

Author's Introduction

Om svasti!

Lord of the Dharma, Teacher, Bhagavat,¹
In the perception of extraordinary
disciples,
You were enlightened countless aeons ago.
To you who perpetually turn the Wheel of
Dharma, I bow down [2a].

First of the Buddhas of the three times,²
You manifested as Samantabhadra,³ the
teacher.
To you who turned the wheel of the Great
Perfection
For Vajrasattva and his assembly, I bow
down.

In the dharmadhatu palace of the
Unexcelled Realm,⁴
You manifested as Vajradhara.
To you who turned the wheel of the Secret
Mantrayana
For the Lord of Secrets⁵ and his assembly, I
bow down [4b].

In the perception of ordinary disciples
You first aroused Bodhicitta,⁶ gathered the
two accumulations,⁷
And, finally, reached true and complete
enlightenment.
To you who set in motion the wheel of the
Sutras, I bow down.⁸
Lord Padmakara,⁹ heart emanation of all
the Buddhas,

You turned the wheel of sutra and mantra.
To you, most kind Orgyen,
Who came to Tibet and established the
great tradition of the Dharma,
I bow down.

When the teachings degenerated due to
changing times,
Padmakara took birth again as Lord
Atisha.¹⁰
To you, most compassionate lord,
Who kindled to greatest brightness the
torch of the sutra and mantra,
I bow down.

Lobzang,¹¹ the second Buddha,
Manifestation of Lord Atisha in this
degenerate age,¹²
To you who spread the teachings of the
Victorious Ones
And made them bloom like the sun rising
in the sky, I bow down.

Chögyal Ngakyi Wangpo,¹³ you revealed
in its entirety
The Dharma taught by the Victorious
Ones.
To you, most gracious root guru,
Who was kinder to me than the Buddha
himself,
I bow down.

Kind masters, according to the needs of
beings,

You were emanated as spiritual teachers in
 this dark age
 By all the past Buddhas [5a].
 To you, who taught me the sutras and
 tantras,
 The treatises and pith instructions,
 I bow down.

My masters, thinking of your kindness,
 I make this offering: to fulfill your every
 command.
 Grant your blessings that my life-story and
 songs
 May benefit the minds of whoever hears
 them.

For the benefit of those who will come in
 the future,
 I shall now tell my whole tale,
 From my birth until this very day.
 Listen with joy!

In the highlands is the sacred mountain, Machen Pomra,¹⁴ Lord of the Tenth *Bhumi*,¹⁵ graced with auspiciousness and prosperity. In the midlands is Trakar Drel Dzong, White Rock Monkey Fortress, the place sacred to the Lord of Great Compassion,¹⁶ the source of blessings and *siddhis*. In the lowlands is the sacred place called Tsonying Mahadeva, The Heart of the Lake, which induces well-being, happiness, and fame. I once spent time engaged in profound meditation in the secluded, pleasant groves of Tsonying Island, in the middle of Lake Kokonor, the lake of abundance where the essence of the whole Mongolian land is gathered—a lake where waves ripple gently and the calls of water birds constantly resound.

While I was staying there, Lama Pema Rangdrol (“Self-liberated Lotus,” my fortunate and supreme heart-son, who is diligent, intelligent, and compassionate) [5b], Kunzang Rangdrol (“All Perfect Natural Liberation”) Alak Dechen¹⁷ (“Great Bliss”), and Shanye Genpo Lama came to stay for a year. One day they came to me, prostrated themselves many times, and, offering a silk scarf of immaculate whiteness, made this request:

“Great vajra-holder, lasting refuge and pro-

teCTOR of all beings in this and future lives, kindly heed our request: to nourish our devotion and that of future disciples, as well as to benefit all beings, please tell us in detail the story of your life—from the time you lived at home until now.”

They accompanied their request with this seven-branch supplication:

Jetsun, lord guru, emanation of the
 Victorious Ones,
 We bow down with great devotion at your
 lotus feet,
 Singing songs of praise and supplication.

We offer you this excellent wealth:
 Our body, our speech, and the fulfillment
 of your every command.

We confess whatever breaches and errors
 we have committed,
 And henceforth will refrain from committing them.

Protector, we rejoice with great delight
 In the life-example you gave with your
 three mysteries.¹⁸

For our benefit and that of future disciples,
 Set in motion the Dharma-wheel that is
 the story of your life.

