two elements alone. The key element "Tsangyang" appears to have been given in order to fulfil the prophetic dream which had come to the monk of Drepung all those years ago.¹¹⁰ If one keeps to the sense of its original Sanskrit rendering as *Brahma-svaratā*, the name means "A Voice Like Brahma's". Such a voice, "as soft as a cuckoo's", is one of the thirty-two signs of a Buddha.¹¹¹ The name was to acquire in the popular mind the strongest relevance for this Dalai Lama, but definitely not in the sense intended by the Panchen Lama when he gave it to him. The Tibetans were thinking instead of the melodious qualities of the secular love songs they later attributed to him.

On the twenty-first of the ninth month Tsangyang Gyamtso, as we can now call him, left Nangkartse in a huge cavalcade of government officials, lamas, monks and camp followers, all ranged strictly according to rank and precedence. Among them

were his own household officials whom the regent had recently appointed in Lhasa. Each night during the week's journey to Nyethang the camp was pitched with his own tent in the centre and 156 other tents disposed into left and right wings. They included those for his mother, all the various officials, the common cooks, meat cooks and tea servers, also the astrologers, dancers, grooms, the menials who pitched camp every day, and the "keeper of the seats". Each day the Dalai Lama's progress was welcomed by the laity and monks of the surrounding districts with their own parties of dancers. The protective deities of the monasteries along the route were also seen to make their obeisances, as when the god Jakpa Melen ("The Thief who Stole the Fire") of the Drukpa school produced portents at Namda which were thought to indicate his submission. A fleet of seven wooden ferries and sixty yak-hide coracles were waiting at Chuwori to carry the party across the Tsangpo river.¹¹²

The great tented encampment which awaited the Dalai Lama at Nyethang must have been very similar to the one erected for the reception of his fourteenth incarnation on the Lhasa plain nearly two and half centuries later in 1939.¹¹³ Similar to the ones put up along the route from Nangkartse, it followed a Mongol pattern with the great tent of the Dalai Lama called the Gurchen Tashi Phuntsok in the centre and everything else disposed in left and right wings, but in the form of a square like an imperial Chinese city with gates at the four quarters. Within the "walls" the tents were graded into three concentric zones, those for the seniormost officials being closest to the central "palace", two large guest tents, and those for the personal bodyguard. Close by stood six felt tents for the regent and two for his son Ngawang Samten; those for the three grades of government officials (*drung-'khor*) and military officers (*lding-dpon* and *'go-pa*), and the fourteen types of minor officials; twenty-four tents for the personal officials of the Dalai Lama's household (*nang-rnams*); and those for the various types of kitchen, for the attendant monks, scribes, artists and all the rest. Beyond the main camp stood smaller camps for the Khoshuud "king" Tendzin Dalai Khan, his family and officials, and for other Mongol chiefs; also those for the "Royal Mother", as Tsewang Lhamo was now officially known, also for the

governor of the Lhasa region, the Panchen Lama, and the monks of Sera, Drepung and Ganden. Within the whole tent city, “which resembled the stars of heaven come down to earth”, a special decree was promulgated forbidding the use of alcohol, tobacco, gambling, dancing, shouting, and the playing of musical instruments other than those for the worship of the gods. All were commanded to behave in a dignified manner.¹¹⁴ This was to be the Dalai Lama’s home for just under a month before his enthronement in Lhasa.

On the same day as his arrival he rode out to meet the Khoshuud “king” and the regent as they arrived in mounted procession from Lhasa. It was said that such a thunder of hooves had never before been heard in India, China or Mongolia. The regent, for whom this was perhaps the most important event in his life, recorded all the minutest astrological configurations of the occasion just as he had done for the boy’s ordination ten days earlier. Those holding the Dalai Lama’s horse reported to him later that as the boy first caught sight of him he shed tears and then broke into smiles. The regent himself was quite overcome with emotion, crying unashamedly “in an inseparable mixture of joy and sorrow”. The dense crush of people of all nationalities straining to witness the meeting was such that “there was nowhere to put one’s feet”. A reception in the main tent followed during which the regent rose to his feet and made an eloquent speech with all his skills as an orator and all the satisfaction of bringing the long plot to a successful conclusion. He reviewed once again the whole sequence of events which had led to the secret discovery of the boy now enthroned before them. “Just as the rays of the sun cannot be blocked with one’s own fist”, so had his reappearance in the world finally become manifest despite all the obstacles.¹¹⁵

From Enthronement to Deposition and Death

The real enthronement took place on the twenty-fifth of the tenth month of 1697 in the Potala palace. Tsangyang Gyamtso was brought the day before to a final camp in the Luding park where he gave his blessings to a crowd of more than ten thousand.

He was greeted on the way by the oracles of Nechung and Gadong in states of trance and by the emissaries of the Chinese emperor escorted by a hundred cavalry. He and the regent both later claimed to have heard above the din of the crowd a great sound of laughter in the skies as the guardian deities of the country expressed their joy at his triumphant arrival. The following day the processions formed again to make a clockwise circle of the Potala, which had finally been completed two years earlier. With the regent leading the way carrying sticks of lighted incense, the Dalai Lama was brought in by the central gate and conducted to the Kadam Khyilpa chamber and there placed on the throne he had last occupied as the Great Fifth. He was at once offered a dish of auspicious curds by a young nobleman of his own age. Then there began the presentation of gifts on behalf of the government and subjects of Tibet. This vast heap of offerings was classified into those associated with the physical, verbal and mental planes, to which were added those of spiritual knowledge and action. The seals of the Great Fifth were returned to him and this was followed by images of the Seven Symbols of Royal Power. Then began individual offerings from the highest dignitaries, starting with the Panchen Lama and followed by the Changkya Khutuktu, who had brought with him a letter and gifts from the Manchu emperor. Then came all the high abbots and incarnations of the Gelukpa school, the government officials and nobles, also the Mongol chiefs of the Khalkha, Torgut and Dzungar tribes who had either come in person or sent their representatives. When all the gifts had been presented a general prayer for the Dalai Lama's long life was intoned. A great feast ensued, followed that afternoon by a performance of sacred dances by the monks of the Meru monastery and folksongs by the laity. The next day it all began again with a presentation of gifts from each of the provinces of Tibet and from the non-Gelukpa monastic schools. The favoured Nyingmapa had already been represented on the first day by Terdaklingpa and Pema Thrinley. There seems to have been an endless sequence of games, dances and feastings for the public. The next two days were reserved for private audiences granted to distinguished lamas and nobles who had come from distant parts to meet their ruler.¹¹⁶

The regent's description of the ceremonies of enthronement (the above is only the briefest summary) sets the tone for the remaining four years of his narrative. Tsangyang Gyamtso disappears behind a screen of verbiage into the thickest fog of unending ritual, and this must in some ways reflect what did indeed happen to him. Just as we are prevented from seeing his natural reaction to events, so too was he constrained on all sides from actions and emotions that did not conform to his predetermined role. To that extent and notwithstanding these limitations the regent's account is a mirror of the enormous pressure of expectations placed on the young ruler.

Having lived practically all his life so far in a state of secret confinement, when visits even from his family who occupied the same building appear to have been restricted and his only companions were his tutors and monk attendants, he was now thrust suddenly and completely into the glare of public life. So detailed are the lists of people granted audiences it is certain the regent must have depended for his account on a daily record of events maintained either by himself or by one of his officials. (The practice of keeping a court diary is said to have been followed during the lives of all the Dalai Lamas. Perhaps one day they will come to light.) Apart from those monks and officials living close by who came to see Tsangyang Gyamtso in an unending stream, those who came from further off would usually have both an audience on arrival and one on leaving, thus effectively doubling his duties. Many of these were simply courtesy visits, but there are strong political overtones to others. The Himalayan kings of Sikkim, Ladakh, Zangskar and the Malla ruler of Nepal all sent their sons at different times.¹¹⁷ Even the Bhutanese were represented, quite unofficially, by the Shingkhara Lama from the Ura valley in Bumthang, also by the displaced chief of that valley, the so-called "Black Bone" (*gDung Nag-po*), who had many years earlier fled to Tibet upon his defeat by the Drukpa forces of Bhutan.¹¹⁸ Politically of more importance than these contacts with the south and west were the ties with the Mongols to the north and with China to the east, from where a steady stream of missions continued to arrive. The emperor sent messengers to insist again and again on a formal state visit from the Panchen Lama.

The regent's apparent obstruction to this plan resulted in 1700 in threats to remove from him the seal of office granted him by the emperor in 1693, but nothing seems to have come of it.¹¹⁹ Although the Dalai Lama as the figurehead of the Tibetan state was directly involved in all such formalities, it seems unlikely that he would have taken part in the real negotiations. There are vague mentions of his giving advice in general terms, as for instance in 1699 when he counselled Lajang, the future Khoshuud "king" who was to be the instrument of his own undoing, about sending his daughter Künzang as a bride for one of the Kokonor princes. But Tsangyang Gyamtso's role in arranging this political marriage was, as in all such affairs of state, more that of a passive onlooker than key negotiator.¹²⁰

In 1699 the whole case against Jayakpa and Pushupa, the two governors of Tsona who had mistreated the Dalai Lama's family in the early years, came out into the open. As soon as his mother Tsewang Lhamo had met the regent at Nyethang she had presented him with the list of accusations drawn up by her husband before his death. She had begged him in particular that Pushupa, for whom she had clearly conceived an intense dislike, should not be appointed to an official position in the Potala. The governors were both very worried men and seem to have tried hard to mollify the lady, but to no avail. They were now stripped of office, had all their wealth confiscated and were reduced to the level of common taxpayers in their home districts.¹²¹

The regent went to great lengths to record the progress of the Dalai Lama's studies, but in his account of his own repeated implorings that the young man should strive for the wisdom of his great predecessor one begins to see that things were turning out otherwise than as planned. To begin with, however, the signs had been hopeful. In the intervals between all the ceremonies at Nyethang and afterwards in the Potala the Panchen Lama had begun to confer on him the "authorization" for his own collected works. The boy had appeared to listen with interest. The following month they together performed the consecration of the Fifth Dalai Lama's tomb. Even amid the distractions at Nyethang the regent had encouraged him to continue his studies in astrology and he recorded how the boy

applied himself to these whether or not he, the regent, was present. The very day after his enthronement he is described as taking the merest glimpse at the folkdances and games because he had to get back to his astrological texts.¹²² His studies continued for the next four years both under the Panchen Lama and others, but they were pursued amidst the constant flow of audiences, the visits paid to the great monasteries in the vicinity of Lhasa, and the demands of rituals and ceremonies. By the third month of 1701 the regent is found making a speech to the abbots of Sera, Drepung and Ganden in which he says that the Dalai Lama would listen to no one, not even his mother or him, in matters concerning his studies.¹²³

Yet nine months later he appears with the otherwise unknown name of “Lobsang Jikten Wangchuk Palbar of the Nyö family” as the author of the guide to the reconstructed temple of Ugyenling, his own birthplace. The temple had been entirely refurbished “. . . chiefly lest the last will of my father who begat me, *Rigdzin* Tashi Tendzin, should be forsaken and in order to bring his intentions to a happy completion, also incidentally to acquire a great mass of merit for me, the regent Sangye Gyamtso and my old mother Tsewang Lhamo”.¹²⁴ The guide is a sophisticated work which tries to harmonize the spiritual inheritance from his Nyingmapa ancestry with a formal commitment to the teachings of the Gelukpa school. Apart from describing the new enlarged structure and contents of the family temple, it also contains a detailed list of the rituals prescribed for the new community that was to be housed there. However, it seems unlikely that Tsangyang Gyamtso himself composed it. Very likely it was “ghosted” for him, either wholly or in part, by a scholar under the orders of the regent. It was never published in blockprint form, and in 1904 during the Younghusband Expedition to Lhasa the only manuscript copy known to have survived came into the hands of L. A. Waddell, who later gave it to the British Library. The text now available is a recolligaphed version of that manuscript.¹²⁵ It should be recalled here that the authorship of some of the works claimed both by the Fifth Dalai Lama and by the regent himself is subject to doubt.¹²⁶ That this guide too may have been ghosted under the direction of the regent should therefore cause little surprise. It probably

represents one of the last attempts to portray the Dalai Lama as possessing the qualities of his scholarly predecessor. In the coming months and years this was to become more and more difficult.

The last scene recorded in the regent's account of Tsangyang Gyamtso's early years describes his participation in the celebrations held to mark the outbreak of civil conflict in the enemy state of Bhutan and the Sikkimese repulse of the Bhutanese from their territory, also the fact that troubles in the east had been limited to Tachienlu. The state oracle of Nechung exhorted the Dalai Lama to compose a verse in honour of the protective deities of Tibet who had ensured these rather hollow victories. Written out on a length of silk and offered to the gods, it may be that this poem too was ghosted for him. Thanksgiving rituals were performed for the first three days of the tenth month of 1701. The Dalai Lama made a token appearance in the hall where they took place but when the regent tried to persuade him to sit on his throne before the assembled monks he refused, saying that what he had done was sufficient.¹²⁷ This final glimpse of him in the regent's account looks like a real omen for what was to follow. Thereafter we are dependent on random evidence gleaned from other sources.

Six months later the regent wrote a letter to the Panchen Lama in which he made it very clear that things were not turning out well with the Dalai Lama. He was approaching the age of twenty (nineteen by western reckoning) and it was essential that he should now take the vows of a fully ordained monk. Though the "karmic traces" left over from his previous existence were still within him, he accepted no advice whatsoever on how he should behave. At best he gave evasive and temporizing replies to the regent's repeated request that he should take his final vows. In some desperation the regent begged the Panchen to intervene. There followed a direct exchange of letters between the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, the former explaining that although he occupied the place of his predecessor he had no wish to sit on a throne in the monastic assembly, that although he would not be unhappy to see the Panchen he was a little unwell at the time—and more in that vein. But eventually it was agreed that he would visit the Panchen at his seat of Tashi-

lhunpo. The lama rode out to welcome him at a place called Dablung, but it is a sign of their growing distance that they took separate routes from there to reach Tashilhunpo, the Panchen arriving on the fifteenth of the sixth month and the Dalai five days later. Upon arrival he took up quarters in a mansion in the adjoining town of Shigatse.

What followed was an utter disaster in the eyes of everyone except presumably, the Dalai Lama himself. The Panchen Lama entreated him again and again to devote himself wholly to religion, to occupy the throne at Tashilhunpo while he was there, which was rightly his, to attend a recitation of prayers for his long life, in short to behave as all his predecessors had done. Above all he should take the full vows of a monk. Saying all this the Panchen even made three prostrations on the ground before his disciple, but to no avail. The Dalai Lama for his part made his own prostrations while reciting the formula: "I confess my breaking the lama's commands", but he would agree to none of the entreaties. Far worse, he made it known that he wanted to give up the minor vows of a novice monk which the Panchen had administered to him at Nangkartse. His resolve in this was so firm that he said if his renunciation of the vows was not accepted he would commit suicide while facing in the direction of the Panchen's monastery at Tashilhunpo. Whether or not he meant it, this was the most dreadful threat imaginable.¹²⁸

The Panchen consulted with the high delegation sent by the regent to help in the crisis. It consisted of the Demo and Sempa incarnations, the nobleman Taktsepa, Lajang of the Khoshuuds and the head teachers and stewards of Sera and Drepung. They all added their voice to the Panchen's, both singly and in a group, "...but nothing happened except that his replies became weaker and weaker". Eventually there was nothing for it but to accept the return of his vows. They tried to persuade him at least not to change to lay dress and to agree before long to take the "middling vows" between those of a novice and a fully ordained monk, and in that manner "turn the wheel of the doctrine". But it was no good. He was quite adamant. The disconsolate Panchen made a report to the regent and after seventeen days at Shigatse the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa.¹²⁹

The whole episode is the first evidence of the Dalai Lama

actually taking a decision for himself, asserting his own will—and with a vengeance. Did he thereby reveal a quality of real courage in standing up to the enormous weight of official disapproval? Or does it show him weak, unable to control his selfish whims in the interests of the Tibetan state? Or does the truth lie perhaps in some complex combination of these alternatives? We shall never be sure because the sources are silent about his inner motivation, merely saying that his actions were difficult to fathom—difficult because his behaviour did not appear to be that of the incarnation of Avalokiteśvara he was known to be. What is quite sure is that the youth was now totally determined to win the freedom he had never enjoyed.

Though he had given up his monastic vows there was no question but that he was still the Dalai Lama.¹³⁰ He continued to live in the Potala but adopted the dress of a layman, wore rings on his fingers and kept his hair long. His particular delight was archery. Most days he was to be found playing with his friends on a field behind the Potala. He also went off on short journeys “according to his will”, and these took him to the vicinities of Ölkha, Chongye, Gongkar and other places. These scenes convey the image of a free-roving spirit breaking out from long confinement, and it is one which finds particular confirmation in the account of his nocturnal activities. He spent his nights with the girls of his choice in the town of Lhasa and in the Shöl village at the foot of the Potala. It is for these amorous activities that he is best remembered by posterity. The love songs attributed to him, which are discussed below, played on the imagination of the Tibetans for all time.¹³¹ And before their eyes there remained the physical evidence for this Dalai Lama’s love life, since the houses he is supposed to have visited were all painted yellow as a mark of the great honour conferred on them. That at least was the traditional explanation given for the fact that some houses were painted yellow instead of the usual white. The only girl actually identified as one of his lovers was the daughter of no less a person than the regent himself, who is even said to have encouraged the liaison.¹³² However, that seems unlikely considering how much trouble his protégé’s unconventional behaviour caused him. The songs are addressed equally to “the daughter of a great noble” and “the girl of the market”, but most of the objects of his affection are

not socially characterized. Was it merely a question of indulging a long-suppressed physical need and curiosity? Or were his attachments true affairs of the heart? At least one song is clear on this question:¹³³

When he resides in the Potala
He is the *Vidyādhara* Tsangyang Gyamtso.
When he stays in the Shöl district of Lhasa
He is the fornicator Dangzang Wangpo.

But this looks very much like one of those street songs of Lhasa which the ladies used to sing against members of the élite who had stepped beyond the bounds of acceptable behaviour.¹³⁴ The following item too is a typical example of social criticism expressed in song:¹³⁵

The cloud fringed with yellow but black within
Is the source of frost and hail.
The priest who is neither monk nor layman
Is the enemy of the Buddha's teachings.

It is difficult to accept the attribution of these two to Tsangyang Gyamtso, unless perhaps he was indulging in a wry form of ironical self-criticism by turning the genre of the street song against himself. There is another possibility, namely that *all* the songs were composed by anonymous songsters trying to recapture the emotions they imagined this Dalai Lama would have felt while pursuing his love affairs. According to this interpretation, these would have been collected later to form the basis of the first blockprint edition, which may belong to the later eighteenth century.¹³⁶ However if that were the case one would expect to find a very substantial number in the collection containing overt allusions to the Dalai Lama's situation. Instead by far the greater number of the sixty-six songs so far attributed to him deal with those universal qualities of requited or unrequited love to be found in such songs the world over. Apart from the two given above, there are only eight others which could be taken to speak directly to the predicament of the Dalai Lama. The first five do this by contrasting his religious obligations with the temptations of love. Interestingly, the first four of these follow each other in the collection to make a separate group of their own. There is a real delicacy of sentiment here to be contrasted with the picture of

rather frantic lust given in the first song above:¹³⁷

If the girl to whom my heart has gone won't stay
 But departs for the sake of holy religion
 Then neither shall I the youth remain
 But leave to wander amid mountain retreats.

* * *

As I went to beg counsels of the mind
 From a lama with all the right signs
 My attention could not hold
 But slipped off to the loved one.

* * *

The lama's face I contemplate
 Will not appear in my heart
 But the un contemplated face of the loved one
 Shines again and again in my heart.

* * *

If my mind could move to religion
 As it always goes to her
 Then in just one life and one body
 I would attain buddhahood.

* * *

If I acquiesce to the wishes of the fine lady
 This life's share of religion will be wasted.
 But if I wander off to lonely mountain retreats
 It will break the girl's heart.

The next three songs seem to carry overt allusions to the Dalai Lama as he stole away from the Potala on his nocturnal escapades:¹³⁸

The old watchdog called Ja'u
 Has a mind sharper than a human's.
 Don't tell them: "He left at dusk!"
 Don't tell them: "He returned at dawn!"

* * *

As I searched for my beloved at dusk
 The snow was falling heavily.
 There was no question of secrecy
 Since my footprints were left in the snow.

For what the people say of me
I promise to beg forgiveness
But all I took was three wee steps
That landed me in the home of my hostess.

In the whole collection just three images can be found alluding to the general area where Tsangyang Gyamtso was born: “a [bamboo] bow of the south”, “the cuckoo coming from Mön”, and “the forests of the southern ravine country”.¹³⁹ But then we also find “the glacial streams of Dakpa Sheri”, “the peacock of eastern India” and “the parrot of central Kongpo”.¹⁴⁰ The phrases with southerly connotations may be just general poetic images current at the time and therefore carry no specific allusion to Tsangyang Gyamtso.

There is at least one independent contemporary account which confirms his singing of songs. During one of his travels he was met by Lelung Jedrung Lobsang Thrinley, who recorded in his autobiography how he found the Dalai Lama in a house at a village called Tsatingkha, surrounded by attendants who were very drunk and behaving badly. Also present were Ngawang Rinchen, who had succeeded his father Sangye Gyamtso as regent, the Demo incarnation and others. They too were so drunk they could not stand up but leaned against each other in a complete stupor. The only one who was not in that condition was the Dalai Lama himself. Lelung said that on this occasion he “gave counsels, wrote compositions and sang songs without error, being not in the least bit altered [by the effect of alcohol]”.¹⁴¹

Lelung had first met the Dalai Lama when, as a child, he was brought to him in the Potala to receive his monastic name on the occasion of his tonsure. When the Dalai Lama finally turned up for the appointment he was in a hurry to be off and play archery behind the Potala with his friends, who were wearing all manner of strange clothes. With real mischief he told his major-domo jokingly that he was going to give the young Lelung incarnation the humorous name of “The Nun *Tingting Drölma*”.¹⁴²

Lelung gives us a final glimpse of the Dalai Lama in the words of the man who was responsible for his downfall, Lajang Khan. Some years after the Dalai Lama’s death, Lelung and Lajang met at the hot springs of Ölkha. During the long conversations

they had there over several days the Khan fell to talking about the former Dalai Lama whom he had overthrown: "That *Gongsa Tsangyang Gyamtso* had a wonderful charm, quite unlike ordinary people. He was tremendously bold, very different from the present Dalai Lama. He knew he was destined not to live beyond the age of twenty-five." The khan was thoroughly remorseful for causing his downfall.¹⁴³

The same adjective "bold" (*brtul-zhugs*) used by Lajang is found applied to Tsangyang Gyamtso in other writings of the period and later.¹⁴⁴ The word has no pejorative overtones and is most often used to describe the unconventional behaviour of yogins who act with courageous resolve on the difficult path to enlightenment. Its occurrence in the literature was probably one of the factors which later gave rise to the notion that Tsangyang Gyamtso was indeed a secret yogin and that his amorous exploits can really be explained in terms of his practice of sexual yoga. The idea is still current today,¹⁴⁵ but it can be safely discounted as an attempt at pious justification for there is nothing in the literature to support this view. Particular weight, however, has been placed on the report to the emperor K'ang-hsi by the Manchu general Funingga in which the Dalai Lama is portrayed engaging in rites of sacrilege and debauchery which he had inherited from his ancestor Pemalingpa.¹⁴⁶ But this was no more than a piece of political propaganda put out by Lajang Khan in his attempt to win all power to himself by undermining the role of the Dalai Lama with the help of the Manchu emperor. A reference to the "white caps" in the general's letter has even been seized upon as possible evidence of "Manichaeian infiltration into the Nyingmapa doctrine", but the suggestion need not detain us.¹⁴⁷ Tsangyang Gyamtso's love for the ladies was all too human. He appears to have been a bold and honest rebel who would surely have laughed at such attempts to explain his behaviour, whether aimed at discrediting him or doing him honour. Chastity was certainly not his virtue, but neither was he a drunken profligate if Lelung's dispassionate account is to be believed. Moreover, although the value of the songs' evidence is yet to be properly established, they reveal him as a person of the finest sensitivity.

Much of the trouble was blamed on his keeping bad company.

