

MATTHEW W. KING

**Rivers of Clay, Silver and Safron Cloth: *Apropos*
“A Brief History of Trashi Thösam Ling”
(*Bkra Shis Thos Bsam Gling Gi 'Byung Khungs*),
a Late Record of Yeke-Yin Kūriye’s Twenty-sixth Buddhist
Monastic Residence**

Abstract

This article introduces and translates a Tibetan language record of Trashi Thösam Ling (Tib. *Bkra shis thos bsam gling*; Mon. *Dashitoisamlin*), the twenty-sixth regional house (T. *kham tshan*, *khang tshan*; Mon. *ayimağ*, *khamtsan*) of the great Khalkha monastic city of Yeke-yin Kūriye (present day Ulaanbaatar). This undated work was prepared and edited by the great polymath of the post-Qing era Lubsangdamdin (1867–1937), a resident of that monastic house, based on an antiquated record of uncertain origin housed in its archives. The history of monastic institutions in Khalkha from the early twentieth century are of tremendous interest to historians of Inner Asian Buddhism in light of the erasure of socialist state violence that began in earnest in Khalkha and Siberia in the late 1930s. Beyond the narrow interests of specialists in revolutionary-era Buddhist life, however, records such as these reveal the largely unstudied networks of exchange that united sites of self-and community formation between the Himalayan foothills of the British Raj, the high Tibetan plateau, north China during the Qing and Republican periods, all Mongol lands, Siberia, and even St. Petersburg. In the short historical record of Trashi Thösam Ling we are thus provided a glimpse of trans-regional circuits of material culture, wealth, and human bodies that productively challenge the territorial fixities of the Asia concept in the late-and post-imperial period and which help materialize the history of Buddhist formation along the Khalkha crossroads.

Keywords: Buddhism, Mongolia, Tibet, kham tshan, monastic residence, Yeke-yin Khūriye, Dā Khuriye, Ulaanbaatar, Lubsangdamdin

By the second decade of the twentieth century, when the Qing and Tsarist Empires began to crumble in the face of nationalist and socialist revolutionary movements, networks of Buddhist monastic colleges (Tib. *grwa tshang*) connected vast stretches of Asia's heartland. These largely unstudied networks of exchange, mostly of the "Yellow Hat" Géluk tradition (Tib. *dge lugs*) and rooted in three major "mother monasteries" (Tib. *ma dgon*) in the Lhasa region, united sites of self-and community formation between the Himalayan foothills of the British Raj, the high Tibetan plateau, north China during the Qing and Republican periods, all Mongol lands, Siberia, and even St. Petersburg. Often based on Central Tibetan curricula, disciplinary codes, and institutional organization, these networks brought local ethnic, linguistic, political, and economic spheres into broad circuits of trans-Asian exchange. Trashi Thösam Ling (Tib. *Bkra shis thos bsam gling*; Mon. *Dashitoisamlin*), the twenty-sixth regional monastic residence of the great Khalkha monastic city of Yeke-yin Kūriye (present day Ulaanbaatar), is emblematic of this process: an institutional solution to a housing problem for monks arriving in Kūriye from Tüsiyetu Khan Ayimay that, in its memorialization at least, evokes a global history of enlightened intervention and flows of materiality and authority extending right to the court of the Qing Emperor in Beijing and the receiving room of the Dalai Lama in Lhasa.¹

As Stacey Van Vleet has argued, such monastic networks (and especially their college system) were widely promoted across Inner Asia by Qing authorities as a matter of consolidating outlying areas into the imperial fold and projecting a strategic vision of authority to Mongolian and Tibetan subjects.² Indeed, the exercise of imperial (and later, socialist state) power was always operating (and resisted) in such monastic networks, often representing the only sedentary buildings and communities and enjoying a near exclusive hold on literacy, education, printing technology, medicine, astrology, and of course, ritual and religious techniques and technologies.³ In light of the profound socialist

¹ Unfortunately there is no room here to elaborate on this dispersed ideology of history and religio-political authority. This framing is not to say that these trans-Asian narratives overrode local concerns, that they directed self-and community formation beyond elite circles of highly educated monks, nobility, and diplomats. However, understanding such narratives in their local articulation, as with the text explored below, helps reconstruct generative forms of trans-regional affiliation and place making that would soon be erased by the formation of the Mongolian national subject, brutal socialist state violence, and the erasures of Soviet-era historiography.

² Stacey Van Vleet, *Medicine, Monasteries and Empire: Rethinking Tibetan Buddhism in Qing China*, Columbia University, New York 2015.