Protector, for the sake of the Dharma and
 all beings,
 Please remain in your bodily form for a
 hundred aeons.

We dedicate the merit gathered by
 ourselves and others
 So that we may be able to follow perfectly
 your life’s example [6a].
 Refuge and protector of beings in this dark
 age,
 Out of great kindness,
 Tell us the story of your life
 From the time you were living at home
 Until the present day.

I replied:

Fortunate heart-son endowed with faith,
Zeal, intelligence, and compassion,
Lama Pema Rangdrol, and you fortunate
ones,
Listen!

You must open and behold the treasury
Of the life-stories of the Buddhas and
Bodhisattvas.
What is the point of rummaging through
the rat's nest
Of the life of a practitioner like me?

If I were to tell you how that ass, Tsogdruk
Rangdrol,
Painfully trailed behind the hoof prints
Left by those sublime steeds,
The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past,
On the vast plain of their perfect lives,
It would only cause laughter.

There is little need for my life-story,
So you had better keep to the examples of
our forefathers,
And allow this yogin to rest peacefully
In his quiet mountain retreat.

Yet, they insisted:

E ma! Protector of beings living in this dark
age,
Tell us how first you abandoned the
concerns of this life,
How next you followed a qualified master,
How finally you practiced in secluded
places,
And how meditation experiences and real-
ization have now dawned in your mind.
Protector, your life-story is wonderful
indeed!

When the light rays of the sun shine,
The whole world benefits.
Likewise, if you tell your life-story,
It will benefit the whole Dharma and all
beings.

Thus, don't think it unimportant,
And, from great kindness, tell us the story
of your life [6b].

In response to their insistence, I wrote down notes on my life, from the time I lived at home until my stay at Tsonying Island. When I told them my story, they were pleased, did many prostrations, and went away with the notes. Later, Lama Pema Rangdrol composed a biography covering the events of my life up to my pilgrimage to the Pure Realm of U and Tsang.¹⁹ Since it was well-written and was of a suitable length, I thought it would suffice to inspire devotion in present and future disciples.

Later I came to live in Lapchi Snow Range, one of the most sacred places of the body, speech, and mind of Chakrasamvara.²⁰ The place sacred to Chakrasamvara's body is the abode of the White Lion-faced Dakini at Mount Kailash in Upper Tibet, the famed king of glaciers. The place sacred to his speech is the abode of the Striped Tiger-faced Dakini at Lapchi in Middle Tibet. The place sacred to his mind is the abode of the Black Sow-faced Dakini, matchless Tsari, in Lower Tibet. Among these, the highlands of Lapchi, perpetually wreathed in cloud banks and mist, are the perfect dancing ground of celestial *mamos* and *dakinis*,²¹ the place where Jetsun Milarepa once stayed.

One day, as I was turning the Wheel of Dharma there for many faithful disciples, Kalden Rangdrol ("Self-liberated Fortunate One"), my close spiritual son who had great faith, generosity and intelligence, accompanied by Lama Jimba Norbu ("Jewel of Generosity"), Tendzin Nyima ("Sun of the Doctrine"), Yeshe Wangchuk ("Endowed with Wisdom"), Tsultrim Namgyal ("All-Victorious Discipline"), Lobzang Dargye ("Vast and Excellent Intelligence"), Nyene Khepa ("The Learned Attendant"), and many other close disciples offered me a mandala of gold and silver on a silken scarf, and said [7a]:

"Lord who embodies the Three Jewels, our precious and lasting refuge in this life and in all our lives, heed our supplication. If you tell the story of your life as did the learned and accom-

plished sages of the past, it will set a supreme example for the Dharma and all beings.

“Therefore, tell us first, lord, where you were born; your father and mother’s names; whether they were rich or poor; how many brothers and sisters you had—in short, beginning with your birth, tell us your wondrous life year after year.

“Tell us how, having come to feel revulsion for samsaric affairs, you gave up this life’s concerns, followed many learned and accomplished masters, studied and contemplated the sutra and tantra teachings, and, in accordance with the meaning expressed in them, stayed in secluded mountain retreats, persevering in profound meditation.