Even before he arrived in Lhasa the regent had appointed some of the sons and nephews of the nobility to act as his personal attendants.¹⁴⁸ These were all young laymen wise in the ways of the world who had a lot to teach the inexperienced Dalai Lama. Even some of the monks may have had a hand in leading him astray, particularly the Demo incarnation. That person seems to have been blamed by his own lama, the abbot of the Gomang college, for advising Tsangyang Gyamtso how to give up his vows to the Panchen, and he was certainly one of the group of intoxicated hangers-on whose behaviour caused Lelung such a shock.¹⁴⁹ The regent himself is sometimes blamed for introducing the Dalai Lama to the pleasures of the world,¹⁵⁰ but that seems unlikely in view of his implication in a plot to do away with a young nobleman called Thargyené. This person had come to be regarded as the very worst influence on the Dalai Lama, and a group of minor officials, with the active connivance of the regent, decided to eliminate him as he returned with the Dalai Lama from archery one evening. But the plot misfired because the lama and his friends seem to have been in the habit of exchanging clothes out of a sense of fun. On this occasion, the Dalai Lama had put on the clothes of the servant of Thargyeney, Thargyeney had put on those of the Dalai, and the servant had put on his master's. (This is an interesting example of role reversal, comparable to the one enacted during the ambivalent time of the Agricultural New Year in Tibet when masters and servants used to swap clothes.) As they returned in the gathering darkness, singing songs according to the account, the assassins struck, killing the servant instead of his master. When they realized their mistake they knifed Thargyeney too, but he survived. Tsangyang Gyamtso was determined to find and punish the plotters. He consulted the Lamo oracle, who presented him with an arrow decorated with silk of five colours and a bamboo pen. The clues were thought to be obvious pointers to the "arrow-captain" Gachakpa, the secretary Tendzin Wangpo, and one Apho Ngadzompa (the second part of whose name means "He in whom five are conjoined"). They all suffered execution. The regent somehow managed to escape direct blame, but the Dalai Lama's relations with him now went into steady decline.¹⁵¹

In 1703 the regent handed over his position to his son Ngawang Rinchen. However, he retained all power in his own hands and it is clear that the transfer to his son was only a formal gesture intended to appease several groups no longer satisfied with his rule. In particular the growing criticism of the Dalai Lama's behaviour came to focus on the man who had been responsible for elevating him, though none denied the youth's authenticity as the Dalai Lama. The regent had taken pains to influence the opinion of the great and powerful monasteries, to steer them away from voicing open disapproval of the lama, and he seems to have been partly successful in this. His resignation may have been precipitated by the sudden rise to power of the last of the Khoshuud "kings" of Tibet, Lajang Khan, who in the same year of 1703 succeeded his brother Wangyal whom he had poisoned to death. Lajang was determined to revitalize the Khoshuud supremacy over Tibet introduced by his great-grandfather and which had by now sunk to the level of a ceremonial fiction. The violent clash that was about to occur between the new "king" and the old regent who had ruled Tibet almost single-handed for nearly a quarter of a century has all the appearance of inevitability. The fate of the Dalai Lama was entirely determined by the outcome of their struggle.¹⁵²

The regent first tried to poison Lajang, but he was unsuccessful and the plot was discovered. By 1705 their relations were so bad that a great council was convened during the New Year in the temple where the remains of the Great Fifth were enshrined in the Potala. Tsangyang Gyamtso himself supervised the proceedings, though his role in the negotiations is not known. Sangye Gyamtso first tried to gather support for another plot to kill Lajang, but he was opposed by the monks. Under pressure from the Lamo oracle, the representative of the Panchen Lama, the abbots of the great monasteries, certain Mongol princes and others, it was finally decided that the two main contestants should retire from the political stage. Sangye Gyamtso was to divest himself of all power and receive the estate of Gongkar, while his son Ngawang Rinchen would now continue as regent in more than name. Lajang would retain the title of "king of Tibet" and all his privileges but retire to the Khoshuud homelands in the Kokonor region.¹⁵³

Lajang, it has been claimed, was quickly moved to reject the agreement, having first agreed to it, because he had learnt of the ex-regent's first proposal to the council that he should be killed. It has also been suggested that Thargyené, the Dalai Lama's companion whom the regent had tried to have assassinated, forged a letter from the Dalai Lama commanding Lajang to attack the regent.¹⁵⁴ At all events Lajang gathered his troops in the Nakchukha region and moved south again in three columns towards Lhasa where the ex-regent had concentrated his troops. The defenders were totally routed and four hundred of their number were slaughtered. Sangye Gyamtso agreed to a full surrender and was exiled to Gongkar. At this point one of Lajang's wives who was acting as a commander of the Khoshuud troops and who harboured a deep grudge against the ex-regent saw a chance to wreak her revenge. According to one account this lady, Tsering Tashi, had been the stake in a game of chess between Lajang and the regent.¹⁵⁵ Lajang had won. She had presumably suffered some insult at the hands of the regent, for she now had him taken from Gongkar and brought to her camp at Tölung. The Dalai Lama rightly suspected she planned to kill him and sent a delegation of monks from Drepung to try to intervene. Though he had little cause by this date to feel much affection for the old regent, it reflects well on Tsangyang Gyamtso's character that he did his best to save the life of the man who had made him. But by the time the monks got to Tölung it was too late. Sangye Gyamtso's decapitated body was still warm when the Gomang abbot arrived.¹⁵⁶

All power now came into Lajang's hands. To prevent the possibility of future retaliation from members of Sangye Gyamtso's family he had them sent to Peking and from there they were exiled to Dolonnor in the Chahar region of Mongolia. Four unnamed sons of the dead regent turned up at Kumbum in 1716 and 1719 on visits to the Seventh Dalai Lama.¹⁵⁷ One son, Makzor Tsering, lost his life soon after his father.¹⁵⁸ Lajang also took strong measures against others who had opposed him, with executions, floggings and imprisonments.

The only remaining obstacle to his complete triumph lay in the person of the Dalai Lama himself. As long as Tsangyang Gyamtso continued to occupy the throne, even in the robes of

a layman and in the face of strong criticism of his behaviour, Lajang's secular authority could be undermined by the lama's superior spiritual standing. For all his apparent faults, the young man continued to receive massive popular support. Lajang had got to know him well soon after his enthronement in the Potala, even attending on him sometimes in the capacity of a superior kind of page.¹⁵⁹ As we have seen, he had been a key figure in the mission that had tried to dissuade the Dalai Lama from renouncing his vows. Whether as an act of political expediency or because he had by now genuinely come to believe that the Dalai Lama was spurious (more likely he succeeded in convincing himself of the latter to justify his actions), he decided to contrive a situation that would lead to his deposition.

For this it was essential that he first obtain the full backing of the Chinese emperor, who alone had the power to enable him to withstand the potentially disastrous effect of such an unpopular move. The Khoshuud had already accepted Manchu suzerainty seven years earlier, and the act of submission automatically brought their own fiefdom of Tibet within the purview of the Chinese empire.¹⁶⁰ For his part the emperor K'ang-hsi was anxious to secure strong influence in Tibet since this would enable him to manipulate the control exercised by the Tibetan church over his own enemies, the Dzungars. In Lajang he found the necessary tool to achieve this aim and so he readily agreed to support him in the action proposed against the Dalai Lama. In the emperor's view the solution was simple: the Dalai Lama should be arrested and sent to Peking, where his fate could be decided on arrival.

Lajang, however, knew he did not have sufficient local support to do this without causing an uprising. Arming himself with certain pronouncements of the Lamo oracle which he thought would endorse the proposed action, he convened a meeting of the leading abbots to try and win their consent to the deposition. All they would agree too, however, was a statement that "the spiritual enlightenment (*bodhi*) no longer dwelt in him (the Dalai Lama)". But that was sufficient for Lajang. The Dalai Lama was taken out from the Potala and detained at the Lhalu Gatsel park in Lhasa. He was surrounded by Khoshuud troops to prevent a large and loyal crowd of monks and laymen

from approaching him. Six days later, on the seventeenth of the fifth month of 1706, Lajang Khan made a public declaration that Tsangyang Gyamtso was not the true incarnation of the Great Fifth. His deposition was complete.¹⁶¹

As he was being led off on that same day towards China, the monks of Drepung with great courage rescued him from the hands of the Khoshuud escort. They took him to his summer palace, which lay within the precincts of their own monastery. On the following day the Nechung oracle was possessed by the protective deity Dorje Drakden and asked by the monks whether the Dalai Lama was legitimate or not. The oracle replied: "If he is not the incarnation of the Omniscient Fifth, may I the bodiless demon have my head split!" Some of the Mongolian monks at Drepung were quick to pour scorn on this, pointing out that a bodiless demon need have no fear of suffering that particular fate. However, the community as a whole took the pronouncement as definite confirmation they had right on their side. They were more than ever determined to prevent the forcible removal of their ruler to China. (One is inevitably reminded how a massive and popular revolt in Lhasa was sparked off more than two and a half centuries later by precisely the same fears. It was believed the Chinese were again on the point of removing the Dalai Lama to Peking.) Now under Lajang's direct command the Khoshuud troops began firing cannons at the rear of the summer palace while from other directions some of his men attacked the poorly armed monks within. Tsangyang Gyamsto then showed his courage in quite unmistakable fashion. He saw that a wholesale slaughter was about to occur if he did not prevent it by his own surrender. One account holds that as he was about to give himself up he said to those around him: "It's no matter if I live or die. I'll meet my lamas and monks again soon [in my next life]." He left the palace with just a few companions, all of whom are said to have been killed to the last man. Then he allowed himself to be taken off by the victorious Khoshuud.¹⁶²

The fullest account of what followed is provided by the biographer of the Seventh Dalai Lama. He begins his narrative by commenting on the incident which had just occurred: "He clearly acted with a greater love for others than for himself;

also on the route [he was now forced to take], while cultivating the ‘mind of enlightenment’ (*bodhicitta*) he read and pondered a great deal on the precepts which speak of how to turn evil circumstances to profit on the path to liberation, and he put them into practice.”¹⁶³ Was the “libertine”, if one accepts that label at all, really now turning to a truly spiritual path? Or is this another example of pious hindsight? There seems to be insufficient cause to decide either way and the man remains as elusive as ever. But the writer also says Tsangyang Gyamtso went out of his way to receive teachings from the abbot of Phabongkha while on this journey. He further describes a scene at the hot springs of a place called Sangtologo where the party stopped for a time. There the Dalai Lama took to sitting on a boulder every day and giving many “mindful discourses” while facing eastwards, the direction where his next rebirth was to take place.

On arrival at the northern district of Dam he fell sick. Though the illness gradually got worse he was forced to go on. In this condition one day he said to his major-domo, Ngawang Palbar: “Don’t lose the scrolls containing my unfinished writings. You must return them to me later.” This was thought to be a sign that he would now die and be quickly reborn, but the interesting point is that this might just possibly be a reference to his secular songs. Despite his sickness he gave audiences and blessings to many tens of thousands of people who came to greet him along the way. One day when a chief called Yangching Batur came to receive him he was so sure of his approaching death he insisted that the skyfarers had come to fetch him to heaven. Finally on reaching the small lake of Kunganor, which lies south of the great Kokonor, his sickness was such that when his escort insisted he should continue he told them: “You won’t cross this place except by passing over my bones.” He left instructions that after death all his possessions and sacred objects brought with him on this journey were to be handed over without fail to his next incarnation. The emissaries seem to have been convinced he was really going to die and so the whole group was allowed to stop at the lakeside. His personal attendants included another major-domo called Lodrö Wangchuk, a Mongolian called Nyima, and a physician called Sangye Sidrub. They all

prayed for his recovery but it was clear that his end was close. Finally he bade them cease their repeated entreaties that he should find a quick rebirth with the words: "There's no need for a lot of talk when one's about to die. Just bear in mind those things I've kept saying to you before and all will be well." These blunt but kindly words ring true, surrounded as they are by so much else that is panegyric. The actual moment of death is said to have come while he was reciting the mantra of Avalokiteśvara.

According to the Chinese records the death took place on the tenth day of the tenth month (14 November) 1706.¹⁶⁴ The Tibetan account explains carefully that the body was then taken to the provincial capital of Ziling (Hsining) just east of Kokonor. Before its cremation in that place a large number of people came to do it honour over several days. Two months later a lama called Chana Dorje, who was often employed by the emperor as an intermediary between the Chinese and Tibetan courts, arrived in Peking and reported the death of the Dalai Lama. In a rather uncharacteristic act of meanness, K'ang-hsi commanded that the corpse should be discarded in a deliberate act of insult and desecration.¹⁶⁵ But the smoke from the funeral pyre had long since wafted in the direction of Lithang. There the Seventh Dalai Lama was born twenty-two months later.¹⁶⁶

The Secret Life

Half a century later a Mongolian monk from a monastery in the Alashan desert, south of the great Gobi, wrote a work he called *The Biography of the Omniscient Ngawang Chödrak Pelzangpo, [Containing] a Melodious Discourse on his Most Excellent Acts of Virtue [Entitled] A Tune from the Cords of the Divine Lute*.¹⁶⁷ The short title given in the margin of each folio of the blockprint edition of this work is "The Secret Biography of Tsangyang Gyamtso". In brief, the author tells a story of how the Sixth Dalai Lama did not die at Kunganor in 1706 at all. He left his escort there and assuming a disguise he began a secret life as a wandering pilgrim. His journeys took him to eastern, central and south-eastern Tibet, also to China,

Nepal, India and his own home in Mönkyul. He experienced all kinds of adventures on these travels, many of a miraculous nature, and all are carefully dated. Later in life he came to the north-east, where he continued to move in the area of Amdo, Mongolia and Alashan. He was appointed abbot of several monasteries in the Pari region of Amdo, notably one called Jakrung. He died there in 1746 and his corpse was mummified. Right up to his death he concealed his true identity from all but a few of his closest disciples and these he swore to secrecy. However, on several occasions he was recognized by people who had known him in his earlier life in Lhasa. Much of the narrative was copied down directly from an account written by the lama on a scroll that came into the possession of the author, who was himself the lama's close disciple, and so a good deal of the story is narrated in the first person.

It is beyond doubt one of the most extraordinary tales in the long repertoire of Tibetan mysteries, not only because it relates to the much loved Sixth Dalai Lama but also because it conveys, at first sight, a strong impression of circumstantial and emotional plausibility. It has been accepted without question by the Tibetan authorities in their present Indian exile to the extent that the work has been included in the official collection of the lives of all the Dalai Lamas published in 1977 under the auspices of the Private Office of the Dalai Lama.¹⁶⁸ As such it is required reading throughout the educational establishments run by the Tibetan government in exile.

If the testimony of the text is thus accepted, one is faced with a most peculiar situation where two Dalai Lamas lived at the same time: the lives of the Sixth and Seventh are seen to overlap by a total of thirty-eight years. The Tibetan authorities seem to be content to ignore the potential threat which this poses to the whole concept of incarnation and to the institution of the Dalai Lama in particular. One can only assume that they accept the explanation put forward by the original author in his opening verses, namely that while the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara:

Eternally disports himself in the sphere of the
dharmakāya which is beyond visualization,
He transforms himself into the manifold and
magical dance

Of countless beings in innumerable worlds.¹⁶⁹

In brief, he has the ability to incarnate himself in several bodies at the same time. So the simultaneous appearance of two Dalai Lamas, even two born at different dates, far from undermining the concept of incarnation serves instead to demonstrate its universal truth and power. However, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, who may have read the secret biography, was very critical of his predecessor's habit of jumping from body to body. In a conversation with Sir Charles Bell he once said that Tsangyang Gyamtso "used to have his body in several places at the same time, e.g. in Lhasa, in Kongpo (a province seven days' journey east of Lhasa), and elsewhere. Even the place whence he retired to the Honourable Fields (i.e. died) is uncertain; one tomb of his is in Alashan in Mongolia, while there is another in the Rice Heap monastery [Drepung]. Showing many bodies at the same time is disallowed in all the sects of our religion because it causes confusion in the work."¹⁷⁰ (It causes confusion in the work of modern historians too, as we shall see!) Another of Bell's Tibetan acquaintances even used the notion of multiple transformation to account for Tsangyang Gyamtso's nocturnal escapades while he was still in Lhasa: "His own body used to be in the Potala Palace, while a secondary body used to roam about, drink wine, and keep women."¹⁷¹ Once the idea is accepted, the possibilities are endless and not without humorous potential.

There has been a tendency among several scholars in recent years either to believe the whole story or to reserve judgement upon it. A few have expressed tentative scepticism. Only one scholar, a Tibetan living close to the area where the lama is said to have died in Amdo, has recently tried to show the story is false. To accept that the Dalai Lama survived the "official" death in 1706 does not of course require the belief that he lived on in two bodies, so a respectably rational approach can still be maintained.

The work which has addressed the problem most directly in English is the 1979 study by Klafkowski, which he based not on the original text of the secret life (already available by then in the facsimile reprint of 1970), but instead on a brief synopsis contained in the *Hor chos-'byung* of 1889 by Dharmatāla.¹⁷² Although Klafkowski puts the case both for and against believing this summary while trying to avoid passing final judgement,

his own susceptibility to its power is quite evident.¹⁷³ His study had been preceded by two works, one by a Russian and the other by a Mongolian, which gave full credence to the story but made no attempt to substantiate its evidence.¹⁷⁴ A very brief version based on just a few elements of the secret biography, but without disclosing the source, appeared in the popular account of traditional Tibetan life written by the present Dalai Lama's brother in collaboration with an English author.¹⁷⁵ Here the incidents recounted are again told as fact and not fiction. The better of the two 1981 Chinese editions of the text merely says in its preface that there are two versions of the Dalai Lama's death and withholds judgement.¹⁷⁶ Shakabpa regards the text with some caution and inclines towards disbelief, though he gives no reason.¹⁷⁷ Mark Tatz does not quite dismiss the story in his introduction to the love songs.¹⁷⁸ Heather Stoddard has concentrated on an incident in the secret biography concerning the Dalai Lama's alleged interest in sacred dance, accepting the story at its face value while suspending judgement on the overall truth of the work.¹⁷⁹ Two scholars from Amdo have looked at the whole question and published articles in the first issue of the journal of the North-Eastern Institute for National Minorities at Hsining.¹⁸⁰ Dorshi Dongdruk Nyemlo is clearly in favour of the whole secret tradition, though he does not say why, but Döndrup Tsering has argued against it. He points to the inherent conflict in the two accounts of why Tsangyang Gyamtso was taken off towards China. He explains that the assumption of an abbot's throne in Amdo does not align with the earlier renunciation of monastic vows. And he uses a crucial passage in the history of the Amdo monasteries by Könchok Tenpa Rabgye to suggest that the lama who is claimed to be the Sixth Dalai Lama may have been confused with another lama called Ngawang Chödrak Gyamtso. I shall try to show that this is the most convincing line, but I modify these arguments by showing that the lama in question actually sought to impersonate the dead Dalai Lama.

Firstly it is necessary to look carefully at the text, its authorship and dissemination. The author identifies himself in the colophon as the monk Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye bearing the title *Arilugsan Erdeni Nomunqan*, otherwise known as *Lhatsün*

Ngawang Dorje. He wrote the work in the monastery of Phendé Gyamtsoling in Alashan (in what is now Inner Mongolia) in the year of the Fire Bull (1757), that is eleven years after the lama's death in 1746.¹⁸¹ His Mongolian title means "Purified and Precious King of the Law", while the Tibetan title of *Lhatsün* is normally reserved for monks of royal descent. In this period when the Manchus were actively cultivating Mongolian church leaders, both forms suggest a degree of imperial recognition to the title-holder's descent from a line of Mongolian rulers. Elsewhere he styles himself *tho-yon*, which renders the Mongolian *toin*, a word used for "lama" in that language, "especially a lama of the rank of *taiji* (i.e. a descendant of the family of Genghis Khan)".¹⁸² Sumpa Khenpo's chronicle, moreover, supplies the useful information that the Mongol tribes of Alashan, also the Töhor (*sTod-hor*) people of Kokonor, were descended from a younger brother of Genghis Khan.¹⁸³ The author of the secret biography actually applies the title of *thaiji* (*the-rje*) to his own father, who was the man first responsible for welcoming the lama posing as the Sixth Dalai Lama to Alashan in 1716.¹⁸⁴ Though, as we shall see, he was not the paramount ruler of the Alashan Mongols, it is clear he was a leading noble and this is corroborated by the little we see of him in the biography, surrounded by his clansmen and "witnesses" (*che-bzhi*). *Toin*, the clerical version of the title *thaiji* as applied to his ordained son (our author), turns up much later in the nineteenth century applied to that son's own incarnation, Jungné Dargye.¹⁸⁵ We can perhaps assume from this that they were born to the same family. The second element "Dargye" in the incarnation's name must have been a conscious allusion to our author's own name, which is given in some works as Dargye Nomunqan, a form I shall adopt myself from here on.¹⁸⁶

He provides a nice account of his own first meeting with the subject of his biography, though it must have been based on what he learnt from his relatives later in life. The lama had arrived in their camp together with a party of "offering collectors" from the Lhasa monasteries of Meru and Zhidé. He had joined the caravan as it set out from Lhasa in the spring of 1716 and arrived in Alashan by way of Hsining in the tenth month of the same year. The party was welcomed to the camp of Dargye

Nomunqan's father, which had been pitched at a place called Tsapurosu (perhaps *Sabar Usu* in Mongolian, "Marsh Water"). It was a time when the whole clan had gathered in the place for what looks like an annual meeting. The lama was accorded a very special welcome and accommodated in the family's shrine-tent. Dargye Nomunqan then says:

At that time I was only two years old, my legs could not support my body and so I crawled over to the lord's lap and stayed there. The lord was very affectionate and would make compassionate noises while rubbing my head and act most lovingly. At that time I urinated on his lap and he declared it to be an extremely good auspice.¹⁸⁷

Apart from this first encounter the author tells us very little about his relationship with the lama. In 1735 the lama sent him to central Tibet to pursue his studies and to procure images, paintings, books, robes and offering lamps. The lama gave him ten thousand silver coins for this purpose and arranged all the horses and camels for his caravan.¹⁸⁸ He returned two years later in 1738 with his shopping list complete.¹⁸⁹ It is not quite clear whether the temple furnishings were needed for the new monastery at Jakrung (in the Pari region of Amdo) or else for an unnamed monastery in Alashan.

The lama used the opportunity presented by his disciple's journey to send a letter to the Panchen Lama requesting him to compose a code of discipline (*bca'-yig*) for Jakrung. The Panchen acceded to the request and sent the code back with a letter and presents.¹⁹⁰ After the "official" death of Tsangyang Gyamtso he had been obliged to give his approval to two further Dalai Lamas: firstly one Pekar Dzinpa, born in 1686, was installed by Lajang in 1707 as the real successor of the Great Fifth (thus replacing Tsangyang Gyamtso who had been declared spurious), and secondly (after the posthumous reinstatement of Tsangyang Gyamtso as the true Sixth) Lobsang Kezang Gyamtso born in Lithang in 1708, was enthroned in 1720 as the Seventh.¹⁹¹ The Panchen Lama had in each case been persuaded to accord his recognition. Now in 1735, two years before his death, it is alleged he entered into friendly correspondence with the Sixth Dalai Lama on the one subject which had divided them all those years ago—monastic discipline. Having installed two of his successors, it is inconceivable that he would have responded to a letter written in the name of Tsangyang Gyamtso. There is

no reason to doubt that a letter *was* sent to him by the hand of Dargye Nomunqan, but it must have been written under another name. I shall return to this problem shortly.

The only other information Dargye Nomunqan supplies on his relationship with the lama comes in the very long passage describing the events which led up to the lama's death in 1746.¹⁹² There we find him as the lama's right-hand man, supervising and taking part in all the rites performed to try and secure his recovery, massaging his feet, being kissed by him, promising to go to Tibet to perform acts of virtue in his memory and assuring the lama he would find his next incarnation and see to his education.

In the last chapter Dargye Nomunqan gives us the names of the lama's ten chief disciples and, in the colophon, the names of three persons who requested him to write the work. The latter also turn up in the preface, with the addition of one other.¹⁹³ At least three of these fourteen monks are known from other sources: Shalupa Lobsang Palden, abbot of Serkhok,¹⁹⁴ Lobsang Tenpai Gyaltzen of Chuzang (1652–1723),¹⁹⁵ and Janakpa Lobsang Tenpai Nyima (b. 1686).¹⁹⁶ Very likely all fourteen persons were historical figures. The circumstances which led Dargye Nomunqan to write the secret biography are best explained in his own words:

To those of pure heart and to his close servitors he would relate many wondrous stories about how he had travelled secretly to many holy places in eastern and central Tibet, India and Nepal, and how he had practised meditation and austerities there—at times joking, at other times laughing while he told these tales in a disjointed manner. He forbade them to relate these to others, and to common folk he would never say anything clear at all. Later in old age Shalupa Lobsang Palden, the abbot of Serkhok, and also the Gongwa Shabdrung who was the lama of Thangring, earnestly entreated him, saying that though there might have been a special need to conceal things for a time, he should now definitely compose a biography concerning his ordinary activities. He did therefore set down in a scroll an account of a few of his wondrous deeds. Later after his death many of his faithful disciples, in particular the Tri Rinpoché Janakpa, insisted that if I were now myself to compose a biography it would not contravene [the wishes of the deceased]. The *Vajradhara* Jampa Rinpoché also said I should write a biography and deliver it to him since he had great faith.¹⁹⁷

He went on to argue that the writing of the life had not been delayed because the lama himself had been “sullied by faults and impurities” but only from force of circumstances, also that the writing was not “a contravention of the norms of religion and state”, and that it would not annoy the Chinese emperor. It was the nature of holy people to conceal their own qualities and broadcast those of others. Many scriptural justifications for the writing of biographies can be found. Moreover, the lama’s reasons for concealing his true life no longer held because they had been aimed solely at protecting the people of Tibet during his own lifetime and at nothing else. The time had not then been ripe for disclosing his real identity, but all that had changed:

So calling to witness the law of karmic fruition and with a resolve of pure faith I devote myself now to writing by bringing together in one place what the holy lama himself related about his life as recorded on the scroll with what I myself witnessed in my own sight and heard from his own mouth and so came to believe.¹⁹⁸

Before turning to the internal evidence of the text itself and to what can be brought in to illuminate it from other sources, the printer’s colophon is also worthy of notice.¹⁹⁹ It takes the form, firstly, of a verse in which the person who acted as patron for the carving of the blocks identifies himself as “Gyurmé Gyamtso, noble of the house of Trethong, Arrow-Officer of Tsang”. The writer of the verse signs himself as “the indolent Jamyang Chökyi Gyaltzen”. A final two lines of verse explain that the blocks are kept in Lhasa at a house called Dargye Rabtenling, the home of the Trethong family. This is quite sufficient to allow us to recognize the man who inspired the only published edition of this work in the old Tibet.²⁰⁰ The Trethong family is a noble family whose best known scion was the Gyurmé Gyamtso mentioned here. In 1913 he was appointed Arrow-Officer of Tsang and posted to the Kham region of eastern Tibet where he had charge of the Dergé district. He was steadily promoted through a succession of offices in Kham until he was finally recalled in 1935, having held the post of full minister there since 1932. In between he made several visits to his home in Lhasa. He appears to have held the post of Arrow-Officer of Tsang in the years 1913–23 during his first mission to Kham. During

this period he must have come across a manuscript of the secret biography. The style of the block carving may prove to be that of Dergé itself, a great centre of traditional printing, and “the indolent Jamyang Chökyi Gyaltzen” was perhaps a Dergé monk. The final information that the blocks were stored at the home of the Trethong family could have been added by a different carver after Gyurmé Gyamtso had deposited them there on one of his return trips to Lhasa. There was sufficient space on the last folio to do this.²⁰¹ His grandson is the present Dalai Lama’s private secretary. He has not so far been able to supply me with any additional information on the history of this edition.