³ Johan Elverskog, "Wutai Shan, Qing Cosmopolitanism, and the Mongols", *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, no. 6 (2011), pp. 243–274; Johan Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism and the State in Late Imperial China*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 2006; Nikolay Tsyrempilov, "Samdan Tsydenov and His Buddhist Theocratic Project", in: *Biographies of Eminent Mongol Buddhists*, Johan Elverskog (ed.), IITBS, International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, Halle 2008, pp. 117–38; Erdenibayar, "Sumpa Khenpo Ishibaljur: A Great Figure in Mongolian and Tibetan Cultures", in: *The Mongolia-Tibet Interface Opening New Research Terrains in Inner Asia: PIATS 2003: Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, Uradyen Erden Bulag and Hildegard Diemberger (ed.), Brill, Leiden–Boston 2007, pp. 303–314; Gray Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*, New York Columbia University Press, New York 2007; Vesna Wallace, "Legalized Violence: Punitive Measures of Buddhist Khans in Mongolia" in: *Buddhist Warfare*, Michael Jerryson and Mark

state violence heaped upon monastic institutions and monastic persons in Mongolia and Siberia in the late 1930s, and then in Inner Mongolian and Tibetan cultural regions at mid-century, a small but prolific body of scholarship has been intent on identifying material and cultural traces of such institutions in order to reconstruct their traditions and affiliations as described, for example, in late-nineteenth and early twentieth century European sources like those of A.M. Pozdneev, G.J. Ramstedt, and W. Kotwicz, the 1931 Tibetan language survey by Lubsangdamdin, editor of *A Brief History of Trashī Thösam Ling* translated below, in his prolific *Golden Book* (Tib. *Gser gyi deb ther*; Mon. *Altan dewter*), and the magisterial 1979 survey by the Mongolist B. Rinchen in his *Atlas of Mongolian Ethnography and Linguistics* (Mon. *Mongol ard ulsyn ugsaatny sudlal khelnij shinjlelijn atlas*).⁴ The urgency in this latter endeavor is that in Mongolia and Siberia previously hegemonic monastic worlds were erased with terrible efficiency by socialist forces, their written records and material effects scattered, and the number of those with living memory of their pre-purge traditions dwindling rapidly.⁵

As a small contribution to this reconstructivist project, the present text is drawn from the oeuvre of the most prominent Khalkha scholastic from the post-Qing period, Lubsangdamdin, otherwise known as Lubsangdayan and most often memorialized today as Zawa Damdin (1867–1937). Zawa Damdin's prolific career in the scholastic system of the

Juergensmeyer (ed.), Oxford University Press, New York–Oxford 2010, pp. 91–104; Christopher Kaplonski, *The Lama Question: Violence, Sovereignty, and Exception in Early Socialist Mongolia*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 2014; Brenton Sullivan, "Monastic Customaries and the Promotion of Dge lugs Scholasticism in A Mdo and Beyond" *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 36 (2015), pp. 82–105, 301–332.

⁴ Krisztina Teleki, "Bogdiin Khüree: Monasteries and Temples of the Mongolian Capital (1651–1938)", *Études Mongoles, Sibériennes, Centralasiatiques et Tibétaines*, no. 40 (2009); Aleksei Matveevich Pozdneev and John Richard Krueger, *Religion and Ritual in Society: Lamaist Buddhism in Late 19th-Century Mongolia*, The Mongolia Society, Bloomington 1978; G. J. Ramstedt and John Richard Krueger, *Seven Journeys Eastward, 1898–1912: Among the Cheremis, Kalmyks, Mongols, and in Turkestan, and to Afghanistan*, Mongolia Society, Bloomington, 1978; Jerzy Tulisow et al., (eds.), *In the Heart of Mongolia: 100th Anniversary of W. Kotwicz's Expedition to Mongolia in 1912: Studies and Selected Source Materials*, Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences, Crakow 2012; Blo bzang rta mgrin, "Byang Phyogs Chen Po Hor Gyi Rgyal Khams Kyi Rtogs Brjod Kyi Bstan Bcos Chen Po Ngo Mtshar Gser Gyi Deb Ther", in: *Rje Btsun Blo Bzang Rta Dbyangs Kyi Gsung 'Bum*, vol. 2, 17 vols., Mongolian Lama Guru Deva, New Delhi: 1975, pp. 43–490; B. Rinchen, *Mongol Ard Ulsin Ugsaatni Sudlal Khel Shinjlelijn Atlas*, Shinjleh Ukhaany Akademi, Ulaanbaatar 1979.