“Tell us how meditation experiences and realization took birth in your being; how you manifested miracles and the higher perceptions and brought immense benefit for the Dharma and all beings in Upper, Lower and Middle Tibet. Without holding anything back, tell us the outer, inner, and secret stories of your life.”

Kalden Rangdrol repeated this request in verse:

Wish-fulfilling gem, refuge and protector,
I have but one request:
In the way of our spiritual forefathers,
Please tell us the story of your life.
This will greatly benefit the Dharma,
Your present disciples, and all beings in the
future.

Precious refuge and protector,
First, tell us where you were born, the
names of your parents, and then
What you have done, year after year, since
your birth.

Tell us the wondrous deeds you have
accomplished [7b];
How, having given up the affairs of this life
for the sake of Dharma,
You followed learned and accomplished
masters;
How you practiced in secluded places

And gave rise to meditation experiences
and realization;
How you vastly benefited sentient beings
and the Dharma,
Displaying prescience and miraculous
deeds.

Please tell us all, not withholding anything,
And grant your blessing that we, your
fortunate disciples,
May be able to follow thoroughly
The example of the outer, inner, and
secret aspects of your life.

I answered:

“Since you ask with such insistence, I have no reason to keep my life-story secret. So, I shall tell you all I did from my birth until now—where I have been, where I stayed, and all I have done in accordance with the Dharma. Listen joyfully!”

I then told them all that I could remember. Delighted, they did many prostrations and circumambulations, and then returned to their hermitages. Although no notes were taken at the time, later, a few of the close disciples, who feared they might forget the details, wrote some down.

Following this, I went on to Domey, where I could be of help to beings.

Nine years later, I happened to stay in retreat at Tashikhyil,²² a perfect secluded place covered with forests and flowers, and filled with the melodious calls of birds of all kinds. At that time, the faithful disciples and *ngakpas*²³ said among themselves, “If our precious refuge and protector would tell his life-story in detail [8a], it would strengthen our faith and be of invaluable benefit for future disciples.”

Soon after, Khen Rinpoche dreamed that I was seated outside on a throne at the east side of the Dewachen Temple on the top of Tashikhyil Mountain, telling a great crowd of human beings and celestial beings the life-stories of many Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and learned and realized beings of India and Tibet. In his dream he thought, “Who knows when I’ll die? I must ask

Lama Shabkar to tell his life-story.” At that moment, he woke up. The next day, he came, presented me with a white scarf, and made this request:

Precious protector, our refuge in this life
and lives thereafter,
You have now grown old.
Almost all the great disciples who earlier
asked
That you tell your life-story
Have now passed away.
I, too, am an old man close to death;
Who knows when I shall die?
I may never have another opportunity
To ask you to tell the story of your life.
If I don’t ask this while I live,
Once I’m dead, even if you tell it,
I won’t be there to hear it.
So, now while I am still of this world,
Please tell the whole story of your life.
It will enhance faith, respect, and pure
perception
In all of us, your disciples;
And set a perfect example
For the Dharma and beings in the future
[8b].
From today, and throughout all of my
lives,
May I follow your life-example
And practice the divine Dharma.
May my aspiration be fulfilled!

Thereafter, some of my disciples, who always did as their master asked, such as Nyangkyi Tsampa (“The Hermit of Nyang”),²⁴ Lhakang Umdze (“The Chant Master”), Yeshe Tendzin (“Holder of the Wisdom Teachings”), Sönam Rinchen (“Jewel of Merit”), my attendant Drupchen (“Great Siddha”), Pema Kardri (“Fragrance of the White Lotus”), Neten (“the Elder”), Sangye (“The Buddha”), Kunga (“All Joy”), Rabjung (“The Renunciate”), Phuntshok (“All-Perfect”), and many devoted patrons, pleaded that, just as there were many biographies of the past and present masters, I should certainly tell my life-story, too.

Although they kept insisting, I thought that there was little need for it. I did not pay much attention to this, and stayed in strict retreat.

One day during my retreat, it occurred to me, “While keeping in mind the practice of Dharma, I have now reached old age, and death is approaching. I do not know how much time I have left for joys and sorrows. At present, my illusory body is fit and free of illness. If, as the Khenpo said, I were to write the story of my life and leave it behind, in the future it might somehow benefit faithful and fortunate disciples who strive for liberation.” Thus I began to feel inclined to write down the events of my life from my birth until the present.



