

Chíntamaní Rosary Spreading the Buddha's Teachings; Great Ocean of Benefit and Joy

***A Method for Depicting the Sacred Biography of
the Great Jetsun Tsongkhapa on Painted Cloth
in One Hundred and Fifty-Three Parts***

*rje btsun tsong kha pa chen po'i rnam thar ras brís kyi tshul brgya
nga gsum pa tsinta ma ni'i phreng ba thub bstan rgyas byed
phan bde'i rol mtsho chen po bzhugs so*

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Practice Requirements:

Anyone can perform the practices in this book.

Thangka I



[Thangka 1: Position 1

(P 1)]¹ I prostrate to the Lama, Manjushri, and Saraswati.

Here, within the first thangka depicting the holy life story of the Great Perfect Master,

[P 2] the main figure, Je Rinpoche, displays the wheel-turning mudra, seated on a lion throne with an aura behind him and the Six Ornaments² above.

[P 9] Gyaltsab Dharma Rinchen and Dulzin Dragpa Gyaltsen are on his right; [P 10] Khedrub Je

Geleg Palzangpo and Tsakho Bonpo³ on his left. Surrounding them on the right and left are the Eight Pure Ones.⁴ Below those



¹ The numbers on the far left of each page followed by a parenthesis, 1), 2), etc. are found in the original Tibetan text of the work translated here. All the numbers in brackets, [Position 3], [P 4], etc., have been added by the translator in order to show how each section of the text correlates with the sections of the thangka images being described. The numbers in brackets correspond to the numbers overlaid on the smaller black and white copies of each thangka which serve as keys.

² The Six Ornaments are great Buddhist scholar saints of ancient India: Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubhandu, Dignanga, and Dharmakirti.

³ Tsakho Bonpo was born into the royal family of Dzakho in the Gyalmorong area of Kham. He achieved the rank of a scholar who had studied the Buddhist Tripitaka and Tantras. Je Tsongkhapa gave an explanation of the *Stages on the Path to Enlightenment*, and composed the *Three Principle Aspects of the Path* for this child of the Victors. (From *dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*)

⁴ These are eight famous disciples of Lama Tsongkhapa whom he hand-picked to join him during a pivotal long retreat at Olka. They are usually divided into two groups of four according to which region of Tibet they are from. There are the four from Central Tibet: Lama Jamkarwa, Elder Zangkyongwa, Elder Rinchen Gyaltsen, and Elder Jangsengwa; and the four from Domay or Eastern

are Gendun Drub⁵ and Jamyang Choje,⁶ Jamchen Choje,⁷ Sherab Sengge,⁸ and others. Arranged in the foreground are clouds of offerings and deities such as Brahma and Indra.

- 1) [Position 3] In addition, long ago in this world system, when Je Tsongkhapa in a previous life was called “Pure Light,” the Buddha Indraketu (Buddha Peak-of-Power) blessed him with praise in the midst of boundless bodhisattvas saying that he would spread the teachings of the tantric vehicle and the view related with it in impure lands. Then he bestowed on him the name, “Great Courage.”
- 2) [P 4] When he was Padmai Ngangtsul (Lotus Natured), the son of a Brahmin, he was led to Bodhgaya by the bodhisattva Mopai Lodro (Wisdom of Aspiration), an emanation of Manjushri, to meet the Teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha, to whom he offered a crystal rosary. Thereby he created the interdependent connection that his future disciples would realize emptiness.
- 3) [P 5] In the middle of Lake Anavatapta/Manasarovar (Ever-Cool Lake) there is a dwelling place of all the previous buddhas. As it says in the vinaya texts, Shakyamuni Buddha

Tibet: Togden Jampal Gyatso, Geshe Sharab Drag, Geshe Jampel Tashi, Geshe Palkyong.

⁵ Gendun Drubpa (dge 'dun grub pa 1391–1474) was posthumously recognized as the first reincarnation in the line of Dalai Lamas.

⁶ Jamyang Choje Tashi Palden (Tib. byams dbangs chos rje bkra shis dpal sdan) (1379–1449), was the founder of Drepung Monastery and author of *Lama Tsongkhapa's Secret Biography (rje'i gsang ba'i rnam thar)*.

⁷ Jamchen Choje Shākya Yeshe (byams chen chos rje shAkya ye shes, 1354–1435) of Zel Gungtang, was the founder of Sera Monastery and the one whom Tsongkhapa sent in his stead to teach in China when requested by the Ming Dynasty Emperor.

⁸ Je Sherab Sengye (rje shes rab seng+ge, 1383–1445), who famously arisen to volunteer when Tsongkhapa asked who among his disciples would uphold his teachings on tantra, founded Gyume Tantric College.

went there and taught the Dharma. The Naga Anavatapta offered him a conch and he blew it in the midst of those abiding in rains retreat.

[P 6] Then, while staying at Mount Kailash, he also blew the conch amidst the assembly and taught Dharma to Maheshvara and many other gods and nagas.

- 4) [P 7] Later, on Vulture's Peak, after making a prophecy about Je Rinpoche and his monastery, Ganden, the Buddha sent this conch to that community.

[P 8] It was hidden in the Snow Land near a large river. A likeness of this conch came to light during Je Rinpoche's life.

Thangka 2



5) [Thangka 2: P 1]

In the Fire-Monkey Year (1356), Tsongkhapa's father had a dream in which Manjushri appeared as a monk carrying volumes of scriptures and went into the shrine room of his home. Thus he thought to himself, "Perhaps a wise child will come to us."

[P 2] He also dreamed that Vajrapani threw a vajra from Janglochan (the Pure Land of Vajrapani) which dissolved into his wife, whereby he thought, "It seems that a strong child will be born."



- 6) [P 3] Tsongkhapa's mother dreamed that she was bathed on a plain of flowers by crystal youths and dakinis of the west.

[P 4] Neighbors dreamed of inviting Jowo Rinpoche to come.⁹ The sun, moon, and stars appeared together, a rain of flowers fell in the daytime, musical sounds resounded in the sky, the earth shook, and so forth.

- 7) [P 5] In a dream, the Dharma master Dondrub Rinchen came face to face with Vajrabhairava and requested, "May I see you in actuality." Thereupon, Vajrabhairava, pointing in the direction of Tsongkha, said, "One year from now I will come to the lower valley of this region. Until then be at ease."

⁹ This is the most sacred statue of Shakyamuni Buddha in Tibet.

Master Dondrub Rinchen understood that Tsongkhapa would be born.

- 8) [P 6] In the Fire-Bird Year [1357], Tsongkhapa's mother had a dream in which she saw a procession of people playing music and carrying various offerings. All were saying, "Welcome, Avalokiteshvara." In the sky was a golden statue the size of a mountain shining light like the sun and resounding with melodious sounds of Dharma. Accompanied by many gods and goddesses bedecked in magnificent attire, this statue gradually diminished in size and then absorbed into her body, whereupon she dreamed that she was surrounded by this retinue making offerings and singing verses of auspiciousness.
- 9) [P 7] Following a dream in which dakinis opened the crystal door of his mother's heart and ritually bathed her, Tsongkhapa was born at dawn at the end of the Fire-Bird Year [1357].
- [P 8] At that time, the Dharma master Dondrub Rinchen sent Manjushri relic pills and other offerings. At the place where Tsongkhapa was born a white sandalwood tree sprung up and on all of its leaves many various sacred images appeared such as the letters of the mantra, ARAPATSANA.¹⁰
- 10) [P 9] [When this youth had reached the age of three, on an occasion when Je Rinpoche's father had invited him to visit, the Dharma master Dondrub Rinchen offered livestock and a huge number of other offerings to the father. He said to the father, "Please offer this son of yours to me." The father thereupon accepted to offer his son with profound joy.]¹¹

¹⁰ This is the mantra of the Buddha of Wisdom Manjushri. The complete mantra is OM ARA PATSA NA DHI.

¹¹ In order to explain this scene in the second thangka, this description has been added from Khedrub Geleg Palzangpo's biography of Tsongkhapa

[P 10] At the age of three, Tsongkhapa was given lay vows by the Fourth Karmapa, Rolpay Dorje. In Rolpay Dorje's travel notes, it is explained how this was prophesied to be the coming of a second buddha.

- 11) [P 11] At seven years of age, Tsongkhapa took Dondrub Rinchen as his guru. At eight, this master bestowed novice ordination and [P 12] tantric initiations on Tsongkhapa.

[P 13] Again and again Tsongkhapa had dreams of Vajrapani and Jowo Atisha. He did many approximation retreats and so forth, and then set out on the road to Central Tibet at the age of sixteen.

[P14] While staying in Chamdo for some days he received a prophecy after having visions of the sixteen arhats and Mahakala in a protector temple.

entitled, *Ford of Faith; The Amazing and Wondrous Sacred Biography of the Great Jetsun Lama Tsongkhapa* (rje btsun bla ma tshong kha pa chen po'i ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba'i rnam thar pa dad pa'i 'jug ngogs zhes bya ba bzugs so.)

Thangka 3



12) [Thangka 3: P 1]

During his seventeenth year he went to Drikung where he listened to boundless profound explanations from Chennga Chokyi Gyalpo including *Six Yogas of Naropa*, *Vajra Garland*, and *Five-Fold Mahamudra*.¹²



- 13) [P 2] Then in Kuntang, he studied the eight branches of medical analysis with the great physician Konchog Kyab of Tsal, thereby signifying his learning of all the sciences in the manner of a child of the victors as described in *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.¹³ Although he didn't practice medicine, he developed an unsurpassed understanding and became the crown jewel of all those speaking on the medical sciences. He became famous as someone whom many later doctors would consult when prescribing medicines.
- 14) [P 3] In Nyethang he studied with Tashi Senge and Densa Gekong.
- 15) [P 4] In Dewachen he received explanations on *Four Trail-blazers of the Perfections* and so forth with Lama Yonten Gyatso and Lama Urgyan.

¹² A Mahamudra cycle of the Drikung Kagyu School.

¹³ This is a renowned text by the eighth century Indian Buddhist master, Shantideva.

[P 5] He listened to explanations on the totality of *Five Treatises* by Maitreya from Lama Jamrinpa.¹⁴

- 16) [P 6] In Ngulchu Chodzung, the Seventh Jamyang, the sacred lama Sonam Gyaltsen, gave him the initiations of Manjushri Arapatsana and the Heruka Chakrasamvara Body Mandala of Drilbupa, the empowerment of Gurgon,¹⁵ and a pandit's hat indicating that he was passing the teaching lineage of Buton Rinpoche to Tsongkhapa.
- 17) [P 7] When he was nineteen, he sat for a monastic debate round¹⁶ at Sangpu Monastery and his fame spread.
- 18) [P 8] His fame grew further when he sat for monastic debate round at Dewachen Monastery.
- 19) [P 9] In Tsang, while passing through Kharka,¹⁷ he received the initiation of Thirteen Deity Heruka of Maitripa at Sharlu Monastery from the Great Translator Rinchen Namgyal.
- 20) [P 10] At Narthang he listened to many Dharma teachings from the great Pandit Mati.

¹⁴ The five treatises by Maitreya are considered to be fivefold: *The Ornament of Clear Realization* (Skt. *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*), *The Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras* (Skt. *Māhayānasūtrālaṃkāra*), *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes* (Skt. *Madhyāntavibhāga*), *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* (Skt. *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhāga*) and *The Sublime Continuum* (Skt. *Uttaratantra Śāstra*). Lama Tsongkhapa memorized the *Ornament for Clear Realizations* in just eighteen days.

¹⁵ Gurgon is a Dharma protector.

¹⁶ It was customary at this time for young monastic scholars to make the rounds of the famous monastic institutions where Buddhist philosophy was studied in order to sit for public examination on topics they had studied. By doing so they could test and deepen their knowledge, help others find ways to clear up doubts about difficult issues and, with a pure motivation, create a great store of merit. Some degree of this tradition still exists among the Tibetan monasteries in exile in India and Nepal.

¹⁷ According to Ives Waldo, Kharka is a place in Tsang where Tsangnyon Heruka was born.

- 21) [P 11] Having gone to Sakya, he sat for a monastic debate round and gave a fearless lion's great melodious roar in the midst of all the scholars.
- 22) [P 12] In the same way, he went to Zangden for a monastic debate round on the *Perfections*.
- 23) [P 13] He also went to Gagrong for a monastic debate round;
- 24) [P 14] and to Ngamring for a monastic debate round.
- 25) [P 15] On the way down from Ngamring, at Jonang, Tsongkhapa received commentary on the *Six Branched Yoga of Kalachakra* from Cholay Namgyal.
- 26) [P 16] He listened to teachings on the *Kadam Lamrim* from Chillay Rinpoche, and teachings on *The Book of Kadam*¹⁸ from Choje Gyanzang.
- 27) [P 17] He went for a monastic debate round at Er Monastery.
- 28) [P 18] At Narthang he received teachings on *abhidharma*, *pramana* (valid cognition and logic) and so forth from the Great Translator Donzang.
- 29) [P 19] At Naynying he sat for a monastic debate round;
- [P 20] and his heart was satiated by receiving teachings from Nyapon Kunga Pel on the *Perfections*.

¹⁸ The *Book of Kadam* (*bka' gdams glegs bam*) is a collection of instructions attributed to the 11th-century Indian master Atisha and his primary Tibetan disciple, Dromtonpa.

Thangka 4



30) [Thangka 4: P 1]

At Tsechen Monastery, Tsongkhapa listened to an explanation by Jetsun Rendawa of the *Finger-Pointing Instruction on Abhidharma*. They mutually formed a heartfelt relationship like that of two eloquent white lotuses.



31) [P 2] At Samling in Upper Nyang, Tsongkhapa listened to Jetsun Rendawa explain

Chandrakirti's *Entering the Middle Way* and its *Autocommentary*.

32) [P 3] The Great Translator Jangtse came to the Potala, and Tsongkhapa made a dharma connection with him at Chodzong by listening to some teachings.

33) [P 4] At Kyormolung he listened to Great Abbot Kashiwa Losel explain the *Extensive Commentary on Monastic Discipline*. Tsongkhapa's realization of the oral tradition exceeded that of this teacher. He continuously memorized seventeen folios daily.¹⁹

[P 5] While in the midst of a monastic prayer assembly he developed a stable concentration of meditative equipoise abiding in a profound concentration.²⁰

¹⁹ That equals about thirty-four pages of a modern text.