⁵ Most notable here is the work of Krisztina Teleki and Zsuzsa Majer. See, for example: Zsuzsa Majer and Krisztina Teleki, *Monasteries and Temples of Bogdiin Khuree, Ikh Khuree or Urga, the Old Capital City of Mongolia in the First Part of the Twentieth Century*, Ulaanbaatar 2006; Zsuzsa Majer and Krisztina Teleki, *History of Zaya Gegeenii Khuree, the Monastery of the Khalkha Zaya Pandita*, Admon, Ulaanbaatar 2013; Zsuzsa Majer, "Delgeriin Choir, the Monastery of Zawa Lam Damdin in the Gobi", *Zentralasiatische Studien Des Seminars Für Sprach- Und Kulturwissenschaft Zentralasiens Der Universität Bonn*, vol. 41, International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2012, pp. 7–42; Krisztina Teleki, "Mongólia Kolostorai Az Arany Krónika Jegyzéke Alapján", in: *Bolor-un gerel: Kristályfény: Tanulmányok Kara György Professzor 70. Születésnapjának Tiszteletére*, Ágnes Birtalan (ed.), vol. 2, Eötvös Lóránd Tudományegyetem, Belső-ázsiai Tanszék, Budapest 2005, pp. 773–790. For a momentous project to synthesize all existing data on pre-purge Buddhist monasticism in Mongolia, as well as direct new archaeological excavations and oral history interviews, is: "Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries" Project (Mongoliin Süm Khiidiin Tüükhen Tovchoo Tösöl), 2017, www.mongoliantemples.org/index.php/en/.

“Yellow Hat” Géluk tradition was always centered in the great monastic city of Yeke-yin Kūriye, the seat of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtus and ground zero for the nationalist and socialist revolutions that came in the wake of the Qing collapse in 1911. A poet, pilgrim, yogi, logician, tantric ritualist, and accomplished exegete in the dialectical traditions of Géluk scholasticism, as the Qing receded into an uncertain dawn of revolutionary turmoil Zawa Damdin also became an accomplished historian of his Khalkha Buddhist traditions in the light of trans-Asian flows of ideas, materiality, people, and political regimes. As was customary in imperial-era scholastic histories, but increasingly at odds with the temporalities of an emergent nationalist historiography, the spread of the Dharma into Asia’s northerly reaches was described by him as a carefully curated process guided by the enlightened hands of buddhas periodically manifesting as lamas, emperors, and even warriors and scoundrels as needed to bring the Dharma into the northern frontiers of Asia. (Readers will find all of this clearly on display in the short text translated below).

Johan Elverskog broadly described this orientation to history and power as “the Qing-Géluk formation.” Elsewhere I have explored this formation as a mobile model of historicity and political authority that centered monastic institutions and pilgrimage sites as points of contact with purifying, always-masculine centers, necessary for forming lay, monastic, and tantric Buddhist communities (and imperial subjects). Examples of such purifying centers include monastic compounds, monks, and most centrally, the personages and material traces of incarnate lamas (Tib. *sprul sku*; Mon. *qutuytu*; *qubilqan*). In the late-and post Qing-era Géluk *imaginaire*, this latter category included not only high monks like the Dalai Lama and the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, but also Manchu Emperors who were regarded in much monastic writing and associated ritual and diplomatic traditions as the incarnation of Mañjuśrī, the embodiment of the all the buddha’s wisdom (or versions thereof, such as Mañjughōṣa). Another buddha in the guise of a man of note here is, of course, that great progenitor of the Mongolian people, Chinggis Khaan, who makes a predictable entrance early on in the text translated below.

Apart from its iteration of recognizable tropes of self-and community formation linked directly to the political ideology of the Qing-Géluk formation, *A Brief History of Trashi Thösam Ling* is notable for its focus on material, economic, and institutional details that are necessary to understand the spheres of affiliation and social history of the Tibet-Mongol interface during the late-and post-imperial periods. Readers will note that, in the wake of grand injunctions by the “enlightened” Dalai and Panchen Lamas, the Jebstundamba Khutugtus, and the Qing Emperors, Trashi Thösam Ling formed as an institutional base in Yeke-yin Kūriye through a considered process of economic reorganization of existing institutions, the management of flows of monastics from across the Tibetan and Mongolian expanse, a regulated economic process, and perhaps most interestingly, a tangle of material exchanges that, in the language of the work, attached holy objects, enlightened protectors, and monastic bodies to one another in enduring ways.

In the future, a comparative analysis of such local records may not only continue to illuminate the exercise of imperial and revolutionary authority in Inner Asia, or simply provide data points for surveys of lost worlds. We may also glean a materialized, and

thus more robust, vision of Buddhism along the Inner Asian frontiers of Russia and China, one equally attentive to flows of clay and silver as to doctrine and Qing claims to sovereignty. We are thus reminded that Buddhist formation, as with social life more generally is not only “something one does with speech or reason alone, but with the body and spaces it inhabits” in practices of eating, dreaming, meditating, making pilgrimage, and sleeping in seemingly mundane places such as a “monastic residence” (Tib. *kham tshang*; Mon. *ayimay*).⁶ A telling example in the text below is the story of the bestowal of a painting by the Fifth Dalai Lama to Mongol envoys as “a shared holy object” (*rten skal*) between the very center of Géluk authority and the rather marginal regional house of Trashi Thösam Ling. The text describes that allotment of a holy object using language often reserved for the apportionment and distribution of material objects and wealth (*skal ba*) that binds together non-monastic communities, such as in other regular uses as “dowry,” “inheritance,” “ration,” or “land allotment.”