Like a wish-fulfilling gem, the spiritual master is the source of all well-being, bliss, and excellence [9a]. For those who are now asking that their master’s life-story be told and for the fortunate disciples of the future, it is first of all essential to develop faith and respect toward the spiritual master, perceiving the master as the Buddha in human form. Why is this so? In the perception of extraordinary disciples, Buddha Shakyamuni, the matchless son of Suddhodana, the sublime guide of all beings, men, and gods, realized the unsurpassable state of enlightenment at the very beginning of samsara and nirvana. He then manifested in various forms to tame sentient beings, limitless as space, in accordance with their needs, and ceaselessly turned the Wheel of Dharma.

As is said in *The Sutra of Compassion’s White Lotus*:²⁵

Throughout inconceivable billions of aeons,
Infinite, innumerable—
I have attained sublime enlightenment,
And have continuously expounded the
Dharma.

In the perception of ordinary disciples, Buddha Shakyamuni first awakened his aspira-

tion, then gathered the two accumulations, and finally attained perfect and true enlightenment. Having displayed these wondrous deeds, he set in motion the Wheel of Dharma. These are the deeds that he will display again and again in the future, as it is stated in the sutra called *The Meeting of Father and Son*.²⁶

Great hero of great skill,
You manifested in billions of universes
As the Victorious One, the Buddha,
To bring sentient beings to full maturity,
You, the guide [9b],
Will manifest again as numerous Buddhas.

In this degenerate age, the Buddha manifests as various spiritual masters and spiritual friends who train beings—whoever is in need of taming, by whatever means are needed.

In *The Great Drum Sutra*²⁷ the Buddha says:

Do not despair, Ananda!
In the future I will
Emanate as spiritual friends
To benefit you and others.

In the *Salty River Sutra*²⁸ he also says:

During the last five-hundred year period
I will emanate as spiritual friends.
Regard them as you would myself
And respect them.

In the *Vajra Tent Tantra*²⁹ it is said, too:

Assuming an ordinary appearance,
The one known as Vajrasattva
Emanates as spiritual masters
To benefit all sentient beings.

Considering the Buddha's words as the canon of truth, perceive the master as the Buddha in person; regard all he does as perfect, and feel devotion just by remembering the way he sits, acts, and talks, and even more by remembering the vast and wondrous deeds of his life. Whoever has complete faith and devotion will soon give

rise to all the good qualities of the sacred Dharma, accomplish all activities and attain all the *siddhis* of the Buddhas.

As it is said in *The Sutra of the Ten Dharmas*:³⁰

Those possessed of faith
Will perform the deeds of the Buddhas.

Likewise, in *The Magical Net*³¹ it says:

The one possessing faith [10a]
Will naturally achieve all accomplishments.

And Gyalwa Karmapa said:

The faithful disciple gifted with devotion
Will soon give rise to the qualities of
Dharma.

Machik,³² the "Sole Mother," said too:

All those who have faith
Will see their aspirations fulfilled.

You may wonder whether there had been predictions about me. There had. In the *Description of the Great Stupa Jarung Khashor*, or Bodhnath,³³ one finds among the great master Padmasambhava's predictions:

"Several emanations of the Lords of the Three Families, of the Frowning One, and of Arya Tara will restore the stupa.³⁴ At that time, someone with fortunate karma—the result of his past deeds—will come; if, having forsaken all concern for this life, he conceives the supreme intention to restore the stupa and undertakes the work, he will succeed. If he does so, this world, the southern continent of Jambudvīpa, will enjoy good years and happiness for twenty-five human years; the three lands of India, Nepal, and Mön will enjoy the same for thirty-five years; the Land of Snows, Tibet, will ward off the invaders from Upper Mongolia³⁵ for sixty years, and there will be good years and happiness for forty years."³⁶

It is also said in the *General Predictions for the Dharma* made by Tertön Dudul Dorje,³⁷ "Adamantine Subduer of Evil":

Glorious Vajra will fly to the east.
 One with the name Rangdrol, wise in the
 true meaning,
 Will give splendor to Jarung Khashor.
 All fortunate and noble beings will have
 faith in him [10b].

