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རྩ་གསུམ་གཏེར་བདག་སྤིང་པ།

Tsasum Terdak Lingpa: An Incarnation of Nubchen Sangye Yeshe

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

gnubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes kyi skye mtha' rtsa gsum gter bdag gling pa

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Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Tsasum Lingpa was a native of Nangchen and was active both there and in Powo. His treasures are collected in a modern edition of thirty volumes, but little is known of Tsasum Lingpa himself, making this short biography particularly noteworthy. This text is an excerpt from a collection of miscellaneous historical notes in Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's collected works.¹

ཙུ་ག་སྤུམ་ག་ཏེར་བདག་གླིང་པ།

Tsasum Terdak Lingpa

Tsasum Terdak Lingpa, also known as Garwang Namchak Dorje, an emanation of Nubchen Sangye Yeshe, was born sometime in the eleventh *rabjung* (1627–1686), in Nagrong in the foothills of the Jowo Zegyal and Kugyal Shene mountains, in the southern part of Nangchen. His father, Tashi, belonged to the Lang branch of the Dru clan. His mother was named Gelegma. Many wondrous signs and visions were seen at his birth. The year of his birth is not clear.²

When he was not much older, he received refuge vows from Kamda Chöje of the Geluk monastery in Nangchen, who was renowned as an emanation of Ngok Loden Sherab, [226] (he was given the name Tashi Puntsok) and joined the labrang as a novice monk. He learned all the recitations and so on by heart. When he was still very young, Terchen Tagshampa visited Nangchen Gar, from whom he received only an introductory teaching. Apart from that, it does not appear that he received teachings from any other lama. As his behavior was very rough, he did not easily get along with the other monks. At that time, he became like the ringleader of the labrang.

When Kamda Chöje traveled to Central Tibet to deliver donations,³ Tsasum Lingpa had the good fortune to go as his attendant. This seems to have been during the reign of Lhazang Khan and his lama, the White Lotus Holder Yeshe Gyatso. As he was very bright, Kamda Chöje encouraged him to study philosophy at Ganden Monastery, but having received a prophecy that the time had come to reveal a profound treasure, he did not stay and instead returned to Kham.

When he returned to Central Tibet, he went to Drigung Monastery and followed Könchok Trinle Zangpo as his root teacher, living there as a monk for about three years. He received all kinds of teachings, especially the cycles of Jahavīr's spoken transmission on prāṇa in great detail, and his realization overflowed. Miraculous

powers and clairvoyance arose spontaneously. In keeping with the timing of the prophecy, through the practice of disciplined awareness and miraculous command of prāṇa and mind, [227] he roamed through many sacred places. As foretold in the certificate of prophecy, he first revealed the Gathering of Sugatas guru yoga of the Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes cycle from the Great Assembly Hall of the Ḍākinīs cave at Zhotö Tidro. In his dreams, he had immersive visions of traveling to the Lotus Light paradise.

After that, he revealed many profound treasures from places such as Sha'uk Takgo in Mön, the Zilchen cave at Tsäri, and places in Kongpo. Sensing the imminent demise of Drigung Könchok Trinle Zangpo, he hurried to him but was slightly delayed on the road and only arrived in time for the cremation. This happened at the time of the Dzungar invasion of Tibet (1718).

He then returned to Kham. By opening sacred sites such as Jowo Zegyal, known as the “second Tsäri,” he also opened the doors to many concealed treasures. He received patronage from the Nangchen king and others, and his activity flourished to some extent in that region.

In particular, he traveled to the hidden land of Powo, established excellent patronage relations with the Kanam Depa, and founded the small monastic community of Dudul Ngagpe Ling at Tromzik Ngamchen Gang in the Yegong area of Powo. He proclaimed that to the east of this place [228] was Gawalung, the great sanctuary of Hayagrīva; to the south was Gyala Sengtam, a sacred place of Yama; to the west was Bong Ri, a sacred mountain of the ḍākinīs; and to the north was Makung Lung, the sanctuary of the deities of the Eight Herukas. He also revealed profound treasures in that region, such as the major revelation of the Eight Herukas: Secret Brilliance from Ngamchen Rong. He put most of them into writing and actively imparted their empowerments, reading transmissions, and instructions. He then returned again to his native land.