The present text is found in the most complete, seventeen volume version of Zawa Damdin’s *Collected Works* (Tib. *gsung ’bum*).⁷ It is filed alongside several other short histories and poetic praises to the author’s monastic institutions in the Mongol capital, which in turn are extensively narrative in several thousand pages of polemic, historiography, and auto/biography that I explore elsewhere.⁸ *A Brief History of Trashi Thösam Ling* is undated, but given the trajectory of the author’s movement through the scholastic world of Yeke-yin Kūriye, it is most likely from just before or just after the Qing collapse and the establishment of an independent Mongolian hierocratic nation state in 1911. This was a time when Lubsangdamdin was transitioning from his scholastic studies to occupying senior posts in the monastic hierarchy, and when he began turning more regularly to historical studies and writing. We do glean from the colophon that Zawa Damdin found a version of this history in a dusty, forgotten manuscript deep in the “Dharma treasury” (Tib. *chos mdzod*) of what we must assume was Trashi Thösam Ling itself. Zawa Damdin tells his readers that he combined that version with other, unnamed sources to present the following account of the formation of Yeke-yin Kūriye’s twenty-sixth monastic residence in 1798, thus producing a new record of a forgotten history that would last just a few years before facing a new erasure by means of the blunt tool of socialist state violence.

⁶ “Editorial Statement,” *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief*, 1, no. 1 (2015), p. 5.

⁷ Blo bzang rta dbyang, *Rje Btsun Blo Bzang Rta Dbyangs Kyi Gsung ’Bum*, 17 vols., Mongolian lama Gurudeva, New Delhi 1975.

⁸ Blo bzang rta mgrin, “Gdan Sa Khu Re Chen Mo’i Chos Grwa Nub Ma’i ’Byung Khungs Dang ’Brel Ba’i Gtam Gyi Phreng Ba,” in: *Rje Btsun...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 503–540; “dPal Ldan ‘Bras Spungs Su Mchod Rten Gsar Du Bzhengs Pa’i Nang Gzhug Gi Dkar Chag,” in: *Rje Btsun...*, op. cit., vol. 6, pp. 443–448; “Dga’ Ldan Theg Chen Gling Gi Bsnags Pa Mdo Tsam Brjod Pa,” in: *Rje Btsun...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 627–634; “Dben Pa’i Bsti Gnas Gsar Rnying Geig Tu ‘Dres Pa’i Lo Rgyus Ma Bu Cha ’Dzoms Kyi Gleng Mo,” in: *Rje Btsun...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 607–616; “Bkra Shis Thos Bsam Gling Gi ’Byung Khungs Tho Tsam,” in: *Rje Btsun...*, op. cit. vol. 1, pp. 597–606; “bKra Shis Gling Gi Gnas Bstod Khu Byug Skad Snyan,” in: *Rje Btsun...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 637–640.

Translation⁹

[597] A Brief History of Trashi Thösam Ling

[598] *Oṃ svasti!*

*O' Great Master named "Gélek Rabgyé"
 who is intent upon the supreme purpose,
 The incomparable sun for [the benefit] of the Ganden teachings,
 Shining upon the auspicious lotus garden of the saṃgha assembly.
 May you offer protection by the auspicious sign of a hundred thousand
 beams of light!*¹⁰

May the pleasant words of these auspicious verses, like a rain of maṇḍala flowers, beautify the subject I will now explain.

This land of Khalkha in the north of the north of the world was clearly prophesized by the Jina himself.¹¹ For example, in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*: "It is said that in the final five hundred year period the teachings will spread to the north of the north" and in the *Stainless Goddess Sūtra*:¹² "It is said that two thousand five hundred years after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa the holy Dharma will spread to the land of the Red-faced Ones."

In general, the holy Dharma [was established in Mongol lands] beginning in the time of the Heavenly Ruler Chinggis,¹³ the Gentle Protector Sakya Paṇḍita,¹⁴ and so forth. In particular, the Yellow Hat teachings arrived here due to the kindness of the patron-priest¹⁵ relationship of the Dharmarāja Altan Khan¹⁶ and the Omniscient King of

⁹ As became customary for Mongolian scholastics in the late-Qing, this text references Mongolian affairs but is written in Tibetan. For the sake of flow and intelligibility for non-specialist readers, I simply transcribe the Tibetan version of place and person names and then provide the Mongolian in footnotes when these are known. I use the Tibetan and Himalayan Library (THL)'s Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan. The Wylie transliteration of Tibetan is given in every case after the first appearance in a footnote. When transliterating vertical and Cyrillic script, I also follow THL's transcription system as prepared by Christopher Atwood. Sanskrit texts, names, and technical language are left untranslated, with Tibetan and Mongolian equivalents given as reference.