In the *Secret Predictions* of Karmapa Rolpai Dorje,³⁸ “Adamantine Display,” one finds:

Jetsun Shepai Dorje, “Laughing Vajra,”³⁹
 Will reappear in Dokham, in the east.
 He will make excellent restorations
 At the Snow Range of Lapchi.

Taksham Nuden Dorje,⁴⁰ “Powerful Diamond,” made predictions concerning the holders of his teachings:

When the Central Temple,⁴¹ built in three
 styles, is damaged by fire,
 A “wheel gathering the profound mean-
 ing” will appear from the east.
 If he meets with this deep teaching of
 mine,
 Obstacles will be dispelled and immense
 benefit will ensue for beings.
 You, great compassionate one with a mole
 above your eye,
 Do not harbor doubts; practice and propa-
 gate these teachings.

Likewise in the predictions of Dzogchenpa Kunzang Shenphen, “Ever-excellent Benevolent One,”⁴² a lord among *siddhas*, one can read:

The Lord, the “Wheel of the Doctrine,”
 will appear in Upper Tibet,
 As the magical display of the divine Lotus-
 holder.⁴³
 He will manifest there and in other places.

According to the prophecies received by the great awareness-holder Palden Tashi,⁴⁴ it is said:

On the mountain that resembles a
 standing elephant

Is a forest shrouded in dark clouds.
 This place, known as Tashikhyil,
 Will become a place of practice.
 There, like the sun and moon
 Encircled by a host of stars,
 Will appear several realized beings
 And secret practitioners of great bliss.

Others say that if someone endowed with faith and respect were to look through the scriptures of the sutras and tantras, the volumes of the Kadampas, and the ancient and recent revealed treasures of Orgyen Rinpoche, there are many instances where one would wonder, “Isn’t this a prediction, too?” [11a].

For these reasons, if in the future someone tells or listens to the story of my life with a pure mind filled with faith and respect, and thinks, “This is a holy person predicted by our holy forefathers,” great benefit could result.

As it is said in the *Golden Garland of the Kagyu Lineage*:⁴⁵

Merely hearing of the life-stories, the wondrous deeds and virtues of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and of their emanations, the masters of the precious Whispered Lineage and all the other holy and supreme emanated beings, purifies limitless negative karma, evil deeds, and obscurations, while perfecting an equally limitless accumulation of merit.

Once the seeds of virtue have been sown in your being, you will always be reborn in the presence of spiritual masters and take delight in the teachings of the Mahayana; you will be able to bear austerities and hardships, while mental strength and understanding will naturally develop.

These life-stories teach the Dharma. So if you hear them many times and keep them in mind, they will help you to understand what to do and what not to do. You will know which path to follow, without any mistake. Faith will be born in those with no faith and be enhanced in those who have faith; diligence, intelligence, revulsion toward samsara, and other excellent qualities will grow effortlessly.

Your fervent devotion will enable you to receive the blessings of the true lineage; meditation experiences and realization not yet born will arise, and those already born will increase [11b].

When you think, 'May I perform the same wondrous deeds as these Bodhisattvas!' Bodhicitta will arise. When you rejoice in their great virtuous acts, you will gain the same merit as if you had performed them yourself.

When you hear the profound accounts of the Bodhisattvas' wondrous deeds, your attachment and aggression and other negative thoughts, together with suffering of all kinds, will stop, while your joy and pure deeds will blossom. Even if you are criticized and slandered by people with wrong views, you will be welcomed by great beings, and, having been accepted as their disciple, you will put an end to samsara.

In short, these life-stories are a source of benefit for both yourself and others. To read, hear, or reflect on them is very meaningful; you should read, copy, listen to, memorize and reflect upon them with diligence. Keep them in mind and put them into practice with ardent devotion and respect.

Unlike the life-stories of the past Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and great learned and realized sages of India and Tibet, my own life-story does not have much to offer to my disciples for their practice. Nevertheless, keeping my eyes fixed on the exemplary lives of the past masters, I shall relate all that I have done in accordance with the Dharma [12a].



How will this story be told? To make it pleasant to those of superior, middling, and lesser capacities, I shall (as a few learned and accomplished persons have done in the past) alternate prose and verse. This account will be related in fifteen chapters:

The first chapter tells how and where I took birth, as a result of good karma and of pure prayers made in my past lives.

The second tells how, having reflected on the vanity of worldly affairs, I left home for the homeless life.