²⁰ There is some debate about this incident in Tsongkhapa's life because at this point, he is generally held to have not yet developed a valid realization of

[P 6] During this period he developed an ailment in the upper part of his body. He went to Tolung to receive instructions from a master in tantric practices named Urgyan but this did not help his illness.

- 34) [P 7] A group of teachers and disciples went to Naynying via the pass of Ngurmig-ki-pu. Because the many people of Naynying as well as all of his attendants requested, he turned the wheel of dharma for the first time by teaching the *Asanga's Compendium of Abhidharma* (Skt. *Abhidharma samuccaya*).²¹
- 35) [P 8] In the spring he went to Sakya by way of Narthang. There he received teachings from Jetsun Rendawa on *Compendium of Abhidharma* while primarily studying and receiving teachings on Dharmakirti's *Commentary on the Compendium of Valid Cognition*. He also listened to explanations on *Entering the Middle Way*, Gunaprabha's *Sutra on Monastic Discipline*²² and so forth.
- 36) [P 9] At the feet of Lama Dorje Rinchen, Tsongkhapa received an explanation of the *Two Parts*²³ according to the Sakya School.

[P 10] Tsongkhapa received oral instructions [on how to cure his illness] from a geshe specializing in tantra who appeared

emptiness. Therefore, it is unclear what view of selflessness he held and what he was meditating on at this time.

²¹ This is one of the most important texts composed by the fourth century Indian Buddhist master, Asanga.

²² This is not a sutra in the sense of a teaching given by the Buddha, but rather a text composed by the seventh century Indian Buddhist master Gunaprabha who was a disciple of Vasubhandu. This text brings together all the main points from the primary sutras on Vinaya and is the basis for study of this topic in all lineages of Tibetan Buddhism.

²³ This refers to the *Hevajra Mulatantra Raja* which is a condensed version of the *Hevajra Tantra* having only two chapters, hence, two parts.

- at Sakya Ladrang. On the mountain behind Labrang Rinchen Gang, he practiced reciting the neuter letter HA a number of times which cleared the illness in the upper part of his body.
- 37) [P 11] Then the group of masters and disciples [i.e. Rendawa, Tsongkhapa, and others] went to Ngamring Choday Monastery in North Lato and stayed for the spring and the summer. Rendawa composed an extensive commentary on the *Compendium of Abhidharma* and Tsongkhapa received teachings from him on this as well as on the *Commentary on Compendium Valid Cognition*.
- 38) [P 12] In autumn Tsongkhapa accepted many offerings which had been sent from his birthplace. In Maldro Lhalung, he trained his mind in tantra under the guidance of Lama Sonam Dragpa. He stayed in strict retreat and studied a commentary on pramana called *Treasury of Reasonings*. Upon developing an extraordinary realization, tears streamed from his eyes and his hairs continuously stood on end.
- 39) [P 13] He spent the winter in Dewachen reading many volumes of scripture and deepening his understanding. Then he went to Tsang.
- 40) [P 14] Arriving at Narthang Monastery, he received teachings from the Great Translator Donzang on an explanation of *Commentary on Valid Cognition* composed by this translator himself. During the summer Dharma sessions, he sat for monastic debate rounds on pramana, the *Upper and Lower Abhidharmas*,²⁴ and the *Root Sutra on Monastic Discipline*.

²⁴ This refers to two texts, the *Compendium of Abhidharma* composed by Asanga which expresses the view of the Mind Only School, held to be a higher tenet system, and the *Treasury of Abhidharma* composed by Asanga's half-brother, Vasubhandu, expressing the tenets of the Great Exposition School, a lower tenet system.

His formal examination on the *Great Treatises* also began during this time at Narthang.

- 41) [P 15] Jetsun Rendawa went to Bodong and there Tsongkhapa received from him explanations on the middle way, pramana, the perfections, vinaya, and oral transmission of the *Six Collections of Reasonings* by Nagarjuna.

[P 16] He also received instruction in poetry, arithmetic, terminology, and so forth from the Translator Namkha Zangpo. From this time, he had generated the attainment of Saraswati.

- 42) [P 17] With Jetsun Rendawa he went to Sakya Monastery. Although he had knowledge of ten volumes and so forth, he sat for monastic debate rounds on four topics: valid cognition, the *Upper and Lower Abhidharmas*, and the root text on vinaya. This holy being captivated all those present.
- 43) [P 18] Just after that they went to Central Tibet and stayed on plain of Sogunghang.
- 44) [P 19] At Sangpu Monastery, when he had completed an approximation retreat during which he recited fifty million mantras of Saraswati, he saw Saraswati's holy face. Then, sitting for monastic debate rounds on the *Four Great Difficult Treatises*,²⁵ the minds of all the scholars were moved and a thousand lights of eloquent exposition radiated all around.

²⁵ Here this phrase appears to refer to the four root texts on: 1) pramana, 2) the upper and 2) lower adbhidharmas, and 3) the root text on vinaya as described above. However, in general this phrase can also apply to the great treatises on: 1) the perfections, 2) valid cognition, 3) the middle way, and 4) either cosmology or vinaya (according to *dung-dkar tshig-mdzo chen-mo*).

Thangka 5



45) [Thangka 5: P 1] At Tsethang, Tsongkhapa again sat for a monastic debate round on the *Four Great Difficult Treatises*. In the middle of an ocean of deer-like scholars, Tsongkhapa gave a lion's roar of lucid explanation and all the deer-like scholars were set in a state of both fear and marvelous amazement. The banner of his renown could not be contained within the three realms.²⁶



46) [P 2] At Yarlung, Tsongkhapa took the vows of full ordination from a sangha of twenty fully ordained monks. Abbot of the monastic community there, Tsultrim Rinchen, a master of the *Four Treatises*, acted as abbot, while the Abbot of Chidzing Monastery, Sherab Gonpo, acted as master ceremonial preceptor, and the Chant Master of Chidzing Monastery, Sonam Dorje, acted as secret preceptor. In that way he became a crown ornament of both gods and humans.

47) [P 3] At the great monastic center of Thel, Tsongkhapa met with Chennga Dragpa Jangchub²⁷ and offered him an eloquent and sincere account of his activities. Conversing together for a long time, Chennga Rinpoche developed faith in his heart and was stirred such that tears flowed from his eyes like a spring. From Chennga Rinpoche, Tsongkhapa

²⁶ Here “the three realms” refer to: on the surface of, above, and below the ground.

²⁷ This Kagyu lama was the foremost ruler in Tibet at this time.

received teachings on the *Six Yogas of Naropa*, the *Collected Works of Pakmo Druppa*, the *Collected Works of Jigten Gonpo*, and the *Lamdre* teaching cycle. He received most of the instructions on terminology and diagrams from the Great Translator Namzang.

- 48) [P 4] At the temple of Keru, Tsongkhapa gave Dharma teachings on the perfections, pramana, and the middle way to an audience of many upholders of Buddhist treatise²⁸ including Tsako Bonpo²⁹ and others.
- 49) [P 5] He went to Kyisho.³⁰ At Tsel he deepened his understanding by reading and reflecting on all the holy speech of the Buddha and its Indian commentaries which had been translated into Tibetan.³¹ Through countless doors of analysis, the meaning of all the scriptures arose in his mind. Using as his source all the explanations of Maitreya's *Clear Ornament of Realization* and its commentaries composed in both India and Tibet, he began writing the *Golden Garland of Eloquence*.³² At that time, in this region there were several

²⁸ The Tibetan word *sde snod* (pronounced, *day noo*) is a translation of the Sanskrit, *pitaka*, meaning "basket." All of the Buddhas teachings are traditionally divided into the three baskets, sections, or collections of teachings related to: 1) vinaya and the training in pure morality, 2) sutra discourses and the training in meditative concentration, 3) cosmology and the training in wisdom. One who is well versed in any one, or all three, of these collections of Buddhist scriptural material and practice is one who upholds the Buddha's teachings through their knowledge, their example, and by teaching others.

²⁹ This important disciple of Tsongkhapa's also appears in the first thangka of this series.

³⁰ This is a famous area along the Kyichu River on one side of Lhasa.

³¹ I.e. the Kangyur and Tengyur.

³² Tib. *Legs bshad gser phreng* This is Tsongkhapa's earliest large work, composed when he was thirty-one years old. It is an extensive commentary on Maitreya's verse summary of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* called *The Ornament for Clear Realization* and draws from all the main Indian and foregoing Tibetan commentaries on this text. It has been translated by Gareth

people renowned for memorizing well: Ling Tsungme, Jampel Tashi from Amdo, and Shakya Drub. These three competed with Tsongkhapa in a memorization contest. By the time the sun first shone on the highest tip of the spires in the center of Tsel Monastery, Tsongkhapa had memorized perfectly and could recite clearly four folios the length of an arrow having nine lines on each side. Ling had memorized a smattering from three pages, the other two could only memorize one page apiece.

- 50) [P 6] At the Jorkhang in Lhasa, before the Self-Arisen Great Compassionate One belonging to the set of five,³³ Tsongkhapa did many nyung näs and analyzed his dreams.
- 51) [P 7] For the winter Dharma session he went to Dewachen and gave teachings on many scriptures.
- 52) [P 8] During the spring debate period he went to Jayul in Upper Central Tibet. There he taught the perfections, pramana, the middle way, and the *Compendium of Abhidharma* to seventy geshes and others.
- 53) [P 9] Again he went to Tsel and continued where he had left off composing the *Golden Rosary of Good Explanation*.
- 54) [P 10] In Dewachen he completed the end of the *Golden Garland of Eloquence*.³⁴

Sparham as *Golden Garland of Eloquence*. Fremont, CA: Jain Publishing (2007–2013)

³³ For more information see, Self-Arisen Avalokiteshvara Brothers, <https://www.rigpawiki.org>

³⁴ “The translator Tagtsang, who had previously disputed many of Tsongkhapa’s viewpoints, was amazed by this commentary and showered praise on the text and its author. He wrote, ‘As your sun of wisdom rises, my flower of arrogance disappears.’” From the translation of Geshe Ngawang Dargye’s commentary in *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*.

- 55) [P 11] In Kyormolung he requested teachings on Kalachakra from the supreme scholar and realized being Togden Yeshe Gyaltsen. After inviting this lama, Tsongkhapa studied in detail the explanation of the *Great Commentary on Kalachakra*, the related diagrams, and so forth. There Tsongkhapa also taught the explanations of many large and small texts to many upholders of the Buddhist scriptures.
- 56) [P 12] During the summer Dharma session of the following year he gave many explanations of the scriptural collections to an ocean-like host of intelligent disciples.
- 57) [P 13] Then during the winter, at Tolung Tsomay, he studied the Kalachakra tantra and also taught the collections of scriptures to many spiritual friends.³⁵
- 58) [P 15] In Ngangkar he further studied Kalachakra and also taught many clear-minded people.
- 59) Then he went to Srinpo-ri, having been invited by Dragpa Rinchen of Dzingchi. At that time in Gonkar³⁶ there was a meditator [named Chogyal. Out of deep heartfelt faith in Je Rinpoche, he also made offerings and fervent requests for teachings.]³⁷
- [P 17a] Therefore, in the late spring, Tsongkhapa taught the perfections, pramana, the *Upper and Lower Abhidharmas*, the *Sutra on Monastic Discipline, Entering the Middle Way* and other treatise to more than seventy holders of scripture in the Temple of Five Buddha Families.
- 60) [P 16] At Monkhar in Yarlung, Tsongkhapa taught many treatises and also gave initiations, empowerments, and oral instructions as appropriate at this time.

³⁵ There does not seem to be an explanation of [P 14] in Jamyang Shepa's text.

³⁶ An area near Lhasa.

³⁷ The words in brackets are added from Khedrub Rinpoche's *Ford of Faith*.

[P 17b] Later, at Monkhar Tashi Dong, he taught seventeen texts together in one cycle of teachings to an assembly of over one hundred learned monks.

- 61) [P 18] That summer in Yarlung, at a place called Olkar Trag, Tsongkhapa stayed in a strict retreat on Chakrasamvara, meditating with mantra recitation and performing self-initiations. Practicing the six yogas of Niguma and 100 rounds of wind yoga (*pranayama*) during every session, he gave rise to excellent experiences.
- 62) [P 19] That autumn at the Potala in Kyisho, Tsongkhapa engaged in many dharma discussions and gave teachings to all of his students.

Thangka 6



63) [Thangka 6: P 1] That winter in the Grotto of Kyormolung, Tsongkhapa instructed many scholar monks on Kalachakra, the perfections, pramana, and so forth.

64) [P 2] That spring, in the Year of the Iron-Horse (1390, age 33), wishing to receive teachings on all the great collections of treatise concerning tantra, he went to Tsang. At Nubcholung, in Rong, he received all of the transmissions held by the abbot of the community there, Dragpa Shenyen.



65) [P 3] At that time, Tsongkhapa gave the empowerment of Saraswati to Lama Umapa. Saying that he wanted to investigate the phenomena of Manjushri appearing to Lama Umapa, Tsongkhapa posed questions to Manjushri and Umapa acted as an interpreter for the replies. By analyzing through question and answer in this way Tsongkhapa generated the certainty of belief in his mind.

66) [P 4] Next, he went to Tagsang Dzongkhar. There, with the Great Translator Chokyi Kyabchog acting as benefactor, four lamas, the Great Translator Dragpa Gyaltsan, Jetsun Rendawa, the Great Translator Donzang, and Lama Tsongkhapa together with their followers passed the time by giving excellent explanations and discourses on Dharma. During that time Draggyan taught the perfections, Kyabchog taught the *Two Chapters on Chakrasamvara*, and Jetsun

Rendawa taught his on composition on pramana to Je Tsongkhapa.

- 67) [P 5] At Banyer in the district of Ba, Tsongkhapa received an explanation of the *Guhyasamaja Root Tantra* from Jetsun Rendawa. At that time Tsongkhapa had a prophetic dream in which he learned that the lama Gongsum Dechen [Chokyi Pel] had received the *Great Commentary on Kalachakra* from Buton Rinpoche seventeen times. Later, he found this to be true.
- 68) [P 6] Then Tsongkhapa went to Rong Cholung. There, again with Lama Umapa acting as intermediary for his queries, he received the *Manjushri Cycle of Teachings* from Manjushri and asked many Dharma questions.
- 69) [P 7] At Upper Nyang he met the Rinpoche, Chokyi Pel, who had received the *Great Commentary on Kalachakra* from Buton Rinpoche seventeen times. He offered a yellow scarf (kata). The following day he offered tea and a roll of green brocade. He requested the one section of the *Great Commentary* which had already been given before he arrived,³⁸ whereupon he received a complete explanation of the root tantra and its commentaries, a detailed instruction on the practice, and an experiential commentary on the *Six Yogas (sbyor drug)*.
- 70) [P 8] Then, in a thatched house near the border of Upper and Lower Nyang, the yogi Gonzang and Tsongkhapa gained proficiency in the ritual dances, melodies, and diagrams of tantra.