The narrative thus far has been from Tsasum Lingpa's *Fire Crystal Rosary* autobiography in verse, which is over three hundred pages. Although set within there is a multitude of songs of realization and accounts of visions and prophecies, his actual life story is not clearly apparent. It is said there is no supplementary account of the events of his life.

It seems that during his time in Powo, the Dagla Gampo incarnation came there and was nominated the custodian of Tsasum Lingpa's revelations. This may have been during the time of the Third Gampopa Tulku, Zangpo Dorje.⁴

The list of names by which he was known includes Pema Terdak Lingpa, Karma Ledrel Lingpa, Rigdzin Tsasum Lingpa, Garwang Namchak Dorje, Ngagchang Hūṃnak Dragtsal, Rigdzin Dudul Dorje, and Terchen Pema Mindröl.

While he was at Samye Chimpu, [229] it is said that his son Rigdzin Tugchok Dorje was born to his consort, a woman of noble lineage from Kyirong.

Tsasum Lingpa's Revelations

The outline of his revelations was put down in verse by the master himself during his time in Powo:

The list of tantras written down at that time—
Four longevity practices and Dark Red Amulet Kilāya,
Three types of wrathful ones and Mahākāruṇika,
Ḍākini Siṃhavaktrā and the two classes of kṣetrapālas,
The five wisdom protectors and so on,
And the *Hundred Thousand Dregpas* as well, with none missing—
Was arranged in the order of their discovery
Up to the Fire Horse year (1726), and the copies of the treasure scrolls
Have amounted to over fourteen volumes.

This seems to be only a rough summary, as his revealed teachings were said to be extensive.

Those for which the empowerments and reading transmissions are still current today seem to make a total of about eighteen easily readable volumes of revealed teachings. They are the following:

- The empowerments for the general and specific practices of the *Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes* prayer from the Gathering of Sugatas guru yoga, revealed in the Dragmar Keutsang temple at Samye Chimpu, together with the development and completion stage practices and ritual corpus, which amounts to two volumes;
- The exceptional profound instructions for the four empowerments related to the tantra, transmissions, and practice instructions of the Wrathful Guru, Most Profound Lotus Heruka, the treasure revealed in the Great Assembly cave at Tidro in Zhotö, with a vast range of ritual practices, [230] which amount to two volumes;
- The extensive collection of the tantras, transmissions, practice instructions, and ritual activities for the fourteen tantras of the Eight Great Herukas called “Secret Overwhelming Splendor” and so on, which was revealed from the Hidden Lotus grove in Tromzik Ngamchen Rong in Powo and amounts to seven volumes;
- The very profound Dark Red Amulet of Kilāya, revealed at Sha’uk Tagö in Mön, in one volume;

- Four cycles of longevity sādhanas: (1) the Overwhelming the Lord of Death with Splendor longevity rite revealed in the secret Zilchen cave at Tsāri; (2) the Vajra Armor longevity rite revealed at Wazhab Dragri in the south, a mountain that resembles a longevity vase; (3) the Lotus Secret Drop longevity rite, revealed high up on the Jowo Gagyāl Rinchen Pungpa mountain in lower Doshe; and (4) the Iron Knot that Cheats Death longevity rite revealed in the Ḍākinī's Heart cave on the border of upper and lower Ngoshul, together with many ritual practices, making one volume;
- Mahākāruṇika Subjugator of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa, revealed in the Lotus Crystal cave in the hidden land of Drakge, in one volume;
- Solar Essence Hayagrīva and *Wrathful King Hayagrīva, Embodiment of Power* revealed from the Darna Pawang Tago boulder in Powo;
- The Luminous Wisdom Net Vajrasattva cycle revealed from the jewel treasury on the Serling Riché mountain; [231]
- *Vajrapāṇi Outshining the Haughty Spirits with Splendor, Red Razor Hail Protection Rites of Wangchen Sangwa Tanak*, offering rites for Drongyal Nöjin, and an offering liturgy for Dhūmāvatī, all revealed from Mount Mugpo Lhatse in the Lhoda Chigyu area of Nangchen;
- Ultra-Secret Lotus of the dominance and wrathful classes of ritual, and a three-part Dorje Drolö cycle revealed from the ear of the Maitreya statue in the Dungchu temple in Powo, with the texts of this type making up about one volume;
- The Blazing Poison Mountain Mañjuśrī Yamāntaka Vajrabhairava cycle revealed at Tromzik Ngamchen Rong, in one volume;
- The ritual corpus of the Secret Ḍākinī, Supreme Wish-Fulfilling Gem revealed from the inner sanctum of the Great Assembly cave at Tidro Dragkar in Zhotö, in one volume;
- The Ḍākinī Subduer of Mara cycle revealed from the purple lake of blood in the snows of Jowo Zegyal, in about one volume or so;
- The Kṣetrapāla Mahākāla cycle revealed at Tsāri, in about half a volume;
- The extended Lotus King cycle guru wealth sādhanā revealed on the Lagong Genyen Podrang mountain in Chamdo in Domé, and the Wrathful Guru Cycle rites for turning back the Turuṣka and other invading armies, with many ritual liturgies, revealed from either the jewel treasury on Serling Mountain or from Dragnak Dudzong, with the texts of this type [232] making up about one volume each.