The third tells how, leaving my homeland behind, I came into the presence of the Dharma King, Chögyal Ngakyi Wangpo.

The fourth tells how, in keeping with the prophecy of my master, I persevered in profound meditation practices in the pleasant solitude of Tsheshung Grove.

The fifth tells how I went to practice in other nearby places such as Takmo Dzong, Göpo Dzong, and Getho.

The sixth tells how I went to practice at Tsonying Mahadeva, The Heart of the Lake, the renowned sacred place that induces well-being and happiness.

The seventh tells how I went to practice at Machen Pomra, the mountain of the Lord of the Tenth *Bhumi*, auspicious and magnificent.

The eighth tells how I went to practice at Trakar Drel Dzong, the White Rock Monkey Fortress, the source of all blessings and accomplishments.

The ninth tells how, following the death of my mother, I went to the Pure Realm of central Tibet, U and Tsang.

The tenth tells how I made the pilgrimage through the Ravines of Tsari, and how I practiced at the place sacred to the Mind of Black Varahi, unequaled in Lower Tibet.

The eleventh tells how I went to western Tibet and practiced at Mount Kailash, the famed king of mountains, the place sacred to the Body of the White Lion-faced Dakini. [12b].

The twelfth tells how I went to the celestial realm of Nepal, and paid homage at the two great stupas.

The thirteenth tells how I went to the authentic place of Lapchi, the place sacred to the speech aspect of the Striped Tiger-faced Dakini, and meditated there.

The fourteenth tells how, coming back to the Pure Realm of U and Tsang, I wandered on, benefiting beings.

The fifteenth tells how, returning to lower Do-kham, I worked to benefit the Dharma and all beings.



Notes

1. Bhagavat is rendered in Tibetan by *bcom ldan 'das*, literally the one who “has vanquished” (*bcom*) the obscuring emotions, is “endowed” (*ldan*) with the excellence of enlightenment, and is “beyond” (*'das*) suffering.

2. Present, past, and future.

3. Skt. Samantabhadra (*kun tu bzang po*), the “Ever-perfect” primordial Buddha. In the primordial universal ground, there are neither sentient beings, nor Buddhas; neither ignorance, nor enlightenment. It is a state of natural, unchanging perfection beyond conditions and concepts. When the first manifestation of phenomena arises from the primordial ground, to recognize that this arising is the display of one’s own awareness leads instantaneously to the primordial Buddhahood of Samantabhadra. Not recognizing this to be the case, and taking phenomena and beings to be real entities distinct from oneself, leads instantaneously to the ignorance of sentient beings.

4. Akanishtha (*'og min*), literally “which is not below,” the Unexcelled Buddhafield. There are several kinds of *'og min*; see the commentary on Jigme Lingpa’s *Treasury of Spiritual Qualities* (*yon tan mdzod*) by Khenpo Yonten Gyatso, hereafter abbreviated as YZ, vol. 40, pp. 742–43.

5. The Lord of Secrets (*gsang ba'i bdag po*), a synonym for Vajrapani, the compiler of the tantric teachings.

6. Bodhicitta (*byang chub gyi sems*), thought or mind of enlightenment, is defined as the intention to achieve Buddhahood for the sake of all beings. It has two aspects, relative and absolute. The relative mind of enlightenment is itself divided into two steps: the wish to attain ultimate perfection to become able to free all beings from suffering, and the entry into spiritual practice to actualize this wish. The absolute mind of enlightenment is the realization of emptiness, the recognition that the Buddha-nature abides in every sentient being.

7. These two accumulations of merit and wisdom (*bsod nams* and *ye shes kyi tshogs*) lead respectively to the realization of the two kayas, the dharmakaya (*chos sku*, absolute body) and the rupakaya (*gzugs sku*, manifested body) of a Buddha.

8. This verse refers to Lord Buddha Shakyamuni.

9. Skt. Padmakara (*padma 'byung gnas*), the “One

Who Arose from the Lotus,” or Guru Padmasambhava (see Translator’s Introduction, note 17). Known by many names, in this life-story he is referred to as Guru Rinpoche, Orgyen Rinpoche, the Precious Master, or the Lake-born Vajra.