[P 9] During that time, one evening Tsongkhapa had a dream in which Kyungpo Lhaypa, adorned with a jeweled crown and

³⁸ Tsongkhapa had arrived one day late to this teaching event and so had missed the section of transmission commentary given on the first day.

holding a vajra and bell, circumambulated him while performing a ritual dance. Placing the vajra and bell on the crown of Tsongkhapa's head he pronounced him, *Karma Vajra*.

71) At the end of that spring, at Dewachen Monastery in Upper Nyang, he received the initiations and detailed instructions of the *Vajra Garland Cycle* from Rinpoche Choepel, gained proficiency in the *Garland of Three Cycles*³⁹ in terms of the three, ritual dance, diagrams, and melodies. He received many deep and extensive initiations, oral transmissions, and pith instructions on the *Great Wheel of Vajrapani*.

72) [P 10] In Shalu he dreamed that an elderly lama was seated atop a great throne and at whose heart where many mantra garlands one inside the other.

[P 11a] During that fall and winter in Sharlu, Tsongkhapa received from Kyungpo Lhaypa initiations into twelve mandalas of the Yoga Tantra class, all the initiations and instruction on Chakrasamvara and Guhyasamaja, and on the Kriya and Charya classes of tantra. Then he pleased this lama with a ritual offering feast.

73) [P 12] At Hog Mountain in Panam he received a cycle of bodhisattva commentaries and all the teachings of Buton Rinpoche from Rinpoche Choepel.

[11b] From Dragpa Gyaltsen he received teachings on the ritual dances, melodies, and so forth, and all the root tantras and commentaries of Yoga Tantra.

74) [P 13] During the autumn of the Water-Monkey Year (1392, age 35) Tsongkhapa travelled together with Lama Umapa to

³⁹ A set of three texts composed by Abhayakara, a Buddhist scholar-saint of ancient India, concerning mandala rituals, meditation manuals, and burned offering practices. (From *dung-dkar tshig-dmzod chen-mo*)

Gawa Dong Monastery of Central Tibet. In Lhasa they made requests to the holy Jowo statue.

[P 14] [Back in Gawa Dong,] both teacher and disciple then did retreat, each in their own hermitage. They would have tea together, first offering it and making requests to the inseparable lama and yidam.

[P 15] One day Tsongkhapa beheld Manjushri Arapatsana in the middle of a circle of lapis colored light surrounded by a five-colored rainbow and could not be satiated so long as he gazed at him. From this time onward, whenever he made requests, he directly beheld Manjushri. Afterwards, from Manjushri, Tsongkhapa received the initiations of Solitary Manjushri, the body mandala, the inner sadhana, and secret sadhana. While giving these, Manjushri would transform into each deity and bestow blessings. Manjushri directly showed all the outer, inner, and secret forms of Dharmaraja. Then, with Lama Umapa acting as interpreter, Manjushri himself transformed into Yamantaka and having given commands to the Dharma protectors, the Dharma protectors were observed to abide by these commands. From this time, it was decided, in accordance with Manjushri's instructions, that Tsongkhapa would go into retreat at a solitary mountain retreat place together with the Eight Pure Ones.⁴⁰

75) [P 16] Tsongkhapa escorted Umapa to Lhasa. There, upstairs in the Jokhang, on the southern side beneath the ornamental roof, by making offerings and requests, Jetsun Manjushri condensed the main points of Dharma practice and expressed them in several verses which Tsongkhapa set in writing:

⁴⁰ These are the eight close disciples of Tsongkhapa who are also depicted in the first thangka of this series and listed in note 3.

Dwell in solitude like a rhinoceros.
Abandon all busyness and distraction.

[P 17] In the room above the main entrance of the Jokhang, Tsongkhapa gave all four complete initiations of Guhyasamaja to Umapa.

76) [P 18] At the end of that autumn Tsongkhapa gave many teachings in Kyormolung.

Thangka 7



[Thangka 7: P 1] In the winter of the Water-Monkey Year (1392), in the tenth month of his thirty-sixth year, the group of nine, Tsongkhapa and the Eight Pure Companions,⁴¹ departed from Kyormolung, crossed the river in a hide coracle, and entered into the life of ascetic yogis in Olkha.



[P 2] During the winter and spring, the teacher and disciples all made every exertion in accumulation and purification through prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas. Thereby, Je Rinpoche had visions of the Thirty-Five Buddhas repeatedly. Again and again he saw: 1) a huge Jetsun Jampa (Maitreya Buddha) adorned with jewels, teaching the Dharma, seated in the vajra posture upon a jeweled throne upheld by a flowering tree together with 2) Medicine Buddha wearing a golden upper robe, 3) Jampa (Maitreya) in the aspect of a renunciate wearing monks robes, holding a naga-tree stick marked with an anointing vase, and 4) Amitayus.

77) During this time at Olka, they practiced purification until, like the delight of elephants bathing in a lotus lake, they had perfectly pure experiences of accumulation and purification and of each of the many holy deeds of the victors and their children as described in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.

⁴¹ The Eight Pure Companions are listed in note 3 above.

[P 3] During that time also, Tsongkhapa had visions of Manjushri, the Thirty-Five Buddhas, Maitreya, Medicine Buddha, and Amitayus. Once, when Tsongkhapa had the thought that perhaps he should teach, Manjushri said,

What is the great benefit from teaching all these
Unruly sentient beings who are so difficult to train?
Therefore, I think you should discover the path that
satisfies yourself and others
By single-pointedly engaging in practice in isolation.

78) [P 4] In the summer of his thirty-seventh year, Tsongkhapa saw the sacred Maitreya statue of Dzingji. He made great waves of offerings and prayers.

79) [P 5] Then in winter, Tsongkhapa went to Gya Sogpu in the region of Dagpo Menlung. As the depth of his realizations increased, he had visions of Manjushri more brilliant than ten million suns, in the aspect of a youth having a saffron hue and surrounded by innumerable buddhas and bodhisattvas filling all of space. Manjushri also appeared surrounded by the father, Nagarjuna and his four spiritual sons,⁴² Asanga and his brother Vasubandhu, Choklang, Dignaga, Dharmakirti, the Two Supreme Ones,⁴³ Devendrabuddhi, Prajnakaragupta, Kamalashila, Abhyakara, and many other pandits.

[P 6] Manjushri also appeared surrounded by Indrabodhi, Saraha, the three—Luhipa, Gangthapada, and Nagpopa—and the other Eighty Mahasiddhas. This signaled an auspicious portent that Tsongkhapa would accomplish vast benefit in dependence upon the texts of these masters.

⁴² This refers to the Nalanda masters of the lineage of profound view, namely Arya Nagarjuna and Aryadeva, Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, and Chandrakirti.

⁴³ This is an epithet for the two renowned masters of vinaya from ancient Nalanda University, Lopon Yonten Oe and Lopon Shakya Oe.

- 80) [P 7] Later, also in that place, Tsongkhapa saw the Bhagavan Vajrabhairava with face and arms complete, having a brilliance difficult to bear like the blazing of the fire at the end of an eon. This deity dissolved into light and absorbed into him. From that time onward Tsongkhapa took the Yamantaka self-initiation daily. There is also a prophecy about this event. While he was doing a fire-puja in a courtyard paved with stones, everyone saw that although heavy snow fell, not a bit of snow fell in the area around him.
- 81) [P 8] Later in this holy place, Manjushri again appeared as before, surrounded by buddhas, bodhisattvas, scholars, and mahasiddhas pervading all of space. At Manjushri's heart was the handle of a sword, the tip of which extended to Tsongkhapa's heart. From this, very thick smooth light-golden nectar, like a stream of honey or mercury, flowed into Tsongkhapa's heart, filled his entire body and generated uncontaminated bliss to an inconceivable degree.

[P 9] At that time, vast amounts of people, both those who were and were not cognizant of the appearance, opened their mouths to drink the nectar. Into the mouths of some much nectar fell; into the mouths of many, a little nectar; and some did not receive any at all. On seeing this, Tsongkhapa made a prophecy in just a few words, saying merely:

In the city of Katara flowers,
A pleasure garden perfectly ripens;
Many bees appear playing there
And drinking the supreme nectar as well.

By way of that, both during Lama Tsongkhapa's life and later, through his many teachings, many people arose who attained realizations of the path of the generation and completion stages, and the concentration of bliss and emptiness. Saying, "...drinking the supreme..." was a way of stating that in the

future many would also attain the supreme realization. Those who opened their mouths made enthusiastic effort in the two paths and the concentration of bliss and emptiness, and even those who did not achieve any realizations created an auspicious connection by having been set in a state of amazement.

One should know it to be as elaborately explained in Khedrub Je's hagiography, *Endowed with Five Visions*, that many people strove in the graduated paths of sutra and tantra and made single-pointed prayers to generate such realizations at this time.

Some, not knowing about this explanation, say that many people wandered on mistaken paths then. Actually, unfathomable visions and authentic realizations arose at that holy place.

[P 10] Also at this place, during the fifteen days of miracles, Tsongkhapa arranged vast and extensive offerings. When, generating an intense yearning, he invited the objects of offering to come to that place, Akshobyas were seen to fill the eastern direction like mustard seeds in a pod. In the same way, Ratnasambhavas, Amitabhas, Amogasiddhis, and Vairochanas were seen to fill the southern, western, northern, and central directions respectively. Then he made inconceivable offerings. For fifteen days he saw these buddhas even during daily activities.

Thangka 8



82) **[Thangka 8: P 1]** In spring, Tsongkhapa went to Olkha Dzingji. Manjushri instructed him to repair the Maitreya statue there. Tsongkhapa and his eleven disciples sold whatever various possessions they had, but the value came to no more than twelve zho.⁴⁴ They wished to perform a ritual enlisting Vaishravana to assist with their work but because they did not have even any butter of their own, they offered just the little bit of butter that a passing monk gave to them.⁴⁵



[P 2] The next day some nomads offered them large quantities of soft creamy cheese and from then on many offerings accrued. At other times also, by ritually enlisting assistance, requisites always appeared in a similar way. As soon as the surface of the temple had been re-plastered, measurements were made for sketching the outlines of

⁴⁴ A zho is a Tibetan monetary unit which equals about half of one tola of gold. One tola of gold equals about 11.34 grams of gold according to, [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tola_\(unit\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tola_(unit)). Therefore, 12 zho equals about 68.04 grams of gold.

⁴⁵ Repairing the Maitreya statue at Dzingji is the first of Tsongkhapa's renowned Four Great Deeds. The second is alternately considered to be establishing the annual Dharma teaching event called Nyal Lungtra Chenpo (The Great Teaching Ground of Nyal) or holding an extensive teaching and practice retreat reviving the practice of Vinaya at Namtse Deng (gNam rtse Ideng). The third is establishing the annual Great Prayer Festival in Lhasa; and the fourth is constructing Ganden Monastery together with all its holy objects.

Manjushri set in his pure land. Then Tsongkhapa performed a consecration ceremony during which there was an appearance of the wisdom beings absorbing. A small butter lamp that was offered [which ordinarily burned for only a few hours] lasted for two and a half days.

[P 3] After the consecration was completed, they constructed a mandala of Manjushri, the Possessor of Secrets.

Tsongkhapa also gave initiation to more than ten disciples in the course of an extensive consecration of this mandala. All the holy objects were adorned with cloth, robes, jewelry, and the temple walls embellished with ornamental borders and cloth coverings for the images. On the day that a grand opening ceremony was held, everyone said that the sun shone for longer than usual.

[P 4] When they began to paint images of the Thirty-Five Buddhas, the artist did not know the colors and other details, and so requested instructions. Lama Tsongkhapa himself made requests to the Thirty-Five Buddhas and then, while gazing at a vision of them, he gradually described to the painter, “This one’s color is like this....” and so forth. At that time, far away in Lhodrag, the great yogi of Vajrapani, Khenchen Chakdorpa,⁴⁶ asked his yidam Vajrapani where the Thirty-Five Buddhas had gone. The reply came that they had gone to a consecration ceremony in Dzingji. The time of these two events corresponded. Some saw dakinis appearing as painters in their dreams.

83) At that time Tsongkhapa wrote down three prayers spoken by Manjushri. One, a praise to Maitreya called *Precious Lamp*,⁴⁷ praised Maitreya as having been blessed with

⁴⁶ This lama’s full name is Lhodrag Khenchen Namkha Gyaltsen.

⁴⁷ This seems to refer to the prayer commonly known as *Great Praise to Maitreya (byams pa'i bstod chen)*.

initiations by the buddhas of the ten directions. Another was the *Prayer to be Reborn in Sukhavati*,⁴⁸ and a third was a prayer wishing that one's own future buddha might establish a pure land with such and such qualities. In accordance with prophetic instructions from Vajrapani, Khenchen Chagdorpa made a connection with Tsongkhapa by sending him a letter of invitation whence Tsongkhapa departed for Lhodrag.

84) [P 5] When Tsongkhapa arrived at Drawo Monastery, Khenchen Chakdorpa came to welcome him. Thereupon, Tsongkhapa saw Khenchen Chakdorpa as a fierce and terrifying Lord of Secrets,⁴⁹ and Khenchen saw Tsongkhapa approaching in the form of a Manjushri beautified by a net of light. On this occasion a rain of flowers fell and all directions were pervaded by rainbow lights.

85) [P 6] That evening, as he listened to Khenchen teach on a guru yoga, both saw Vajrapani absorb into Tsongkhapa.

[P 7] At dawn, the Lord of Secrets told Khenchen that he should request Shantideva's *Compendium of Trainings*⁵⁰ from Maitreya. Having been requested, Tsongkhapa taught the *Compendium of Trainings* to Khenchen and all the assembled sangha. Tsongkhapa gave Rinpoche the initiation and empowerments of the *Five Dharanis*.

⁴⁸ This prayer, known in Tibetan as, *bde smon*, is one of the *Eight Prayers* which are commonly recited at Gelug monasteries.