¹⁰ Like the second to last stanza of this text, in these opening lines the author crafts the "pleasant words" (*snyan tshig*) of each verse as a play off the multiple meanings of *dge*, either as a stand alone noun or as part of a compound: "Ganden" (*dge ldan*, lit. "one possessed of virtue" but here referring to the "Yellow Hat" Géluk tradition of Tsongkhapa); "saṃgha" (*dge 'dun*); "auspicious sign" (*dge mtshan*).

¹¹ "Conqueror" (Tib. *rgyal ba*) is an epithet of the Buddha in both Sanskrit and Pāli. A bodhisattva "conquers" the four kinds of Māra and vanquishes unwholesome dharmas on their path to full enlightenment.

¹² *Lha mo dri med kyi mdo*.

¹³ *Jing gir gnam gyi lha*.

¹⁴ *Jam mgon sa paṇ*.

¹⁵ This is a reversal of the usual formulation of this relationship as "priest-patron" (Tib. *mchod yon*).

¹⁶ *Al than han*. Altan Khan (1507–1582) was a powerful Tümed Mongol leader who was instrumental in the centralization of Mongol power during the late sixteenth century that, on the model of Khubilai Khan and Phakpa Lama's relationship during the Yuan, was founded in part upon association as patron with powerful Tibetan Buddhist masters. Altan Khaghan is credited with first giving the title of "Dalai Lama" to Sönam Gyatso, the third in that ascendant Géluk tradition incarnate lineage. On a revisionist history that mutes the

Victorious Ones Sōnam Gyatso.¹⁷ At that time, [Mongolians began] to diligently engage in virtuous behavior such as going for refuge to the Three Jewels, making offerings, and taking the basic precepts to the extent of their individual ability. Apart from that, monasteries that gathered together pure ethical discipline, teaching, and practice were never established and scriptures and realizations about the precious collected teachings of sūtra and tantra did not really develop.

On the basis of the power of the aspirational prayers and unthinkable manifestations of the three secret Buddha activities of the former incarnation of the Refuge and Protector Jétsün Dampa [named] Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen Pelzangpo,¹⁸ the Mahātman endowed with a compassion that set countless sentient beings of this borderland upon the path to ripening and liberation during the Degenerate Age and who accomplished his aspirational prayer to [599] uphold and preserve the ultimate aim of Jampel Nyingpo's¹⁹ teachings unifying sūtra and tantra, the essence of the Buddha's teachings, all spiritual leaders together with the subjects of the Four Khalkha Groups enclosed themselves within the vajra fence of the political dominion of the Heavenly Appointed²⁰ Mahātman Mañjuḥṣa Emperor. As such, all adverse conditions to the spread of the complete teachings of the Gentle Protector Lama [Tsongkhapa] naturally subsided and the conducive conditions for fulfilling all wishes were assembled. Concerning all this, the kind Refuge and Protector then said:

Géluk triumphalist narrative being rehearsed in this text, see: Johan Elverskog, *The Jewel Translucent Sūtra : Altan Khan and the Mongols in the Sixteenth Century*, Brill's Inner Asian Library, Brill, Leiden–Boston 2003.

¹⁷ *Bsod nams rgya mtsho* (1543–1588) was the Third Dalai Lama and the first to actually hold the title. He visited the court of Altan Khan in 1578 and served as a court advisor and ritualist before returning to Central Tibet. Following the death of Altan, he returned to Tümed lands in order to perform a Buddhist funeral for the deceased ruler. He stayed in Mongol lands for five more years teaching widely and founding monasteries until his death.

¹⁸ *Rje btsun dam pa Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po*, 1635–1723. Often remembered as Zanabazar, Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen Pelzangpo was the first of the lineage of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtus, the most important figureheads in the Khalkha Mongol regions of the Qing–Géluk formation (c. 1644–1911) and in the formation of an autonomous Buddhist theocracy after the collapse of the Qing under the leadership of the Eighth Jebtsundamba (1870–1924). Born to the Tüshiyetu Khan Gombodorj and thus a member of the golden lineage of Chinggis Khan, Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen Pelzangpo was dully recognized as the incarnation of various holy beings including Tāranātha, a recently deceased Tibetan master of the Jonang sect that was then being expunged by the Fifth Dalai Lama's Ganden Potrang government and his Khoshut Mongol patrons. This Jétsün Dampa and all subsequent incarnations were major figureheads of the expansion of the Géluk school into eastern Tibet and Mongol lands during the Qing formation, to which Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen Pelzangpo submitted all Khalkha Mongol territory in 1691 in order to secure imperial protection against the incessant wars with the Dzungar Oirat forces of Galdan Boshugtu Khan.