There also seem to be many scrolls that were never redacted and teachings for which the textual transmission has survived but the empowerments and reading transmissions have not.

NOTES

1. For cataloguing purposes, Khyentse Vision Project created the following title for this previously untitled compilation: *A Miscellaneous Collection of Historiographical, Biographical, and Other Notes (lo rgyus rnam thar sogs sna tshogs kyi zin bris phyogs bsgrigs)*, which can be found in vol. 19, 1–504, of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo’s Kabum.
2. BDRC has the dates 1694–1738.
3. Here *bod* means Central Tibet, as opposed to Greater Tibet (*bod chen po*), which Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo often uses to mean Kham and other eastern areas outside the territory of the Tibetan government.
4. The Third Gampo Tulku, whom Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo here names Zangpo Dorje (bzang po rdo rje), died in 1700, and so the events described were likely during the time of the Fourth Gampo Tulku, Kunzang Ngedön Wangpo (sgam po sprul sku 04 kun bzang nges don dbang po, 1708–1754), who fled to Powo to escape the Dzungar.

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GLOSSARY

certificate of prophecy

ཁ་བྱང་ལུང་བསྟན། • *kha byang lung bstan*

A document received through vision or other means in the initial stage of treasure discovery that foretells the place and time of the revelation.

Chamdo

ཆབ་མདོ། • *chab mdo*

Town in western Kham at the confluence of the Ngom Chu and Dza Chu (upper Mekong) rivers.

Chimpu

མཆིམས་ཕུ། • *mchims phu*

The hermitage cave complex near Samye is famed for having been a special place of practice for such great masters as Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyal, and Longchenpa (1308–1364).

[BDRC G3528](#).

Dagla Gampo

དྲགས་ལ་སྒྲུ་པོ། • *dwags la sgam po*

The original Kagyu monastery founded by Gampopa Sönam Rinchen (1079–1153) on a sacred mountain in Dagpo. [BDRC G197](#).

Ḍākinī Siṃhavadtrā

མཁའ་འགྲོ་སེང་གཤོང་། • *mkha' 'gro seng gdong* • ḍākinī siṃhavadtrā

The lion-faced ḍākinī.

Dark Red Kīlaya Amulet Box

བླ་མེད་ཡང་ཕུར་གྲུ་དམར་ནག་། • *bla med yang phur gwa'u dmar nag*

An extensive treasure revelation of Tsasum Lingpa.

Dhūmāvātī

དུད་སོལ་ལྷ་མོ། • *dud sol lha mo* • dhūmāvātī

A form of Palden Lhamo.

disciplined awareness

རིག་པ་བརྟུན་ཞུགས། • *rig pa brtul zbugs* • vidyāvratā

A central principle of Buddhist practice, referring to the cultivation of insight.

Domé

མདོ་སྐད། • *mdo smad*

Eastern Tibet, or specifically northeastern Tibet.

Dorje Drolö

རྡོ་རྗེ་གྲོ་ལོད། • *rdo rje gro lod*

One of the eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche.

Dragmar Keutsang

བྲག་དམར་ཀེུ་ཚང་། • *brag dmar ke'u tshang*

The main temple at Samye Chimpu.