10. For Atisha, see Translator’s Introduction, note 12.

11. Lobzang refers to Tsongkhapa Lobzang Trakpa. See Translator’s Introduction, note 12.

12. The “age of residues” (*stnyigs dus*), which is characterized by a degeneration in (1) the life span (*tshé*), (2) the general karma (*las*), (3) the view (*lta ba*), and (4) the faculties of beings (*sems can*), as well as by (5) an increase of the obscuring emotions (*nyon mongs*).

13. Chögyal Ngakyi Wangpo (*chos rgyal ngag gi dbang po*, 1736–1807), Shabkar’s main teacher (see Translator’s Introduction and Appendices 3 and 4). In the course of this life-story he is referred to by various names: the precious Dharma King, Chögyal Rinpoche, Chögyal Wang (*chos rgyal wang*), Pöntsang Rinpoche (*dpon tshang rin po che*), and Chingwang Rinpoche (*chüng wang rin po che*).

14. The details about this and the other sacred places mentioned will be found in the following chapters and their related footnotes.

15. Skt. *bhumi*, the ten spiritual stages through which a Bodhisattva passes before attaining full Buddhahood, the eleventh *bhumi*. See SD, p. 21.

16. The Great Compassionate One (*thugs rje chen po*) is a name of Avalokiteshvara.

17. Alak (*a lag*) is an honorific title given to lamas and notables in Amdo.

18. *gsang ba gum*, literally the “three secrets,” refer to the body, speech, and mind of an enlightened being.

19. This work of Pema Rangdrol (d. around 1837; see Appendix 6) has not been found. U and Tsang (*dbus* and *gtsang*), the two main provinces of central Tibet, are often described as being a “Pure Realm” because of the presence in U of the Dalai Lama, the living embodiment of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of Compassion, and the presence in Tsang of the Panchen Lama, the embodiment of Amitabha.

20. According to tantric cosmology, enlightened qualities of the body, speech, and mind of various deities are manifested in sacred places. Tantric practitioners therefore go to practice in these places where spiritual progress is said to be swifter than elsewhere.

21. Dakinis are female celestial beings of varying levels of realization. The wisdom dakinis are fully enlightened deities. *Mamos* are wrathful dakinis.

22. In 1837, since Shabkar returned to Amdo in

1828. Tashikhyil Hermitage (*dben pa'i bkra shis 'khyil*), where Shabkar spent most of the latter part of his life, is not to be confused with the great monastery of Labrang Tashikhyil (*bla brang bkra shis 'khyil*). This retreat place, also known as Yama Tashikhyil (*g.ya' ma bkra shis 'khyil*; see RO, p. 644), was founded by Gyal Khenchen Gedun Tenpai Nyima (*rgyal mkhan chen dge 'dun bstan pa'i nyi ma*). Shabkar built new temples and hermitages; since then, the place has been taken care of by Shabkar's successive reembodyments and disciples. The Dewachen Temple was recently restored under the guidance of Alak Sherap (d. 1992).

23. A *ngakpa* (Tib. *sngags pa*, Skt. *mantrin*) is a practitioner of the Secret Mantrayana.

24. The Hermit of Nyang, Lobzang Tenpai Nyima (*nyang mtshams pa blo bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma*, 1811–61) was a learned and influential master in the Rekong area and at the Five-peaked Mountain in China (Wu Tai Shan). See RO, pp. 533–43.

25. *The Sutra of Compassion's White Lotus* (Skt. *mahakaruna-pundarika-sutra*, Tib. *snying rje chen po padma dkar po'i mdo*, T 111–12).

26. *The Sutra of the Meeting of Father and Son* (Skt. *pitaputra-samagamana*, Tib. *yab dang sras nyal ba'i mdo*, T 60), which is part of the Ratnakuta.

27. *The Great Drum Sutra* (Skt. *mahabheriharaka-parinirvana*, Tib. *mga bo che chen po'i mdo*, T 222).

28. The Salty River Sutra (Tib. *ba tshwa can gyi chu klung gi mdo*) is not found in the list of contents of Derge Kangyur (*sde dge bka' 'gyur*). This declaration may be one of those verses which are found as quotes in translated commentaries, whereas the original sutras to which they belong have been lost, or were never translated into Tibetan.

29. *The Vajra Tent Tantra* (the full title of which is in Skt. *dakini-vajra-panjara-mahatantrara-ka-kalpa*, in Tib. *mkha' 'gro ma rdo rje gur zhes bya ba'i rgyud gi rgyal po*, T 419).