⁴⁹ This is an epithet for Vajrapani indicating that Vajrapani is the one responsible for upholding and protecting the Buddha's esoteric or secret teachings on tantra.

⁵⁰ *Siksamuccaya*, Shantideva's more extensive commentary on the practices of bodhisattvas which, toward the end of Chapter 5 of the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Shantideva himself urges others to read.

[P 8] Tsongkhapa received from Khenchen explanations of the two Kadam lineages of lamrim and special instructions.⁵¹ As he received the initiations of Vajrapani, Garuda, Khorchen, and other initiations of the Ear-Whispered Lineage, he directly saw each deity. Tsongkhapa said that Khorchen was especially kind by blessing him and thereby turning back great obstacles related to his forty-fifth year.

86) [P 9] Because Tsongkhapa was thinking of going to India to meet Mitra Yogi, Vajrapani said to Khenchen that if Tsongkhapa went, he would have amazing success but it would harm his followers. It is for this reason that Manjushri told Tsongkhapa that if he were to offer all the articles of a monastic and the *Crown of Brahma Praise* to Maitreya, it would create an auspicious connection. Later, because Manjushri told him that if he made such an offering, a dependent relationship would be made such that in future times he would establish a pure monastic order, he made this offering. Because Manjushri said that there would be hindrances if he went to India, as described before, Tsongkhapa sent the three monastic robes, a monk's staff, begging bowl, sitting mat, water strainer, and so forth along with the *Crown of Brahma Praise* to the Maitreya statue in Dzingji. Then he went to Nyal.

87) [P 10] He stayed in Nyallo for five months. Tsongkhapa invited the text, the *Great Stages of the Teachings*⁵² by Geshe Trinlaypa, showed his respect by going out to receive it, and then made offerings to it.⁵³ On reading this text, a great

⁵¹ There is a third Kadampa lineage of *Great Treatise* that Tsongkhapa received from a different teacher.

⁵² *bstan rim chen mo* by dge bshes phrin las pa.

⁵³ In English this may sound strange, but in Indo-Tibetan culture it is not uncommon for people to show great respect to texts containing profound teachings in similar ways as they show respect to wise and learned persons from whom they hope to receive guidance.

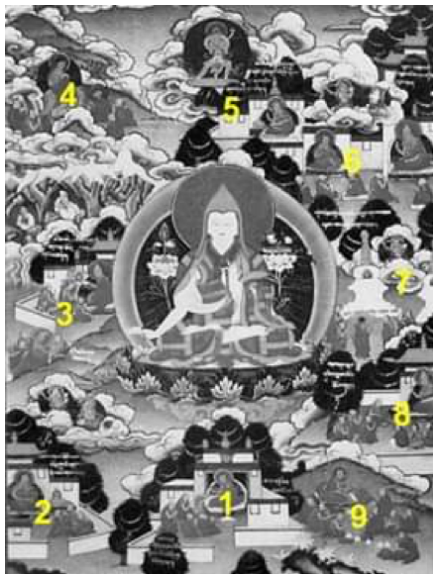
ascertainment like that of the Two Charioteers⁵⁴ arose in him apprehending all that exists in the Buddha's teachings of sutra and tantra, how to practice on the path for one individual from the time of being an ordinary person, and the entire entity of the path, its definite enumeration and order. In that place he taught the *Stages of the Teachings* once.

⁵⁴ Nagarjuna and Asanga.

Thangka 9



88) [Thangka 9: P 1] At Drakor in Nyal, Je Rinpoche received transmissions on vinaya, abhidharma, the middle-way and so forth from Khenchen Chokhyab. From this lama, he also received many complete sets of instructions on sutras and tantras of the Kadam Textual Lineage including Sharawa's *Lamrim*, the root text of Gehse Potowa's *Blue*



Scripture,⁵⁵ together with its commentary, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, and several mind-training texts.

89) [P 2] At Yardren in Saljaygang of Lower Nyal, he saw Manjushri's visage for one summer and was given a prophecy that he would realize the view of emptiness in dependence upon one Indian pandit's texts. It is said that he also saw the countenance of Gyalchen Vaishravana.

90) [P 3] Then Tsongkhapa and thirty disciples went to Tsari Machen and sought out a retreat place. They engaged in self-initiations of Chakrasamvara and other practices. Many wondrous signs appeared.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Tib. *be'u bum sngon po*. This is a Kadampa text describing the stages of the path by Geshe Potowa (dge bshes po to ba) and edited by Dolpowa Sherab Gyatso (dol pa shes rab rgya mtsho).

⁵⁶ Tsari is widely considered one of the three most sacred mountains in Tibet, the other two being Kailash and Lapchi. All three are associated with Heruka Chakrasamvara.

- 91) [P 4] Travelling from Tsari to Nyal, they stayed one night on the lower part of Moela Pass. At that time an apparition of the Perfect Protector Maitreya, huge and blazing with splendor like Mount Meru, said to Tsongkhapa, “Child of the lineage, know that just as the Buddha came to this world, so you come!” In a lion’s roar this was confirmed when concordantly the Lord of Secrets said to Khenchen,⁵⁷ “Just as the Buddha came to this world, your companion comes.” Labdron⁵⁸ also said that one will come just as the Buddha came to Varanasi and turned the Wheel of Dharma. Furthermore, these messages were conveyed solely as straightforward statements.
- 92) [P 5] At Senge Dzong in Lower Nyal, through sustained analysis, Je Rinpoche attained unmistakable ascertainment of the six yogas and related topics and fathomed the vajra words. He continually had a vision of a golden colored Solitary Kalachakra. One night in a dream Kalachakra said to him, “Just as King Dawa Zangpo came, you will come to spread this Wheel of Time.”
- 93) [P 6] While staying in Nyal, Saraswasti said to Je Rinpoche, “You will live to the age of fifty-seven. Until then you will accomplish immeasurable benefit for yourself and others.” Thereupon, Tsongkhapa asked her whether he could not extend his life through tantric practices such as those of Namgyalma. She replied that as those practices all work through the force of previous prayers and the yearning for wisdom, they are not particularly effective for extending

⁵⁷ Here the Lord of Secrets is Vajrapani and Khenchen is Khenchen Namkha Gyaltsen of Lhodrag described in section 82 above.

⁵⁸ This refers to Machig Labdron (1055–1149), close disciple of Pampa Sangye, who made the practice of Chod famous in Tibet. There is another prophecy by her about Tsongkhapa’s coming cited below in Section 120.

one's lifespan. Then Togden⁵⁹ asked Manjushri what could be done, whereupon Manjushri told him that if henceforth they employed methods to reverse obstacles and create dependently related causes for his lifespan they could, with great hardship, overcome the obstacles.

- 94) [P 7] While staying in Nyal at Senge Dzong, Lama Tsongkhapa had an especially uncommon vision of Manjushri during which he asked for instructions about the nature and definite enumeration of the path, and in particular about all the main points regarding calm-abiding and special insight. Consequently, Manjushri told him, "From now on you don't need to repeatedly inquire with me. Rather, closely scrutinize all the great treatises and their meanings will appear solely in accordance with what I have taught you. Each time some small inconsistencies appear, it is not appropriate for all those who desire mere cast-off practice instructions to reject all the great treatises which have been won." Tsongkhapa replied, "From now on all the actions of my three doors⁶⁰ will be solely for the benefit of others" and then acted accordingly.
- 95) Then, in Lower Nyal, he made an extensive offering to the Serchay Bumpa. Manjushri's advised Tsongkhapa, "You should follow all the subtle practices of maintaining the complete signs of a renunciate from rinsing the mouth with water upwards." Je Rinpoche replied saying, "Due to the power of the time, it is difficult for even me to heed these practices and because others do not have insight it is difficult to motivate them." To this Manjushri replied, "Do not listen to others." Thereafter, because the teacher and his disciples all upheld the monastic practices of keeping only the three

⁵⁹ This refers to Togden Jampal Gyatso, one of the eight close disciples who went into retreat with Je Rinpoche in Olka.

⁶⁰ This means the actions of body, speech, and mind.

robes, sitting mat, other sewn articles, begging bowl, and so forth, their fame spread in all regions. From then on, excellent monastic accoutrements became available in all the land.

- 96) [P 8-9] Later, in spring, Je Rinpoche stayed at Pangchung in Nyal. He gave various teachings to many ordained sangha and gave refuge vows to countless villagers. By first making them himself, he led the people in making many hundreds of thousands of *tsatsas*, and also later exhorted them in this virtuous practice which still exists today.

Thangka 10



97) [Thangka 10: P 1] After that, Tsongkhapa stayed at Radrong in Upper Nyal for the summer. During this time, he first met Gyaltsab Rinpoche, foremost child of the conquerors, master of reasoning, an emanation of one possessing the Lineage of the White Lotus.⁶¹ Listening to Tsongkhapa teach about how to order the path according to the



Commentary on the Compendium of Valid Cognition, Gyaltsab developed powerful heartfelt faith. With tears in his eyes he made prostrations and requested that, for as long as Tsongkhapa lived, may he never be parted from him and that he might be permitted place Tsongkhapa's feet on the crown of his head, to which Je Rinpoche consented.⁶²

Later on, Tsongkhapa initiated a Dharma teaching event involving both lay and ordained men and women, famed as the Nyal Lungra Chenpo (The Great Teaching Ground of Nyal)

⁶¹ The Holder or Possessor of the White Lotus is typically an epithet of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of Compassion. This seems to be stating that Gyaltsab Je is an emanation of Avalokiteshvara.

⁶² To say one places a teacher's feet on the crown of one's head is an expression common in Indian culture as a way of showing utmost respect. It means that mentally one sees this person as a role-model and guide for oneself and in that sense sees them as higher. It does not mean that one literally places the other's feet on top of one's head. Lama Tsongkhapa consenting here means simply that he agreed to be Gyaltsab's teacher.

that was also held in subsequent years and still flourishes to this day.⁶³

- 98) [P 2] Having worked for the welfare of the Buddha Dharma like this in the area of Nyal, Tsongkhapa then made his way to the area at the foot of Mt. Oday Gungyal where he stayed at Dagpo Lhading and gave many Dharma teachings. One evening an auspicious portent arose. Having made intense requesting prayers to the inseparable lama and deity, Tsongkhapa had a dream in which the holy father and four sons (Nagarjuna accompanied by Aryadeva, Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, and Chandrakirti) appeared discussing whether there is inherent existence or not. From their midst one tall pandit with a clear bluish complexion arose. Saying that he was Buddhapalita, he came toward Tsongkhapa's pillow carrying an Indian scripture in his hand and placed it on his head bestowing a blessing. The next morning, while reading this pandit's text, entitled *Buddhapalita*, Tsongkhapa gained definitive ascertainment of the distinction between the objects of negation according to the Consequentialist and Autonomist Schools. All of his mental elaborations grasping at signs were destroyed. By the power of gaining faith through understanding the Teacher,⁶⁴ he composed the prayer, *In Praise of Dependent Origination*. Since that time, an auspicious dependent relationship is also created whenever his followers read this prayer.
- 99) [P 3] In autumn, Je Rinpoche went to Garpug in Olka. There he gave Dharma teachings to all the ordained sangha of Olka.
- 100) [P 4] From there he went to Teura in Ay where he stayed for the summer. There he gave Dharma teachings to all the ordained sangha of Ay.

⁶³ This is considered the second of Tsongkahapa's Four Great deeds.

⁶⁴ Shakyamuni Buddha.

101) [P 5] During that winter Tsongkhapa stayed at Dragdong in Olka and gave Dharma teachings.

102) [P 6] Then, during the days of miracles he arranged vast magnificent offerings to the Dzingji Jowo during all fifteen days and made extensive prayers for the Buddha's teachings, for the well-being of sentient beings, and for benefit and happiness now and in future times. By the force of making heartfelt requests invoking the objects of offering to come to that place, all of space was seen to be filled with buddhas of the Five Buddha Families like sesame seeds filling a pod. By seeing these at all times for twenty days, even during the four activities of the period of subsequent attainment,⁶⁵ boundless sentient beings of the ten directions were set on the great paths to liberation and omniscience.

[P 7] In the spring Tsongkhapa gave extensive teachings to Gyaltsab Je and others.

103) [P 8] Then, having been requested by people in the area of Nyang, he went to Do (Sutra) Monastery in Nyangpo Dang. While crossing the middle of a river his hat fell into the water whereupon he said, "In this valley my teachings have come like the flow of a great river. Wherever my hat may go, there, this instruction lineage of the middle way will arise." Just as he predicted, in the remote area of Nyangpo Sangsang, the monastery called Thegchen Chokhor Ling (Sanctuary of the Great Vehicle Dharma-Wheel) was established on the mountain of Nyangpo Sangsang.

[P 9] He stayed there for the summer giving many Dharma teachings to the ordained sangha and benefiting the community of lay people by giving refuge and so forth.

⁶⁵ This refers to the period between meditation sessions during which meditators engage in the four activities of lying, sitting, standing and moving about, and walking.

104) [P 10] Then, due to repeated invitations from the ruler, Namkha Zangpo, with Konchog Tsultrim from the monastic center Sangpu acting as his emissary and due Je Rinpoche's own wish to visit the Jowo statue in Lhasa, Tsongkhapa went to Khyisho where he stayed in the Potala for the autumn. All the monks of Sangpu, Dewachen, and Guntang monastic centers came out to escort him on arrival. Je Rinpoche gave many teachings on Kamalashila's *Illumination of the Middle Way*, vinaya, the graduated path and more.

105) [P 11] After that he went to Gawa Dong for the spring. There he repeatedly taught about following the practice instructions related to tantra and bodhichitta and the reasons for needing to guard these.

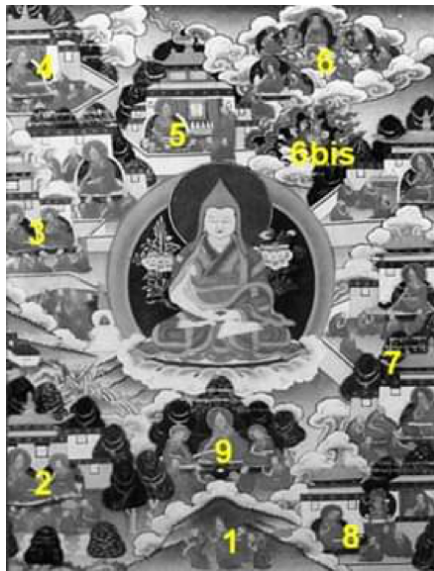
[P 12] At the conclusion of these teachings Rendawa came together with a few of his attendants. Tsongkhapa and his disciples, who were far greater in number, formed a receiving line to welcome them. Je Rinpoche offered prostrations to Rendawa who also began to prostrate in return. When Tsongkhapa asked him not to, he stopped.