Drigung

འབྲི་གུང་། • *'bri gung*

Drigung Til, a Drigung Kagyu monastery founded by Jigten Gönpö Rinchen Pal (1143–1217) in 1179.

Dru

འབྲུ། • *'bru*

One of Tibet's six early clans, the Dru are believed to have originated from Drusha (Gilgit) and were notable Bön supporters.

Dzungar

ཕུན་གར། • *jun gar*

One of the four tribes of the Oirat Mongols.

Eight Herukas

བཀའ་བརྟུན། • *bka' brgyad*

An important set of Mahāyoga teachings taught by Padmasambhava, centered around eight heruka deities.

Fire Crystal Rosary

རྣམ་ཐར་མེ་ཤེལ། • *nam thar me shel*

The brief title of a verse autobiography of Tsasum Lingpa, which does not appear to be extant.

Ganden Monastery

རི་བོ་དགེ་ལྡན། • *ri bo dge ldan*

A major Geluk monastery outside of Lhasa founded in 1409 by Tsongkhapa. [BDRC G337](#).

Gathering of Sugatas guru yoga of the Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes Cycle

སྐུ་མའི་སྤྱགས་སྐུ་བ་བདེ་གཤེགས་ཀྱན་འདུས་བསམ་ས་ལ་ལྷན་གྲུབ་མ། • *bla ma'i thugs sgrub bde gsbegs kun 'dus bsam pa lhun grub ma*

A treasure revelation of Tsasum Lingpa, not to be confused with a similarly titled revelation of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.

Hundred Thousand Dregpas

རླུང་པ་འབུམ་ཉིག་ • *dregs pa 'bum tig*

A treasure revelation of Tsasum Lingpa.

Jahavīr

ཇ་ཕྱིར། • *dza pIr*

A Persian siddha said to have transmitted a special pith instruction on the practice of the internal winds.

Jahavīr's spoken transmission on prāṇa

རླུང་ཇ་ཕྱིར་སྟེན་བརྒྱུད། • *rlung dza pIr snyan brgyud*

A special oral instruction of Guru Rinpoche for attaining a body of light within one lifetime. Jahavīr's spoken lineage is said to be the short transmission.

Jowo Zegyal

ཇོ་བོ་གཟེ་རྒྱལ། • *jo bo gze rgyal*

A sacred mountain in Nangchen.

Kanam Depa

ཀ་གནམ་སྡེ་པ། • *ka gnam sde pa*

Also referred to as Kanam Gyalpo, the kings of Powo/Puwo whose palace was located in Kanam.

Könchok Trinle Zangpo

དཀོན་མཆོག་ཕྱིན་ལས་བཟང་པོ། • *dkon mchog phrin las bzang po*

The Second Drigung Chetsang (1656–1718). [BDRC P416](#). [TOL 6569](#).

Kongpo

ཀོང་པོ། • *kong po*

A region in southern Tibet.

kṣetrapāla

ཞིང་སྐྱོང་། • *zhing skyong* • kṣetrapāla

A class of Tibetan territorial protector deities.

Kyirong

སྐྱིད་མོ་གྲོང་། • *skyid mo grong*

An alpine valley on the border with central Nepal that was traditionally a part of Tibet.

labrang

ལྗ་བར་། • *bla brang*

A residence for a lama. It can range from a private domicile to a large monastic estate and administrative center.

Lhazang Khan

ལྷམ་པོ་ལྷ་བཟང་། • *rgyal po lha bzang*

Lhazang Khan was a Qoshot Mongol ruler and grandson of Gushri Khan (1582–1655), and a ruler of Tibet in 1706–1717. He dethroned the Sixth Dalai Lama and replaced him

with a child who may have been his own son, known as the White Lotus Holder Yeshe Gyatso. [BDRC P420](#). [TOL 6613](#).

Lotus Light

པདྨ་འོད། • *pad+ma 'od*

Alternatively described as the pure land (*zhing kham*s) of Padmasambhava or his luminous palace on the Copper-Colored Mountain.

Mahākāruṇika

ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོ། • *thugs rje chen po* • mahākāruṇika, mahākaruṇika

Epithet of the great bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, the embodiment of the compassion of all buddhas.