30. *The Sutra of the Ten Dharmas* (Skt. *dasadharmaka-sutra*, Tib. *chos bcu pa'i mdo*, T 53).

31. *The Tantra of the Magical Net* (Skt. *mayajala-mahatantrara-ka*, Tib. *rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po sgyu 'phrul drwa ba*, T 466).

32. The Sole Mother, Machik Labdrön (*ma gcig lab sgron*, 1055–1153), who, with Padampa Sangye (*pha dam pa sangs rgyas*, d. 1117), initiated in Tibet the lineage of the practice of Chöd (*gcod*), which means “cutting through” ego-clinging and other attachments. In this practice, based on the view of the *Prajnaparamita*, one visualizes offering one's body to the “four classes

of guests” (*mgron po bzhi*), which are: (1) the Three Jewels, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who elicit faith and respect, (2) the protectors of the Dharma who are endowed with good qualities, (3) sentient beings who deserve our compassion, and (4) negative harmful spirits to whom we must repay karmic debts. On the history of Chöd, see J. Gyatso (1989). On translations of Machik's biographies, see A. Tempa Gyaltzen et al. (1990) and J. Edou (1993).

33. Jarung Khashor (*bya rung kha shor*), the Great Stupa of Bodhnath in the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal. On its history, see chap. 12, note 23.

34. The Lords of the Three Families (*rigs gsum mgon po*) are Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara, and Vajrapani. The Frowning One (*khro gnyer can ma*) is a wrathful aspect of Tara.

35. According to Trulshik Rinpoche, *dur kha* refers to Upper or Outer Mongolia (*stod sog*) and *mu dur kha* to Lower or Inner Mongolia (*smad sog*). This could also very well refer to Turkey.

36. This story will be told in chap. 13.

37. Rigdzin Dudul Dorje (*rig dzin bdud 'dul rdo rje*, 1615–72), a great tertön reincarnation of Khyeuchung Lotsawa (*khye'u chung lo tsa*), one of the twenty-five disciples of Guru Rinpoche. See GC, vol. 3, pp. 161ff. and NS, pp. 813ff.

38. Karmapa Rolpai Dorje (*karma pa rol pa'i rdo rje*, 1340–83), the fourth Karmapa. See Karma Trinley (1978).

39. Shepai Dorje is Jetsun Milarepa (see Translator's Introduction, note 1). Shabkar's sojourn and restoration work in Lapchi are described in chap. 13.

40. Taksham Nuden Dorje (*stag shan nus ldan rdo rje*, born in 1682), also known as Samten Lingpa (*bsam gtan gling pa*), was a great tertön and an emanation of Atsara Sale, Yeshe Tsogyal's Nepalese consort. See ND, pp. 301–2.

41. The main temple of Samye, the three stories of which were each built in a different style—Indian, Tibetan, and Khotanese (*li yul*).

42. Dzogchenpa Kunzang Shenphen (*rdzogs chen pa kun bzang gzhan phan*), the first Do Drupchen (see Translator's Introduction, note 48), thus called because he was a master of the teachings of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*).

43. Lotus-holder, Padmapani, a name of Avalokiteshvara.

44. Rigdzin Kachupa Palden Tashi (*rig 'dzin bka' bcu pa dpal ldan bkra shis*): this master from Rekong traveled to central Tibet and became a geshe at Drepung monastery. He then embraced the Nying-

mapa tradition at Mindroling Monastery. He also became the disciple of Terchen Nyima Trakpa (*gter chen nyi ma grags pa*, 1647–1710) and of his son Gyalse Orgyen Tendzin (*rgyal sras o rgyan bstan 'dzin*, 1701–7/8) from whom he received the complete transmission of Nyima Trakpa's *termas*. He then returned to Amdo where he taught these widely. (See GC, vol. 4, p. 444,

and RO, p. 615). Among the descendants of Palden Tashi was the famed Gedun Chöpel (*dge 'dun chos 'phel*, 1905–51). See RO, p. 647.

45. *The Golden Garland of the Kagyu Lineage* (*bka' brgyud gser phreng*). A collection of hagiographies of Kagyu saints. There are several such collections, related to the different branches of the Kagyu lineage.