It is clear, then, that for approximately a hundred and eighty years the work circulated in manuscript before it was privately published in Lhasa this century. Two very well-known historians of the nineteenth century had access to hand copies and made full use of them in their own works, though in very different ways. Dharmatāla in 1889 gave the secret life pride of place in his chronicle, obviously believing the whole story and accepting without question that the lama who claimed to be the Sixth was no one else. It is his synopsis of the life which has been studied by Klafkowski.²⁰² But Dharmatāla had been preceded by Könchok Tenpa Rabgye who, in the enlarged 1849 version of his history of the Gelukpa monasteries of Amdo, credits the whole story not to the Sixth Dalai Lama at all but rather to a lama he names “Lobsang Rinchen Chödrak Gyamtso of Dakpo, the *Kundröl Gongma*”—that is, a person having this four-part name who came originally from the region of Dakpo (east of Yarlung and south of the Tsangpo River) and who was the first of a line of recognized reincarnations called Kundröl.²⁰³

Könchok Tenpa Rabgye knew very well that this lama claimed to be the Sixth Dalai Lama because in the list of sources given at the start of his chronicle we find mention of “Dargye Nomunqan’s biography of Tsangyang(pa) [Gyamtso]”.²⁰⁴ But when it came to actually using that work he makes no mention of the Dalai Lama at all, he omits all the “international” adventures which are supposed to have preceded the lama’s arrival in Amdo, and he treats the lama only as the abbot of Jakrung and nothing else. But from where did he get the name he applies to

the lama? The four parts of the name are elsewhere found only in the opening verse of the secret life, but shorn of title and place-name. They obviously combine the first two elements from the real name of the Sixth Dalai Lama with the two central elements of the name applied to his impersonator in the title, preface and colophon of the secret life. It seems to be a device aimed at bringing together the two identities in one person. To make this clearer, the three separate names involved here are set out in Table 2 together with their sources. What emerges is that

TABLE 2

The Names of the Sixth Dalai Lama
and his Impersonator

- 1 : Lobsang Rinchen Tsangyang Gyamtso
 - 2 : Lobsang Rinchen Chödrak Gyamtso
 - 3 : Ngawang Chödrak Gyamtso Pelzangpo
-
- 1 : Name of the Sixth Dalai Lama: THCKH, *passim*.
 - 2 : Combined name of the Sixth Dalai Lama and his impersonator: LHTBR, opening verse; DTHGY, i, fo. 156a (where the name is preceded by the title *Kundröl Gongma, Dakpo* ("The First of the Kundröl [Incarnations who came from] Dakpo")).
 - 3 : The impersonator's actual name: LHTBR, title (omits "Gyamtso"), preface, colophon; DTHGY, i, fo. 155a (preceded by the title *Kundröl Rinpoché*).

the impersonator's real name seems to have been Ngawang Chödrak Gyamtso (Pelzangpo at the end can be dropped as it is only an honorific). This is confirmed in a passage of the chronicle by Könchok Tenpa Rabgye which immediately precedes his treatment of the Jakrung abbots. There he cites the blockprint of a work called the *dKar-chag pad-dkar ljon-bzang* written by "Ngawang Chödrak Gyamtso, the *Kundröl Rinpoché*".²⁰⁵ This work, he explains, contains the lama's visionary account of the origin of a famous image of Vajradhara kept at the monastery of Taitung. Although the lama's activities at Taitung are the subject of a passage in the secret life (he occupied the abbot's throne there also and introduced a festival dedicated to Vajradhara), his writing of this work is not mentioned.²⁰⁶ Dorshi Dongdruk Nyemlo gives the impression of having had

access to a surviving copy.²⁰⁷ There seems every reason to believe that the lama signed it with his own name. It is the one which, according to the preface of the secret life, he “acquired again” (*slar sbyar-ba'i mtshan*) after using the name of Jigme Dorje Sheja Künkhyen during “the period of obstruction” (*dgag-bya'i dus-bstun-gyi mtshan*).²⁰⁸ This seems to refer to the common practice of taking on a new name during a period of danger forecast in a horoscope. The name occurs also in the regent's account of Tsangyang Gyamtso's early life.²⁰⁹

Struggling somewhat wearily out of this tortuous maze of assumed or fictitious names we are still left with one that appears to fit: Ngawang Chödrak Gyamtso. That we are able to win this little prize at all suggests that the lama did not live openly under his assumed identity as the Sixth Dalai Lama. To those he entrusted with his secret he would pretend his real name was just a front. It is of course also possible he even invented this one as front. As it is, we know that when it suited him he could be thoroughly reticent on anything to do with his name and identity. Dargye Nomunqan tells us:

Moreover he hid all his qualities within himself to the extent of totally concealing the area of his birth and his lineage. Also in regard to his later deeds he adopted a very circumspect attitude, even towards those who had served him a long time and wanted definite information. To those who were not well acquainted with him and who enquired about his birthplace, lineage or age he would say: “I began wandering when I was young and such a long time has now passed that I don't remember my parents or home.” If asked to reveal merely his name he would say: “I have no name.” And when some came pretending to some knowledge of who he was, he would be displeased and scold them saying: “When I myself don't know who I am, how could you possibly know?” . . . Again and again he would block such talk. He absolutely forbade those monks coming from central Tibet who knew him and those old monks of Amdo who had previously seen him from revealing what they knew for a time. And he entrusted [the concealment of his secret] to the guardian deities. Because of his special resolve in this, those who knew about his earlier actions did not dare talk about them till a later time. He himself said: “Don't put a lot of names on me, asserting this and denying that. If you go for too much clarity it's like the simile of the fish in the water [?]. If you supplicate the lama as if his essence were inseparable from a tutelary deity, the blessings of that god will come to you. That is the truth.

You should think to yourselves: ‘The lama seems to be blessed by Ārya Avalokiteśvara’, and if you do so your requests will be granted. That by itself is virtue.”²¹⁰

Reading this passage in isolation it almost appears that the man himself never made a direct claim to be the Sixth Dalai Lama, that the whole notion developed as a result of wild rumours which he tried hard to stop. But when we come to consider some of the “many wondrous stories” which he related to the chosen few, which he recorded in the scroll and from which Dargye Nomunqan makes verbatim quotations, it is clear that he made precisely this claim. It was a dangerous game that required him to operate on several levels at the same time, sometimes making flat denials, at other times sheltering behind a total evasiveness and, when the circumstances were just right, revealing his secret to a few whose discretion he knew he could completely trust. This way the rumours probably continued to grow, but in such a way that his overall safety was ensured. It is also worth bearing in mind that the region he chose to operate in lay very far from central Tibet, where the danger of impersonating the Dalai Lama would have been very much greater. In Amdo and Alashan the real authority lay with the Chinese who would not have been much bothered with rumours of this sort unless they constituted a real threat to the political order. That the lama was involved in a double game, revealing his secret only with perfect timing, will be seen when we consider his relations with his chief Mongolian patron.

While still on the subject of his real name and identity it is worth turning back to the title of *Kundröl Gongma* or *Kundröl Rinpoché* given him in the history of the Amdo monasteries and the way his name there is preceded by the place-name of *Dakpo*. In a passage of the secret life which reproduces a section of the lama’s scroll dealing with the events of 1714, we find the lama arriving in the Dakpo region and residing in the monastery of Dakpo Dratsang: “Staying there secretly for quite a time, I used to be known by the people there as *Dakpo Shabdrung*. If I were to meet those people now they would very likely address me as *Dakpo Shabdrung* or *Dakpo Lama*.”²¹¹ Much later, in 1731, when the new monastery of Jakrung was completed and accorded imperial recognition, Dargye Nomunqan tells us that

the monastery was named in the official “charter” (*tho-this*) as Dakpo Si (“The Monastery of Dakpo”, using the Chinese word for “monastery”). This, he says, was because the name of its founder had been given to the authorities as *Dakpo Lama*.²¹² Would the lama have dared to lie to the Manchu government and provide a false name? The one he did give was vague, but I am inclined to think there is some truth in it and that he may have been a native of Dakpo. This was certainly the official position in Alashan when it later came to recognizing his incarnations. At least two of them were known as the *Dakpo Trulku*, “The Incarnations of Dakpo”. We shall return to them later, but this is the list contained in the chronicle of Könchok Tenpa Rabgye, starting with our impersonator: (1) *Kundröl Gongma*, *Dakpo* Lobsang Rinchen Chökrak Gyamtso, (2) *Dakpo Trulku*, *Kundröl Nomunqan* Lobsang Thubten Gyamtso, (3) *Dakpo Kuthreng Sumpa* (“The Third Dakpo Incarnation”), Lobsang Chödar Gyamtso.²¹³ Perhaps the form *Kundröl* was applied retrospectively to the first in the line because the second incarnation had received the title *Kundröl Nomunqan* from the imperial authorities. That, however, is only speculation.

The structure of Dargye Nomunqan’s work is not complex. The first chapter, “On his Birth and on How he Came to his Seat after Receiving Ordination”, is the shortest and deals in outline with the facts of Tsangyang Gyamtso’s career from 1683 to 1697.²¹⁴ It adds nothing to the picture already depicted above. The second chapter, “On the Austerities and Spiritual Practices He Undertook for the Sake of Others”, covers the years in Lhasa, his education there, the troubles between the regent Sangye Gyamtso and Lajang Khan, the journey the Dalai Lama then had to make towards China, his escape from Kunganor and his life as a wandering pilgrim and meditator in the years 1707–15.²¹⁵ The account depends almost exclusively on the lama’s own first-person narrative contained in the scroll, to which the author adds a few comments of his own. There are several indications which suggest that the author himself took down the lama’s dictation on the scroll. After each quoted passage he inserts one of his own poems, summarizing the events just described and pointing out the moral of the story. The dates provided in this chapter are made up of both animal and

element, whereas in the remainder of the work only the animal is supplied. (See Appendix 2.) The lama, it seems, was anxious to give the appearance of chronological accuracy by supplying both in his own account. Chapter three, “How He Came to Amdo, Worked for the Sake of the Teachings and Beings, and Finally Attained Nirvana”, covers the years from 1716 to 1746.²¹⁶ Here it is only the author who is speaking and we can assume that the narrative contained in the lama’s scroll came to an end with his arrival in Amdo. For what followed the author seems to have depended very largely on what he heard from others, since the only events we can be quite sure he himself took part in and witnessed were, as already noted, the lama’s preparations for sending him to central Tibet in 1735, his return in 1738, and the lama’s death in 1746. But as a close disciple of the lama we can be fairly sure he was present during some of the other events described, even though he does not say so specifically. Chapter four, “Concerning the [Lama’s] Teachings, By Way of an Appendix”, simply lists his disciples, provides further justifications for writing the work, describes the extraordinary powers gained on each of the ten stages of a *bodhisattva*’s career (including the power of producing a hundred bodily emanations), provides what purports to be a logical proof of the life story according to the principles of philosophical logic, and finally a long quotation from a work called *The Questions of Kalandaka*.²¹⁷

On two occasions the author quotes from other “scrolls”, these ones containing a song and a prophecy composed by the lama. The first was taken down by a monk called Tashi who heard the lama sing it in 1716 when he first came to the camp of the author’s father: “At that time the monk Tashi recorded everything about this song in a scroll and wrote it out. I do not know if he checked it over.”²¹⁸ The prophecy was similarly “reproduced directly from the old, original copy, even though there appear to be mistakes in it which have not been corrected.”²¹⁹ A further two prophecies composed in verse by the lama before his death, also one in prose of 1741, are given but without any mention of the circumstances under which they were composed.²²⁰

The Impersonator and his Fictions

Since it is inconceivable that the man was the Sixth Dalai Lama as he and many of his followers claimed, is it really necessary to retell the cock-and-bull story which he and his biographer recorded? Is it not enough to know that the tradition is false? Why should history bother itself with such things when what actually happened in the past is so much more important and worthy of our attention? In justifying this final section on the Sixth Dalai Lama the point has to be made that since his impersonator was firmly believed within his own lifetime (and still is by many) to be the man he said he was, everything known about him went to influence the image of the historical figure. In dealing with that image we approach the perception of the past as it directly influenced people's lives. To that extent we are dealing with history itself. Moreover, the fictions spun by the man for the edification of his audience tend to slide into truth and so at several points we approach "what really happened". The tale is in any case a good one. The thread of the narrative is best picked up after the Dalai Lama has been installed in the Potala Palace and is starting his studies. The following is only a summary.²²¹

Dargye Nomunqan was clearly aware that something went wrong with the Dalai Lama's studies, though the trouble is played down. The regent had appointed as his tutor a monk called Jamyang Drakpa, an historical figure who had been a close attendant of the Great Fifth. The regent threatened this man with all sorts of dire consequences if the young lama did not study properly. The lama told his biographer:

Because at that time I was very young I used not to listen properly when I was being given "authorizations". Instead I would get up and walk around. My guru would stand up . . . and taking the book in his hands he would say: "Please, I beg you not to do this! Please sit and listen to this! If you don't listen, the regent will scold me." He would join his hands together in supplication. And so I'd obey and take my seat. He would sit down before me and deliver the remainder of the authorization. I remember how this happened on several occasions. It was the cause of all sorts of changes in fortune falling on my head later. Saying this he would strike his head with his fist again and again while weeping.

Nevertheless he is said to have received the teachings of all the major schools, and particular mention is made of his studies in philosophical logic, astrology and poetry. The author says about the latter: "Though he clearly studied poetry to great effect, how he did this is not known."

There is a detailed description of the lama recalling his study of sacred dance while he demonstrated certain steps for his students by leaving footprints in the snow. The author remembered how the lama had said to him at a monastery of Poröl²²² that it would be a good idea to introduce there the Gelukpa tradition of "earth dances" (*sa-gar*, which precede the consecration of a *maṇḍala*). When Dargye Nomunqan went to central Tibet to arrange funeral rites for the lama (presumably in 1746 or a bit later) he says he met the Seventh Dalai Lama and discussed with him the revival of the whole tradition, which was then practically extinct. He does not say whether he revealed to the Dalai Lama his own conviction as to the identity of his lama who had just died. It seems most unlikely. (The lama's interest and skill in the tradition of sacred dance is confirmed in several other passages of the biography.)

The troubles between the regent Sangye Gyamtso and Lajang Khan are ascribed vaguely to the "low condition of merit" in Tibet. They resulted in Lajang reporting to the emperor his doubts about the authenticity of the Dalai Lama. The emperor accordingly sent a man to Lhasa who was skilled in recognizing the incarnations of lamas. The Dalai Lama was stripped naked and placed on his throne so that the signs on his body could be properly examined. The man declared he could not tell whether or not he was the incarnation of the Great Fifth but that he was definitely the emanation of Avalokiteśvara. He prostrated before him and returned to Peking. But the troubles increased and the emperor sent two emissaries to try and effect a truce between the regent and the Khoshuud king. Their names were Chana Lama and Ananda.²²³ But it was too late. The regent was killed before their arrival in Lhasa and the waves of civil strife increased. According to this account, Lajang was then possessed by a demon and in this condition spoke all kinds of things to the two emissaries which resulted in the Dalai Lama being taken off to China. The decision is made out to be

entirely that of Lajang. He had received no orders about this from the emperor and was acting entirely on his own initiative. (The year this is supposed to have happened is Fire Pig, 1707, whereas we know the Dalai Lama was escorted off in Fire Dog, 1706.)

When the party escorting the lama arrived at a place called Tölu Tsonak another messenger arrived from the emperor, who had meanwhile heard about Lajang's independent decision to send the Dalai Lama to Peking. In his letter the emperor upbraided Ananda and the other officials in the escort, saying: "How are you thinking of arranging a residence and how are you going to do honour to the lama after bringing him here?". This was interpreted as "a fierce rebuke". The officials heard that their very lives would be in danger when they arrived at Peking with the lama they were escorting there against the emperor's wishes. To save their lives they begged him to go off of his own accord and disappear. He said he had no wish to cause them injury, that it would be better if he himself were to die, and that he would consult the auspices. (This of course is in total conflict with the known course of events. It was certainly the emperor's decision that Tsangyang Gyamtso should be taken to Peking.)

Shortly thereafter the party reached the lake at Kunganor. An old Mongolian called Arpasilang poked his head in at the lama's tent door. Questioned through an interpreter it turned out that his name meant "lion" in Mongolian, denoting "absence of error and fear". The Tibetan form of the lake's name meant "joy to all".²²⁴ This augured well and so the lama made up his mind "to act in an illusory manner in accordance with their wishes". That night he explained his decision to his major-domo, his guestmaster,²²⁵ and to the Chinese officials. In the first watch of the night he dressed himself in two cloaks, one yellow and the other red, a pair of Mongolian boots and a *boktho* hat. He took with him certain relics he always carried on his person, which included the ritual dagger given to him by Terdaklingpa. He spoke final words of counsel to his people, who were weeping profusely, and then he set off quite alone and without further delay in a south-easterly direction.

Immediately a fierce dust storm arose and while stumbling

around in a daze he saw some sparks glittering in the storm. Then a girl appeared in the dress of a nomad. He followed her the whole night and as dawn was breaking she disappeared. The storm abated and everywhere dust had settled. He found himself at a spot between two mountain pastures. Having never before travelled on foot, great blisters had broken out on his feet and he was suffering from a terrible thirst. He was exhausted and “saddened by the perception of impermanence”, but overjoyed at gaining his freedom. He resolved to act as a yogin, to go off on pilgrimage and meditate in order to purify his defilements.

On his way he joined a major route and met up with a group of Arik²²⁶ traders returning from Hsining. Despite his great thirst he did not beg from them, never having done so before in his life. Eventually he was offered tea and, overcoming his aversion at using someone else’s bowl, he drank and found the tea infinitely delicious. The traders were astonished at his dress and appearance: “At that time the people said my body was larger than a human’s and about as big as a god’s.” He was very disturbed by their questions, never having told a lie before, but he managed to invent a story: “I was coming down in a party of Tibetan monks when we were set upon by Golok²²⁷ brigands and scattered.” Everyone was moved by compassion, in particular an old man called Bendéchap who was their chief. As they were loading their pack animals he was asked if he would accompany them. He explained about his blisters, so they brought him a yak to ride. But the rough saddle cut into his thighs. The old man padded it with a woollen robe and everyone took turns leading the animal. It became a matter of great joking: “‘He’s never experienced anything like this before’, they said, laughing compassionately.” He decided he had to do something about his appearance and so he found a monk who agreed to receive his fine red cloak in exchange for his own of yellow serge. This caused even more astonishment in the party. “Being defiled by other people’s bowls and clothing, for many days my mouth and face swelled up and I was sick, but then I recovered.”

The party had to choose between one of two routes to their homeland. The shorter route involved crossing the Machu

river, but it was not known if ice had yet formed to permit this. He was asked if he knew divination to determine the condition of the river. He did not, but nevertheless he went through the motions and declared ice had already formed. Fortunately the result turned out correct and their estimation of him rose accordingly. He attributed his success in this mock divination to the favour of the most powerful of the local gods, Machen Pomra.²²⁸

On arrival at the Arik homelands he was persuaded by the old man Bendéchap to stay in his house for a couple of months. He recited a volume of the *Prajñāpāramitā* in its 8000-verse form for the family and gave them teachings on karmic retribution. They promised not to speak about him to anyone. On leaving he gave them the fine yellow cloak he still had, while the lady of the house gave him boots and a robe stitched from new serge. He also accepted a small quantity of tea, butter and cheese. They all wept as he left and for a day the old man and his son accompanied him on his way: "It was the first time I wore beggar's clothes. I never had kinder patrons than these", he said.

His travels then took him to a community of the Ashul people and from there to a Bönpo monastery where a wealthy man had dreamt of his coming and did him honour. Aiming for the Jang region (in Yunnan, south of Mili) he stopped short in the Gyalmorong and Tsawarong districts. In the former he lived in a cave at the monastery of Kargya: "Because of the kindness of the Triple Gem, a large number of people came forth from round about and provided me with nourishment." The year was 1708.

At Tsawarong, in a village called Dorgé, he was struck by an attack of smallpox. The disease and his sufferings are recounted in a long and detailed passage. For twenty days he struggled for life and eventually recovered to the point where he could leave by the lower end of the valley. Coming to a large black tent he said to a man there: "I've had the smallpox. Do you want to avoid me or not." The old man was not troubled and invited him in to serve him tea, but drinking it he fainted. He was cared for by the family and then taken to a cave to meditate. His host, one Kachuchap, supplied all his wants and the local god made

an appearance to encourage his stay. "At that time I didn't know how to boil tea or broth very well, and so the old man taught me."

That same year his travels took him to Tachienlu. There he joined up with another pilgrim for the journey to the shrine of Langchen (not identified) in China, passing many traders carrying tea and porcelain in bamboo baskets. He managed to lose his companion on the way but he reached the shrine, located on top of a mountain, and spent ten days there: "The Chinese monks were most loving and provided me with sustenance. Then I proceeded to Tibet."

Arriving in the Lithang region he put up at the main monastery (unnamed), but stayed for no more than three days because he was afraid the abbot, who had previously been at the Gomang college of Drepung, would recognize him as the Dalai Lama. He then recorded a story which is a little hard to swallow:

I went on and came to a household where there was a man with no head. I asked his wife and others for an explanation and was told that his head had been cut off . . . and that even after three years he had not died. With limitless pity I went to look. He was beating his chest with his hands and someone told me he did this because he was hungry. Where his neck had been were two holes. From a pot they poured into one of these holes a small quantity of warm and soft barley-flour [mixed with tea]. Bubbles rose up through this and in a little time the food went down to his stomach.

The next story is quite devoid of miracles and much more affecting. Travelling through the Bathang region one day he saw a village close by and went there to beg for food. The place was deserted and on entering a house he found a girl of about twelve and a boy of nine afflicted with smallpox and on the point of death. Their mother lay beside them quite dead. He immediately set about to try and nurse the children back to health, pouring a little broth into their mouths. They fainted again and again, but finally their breath came back stronger. Then he turned to the disposal of their mother's rotting corpse. He performed the funeral rites, managed to put it into a bag and took it off to a distant ravine. After many days spent nursing the children, a man came who said he was their uncle and so he made ready to leave: "But the children wept and clung to me

and wouldn't let me go. I gave them everything I had and in spite of my attachment for them after a few days I left secretly at night."

In the fourth month of the next year (1709) he went by stages to Assam (*Ka-ma-ru*). There he met a tantric priest who insisted on taking him to a large cave where a ritual feast was laid out. The priest blew his thigh-bone trumpet and a great number of people assembled wearing the dress of nomads. The feast was held and afterwards the priest accompanied him some distance on his way. The author comments: "He spoke just a little of how at that time he had a vision of Cakrasaṃvara and about other wondrous things, but he did not enlarge on them." On his return journey he was attacked by four brigands who seized what little he had: "‘Until I reached the border of Tibet I experienced great difficulty’, he said."

Heading for Lhasa, begging and visiting the pilgrim sites on the way, he came to the monastery of Katsel. He met there a young girl who showed him the way to a hermitage on the mountain behind. At dusk she arrived with a pitcher of water, firewood and a little barley flour, promising more when they were finished. She turned out later to be the goddess Yudrönma in disguise. A monk who was the guardian of the temple turned up, recognized the pitcher, accused him of theft and slapped him. But the pitcher broke as he carried it off and he later repented his actions. (The point of this and other such stories seems to be to mix the credible with the incredible: the latter are so closely associated with the former that they too become credible.) The next day the lama of Katsel (not to be confused with the irate guardian) came up to the hermitage:

At that time I spoke the Kham dialect well and so I told him I was a pilgrim who had come from Kham and then I fell silent. He looked at me again and again. Then he took hold of my robe and pulling it with great force, he wept. I said to him: "Don't do that! I'm a real pilgrim from Kham. You've mistaken me for someone else". But he replied: "I know you from the sound of your voice!" and he prostrated before me. Thereupon he swore an oath not to reveal my identity to others. I stayed in that hermitage for a month and the lama took care to provide me with all I needed.

One day the lama invited him to his house for a meal. A pet

monkey there became very excited when it saw him, “by turns showing great delight and then weeping”. He immediately recognized it as the incarnation of his sister, Ashi Chödrön. (Tsangyang Gyamtso’s sister, about whom practically nothing is known, was in fact named Sonam Dzompa.²²⁹) She had been reborn a monkey because one day she had grabbed a ribbon he wore around his neck that had been blessed by the Panchen Lama and had dragged him by it over a boulder. He was naked at the time and the marks of his body had miraculously appeared on the rock. He had been injured by his sister’s rough play and this explained her present condition. He told the lama that the monkey was likely to die of misery after he left and so he gave him clear instructions for the funeral. (We have to remember constantly that none of these stories would have been told if the lama had not had a captive audience—as he still does in many quarters today.)

After arriving in Lhasa he found accommodation in a hermitage above the great monastery of Sera. There he was met and recognized by the abbot of Sera, Gelek Gyamtso, who gave him teachings on meditation and provided for his needs. (The abbot is listed in Chapter One of the secret biography among the teachers who instructed him in the Potala. There he has the title of *Ngari Shelngané*.) To avoid causing trouble to the old abbot he shifted to the monastery of Ganden where a lay patron of the community called Tsangdok Powa befriended him and gave him quarters. He was prevented from paying his respects to the remains of Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelukpa school, enshrined in the monastery. However, the guardian of the temple where it was kept suffered an accident and one day he managed to slip in with a company of pilgrims. He then chose to meditate at the monastery of Draksok, where Tsongkhapa himself had stayed, and the lama of that place recognized him and helped him to pass a whole year in retreat there. Tsangdok Powa, his friend from Ganden, supplied all his wants. Eventually he set off on his travels again, this time accompanied by a monk called Ngödrup, the disciple of the Draksok lama. After visiting several of the major shrines in central Tibet he set off in the direction of Tsari in order to circumambulate this most famous of pilgrim spots in south-eastern Tibet. The year was 1710.

At the temple of Chikchar in Tsari he received teachings of the Kagyüpa school from a lama called Marpo. Before starting on another retreat he sent Ngödrup back to Lhasa. He stayed there several months, fasting and practising the skills of “inner heat” (*gtum-mo*). One day a lady came to summon him to a ritual feast and, after reporting this to the lama, he followed her off. (We are supposed to understand this was not a dream.) A door in a rockface opened of itself and they entered to find a fine mansion made of precious substances. In the centre of many skyfarers assembled there was one he identified as the goddess Vajrayoginī: “Many wondrous things were displayed including a ritual feast and the skyfarers performed their *vajra* songs and dances. When I returned I thought no more than a day had passed, but it turned out that seven days had gone by”, he said. Although at that time other wondrous visions came to him, I shall not write about them because of his strict command.”