¹⁹ Jampel Nyingpo (T. *'Jam dpal snying po*) is the name by which Lozang Drakpa (T. *Blo bzang grags pa*, or *Tsong kha pa* 1357–1419), the founder of the “Yellow Hat” Géluk school, is known whilst manifesting as a deity in the heavenly realm of Tuṣita (T. *dga ldan*; M. *tüsid*; *bayasqulang tegülde*). On the life of Zanabazar and the early development of his religious authority based on a biography of one of his disciples, see: Agata Bareja-Starzyńska, *The Biography of the First Khalkha Jetsundampa Zanabazar by Zaya Pandita Luvsanprinlei: Studies, Annotated Translation, Transliteration and Facsimile*, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warsaw, 2015).

²⁰ Tib. *gnam bskos*.

The Sun of Teachers Khédруп²¹ said that:

*The happiness and benefit
Of the nine types of sentient beings
Depends, without exception, upon the Buddha's teaching.
The foundation for increasing the river of the teachings
[Is] the great ocean-like samgha.*²²

As this says, the source of all the happiness and benefit for the teachings and sentient beings is, without exception, the great monastery called Dā Kūriye's Riwo Gégyé Ganden Shédруп Ling.²³ It was established in the Wood Male Horse Year of the Eleventh Rabjung (1654)²⁴ according to the instructions of the Venerable One's root lamas, the Protector of the Land of Snows, the Victor, the Father and his sons [ie. the Dalai Lama]. As a result, many monks gathered [to study and practice topics] such as the *Stages of the Path* and *Mind Training*, generation stage and completion stage, medicine and astrology, and chanting melodies and ritual music, including even arts and crafts,²⁵ which were taught in fine and subtle detail. As a result, the excellent light of the holy Dharma came to pervade this dark, northerly land.

Since then, [600] in dependence upon the skillful kindness and immeasurable Buddha activities of the successive incarnations of the Refuge and Protector Sun of the Teachings, [Riwo Gégyé Ganden Shédруп Ling] was founded upon the unmistakable practice of the three grounds of the *prātimokṣa* vows,²⁶ the basis of the Buddha's teachings, and in addition, the complete study of an ocean of scriptural traditions such as the *tripiṭaka*²⁷ and the four classes of tantra.²⁸ A great many monastic colleges – including monastic schools,²⁹ philosophical colleges,³⁰ and tantric colleges³¹ – were built as a holy condition

²¹ I believe this verse is being attributed to Khédруп Gelek Pelzang (*Mkhas grub rje dge legs dpal bzang*, 1385–1438), one of many of Tsongkhapa's disciples who in the later tradition was centered as one of two principle "sons" (*sras*) to the Géluk founder.

²² On the evolving role of Khédруп in the context of Géluk historical and philosophical thought, see: Elijah S. Ary, *Authorized Lives: Biography and the Early Formation of Geluk Identity*, Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, Wisdom Publications, Somerville MA 2015.

²³ *Dā hu re ri bo dge gyas dga' idan bshad sgrub gling*; Mon. *Riwojejaigandenshadublin*. Dā Khūreyi was the itinerant seat of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtus, known today as Mongolia's capital city Ulaanbaatar.

²⁴ In the version of this text that I have available this date is inserted within parenthesis.

²⁵ Tib. *bzo'i gnas*, one of the ten "fields of knowledge" of classical Buddhist scholasticism imagined and widely promoted by Géluk monastic leaders during the Qing. See: Kurtis Schaeffer, "New Scholarship in Tibet, 1650–1700," in: *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500–1800*, Sheldon Pollock (ed.), Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 291–310.

²⁶ Tib. *So thar (so so'i thar pa)*.

²⁷ Tib. *lung sde snod gsum*.

²⁸ Tib. *rgyud sde bzhi*.

²⁹ Tib. *bshad grwa*.

³⁰ Tib. *mtshan nyid grwa tshang*.

³¹ Tib. *rgyud pa grwa tshang*.

including the *Vast, Middling, and Condensed Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and a precious Tengyur in two-hundred-and-twenty-five volumes printed in Chinese vermilion⁴⁴ whose blessings actually radiated light.

Moreover, some masters and attendants were dispatched to Lhasa in Tibet with gold, silver and many other excellent substances. They visited very special holy sites, offered tea and money [to the monks at] at the great [602] monastic seats, and offered many actual offerings to lamas and trülkus. Specifically, they offered a long-life puja to the King of Victorious One, the All-Knowing Dalai Lama Vajradhara, along with requesting his general and particular spiritual protection⁴⁵ and divination. They then requested a seal for that newly built monastery and a very blessed protector. The Precious King of Victorious Ones happily acquiesced. Regarding the subject of their request for spiritual protection, the divination, the official letter, the seals, and the blessed objects, those [Mongol envoys] were sent to Chökhör Gyel [Monastery]⁴⁶ in the company of government officials and with an official letter in hand. From amongst the different inner holy objects [therein], they were gifted a very fierce thangka painting of glorious Dökham Wangchukma⁴⁷ as a collective holy object.⁴⁸