[P 13] Then Tsongkhapa respectfully honored and made elaborate offerings to Rendawa after which the two, mutually teacher and disciple, gave dharma teachings.

Thangka II



106) [Thangka 11: P 1] Then the spiritual father and son, delighting in solitude, went to Reting, place of the Kadam masters praised by Atisha and his heirs together with an assembly of many upholders of Buddhist treatise. Je Rinpoche gave teachings on calm-abiding by combining the instructions from Maitreya's *Discrimination of the Middle Way and*



Extremes and Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras as well as Asanga's *Hearer Levels* and other texts and engaged in the corresponding meditations. Thereby many people developed exceptional calm-abiding.

[P 2] Rendawa also inconspicuously received teachings from Tsongkhapa on Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom*⁶⁶ and the *Brilliant Lamp* by Chandrakirti.⁶⁷ The two also conversed at length about sutra and tantra.

107) [P 3] Then, having been repeatedly entreated to come to Drikung, Je Rinpoche received teachings there on the yoga of generating the six yogas and mahamudra simultaneously and other instructions from Chennga Rinpoche during the springtime. He also gave many Dharma teachings to the ordained sangha in Drikung.

⁶⁶ Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way Called "Wisdom"* (*Mulamadhyamakakarika*)

⁶⁷ [Chandrakirti's] *Brilliant Lamp: Extensive Commentary* [on the "Guhyasamaja Tantra"] [P2650, vol. 60]

108) [P 4] Following that, Je Rinpoche went to the temple of Archenpo, Jangchub Yeshe, above Namtsib for the summer. The great translator, Kyabchog Pal,⁶⁸ spiritual father and son, and the three dharma lords, the two Chennga Rinpoches, and Tsongkhapa together with a sangha of over 600 monks, stayed in the annual rains retreat. The three Dharma lords each taught on vinaya by turns. They sowed the monastic practices of the seventeen bases,⁶⁹ confession and blessing regarding all the downfalls described in the sutra on vinaya called *Scripture of Discernment*, confession of trainings that had formerly been given up, blessing monastic articles, delineating the kitchen,⁷⁰ protecting the training of novice and fully-ordained monks sleeping separately, and so forth. In this way they greatly expanded and improved the practice of the vows of individual liberation which is the foundation of Buddha's teachings. They also turned the wheel of Dharma regarding the middle way and pramana.⁷¹

109) [P 5] Then Jetsun Rendawa set out for Tsang and the two Dharma lords, Tsongkhapa and Kyabchog Palzangpo, returned to Reting together with their entourage. There, Je Rinpoche built a hermitage at Drag Senge Shol (Cave at the Foot of the Lion).

⁶⁸ The great translator, Kyabchog Palzang was among the foremost of Tsongkhapa's disciples who entreated him to compose the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* and the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path of Tantra*.

⁶⁹ These seventeen practices relate to taking and keeping ordination as a monastic having gone forth from lay life. There is one basis of receiving ordination for one who has not received it. There are nine bases for protecting the vows of ordination that one has received. And there are seven bases for repairing those vows that have deteriorated.

⁷⁰ This refers to the monastic practices related to setting up a communal kitchen.

⁷¹ This is event reviving the practice of vinaya in Tibet is considered by some to be the second of Tsongkhapa's Four Great Deeds.

[P 6] Tsongkhapa made offerings and requests to the statue of Jowo Atisha having an inclined head in the temple above. Thereby he had a vision of all the lineage lamas from Shakyamuni Buddha down to Khenchen Chagdor. Jowo Atisha put his hand on Je Rinpoche's head and said, "I will be your companion in whatever deeds you undertake for the Buddha Dharma, to achieve enlightenment, and to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings." Then, having been requested by many great scholar-practitioners, Tsongkhapa began composing *The Great Treatise on the Stages on the Path to Enlightenment*, which shows how to practice all of the conquerors' teachings in one session. At that time, he had some doubt whether or not it would be beneficial to compose the section on special insight. Thereupon he had a vision of Manjushri who said that it would be of middling benefit to others whereupon he wrote it. Thereby, he brought satisfaction to gods and humans with this Dharma.

[P 6b] At that time, Tsongkhapa pleased the white side landlord spirits of Central Tibet such as Nyenchen Tanglha, Shoglha, Gyugpo, and others and requested them to look after the teachings and sentient beings as is stated in his *Lamrim Dedication Prayer*:

As for all who provide conditions that support the
integration of the good path
And clear away conditions that inhibit that integration,
Whether they are human or not, may they never be
separated in all their lifetimes
From the pure path praised by the conquerors.⁷²

110) [P 7] Then Lochen Kyabchog Palzangpo took a copy of the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path* and went to Tsang.

⁷² Translation extracted from *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, by Tsongkhapa, Snow Lion Publications, 2002, p 368.

Tsongkhapa stayed in retreat during this summer and winter and taught the *Stages of the Path* to many upholders of Buddhist treatise. During the days of miracles, they made extensive offerings and great waves of prayers. In particular, Tsongkhapa gave a teaching on *The Ornament of Clear Realization* conjoined with relevant sutras, at the conclusion of which he said they should make extensive offerings. After all the others had set up many small butter lamps, Gyaltsab Je made one big butter lamp by placing in a large copper bowl a wick made from a stick. Tsongkhapa looked at all the butter lamps and said they should pour them all into the copper bowl. He said, “Now, Kachupa⁷³ should compose a commentary for them from his notes.” The significance of this was that Gyaltsab Dharma Rinchen was given authority to compose *The Explanation: Ornament of the Essence*.⁷⁴

111) After that, in Lhasa at Phu Gonsar, to an assembly of many clear-thinking persons, Je Rinpoche taught all main points of Dharmakirti’s *Commentary on Valid Cognition* by arranging them in conjunction with the path. It is solely through this lamp for those seeking the path to liberation that all gods and humans are brought to understand.

112) [P 8] Having been invited by the ruler, Dragpa Gyaltsan, Tsongkhapa went to Dewachen Monastery in Oen. There, together with many other scholars of the Buddhist scripture, he stayed for the summer. He gave a commentary on the *Stages of the Path* and also taught on the middle way, pramana, and other topics.

⁷³ This was an epithet used for Gyaltsab Dharma Rinchen indicating that he was a master of not just a few but ten subjects of Buddhist scripture.

⁷⁴ This is an elaborate commentary by Gyaltsab Je on Maitreya’s *Ornament for Clear Realization* and Haribhadra’s *The Commentary: Clear Meaning*, based on Tsongkhapa’s oral explanation of these texts.

113) Then Tsongkhapa went to Lhashol Jamling in Oday Gungyal.

There he taught the stages of the path and the generation and completion stages of tantra. The teacher and all his disciples stayed in strict retreat and earnestly applied themselves to meditation practice. Thereby, while Je Rinpoche was absorbed in the meditative equipoise of concentration on bliss and emptiness, he achieved the stable equipoise of not seeing the dualities of action and actor or coming and going.

The perfect lord Manjushri instructed him to compose a commentary on Lobpon Lujang's *Exposition of the Path*, saying that it would be of great benefit whereupon he began immediately. At this time, it appeared that ten years had passed since Tsongkhapa realized the essential meaning of the five paths of Guhyasamaja.

[P 9] Earlier, compelled by Manjushri having given his blessing by saying that many Chinese and Mongolians would receive great benefit in dependence on these texts, Chennga Rinpoche and many other holy beings requested Tsongkhapa many times saying, "Please compose a work on the path of secret mantra that explains how to practice the entire path of the four classes of tantra." At that time, because some bad omens occurred, Tsongkhapa first composed the sadhana of the blessed one, Solitary Hero Vajrabhairava called *Victory Over Evil* and a fire puja ritual called *Ocean of Accomplishments*. By performing other rituals to avert interferences he cleared away all obstacles without difficulty. He stayed there for two years during which his meditation practice greatly developed and secret mantra became renowned in that region.

Thangka 12



114) [Thangka 12: P 1] The following winter he stayed in Jangchub Lung. He taught the paths of tantra to many hundreds of Dharma masters upholding the treatise on tantra and philosophy.

115) [P 2] In late spring he went to Kyisho and stayed at Sera Choding for the summer. Within his exalted wisdom he had a vision of Six-Arm

Mahakala who pledged that henceforth he would serve as Tsongkhapa's protector.



[P 3] The supreme son, magical emanation renowned as a lineage holder, the Omniscient Khedrub, also first met him during this time. While staying in strict retreat Tsongkhapa bestowed an initiation into Vajrabhairava based on a sand mandala to Khedrub Je alone. He gave teachings on the five stages of Guhyasamaja and the completion stage of mother tantra to the Omniscient Khedrub and a few others.

He began composing a commentary on Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom* called *Ocean of Reasoning*.⁷⁵ At one point, on encountering a difficult issue, he made requests to the inseparable lama and Jetsun Manjushri whereupon he had a vision in which the lines from the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* which explain the twenty emptinesses appeared in the

⁷⁵ *Ocean of Reasoning: A Great Commentary on Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika*, translated by Jay L. Garfield and Geshe Ngawang Samten; Oxford University Press, 2006.

sky having the color of refined gold. Then, having realized the meaning without any lingering doubts, he composed the *Essence of Eloquence; Differentiating Interpretive and Definitive Meanings*⁷⁶ and *Ocean of Reasonings* simultaneously.

- 116) [P 4] At this time, four representatives of the Ming Dynasty Emperor of China came to respectfully making offerings and invite Tsongkhapa to come teach in China. Giving reasons for declining their request he sent Jamchen Choje in his stead.

[P 4b] Then, at Sera, he gave teachings to Thangsagpa and over six-hundred spiritual masters from Sangpu, Dewachen, and the three—Gadong, Kyomolung, and Zulpu—on *Fundamental Wisdom, Essence of Eloquence, Aryadeva's Four-Hundred Stanzas, Tsongkhapa's own Great Treatise on the Graduated Stages of Tantra, the root tantric downfalls, Ashvagoshā's Fifty Verses on Guru Devotion*,⁷⁷ and others. He also gave a commentary on *The Great Treatise on Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* during the summer. He stayed there for two years.

- 117) [P 5] After this, having been invited by Miwang Dragpa Gyaltsen, he went to Drumbu-lung in Kyimay and was followed there by 500 spiritual masters. Joined by others from surrounding regions they numbered over one-thousand monks who stayed there for the winter. During this time

⁷⁶ This work (*drang ba dang nges pa'i don rnam par phye ba'i bstan bcos legs dshad snying po*), which primarily attempts to distinguish the interpretive and definitive meanings and scriptures within the vast array of Buddha's teachings, has been translated by Robert Thurman and published in his book, *Tsong Khapa's Speech of Gold in the Essence of True Eloquence: Reason and Enlightenment in the Central Philosophy of Tibet* (Princeton Library of Asian Translations) 1984.

⁷⁷ *The Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion* (Skt: *Gurupancashika*; Tib: *Lama Nga chu pa*)

Tsongkhapa taught the stages of the path, the
Chakrasamvara sadhana by Luipa and *Drops of Spring*.⁷⁸

118) [P 6] Then, when it had just turned autumn in the Earth-Mouse Year (1408), as it says in the *Kachem Kakholma*,⁷⁹ “There they will engage in extensive veneration and worship,” they set about making preparations for a prayer festival in Lhasa. They repaired the temple walls and all the area artisans covered them with gold leaf and paint. New robes were sewn and new offering banners were made.

119) Next, as was prophesied in the *Sutra Conferring Advice* from the *Set of Discourses*⁸⁰ in the chapter on distinguishing what is pure from garbage,

A person named Lozang will arise,
After attracting a great assembly of the four types of
followers,
He will establish a continuous stream of the ten Dharma
practices.⁸¹

In the later part of the twelfth month of the Earth-Mouse Year Tsongkhapa came to Lhasa. During the day of the new moon [the last day of the Tibetan calendar year], after makings offerings inviting all to come, a great prayer gathering (*mangcha*) was held. Each lay person who came

⁷⁸ This seems to be a commentary on the completion stage of mother tantra according to Khedrub Je’s *Ford of Faith*.

⁷⁹ This is a text of prophecies by the seventh century Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo.

⁸⁰ *mdo sde sdams ngag 'bog p'i rgyal po*, TBRC W1PD96682, Vol 107, p 526.

⁸¹ The ten Dharma practices are: 1. transcribing the teachings (*yi ge bri ba*); 2. worshipping (*mchod pa*); 3. giving (*sbyin pa*); 4. listening to the teachings (*chos nyan pa*); 5. reading the teachings (*klog pa*); 6. comprehending the teachings (*'dzin pa*); 7. instructing others (*rab du ston pa*); 8. reciting holy works (*kha 'don byed pa*); 9. contemplation (*sems pa*); and 10. meditation (*sgom pa*).

offered about one kilogram of butter and sixty china-cups of curd. There were about ten-thousand ordained sangha in attendance. From the first to the fifth of the new year a magnificent crown of the five buddha families made of poured gold and embellished with many exceptional fine jewels was offered to Jowo Rinpoche.⁸² Exceptional crowns made of poured silver were offered to Jowo Mikyo and Eleven-Faced Chenrezig statues. These deeds were in accordance with many prophecies about enhancing the benefit and well-being of the Dharma and sentient beings, causing them to last a long time, and setting all beings in the peerless state of enlightenment. As it says in the *Manjushri Root Tantra*,

Just as all beings are prophesied to enlightenment,
So, they will achieve my supreme enlightened state.

And in the *Sutra Conferring Advice* it says,

In the temple having pillars adorned with designs of
leaves,
To two statues of me in two aspects,
By presenting crowns and other offerings
As was proclaimed in the Teacher's sutras
And by making requesting prayers to me,
The teachings will remain for one-thousand years.

Then, before Jowo Statue, he offered a large silver begging bowl in the mouth of which was a silver mandala. Each day gold was offered to the faces of these three sacred statues and on the eighth and fifteenth of the first month liquid gold was offered to the entire body. Also, upper and lower robes were offered to the two Jowos, to the Subduer of the Immense Ocean, and to all the emanation body images engraved in relief. Upper and lower garments were offered

⁸² The main statue of Shakyamuni Buddha at the Jokhang in Lhasa.

to all the images of bodhisattvas and wrathful ones. As described in many sutras, the pinnacle ornaments, eaves, the peaks and corners of all the large and small temples were strung with ropes lavishly bedecked with offering banners, yak-tail fans, and bells.