When his retreat at Tsari came to an end he went on to a place called Gangnang in the Ölkha district where there was a cave that had been used by Tsongkhapa. There he practised the form of meditative austerity called *rasayāna* which involves extracting the “essences” of flowers and stones. All kinds of visions resulted, his body became blissful and light, he remembered his past lives, and he gained clairvoyance and the ability to produce magical manifestations. In recounting these experiences he complained that because of all the impure food he had eaten since that time, not only did contemplation fail to come forth but what he had previously attained had diminished.

In the seventh month of 1711 he climbed to the top of the sacred mountain of Odé Gungyel and offered the gods the smoke of juniper from its summit. On returning he followed the footprints of what looked like a dog, only to discover it was a lion with a blue mane: “I was amazed since I had never seen a lion before. It was exceedingly difficult to move on that mountain. The cracks in the ice were greenish-blue and it would have been impossible to climb out if I had fallen into one. Gradually I descended to the point where the ice met the forest.” There he met two monks who were astonished that someone had climbed to the summit which no one else had ever reached. Everyone had seen the smoke rising from the peak and a message had been sent to the government in Lhasa reporting this strange

event. The monks took him to their monastery of Samtenling and he stayed there for a time.

Lajang Khan came to hear rumours of his presence in the Ölkha district and sent people to investigate. He was eventually captured and imprisoned in a house on the hill behind the district fort of Taktse. One of the two governors posted there, a Mongolian called Jesang, felt some animosity towards him but the other, a Tibetan, was well disposed. He was carefully guarded but did not use the opportunity to escape when one night the doors and windows of his room opened by magic. He was afraid his guards would get into trouble. Fifteen days after his capture a letter from Lajang arrived saying he should be brought to Lhasa. He was mounted on a yak and escorted by twelve guards. On reaching the foot of the Gökärla pass:

... suddenly a dust storm arose and from within it the Goddess [Palden Lhamo] appeared in person and I had a vision in which she said: "Now go!". All the people turned rigid and seemed to lose consciousness. I went with the storm and on reaching the top of the Gökärla pass the thought occurred to me that since even King Lajang had now heard about me and the people were growing hesitant, it would not do unless I went a long way away. I proceeded continuously night and day and so came to the land of Kongpo.

There he took up residence in a cave sacred to Padmasambhava called Gyala Sendong where the epic hero Gesar had subdued a demon. He observed a strict retreat, "... and so a great joy arose". After several months he went on. It was the autumn when by custom the Kongpo people went up to the high pastures to fetch the butter produced there by their herds. The husbands leave their wives behind at home and carry their black yak-hair tents up into the mountains. At that time the males of a rich family possessing some two thousand yak-cows had moved up with more than a hundred of their servants to a high and solitary place abounding in rich pastures and dense forests through which the lama was passing. One of their party saw him and called out that he should take care as they had lost their watchdogs. But suddenly two dogs "as big as three-year-old yaks" came tearing up and took him by the legs. He had no stick to protect himself with and could find no stones, so he gathered two handfuls of earth and threw them at the dogs. They died

instantly. When the owners reached him as he was bleeding profusely from his wounds, they were furious and accused him of slaughtering their dogs. Some claimed to have seen two men with him strike the dogs with swords. Others said he had been alone. The true explanation, he said to his biographer, was that the guardian deity Mahākāla and his divine consort had come to his aid and had killed the dogs. The man who had called out a warning took pity on him, washed and bound his wounds, and carried him down to his house. He and his father tended him for a month, feeding him and bathing his wounds every day. The young man was called Loja.

The lama decided he would make a pilgrimage to India. Loja received his father's permission to accompany him and so together they set off. After many days they came to a thickly forested valley. At midday they saw two animals approaching them. They were "larger than humans, their bodies generally humanoid but covered in hair". The lama told Loja they were very likely demons such as those which had inhabited Tibet in the old days. Loja promptly fainted in terror. The animals crossed the river and entered a forest on the other side. They stripped the branches from two trees the height of medium-sized pillars and bore them off on their shoulders. After recrossing the river they came in the direction of the lama and Loja. Then the chase began. The lama picked up the unconscious Loja and ran off, stopping at streams on the way to splash his servant with water. But each time the animals approached, Loja fainted again. And so they crossed many valleys and passes. Eventually they reached a safe hermitage where they were given refuge. One of the hermits there identified the beasts as "man-bears" (*mi-dred*, presumably yetis, "abominable snowmen") and said it was essential to block up the entrance to the hermitage with heavy stones, otherwise they would get in. Loja, waking up after more splashing of water, was so relieved to hear they were not demons that when one of the animals stuck its paw under the threshold of the main door he recovered his bravery and cut it off with his sword. The man-bears fled. But when the lama and Loja left the next morning they were chased again. Finally, after climbing a mountain and throwing stones down on the beasts, the larger of the two was killed and the smaller one fled.

(Another chase, by even stranger beings, will be told shortly.)

Just before reaching his birthplace in Mönnyul, the lama and Loja ran out of provisions. As they were approaching a cairn which lay on their path they were beset by ferocious dogs. An Indian yogin (*A-tsa-ra*) who was passing by came to help ward them off. He picked up a couple of stones from the cairn and threw them at the dogs, which scattered. It was found that the stones had turned into Chinese silver ingots (*rta-mig-ma*) but the Indian refused them, saying he had no need of stones. They took them off and used them to purchase whatever they needed in Mönnyul and on the rest of their journey to India.

Nothing is said about what happened when the lama reached his home. He and Loja made straight for Nepal, it seems by the northern route by way of southern Tibet. The description of the sites in the Kathmandu valley are detailed enough to suggest that he was actually there and did not depend on the accounts of others. It happened that the king of Bhatgaon (his name is not given) was making a pilgrimage to India and so they teamed up with his party till their paths separated in the plains. The description of his first adventure there and his reaction to the experience of India is worth giving in full:

Eventually one day we came to a large town where many of its inhabitants, male and female, were gathered together. They stared at me and spoke many things to each other and finally some went off. They summoned an old lady skilled in interpreting [bodily] signs and she came. She took me to a house and after leading me inside she stripped me naked and looked me all over, back and front, expressing great faith. All the inhabitants gathered there, prostrated before me and did me much honour. Since neither of us at that time knew much of even the common speech of India we could not speak with them. For about a day I meditated with the mind of enlightenment on love and compassion and made a good connection with them by means of a pure prayer. Then we left.

The land of India is mostly a very broad plain where a good deal of *kuśa* grass grows and there are plenty of peacocks. Though there are great highways and we followed these for a time, we came to a point where we could find no way through a thick grove of *kuśa*. As for the main highway, it wandered through places where there were peacocks, rivers and grasslands, also many elephants, buffaloes, rhinos, monkeys and snakes. And there were many kinds of birds too. At various places there were all kinds of trees. . . . In winter thunder resounds and rain falls and other wondrous things occur.

The season seems to be wrong in this last sentence. Moreover the whole passage could depend on the classical descriptions of India found in Buddhist texts. Perhaps the lama did visit India, but there is precious little in his account to substantiate that view.

Joining up with a group of Tibetan pilgrims they came one day to a deserted village and camped for the night in the courtyard of a temple:

That night, just as darkness had fallen, the door to the temple was pushed from inside and suddenly flung open. Two zombies (*ro-lang*), a male and a female, passed through and came forth running and jumping as they danced. My companions all fled and ran off in different directions. The zombies followed of their own accord, chasing them everywhere like hawks plunging into a flock of little birds. They slapped everyone except me with swipes like fires burning. Then they chased me too, running with great cries and the eight uncoordinated gestures (? *nam-'gyur ya-ma-zung brgyad*). When they got near I grasped both by the hair and threw them to the ground, pressing one on top of the other. I took out the iron treasure-dagger from my waist and struck them. Both zombies lost consciousness and fainted. I called to my companions to bring stones, but they were so terrified they would not listen and went far off. Alone I crushed the zombies with stones and pounded them to ash powder. I shouted to my companions and summoned them. After explaining that there was no need of fear they gradually came up to watch the spectacle and they were amazed. . . . Of those two zombies, one had his bones connected by sinews and one had flesh, skin and hair, a terrifying one like a *yakṣa* demon. The one without flesh or skin, only dried up bones, was very difficult to subdue. I had heard some elderly and holy persons say that the zombies who enter the sinews are hard to conquer, and what they said is really true. . . . It is in the nature of zombies that when they place their hands on someone's head, that person dies as soon as he is touched. For reasons of karma these zombies could not do this and so instead they delivered slaps. The people there said it was thanks to me, but it was good they could only slap.

At the hill of Gridhrakūta where the Lord Buddha had ascended to heaven to preach to his mother, he had a vision in which he saw that the whole mountain was composed of volumes of scriptures. He was aghast to see that the other pilgrims were trampling on them. He stayed at the foot, overcome with "measureless feelings of happiness and sadness", and he sang a

song there in praise of India and this shrine in particular. In it he spoke of his resolve to strive only for the enlightenment of others. He then went to the monastery of Pulahari, offered gold and a general serving of tea to the five hundred pandits there, and meditated on Cakrasaṃvara for six months. The author adds: “Although he had boundless visions and realizations at that time, I cannot write of them because of his strict command.”

His last adventure in India involved a meeting with the famous six-tusked elephant of Buddhist legend called “Most Firm on the Ground” which the Buddha’s mother dreamt of before she gave birth. The author introduces the story with the words: “Since at that time I did not commit to writing where it was in India that he saw it, this is not very clear in my mind. But since it is a wondrous story I beg the permission of the gods and skyfarers to write whatever remains in my mind.”

I travelled for many days through a great plain of *kuśa* grass where there were no people at all and on the eighth day of the month I saw from a distance something like a mountain moving. I wondered what it was and thought to myself that it was rather like what I had heard of in legend, namely that mountains can move and travel. Gradually I realized as it came nearer that it was some kind of animal. Then as it came up bit by bit I saw it was the white elephant with six tusks. It was so beautiful one could not gaze at it long enough, a most lovely thing, emitting a fine scent. From the centre of its back there shone forth a rainbow of five colours which touched the depths of the sky. As it slowly approached, it was eating up the *kuśa* grass of each district, using its trunk to pull it up. I realized and believed it was the precious elephant which is said in the scriptures to be begotten of the Bhagavat’s merit and so in front of that elephant I recalled the qualities of that incomparable sage. My mind became extremely sad and with my eyes full of tears I prostrated myself on the ground three times. For a long time I gazed and gazed, wonder-struck and without moving at all. It moved round me in a circle to the right and as it did this I had a detailed view of its four sides. When it finished one round it released before me a large dung. Slowly it moved off and departed to a great distance.

Later on his travels he came to a great city where he met “an old lady, well dressed and of fine appearance”. Because by this time he had good knowledge of “the common speech of India”, he gave her a detailed report on the elephant. She explained that

the elephant made its appearance in India once in every hundred years: "It is the precious elephant from among the Seven Symbols of Royalty which are destined to come to the Buddha if he resides in a lay household."

Meeting again with Loja, who had taken a different route, they made for Nepal and from there returned to Tibet. In the year of the Wood Horse (1714) they passed through the border districts of Nyanam and Dingri and came back eventually to "my birthplace in Mönyul". (Again, nothing is revealed of the experiences in Mönyul. It seems unlikely he was ever there.) Then there followed the period spent in the Dakpo district and, as already noted, it is in this connection that the lama claimed he was known as the *Dakpo Shabdrung* or *Dakpo Lama*, a form which was to adhere to at least two of his incarnations, the *Dakpo Trulkus* of Alashan.

Two further incidents from this part of his "illusory" life, to use his own expression, are worth mentioning. The first was a vision that came to him as he gazed into the waters of the famous "soul-lake" in the mountains behind the monastery of Chökhorgyal, the same one which supplies omens pointing to where the Dalai Lamas are reborn.²³⁰ When he first met his biographer's family in Alashan he told them how:

When I went to the soul-lake of the goddess at Gyal Metothang, Makzorma [the goddess] showed me in the lake's mirror all the regions of India, Tibet and Hor, also the particular outline of your region of Alashan, your manner of living, the number of your family and so on, also this little son who is on his mother's lap over there [the infant Dargye Nomunqan, his future biographer]. That boy is definitely one of good fortune. But don't let on to anyone at all whatever counsel I have given you on these matters and in particular that I am such and such a person who came from the direction of Tibet. Since I must for a time go on in the guise of a pilgrim as before for the sake of the teachings and beings, you must not make obstacles. At one point there will come a time when my life will become perfectly clear and everyone will be amazed and come to hold it as true. So there is no need for haste.

The final incident took place after his vision in the soul-lake when he had come to Lhasa once more in the winter of 1715. At the monastery of Drepung he arrived during a great public

seance of the state oracle of Nechung. In front of a huge crowd of monks the oracle singled him out and came rushing up waving his sword to make gestures that indicated he had realized the lama's true identity. The lama looked at the oracle with fury for letting the cat out of the bag. To cover up his indiscretion the oracle at once made the same gestures in every direction, thus distracting attention from the person he had seen to be the Dalai Lama.

Amdo and Alashan

It will probably never be possible to separate the truth from the fictions in the account of the wanderings and adventures which the impersonator is said to have experienced before he came to the area of Amdo and Alashan. It is, however, an indication of his manner that in the remainder of the story, where he is found moving among people who knew him as a real person, the wonders ascribed to him are not nearly as incredible as those just related. True, the miracles continue, but they appear as brief, third-hand recollections punctuating a fairly prosaic, factual account of the lama's doings. Not much is lost by omitting them from a summary. The quality of amazement is still there, but this is aroused more by his devotees' recognition that he truly was the Dalai Lama than by the marvels of his own telling.

The extraordinary force of his personality and his overwhelming physical presence comes across clearly in a passage where Dargye Nomunqan recalls his own memories of the lama. It is a peculiarly suggestive kind of hagiography. It brings together quite mundane details with the recognition of marks that are normally associated with the Buddha himself and what must be an accurate account of the powerful effect he had on others:

As to the form of the lord lama's bodily *maṇḍala* as it was perceived by us fortunate ones like a feast of nectar for our eyes: his body was neither very large nor very small, but no matter how important were the lamas and chiefs who assembled before him, his great dignity was clearly apparent. Whatever sort of wretched robes he wore, they surpassed the elegance and finery of others. When great lamas and

chiefs, proud and haughty, who had never seen him before came into his presence, their bodies and voices trembled, they quite lost their courage, they could not look at him in the face, and they found it difficult to reply to his questions. As soon as some faithless ones who secretly intended not to prostrate before him beheld the *maṇḍala* of his face, the hairs of faith were moved, tears stirred in their eyes and they would take his feet on the crown of their heads.

The *maṇḍala* of his face was extremely beautiful, of a whitish and reddish hue. Even after he had reached the age of sixty he had a youthful appearance of about thirty, though on occasion he did seem very aged. His hair was lustrous and coiled. Sometimes he needed to wash it every month, but at other times he did not need to for about four or five months. . . . His hands reached down beyond his knees. . . . There were no spaces between his fingers, nor were the joints visible. He had all his forty teeth and they were of good texture. . . . Though he had the marks of smallpox, sometimes they would become quite invisible. Even when he was old the veins of his hands and feet could not be seen and his body was upright and even. . . .

He had such mastery of *prāṇa* that when he took his bath or went into water he caused his privy parts to disappear within his body . . . He wafted forth to a great distance the fine odour of discipline. The beds he used and the pebbles or sticks he took in his hands even for short times were impregnated with a lovely scent. The lord himself said: "When I stayed among beggars, acting as a beggar myself, they became suspicious of this scent." After eating onions and breathing out, instead of emitting a smell of onions there was a scent like that of good medicine. When he smoked tobacco others caught the scent of incense. These and other inconceivable wonders were actually witnessed by all his attendants who are still alive.

Moreover, his nature was filled with great compassion, so that if he saw or heard of others sick, dead or suffering he appeared unable to bear it and he wept. . . . He had clear knowledge, quite unblemished, of everything near or far, open or hidden. He used to relate what he knew of others' minds just as they were. . . . He had unobstructed miraculous powers, including the ability to leave the imprint of his hands and feet on stone just as if it were mud. He performed the acts of an All Renouncer like the eighty *mahāsiddhas* of India and the venerable Milarepa of Tibet. These powers included the ability to travel to the great external pilgrim sites where the male and female skyfarers forgather while, internally, he achieved the highest level of transcendental wisdom through his own contemplations.

Picking up the thread of the narrative where it was left in Lhasa, the lama set off from there in the spring of 1716 with the faithful Loja and the party of monks who were travelling to the north-east to collect offerings for the monasteries of Meru and Zhidé.²³¹ They arrived that autumn in the Kokonor region and there Loja, who was recovering from a bout of smallpox, decided at last to part company with his master, giving him his knife and flint-case as mementoes: "Later he always had them wherever he went and he would say, 'That Loja of mine was really kind to me'." At other times he would say: "If only that dear person were here now". It seems probable he was a real person and not in the ranks of the abominable snowmen, headless men, and zombies which likewise decorated the lama's memory.

Leaving his companions at Hsining the lama went on alone northwards to the great monastery of Serkhok, one of the largest Gelukpa establishments in Amdo.²³² Two of the most senior monks of that place, Mel Drubchen and Shalupa Lobsang Palden,²³³ are said to have been expecting him because of prophecies foretelling his arrival. He was accorded a warm reception and "from that time on the whole community would speak in private about the circumstances of the holy one and it is said all were amazed". It was the occasion of a public debate between two monks of the monastery. One of them had often seen the true Dalai Lama in Lhasa and recognizing him now, came forward to receive his blessing. Though he was weaker than his opponent, the blessings ensured his victory in the debate.

After returning to Hsining the lama rejoined his companions and together they journeyed eastwards to the Alashan region, which lies south of the great Gobi, and so he came to the encampment of his future biographer's family at Tsapurosu as already described.²³⁴ The family priest, a Torgut Mongol with the name of Ayukhihan, encouraged everyone in the camp to do the greatest honour to the lama. Dargye Nomunqan's father, Badzrachap *taiji*, did his best to persuade him to stay on as their lama, but he said he had a further plan to visit Wutaishan, the emperor's palace in Peking, the Potala (not the palace in Lhasa but presumably the mythical abode of Avalokitesvara) and the legendary kingdom of Shambala. However he told them of his vision in the "soul-lake" which presaged his eventual

return to their home in Alashan. He sang them a song which appears to recall in rather vague terms his earlier life in Lhasa as the Dalai Lama, saying how much he missed the Panchen Lama, his own mother, the great monasteries of the capital, and the “great and middling government officials from outside and inside [the court] / Including the ministers, arrow-officers and finance officers”. He alludes to the way the government of the country kept falling to the hands of any man of the moment and he recalled the austerities he himself had suffered during the last eight years and ten months.

The monks from Meru who were still with him went on now to Mongolia while others in the party proceeded to Wutaishan, the best known place of pilgrimage for Buddhists in China. The lama himself stayed on at Tsapurosu. He was in the habit of riding off on short journeys entirely by himself, though the family had appointed monks to look after him. On one such trip, which took place in the second month of 1717, he met the deputy leader of the banner, an old man called Lhagye whose title in its Tibetan form of *ho-shu tsa-khi-rug-chi* can be reconstructed in Mongolian as *qosiḡu jakiruḡci* (“banner administrator”). Thereafter he took most of his meals in the old man’s tent everyday and would spend some nights saying prayers in his shrine-tent. In this way Lhagye’s superior, the leader of the banner and ruler of Alashan, came to hear about him. This man was destined to become the lama’s foremost patron in the region. Fortunately a good deal is known about him from other sources. His name Apo or Abo in its Tibetan form has been rendered by modern scholars as Aboo, Abau or A Pao.²³⁵ I shall keep to Aboo, the form used by Petech.

He was a grandson of Gūūshi Khan, the Khoshuud ruler who had won supremacy for the Dalai Lamas in Tibet in 1642. Described as the *noyan* (“ruling noble”) of the Ögelüd tribe of Mongols in Alashan, Aboo married a second-ranking princess (*chün-chu*) of the Manchu imperial family, either in 1695 or in 1704,²³⁶ and so received the title of *hoshoi efu*. In 1750 his son Lobsangdorji also married a *chün-chu* and he received the title of *doroi efu*. According to the local legends still told in the vicinity of Ting-yuan-yin, the provincial capital of Alashan, one of these princesses was a “daughter” of the emperor K’ang-

hsi, though more likely she was a distant relative.²³⁷ Like the lama of our story as described in the passage just quoted, her fingers are said to have had a web-like appearance and so she was called “The Princess with Palms like a Goose”. The story, as applied to both the lama and the princess, derives from the “thirty-two signs of a great being” (*mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*) which are the marks of a Buddha. It is perhaps this princess who appears in the secret biography with the name of Keké, which is Manchu *gege* (“elder sister, young lady, respectful term of address to young ladies”).²³⁸ As the wife of Aboo she became our lama’s chief supporter in Alashan and, as we shall see, took him with her to Peking when she went there in the autumn of 1717. It is either from the families who accompanied her or her daughter-in-law from Peking to Ting-yuan-yin (also known as Wang-ye-fu) that the Manchu families who still live on the outskirts of the city claim descent.²³⁹

Aboo first appears on the historical scene in 1720, three years after his first meeting with the lama. That year he was one of a large group of Mongol nobles escorting the Seventh Dalai Lama from the Kumbum monastery to his enthronement in Lhasa.²⁴⁰ This by itself makes it very difficult to believe he was simultaneously supporting someone claiming to be the Sixth. In the same year Aboo is found in Lhasa as one of the members of a provisional military government established by the Manchus after their defeat of the Dzungars in Tibet. He was a personal enemy of the Chinese general Nien Keng-yao, the governor of Szechuan, and his career prospered greatly after the latter’s disgrace. In Tibet he was first put in charge of a garrison of three thousand Chinese troops under the command of the Khalkha prince Cewang Norbu. When the latter was promoted in October 1721 as chief Chinese representative and commander-in-chief, Aboo was made his assistant for military affairs. They both opposed the reconstruction at official expense of 550 Nyingmapa monasteries destroyed by the Dzungars. Aboo otherwise seems to have been on good terms with the most ambitious and successful Tibetan of this period, Pholhané, a friend of the Nyingmapas. In 1703 both Cewang Norbu and Aboo were recalled from Tibet as part of a policy of Chinese military retrenchment. They had a most cordial meeting with

the Dalai Lama before their departure. In 1724 Aboo was promoted *chun-wang* (second-ranking prince). He was degraded in 1729 for reasons that are not known, but reinstated in 1732. He died in 1739.

The lama's first meeting with Aboo in 1717 was a great success. He was accommodated in a fine tent which had been made in in central Tibet and he was invited by the ruler to accept the position of head lama (*spyi-bla*) of Alashan and to favour the ruler's son with his teachings. He agreed in guarded terms, saying he would do what he could as long as he stayed in Sogyul, a term usually designating "Mongolia", but here simply meaning "this region inhabited by Mongolians". Aboo's wife, the Manchu princess, came one day to inspect this lama about whom she had heard so much. She arrived with a retinue of maids and eunuchs as he was saying his morning prayers:

She had seven cushions piled into a seat for her and she strode up to it with great resolution and sat herself down. After displaying much haughtiness she declared: "I've come to take a look at you, lama. Though the people say you're quite a fine lama, I find that difficult to believe. If, however, you can show a magic feat here within my sight I swear I'll be your patron. If you can't, then there are masses of pilgrims, old and young, who take this highway like you and to any of them we can say: 'Who'll take him off from here?'" Saying this she stayed there watching, smoking tobacco in a very long pipe.

The lama was served some tea. In due course he calmly picked up the bowl and its contents and squeezed them in his hands "like mud" into the shape of an egg which he then pulled out in the shape of a rope. Making it into a ball again, he threw it high into the air and it came down in the form of the original, unbroken bowl with all the tea unspilled. The princess was of course totally flabbergasted and at once removed all her jewellery and gave it to him. She became his foremost patron.

It has to be remembered that the narrator of these events was a toddler at the time and in writing his account some fifty years later depended entirely on hearsay. The other point to note is that according to this account the lama made no claim to be the Dalai nor was he recognized as such. Indeed it is inconceivable that anyone so closely associated with the Manchu government as Aboo, especially one like him with political ambitions,

would have compromised his position by supporting a false claimant to the Potala throne. The same must hold for his wife. We can be sure, therefore, that the lama was not making the same extravagant claim to them which he did to others at different times.

Throughout 1717 he seems to have shifted between the ruler's place, the camp of the banner deputy and that of the author's father. In the autumn the princess went on a trip to Peking (presumably to visit her family) and she invited the lama to accompany her. The party seems to have been accommodated in the imperial palace or close to it. One night the lama was visited in his quarters by a group described as "a small party of the *A-lo*, the lord and his servants". The leader let it be known that he was aware of the lama's true identity as the Dalai Lama and said to him: "I know everything about you, lama. I can arrange permission for you to reside in your former seat after reporting your case to the emperor. Or else since it's a time when there is no *Thamkha Lama*, the previous one having died, I can report your name to the emperor so that you find favour in his eyes."²⁴¹ The lama declined, saying he was only a wandering yogin on pilgrimage. However, he accepted the gift of a copy of *Padmasambhava's* life and a vase which the man said his own teacher, the exiled *Demo Khutuktu*, had left for him to give to *Tsangyang Gyamtso* when he arrived. For a month the man, whoever he was, is said to have come by night in secret to receive the lama's teachings. *Dargye Nomunqan* also says that at that time the lama taught the very well-known *Thukhen Hutuktu* and someone called *Ephu Gönpochap* but the details of this, he says, were not known to him.²⁴²

Two other incidents in Peking are recounted as confirmation of the lama's true identity. On one occasion he was recognized by a Tibetan dog which had followed the party of exiles that included the daughter and sons of the dead regent, *Sangye Gyamtso*.²⁴³ The lama is supposed to have been very affected: "Alas! What sort of faithlessness and turning upside-down does one experience in this place of *saṃsāra*! All these years have passed since I left my home behind me and not a single person from home have I seen. Now this silly dumb animal has arrived and, seeming to recognize me, rejoices. He perceives

me with his mind, the poor thing!" The dog is said to have attached itself to the lama for ever after and followed him to Mongolia. When it died he performed its "transference of consciousness". The regent's daughter heard of his presence in Peking and managed to smuggle him a ring with a request for prayers, so it is said. The other incident concerned his curing of the emperor's own physician, a lama called *Menrampa* Künzang, who is also supposed to have recognized him.