While en route back from Tibet, they encountered many adversaries, bandits, and dangers. Whenever this occurred, the Dharma Protector would manifest amazing illusory displays. As such, with great joy they were able to bring [the painting back to Khalkha]. [Dökham Wangchukma] was then enthroned as the protector [of Ganden Chökhör Ling]. Every year, month, and day during the monastic assembly, uncle and nephew and all other subjects would continually made offerings just like the life story of Anāthapiṇḍada.⁴⁹

One time, uncle and nephew agreed that: “Nowadays our monastery, including its main assembly hall, the inner three holy objects,⁵⁰ the administrative office,⁵¹ and its subordinates⁵² as well as new monk recruits from our area have since long ago resided together in a single regional house in Kūriye. They should make offerings to the great Refuge and Protector [603] Vajradhara [Jétsun Dampa].” They dully made a request to their regional Jasak leader in a firm, imprinted letter.

In the third reign year of the Mañjuḥoṣa Emperor Jiaqing,⁵³ when the fourth incarnation of the Refuge and Protector Vajradhara was twenty four years old, in *Kalāyukta*,

⁴⁴ Tib. *rgya nag mtshal*.

⁴⁵ Tib. *spyi sgos kyi skyabs 'jug*.

⁴⁶ Tib. *Chos 'khor rgyal*.

⁴⁷ Tib. *Dpal ldan 'dod khams dbang phyug ma*.

⁴⁸ Tib. *rten skal*.

⁴⁹ *Mgon med zas sbyin* [spelled incorrectly in this text as *Dgon med zas sbyin*). Anāthapiṇḍada was a wealthy merchant from Śrāvastī whose great patronage of the Buddha and the saṃgha is widely extolled in Indian Buddhist canonical literature.

⁵⁰ Tib. *rten gsum*: ie. statuary and other images, Dharma texts, and stūpas which are the standard representations of the Buddhas' body, speech, and mind respectively.

⁵¹ Tib. *spyi so*.

⁵² Tib. *mnga' zhabs*.

⁵³ *Jam dbyangs gong ma bsngags 'os smon ldan*; 嘉慶, r. 1796–1820.

the fifty-second year of the Earth Female Horse Year of the thirteenth *rapjung*⁵⁴ (1798), [they gathered together] the supports of body, speech, and mind of the above-mentioned main assembly hall along with twenty offering substances, more than five-thousand-three-hundred silver *srang*⁵⁵ from the monastery's administrative office, and many thousands of livestock and wrote a letter requesting that "more than thirty servant-monks⁵⁶ and our own local monks who had been staying in Dā Kūriye could all be combined into one regional house."

They offered these in the presence of the Fourth Lord of Refuge Vajradhara. The Lord of Refuge accepted their request with unusual happiness and bestowed the name Trashī Thösam Ling along with many amazing objects, such as a blessed gold and copper statue of the Gentle Protector, King of the Dharma Tsongkhapa that was two cubits in height together with robes and a hundred and eight beaded rosary, a clay statue of the Fifth All-Seeing Lord of Victorious Ones⁵⁷ about five hand lengths in height, and a painting depicting the Refuge and Protector's sixteen previous incarnations.

In response to the requests of the Erdeni Treasure Holder⁵⁸ and so forth, [the Fourth Jétsun Damba] bestowed as the constituency⁵⁹ for Tashi Thösam Ling monastic recruits from the Jasak Üdzeng Orgyan Kyap and the Tshé tshing Toyon [604] regional house who were of the same ancestry⁶⁰ as the Jasak Métri from amongst the ranks of Hevajra Regional House⁶¹ and, additionally, the ten villages of the Ergéten Otak.⁶² All this occurred just as it had been prophesized. In addition, the Noyon Treasure Holder and others gave their constituency with supreme kindness, which further sustained [Tashi Thösam Ling].

Additionally, he assigned Guhyasamāja⁶³ and Sarvavid-Vairocana⁶⁴ as the meditation deities of the regional house and Yāma⁶⁵ and Śridevī⁶⁶ as its protectors. He also offered the special robes of a trülku to the Tibetan Lama Lingsi Kachu⁶⁷ and installed him as the throne-holder lama. He also granted an exception for them to perform the yearly Fulfillment Ritual⁶⁸ before the government offering ritual.⁶⁹ In addition, before and after

⁵⁴ Tib. *rab byung*, the sexagenary calendric cycle used in this period by Tibetans and Mongolians (though many versions of this systems were in use, as were other concurrent Mongolian and Chinese dating systems, as we see in this passage).

⁵⁵ "silver coinage", Tib. *ngul srang*.

⁵⁶ Tib. *mnga' zhabs kyi grwa pa*.

⁵⁷ The "Great Fifth" Dalai Lama Ngakwang Lozang Gyatso (*Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho*, 1617–1682).

⁵⁸ Tib. *Er te ni phyag mdzod*.

⁵⁹ Tib. *thob khungs*.

⁶⁰ Tib. *rigs rgyud gcig*.

⁶¹ Tib. *Kye rdo khams tshan*.