On the outer side of the outer great circumambulation path, fifteen very tall wooden poles were adorned with fifteen banners and images of the fifteen direction protectors were placed atop them. Below that artisans painted each of their mounts and mantras, and ornamented their areas with each of their associated colors. Each evening, tormas for the direction protectors were set up and offered on their main tormas stands. In the areas between these, white umbrella victory-banners, and other offerings were set out in keeping with each of their ritual texts. In accordance with the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, all the spaces in between were strung with ropes bedecked with flags, banners, yak-tail fans, bells, and so forth.

From the veranda of Jokhang inward, there were 400 white lamps. As in *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, all the outer, inner, intervening, and surrounding areas were decorated with hundreds of butter lamps. On the outer circumambulation path there was a stone pillar set up directly in the line-of-sight of the Jowo statue. On the right and left sides of this, great square vessels measuring three arm spans on each side, were placed as giant dharma lamps. All around the outer circumambulation path, large earthen vessels were placed containing hand-length wicks with flames the height of arrows. Similar offerings were set up near the Ramoche statue and on each pillar along the outer periphery of the inner courtyard. Every day, hundreds of large water bowl offerings were set out, within the which water was scented with many hundreds of grams of saffron. The

circumambulation paths were permeated with smoke from many various kinds of incense burning which billowed like clouds in the sky. All the areas within the circumambulation paths were sprinkled with scented water and ornamented daily with 108 decorative food offerings fashioned into the seven royal emblems more than a meter tall and so forth. On the right and left sides of the stone pillar, large earthen vessels contained massive food offering cakes for the deities each made from 400 bushels of tsampa, decorated with countless ornaments and with banners and flags.

Furthermore, from Gyeray Mentreng, a treasured horse-head silver seal was received. According to Kujor⁸³ because all the objects of offering, the offering substances, and the ones making offerings were all viewed in the nature of bliss and emptiness, while making offerings the sky wall filled with collections of the Thus Gone Ones of the Five Buddha Families like sesame seeds filling a pod. Also, when reciting the *Confession of Downfalls*, with just the sky as a support, all the Thirty-Five Buddhas and Seven Medicine Buddhas, Maitreya, Amitayus, Tara, White Umbrella Deity, Saraswati, and the Eighty Mahasiddhas would appear. According to accounts of Khenchen Chagdor, in the space above Tsongkhapa himself, the Lords of the Three Families⁸⁴ and most of the Dharma protectors of the white side would abide.

It is worth mentioning that at this time, Kujorpa, who was staying in retreat at Lhasa Rakha, came out of retreat and met Shawari⁸⁵ while travelling through Langchen Dong. Then he went to the prayer session dedicated to the Eighty

⁸³ This refers to Kujor Togden Sangyay Palzang, a direct disciple of Tsongkhapa who was renowned as a great meditator.

⁸⁴ Namely Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, and Vajrapani.

⁸⁵ Shawari is one of the famed Eighty Mahasiddhas of ancient India.

Mahasiddhas. At midnight he saw the Eighty Mahasiddhas encircling and making prayers, and also many deities and nagas surrounding the gathering. The ordained and lay people present continually made circumambulations.

Kujor also dreamt that a woman was embracing the main temple thereby protecting it. He dreamed as well that countless people went dancing from the circumambulation path up into the sky where they said, “By making offerings to Jowo, we have gone to the Abode of Brahma.”⁸⁶

- 120) Tsongkhapa made three kinds of observations to check for a good place to build a monastery. In front of the Jowo statue he observed butter lamps, made a divination with tsampa balls, and checked his dreams. In this way, favorable signs arose indicating the current location of Ganden Monastery. [P 7] He went to visit Ganden and had Gyaltsab Je, Dulzin, and others initially check that the site was suitable. In accordance with the guidelines of monastic discipline, having checked the site, they requested the ordained sangha for permission to build.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Establishing the Great Prayer Festival in Lhasa is the third of Tsongkhapa's Four Great Deeds.

⁸⁷ In Jamyang Shepa's text there seem to be no descriptions of positions 8 and 9 from thangka 12.

Thangka 13



[Thangka 13: P 1] After the sangha granted their consent, they gave instructions to the laborers on demarcating the site for a kitchen that would not exceed the dimensions for a building of stone, and on building in a way that does not exceed the prescribed parameters. This was clearly prophesied in the *Manjushri Root Tantra* which says:



In the final time,
 I will make a supreme offering to all sentient beings.
 Having gone beyond the sorrow of the world,
 In a land which is empty,
 Appearing in the body of a childish one,
 I will engage in the deeds of a buddha.
 At that time there will exist in the Land of Snows
 A great monastery, Thoroughly Delightful.⁸⁸

Here the word “I” in the third line refers to Manjushri and the word “childish one” indicates that he will appear as an ordinary person. The phrase, “engage in the deeds of a buddha,” indicates that one similar to the Buddha will arise. As it says in *The Great Treatise by Labdron*,⁸⁹ “In the time

⁸⁸ The Tibetan word, *bga'*, here translated as delightful, is the same word that forms the first syllable of Ganden, meaning possessing joy or delight, the name of Tsongkhapa’s monastery being described here.

⁸⁹ For more about Machig Labdron see note 46 above.

when the Conqueror's law is disappearing, there will arise a fully-ordained monk who will clarify the Buddha's teachings. That fully-ordained monk spoken of now, is the one upheld by the name, Dragpa.⁹⁰ That monk will turn the wheel of the Muni's Dharma in Dzambuling by vanquishing many faulty teachings which have arisen, teaching the true meaning, and reintroducing the pure moral law. The degenerate time when the fully-ordained monk named Dragpa appears in Tibet will coincide with a resurgence of the Dharma." *The Sutra Conferring Advice* says:

In an area endowed with female yaks
A monastery called Delight will be founded
And a person named Lozang will arise.

As the Lord of Secrets said:

Amidst mountains which have been blessed with
initiation,
On a mountain-side where goddesses glide,
Innumerable ordained sangha will gather.
Manjushri will state which mountain this is,
A refuge for all of Ngari,⁹¹ Jang,⁹² and Kham,⁹³ from there
monastic communities will spread in the ten directions.

There are many prophecies like this.

⁹⁰ This is the third second part of Tsongkhapa's ordained name, Lozang Dragpa. Typically, when a lama ordains a monk or nun, the first part of the name is like the surname in English, it indicates from whom the ordination came and the second part of the name is like the given name, it is unique to the individual student. Hence, in this prophecy, "Dragpa" is Tsongkhapa's given name.

⁹¹ Western Tibet.

⁹² Northern Tibet.

⁹³ Eastern Tibet.

[P 2] [Tsongkhapa and his main disciples take up residence at Riwo Ganden.]⁹⁴

121) [P 3] During that time, Tsongkhapa was staying at Samten Ling in Olkha. He gave many Dharma teachings. As part of the offerings given on the occasion of the Abbot of Radrong in Nyel passing away, he received about four kilos of gold and offerings of silver and so forth. He did retreat in this place during the autumn. Regarding Manjushri as the lama and yidam inseparable, he made strong requests. If one were to describe precisely all the miraculous visions that occurred when he wrote notes for his *Lamp Illuminating the Five Stages*, one would have to describe successive visions for many lifetimes. Let us be content with just one account.

122) [P 4] On the third day of the twelfth month in the Earth-Ox Year (1409), Tsongkhapa had a vision in a dream during which the entire mandala of Nineteen-Deity Manjushri directly appeared to him. Maitreya and Manjushri also appeared to the right and left of the mandala engaged in conversation. As the main figure in the mandala extended his hands to entrust Tsongkhapa with a precious vase filled with water, which was bedecked with various excellent jewels and had various excellent silks tied around its neck, he said, “This vase water is water that is mixed with the water of a Dharma conversation that the Great Jowo Atisha had with Venerable Manjushri and Venerable Maitreya on the banks of the Kyichu River in Nyethang about whether a buddha body is threefold or singular. From the time of Atisha until now, this water has come down for 310 years but during all that time one could not be found to give it to. Now I’m giving it to you.” Then he made a prophecy saying, “Until you, no one

⁹⁴ Riwo Ganden is a term commonly used to refer to Ganden Monastery. Riwo means hermitage or mountain retreat place. This line appears painted in some versions of Thangka 13, but not in Jamyang Shepa’s description.

has realized the need to know the manner of the three bodies abiding as one entity and yet different, as contained within Jowo Atisha's mind. It is like the holy body, speech, and mind of Guhyasamaja being one and different." This also indicates that as long as one does not realize the illusory body and the manner of unification of Guhyasamaja, then one cannot realize how the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha exist. Therefore, it is said that the Buddha-dharma existing or not depends on Guhyasamaja existing or not. At that time Tsongkhapa dreamed that after he set out a Heruka Chakrasamvara thangka and the tenth day offering substances, he saw a letter saying that these were being tossed out as offerings to a dead person.

- 123) [P 5] Then, on the night of the fourth, upon a throne embellished with multifarious jewels sat a lama who was said to be the All-Knowing Buton Rinpoche. Handing Tsongkhapa a volume containing the *Root Tantra of Glorious Guhyasamaja* he commanded, "Be the caretaker of this!" Tsongkhapa thought that there was a little missing from the end of the text but on checking he saw that it was complete. Then, taking it up with both hands, he recited the mantra, HUM VAJRA UTISHTA and, with mudras, touched it to his head three times. He understood that when he was entrusted with the water-filled-vase on the previous night, that was also a portent of this.
- 124) [P 6] On the fifth, there arose in his mind ascertainment that there are many heart essence teachings of Marpa regarding mixing and transference.⁹⁵
- 125) On the sixth, Tsongkhapa discovered an amazing insight into the intent of Nagarjuna, his spiritual sons and lineage

⁹⁵ Mixing and transference or powa, are two generation stage practices described in the six yogas of Naropa.

concerning the nine cycles of mixing the truth, enjoyment, and emanation bodies.

126) On the seventh day of the twelfth month he gained realization of the mixings. By reading the *Summary of Conduct*,⁹⁶ he also came to a great many insights clearly understanding the mixings of sleep and dreams. Tsongkhapa clarified that on a previous night when he had seen the tenth day offerings of Heruka Chakrasamvara set out below a thangka depicting the supporting mandala of Chakrasamvara, and then heard that these were like tossing offerings to the deceased, it meant that in future times it would be as if Heruka had died. He said that on the seventh night he understood that it is like offerings given after a person has died.

127) [P 7] Then, on the fifth of the second month of the Iron-Tiger Year (1410), Je Rinpoche went to Ganden. Together with a commentary on the stages of the path and the five paths according to the *Brilliant Lamp*,⁹⁷ he gave many Dharma teachings on the *Compendium of Abhidharma*, Asanga's *Five Treatise on the Levels*, and the difficult points of pramana. At this time, he composed the two commentaries, *Request by the Four Goddesses* and *Collection of All Exalted Vajra Wisdom*. In the following year, he composed the *Lamp Illuminating the Five Stages* and all the instructions for completing the path on one seat.

128) [P 8] Then, in the early winter of his fifty-fifth year, the Year of the Iron-Rabbit (1411), Je Rinpoche himself presided over thirty practitioners engaged in practices to increase lifespan and avert obstacles. They performed many increasing

⁹⁶ This is a commentary on the *Guhyasamaja Tantra* by Nagarjuna's main direct disciple, Aryadeva.

⁹⁷ This is a central commentary on the *Guhyasamaja Tantra* by Chandrakirti.

emanation-wheels of Yamantaka. In the early part of the day, with a loving demeanor, they would engage in increasing mantra-recitation meditations while wearing their yellow robes. In the later part of the day, with a wrathful demeanor, they would engage in expelling mantra-recitation meditations for a long time. They had visions of all the buddhas, Yamantaka, Vajrapani, Tara, Sitatapatra, Manjushri, Amitayus, Ushnishavijaya, and Marici. Je Rinpoche said, "If we do this many more times, it seems things will turn out well."

129) [P 9] In the autumn of the Water-Dragon Year (1412), he said, "I don't know if it will help to keep making prayers. Up to now we've made prayers though the instructions of each of the main deities of the four classes of tantra." All the foremost in his retinue having made requests, from the seventh day of the eighth month in that year, Je Rinpoche and thirty of his disciples stayed in retreat. They had visions of the sky being filled with rainbows and Manjushri appearing. Once during that time, Tsongkhapa had a dream in which, while absorbed in concentration, from the upper door of his central channel the letters EVAM, like a grayish string, continuously came out. From then on, an uncommon peace and bliss grew within him. As it says in the *Tantra of Concentration on Bliss and Emptiness*,

Even without the modes of conduct you will gain accomplishments.

and,

The one method which includes them all,
Is just reciting mantra and offering tormas.

Because the profound methods of the glorious buddhas are profound, the profound is found.

130) Further, on the thirteenth day of the second month of his fifty-sixth year, due to seeing all the buddhas, the three deities who grant the supreme attainment, the two deities dispelling evil and so forth, and due to a stable sign arising, Tsongkhapa said, “Now, with effort, it seems things will turn out well.”

[P 10] On the twenty-ninth of that month, by endeavoring in tantric meditations together with seven vajra disciples, they compelled the Four Interferers as one to pledge henceforth not to harm this monastic community for seven generations. After that, again tormented, Je Rinpoche lifted his body up with some discomfort and walked a little until his strength was spent, and then he sat down.

[P 11] Thereupon he had a vision of the Teacher, Conqueror of the Shakyas, having the color of refined gold, blazing with radiance like ten million suns, and displaying a mudra of subduing demons. Through the force of concentration, Tsongkhapa invited him to come, whereupon he absorbed into Tsongkhapa. And overcoming all demons, Je Rinpoche achieved the concentration of fearlessness.

[P 12] Immediately afterward, he saw Yeshe Gonpo, Four-Armed Mahakala, Pañjaranatha,⁹⁸ Dharmaraja, Vaishravana, and others. With Yeshe Gonpo as their head, Dharmaraja bound the main demon by his neck and led him away. Kshetapala chased the harmful spirit from behind and, just as he had threatened, cut his head off with a curved knife. Thereafter, Je Rinpoche entered into the concentration of the triangular-fire-pit. Simultaneously, before him he heard

⁹⁸ Pañjaranatha (Gurgyi Gönpö, *gur gyi mgon po*), “Lord of the Pavilion” is a form of Mahakala that is especially popular in the Sakya tradition as the protector of the Hevajra cycle of tantras.

wails and cries of the four classes of external rahu,⁹⁹ gyalpo spirits, nagas, and flesh eaters of the dark side saying they had lost the war and were fleeing away.