In the spring of 1718 he returned to Alashan with the princess and stayed for two years on the estate of Badzrachap *taiji*. In 1720 he visited the Serkhok monastery again and resumed his relationship with Mel Drubchen and Shalupa Lobsang Palden, also the abbot Chuzang Tenpai Gyaltzen. He gave teachings there. That winter he returned to Alashan and it was apparently on that occasion that large numbers of people began coming to see him from Khalkha (Mongolia proper) and the Ordos (*Ortu-su*) plateau who were attracted by his growing reputation.

In 1721 he again returned to Serkhok and was received there with a splendid procession of all the monks. A delegation arrived from one of this monastery's own daughter-houses, Jakrung, to request him to become their lama and he promised to accept the offer the following autumn.²⁴⁴ It was the start of an association with that monastery that was to last till his death in 1746. He was welcomed there in the autumn by one thousand five hundred horsemen representing the so-called "thirteen meditation centres of the six *tsho* (divisions) of Jakrung", headed by the *nangso* of Brarti, the *nangso* of Drigong and the Gongwa Lama of Thangring. His new patrons were almost certainly Monguors, a distinct ethnic group known to the Chinese as the Tujen.²⁴⁵ A great tent was pitched for him which had previously been used to receive the Fifth Dalai Lama when he passed through the region on his return from visiting the emperor in 1653-4.²⁴⁶ We know on that occasion the Fifth was presented with thirty horses by a *nangso* called Zangpo Gyaltzen, but in the speech now made before the impersonator of his successor it was said that Zangpo Gyaltzen had given him "three hundred white horses as large as camels, all well-matched and with their ears of different colours". Horseraces and wrestling took place to mark the installation on the abbot's throne.

Two years later, in 1723, there took place a major revolt of some of the Mongol princes of Kokonor led by Lobjang Danjin, another of the grandsons of G \ddot{u} ushi Khan (and therefore a relative of Aboo).²⁴⁷ He had been frustrated in his wish to be appointed head of the Manchu administration in Tibet. According to Petech, he dreamt of unifying the Khoshuuds and reviving the imperial dream of G \ddot{u} ushi Khan.²⁴⁸ He appears in the secret biography with the name of Tendzinwang. Some of the Amdo monasteries were implicated in the revolt and in the Chinese reprisals many were destroyed and a large number of monks were preemptorily killed. Serkhok suffered the worst damage and its saintly abbot who had befriended our lama, Chuzang Tenpai Gyaltzen, was executed. The secret biography describes these events and explains that Jakrung too was put to the torch. The lama may have been away in Alashan at the time. One of his monks, Jamo Kachupa, attributed his own escape to hearing the lama's voice calling him to flee as he was about to commit suicide: "Looking in the direction of China he saw the Chinese soldiers had arrived, darkening the land as with a fog, and so he fled according to [the lama's] word and was saved." In this account Jamo Kachupa is said to have been a monk of Ganden who had years earlier lifted the child Sixth Dalai Lama up to touch his head to the tomb of Tsongkhapa in his monastery. (However, we know Tsangyang Gyamtso would not have needed to be lifted up because he was no longer a child when he first reached Lhasa.)

In the summer of that year the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, who was recognized by the Manchu emperor as the ruler of Mongolia, sent an Indian yogin (*A-tsa-ra*) to deliver a letter to the lama in Alashan in which he explained that since he did not have long to live he wanted to entrust his whole dominion throughout the seven banners of Khalkha to the care of the lama as his official successor. The lama, who is described as "extremely fluent in the common speech of India", discussed the proposal at some length with the Indian messenger but declined the offer on the grounds that: "It would be extremely difficult now to take on the responsibility of someone else's seat and dominion." Not long after sending the Indian back with a letter and presents he heard that the Jebtsundamba had died. He was overcome with

remorse and when Aboo came to see him one day they resolved to travel to Urga to pay their respects to the dead ruler. Another reason for this journey was to fulfil Aboo's promise to introduce the lama to someone called Tsetsen of Hahi, a Mongol lord whom Aboo had met in Peking at the emperor's palace the previous year. They had arranged to marry off their children and Aboo had agreed to come to Mongolia for this purpose in 1724 together with his lama. At Urga the lama is said to have been welcomed by all the Mongol nobles and monks in a great procession. He performed funeral rites for the Jebtsundamba and then went on with Aboo to the home of Tsentsen. The lama is described as performing rituals for his sons, named *U'i-bcad-rgyun* and *Ba-thor-wang*. The Mongolian scholar Damdinsureng renders Tsentsen's name as Setsen, and he may therefore perhaps be identified with the Setsen Khan who eight years later, in 1732, is found replaced by a Manchu loyalist because he could not put an end to the troubles in his own league (*aimak*).²⁴⁹

As for the Jebtsundamba trying to bequeath his dominion to this lama whom he had never met, the story appears unconvincing. But there was perhaps some real contact between them since Damdinsureng informs us that "in the 'Biography of the Third Incarnation of the Jebtsudampa Hutukhtu' there is a report of Tsangyang Gyamtso coming to Khalkha during the time of the Second Bogdo."²⁵⁰ This certainly requires further investigation. It may perhaps accord with the tradition of our lama's visit to Urga, particularly if the Jebtsundamba's incarnation had already been discovered by the summer of 1724. Dargye Nomunqan adds one afterthought to his account of this trip by saying there were many conflicting versions of the travels which the lama then undertook through the seven banners of Khalkha (that is Mongolia), through the "forty-nine great banners" (which constituted Inner Mongolia) and the region of Dolonnor (*Tol-lo-ko-han-nor*): "They would fill more volumes than those of the Buddhist cannon." He accounts for this by the theory of multiple transformation, but with rare candour he also admits that some people maintained there was just this single journey when the lama was invited by Setsen Khan.

In 1724 the lama hoped to build a new monastery at Jakrung

to replace the one destroyed by the Chinese forces the previous year, "but the vapours of worldly distractions had not yet disappeared". It was only in 1727 that work began after the purchase of "Chinese land" on what seems to be the opposite side of the valley to the old foundation. Several hundred silver coins were paid for it but the Chinese governor posted close by at Thurchen opposed the construction. Fortunately that man was replaced by another who proved much more amenable, particularly after the lama had presented him with several good horses and a quantity of silver. The official promised his support, but only for the three months duration of his own temporary appointment to that place. Working day and night, the monastery was all but finished when the previous governor returned and ordered the soldiers under his command to pull it all down. More bribes exchanged hands but the building was only saved when the governor suddenly died, "blood pouring from his nine orifices". He had got his just deserts.

The lama's plans for his new monastery received a great boost when imperial policy suddenly changed in favour of restoring all those foundations destroyed in 1723-4 during Lobjang Danjin's revolt.²⁵¹ In our text the destruction is blamed on *Nye-tsong-tu*, who may perhaps be the Chinese general Nien Keng-yao who is known to have played the major role with another called Yueh Chung-ch'i. The latter appears in the text as *Yo'u Tsang-gyun* and it was he who is credited with carrying out the command for restoration. A permit was issued to the lama for building his new monastery and by 1731 it was completed. The monastery's charter allowed for a community of 205 monks with the lama as the abbot. The rites and privileges awarded by K'ang-hsi to the old monastery were transferred to the new one together with a fresh grant of food rations. It is at this point that the monastery came to be known as Dakpo Si in the manner already described. Another Chinese name recorded in the biography is Shi-men Si, which is supposed to translate Dragak (*Brag-'gag*), the Tibetan name of the valley where Jakrung is situated.²⁵² In all respects it became a foundation enjoying full imperial patronage. The Panchen Lama, as we have seen, contributed its code of discipline. The seasonal rituals were introduced in accordance with those performed in the

Gomang college of Drepung, the Lower Tantric College (*rGyud-smad*) and the monastery of Chökhorgyal north of Dakpo. This last choice is another indication that the lama was probably a native of that area.

A strange event occurred in 1730. The lama was invited to Lanchou, provincial capital of Kansu, to take part in the victory celebrations staged by the Manchu and Chinese troops to mark their defeat of the Dzungars. It was their general Yueh Chung-ch'i, the same who had restored the monasteries, who brought the lama to Lanchow and set him up at a spot between the left and right wings of his forces to give praise to the God of War and to cast a ritual weapon-cake (*gtor-zor*) in the direction of what remained of the enemy. Again it is inconceivable that the general knew he was employing for this purpose someone impersonating the Sixth Dalai Lama.

For reasons which are not explained, in 1724 the emperor ordered Aboo and all his people to shift from Alashan to the Kokonor region. The lama used to visit him there at a place called Poro. In 1732 Aboo and his people were ordered back to Alashan, where the lama continued to visit him. He also made trips to the area of the so-called "Yellow Uigurs" (Shara Yugur), bordering on the Pari region due north of Kokonor.²⁵³ In this period he became the abbot of no less than thirteen monasteries in the Pari and adjoining districts, not including Jakrung which remained his principal seat.²⁵⁴ Of these the most important seems to have been Taitung²⁵⁵ whose lama, known as the Lukya Shabdrung, was quite convinced he was none other than Tsangyang Gyamtso. Lukya Shabdrung is said to have convinced his brother Luchap, who was the chief official of the district, of this fact. The brother is therefore supposed to have issued a proclamation to all his people (called the *Lo'u Shin-bha* or *Shi-ban*) to the effect that the lama was indeed the Dalai Lama and should be worshipped as such.²⁵⁶ As we have seen, there is independent confirmation of his activities at Taitung.²⁵⁷ He introduced there the New Year Festival as celebrated in Lhasa, and he did the same at Jakrung and Alashan. He taught the sacred dances himself.

The last decade of his life saw the extension of his activities to the Ordos region, designated in the text by its traditional division

into “The Six *Jasaks* of Ordos” (*Or-to-su tsur-khan dza-sag* = *Ordos zurgaan jasag*).²⁵⁸ The ruler of the unit known as Jungar (*Cung-k.har* in our text), Sisi Namgyal Dorje by name, first brought him to Ordos in 1736. He also found himself invited to the great Gelukpa monastery of Tashi Chöling there, which was populated by three thousand monks. He is said to have introduced to it certain essential monastic customs which had previously been lacking. In 1741 he went to Ordos again and this time appears to have received the patronage of all six *jasaks*, accumulating a vast amount of gifts. It seems that several of the most senior Mongolian nobles, coming from a very wide area, became his patrons, but their names still await identification.²⁵⁹

True to form, the biographer devotes one of the longest passages in his book to a description of the events which heralded the lama’s death in 1746. The first warning of its approach came in 1742 when, on a visit to the restored monastery of Serkhok (which was still the mother-house of Jakrung it seems), the oracle of that place ordered rites to be performed for his benefit. The following year was reckoned to be particularly inauspicious for him and further ceremonies were held on that account. In 1745 he toured his monasteries and appeared to be making his last farewells. He then managed to retire from the throne of Taitung but his retirement from Jakrung was refused. In the tenth month he is found on tour again, this time among his Mongol patrons though the place is not indicated. There he fell sick and so came home to Jakrung. By the end of the year his condition was serious but he insisted on overseeing the details of the New Year Festival. His attendants tried to persuade him not to give audiences to so many of his devotees, but he said they had come from so far he could not disappoint them. The illness dragged on through another five months. When he was sure of his approaching death he wrote letters to 130 monasteries throughout Amdo giving his final advice on sacred and secular matters and exhorting the monks to their studies. In the month of his death he told Dargye Nomunqan to be ready to leave for Tibet and perform acts of virtue there after he died, also to be sure to educate his reincarnation properly. As the end approached, messengers were sent to the district headquarters (the *yamen*) and to Serkhok with the news. Finally, on the eighth of the fifth month, Dargye Nomunqan says:

Hoping that the Buddha's relic, quite a large one, which he always kept on his person would be of help, I asked him if he would hold it, but he said: "I don't want it. You do it." When I insisted on offering it to him, he smiled and took it saying: "There's no harm in doing this." Those were his last words. Visualizing him as Amitāyus I recited the mantra of Amitāyus loudly, and for his part he recited it even clearer and quicker than we did. While he was thus reciting the mantra he straightened his body, released his feet from the crossed-*vajra* pose and assumed that of a *bodhisattva*. He placed his right hand to his right side and his left upon his left thigh. By thus appearing to hold the *vajra* and bell he assumed the meditative pose of Avalokiteśvara or else the pose of Vajrasattva, and so his mind was directed towards the *dharmadhātu* and placed in a state of great purity.

His devotees and patrons from all over Amdo, Alashan and Ordos came to pay their respects to his corpse. It was decided that his prospects for reincarnation would not be harmed if the corpse were now mummified. Dargye Nomunqan seems to have been mainly responsible for this decision. It may be that he did this with a view to transporting the remains to his own homeland, for the Russian explorer Kozlov, as we shall see, tells us that they are enshrined in a stupa appropriately called "Tsangyang Gyamtso" at the Western Monastery (Barun-hyt) of Alashan.

Lobsang Thubten Gyamtso, the first of our lama's incarnations, was born "in the lineage of Tendzin Chögyal [Güüshi Khan] to the family of the Alashan *gung*", very likely a descendant of the ruler Aboo.²⁶⁰ Dargye Nomunqan, our author, fulfilled his promise and acted as his tutor. He also received teachings from the Panchen Lama Lobsang Palden Yeshé. He became the fourth abbot of Jakrung and invited many distinguished teachers there while he held office. He is remembered particularly for establishing a new tantric college in the monastery. Nothing is known of the next incarnation, Lobsang Chödar Gyamtso (styled in our source as the third *Dakpo Trulku*), except that he was the nephew of Chuzang Rinpoché, presumably the incarnation of the Chuzang of Serkhok who had recognized and befriended our lama.²⁶¹ This *Dakpo Trulku* ruled as Jakrung's eighth abbot and was succeeded in that position by the incarnation of Dargye Nomunqan, *Toin Jungné* Dargye, who occupied the throne for many years. All that is said about him, however, is that: "He granted capital for regular servings of tea."²⁶² His own successor

was alive in 1849 when the chronicle providing all this information was written. The author of the chronicle had no difficulty in composing a long list of the famous and respectable teachers produced by our lama's monastery down to his own day. Beyond doubt it would have given the lama much satisfaction.²⁶³

We catch another fleeting glimpse of his first two incarnations in Alashan in a source which seems to survive only in the Sven Hedin Collection in Stockholm.²⁶⁴ The collected works of the *Alashan Lhatsün* Lobsang Tenpai Gönpö (whose life spanned the last decade of the eighteenth and the first two decades of the nineteenth centuries, and who wrote numerous works on astrology and monastic discipline) contain two short and undated prayers in verse for the long life of one Rinchen Gyamtso, described as the incarnation of the *Kundröl Nomunqan Dakpo Hutuktu* Lobsang Thubten Gyamtso (the first incarnation of the impersonator, introduced above). It may be assumed that this Rinchen Gyamtso, whose name is clearly modelled on that of the Sixth Dalai Lama (Rinchen Tsangyang Gyamtso), was the Lobsang Chödar Gyamtso introduced above as the third in the line. He would have acquired this latter name when receiving full ordination.

The whole tradition of the Sixth Dalai Lama's survival after 1706 and of his reappearance in successive embodiments in Alashan continued to have great appeal down to the twentieth century, particularly in Alashan itself. This is abundantly clear from the evidence gathered by Kozlov during his visit to Alashan in 1906:

The monastery of Barun-hyt [literally "The Western Monastery"] is not particularly rich but it is much respected, having been founded 165 years ago in the year of the Red Blood [?]. In the 1870s it experienced all the consequences of the dangerous uprising of the Dungsans [Chinese Muslims]. It was located not far from Tsun-hara and then later moved firstly to the place where Tsokto-khure is situated and then to a narrow defile where it has continued to exist till the present. The permanent community of the monastery of Barun-hyt numbers 850 persons, but there are no more than half to be seen [in actual occupation].

The abbot Barun-gegen [*gegen* = "teacher", "abbot"] or Jalarai-gegen is regarded as the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama himself, or in other words of Tsangyang Gyamtso, the sixth reincarnation. This

very honourable office was occupied for a long time by the brother of the present *chinwang* [ruler of Alashan], who gave up his monastic status towards the end of his life and was known to the world by the name of San-é. When he gave up his position and down to the time of his death the monastery had no senior *gegen*. Only then did the Dalai Lama give instructions for the election of an “honorary priest”, and he came from the *hoshun* [“banner”] of Barun-hyt. The one who is regarded as next in seniority after the Jalarai Gegen is the Erdeni Hambo Lama and he is a reincarnation of the teacher of the eminent Sixth Dalai Lama [presumably Dargye Nomunqan]. The present Erdeni Hambo Lama is a relative of the *wang* [the ruler of Alashan]. He is forty years old and distinguished by his moral purity, spirituality and clear mind.

Barun-hyt among other things is proud of the memory of the Sixth Dalai Lama, who was in this monastery and found his place of rest there. His remains lie in the *suburgan* [*stupa*] called “Tsangyang Gyamtso” which stands in the north-west temple of this complex. It is next to the gravestones of one of the first *chinwang* of Alashan and of one of the first Jalarai-gegen.²⁶⁵

It remains to be discovered if the monastery still stands and if perhaps in this forgotten corner of the Chinese empire an incarnation of Tsangyang Gyamtso still sits on the abbot’s throne as a sort of alternative Dalai Lama, winking at us with all the mischief of his impersonator. But Kozlov’s account can suffice to show how the peculiar cyclical movement in the career and heritage of this most loved Dalai Lama had once again asserted itself. The heterodox and peripheral had been transformed again into everything that was orthodox and central. The movement began at his birth on the outer confines of the Tibetan cultural empire, on its southern fringe. It then brought him to the core of that empire as its very personification, before expelling him once more to the furthest frontiers, this time to the north. There, under the impact of the impersonator, the tradition was again transformed from something suspect and remote into a ruling and established norm. At the centre of the Tibetan state too the figure of Tsangyang Gyamtso regained full legitimacy (having never really lost it in Tibetan eyes) and there the story of the survival also won a kind of acceptance. Finally in the mid-twentieth century the cultural empire of Tibet was almost entirely overtaken by external forces which first attempted to destroy it and then, some decades later, sought to rebuild it in

acceptable form. No doubt the multiple historical transformations of Tsangyang Gyamtso as priest-king, rebel, lover, poet and survivor will continue to play a part in the pattern of this wider upheaval and resurgence for many years to come.

Meanwhile if there is a moral to be drawn from all the strange permutations of this story it lies perhaps in the words of the secret biography itself, where we find the life of the impersonator described as “illusion-like” and he is quoted as saying that all his actions are “like a dream, like illusion.”²⁶⁶ The idea here is that whatever view we take of the life, it has independent power to confirm and demonstrate the universal truth of illusion as a basic condition of all existence. The illusions (or deceptions) revealed in the life of Tsangyang Gyamtso are those which inhabit our own minds. This is a conclusion which can be shared alike—from different standpoints but with no difficulty—by the traditional Buddhist and the modern investigator.

Who can rightly fathom the full extent
of the appearance in all directions
Of the illusory body of Padmapāṇi in
manifestations fitting
To the diverse sight, pure and impure,
of beings
In the Land of Snow, the field of emanation
of the Exalted One [Avalokiteśvara]?²⁶⁷

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Chronology of the Life of Pemalingpa According to his Autobiography

Folio numbers on the left are those of the BTHTT. Roman numerals indicate the month according to the lunar calendar. A question mark indicates that no date is provided or the one entered has been conjectured. Figures in square brackets after text titles are the numbers in the sequence of “treasure-hoards” (*gter-kha*) discovered by Pemalingpa according to the lists provided in OGGGK, fos. 57a–60a. A question mark within square brackets [?] indicates that the text in question does not figure in these lists because it has been subsumed within another cycle (see *ibid.*, fo. 60a). The gaps in the numerical sequence can be accounted for by the fact that the non-textual “treasures” discovered by Pemalingpa do not figure in the lists, which divide the textual discoveries into the following three standard categories: (I) “The Cycles Concerning the Lama” (*Bla-ma’i skor*): nos. 19, 18, 11, 9; (II) “The Cycles Concerning the Great Fulfilment” (*rDzogs-chen-skor*): nos. 27, 1, 30; and (III) “The Cycles Concerning the Peaceful and Wrathful Forms of Mahākarūṇa” (*Thugs-rje-chen-po zhi-khro’i skor*): nos. 3, 21, 20, 19 (*bis*), 7, 20 (*bis*), 22, 16, 21 (*bis*), 23. Not all the texts listed appear to be specifically mentioned in the autobiography. The Dalai Lama is clearly wrong in his statement that the thirty-two “treasure-hoards” attributed to Pemalingpa were all discovered in the six years between the time he was aged twenty-seven (when he recovered the *Klong-gsal* at Naringdrak) and thirty-two (when he got the *Man-ngag-gi skor* at Samyé): he was in fact twenty-five (or twenty-six by Tibetan reckoning) when he discovered the former in 1475 and sixty-three (or sixty-four) when he found the latter in 1513. There seems, however, to have been just a single find in all the years from 1489 to 1513. It should be noted that the chronological list which follows is not an exhaustive guide to the con-

tents of the autobiography, merely a rough indication of major events and dates.

- 25a: Iron Horse = 1450: born at Chel, Bumthang (Bhutan)
 25b: aged 3 = 1452: taken to Mani Gömpa by his grandfather
 26a: aged 9 = 1458: trained as blacksmith by his grandfather
 27b: [Water] Snake = 1473: death of grandfather
 27b: [Wood] Sheep = 1475: recovered the *Klong-gsal gsang-ba snying-bcud* [1] from Naringdrak
 32a–b: [1476]: vision of Ratnalingpa
 32b: X: recovered treasure from the riverine lake of Membartso
 33b: ?: founded monastery of Pemaling
 33b: [Fire] Bird = 1477: recovered the *Thugs-rje chen-po mun-sel sgron-me* [3] from Rimochen
 34a: II: recovered treasure from Sengedrak
 35a: ?: recovered the *dGongs-pa bla-med* [?] from Rimochen
 35a: VII: recovered the *rTa-mgrin dpa'-bo gcig-pa* [?] from Senge Namdzongdrak
 35b: XII: recovered the *Nor-bu lam-khyer* [7] from Kujédra
 36a: [Earth] Dog = 1478: vision of Padmasambhava at Buli-Tali
 37b: IX: recovered the *Drag-sgrub me-rlung 'khyil-ba* [9] from Senge Khyitsuk (Khyichodrak)
 37b, 39b-40b: [Earth] Pig = 1479: restored the Chökhör temple
 38b: [1480?]: met the fourth Shamarpa Lama in Bumthang
 41a: III: recovered the *Bla-ma drag-po dpa'-bo gcig-pa* [11] from Senge Khyitsuk (Khyichodrak)
 41b: VI: founded new temple at Ugyenling, Kurtö
 41b: IX: first visit to Tibet; recovered treasure from Bentsa Lhakhang and Khari
 43a: ?: recovered the *bKa'-brgyad thugs-kyi me-long* [16] from Tsilung
 43a–52a: Iron Bull = 1481: built an addition to the Pemaling monastery; vision of the divine palace of Pema'ö
 52a–53a: IV: recovered the *Bla-ma drag-po* [?] from Sengedrak at Tharpaling
 58b–59a: [Iron] Bull X = 1481: composes a *mañi* dance at Samling

- 59a–60a: [Water] Tiger = 1482: recovered the *Bla-ma drag-po yang-gsang bla-med* [18] from Kujédrak
- 65a: ?: left handprint on a pestle [NB: From this point till fo. 198b line 4 the autobiography was dictated by Pemalingpa to the lama Tashi Gyalpo.]
- 65b–67a: Earth [*rect.* Water] Hare VII = 1483: second visit to Tibet; recovered the *Bla-ma nor-bu rgya-mtsho* [19] from Lhodrak Mendo
- 72a–73b: ?: recovered the *rTa-mgrin lcags-ral-can* [20] from Lhodrak Dramotrang
- 75a: ?: recovered the *rTa-mgrin yang-gsang bla-med* [21] and the *Phur-ba yang-gsang bla-med* [21] from Mendo
- 75b: ?: recovered treasure from Dramardo
- 77b–78a: ?: recovered the *mKha'-gro nye-lam rgya-mtsho* [?], the *Chos-skyong-gi skor* [?] and the *gNam-lcags 'od-kyi drwa-ba 'i rgyud* [?] from Sengdongdrak and other treasure from Leuchung
- 79a–81a: I [1484?]: recovered the *dGongs-pa kun-'dus* [?] and other texts from Tharpaling
- 82b: VII: expounded the *Thugs-rje chen-po mun-sel sgron-me* at Rinchenling
- 83a: ?: third visit to Tibet (Laya, Nedong, Lhalungphu)
- 85b–88b: ?: quarrel with Lama Shangpa Namkha
- 91b: [Fire] Horse III = 1486: spent six months bestowing the initiations of all his textual discoveries at Pemaling
- 92a: [Interpolated by Gyalwa Döndrup out of sequence?] aged 61 Iron Horse = 1510: retreat at Mani Gömpa, followed (92a–94b) by dream of Padmasambhava and the skyfarers in the heaven of Ugyen Khandroling
- 94b: IX [1486?]: initiations at Samling
- 95a–99b: Winter: fourth visit to Tibet, at the invitation of the Japa myriarch, Tashi Dargye (Kurélung, Mön Sha'uk, Loro, Chögyal Lhunpo, Tsona, Domtsangrong, Chali, Gönsar etc.); returned to Bumthang in VII
- 101a: VIII [?]: composed songs and dances at Pemaling
- 101b–106a: [Fire] Sheep X = 1487: fifth visit to Tibet; recovered the *Kun-bzang dgongs-pa kun-'dus* [27] from Samyé Chimphuk
- 110a: II: to Bamrin Rinchenling