⁶² Tib. *Er ge then o thag*.

⁶³ Tib. *Gsang ba 'dus pa*.

⁶⁴ Tib. *Kun rig*.

⁶⁵ Tib. *Dam can chos rgyal*.

⁶⁶ Tib. *Dpal ldan lha mo*.

⁶⁷ Tib. *Gling bsrid dka' bcu*.

⁶⁸ Tib. *bskang tshogs*.

⁶⁹ Tib. *gzhung sa'i tshogs*.

[these requests] he happily gave many prophesies. He thus protected this monastery with his great kindness. Until the sky ends, we will be ever unable to repay this unforgettable kindness.

Following upon all this, the unthinkable benevolent Great Refuge and Protector Vajradhara gave advice to all the many monks [of Trashi Thösan Ling] about which practices should be adopted and which should be rejected. The summary of his advice, deeper than an ocean, is as follows:

Homage to Great Compassion!

This appeal is directed to the saṃgha.

My wish is for all of you is to exert yourselves unrelentingly in activity related to the teachings, such as study and daily recitation. I become very happy whenever I learn that this has occurred.

Nonetheless, there are still some who have heedlessly adopted obvious and hidden paths that lead to unwholesome behavior, afflictive emotions, and bad friends. As such, they engage in activity that harms the [605] general teachings and sentient beings as well as themselves and others. The signs and characteristics of this have clearly appeared.

Moving forward, [such monks] must be much more attentive. Due to the influence of [differences] in region and time, it is impossible to behave virtuously as when the Teacher Buddha was himself alive. Even so, this bodily support is like a spring flower, so easily destroyed. All mundane wealth and pleasure is impermanent, as if simply borrowed from friends. In the future it will not be easy to find a human body.

So that at least you yourself will not suffer, you should base yourself on the vows you have promised to keep and to memorize texts, and so forth. You must study hard according to your abilities and also engage in virtuous activities of body, speech, and mind such as prostrations, circumambulation, and acts of generosity. Then the Lama and Triple Gem will certainly protect you and all of yours own and others' temporary and ultimate goals will be accomplished.

In following this advice, monastic pupils from this regional house should be solely devoted to those [acting] as doctors for the teachings and beings and remember the kindness of all the Buddhist teachers who have previously served the Buddha's teachings. Following the Teacher's advice, one must protect the inner vows of the [monastic] saṃgha and all of one's other vows as if they were one's own eyes. On that foundation, one must

want to exert effort like a river in activities such as study, contemplation, meditation, and abstaining from meditative absorption in order to uphold, protect, and spread the unmistakable system of the Yellow Hat tradition, which unites the precious sūtra and tantra [606] teachings. As it says in the Jātakas:⁷⁰ “To make offerings in order to pay back someone who has kindly helped you, practice according to whatever has been instructed.”

To summarize:

*Whosoever is endowed with the enlightened mind is marvelous,
Like the flame of a lamp in the cave of the pure teaching
For the sentient beings of the northerly borderlands in this degenerate age,
Illuminating the excellent path to emancipation and the higher realms.⁷¹*

E ma!

*An intelligent disciple,
Healed by the cool shade of compassion
Is not deceived by the illusory appearances of the eight worldly dharmas.
You should diligently study the pure biographies of the Kadam masters.*

*This monastery, like an excellent auspicious vase, gathers together ethical
[monks].
And is filled with the nectar of study, contemplation, teaching, and practice.
May it perpetually flourish and develop until the end of existence
As a foundation for the benefit and happiness of the teachings and beings
in this world!⁷²*

[Zawa Damdin’s Colophon:] Regarding this text, it [is copied] from a very old, excellent work that may have come originally as a gift from Tibet but was stored deep in the Dharma Treasury [of Trashi Thösam Ling] in a heap of dust. After recovering it, I made edits and added material from other sources⁷³ to write [the present version].⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Tib. *skyes rabs*.

⁷¹ With poetic flair, each of these verses plays off of the multiple meanings of *byang*, either as standalone noun or as part of a compound: “pure” (*byang*), “northerly” (*byang phyogs*), “emancipation and liberation” (*byang grol*), and “enlightenment” (*byang chub*).

⁷² The author’s literary exercise in this last stanza is to craft a poetic dedication of the merit accrued from composing the text that plays off of the component parts of the name of the regional house, Trashi Thösam Ling. In verse one, “auspicious” (*bkra shis*). In verse two, “study and contemplation” (*thos bsam*). In verse three, “place” or “land” (*gling*) as part of “the world” (*’dzam gling*; Skt. *Jambudvīpa*, our southern continent according to classical Buddhist cosmology).

⁷³ Lit. “I joined head and tail together” (*mgo mjug sbyar*).

⁷⁴ The colophon is written in a fairly illegible shorthand. I thank Khenpo Kunga Shéráp for his kind assistance in parsing out its meaning.

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