Mön

མོན། • *mon*

A generic term for the southern slopes of the Himalayas, particularly the region that became the modern kingdom of Bhutan.

Nangchen Gar

ནང་ཆེན་སྒར། • *nang chen sgar*

A Drukpa Kagyu monastery in the capital of Nangchen. [BDRC G2611](#).

Ngok Loden Sherab

རྫོག་ལྷོ་ལྷན་ཤེས་རབ། • *rngog blo ldan shes rab*

An eleventh-century scholar and translator associated with Sangpu Monastery. He translated the *Ratnagotravibhāga* with the Kashmiri paṇḍita Sajjana, crucial for buddha nature theory in Tibet. His commentary reportedly began the “analytical” exegetical tradition. [BDRC P2551](#). [TOL 4261](#).

Nubchen Sangye Yeshe

གུབས་ཆེན་སངས་རྒྱས་ཡེ་ཤེས། • *gnubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes*

An influential ninth-century Nyingma master counted among the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava. He composed such works as *The Lamp for the Eye of Contemplation* and *The Sun of Yoga That Is an Illuminating Key to the Armor of Darkness*. [BDRC P2885](#). [TOL 4626](#).

Powo

ཕོ་བོ། • *spo bo*

A principality in southeastern Tibet.

rabjung

རབ་བྱུང་། • *rab byung*

The sixty-year cycles of the Tibetan calendar.

Red Razor Hail Protection Rites of Wangchen Sangwa Tanak

དབང་ཆེན་གསང་བ་ཐ་ནག་གི་མེར་སྲུང་སྒྲི་དམར་པོ། • *dbang chen gsang ba tha nag gi ser srung spu gri dmar po*

The name of a ritual text revealed by Tsasum Lingpa that appears to have been lost. Wangchen Sangwa Tanak is likely the name of a local deity.

Secret Overwhelming Splendor

གསང་བ་ཟེལ་གནོན། • *gsang ba zil gnon*

A treasure cycle of Tsasum Lingpa.

Solar Essence Hayagrīva

རྩ་མཚོག་ལོ་ལ་ཉི་མའི་སྤྱིང་པོ། • *rta mchog rol pa nyi ma'i snying po*

A treasure cycle of Tsasum Lingpa that he revealed from the Darna Pawang Tago boulder (dar sna pha waM rta mgo) in Powo.

Tertön Tagshampa

གཏེར་སྟོན་སྟག་ཤམ་པ། • *gter ston stag sham pa*

Tagsham Nuden Dorje. Also known as Samten Lingpa. A renowned Nyingma master and treasure revealer from Kham. Believed to be the incarnation of Ācārya Salé. [BDRC P663](#). [TOL 9234](#).

Tsasum Lingpa

རྩ་གསུམ་གླིང་པ། • *rtsa gsum gling pa*

Namchak Tsasum Terdak Lingpa (1694–1738), also known as Tsasum Terdak Lingpa, was a prolific treasure revealer from Nangchen. [BDRC P680](#).

Turuṣka

དུ་རུ་ཀ། • *du ru ka* • *турушка*

A generic term for the armies that invaded northwest India from the ninth century.

Vajrapāṇi Outshining the Haughty Spirits with Splendor

བྲངས་པའི་ཕྱག་རྩོར་རྟེན་པ་ཟེལ་གནོན། • *drangs pa'i phyag rdor dregs pa zil gnon*

This appears to have been the name of a text that Tsasum Lingpa revealed that is now lost.

White Lotus Holder Yeshe Gyatso

པད་དཀར་འཛིན་པ་ཡེ་ཤེས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། • *pad dkar 'dzin pa ye shes rgya mtsbo*

The White Lotus Holder Yeshe Gyatso was recognized by Lhazang Khan as the true Sixth Dalai Lama and installed on the throne of the Potala in 1708. [BDRC P2305](#). [TOL 3995](#).

Wrathful Guru, Most Profound Lotus Heruka

གུ་རུ་བྲག་པོ་ཡང་ཟབ་པ་རྒྱ་ཐག་འཐུང་། • *gu ru drag po yang zab pad+ma kbrag 'thung*

A treasure cycle of Tsasum Lingpa that he revealed in the Great Assembly cave at Tidro in Zhotö.