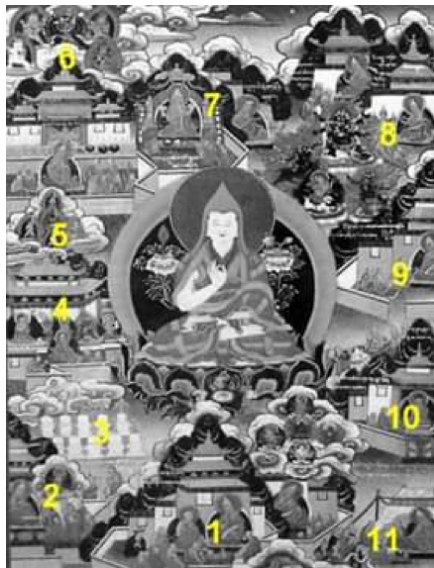
Then, gradually Tsongkhapa recovered and resumed as the sacred protector of gods and others. Each time those signs of obstacles arose, Je Rinpoche would quickly become peaceful through having visions of the Bhagavan Yamantaka, unbearable to view, massive as the breadth of the universe, eyebrows blazing like ten-million suns, amidst the light of a great fire like at the end of an eon reaching up to the Realm of Brahma. Also, he had visions of the Buddha and bodhisattvas, Ushnishavijaya, Tara, Sitatapatra, Marici, Medicine Buddha, and Amitayus, filling all of space most of the time. Yeshe Gonpo, Pañjaranatha, Four Arm Makala, and Vaishravana continuously accomplished his works and especially Dharmaraja and Kshetapala inseparably endeavored for Je Rinpoche exactly like servants and attendants in person would do. The above description is tangential and so it's also alright to leave it out of the illustration.

⁹⁹ Rahu are a class of beings linked with planetary influences and can cause disturbances such as paralysis.

Thangka 14



131) [Thangka 14: P 1] The following year, in the summer of his fifty-eighth year, Miwang Dragpa Gyaltsen invited Tsongkhapa to come to Trashi Dokar in Oen. It says in the *Illuminating Mirror of Prophecies*, “The disciple possessing a lotus, the fully ordained monk Dewai Jungnay (Source of Joy), will also go to Tibet among those aspiring for virtue. He will become a monk having reached the end of goodness, after which he will expand the teachings of Lozang Dragpa.” And as Gendun Drub himself has said,



From now until the heart of enlightenment
I will uphold your teachings my protector.

In just this way, at that time Gendun Drub, the heart son whose holy works were equal to the sky, met Tsongkhapa. Due to the great bodhisattvas Kunzangwa and Sherab Sengye effulgently praising Gendun Drub, even Tsongkhapa too was greatly pleased immediately on meeting him and, according to Naynying Rinpoche, said, “He will achieve all of the teachings.”¹⁰⁰

At that time Tsongkhapa taught the middle way, pramana, the stages of the path, and other subjects to many hundreds

¹⁰⁰ Gyalwa Gendun Drupa (*dge 'dun grub pa*; 1391–1474), one of the most prolific and influential authors among Tsongkhapa’s direct disciples, was considered posthumously to be the first in the line of reincarnations of the Dalai Lama.

of Buddhist scholars. From the monastic seat of Thel, Chennga Rinpoche together with a mass of virtuous students; from Tsethang, all the teachers including Chojay and Shunglaypa; and from Naydong, the Great Gongma and all his students were satiated with Dharma. Thereupon their hairs of faith stood on end and from the depths of their hearts they proclaimed praise in expressions like the melodious roar of dragons. The blessed statue renowned as Trashi Dokama also arose at that time.

- 132) Subsequently, Tsongkhapa returned to Ganden where he taught all of the Heruka Chakrasamvara generation stage text, *Yielding All That is Wished For*, the extensive and abbreviated completion stage texts, and the sadhana. He also taught an annotated edition of the *Illuminating Lamp* by Chandrakirti, the *Concise Meaning*, decisive analysis of all the chapters in the *Guhyasamaja Root Tantra*, and the complete *Commentary Relating the Four Classes of Tantra* along with practice instructions. His great compassion illuminated the teachings of sutra and tantra like the sun.

[P 2] At the time when he recovered from illness, Manjushri, blazing with amazing splendor, told him that if he exerted himself in the practice of the generation and completion stages, from that time onward he would quickly generate exceptional realization of highest yoga yantra; and furthermore, that seven of his fortunate disciples would also develop exceptional realizations of the path. Still feeling physically unwell, Je Rinpoche consulted Togdenpa who then solicited Manjushri. Togden reported that Manjushri said, “The exalted wisdom of bliss and emptiness has already arisen in Tsongkhapa’s mental continuum. With the external condition of field-born messenger dakinis assisting and the causal collection of the blessings of the supreme deity, he will quickly give rise to that path.”

[P 3] In that regard also, Lama Togden had a dream in which there was a stupa the color of porcelain said to be that of Tsongkhapa. Its proportions were very utterly perfect, the top adorned with precious jewels, the tip reaching high up into the clouds. There, many dakinis decorated with jeweled crowns all bestowed a ritual ablution with countless jeweled vases filled with white nectar. There were many stupas surrounding it. In the north there were seven stupas which occupied the space of the one stupa and were equal in height to the first one's lion throne. To these, ablution was offered. It was said that these had not yet been anointed with nectar although all the stupas were said to have been cleansed. It was said of those which were still not ready for ablution that they must be improved; once they'd been improved, ablution could be done. He asked Manjushri about this dream at which Manjushri said it was just as he'd explained before.

- 133) [P 4] Having stated that they needed to build a separate tantric meditation hall since it is a serious infraction if people who have not yet received initiation see mandalas when they come to the prayer hall during offering and accomplishment rituals and so forth, in the year of the Wood-Sheep (1415) they laid the foundation stone for Yangpajen. Within the assembly hall, covering an area of seventy-two pillars including its courtyard, a sacred statue of the Teacher, renowned as Discipline of the Muni, was installed. It was larger than that of the Jowo in Lhasa. There were also four golden statues of Maitreya, Amitayus, Yamantaka, and Manjushri. A clay statue of Yamantaka, standing seventeen *thoe*¹⁰¹ in height, was built whose central face arose spontaneously. At its heart there was a faint heat. On the upper floor of the assembly hall a three-dimensional mandala

¹⁰¹ One *thoe* equals the distance from the tip of the outstretched thumb to the tip of the middle-finger.

of Thirty-Two Deity Guhyasamaja, a three-dimensional mandala of the Sixty-Two Deity Heruka Chakrasamvara of Luipa, and a three-dimensional large mandala of glorious Dorying were constructed. At that time, instead of relying on the measurements described by Shariputra and Tsangpa Edaie, they constructed these according to measurements gleaned through comparing instructions from the root text and commentary of Dom Jung,¹⁰² and the tantras of Red and Black Yamari. They also blessed all the construction materials accordingly. In this way, the apex of previous traditional mandala construction methods, the Heruka Gandakapala mother and father statue called Jatsonma (Rainbow Lady) came into being.

In light of many different people seeing various appearances, Je Rinpoche wrote in the requesting prayer called *Excellent Appearance*:

It is excellent that Chakrasamvara father and mother
Have come here from the palace of Heruka
As the supreme field of merit for wanderers in samsara.

The father and mother's bodies
Are adorned by many skull pieces, miraculous omens.
Emaho! How wonderful that all of us disciples are
fortunate
To have gathered such a great collection of merit!

The three main deities of the Chakrasamvara, Guhyasamaja, and Dorying mandalas arose spontaneously. It is said that at the heart of the Chakrasamvara statue there was a very slight heat. The material from which the statues were made was about twenty-six kilograms of silver and so forth.

¹⁰² The *Samvarodaya Tantra* (*sdom 'byung gi rgyud*) or *Tantra of the Emergence* is a tantra concerning Heruka Chakrasamvara.

134) [P 5] At that time Tsongkhapa had a vision of the deities of Heruka Chakrasamvara. From the sky a gathering of dakinis made offerings and chanted praises in melodious tunes which Tsongkhapa committed to memory. Later he wrote these down in verse as the prayer, *Excellent Concentration* and the entreaty, *Song of the Spring Queen*. From *Lama Tsongkhapa's Secret Biography* by Jamyang Choje:

When you completed construction of the Chakrasamvara
mandala,
You had a clear direct perception of all the mandala's
deities.
Myriad gatherings of dakinis of the outer and inner three
places
Made you offerings of vajra songs, transporting you in
ecstasy.

And from the *History of Kadam*, "During construction of the three-dimensional mandalas in the temple, this offering of the spiritual songs, *Excellent Concentration* and so forth together with their melodies, were hymns of invocation sung by all the goddesses that appeared in Tsongkhapa's visions. This very Je Rinpoche, now manifests in the world through countless emanations." The words, "and so forth" here are said to mean that when the dakinis sang this tantric song, they also sang many other songs that were not heard by ordinary ears but which were entreaties appearing to Tsongkhapa. This is renowned in the oral lineage of elder tantric practitioners which has come down to this day, so know it to be true. The meaning of these songs is that, although one may not have given rise to profound experiences, by not allowing one's practice to decline, blessings will come very quickly. This is explained as being due to the fact that when these prayers were first made long ago, all the buddhas endowed them with blessings.

135) [P 6] The temple and all its holy objects were completed in the Fire-Bird Year (1417). Within the Bird Year, on the day when they performed extensive consecration according to the classes of tantra, all heard a great sound, like that of thunder, arise from the midst of a clear sky and absorb into the prayer hall. At that time, some yogis of the five stages of Guhyasamaja and Chakrasamvara said they saw Vajrabhairavas fill the sky, then come from the four directions and absorb into the statues. In these ways, all the land became blessed with auspiciousness.¹⁰³

136) [P 7] This has been written in addition to the earlier descriptions of Ganden. During the Earth-Dog Year (1418) Tsongkhapa turned the wheel of Dharma continuously for the resident monastic sangha and for many hundreds of scholars of the Buddhist treatise who came from all different directions. He taught the *Four Conjoined Commentaries* on Guhyasamaja, several commentaries on root tantras, extensive instructions on the five stages, extensive instructions on the six yogas of Kalachakra, and a detailed explanation of the *Great Commentary on Kalachakra*. He also taught on the middle way, pramana, Chakrasamvara, the stages of the path, and so forth.

During that summer and fall, the paintings in the courtyard of Yangpajen were completed. Tsongkhapa composed and taught on his *Exposition of "Entering the Middle Way."*¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ The construction of Ganden Monastery in general and especially of the tantric temple, Yangpajen, together with all its holy objects is commonly known as the fourth of Tsongkhapa's Four Great Deeds. This monastery has been completely destroyed during the communist Chinese occupation of Tibet.

¹⁰⁴ This refers to Tsongkhapa's last major treatise composed on the middle way view of emptiness called *Clear Elucidation of the Intent: A Thorough Exposition of "Entering the Middle Way"* that is currently being translated by Thupten Jinpa as part of *The Library of Tibetan Classics*.

137) [P 8] One day in the Earth-Dog Year (1418), during the latter part of his sixty-second year, while making torma offerings to all these Dharma protectors as well, Tsongkhapa said that because they are extremely pleased when the torma offering is made with the roar of a chant, it should be done as follows. Thereupon he composed four songs to Shinje Dharmaraja: an invocation, a praise and exhortation, and so forth. One night during that time, in their sleep several people dreamed that Shinje Dharmaraja, having a huge magnificent body, appeared coming in space saying, “If you chant the offering song like this, I will be invoked,” and then he came making all the earth and mountains tremble. Furthermore, several people had similar omens manifest in dreams. The meaning of this song of praise then, known as *Shinje’s Own Song* or the *Song Invoking Shinje*, seems to be something like this. Therefore, it is said to all those who study this song that it is unsuitable to perform it until the tormas have been set out. One time someone asked why this is, in response to which it says in the *Secret Biography* by Legzang, “The reason for that is, from the time Je Rinpoche engaged in his first tantric retreat, this Dharmaraja has remained extremely close to him. He is the one receiving and sending off all who come and go in Je Rinpoche’s presence. He pays special attention to all those who have respect for Je Rinpoche from the depths of their hearts. He has come many times emanating as those who serve as Je Rinpoche’s attendants and in the aspect of many who request advice. In Je Rinpoche’s quarters he goes here and there, performs many actions before Je Rinpoche and so forth. Some present in Je Rinpoche’s quarters have seen him, but others, mistaking him for whatever form it is that he’s emanated, don’t recognize him. When Tsongkhapa would make offerings of this song and torma, Dharmaraja would come like this and converse with him. It is said that when we offer this torma and chant this

song, we should abide showing a joyful demeanor and so forth.”

It is imperative that we understand this well, not just as mere words. At the end of that year Tsongkhapa had printing plates carved of the *Guhyasamaja Root Tantra* and Chandrakirti’s commentary on it, called *Illuminating Lamp*.¹⁰⁵

138) [P 9] In the Year of the Earth-Pig (1419), all the great upholders of Buddhist treatise of U-Tsang gathered together. Through the spring and summer Lama Tsongkhapa turned the wheel of Dharma by explaining the tantra of Chakrasamvara while also composing an extensive commentary on the *Chakrasamvara Root Tantra* and teaching this in its entirety. Jamyang Choje¹⁰⁶ acted as the leader of studies by memorizing and reciting each of the arrow-length nine-line folios of Tsongkhapa’s *Chakrasamvara Commentary* each day. It is said that Jamchen Choje was also similarly amazing.

139) [P 10] In the autumn of the Earth-Pig Year (1419), on account of some disciples saying that the hot springs in Tolung would be agreeable to him and primarily in order to pay his final respects to the Jowo Rinpoche statue in Lhasa, Je Rinpoche set out from Ganden Monastery. He also intended to accomplish the welfare of many whom he might directly subdue and wished to confer the nectar of well-spoken advice one last time on innumerable disciples whom he had previously ripened. In Lhasa, he made boundless offerings and prayers to Jowo.

¹⁰⁵ Woodblock printing was just becoming widespread in Tibet around this time, the early 13th century. These printing plates sponsored by Tsongkhapa would likely have been the first woodblocks made of these texts.