- 110b: III: to Kurélung
- 110b: [Earth] Monkey VII = 1488: opened the chest of the *Kun-bzang dgongs-pa kun-'dus* at Mani Gömpa
- 112a: VII: sixth visit to Tibet (Lhalung, Ney); first meeting with Tsultrim Penjor, abbot of Ney
- 113b: I: to La'ok Yulsum (now in Arunachal Pradesh) for the wedding of his youngest brother, Ugyen Zangpo
- 114b–116a: ?: recovered the guide to the “hidden land” of Khenpalung; a “war” ensued
- 116b: [Earth] Bird X = 1489: seventh visit to Tibet; recovered the *rTa-phag* [?] and *Padma Gu-ru* [?] at Lhodrak Mendo
- 117b: ?: recovered treasure from Mönkharteng
- 119a: Iron Dog = 1490: returned to Bumthang
- 122a: V: to Künzangdrak
- 122b: VI: recovered treasure from Jadrak at Tharpaling
- 123b–125a: VI?: entrusted with the *rGyud-bu-chung* [30] discovered earlier by Sherab Membar
- 125a: VII: founded the monastery of Dekyiling
- 125b: X: to Baribrang, his birthplace at Chel
- 125b–126b: Horse = ?: eighth visit to Tibet (Lhodrak); restoration of the Kyeréchung temple
- 128a: [Water] Bull II = 1493: to Tharpaling
- 129a: Sheep = ?: ninth visit to Tibet (Lhodrak); consecrates the restored temple of Kyeréchung (Tashi Rabten)
- 130a: IX: returned to Bumthang
- 130a: X: to Samten Nyashong
- 130b: [Fire] Snake I = 1497: to Buli-Tali
- 130b: [Earth] Horse = 1498: to Kurélung after consecrating the Chökhhor temple
- 132a: IV: constructed a stupa for one Nubkar
- 132b–134b: [Earth] Sheep II = 1499: to Longchenpa's monastery at Künzangling (western Bhutan)
- 134b–135a: XI: dream of the “mad monks”
- 135a–b: VII: tenth visit to Tibet; begging tour to Yarong, Kharchung, Chakharzung etc.
- 135b: [Iron] Monkey I = 1500: *gson-'gyed* rite for Ugyenkhyen
- 136a: VI: *bdun-tshigs* rite for Guru Rinchen at Rung in Tang
- 136a: IX: cremation of Lama Gyamtsodar at Tharpaling

- 136b: [Iron] Bird I = 1501: consecrated new images [for Pönpo Künthub ?]
- 137a–138b: III: dream of Padmasambhava's heaven
- 139a: VII: transcribed the *Bla-ma nor-bu rgya-mtsho*
- 139b: [Iron] Bird XI = 1501: laid the foundations for a new temple at Tamshing
- 140b: [Water] Dog Summer = 1502: eleventh visit to Tibet, for funeral of the *nangso* of Lhodrak, Sonam Gyalpo (Lhalung, Nangkartse, Ney etc.)
- 143b–144b: [Water] Pig III = 1503: completion of roof for the new temple of Tamshing Lhakhang; the courtyard measured out
- 144b–147a: VI: twelfth visit to Tibet, at the invitation of the seventh Karmapa Lama (Lhalung, Taglung, Naring Gömpa, Nangkartse, Shigatse, Kharuteng, Talung, Dangtro, Lhalung etc.); meeting with the *nangso* of Lhalung, Gyalwa Döndrup
- 148b: IX: returned to Bumthang; work at Tamshing continued
- 149b: XI: consecrated new images for Tamshing
- 150a: [Wood] Rat II = 1504: to Kurélung
- 150a: V: returned to Bumthang
- 151a: IX: recovered treasure from Rimochen
- 153b: [Wood] Bull I = 1505: consecration of Tamshing (Lhundrup Chöling); composed dance
- 157b–158b: Water [*rect.* Wood] Bull IX = 1505: thirteenth visit to Tibet; consecrated new images at Lhalung; dream of the mountain-god Khari
- 159a: [Fire] Tiger = 1506: restoration of Longchenpa's chamber at Tharpaling by Lama Karpo (Karpo Kunga Drakpa)
- 159b: [Fire] Hare II–VII = 1507: construction and consecration of new *kag-ñi* at Khamphuk
- 159b: I: expounded the *dGongs-pa kun-'dus*
- 161a: [Fire] Hare = 1507: expounded the *Bla-ma nor-bu rgya-mtsho*
- 161a: II: fourteenth visit to Tibet (Zekhar, Dangtro, Dowo Dzong, Karpogang, Dringmön)
- 162a: IX: returned to Bumthang

- 162a–164b: XII: invited to Shar Dongkha (now in Arunachal Pradesh) by King Jophak Darma
- 164b–170b: [Earth] Dragon X = 1508: fifteenth visit to Tibet (Nengön Gömpa, Mönkharteng, Lhalung); dream of the Buddhist cosmos
- 171b: VIII: returned to Bumthang
- 171b: [Earth] Bird [*rect.* Snake ?] = 1509: to Kurélung
- 171b: VI: founded the monastery of Dechenling near Künzangdrak
- 172a: ?: restored the monastery of Bamrin Langmathil
- 172a: [Iron] Horse = 1510: strife with the Ngalong (western Bhutanese)
- 172b–175a: [Iron] Sheep III = 1511: sixteenth visit to Tibet, at the invitation of the *bdag-chen* of Gyangtse, Döndrup Phakpa, and his son Rabten Phakpa (Lhalung, Ney, Thempa, Drachungthang, Gyangtse, Rogo, Ney, Lhalung); meeting with Drukpa Kunley at Rogo
- 175b: VI: to Tsampa and Ngang
- 176b: VII: consecrated new image of Padmasambhava at Dechenling
- 177b–179b: aged 61 [Iron] Sheep summer = 1511: poisoned at Tsanglung
- 179b–180b: [Water] Monkey III = 1512: seventeenth visit to Tibet, for funeral of Tamdrin, the *nangso* of Lhalung; restoration of Samtenling
- 180b: [Water] Bird X = 1513: eighteenth visit to Tibet, for consecration of new temple at Samyé; recovered the *Manngag-gi skor* [32?] and the *Drag-po mthing-ka zhal-gcig phyag-gnyis* [32?]
- 185a: [Wood] Dog I = 1514: returned to Bumthang
- 185a: II: expounded the *Mun-sel sgron-me* at Dechenling
- 185b: IX: nineteenth visit to Tibet, for the funerary memorials of the *nangso* of Lhalung, Gyalpo; restoration of the temple at Chel after returning to Bumthang
- 186a: [Wood] Pig = 1515: twentieth visit to Tibet (Talung and Nangkartse); returned for funeral of his brother Pema Tashi

- 186b: [Fire] Rat I = 1516: performed rites under patronage of *Ama Doramo*
- 186b: III: to Yuwashing for funeral rites
- 187a–190b: [Fire] Rat VII = 1516: dream at Dechenling of the skyfarers' heaven
- 190b–191a: V: meeting with King Jophak Darma at Shamling
- 191b: [Fire] Bull autumn = 1517: to Ura for begging trip; invited to Sombrang
- 191b: I: expounded the *rGyud-bu-chung* at Dechenling
- 192a–194b: VI: twenty-first visit to Tibet, at the invitation of the *nangso* of Lhalung (Lhalung, Ney, Thü, Samtenling, Lhalung, Gyi, Dowo Dzong etc.); meeting with the Talungpa at Thu
- 194b: VIII: returned to Bumthang
- 194b: aged 68 = 1517: fell sick, recovered
- 194b: [Earth] Tiger III = 1518: bestowed initiation of the *bKa'-brgyad* at Tamshing
- 195a: V: expounded the *Bla-ma nor-bu rgya-mtsho* at Bamrin Bula Gömpa
- 195a: VI: expounded the *dGongs-pa kun-'dus*
- 196a: [Earth] Tiger VIII = 1518: twenty-second visit to Tibet, at the invitation of the *nangso* of Lhalung (Drakar, Lodrö Dzong, Lhalung, Ney, Guru Lhakang, Samtenling, Lhalung, Dangtro, Chukhyer Dzong, Saphuk etc.)
- [198b: end of Pemalingpa's autobiography; continued from here by Gyalwa Döndrup]
- 198b: [Earth] Hare = 1519: twenty-third visit to Tibet, meeting with the *nangso* of Lhalung at Shingo
- 204a–219b: [Iron] Dragon IX = 1520: twenty-fourth and final visit to Tibet; meeting with the *nangso* of Lhalung at Saphuk; long tour including Talung and Nangkartse
- 233a: ?: meeting with the *nangso* at Tsampa
- 227b: [Iron] Dragon XI = 1520: fell sick; violent snowstorm in Bumthang
- 234a–b: [Iron] Snake I = 1521: Pemalingpa died at Tamshing
- 244a–b: XI: final funeral ceremonies at Tamshing

Appendix 2: Chronology of the Secret Life of the Sixth Dalai Lama According to Dargye Nomunqan

Page numbers on the left are those of the LHTBR (Peoples Publishing House, Beijing, 1981).

- 57: Water Pig = 1683: born in La'ok Yulsum, Mönyul;
- 58: Fire Bull = 1697: installed in the Potala Palace as the Sixth Dalai Lama;
- 58: Fire Bull IX/17 = 1697: ordained by the Panchen Lama Lobsang Yeshé; began studies;
- 65–73: Fire Pig = 1707: taken to China under escort, but escaped at Kunganor and began life of a wandering pilgrim in disguise; meetings with the Arik and Ashul tribes; proceeded to Gyalmorong;
- 73: Earth Rat VII = 1708: reached Dorgé in Tsawarong; fell sick of smallpox and recovered; befriended by one Kachuchap in the “lower ravine” country and meditated in a cave there for three months; proceeded by way of Tsakho, Sakar and Tachienlu to the Langchen shrine in China, and thence to Lithang and Bathang;
- 81: Earth Bull IV = 1709: reached Assam; returned to Tibet and went to Lhasa, Drepung and Sera by way of the Katsel monastery; recognized as the Dalai Lama at the Sera hermitage by *Je Gelek Gyamtso* and spent a month in retreat there; befriended by one Tsangdok Powa at Ganden; spent about a year in retreat at the Draksok monastery, whose lama was his former disciple; departed for Samyé, Thrandrük, Ölkha and Metothang;
- 87: Iron Tiger = 1710: pilgrimage to Tsari in south-east Tibet; studied meditation with a Kagyüpa lama called Marpo at Tsari Chikchar and held a retreat there for several months; vision of the *dākinīs*; practised *rasāyana* at the hermitage of Ölkha Gangnang for eleven (?) months; visions of Tsongkhapa and Cakrasaṃvara;

- 92: Iron Hare VII = 1711: offered juniper smoke from the summit of Odé Gungyal; reached Samtenling; captured by people sent to look for him by Lajang Khan; imprisoned at Ölkha Taktse Dzong; escorted to Lhasa under guard, but escaped on the Gökarla pass and fled to Kongpo; spent several months in retreat at Gyala Sengdong; chased and attacked by watch dogs; met Loja, who then accompanied him as his servant for many years; departed for India, and chased on the way by “man-bears”; visits his home in Mönyul and from there went to Nepal;
- 102: Water Dragon X fourth = 1712: joined the party of the king of Bhatgaon on pilgrimage to India after visiting the Buddhist sites of the Kathmandu valley; subdues two zombies in India;
- 107: Water Snake IV = 1713: reached Gṛidhrakūta; visited Pulahari; met the mythical six-tusked elephant; returned to Nepal and meditated there for several months;
- 114: Wood Horse = 1714: returned to his birthplace in Mönyul by way of Nyanam, Dingri etc., and proceeded from there to Dakpo by way of the monastery of Bangrim Chödé; after visiting the monastery of Dakpo Dratsang in Or, a tour of all the monasteries in the E region including Rongchakar; also Chökhorgyal and thence to Lhasa again;
- 116: Wood Sheep XI second = 1715: recognized as the Dalai Lama by the oracle of Drepung;
- 120: Fire Monkey spring = 1716: left Lhasa in a party of “offering-collectors” from the monasteries of Meru and Zhidé; saved a monk from drowning in the Yellow River, but while doing so lost his prized “self-reproducing” relic; arrived at Kokonor in the autumn, and proceeded from Hsining to the monastery of Serkhok, where he was recognized by Mel Drubchen and another monk, both of whom had known him in Lhasa;
- 123: [Fire Monkey] X/12 = 1716: met Badzrachap *taiji*, the father of his future biographer, at Tsapurosu in the Alashan desert, having reached there from Hsining;
- 126: [Fire Monkey] X/25 = 1716: sings a spiritual song to his new patrons which appeared to recall his past life in veiled terms;

- 132: [Fire] Bird I = 1717: celebrated the New Year in Alashan with his new patrons; II: rode off by himself to the *yamen* of Aboo, ruler of Alashan; miraculously extinguishes a fire which was burning his outer robe; had clairvoyant knowledge that a herdsman to whom he had entrusted his horse was riding it without permission; invited by Aboo to act as the head lama of the region; met Aboo's wife, a Manchu princess, who became his foremost patron; spent two months there performing religious ceremonies and then returned to the estate of Badzrachap *taiji*, where he stayed for several months;
- 141–4: his physical appearance and miraculous powers;
- 144: [Fire Bird] VII = 1717: went to Peking with his patron, the Manchu princess, and resided at Wangiphu (?); toured the imperial palace; visited by a high official (the *A-lo*) who offers to have him restored to his former seat (in the Potala) or else to arrange his appointment by the emperor as the Thamkha Lama, but he declined; the official gave him gifts from the exiled Demo Khutuktu; gave teachings to Ephu Gönpochap and Thuken Khutuktu; recognized by a watchdog brought from Tibet by the sons and daughter of the former regent, Sangye Gyamtso, who were being taken to exile; secretly received the gift of a ring from the daughter; cured the emperor's former physician, *Menrampa* Kunzang, who recognized him as the former Dalai Lama;
- 149: [Earth] Dog spring = 1718: returned with the Manchu princess and stayed on the estate of Badzrachap *thaiji* for about two years;
- 149: [Iron] Rat V = 1720; to the monastery of Serkhok, where he taught Chuzang Rinpoché and Mel Grubchen; returned to Alashan;
- 151: [Iron] Bull V = 1721: to Serkhok again; the elders of Jakrung, a branch monastery of Serkhok, requested him to be their lama; 3/VIII: welcomed there on behalf of the thirteen meditation centres of Jakrung by *Nangso* Zangpo Gyaltzen; offered a libation to a painting of the goddess Lhamo which had been stolen from Tashilhunpo whose presence at Jakrung he had perceived clairvoyantly; prophesied the appointment of Chuktsitsang as *lobchung* of the monastery, the building

- of the “new” Jakrung at Dragak, and his miraculous saving of his disciple Jamo Kachupa; XII: went to Mongolia and thence to Alashan;
- 154: [Water] Hare = 1723: many monasteries destroyed and monks killed, including Chuzang Rinpoche at Serkhok, by Chinese troops in retaliation for the rebellion of Tendzin Wang (*Cingwang* Lobjang Danjin); Jakrung monastery burnt down but Jamo Kachupa miraculously saved;
- 156: [1723] summer: an Indian messenger from the Jebtsundampa Khutuktu of Urga arrived with a request for him to succeed him; he declined and soon after the Jebtsundampa died;
- 158: [Wood] Dragon IV = 1724: taken to Urga by his patron, Aboo of Alashan, to conduct funeral ceremonies for the Jebtsundampa and to give teachings, and thence to the home of Tsetsen (Setsen?) of Hahi and spent a month there giving teachings;
- 163–7: undated prophecy of 97 lines of six syllables each;
- 167–72: prophecy from the *bKa'-gdams glegs-bam* and commentary;
- 172: [Fire] Sheep / Yung-cheng 5 = 1727: began construction of new monastery of Jakrung at Dragak;
- 175: [Iron] Dog = 1730: took part in the celebrations of the Manchu and Chinese troops at Lanchou by performing rituals to mark their victory over the Dzungars; gifts from their commander Yueh Chung-ch'i;
- 176: [Iron] Pig / Yung-cheng 8 = 1731: completed the construction of the new monastery of Jakrung (Thösam Dargyeling; Dakpo Si or *Zhi-mun-zi* [Shi-men Si] in Chinese), which was accorded imperial recognition and privileges; introduced its calendar of rituals and later obtained its code of discipline from the Panchen Lama;
- 178: Yung-cheng 9 = 1732: returned to Alashan with Aboo and his subjects after their seven years' sojourn in the Kokonor region; visited the “Yellow Uigurs” north of Kokonor; acted as the head of thirteen monasteries; visited the monastery of Taitung and recognized as the Dalai Lama by the abbot, Lukya Shabdrung; received the patronage of the abbot's brother Luchap (the *t'u-ssu* of Lo'u) and his sub-

- jects (the *Lo'u Shi-ban* or *Shin-bha*); visited the monasteries of Gönchen, Dragön and *bShon-pa-ha-zi*; miraculously saved a Chinese from drowning in the Julak river; installed on the throne of Taitung and introduced there the ceremonies of the New Year festival as celebrated in Lhasa;
- 182: Yung-cheng 13 = 1735: despatched his future biographer, Dargye Nomunqan, to central Tibet for studies and to procure requisites for the new monastery at Jakrung;
- 183: [Fire] Dragon = 1736: invited by Sisi Namgyal Dorje of Jungar to the monastery of Tashi Chöling in Ordos where he introduced the practice of the summer retreat and the rituals of the *gZhi-gsum*;
- 183: [Earth] Horse = 1738: return of his future biographer from central Tibet;
- 184: Earth Sheep = 1739: introduced to Alashan the ceremonies of the New Year as performed at Lhasa;
- 184: [Iron] Bird = invited again to Ordos by Erkhe Chöjé and others; gave teachings and received gifts; became the head lama of all the chiefs of *A'i-lag-'ga'*(?);
- 185–8: various miracles (out of chronological sequence) and his loss of the “self-reproducing” relic in 1716;
- 188: [Water] Dog = 1742: the oracle of Serkhok recommended curative rites to prolong his life;
- 189: [Water] Pig = 1743: more rites to counteract inauspicious astrological influences;
- 189: [Wood] Bull = 1745: retired from the throne of Taitung; tried to retire from the throne of Jakrung having occupied it for twenty-five years, but agreement on this was not reached;
- 190: [Wood] Bull X/20 = 1745: departed for Mongolia; fell sick; returned to Jakrung;
- 192: [Fire Tiger] I = 1746: took part in New Year celebrations at Jakrung despite illness;
- 192–204: [Fire Tiger] I–V = 1746: omens and events leading to his death;
- 204: [Fire Tiger] V/8 = 1746: death at Jakrung;
- 224: Fire Bull IX = 1757: Dargye Nomunqan composed the “secret” biography at the monastery of Phendé Gyamtsoling in Alashan.

Notes

Part One: Pemalingpa and his Hidden Treasures

1. For a brief sketch of Pemalingpa's life and legacy and for his place in the cult of "spiritual treasure" in Bhutan, see my *Bhutan*, pp. 156–65, esp. pp. 160–5. My assessment of Pemalingpa, however, has undergone some change since that work was written. For sketches by Dünjom and Kongtrul, see Dargyay, *Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*, pp. 147–51; also Nado, *'Brug dkar-po*, pp. 161–5. Pemalingpa is reckoned among Nyingmapa scholars to be the fourth of five "kings of treasure-revealers". The best general introduction to the treasure cult is Gyatso, "Internal Logic of Legitimation as Presented within the Textual Structure of the Tibetan Treasure Cycles". I am indebted to the author of this work for letting me see it in advance of publication. See also her "Signs, Memory and History". For the study of particular "treasure-texts", see for example Blondeau, "Lha-'dre bka'-thang"; Blondeau, "'Découvreur' du *Maṇi bka'-'bum*". For an analysis of two of Pemalingpa's "treasure-texts", see my *Bhutan*, pt. 1, chs. 2–3.

2. RPLZT. I am most grateful to HRH Ashi Phuntsok Chödön for her kind gift of the entire collection.

3. See p. 103 below.

4. BTHTT, fo. 2a.

5. *Ibid.*, fo. 1a.

6. Dünjom Rinpoché, *Pad-gling 'khrungs-rabs rtogs-brjod dad-pa'i me-tog-gi kha-skong mos-pa'i ze'u-'bru*, 15 folios in RPLZT, vol. *pha* (pp. 601–29).

7. PKHRT.

8. BTHTT, fos. 251b–254b.

9. *Ibid.*, fo. 65a.

10. The break occurs *ibid.*, fo. 198b line 4.

11. *Ibid.*, fo. 252b.

12. *Ibid.*, fo. 253a.

13. *Ibid.*, fo. 138b. Similar phrases are found at the end of nearly all the ten dreams recounted in the work which must have served as Gyalwa Dön-drup's main source and which is also contained in Pemalingpa's collected works and "rediscoveries". This is the *mNal-lam dag-s nang-gi skor-rnams phyogs-gcig-tu bsdebs-pa*, 28 folios in RPLZT, vol. *pa* (pp. 3–57).

14. BTHTT, fos. 65b, 157b, 171b; see Appendix 1, pp. 215–21 below.

15. *Ibid.*, fo. 27b.

16. See PKHRT, fo. 15b (Fire Monkey = 1476); also BMYRS, p. 231 (Pemalingpa aged 27 = 1476).

17. BTHTT, fos. 26a–27b.
18. *Ibid.*, fos. 119a–130b.
19. On the affinities of this language, see my *Bhutan*, pp. xv–xvi, 121–1 and fig. 4.
20. Tashi Gyalpo was a disciple of the fourth Shamarpa incarnation. He had connections with Pemalingpa’s ancestral temple at Sombrang, but I do not think he came from there. See the autobiography of Drondul Lethrolingpa, RCHTT, fos. 187a, 189a.
21. BTHTT, fo. 251a–b.
22. The best example is found *ibid.*, fos. 119b–122a.
23. *Ibid.*, fo. 110a.
24. BMYRS, pp. 228–9. For an assessment of this work, see my “New Light on an Old Clan of Bhutan”. Lam Sangak’s work provides an exhaustive survey of Pemalingpa’s “clan” of the Nyö, his family and descendants. It is based on a profusion of minor local sources, mainly from eastern Bhutan.
25. BMYRS, pp. 106–18.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 63–5.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 225.
28. For Tenpai Nyima’s career, see *ibid.*, pp. 225–8.
29. For Döndrup Zangpo’s career, see *ibid.*, pp. 228–9.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 379 *et seq.*
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 393 *et seq.*, and pp. 111–13 below.
33. BTHTT, fo. 24b.
34. *Ibid.*, fos. 2a–24b.
35. For an up-to-date assessment of Padmasambhava, see Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, pp. 397, 430.
36. BTHTT, fos. 4a *et seq.*
37. See Blondeau, “Analysis of the Biographies of Padmasambhava”, p. 45.
38. BTHTT, fo. 6b.
39. *Ibid.*, fo. 8b.
40. *Ibid.*, fos. 8b–9b.
41. *Ibid.*, fo. 10a. The inspiration behind the classification of Pemasel’s future lives (Pemalingpa’s own former lives) came from the traditional accounts of the historical Buddha’s former lives, which were similarly divided into the categories of “pure” and “impure”.
42. *Ibid.*, fo. 10b.
43. *Ibid.*, fos. 10b–11b.
44. *Ibid.*, fo. 11b.
45. *Ibid.*, fos. 11b–17a; PKHRT, fos. 5a–6a.
46. BTHTT, fo. 17a.
47. PKHRT, fo. 12a.
48. *Ibid.*, fo. 10b, where the monasteries are listed as Bamrön Tharpaling, Shingkhar Dechenling, Tang Urgyenling, Kurtö Künzangling, Ngenlung Drechangling, Khothang Pemaling, Menlok Künzangling, Paro Samtenling.

49. BTHTT, fo. 18a.
50. *Ibid.*, fo. 21a.
51. *Ibid.*, fo. 23a.
52. *Ibid.*, fo. 24a.
53. *Ibid.*, fo. 24b.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, fo. 25a.
56. *Ibid.*, fo. 25b.
57. *Ibid.*; Aris, *Bhutan*, p. 158; Dargyay, *Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*, pp. 139–143. Two of Dorjelingpa's own autobiographical works are contained in vol. 21 of *Texts of the rDo-rje-gling-pa Tradition from Bhutan*, 22 vols. (Kunzang Tobgeyl, Thimphu, 1984).
58. BTHTT, fos. 25b–26a.
59. *Ibid.*, fo. 26a.
60. See p. 51 below.
61. BTHTT, fo. 26a.
62. *Ibid.*, fo. 26b.
63. *Ibid.*, fos. 26b, 27a.
64. VCBKY, p. 176. See also pp. 87–8 below.
65. BTHTT, fo. 27a.
66. *Ibid.*, fo. 27a–b.
67. *Ibid.*, fo. 27b.
68. *Ibid.*, fos. 28a–29a.
69. *Ibid.*, fo. 29a. For Ratnalingpa, see Dargyay, *Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*, pp. 144–7. See also pp. 40, 93 and n. 73 below.
70. *Ibid.*, fo. 29a–b.
71. *Ibid.*, fos. 29b–30a.
72. *Ibid.*, fos. 30a–31b.
73. *Ibid.*, fos. 31b–32b. The *Bod-rgya tshig-mdzod chen-mo*, p. 325 *s.a.*, gives the date of 1476 for Ratnalingpa's death, which fits here nicely. However, it says other authorities claim it occurred in 1478. Kongtrul has 1479: Dargyay, *Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*, p. 144.
74. BTHTT, fos. 32b–33a.
75. Quoted by Kongtrul: see Dargyay, *Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*, p. 147. The prophecy begins with the words: "When the village of Phari [belonging to] Gö is overshadowed by forts / And when poison is sold at Takdru / Then the time will have come. / . . ."
76. See p. 58 below.
77. BTHTT, fo. 33b.
78. See Appendix 1, pp. 217–20 below.
79. BTHTT, fos. 33b–35b. Kujé is the greatest of the Padmasambhava shrines in Bumthang and the place where the kings of the present dynasty are cremated after their deaths. For a photograph, see my *Bhutan*, plate 7.
80. *Ibid.*, fo. 78b.
81. *Ibid.*, fos. 106a–107a.
82. *Ibid.*, fo. 41a.

83. *Ibid.*, fo. 118a–b.

84. *Ibid.*, fo. 139a–b.

85. *Ibid.*, fo. 152a. According to the account of the image's provenance, which Pemalingpa says was written out on a roll of yellow paper contained in a brass tube held in the left hand of the image, it was made by an artisan called Dharmabhadra who came from a place in India called Karanta. Commissioned by the Buddha's disciple Maudgalyāyana during a great council convened for the purpose of collecting the Buddha's scriptures, it was only after the image had been installed as an object of worship that the council achieved its work. The image later came into the hands of Padmasambhava who was persuaded to bury it as treasure for Pemalingpa. *Ibid.*, fos. 151b–153b.

86. *Ibid.*, fos. 123b–125a.

87. See my *Bhutan*, p. 158.

88. LCBII, fos. 74b–75a.

89. See pp. 48–50 below.

90. BTHTT, fos. 38b–39b.

91. *Ibid.*, fos. 72a–73b. It seems to have been a common practice for text-discoverers to strip their clothes off before recovering their "treasure", in order to show that it was not concealed on their persons. Certainly Lethrolingpa says he did so before finding treasure at Domtshangrong: RCHTT, fo. 156b. According to my Bönpo friends at their community in Dolanji, a female text-discoverer of their faith is said to have removed her upper garments while undertaking a successful search in recent years.

92. *Ibid.*, fos. 40a, 59b, 78b, 101b, 106a, 118a, 151b.

93. *Ibid.*, fo. 40a.

94. *Ibid.*, fo. 151b. See p. 45 and n. 85 above.

95. See for instance *ibid.*, fo. 37a.

96. *Ibid.*, fos. 59b, 76a.

97. See pp. 98–101 below.

98. *Padma-gling-pa'i gsung-'gros log-lta-can sun-'byin-pa seng-ge'i nga-ro*, 10 folios in RPLZT, vol. *pa* (pp. 493–511). See Gyatso, "Internal Logic of Verification", p. 18, some of whose translations I give here. For the song enumerating the "false teachings" (*zog-po'i chos-lugs*), see *Bslab-bya zhus-lan-gyi skor-rnams phyogs-gcig-tu bsdebs-pa*, fos. 1a–3b in RPLZT, vol. *pa*, pp. 260–4.

99. For a full discussion of Pemalingpa's treasure-text concerning Khyikha Ratö, see my *Bhutan*, part 1, ch. 3, pp. 60–82.

100. BTHTT, fos. 43a–52a (1481), 84a–b (1485), 92a–94b (1510, out of sequence), 134b–135a (1499), 137a–138b (1501), 158a–159a (1505), 164b–170b (1508), 187b–190b (1516).

101. *Ibid.*, fos. 164b–170b.

102. *Ibid.*, fos. 43a–52a.

103. *Ibid.*, fos. 137a–138b.

104. *Ibid.*, fos. 92b, 137a, 187a.

105. *Ibid.*, fo. 92b.

106. See my *Bhutan*, pp. 127–8; Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, p. 204; Macdonald, “Lecture des Pelliot tibétain 1286, 1287, 1047 et 1290”, pp. 292–309.
107. BTHTT, fo. 158b.
108. See Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, pp. 111–15.
109. Eliade, *Shamanism*, pp. 428–41.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 507.
111. BTHTT, fo. 154a.
112. See my “New Light on an Old Clan of Bhutan”.
113. BTHTT, fos. 52b–53a. Control of the weather is one of the powers credited to Tibetan lamas in all periods, starting probably with Marco Polo: “These people are necromancers, and by their infernal art perform the most extraordinary and delusive enchantments that were ever seen or heard of. They cause tempests to arise, accompanied with flashes of lightning and thunderbolts, and produce many other miraculous effects” (*Travels of Marco Polo*, p. 239).
114. See for example BTHTT, fo. 76b.
115. *Ibid.*, fos. 199b, 222a, 226b.
116. See especially *ibid.*, fos. 59a, 60a, 91b, 106b, 126b, 150a, 150b, 180a.
117. *Ibid.*, fos. 123a, 150a, 178a, 180a (*snang-ba zi-bun-ne-ba*), 117b (*snang-ba zi-bun-pa'i ngang*), 59b (*shes-pa bun-ne-ba*), 101a (*nyams-'bar-nas*), 37a (*lus bzi thom-pa zbig*), 74b (*snang-ba gtad-med*), etc.
118. *Loc. cit.* For magical handprints and footprints, see especially *ibid.*, fos. 35a, 37b, 65a, 67a, 74b, 100b, 101b, 123a, 143b, 150a, 150b, 180a.
119. O’Flaherty, *Dreams, Illusions and Other Realities*, p. 78.
120. BTHTT, fo. 77b.
121. *Ibid.*, fos. 38a–b. The lama probably belonged to the school of the Shangpa Kagyü.
122. *Ibid.*, fo. 38b.
123. *Ibid.*, fos. 85b–88a.
124. *Ibid.*, fo. 88b.
125. *Ibid.*, fos. 54b–55a.
126. *Ibid.*, fos. 114b–116a. For a translation of this passage, see my *Bhutan*, pp. 61–2.
127. BTHTT, fos. 119a–122a. The song is also reproduced in *Thugs nges-'byung skyo-shas-kyis bskul-nas / rang-babs-su mdzad-pa-rnams phyogs-cig-tu bsdebs-pa*, fos. 6a–8b, in RPLZT, vol. *pa*, pp. 207–12.
128. *Ibid.*, fo. 185a–b.
129. *Ibid.*, fo. 128a.
130. *Ibid.*, fo. 159b.
131. *Ibid.*, fo. 221a–b.
132. See p. 71 below.
133. *Ibid.*, fo. 171b.
134. *Ibid.*, fo. 176a.
135. *Ibid.*, fo. 177a–b.
136. *Ibid.*, fos. 177b–179b.

137. They are found together *ibid.*, fos. 136b, 187a, 192a.
138. See for instance LCBII, fo. 78a.
139. BTHTT, fo. 244b.
140. The *nangso* who are named include Gögö Gyalwa (fos. 72a–b, 126a, 127b), Künzang (119a), Sonam Gyalpo (140b, 158a), Könchok Zangpo (141a), Tamdrin (175a, 179b), and Pemalingpa's main patron in his later years, Gyalwa Döndrup (141a *et seq.*, he is commonly referred to as *nang-so chos-mdzad*).
141. See *mKhyen brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*, trans. Ferrari, p. 139 n. 393.
142. On the Phamodrupa and their successors, the Rinpungpa, see especially Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, ch. 5; VCBKY, pp. 19–21.
143. BTHTT, fo. 74a.
144. *Ibid.*, fo. 143a.
145. *Ibid.*, fo. 159a.
146. *Ibid.*, fos. 144b–147a.
147. The *Lung-bstan kun-gsal me-long*, 60 folios in RPLZT, vol. *ka* (pp. 19–138), forms part of the *Bla-ma nor-bu rgya-mtsho* cycle. It is followed by the much shorter prophecy of the *Lung-bstan gsal-byed 'od-kyi dra-ba*, six folios (pp. 139–49). Other prophecies in the collection are the *Lung-bstan gsal-byed sgron-me*, 4 folios in volume *ga* (pp. 555–61), and the *Lung-bstan mu-tig phreng-ba*, 2 folios in volume *nga* (pp. 13–15).
148. BTHTT, fos. 98b–99a. The *Drag* referred to here was the cycle of the *Bla-ma drag-po yang-gsang bla-med* which Pemalingpa claimed to have discovered at the rock of Kujé in 1482: see p. 74 below and Appendix 1, p. 217.
149. See the Fifth Dalai Lama, *Bod-kyi deb-ther dpyid-kyi rgyal-mo'i glu-dbyangs*, pp. 17–182, esp. p. 182; *Blue Annals*, trans. Roerich, pp. 1087–91, esp. p. 1090; VCBKY, p. 85. See also my *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, p. 79, n. 26.
150. *Blue Annals*, trans. Roerich, p. 1090: he “enjoyed both the religious and secular spheres, as he would a summer stream”.
151. BTHTT, fos. 95a–99b.
152. See VCBKY, chart facing p. 10.
153. BTHTT, fos. 172b–173a, at fo. 173a. For a brief history of the family, and mention of Döndrup Phakpa, see the Fifth Dalai Lama, *Bod-kyi deb-ther dpyid-kyi rgyal-mo'i glu-dbyangs*, pp. 175–7. For their chronicles, see Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, pp. 662 *et seq.*
154. BTHTT, fos. 162a–164b. For a more detailed resumé of this visit, and for the history of these “kings” of Dongkha (or Domkha), see my *Bhutan*, pp. 103–6. To the references given there may be added the account of the visit by the treasure-hunter Lethrolingpa to Trangpodar, son of King Jophak Darma: see RCHTT, fos. 199b–200a. The author was thirty-nine at the time, but the year cannot be fixed as we do not know his dates.
155. Aris, *Bhutan*, p. 105.
156. BTHTT, fos. 190b–191a.
157. *Ibid.*, fo. 161b.

158. *Ibid.*, fo. 112a–b.
159. *Ibid.*, fos. 144b–147a.
160. *Ibid.*, fo. 209b.
161. BMYRS, p. 232, and *passim*.
162. See pp. 93, 95 below.
163. BMYRS, p. 232.
164. BTHTT, fos. 136b–137a.
165. See p. 93 below.
166. BTHTT, fo. 155a.
167. *Ibid.*, fo. 175b.
168. *Ibid.*, fo. 206a.
169. See pp. 94–6 below.
170. RCHTT, fo. 161a.
171. *Ibid.*, fos. 160b–185a *passim*. The events at Tamshing may possibly be those described by Pemalingpa himself in BTHTT, fo. 161a. Elsewhere he records the song on the *Mahāmudrā* teachings which he sung on this occasion to the nun Dechen Karmo: *Thugs nges-'byung skyo-shas-kyis bskul-nas / rang-babs-su mdzad-pa-rnams phyogs-gcig-tu bsdebs-pa*, fos. 24b–25a, in RPLZT, vol. *pa*, pp. 244–5.
172. RCHTT, fos. 187a–188a.
173. *Ibid.*, fos. 188a–189a.
174. *Ibid.*, fos. 189a–190a.
175. *Ibid.*, fo. 196b.
176. *Ibid.*, fo. 196a.
177. BTHTT, fo. 250a–b: Chokden Gönpö, Changchublingpa Sonam Chökyong, Zablung Trulku, Chögyal Wangpo, Langlung Kukye and Drangso Chödze.
178. *Ibid.*, fo. 175a.
179. VCBKY, p. 93.
180. BTHTT, fo. 186a.
181. VCBKY, p. 176.
182. 'Gro-ba'i mgon-po chos-rje Kun-dga' Legs-pa'i rnam-thar rgya-mtsho'i snying-po mthong-ba don-ldan, pp. 74–9. See *Divine Madman*, trans. Dowman and Sonam Paljor, pp. 99–101.
183. See Aris, "‘Boneless Tongue’", p. 145 and n. 23.
184. VCBKY, *passim*, esp. the entries listed in the vocabulary, p. 436 s.v. *rjogs-chen*.
185. BTHTT, fos. 198b–234b.
186. *Ibid.*, fos. 198b–204a.
187. *Ibid.*, fos. 204a–218a.
188. *Ibid.*, fo. 218a–b.
189. *Ibid.*, fos. 218b–219a.
190. *Ibid.*, fos. 220a–225a.
191. *Ibid.*, fo. 225a–b.
192. *Ibid.*, fo. 226b.
193. *Ibid.*, fos. 227a–229a.

194. *Ibid.*, fos. 229b–230b.
195. *Ibid.*, fos. 231a–232a.
196. *Ibid.*, fos. 232a–234b.
197. Blondeau, “Lha-’dre bka’-thang”; Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, p. 275; Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, pp. 397–8, 406.
198. See for instance Dowman, *Sky Dancer*, pp. 289–93, esp. p. 291.
199. See for instance Dargyay, *Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*. Gyatso, “Internal Logic of Legitimation”, recognizes the apocryphal nature of the texts while explaining all the attempts to legitimize them, but avoids discussion of the motivation and process of forgery.
200. “In reality the rediscoverers . . . gave their own interpretations to the troves they had recovered”: Prats, “Some Preliminary Considerations Arising from a Biographical Study of the Early *gTer-ston*”, p. 257. “Such texts may then have been edited to suit contemporary tastes”: Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, p. 275. Stein, however, is the only authority who openly admits to the possibility of outright fraud: “The critical historian would regard them as apocrypha, composed, hidden and intentionally rediscovered by authors wishing to give a religious lustre to their work”: *ibid.*, pp. 274–5.
201. Snellgrove and Richardson, *Cultural History of Tibet*, p. 172.
202. See pp. 21–4 above.
203. This was in the village of Uchu in the Paro valley of western Bhutan. On the status and work of Tibetan smiths, see Rauber-Schweizer, *Der Schmied und sein Handwerk im traditionellen Tibet*.
204. BMYRS, pp. 228–9.
205. See p. 32 above.
206. See pp. 26–31 above.
207. BTHTT, fo. 148b.
208. *Ibid.*, fo. 180a.
209. In fact all treasure-revealers are conventionally depicted wearing Padmasambhava’s crown.
210. See pp. 92–3 above.
211. This point is well made by Snellgrove and Richardson, *Cultural History of Tibet*, p. 97, in connection with the stories told about Padmasambhava.
212. See pp. 53–63 above.
213. The oral traditions concerning Pemalingpa’s swords, knives, ritual daggers and millstones are discussed in Nado, *’Brug dkar-po*, p. 164.
214. For a photograph of this object, see Aris, *Bhutan*, plate 3, and for discussion pp. 37–8.
215. BTHTT, fo. 111a.
216. *Four Lamas of Dolpo*, ed. and trans. Snellgrove, i, p. 104 and n. 4.
217. BTHTT, fos. 245b–251b.
218. See Dargyay, *Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*, p. 151.
219. For Pemalingpa’s incarnations, see Aris, *Bhutan*, pp. 163–4.
220. See Aris, “New Light on an Old Clan of Bhutan”.
221. *Ibid.* For a contemporary account of the emergence of the Bhutanese monarchy, see White, *Sikhim and Bhutan*, chs. 13–19.

Part Two: The Sixth Dalai Lama and his Secret Lives

1. For discussion of the Sixth Dalai Lama's historical role, see Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, pp. 85, 139–40, 272; Snellgrove and Richardson, *Cultural History of Tibet*, pp. 204–8; Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, pp. 128–30, 132–3, 136; Bell, *Religion of Tibet*, pp. 137–42; Norbu and Turnbull, *Tibet: Its History, Religion and People*, ch. 14; Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, pp. 9, 15–7.

For translations and discussion of the poetry attributed to the Sixth Dalai Lama, see also the works cited in n. 131 below. For discussions of his “secret” biography dealing with events after 1706, see the works cited in nn. 172–80 below.

2. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, chs. 6–8; Snellgrove and Richardson, *Cultural History of Tibet*, chs. 7–8; Tucci, *Religions of Tibet*, pp. 39–43; Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, pp. 83–8; Aris, *Bhutan*, pt. 3.

3. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, pp. 125–8; Petech, *Tibet and China in the Early XVIIIth Century*, p. 9; Macdonald, “Portrait du Cinquième Dalai-Lama”, pp. 134–8.

4. Aris, *Bhutan*, pt. 3 ch. 2.

5. BTHTT, fos. 113b–114a; and THCKH, fos. 74a–b, quoting an edition of BTHTT where the passage comes on fo. 101a–b.

6. See pp. 72–4 above; GBKNG, fo. 95b, where the girl's father has been turned into his brother and his name garbled from that of his village: *rJe-rus So-mkhar-pa* from *Rus-bu-mkhar* or *Rus-po-mkhar*; OGGGK, fo. 66b, where the Japa Tripön's name is wrongly given as Tashi Namgyal; also THCKH, fo. 73b, where he is said to have abducted the girl on account of her beauty. Yeshé Thrinley in his “Mon-yul-gyi gzhi-rtsa'i gnas-tshul”, p. 132, says the girl's father was a local ruler called *Hrog-mkhar-ba*.

7. On the common derivation and affinities of these two languages, see Aris, *Bhutan*, pp. xv–xvi, 121 and p. 122 fig. 4.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 99 table 5. See also Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, pp. 44–5.

9. Aris, *Bhutan*, pp. 99–100.

10. While Lobsang Tenpai Drönmé figures in the pedigree *ibid.*, Tsangpa Lobsang Khetsün finds mention in MPHYZ, lines 16, 19–20. They were respectively the third and seventh sons of *Jowo Dargye*. For the monasteries they founded, see *ibid.*, lines 15–20. The only Gelukpa to have preceded them in the area seems to have been a certain Tsangtön Rölpai Dorje: *ibid.*, lines 8–13. Like his own student Lobsang Tenpai Drönmé, Tsangtön Rölpai Dorje was a disciple of the Second Dalai Lama (1475–1542).

11. For the regent's reconstruction of Tsewang Lhamo's pedigree, see THCKH, fos. 80a–81b. Cf. the names in the left-hand column of the Table in my *Bhutan*, p. 99, which were extracted from the *rGyal-rigs 'byung-khungs gsal-ba' sgron-me*, ch. 2 (Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, Text I). The regent omitted all but one of the siblings who were not the direct ancestors of Tsewang Lhamo. He allows a gap of several generations between Nyatri (or

Khyikha Rathö) and Gongkarjé, who settled in La'ok Yulsum and founded the household of the Tsosum Lha'u Khampa. The line is as follows: (1) Gongkarjé, (2) Tsünchung, (3) *Jowo* Gyaltzen Drakpa (married Lamakyi, daughter of Tongdé), (4) *Jowo* Lhundrup (took control of Berkhar), (5) *Jowo* Sangchung, (6) *Jowo* Sangdor, (7) *Jowo* Dargye (patron of Thangtong Gyalpo), (8) *Jowo* Tashi Dargye, (9) *Jowo* Tashi Zangpo, (10) *Jowo* Sandzin, (11) *Jowo* Dargye, (12) *Jowo* Karma Dorje (married Abudhi of Shar Murenshing), (13) Tsewang Lhamo. On Khyikha Rathö, see my *Bhutan*, pp. 1 ch. 3, and pp. 52–3 above.

12. RCHTT, fo. 160b.

13. OGGGK, fos. 65b–66a. See also THCKH, fo. 73a, which describes Ugyen Zangpo flying from Bumthang to Ugyenling on a blue horse.

14. BTHTT, fo. 114a. The priority of Sangyeling was also noted by the regent, and on the same evidence: THCKH, fo. 73b.

15. BPNGG, fo. 2a–b.

16. *Ibid.*, fos. 2b–3a.

17. GBKNG, fos. 92a–99a. I have depended on notes taken from a copy of this very rare work which I saw in 1979 at Tawang, within a few miles of Ugyenling. See also THCKH, fos. 80a–81b.

18. OGGGK, fo. 67a.

19. GBKNG, fo. 97a–b; cf. THCKH, fos. 75a–76b.

20. GBKNG, fo. 97a–b.

21. OGGGK, fo. 67a–b; THCKH, fo. 76a–b.

22. Aris, *Bhutan*, pp. 212, 219–24.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 224–8, p. 326 n. 53.

24. Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, Text II, pp. 88–120.

25. He appears as the Tawang Lama Chöying Gyamtso from La'ok Yulsum in the Bhutanese chronicle of this campaign: *ibid.*, pp. 88–9. See THCKH, fo. 75a–b, where he is still said to be alive at the time of its composition.

26. MPHDZ, line 22.

27. The following is a very brief summary of sections 4 and 5 of MPHDZ (lines 32–79), which I hope to study in detail at some future date.

28. The edict is edited, translated and annotated in my “Notes on the History of the Mon-yul Corridor”, pp. 13–20.

29. The following information is based on the detailed description of Mönyul's administrative organization and taxation system provided by Yeshé Thrinley in his “Mon-yul-gyi gzhi-rtsa'i gnas-tshul”, pp. 136–52.

30. See Petch, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, p. 29, where the general of the eastern column is said to have been one Baring *taiji*. There were others too whose names are not recorded. See also my *Bhutan*, p. 259 and p. 330 n. 3.

31. Yeshé Thrinley, “Mon-yul-gyi gzhi-rtsa'i gnas-tshul”, pp. 142–3.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

33. Lamb, *McMahon Line*, ii, pp. 298–9, 534–7, 593.

34. For accounts of Sangye Gyamtso's career, see Gegyepa Tendzin

Dorje, “sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho’i byung-ba don-bsdus rang-bzhin gsong-por smras-pa’i gtam”; Richardson, “The Fifth Dalai Lama’s Decree Appointing Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho as Regent”, pp. 340–3; BKYSR, i, pp. 486–90; Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, pp. 125–32.

35. BKYSR, i, p. 488.

36. Aris, *Bhutan*, p. 235.

37. BKYSR, i, pp. 464–5; Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, pp. 126–7.

38. The construction of the tomb was described by the regent in his two-volume work entitled *mChod-sdong ’dzam-gling rgyan-gcig rten gtsug-lag-khang dang-bcas-pa’i dkar-chag thar-gling rgya-mtshor bgrod-pa’i gru-rdzings byin-rlabs-kyi bang-mdzod*.

39. THCKH, fos. 27a, 173a. Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 44–52, has argued most unconvincingly that the regent did nothing to conceal the Fifth Dalai Lama’s death and that the interpretation put upon his actions later by the Chinese was based on a misinterpretation of Tibetan attitudes to incarnation. This view, however, seems to stem entirely from Ahmad’s own misreading of the sources.

40. *Ibid.*, fo. 27a.

41. See for instance LHTBR, p. 58.

42. *Ibid.*

43. THCKH, fo. 173a.

44. Richardson, “Fifth Dalai Lama’s Decree”, pp. 337–8.

45. BKYSR, i, p. 463; Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, pp. 127–8.

46. Aris, *Bhutan*, pt. 3, chs. 2–3.

47. LHTBR, p. 58 (*thugs-dbang btsan-pa*); BKYSR, i, p. 488 (*sku-dbang btsan-zhing*).

48. THCKH, fo. 1a.

49. Yamaguchi in his *Catalogue of the Toyo Bunko Collection of Tibetan Works on History*, no. 97A-B (pp. 36–7), gives the terminal date of this work as the eleventh month of 1699, but the date I provide here is found on fos. 457b (1701) and 512b (1/X). Ahmad, who fails to recognize the regent’s authorship and constantly and inexplicably refers to the work as the autobiography of the Sixth Dalai Lama, provides the wrong terminal date of the twenty-ninth day of the ninth month (30 October) of 1701: *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 34. There is no indication of when the blocks were carved for this work, but this may have happened after the death of the Seventh Dalai Lama since the work appears as the first item in the collected works of that Dalai Lama: see *Catalogue of the Tohoku University Collection of Tibetan Works on Buddhism*, no. 5823.

50. THCKH, fos. 29b–30a.

51. *Ibid.*, fo. 28a.

52. *Ibid.*, fo. 29a.

53. *Ibid.*, fos. 30b–31b. The account of this incident is repeated on fos. 32b and 98b in such a way as to confuse the date of its occurrence. It may have taken place much later on the thirtieth day of the ninth month of 1685. The regent hops back and forth in his narrative.

54. *Ibid.*, fo. 32b.
55. *Ibid.*, fos. 32b–82b.
56. *Ibid.*, fos. 43b–44b.
57. *Ibid.*, fos. 92b–93b.
58. *Ibid.*, fos. 94b–95a. Dalai Batur was presumably the Khoshuud chief Tendzin Dalai Khan (regn. 1668–86), the “king” of Tibet in this period.
59. *Ibid.*, fo. 98b.
60. *Ibid.*, fos. 96b–100b.
61. *Ibid.*, fo. 100a.
62. *Ibid.*, fos. 101b–102a.
63. *Ibid.*, fos. 102a–104a.
64. *Ibid.*, fos. 96b–97a, 104b.
65. *Ibid.*, fo. 105b.
66. Fletcher, *Quest of Flowers*, pp. 86, 55.
67. For a photograph of the village of Tsona and the fortress in the background, see *ibid.*, facing p. 82.
68. THCKH, fos. 106b–110b.
69. *Ibid.*, fos. 110b–116a.
70. *Ibid.*, fos. 116a–117b.
71. *Ibid.*, fo. 139a.
72. *Ibid.*, fos. 117b–118b, 356b.
73. *Ibid.*, fos. 118b–162b *passim*.
74. *Ibid.*, fo. 120a.
75. *Ibid.*, fo. 121a.
76. *Ibid.*, fo. 123a.
77. *Ibid.*, fo. 124b.
78. *Ibid.*, fo. 129b.
79. *Ibid.*
80. Dawchyan, *Love Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama*, p. 203; Van Heurck, *Chants attribués à Tsang Yang Gyatso*, p. 16. See also Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p. 77: “a few small liturgical works are attributed to him, but love affairs and frivolous pleasures kept him away from severe ecclesiastical studies”.
81. THCKH, fo. 132a.
82. *Ibid.*, fo. 139b. For another of his “secret” works, see Karmay, *Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama*, which unfortunately I have been unable to consult as it is still in press at the time of writing.
83. See for instance Bell, *Religion of Tibet*, p. 137; Norbu and Turnbull, *Tibet*, p. 282.
84. THCKH, fos. 118b–162b *passim*.
85. *Ibid.*, fo. 126b.
86. *Ibid.*, fo. 129b.
87. *Ibid.*, fo. 124b.
88. *Ibid.*, fo. 132a.
89. *Ibid.*, fo. 136a.
90. *Ibid.*, fos. 132a–139a.

91. *Ibid.*, fo. 141a.
92. *Ibid.*, fo. 144a.
93. *Ibid.*, fo. 145b.
94. *Ibid.*, fos. 144a, 150b–151a.
95. For accounts of Galdan's career and conflicts, see Bawden, *Modern History of Mongolia*, pp. 63–70, 74–8; Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 230–323.
96. Translated in Spence, *Emperor of China*, p. 21.
97. THCKH, fos. 151a–152a. Galdan is referred to here as the *sBo-shog-thu rGyal-po* (Boshuḡtu Khan, “Khan by Divine Grace”), a title conferred on him by the Fifth Dalai Lama. The name of the Manchu official Boojū (see Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, p. 9) is spelt *sBo'u-ju* in this source. For an attempted translation of this difficult passage in THCKH, see Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 310–12. The difficulties are not lessened by Ahmad's wrong attribution of authorship to Tsangyang Gyamtso, but the Chinese sources he uses (*ibid.*, pp. 306–9) to complement the passage help to make the exchange clearer.
98. THCKH, fos. 167a–b, 168a–b; BKYSR, pp. 467–8; Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, p. 128; Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, p. 9; Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 312–20.
99. THCKH, fos. 145a–150b, 152a–153a.
100. GBKNG, fo. 1a.
101. THCKH, fo. 160a–b.
102. *Ibid.*, fo. 164a.
103. *Ibid.*, fos. 173a–174a.
104. BKYSR, p. 469. This detail does not seem to be found in THCKH. Shakabpa may have depended on legend for it.
105. THCKH, fos. 162b–164a.
106. *Ibid.*, fos. 164a–166b.
107. *Ibid.*, fos. 169a–172a.
108. *Ibid.*, fos. 172b–173a.
109. *Ibid.*, fos. 176b–179a.
110. See p. 128 above.
111. See for example Thomas, *Life of Buddha as Legend and History*, p. 345; Takasaki, *Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 345. For the full Tibetan list of the *mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*, see *rGya-Bod tshig-mdzod chen-mo*, pp. 2309–10, under *mtshan bzang-po sum-cu-rtsa-gnyis*.
112. THCKH, fos. 180b–185b.
113. For a photograph by Hugh Richardson of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's encampment in 1939, see Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, plate 3 opposite p. 49. For another photograph by Richardson, this one of the main reception tent, which he informs me was called the Maja Ügur (“The Peacock Tent”), see Mortari Vergara and Béguin (eds.), *Dimore umane, santuari divini / Demeures des hommes, sanctuaires des dieux*, p. 198 fig. 60.
114. THCKH, fos. 185b–186b.

115. *Ibid.*, fos. 187b–191b.
116. *Ibid.*, fos. 198a–212a; BKYSR, pp. 470–1.
117. THCKH, fos. 262/3a, 440a, 457b.
118. *Ibid.*, fos. 420b, 179b, 219a. On the *U-ra gDung Nag-po*, see Aris, *Bhutan*, p. 124.
119. THCKH, fos. 288a, 423b, 428a.
120. See for example *ibid.*, fos. 352b–353a.
121. *Ibid.*, fos. 191^t, 355a–358b, 362a–363a.
122. *Ibid.*, fos. 196b–219a.
123. *Ibid.*, fo. 467a–b. That at least is my interpretation of *dam-pa-nyid-kyi thugs-gnyer mdzad-pas mtshon gsol-ba-btab-rigs-la nged dang yum sogs sur-yang gsan-bzhes mi-gnang-ba*... Also: / *gong-zhabs rin-po-che gsan-bzhes chung-bas gang-ci slar-ci 'gyur-ci mthong-'thing dka'-ba'i skabs-'dir*... /
124. OGGGK, fos. 114a–b, 69b.
125. Aris, “Notes on the History of the Mon-yul Corridor”, p. 12 and p. 17 n. 16.
126. Smith, Introduction to *Kongtrul's Encyclopaedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture*, p. 19 and n. 38.
127. THCKH, fos. 512b–513b.
128. BKYSR, pp. 476–7; Petech, “Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century”, pp. 264–5. Both these accounts depend mainly on the autobiography of this Panchen Lama.
129. BKYSR, pp. 476–7; Petech, “Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century”, pp. 264–5. The Panchen's account is confirmed in the biography of Jamyang Zhepa, abbot of the Gomang College of Drepung, who also entreated the Dalai Lama, saying: “You are the single refuge of Tibet and I beg you not to do this but to look on all the teachings and beings with love”.
130. I base the following on BKYSR, pp. 477–9, 494–5; Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, pp. 129–31.
131. The most thorough study of the songs to date is Van Heurck, *Chants attribués à Tsang Yang Gyatso*. See also Tatz, “Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama”; Dhondup, *Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama*; Houston, *Wings of the White Crane*.
132. Hoffmann, Introduction to Houston, *Wings of the White Crane*, p. xvii, quoting the report of the Manchu general Funingga.
133. Van Heurck, no. 48. The translations are mine, though partly based on those of others. The term *vidyādhara* (Tib. *rig-'dzin*, “wisdom-holder”) is a title given to tantric practitioners, particularly those of the Nyingmapa school.
134. For a thorough discussion of this tradition, see Goldstein, “Lhasa Street Songs”.
135. Van Heurck, no. 34.
136. This is the work entitled *Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho'i rnam-thar snyan-'grugs-kyis bkod-pa*, 10 folios, listed in Yamaguchi, *Catalogue of the Toyo Bunko Collection of Tibetan Works on History*, no. 450–2789. The

edition is undated, but my friend Mr. Tashi Tsering is of the opinion that it can be placed in the later eighteenth century from the style of the block carving.

137. Van Heurck, nos. 15, 16, 17, 18, 23.
138. *Ibid.*, nos. 46–7, 55.
139. *Ibid.*, nos. 2, 41, 44.
140. *Ibid.*, nos. 19, 54.
141. Quoted in BKYSR, p. 495.
142. *Ibid.*, pp. 478–9.
143. *Ibid.*, p. 495.
144. See for instance *ibid.*, p. 477 (Gomang abbot speaking to Demo Trulku); GYBDB, fos. 10b–11a (Changkya Rölpai Dorje).
145. See for instance Norbu and Turnbull, *Tibet: Its History, Religion and People*, pp. 286–7; Hoffmann, Introduction to Houston, *Wings of the White Crane*, p. xviii *et seq.*; Dhondup, *Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama*, pp. 33, 39.
146. Hoffmann, Introduction, pp. xvi *et seq.*
147. *Ibid.*, pp. xx–xxi.
148. THCKH, fo. 175a.
149. BKYSR, pp. 477, 495.
150. Dhondup, *Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama*, p. 32.
151. BKYSR, pp. 479–80; Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, pp. 129–30.
152. Petech, “Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century”, pp. 270–1; Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, pp. 9–10.
153. Petech, “Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century”, pp. 271–2; Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, pp. 10–11. BKYSR, p. 481, claims that Gongkar was given to Sangye Gyamtso on this occasion, but Petech says this is the place to which he was shortly to be exiled.
154. BKYSR, p. 482.
155. Richardson, “Fifth Dalai Lama’s Edict Appointing Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho as Regent”, p. 343.
156. Petech, “Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century”, p. 275; Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, pp. 12–13; BKYSR, pp. 483–4. On the attempted intervention of the Dalai Lama, see Gegyepa Tendzin Dorje, “sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho’i byung-ba don-bsdus”, p. 42. This tends to conflict with the story told by the Jesuit Desideri that the ex-regent was arrested on the strength of an order which the Dalai Lama had sealed while in a state of intoxication: Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, p. 12 n. 5.
157. Petech, “Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century”, p. 275. GYBDB, fos. 45b, 53b, has mention of, firstly, the two elder sons and later the two younger sons of Sangye Gyamtso visiting the Seventh Dalai Lama at Kumbum. Gegyepa Tendzin Dorje, “sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rGyam-tsho’i byung-ba don-bsdus”, p. 42, holds that the exiled family included the regent’s two wives, the sons Ngawang Rinchen and Ngawang Tsöndrö, an unnamed daughter and several government officials. BKYSR, pp. 489–90, maintains that Ngawang Rinchen escaped and hid at the monastery of Min-

dröling, but that may be a misreading of a passage in the *Mi-dbang rtogs-brjod*. Some sources claim that the regent's children were taken off to exile in China in the same party escorting Tsangyang Gyamtso in 1706: see for instance Sumpa Khenpo, *Annals of Kokonor* [ch. 2], ed. and trans. Yang, pp. 22, 45. See pp. 202–3 below for the alleged contact between the exiles and Tsangyang Gyamtso during the latter's "secret" life.

158. Gegyepa Tendzin Dorje, *loc. cit.*

159. THCKH, fos. 347a, 352b.

160. Petech, "Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century", p. 269.

161. Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, pp. 13–16; BKYSR, pp. 490–1.

162. Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, pp. 16–17; GYBDB, fo. 11a–b; BKYSR, pp. 491–3. The latter source makes additional use of the autobiography of the Gomang abbot Jamyang Zhepa, which provides a rather different account of these events. The abbot claims he argued in a council of senior churchmen, perhaps the one convened by Lajang, that the Dalai Lama should be encouraged to accept the "invitation" to visit a Sino-Mongol district (*rGya-sog-gi yul-gru*) since this would not only please the emperor but also benefit the Dalai Lama himself and the Tibetan state. He says the disturbance which occurred at Drepung was caused by some "evil men" who detained the Dalai Lama there against his will, and that it died down by itself.

163. GYBDB, fos. 11b–13a.

164. Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, p. 17. With a view to the "secret" tradition described in the next three chapters, it is worth recording here how the Tibetan chronicler Sumpa Khenpo insisted "it is certain that Tsangyang Gyamtso died at Kunganor . . .": *Annals of Kokonor* [ch. 2], ed. and trans. Yang, p. 22. Sumpa Khenpo was taking pains to discount the rumours of Tsangyang Gyamtso's survival after 1706.

165. Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, p. 17 n. 4; Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 332.

166. For the smoke of the pyre blowing towards Lithang, see GYBDB, fo. 13a. The famous song (Van Heurck, no. 51) attributed to Tsangyang Gyamtso which is so often claimed to contain a prophecy about his rebirth in Lithang finds no mention in the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that I can find: "Bird, white crane / Lend me your wings. / I shan't go far. / I'll do a round of Lithang and return."

167. LHTBR (1970 facsimile edn. of the blockprint), fo. 1a.

168. For the publication of the LHTBR in 1977 under the auspices of the Private Office of the Dalai Lama, see the Bibliography below under Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye.

169. LHTBR, p. 45.

170. Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, p. 36.

171. Bell, *Religion of Tibet*, p. 141.

172. Klafkowski, *Secret Deliverance of the Dalai Lama*.

173. See the review of Klafkowski by Philip Denwood in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, xlv (1982), pp. 381–2.

174. Bira, *Mongolian Historical Literature of the XVII-XIX Centuries Written in Tibetan*; Damdinsureng, "The Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangs-Dbyangs Rgya-mtso".

175. Norbu and Turnbull, *Tibet: Its History, Religion and People*, pp. 291–2.

176. LHTBR, p. 2.

177. BKYSR, pp. 496–7.

178. Tatz, "Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama", p. 18.

179. Stoddard, "Note on Vajra-Dance Choreography in the Snow, in the Early 18th Century". I am most grateful to the author for showing me this work in advance of publication. She points out (p. 129 n. 4) that Gedun Chompel may have been the first scholar to draw attention in English to the existence of the secret biography in his article of 1940, "An Ill-Starred Dalai Lama", in which he provides what she describes as "a humorous resumé of the Dalai Lama's escape at Kunga Nor". A reading of that article suggests it was based on a rather garbled memory of Dargye Nomunqan's work since the details and sequence of the resumé are often wrong. Gedun Chompel clearly looked on the tradition as history rather than as legend or fiction. In her n. 5 (pp. 129–30) Stoddard has confused the date of the secret biography's composition by mistaking Fire Bull (1757) for one of the Water Bull years (1733 or 1793). In n. 11 (p. 130) she comes close to identifying the *Kundröl Gongma* Lobsang Chödrak Gyamtso as the Sixth Dalai Lama's impersonator (see below).

180. Dorshi Dongdruk Nyemlo, "rGyal-ba Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtso'i rnam-thar mdor-bsdus"; Döndrup Tsering, "Rig-'dzin Tsangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho'i lo-rgyus skor". I am most grateful to Mr. Tashi Tsering for bringing these articles to my notice, in particular the second one which came at a time when I had just come to very similar conclusions on much the same evidence.

181. LHTBR, p. 224.

182. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

183. Sumpa Khenpo, fo. 65b.

184. LHTBR, p. 123.

185. DTHGY, i, fo. 159a.

186. Thus Sumpa Khenpo (Klafkowski, pp. 29, 75); DTHGY, i, fos. 12a, 157b, 159a.

187. LHTBR, p. 124.

188. *Ibid.*, pp. 182–3.

189. *Ibid.*, pp. 183–4.

190. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

191. Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, pp. 18, 77.

192. LHTBR, pp. 193–204.

193. *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 214–15, 224.

194. He is the *Rbu Chos-rje Blo-bzang dPal-ldan* mentioned in Wylie, *Geography of Tibet*, p. 195 n. 757; also the *rBu dPon-slob Blo-bzang dPal-ldan* (whose connections with the Dalai Lama's impersonator are specifically noted), and perhaps the *rje Zhwa-lu-pa*, in DTHGY, fos. 123a, 124b, 126b.

For his involvement with the impersonator according to the secret biography, see LHTBR, pp. 121, 150.

195. For a sketch of his life, see DTHGY, fos. 104a–105a; *Bod-rGya tshig-mdzod chen-mo*, p. 3274. For his connection with the impersonator, see LHTBR, pp. 149, 151, 154.

196. For a sketch of his life and a list of his collected works, see *Mi-rigs dpe-mdzod-khang-gi dpe-tho-las gsung-'bum-skor-gyi dkar-chag*, i, pp. 309–10. He appears there with the slightly variant name of Jamyang Tenpai Nyima. There is no mention of him in the LHTBR outside the preface and colophon.

197. LHTBR, p. 52.

198. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

199. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

200. Petech, *Aristocracy and Government in Tibet*, pp. 89–91.

201. See LHTBR (New Delhi, 1970 facsimile edn.), fo. 122a.

202. Klafkowski, *Secret Deliverance of the Sixth Dalai Lama*.

203. DTHGY, i, fo. 156a.

204. *Ibid.*, fo. 12a.

205. *Ibid.*, fos. 155a–156a.

206. LHTBR, p. 181.

207. Dorshi Dongdruk Nyemlo, “rGyal-ba Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho'i rnam-thar mdor-bsdus”, p. 93.

208. LHTBR, p. 50.

209. THCKH, fo. 301b.

210. LHTBR, pp. 50–1.

211. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

212. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

213. DTHGY, i, fos. 156a, 157b, 159a.

214. LHTBR, pp. 55–60.

215. *Ibid.*, pp. 60–117.

216. *Ibid.*, pp. 118–213.

217. *Ibid.*, pp. 214–221.

218. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

219. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

220. *Ibid.*, pp. 209–11.

221. In the following narrative I do not supply footnotes to the relevant pages in LHTBR. The reader can find these easily from the list in Appendix 2 by referring to the relevant dates.

222. Poröl (*Po-rol*) is perhaps the *Pho-rod* district whose monasteries are described in DTHGY, i, fos. 164a–165a. The northern end of the district is said to touch Alashan. The monastery where these events are said to have taken place may perhaps be Gyangring, mentioned among the monasteries controlled by the lama: LHTBR, p. 178. Stoddard, however, reads *Po-rol-na* by adding the locative ending and says it is a monastery in Mongolia: Stoddard, “Note on Vajra-Dance Choreography in the Snow”, n. 8.

223. Ananda is the Manchu general *A-nanta-khi-ya* mentioned together

with *Phyag-na rDo-rje* (Chana Lama) in THCKH, fo. 328a, for bringing messages from the emperor to the regent about the Panchen's visit. See also Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 281, 306, 310. On the role of the Chana Lama (Chana Dorje) as a go-between, see Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, p. 15 and n. 2, also esp. p. 17 n. 4; Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 270, 276, 279–80, 284, 321, 328, 332. It was he who reported the death of Tsangyang Gyamtso at Kunganor to the emperor.

224. Damdinsureng, "The Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangs-Dbyangs rGya-mtsho", p. 33, gives the original Mongolian form as *Khara-nur* and says the lake lies near the source of the *Khatan-gol*, the Yellow River.

225. The guestmaster (*mgron-gnyer*) was one Bidur Pönpo, a name I cannot trace elsewhere. The major-domo is unnamed.

226. See Rock, *Amnye Ma-chhen Range and Adjacent Regions*, pp. 56–7, plates 20–1.

227. *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 123, 126.

228. *Ibid.*, pp. 69–77, plates 58–9.

229. See THCKH, fo. 110a.

230. On Chökhorgyal, see Wylie, *Geography of Tibet According to the 'Dzam-gling-rgyas-bshad*, p. 92 and p. 172 n. 535. On the lake, see Ferrari, *Mk'yen brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*, p. 122 n. 207.

231. On Meru and Zhidé, see Ferrari, *Mkhyen-brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*, pp. 94–5, nn. 69–70; Wylie, *Geography of Tibet According to the 'Dzam-gling-rgyas-bshad*, p. 155 nn. 371–2. As in the last chapter, here too I omit footnote references to the main source of the narrative since each passage can be easily identified in Appendix 2, where the pagination of LHTBR is provided.

232. Wylie, *Geography of Tibet According to the 'Dzam-gling-rgyas-bshad*, p. 109 and p. 195 n. 757; DTHGY, i, fos. 115b *et seq.*

233. On Mel Drubchen, see DTHGY, i, fo. 120a. Shalupa Lobsang Palden has already been met as one of the people who requested Dargye Nomunqan to write his work: see p. 173 and n. 194 above.

234. See p. 172 above. For descriptions of Alashan, see Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in North-West China*, ch. 11; Wulsin, "Road to Wang Ye Fu"; Alonso (ed.), *China's Inner Asian Frontiers*; Kozlov, *Mongoliya i Amdo i mertvuy gorod Khara-khoto*, ch. 8.

235. Petech has "Aboo": *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, pp. 74, 80–1, 83–5, 92–3. Jagchid has "Abau(?)": "Mongolian-Manchu Inter-marriage in the Ch'ing Period", p. 75. Richardson has "A Pao": *Ch'ing Dynasty Inscriptions at Lhasa*, p. 19. DTHGY, i, fo. 55b, has *E-bōō*.

236. Jagchid, *loc. cit.*, has 1695, while Petech, p. 74, has 1704.

237. Jagchid, *loc. cit.*, n. 23.

238. Norman, *Concise Manchu-English Lexicon*, s.v.

239. For photographs of Manchus claiming descent from these marriages, see Wulsin, "Road to Wang Ye Fu", p. 233; Alonso (ed.), *China's Inner Asian Frontiers*, p. 81.

240. Sumpa Khenpo, *Annals of Kokonor* [ch. 2], ed. and trans. Yang, pp. 24, 47–8, and p. 91 n. 219. (Aboo appears in this source as *E-phu Pi-le Pathur ju-nang*). The rest of this paragraph is based on Petech, *loc. cit.*

241. The Thamka Lama can probably be identified with the *Tha-ma-ka* lama of the Dolonnor monastery in Mongolia, apparently an imperial appointment: see Ligeti's introduction to the *Hor chos-'byung*, in *History of Buddhism in Mongolia*, p. 2.

242. On Thukhen Lobsang Chökyi Nyima, see DTHGY, i, fos. 77a–78a, 80b. Ephu Gönpochap is not identified.

243. See p. 163 and n. 157 above. Damdinsureng, "Sixth Dalai Lama", p. 34, renders *An-ting-mun*, the place where this happened, as "the Andimyn gates of Peking". He says the regent's daughter "may have been the sweetheart of his youth".

244. On Jakrung (*Jag-rong Thur-chen*), see Wylie, *Geography of Tibet*, p. 110 and p. 197 n. 773, where it appears in a list of the monasteries of Pari (*A-mdo dPa'-ri*), many of which came under the lama's sway. For the history of Jakrung, see DTHGY, i, fos. 156a–159b.

245. On *nangso* Pelzang of Brarti, see Sumpa Khenpo, i, fo. 227a. On Drigong (or Drigung) and its connections with Jakrung, see Wylie, *Geography of Tibet*, p. 198 n. 781; DTHGY, i, fo. 161a. The *nangso* (*nang-suo* in Chinese usage) were hereditary "lama chiefs" whose forebears were first installed in office at the start of the Ming dynasty in an arrangement which granted them rights over a specific territory in exchange for a tribute that was determined anew every year. After the revolt of 1723 (see the next paragraph) their numbers were reduced from eighteen to just two, those of Editsa and Sina. The "meditation centres" (*sgom-sde*) referred to in the text here seem to approximate to the administrative divisions under the control of "Masters in Dhyana" (*ch'an-shih-chia*). Like the *nangso*, they enjoyed certain rights and privileges dating from the Ming. A third institution, the *karwa* (presumably Tibetan *sgar-ba*), which fell between the *nang-suo* and the *ch'an-shih-chia* in importance, finds no mention in our text, but for the *Pra-sde sgar-ba bcu-gsum*; see DTHGY, i, fo. 159b. For a full discussion of these institutions and their history, see Schram, *Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, pt. 2, pp. 18–20.

246. See the *Dukūla*, i, fo. 190a, for the Great Fifth's reception by *nangso* Zangpo Gyaltzen of Pari (*Pā-ras*).

247. See Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, pp. 95 *et seq.*; Schram, *Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, pt. 2, pp. 34–6.

248. Petech, *loc. cit.*

249. Damdinsureng, "Sixth Dalai Lama", p. 35; Bawden, *Modern History of Mongolia*, p. 114.

250. Damdinsureng, *loc. cit.* I can find nothing to confirm the story in those biographies of the Jebtsundampa Khutuktus reproduced by Lokesh Chandra in the Śata-Piṭaka Series, vols. ccxciv, ccxcv (New Delhi, 1982).

251. Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*, p. 101.

252. The official name of the monastery given in DTHGY, i, fo. 156a, is

Jakrung Yarlung Thurchengön Ganden Damchöling. Yarlung presumably refers to the valley of that name in central Tibet, home of the early kings. Thurchen is the nearby town in Pari. The last two elements are typically applied to many Gelukpa monasteries. The secret biography, however, calls it Thösam Dargyeling. The spelling *Shi-min-zi* (DTHGY, i, fo. 156b) comes a little closer to the proper Chinese form of the name (Shi-men Si) than the *Zhi-mun-zi* of our text (LHTBR, p. 170: / *rgya-skad-du zhi-mun-zi zer-ba-yin-la* / *zhi-mun brag-sgo* / *zi-ni dgon-pa'o* /).

253. Wylie, *Geography of Tibet*, p. 112.

254. These were (1) Taitung or Tat'ung etc. (*Ta'i-tung*, variously spelled), (2) Drugu ('*Bru-gu*), (3) Jangring (*Gyang-ring*), (4) Jabtse (*rGyab-tshe*), (5) Semnyi (*Sem-nyi*), (6) Jayak (*rGya-yag*), (7) Ortso (*Or-tsho*), (8) Shamar (*Zhwa-dmar*), (9) Ja (*rGya*), (10) Dok (*lDog*), (11) Hor Gömpa (*Hor dGon-pa*), (12) Kenchen (*bKan-chen*) (13) Drigong or Drigung ('*Bri-gung*, '*Bri-gong*). Most of these are found listed in Wylie, *Geography of Tibet*, pp. 110–11; Sumpa Khenpo, fos. 226a–227a; DTHGY, i, fos. 64a–181a.

255. See p. 176 above. Taitung (Tat'ung etc) was very likely named after the river of that name (Julak in Tibetan), a tributary of the Yellow River due north of the Hsining river.

256. The title of *tho-si* (Chinese *t'u-ssu*) applied in the text to Luchap (*Klu-skyabs*) clearly identifies him as a hereditary clan chief of the Monguors holding full power as a Chinese border official. From the element *Lu* found both in his name and that of his brother I am inclined to place them in the large clan of the Lu which, unique among Monguor clans, claimed Mongol descent. It may perhaps be possible to identify Luchap (also known as Lugen, *Klu-rgan*) with the *T'u-ssu Lu* "Grandfather Feng Chu, Sire Wu I, style name Hsiu Lin" whose biography is given in Schram, *Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, pt. 3 pp. 103–4. On the Lu clan in general, see *ibid.*, pp. 70–116 *passim*. On the institution of the *t'u-ssu*, see especially *ibid.*, pt. 1, pp. 41–68.

257. See p. 176 above.

258. See Sağang Sečen, *Erdeni-yin Tobči: Mongolian Chronicle*, ed. Mostaert, pt. 1, pp. 3–4 n. 11, pp. 82–3.

259. These include Se-li dNgos-grub rGyal-mtshan; the *Ho-wang* of Mer-gen from the Khalkha region; the Chos-'phel *gung*; the Thong-mod *gung*; the dBang-chen-skyabs *gung*; the Hor-ghor *dza-sag* sDa-ma (sNga-ma?); the Thor-khod [Torgut] *bstan-bskyong* Si-li.

260. DTHGY, i, fos. 157b–158a.

261. *Ibid.*, fo. 159a.

262. *Ibid.*

263. *Ibid.*, fo. 159a–b.

264. Dagya and Eimer, "Collected Works of A-la-ša lHa-btsun", pp. 37, 41: nos. 1 (*ga* 22) and 56 (*ga* 21). I am indebted to Dr. Helmut Eimer for a photocopy of the *dkar-chag* of this collection and for advice on related matters.

265. Kozlov, *Mongoliya i Amdo i mertvuy gorod Khara-khoto*, pp. 212–13.

See p. 210 for a photograph of “Barun-hyt Monastery located in a rocky part of the western flank of the Alashan range”. I am indebted to Professor Włodzimierz Brus of Wolfson College, Oxford, for this translation. Further information on Barun-hyt must surely be available, though under its Chinese name (whatever that might be), in the *Ts’an-k’ao tzu-liao* (“A Collation of Research Materials [on the Alashan Banner]”) listed in the bibliography to Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia*, p. 149. Unfortunately since no shelf mark is supplied it has not been possible to trace the work in the Far East Library of the University of Washington, Seattle, where it is said to be deposited. I owe thanks to Professor William G. Boltz for his attempt to locate it. According to Miller’s use of this source (p. 30), there were eight Buddhist monasteries in Alashan, with a total of 2,600 monks.

266. LHTBR, pp. 47, 129.

267. *Ibid.*, p. 46. Padmapāṇi is a form of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, who is emanated into the body of the Dalai Lama.

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Note: Abbreviations used in the footnotes are supplied here in square brackets after the relevant entries.

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Note

Entries, alphabetized as in English, cover all text titles and the names of all humans, gods, places, sects, monasteries and temples. Tibetan, Bhutanese and “proto-Bhutanese” entries are followed by their original spellings transliterated according to the Wylie system and enclosed in brackets. This also holds for those entries whose phonemic and transliterated renderings are identical or differentiated only by the use of hyphens. Where Tibetan forms are provided only in transliteration, these are also alphabetized as in English according to their first letter, *not* according to their “root” letter (*ming-gzhi*).

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