¹⁰⁶ Jamyang Choje Tashi Palden is the founder of Drepung Monastery.

140) [P 11] Then he went to Tolung where many individual families invited him to their homes. He visited most of the homes. He also visited the hot springs but only put his feet in. He bestowed teachings and blessings on countless groups of people in both the upper and lower regions of Tolung valley. According to oral tradition, it is said that Je Rinpoche was famed to have had a vision of the deities of Guhyasamaja absorbing into the debate yard of Chumig Lung, near the hot spring. Thereupon he made a prophecy that there would be a tantric college here in the future. In truth this came to be. It was very meaningful for all the people just to be able to honor him, hear his speech, and see his holy countenance.

Thangka 15



141) [Thangka 15: P 1] While making his way back to Ganden he rode in a palanquin. As he was approaching Drepung a five-colored rainbow appeared in space touching the tip of the palanquin.

[P 2] In the biography of Nay-nying,¹⁰⁷ it says that when Tsongkhapa performed a consecration



on all the holy objects in the tantric temple of Drepung, at the moment he invited the wisdom beings, the earth shook accompanied by the sound of a great resplendent roar that all directly perceived. All the wisdom beings of Bhagavan Vajrabhairava, the exalted wisdom Six-Arm Mahakala and his retinue, and the oath bound one Dharmaraja father and mother with their retinue, were caused to directly enter. An extensive long-life ceremony was offered, a perpetual golden torma was set up, and pacifying and increasing fire pujas were done many times.

It is as said in the biography by Gyalwa Yonten Gyatso that, like the holy deeds of previous conquerors, Tsongkhapa erected a clay Yamantaka statue whose tongue was moist with liquid. It is said in the *History of Yamantaka* that some remains of Ra Lotsawa are encased therein.

142) [P 3] In Drepung, to an assembly of about 2000 spiritual masters and upholders of Buddhist scripture, Tsongkhapa

¹⁰⁷ This is one biography of Tsongkhapa.

gave a commentary on the stages of the path and on *Entering the Middle Way*; he also taught the six yogas of Naropa, and the *Guhyasamaja Tantra*. During that time, a five-colored rainbow shown in the middle of the debate yard repeatedly and from high up in the sky, clouds again and again descended towards Ganden like messengers from the gods. One day Je Rinpoche gazed in the direction of Ganden, after which he concluded his explanation of *Guhyasamaja Tantra* in the midst of the ninth chapter.¹⁰⁸ All the disciples requested him to finish the remaining parts of the tantra and stages of the path teaching by giving just the reading transmission of these, but Je Rinpoche would not listen saying, “Yesterday I already made up my mind to go. Now if I set out quickly all will be uplifted with joy, therefore I’ll go.” Thereby, he made a further interdependent relationship such that the continuum of explanation of tantra and philosophical treatise remain long without being exhausted.¹⁰⁹

143) [P 4] Je Rinpoche went to Lhasa where he made prostrations, offerings, and extensive prayers in front of Jowo Rinpoche. Again, he made an auspicious connection for the teachings to remain long.

¹⁰⁸ There are seventeen chapters in the *Guhyasamaja Root Tantra*.

¹⁰⁹ In Tibetan culture even today, leaving an action unfinished and thus something further remaining to be done between teacher and disciple is considered a way of creating an auspicious causal connection for them to meet again. Therefore, when a teacher gives an explanation or transmission of a text, after they have finished the text, it is customary for them to again read a few pages from the beginning a second time and then stop there, leaving the rest unfinished. Also, from the students’ side, although they would typically prostrate to the teacher three times at the end of each session of teaching, there is a custom to not prostrate, thereby leaving this action unfinished, at the end of the last session of teaching as a way of creating a cause to meet the teacher again in the future. This seems to be the sort of logic alluded to in this passage.

144) [P 5] Then, Jamchen Choje¹¹⁰ invited him to Sera. At Sera Choding, Je Rinpoche said that in Tibet a pure tradition of teaching and studying the classes of tantra had not spread. Although there were many perfect nectar-like explanations given by Je Rinpoche himself, seeing that no monastic institution for the teaching and study of tantra had been established, he thought how wonderful it would be if a monastery were established for the pure explanation and study of tantra. He instructed Jamchen Choje to help with this. Jamchen offered each of the requisite materials for this purpose. In order to create a conducive causal connection for the explanation and study of the *Guhyasamaja* and *Chakrasamvara Root Tantras* on the basis of training in pure monastic discipline, they convened a monastic mending and purification ceremony (sojong) after which these two tantric masters taught these tantras from the beginning in alternating sessions. During that time, in the midst of an ocean-like assembly of many students of the monastic colleges gathered together like a golden mountain, Je Rinpoche asked, “Is there anyone who can uphold the explanatory tradition of tantra,” once, then twice, and yet none of the scholars present rose to the occasion. Then, Je Sherab Sengge held out his hands and said, “I will do that,” thereby taking Je Rinpoche’s instructions upon his own head. Je Rinpoche was supremely pleased and bestowed upon him a special golden statue of Guhyasamaja, the *Four Interwoven Commentaries*, the two exegesis on tantra, the generation and completion stages, a ritual face mask, dance attire, mace, and noose of Dharmaraja. The tantric monastery founded

¹¹⁰ This is Jamchen Choje Shākya Yeshe (byams chen chos rje shAkya ye shes) who is mentioned in footnote 8.

there, at Sera, began from this time. Sherab Sengge established three tantric monasteries from this lineage.¹¹¹

- 145) [P 6] Then, in Balamtse, Je Rinpoche instructed the magistrate of Dragkar and his wife to start a tantric monastery and the magistrate accepted.

[P 7] They requested Tsongkhapa to perform a consecration on that area whereupon he said, “If it’s not done now it won’t happen,” and did an extensive consecration. He gave the name Sang Ngag Kar (Secret Mantra Fortress) to the new temple.

[P 8] Then he travelled to Dragkar. He was invited to Drushi and went.

[P 9] That night, from the sky came the sound of a gandi (a long rounded wooden board that is beaten to summon a community of monks to assemble) struck by an invisible mallet. It was ascertained that no human had struck it.

From the time Tsongkhapa departed Drepung, the earth shook abruptly again and again, and a five-colored rainbow appeared penetrating his palanquin.

- 146) [P 10] Then, when he arrived from Drushi to Ganden, Je Rinpoche first went to the tantric temple, Yangpajen. He had massive ritual offering cakes set up in the temple, then made very extensive prayers before the holy images of the Teacher, the mandalas, and the various yidams entreating them to perform enlightened deeds.

- 147) [P 11] Next, of his own initiative, he went into the main prayer hall during a general assembly and walked to the

¹¹¹ It would seem that the three tantric monasteries referred to here are two directly founded by Sherab Sengye (shes rab seng+ge, 1383–1445), Seygyu and Gyume Monasteries, and a third founded by his direct disciple Kunga Dondrub (kun dga’ don grub, 1419–1486), Gyuto Monastery.

center of the congregation. He made extensive dedications at the conclusion of which he recited the extensive dedication, *Prayer to be Reborn in Sukhavati*. By reciting extensive verses of auspiciousness in the midst of this ocean-like assembly of ordained ones, he intended to create a powerful auspicious causal connection for the future.

- 148) [P 12] Then he went to his private quarters. He showed the aspect of physically declining. The following day, in the presence of Dulzin, Gyaltsab, and others, Gyaltsab requested him to give them final advice. Thereupon Tsongkhapa laid his pandit's hat flat on his head, then passed it into Gyaltsab Je's lap and gave him a monk's cloak saying, "Knowing the meaning of this, train in the mind of enlightenment." Thereby, in meaning also, he entrusted the monastic seat to him.

[P 13] Thereafter they convened an offering feast of Heruka Chakrasamvara during which Je Rinpoche tasted the inner offering thirty-two times, then engaged in vajra recitation. On the following day, the twenty-fifth of the lunar month, at the first light of dawn, he sat in the vajra cross-legged posture, his hands in the mudra of meditative equipoise, and transformed the clear light into the truth body. Transforming the bardo into the body of complete enjoyment, he showed the method of achieving enlightenment. His holy body became as if the body of a youth and radiated rainbow light. From the sky came a rain of flowers and rainbows appeared.

- 149) Entreated by countless heroes and dakinis, he produced an emanation body from amongst the wondrous emanations of the enjoyment body in the bardo. Producing the complete abode and residents of Thirty-Two Deity Guhyasamaja, he gave rise to the wondrous display of a supreme emanation

body. As it says in *Sutra Conferring Advice from the Set of Discourses*.¹¹²

Then, having passed away, in the East,
In a pure realm beautified with magical displays,
He will become a conqueror, a thus gone one
Called Roar of the Lion.

In that way he appeared in Sukhavati as a child of the conquerors. In Tushita, he showed the aspect of taking birth from a lotus as Jampal Nyingpo, a child of the conquerors, and listening to Dharma teachings before the Perfect Protector Maitreya. He radiates a billion emanations in this and other world systems, sometimes as a lama, sometimes as the king of a land, as a chieftain, and in the manner of a Brahmin; in some realms he shows the manner of achieving enlightenment and so forth. By issuing forth immeasurable emanations of whatever subdues immeasurable migrators, he brings them to enlightenment. May the teachings of the conqueror flourish in all times and directions.

In conclusion:

Just as long ago, countless conquerors have come, so have
you,
An ocean of the two collections, deep, profound, and well-
matured,
Spiritual strength filled with jewels, whose waves
Please all the conquerors of the ten directions and make them
smile.

By their blessing you are like a second Muni to the Muni's
teachings,

¹¹² This is a continuation of the passage cited above in section 119. (*mdo sde sdams ngag 'bog pa'i rgyal po*, TBRC W1PD96682, Vol 107, p 526.)

A reflection of the teachings; by listening to the entire
teachings
Your heart was satiated; and you increased and spread
Listening, contemplation, and meditation in not one but ten
directions at once.¹¹³

Protector, your qualities are like the furthest limits,
They cannot all be expressed; but may the virtue of striving
here with faith,
Become a cause for all wanderers to win the three bodies by
the vast and profound paths
Of sutra and tantra, just as your bodhichitta aspired long ago.

Through faith in you, and by seeing, hearing, remembering or
touching
This life story of liberation, may all the nine classes of beings
Attain the lofty tower of high status, and your line of
transmission
Be like the lion's roar of a King of Conquerors.

Colophons

Original Colophon:

This method for depicting the life story of liberation of the great incomparable Tsongkhapa on painted cloth in 153 parts called *Chintamani Rosary Spreading the Buddha's Teachings; Great Ocean of Benefit and Joy*, was composed by one possessing indivisible faith in this Venerable Lama alone, the learned fully ordained Shakya monk, Jamyang Shepai Dorje.¹¹⁴ On the occasion of painting

¹¹³ The author uses a poetic device in this verse whereby on word is repeated two times in each line.

¹¹⁴ The First Kunkhen Jamyang Shepa (Tib. *kun khyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje ngag dbang brtson 'gus*, 1648/1721) is a renowned Buddhist scholar from the Amdo region of Tibet. He is closely associated with Drepung Gomang

large thangkas on cloth, the order of events and so forth was well arranged based on the Omniscient Khedrub Je's *Marvelous Biography of Tsongkhapa Called Ford of Faith, Secret Biography*, and *Extremely Secret Biography*; a biography by the Lord of Siddhas, Legzangpa, *Super-Secret Wonder*; an appendix by one who directly perceived Manjushri, Togden Jampel Gyatso; the Lord of Scholars, Gungru Gyaltsen Zangpo's biographical commentary, *Well Spoken Lamp*; *The Ford of Faith* containing both the external and secret biographies by Kunga Deleg of Naynying; the biography called *Eighty Deeds of Tsongkhapa* by Jamyang Kachay; *Jewel Light Rays* and *All Victorious Great Deeds* by my own teacher, the precious throne-holder; many histories of the Dharma by the lord of scholars, Panchen Sonam Dragpa, Phabongkha Paljor Lhundrup, Khar Nagpa, and others; and the *Blue Annals* and many histories of both my own and other traditions. By this may the teachings of the All-Knowing Conqueror in general, and especially the teachings of the Gentle Protector, the Great Tsongkhapa, spread and increase in all ways and remain for a long time.

Translator's Colophon:

Translated by Gelong Tenzin Legtsok, 2019. This text is a translation of Kunkhyen Jamyang Shepai Dorje (kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje), *tsong kha pa chen po'i rnam thar ras bris kyi tshul brgya dang nga gsum pa tsin+ta ma Ni'i phreng ba thub bstan rgyas byed phan bde'i rol mtsho chen po bzhugs so* (*Chintamani Rosary Spreading the Buddha's Teachings; Great Ocean of Benefit and Joy; A Method for Depicting the Sacred Biography of the Great Jetsun Tsongkhapa on Painted Cloth in One Hundred and Fifty-Three Parts*) in kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje'i gsung 'bum, vol.4, BDRC W21503, Mundgod: Gomang College, 1997, 285–336.

and Tashikyil Monasteries. For a short account of his life see, <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Jamyang-Zhepai-Dorje/6646>.

Care of Dharma Materials



Dharma materials contain the teachings of the Buddha and thus protect against lower rebirth and reveal the path to enlightenment. Therefore, they should be treated with respect.

Printed Dharma materials, as well as phones, tablets, laptops, and hard drives containing Dharma, should be kept off the floor, beds, chairs, meditation cushions, and all other places where people sit or walk. Dharma materials should not be stepped over or put in places where the feet or buttocks will point at them. They should be covered or protected for transporting and kept in a high, clean place separate from more mundane materials. Other objects, including statues, stupas, ritual implements, malas, reading glasses, and so forth, should not be placed on top of Dharma books and devices containing Dharma materials. Avoid licking the fingers to turn the pages of Dharma texts.

If it is necessary to dispose of printed Dharma materials, they should be burned rather than thrown in the trash. When burning Dharma texts, visualize that the letters transform into an A (ཨ) and the A absorbs into your heart. Imagine burning blank paper. As the paper burns, recite OM ĀḤ HŪṂ or the *Heart Sutra*, while meditating on emptiness.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche recommends that images of holy beings, deities, and holy objects not be burned. Ideally, if undamaged, they should be put in a stupa. Otherwise, put them high up in a tree inside a well-sealed structure, something like a bird house, so that the images are protected from the weather and do not end up on the ground.



Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition