

Siddhas of Ga

Remembered by
Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche



by Lama Karma Drodhul
translated by Lama Yeshe Gyamtso

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Contents

Forewordby Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche

A Bouquet of Utpalas

1 • The First Karma Sabchu

2 • The Second Karma Sabchu

3 • Namkha Drakpa

4 • The Mad Siddha of Talung

5 • Jamyang Gyaltsen

6 • Karma Gyalwang

7 • The Retreat Master Karma Tsultrim

8 • Trimey Özer

9 • Lama Tapkay

10 • Koru Topchu

11 • Yönten Chöpel

12 • Katak Ogyen Chöpel

13 • Droril the Yogini

14 • Karma Tendzin

- 15 • Arkham Serbal and his Wife
 - 16 • Khenpo Gangshar
 - 17 • Karma Dargye
 - 18 • Shagö the Severance Master
 - 19 • Ju Mipham Jamyang Namgyal Gyamtso
 - 20 • Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal
 - 21 • Gongpen the Protector Lama
 - 22 • Sherap Gyaltsen
 - 23 • The Blacksmith's WifeAn Emanation of Vajravara
 - 24 • Dorje Gyaltsen
 - 25 • Lama Tsoknyi and the Hermit of Miyul
 - 26 • Gogyu Aku Rinpoche
 - 27 • Rigyar Sergyi Dorje
 - 28 • Lama Ganga
 - 29 • Gyara Gegen Karma Dödül
 - 30 • Bentra Gegen Karma Chöpel
- Acknowledgements

Foreword

by Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche

Our teacher, the kind Buddha, taught the holy dharma out of compassion. Although a great deal of time has passed since then, people with great renunciation, compassion, purity of outlook, and diligence have continued to unfailingly give rise to authentic experience and realization ever since. The stories in this book are evidence of this, especially since most of the holy beings whose lives are recounted here began as ordinary people like us, and were not recognized emanations of buddhas or bodhisattvas.

This book clearly demonstrates that we can, through diligence, achieve the same result. In particular, most of the events recounted here occurred during my lifetime, and were either witnessed by me or told to me at the time; these accounts are therefore trustworthy. My nephew, Lama Karma Drodhul, wrote these stories down with the best intentions and composed the book's

introductory homage and concluding dedication. Lama Yeshe tirelessly translated this book into English. My students — Maureen McNicholas, Peter van Deurzen, and others — published it. I want to thank all of them from my heart.

Through the virtue of this, may the Gyalwang Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje and all holders of the teachings live long; may their activity flourish. May all the sickness, famine, violence, and strife in this world be pacified. May everyone in the world be happy and live in joy. May all who pass from this life, including my sisters Pema Lhakhyi and Tashi Wangmo, be born in Sukhavati.

I thank you who read this, and pray that you give rise to the same experience, realization, and virtues as the holy beings whose lives are described in this book.

Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche

May the stainless rays of virtue's light dispel the darkness of bad karma in these decadent days.

May those who impartially and unwaveringly uphold the life-tree of the teachings live long.

May all beings with whom I have good or bad connections live in glorious joy.

May we all give meaning to our lives through the bodhichitta so pleasing to the victors.

A Bouquet of Utpalas

Brief accounts of the lives of siddhas of Ga whom my guru actually met or whose stories he heard from trustworthy sources, set forth here as medicine to restore faith.

NAMO GURU!

You utterly renounced all the stains of the two veils,
The darkness that ruins the world.
You fully realized the greatest wisdom,
The knowledge of what there is and how things are.
Buddha, you perfectly crossed the turbulent river
Of the three levels of existence.
I bow at your feet, our teacher, for you show all beings,
Humans and devas, the path to freedom.

With powerful wisdom you saw your own face, self-awareness.
With loving compassion you brought holy dharma to Tibet.
With might you tamed vicious, aggressive devas and
rakshasas.
I bow to you, Lake-Born Vajra, the single protector of all
Tibetans.

Your teaching of all sutras and tantras was unhindered.
Your debating overcame all opposition.

Your compositions are superior to all other explanations of
the victor's intentions.

I bow to Sakya Pandita, Mañjushri in person.

The fame of your scholarship filled all of Tibet.
Your nobility opened a hundred doors to the vinaya.
Your benevolent deeds led us to call you a second victor.
I bow to the buddha called Lobzang Drakpa.

You upheld the lineage of the victor's words.
You fostered the lotus garden of disciples
With the instructions of the Kadampas and Mahamudra.
You brought the Samadhirajasutra to Tibet.
I bow to Gampopa, Chandraprabhakumara.

By properly practicing with unflagging diligence
The dharma of tradition and realization taught by our
peerless teacher,
The blessings of your unbroken lineages have entered your
hearts.
Who could fail to respect you, impartial great beings?

In hidden valleys and isolated, pleasant retreats
You cultivated the hidden meaning of dharmata.

Hidden yogis, I prostrate at your toes
With unhidden faith and devotion from my heart.

The best path for the achievement of unity in one life
Is reliance on the blessing of realized gurus.
As that requires diligent study of their lives,
I will write briefly here of their lives for the good of myself
and others.

In that way I have cast flowers of words in veneration of holy
beings and as a promise.

Our teacher, the peerless Siddhartha, generated bodhichitta in the presence of the peerless Mahashakyamuni. Starting then, he undertook countless greater and lesser austerities. Finally, he eradicated the stains that are the two obscurations and achieved manifest awakening at Vajrasana in India. In accordance with the faculties of different disciples he gradually turned the three dharmachakras, enabling innumerable devas, humans, and others to achieve the perfect renunciation and realization of the three vehicles. Eventually, through the kindness of the abbot Shantarakshita, the master Padmasambhava, the dharma king Trisong Detsen, and others, the dharma of peace spread north from Vajrasana in India to Tibet. This opening of the gate of

dharma led to the appearance of the Eight Great Chariots of the Accomplishment Lineage and others. The well-known four great traditions, the Sakya, Geluk, Kagyu, and Nyingma, became widespread. The holders of their teachings became ubiquitous.

However, due to various adverse circumstances the lives of those holy beings, and especially the lives of hidden yogis and yoginis, are not that well-known. Therefore, I will now set forth with benevolence and devotion a few stories about holy beings of various traditions that I have heard from my kind guru Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche.

1 • The First Karma Sabchu

The First Karma Sabchu was a monk of Thrangu, a Kagyu monastery, who achieved siddhi because of water.

Your renunciation of existence is the ground of freedom.
Through your guru's instructions, the life-tree of freedom,
You came to live in holy solitude, the immediate cause of
freedom.

I bow from my heart to you who became drunk with the joy
of freedom.

This holy being was born in Dzakok, which is near Doti Gankar in Gyam, a sacred place in Paltang in Kham. At an early age he exhibited a diligence in worldly endeavors throughout day and night far greater than that of others. He also appeared to be extremely aggressive. One day, while he was driving twenty burdens of goods to be sold, he came to the Pal River. It was

in full spate, and its current was very fast. Without thinking, he rashly tried to cross the raging river along with his beasts of burden, but was carried off to a great distance by the current. Terrified, he thought, “Up to now I have only thought of worldly endeavors; I have never thought of dharma. If I survive this, I will devote myself exclusively to holy dharma!” With that vow in mind, he managed to grab onto a large rock just when he was about to drown.

As soon as he had freed himself from the river he abandoned all his previous worldly endeavors, such as his burdens of goods, as completely as one would abandon one’s spittle in the dust. At Thrangu Monastery he received instruction from the Lord Refuge Thrangu Kunkhyap Nyima. Afterward he practiced diligently, without distinction between day and night, at isolated hermitages such as the Vairochana of Bi and Lepje Karyak. For the rest of his life he principally practiced the Six Dharmas of Naropa and nyungnes. Through those practices he gained siddhi.

At that time Doshul Khandro, a woman who repeatedly returned from the dead, was alive. After Karma Sabchu passed away she visited hell, and discovered that Karma Sabchu had gone there as well. She overheard him say the following to Yama Dharmaraja:

I am a bedraggled old monk from Thrangu.
I come from Doti Gangkar.
I have gathered the accumulations with my body by doing a
thousand nyungnes.
With my speech I have recited more than three hundred
million MANIs.
My mind never strays from dharmata.
I will absolutely not let anyone connected to me be born in a
lower realm.

After saying that, Karma Sabchu promised to remain there
until everyone connected to him had died. This story was told
by Doshul Khandro herself.

Renunciation is the ground of freedom.
The accumulations are the immediate cause of freedom.
Practice pleases the guru.
I dedicate the virtue of those three things.

2 • The Second Karma Sabchu

The second Karma Sabchu was a monk of Thrangu, a Kagyu monastery, who achieved siddhi because of imprisonment. Author's note: The second Karma Sabchu was my kind guru's uncle.

You were as tough as Lord Marpa the Translator.

Your commitment rivaled Jetsun Milarepa's.

The depth of your bodhichitta equaled Chenrezik's.

I bow to you, holy being drunk on realization.

The second Karma Sabchu was extremely aggressive in his youth, always fighting and invariably victorious. Because he was well-known for this, he was also arrogant. One day he got into a fight with a Chinese man. Although Karma Sabchu won the fight, the other man charged him with assault. As a result Karma Sabchu was imprisoned and beaten with a bamboo flail that is called "bedzi" in Chinese. This flail causes the victim's skin to

split open; Karma Sabchu was subjected to five hundred blows with it. This caused him to think, “Up to now my every deed has been worldly; there isn’t even a trace of virtue in me. Even worse, I’m putting my own life at risk! I will definitely devote however much life remains to me exclusively to holy dharma!”

With that stable vow, he practiced for the duration of his life in the Red Retreat on the north side of Thrangu Monastery. When he passed away, although he had been a tall man, his body shrank to the length of one cubit. This amazed and inspired everyone.

This holy dharma is profound.
Through pure, holy samaya
You, holy being, were victorious.
I dedicate this in threefold holiness.

3 • Namkha Drakpa

Namkha Drakpa was a monk of Kyergu, a Sakya monastery. He was a hidden actionless yogin with a tranquil demeanor.

You renounced all the spoils of existence.

Your mind is moist with love and compassion.

Holy one, you love beings as your own children.

Please dwell smiling in our hearts of faith.

Namkha Drakpa undertook both renunciation and completion. After doing so, he renounced even the use of a hearth fire or dwelling. As he had only one set of robes, they soon became ragged; he replaced them with a calfskin that covered his front and back. He had no shoes. In the summer he would journey to various isolated hermitages and allow insects to feed on his body. When he returned to the villages in the winter it was observed by everyone that his entire body was covered by insect bites.

He would say, "This past summer my whole body was bitten by insects!"

When he begged in the villages he would only eat once a day. No one knew where he slept at night, except that he never slept in any villager's home. He was always gentle, and inspired everyone who met him. People often said, "He is not ordinary." Author's note: My aunt Pema Lhakyi met Namkha Drakpa in her youth. Because he slept at the side of the road, she and other children used to throw stones at him. Speaking kindly and without the slightest trace of anger, he would say, "Children, don't mistreat me." When she later heard more about him, my aunt regretted and confessed this. She told me this story herself.

Regardless of the social standing of whomever he met, Namkha Drakpa always spoke kindly to them. When he was around sixty, he announced, "I have now completed the deeds of a renunciate. It is time for me to begin the life of a householder!" When he went begging thereafter, unlike before he asked for tea and scarves, and carried a clay pot. In a field he set up three rocks as a hearth and lit a fire. He placed the clay pot on top of this and boiled some tea. Once the tea was ready he drank a bit of it and poured the rest around the hearth. He then divided the tea leaves into three equal portions, placed them on the three

hearth stones, and covered each of them with a scarf. He then announced, “I have made a home!” He did these things one hundred and eight times. Author’s note: According to my guru, this was definitely skillful tantric behavior.

Finally he asked the custodian, “Everything I needed to do in this life is now done, so tonight please allow me to sleep in the Kyergu prayer-wheel temple.”

The custodian answered, “That wouldn’t be right; you have a lot of lice.”

Namkha Drakpa replied, “You would have been correct in the past, but now I have not even a single louse.” In the end he was allowed to sleep in the temple. On the next morning, when the custodian next saw him, Namkha Drakpa had passed away, and was seated in the vajra posture with his hands in equipoise. His body was floating an inch above his mat, which everyone there saw.

When his remains were cremated, his heart, tongue, and eyes emerged unburnt from the fire. A statue of him was placed in the prayer-wheel temple, and his heart, tongue, and eyes were placed in the statue. By that time everyone realized that he had been a holy being. They regretfully confessed their previous

treatment of him. His statue became their focus for the accumulation of merit.

Although you perfected the actions of the six paramitas,
Your actions for beings' benefit were unpredictable.
Some, judging you by your actions, called you good or bad,
But you proved to be beyond the actions of our judging
minds.

4 • The Mad Siddha of Talung

The mad siddha of Talung, a Sakya monastery, exhibited the discipline of wrathful freedom from action.

Although your heart was moist with the water of compassion,
Your external discipline was that of wrathful behavior.
The magic dance of such lord siddhas, such great beings,
Is beyond the reach of thought.

After undertaking renunciation, the mad siddha wandered from place to place. He was a large man and always appeared, judging by his facial expression, to be angry. He spoke aggressively to everyone he met, regardless of their social status; everyone feared him. However, his heart was actually moistened by the water of compassion. He would carry the corpses of the poor and of people who had died of contagious diseases such as leprosy to the charnel grounds. Whenever the corpse he was carrying was

particularly heavy he would fiercely scold the corpse, saying “Why are you so heavy?” and “What did you eat?” He would also strike the corpse. After doing so, he would announce “You’re lighter now!,” easily sling the body over his shoulder, and bring it to the vultures.

He would collect the clothing from the corpse, regardless of its condition or quality, give the better clothing to the poor, and himself wear the oldest of the clothes.

When he was about to pass away, he demanded to be allowed to sleep in the temple of Talung, his monastery. He was refused, and so said to the temple custodian, “If you don’t let me sleep here I will have to vomit in the temple or cast other filth into it!” This made the custodian even angrier than before, and he expelled the mad siddha from the temple.

The mad siddha went to the nearby home of a wealthy family and told them, “They won’t let me sleep at Talung Monastery. I will sleep in your shrine room tonight.” He slept there that night. On the next morning he was discovered to be seated with his legs crossed in vajra posture, his hands in equipoise, and his eyes gazing into space; he had passed away in that posture. When his monastery was informed of this, they understood for the first

time that he was a yogin who had attained siddhi. Regretting and confessing their previous treatment of him, they brought his remains back to the monastery with an elaborate procession. His remains became a basis for disciples' accumulation of merit.

Nowadays monasteries expect
Siddhas to be monastic lamas
Who are impressive upon first sight.
May these biographies eradicate doubt!

5 • Jamyang Gyaltsen

Jamyang Gyaltsen was also a monk from Talung, a Sakya monastery.

Realized one, you accomplished a celestial rainbow body.

You realized that all things are like rainbows.

You were received by rainbow-bodied dakinis

In an expanse of rainbow light and rays. I bow to you.

Jamyang Gyaltsen lived in a retreat adjacent to Talung Monastery. He was attended by a nun; as a result people had little faith in him. One year he became ill and remained so for a long time. One day during his illness he asked that the officials of the monastery come to see him, which they did. They found him sitting in his retreat with a cup filled with his own blood set before him. He told them, “The chieftain of the Drau clan was very nice to me; please give him this blood. Please give everything else I have to this nun, for she has been the kindest to me. Without leaving a

single drop of water or morsel of food, please lock and seal my door and hold onto the key. After seven days, as soon as the sun shines into my room, please open the door.”

Some of the monks said that it would be better if they left him a little food and drink, but the other monks insisted that they follow his final requests. They agreed to give the key to the nun, who could enter the retreat if the need arose. They instructed her accordingly.

At sunrise on the seventh day his door was opened. On his bed were his hair, nails, and clothing; his body had transformed into a rainbow body, leaving nothing behind. Seeing this, everyone understood that he had been a siddha; his clothing and nails were kept as supports for faith.

Although the foul breath of evil times pollutes our world
 these days,
 The power of the tantric teachings blazes like fire.
 Therefore abandon wrong views of actionless hermits,
 No matter what company they keep!

6 • Karma Gyalwang

Karma Gyalwang was a realized monk of Benchen, a Kagyu monastery, who achieved siddhi because of a knife.

You accomplished the destined deity of Tibet,
The great treasure of compassion.
Realized Karma Gyalwang,
You are worthy of veneration by all!

As a young monk, Karma Gyalwang was a herdsman for the family of the chieftain of the Rada clan. He always kept an extremely sharp knife under his pillow, although he never used it. One fall, while many of the chieftain's yaks and sheep were being slaughtered for consumption during the following winter and spring, one of several people who knew about Karma Gyalwang's knife took it from under his pillow and used it in the slaughtering. That evening Karma Gyalwang discovered that his knife was

missing and began to search for it. One of the butchers said to him “Here’s your knife!” and returned it to him, covered in blood.

Karma Gyalwang immediately began to weep, saying, “I have done terrible wrong!” He quickly journeyed to Benchon Monastery, where he entered the presence of the Lord Refuge Nyenpa Rinpoche and received instruction from him. In retreat there he mainly practiced the meditation and recitation of Mahakarunika, through which he eventually achieved siddhi. Every year, accompanied by more than a thousand disciples, he would carve the MANI mantra on mountains and in stone all over the place. In winter he would write the MANIs with sand on the ice. He also convened accomplishment assemblies for the recitation of one hundred million MANIs in many places. He left his footprints in stone on every mountain and rock he visited, and displayed precognition of future events. He became widely famous for these and other miracles; the evidence of his siddhi was visible.

One karmically destined being
 Can bring an entire land to dharma.
 One karmically doomed wrongdoer
 Can darken an entire land.
 Unlimited interdependence
 And relativity are undeniable.

7 • The Retreat Master Karma Tsultrim

Karma Tsultrim, or Yönpel, was a lifelong retreatant. He was a retreat master at Thrangu, a Kagyu monastery, who achieved siddhi through having his feet chained for thirteen years.

A devoted and diligent disciple,
You were accepted by your kind lord guru.
Your mind mixed inseparably with your father guru's.
I bow to you, a second Lord Tilopa.

The guru of this lifelong retreatant was Dru Jamyang Drakpa, a direct disciple of Jamgön Kongtrül Yönten Gyamtso. Jamyang Drakpa prophesied to Karma Tsultrim, “Practice for thirteen years with your feet in chains. Your wisdom will equal Tilopa’s!”

Accordingly, in the Colorful Cave of Tselung, a hermitage near Thrangu Monastery, Karma Tsultrim practiced onepointedly.

When the prophesied thirteen years were almost over, the region entered into a great conflict with armed forces from Lhasa. As the local forces suffered a devastating defeat, everyone in the area began to flee in any direction they could. Because of his guru's command, Karma Tsultrim alone remained where he was. He was discovered and beaten by the invading soldiers, some of whom said, "This man seems to have been imprisoned here!" and started to remove his chains. Karma Tsultrim insistently explained to them that he was practicing in obedience to his guru's command, and barely managed to escape the forced removal of his fetters.

Realizing that there was no hope of his being able to remain in the area, he went to the peak of Dzam Kyangpo, an isolated, snow-covered mountain. On his journey there he had to cross the Palchu River, which was in full spate and appeared impossible to cross. However, because Karma Tsultrim had withdrawn his prana into his avadhuti and did not need to breathe, he amazingly crawled across the river bottom, grabbing onto rocks as he went, and reached the other side. He regularly walked from Thrangu Monastery to its Vairochana Retreat while holding a single vase breath. When he went to other places he would walk in a straight line, without avoiding any of the mountains or rivers in his way. He displayed the siddhi of quickly reach-

ing any destination, no matter how distant. When people were watching, however, he always seemed to walk slowly; he kept his abilities hidden.

The remote mountain to which he went, Dzam Kyangpo, was so high that no one had ever climbed its peak. Karma Tsultrim easily climbed the mountain's face. When he was later asked how he did this, he said, "I would grip the snow with my fingers and flip my lower body upward; then I would grip the snow with my feet and throw my upper body forward."

He also said, "I've heard it said that the entire peak of Dzam Kyangpo is formed of crystal. It isn't crystal; it's snow."

He fulfilled his vow to practice there for one month, relying only upon samadhi for food and chandali for clothing. After that, his chains fell off spontaneously without having to be struck off.

He would often say, "No matter what I do, whether walking, sitting, standing, or lying down, I never stray from luminosity. This is very convenient, since I have no need for any additional, effortful practice."

I venerate you who with stable diligence
Raised the precious command of your father guru

SIDDHAS OF GA

To the peak of the victory banner of unchanging devotion,
Raining down the unfailing fruition of all that is wanted or
needed.

8 • Trimey Özer

Trimey Özer was a yogin of the great perfection.

The fasting practice of the thousand-handed and -eyed
protector of beings

Is a virtuous endeavor that certainly closes the doors to birth
as the six types of beings.

You regard beings with love beyond focus.

Actionless refuge of beings, I bow to you.

The yogin Trimey Özer was originally from Serta in Golok. He undertook renunciation in his youth and traveled through various places as an actionless mendicant. He eventually reached the area of my kind guru's birth, where he practiced in a small cave at the peak of the mountain Anye Dorje Nyengyal. This cave had been an accomplishment site of Geri Chögyal Dorje, and this mountain is identified with the local deity whose name it

bears. Author's note: Geri Chögyal Dorje was a tertön associated with the Fourteenth Gyalwang Karmapa Tekchok Dorje. The Fourteenth Karmapa and the tertön opened the way to both the mountain and lake at Anye Dorje Nyengyal and performed a ganachakra in this cave. While they were doing so the rock melted, taking the form of the eight auspicious signs and the seven articles of royalty. A rain of crystal fell. It was from that cave that the tertön retrieved both *White Jambhala Prosperity Protection* and the *Sadhana of the Blue Wrathful Guru* as terma; they are both still in circulation. There are also many of the tertön's footprints and body imprints in the cave. However, the people of the area misunderstood Chögyal Dorje. They accused him of removing the source of the area's prosperity and chased him out of the region. As a result he was unable to fill the aperture left in the cave by his removal of terma, as is customarily done. It is said that the large aperture that therefore remains in the cave accounts for the poverty of the villagers of Nyengyal.

When Trimey Özer first settled there, no one knew about it. Then one day an older man named Kori Karma Namgyal, while herding sheep on the mountainside, saw a peaceful and gentle young monk meditating there. Karma Namgyal thought, "I wonder if he is a local deity of this mountain." He looked carefully at the monk and saw that his eyes were closed. Walking around

outside the place where the monk was sitting, he noticed that there were no human footprints in the ground. This made him certain that the monk was a deity. He went back to look at him again, and saw that he was still meditating as before. He asked the monk, “Who are you?”

The monk replied, “I am a monk from Golok. Because of my aspirations, I must remain here. Please don’t tell anyone I’m here!”

The old man searched the hollow in the rocks where the monk was living and found only one cup of tsampa in a sack and no other provisions, so he offered the monk some yoghurt. Trimey Özer made an offering of it with his hand and put one drop of it on his tongue, and then returned the rest. Karma Namgyal was delighted and, without telling anyone of the monk’s presence there, returned to see him after a month. He found Trimey Özer seated in meditation as before, and with only the tsampa as a provision. He again offered him some yoghurt. This time the monk, after making an offering with it, accepted a spoonful of it. He again asked Karma Namgyal to tell no one of his presence there. One month later it was autumn, with winter not far away, so Karma Namgyal went again to see Trimey Özer. The monk was seated as before, with his bag of tsampa hanging on a wooden peg that he had driven onto the rock. This time

Trimey Özer told the old man, “You no longer need to keep my presence here secret; you can tell others.”

Delighted, Karma Namgyal said to the monk, “Not far from here is the old Nyengyal Cave where the great tertön Geri Chögyal Dorje gained accomplishment. Will you live there and be the lama of this area?”

Trimey Özer agreed to do so, so the old man told the people of the area. With joy and devotion they repaired the cave, which had become dilapidated, and made it habitable. Thirteen mounted men rode up the mountain to escort Trimey Özer there. They met with him, received his blessing, and asked him to ride with them to the cave on horseback. He laughed, suddenly got up, broke off the peg stuck into the rock, and began to walk, carrying his tsampa bag under his shawl and refusing to ride a horse.

The others kept the stub of the peg he had broken off as a support for their faith. When they pulled it out they noticed that the hole left in the rock by the wooden peg disappeared, leaving only a faint impression, like that of a peg removed from butter. Seeing this increased their faith, and they knew from then on that he was an actual siddha.

From that year onward Trimey Özer led one hundred nyungnes and one week of ejection practice for the elderly every year. Everyone who attended these achieved the signs. He never wasted whatever was offered to him, using it to sponsor the engraving of MANI stones, the presentation of lamp offerings, and the raising of prayer flags. For the rest of his life he remained immersed in deeds of offering and generosity, and always lived as an actionless renunciate.

From upper Beru he extracted engraving stone as treasure. He used this for the engraving in stone of the entire Kangyur. In general engraving stone was extremely rare in that area, so when Trimey Özer began to speak of his intention to engrave the Kangyur, people of the region said things like, “How could one ever find enough of the stone to do this?”

Trimey Özer told them, “Dig right here and you will find engraving stone.” They found the stone, as flat and smooth as paper in a book. The engravers stayed where the stone was found and engraved the Kangyur into it, day after day. At night they slept in the excavation pit, covering it with a felt curtain. It took about a hundred engravers two years to complete the Kangyur.

This holy being was gentle and noble in his behavior; he demonstrated all the attributes of the holy. He usually remained in

dark retreat in his cave. When he was around seventy he was invited to a place called Namshipu by various patrons among his disciples, some of them farmers and some of them nomads. He led eight nyungnes there, which were attended by a great many people. When he bestowed the nyungne vows the walls of his tent were lifted up so that everyone could see him. At the end of the eight nyungnes, when he bestowed the vow of silence, he supported his head with his hand and transmitted the vow in a loud voice. Afterward, he straightened his posture and prepared to pass into parinirvana. Others lowered the walls of his tent, so onlookers were unable to see him clearly. My guru told me that he heard this story from his father, whose root guru was Trimey Özer.

The benefits of nyungnes are immeasurable.
 Beings, don't fear nyungnes!
 Sufferings a thousand times worse than a nyungne
 Are said to be purified by a single nyungne.
 Through the virtue of writing this,
 May this be correctly understood.
 May this practice be the best refuge In this and future lives.

9 • Lama Tapkay

Lama Tapkay was a monk from Ayang, a monastery of the Drikung Kagyu.

In solitude, so extolled by the victor,
You practiced with a carefree mind at ease.
You gained confidence beyond hope and fear.
Yogi, you are worth of homage.

There are prophetic indications that Lama Tapkay was an emanation of the great tertön Chögyal Dorje. When he undertook renunciation, Lama Tapkay saw indications in both waking and hypnogogic experience that if he were to practice in isolation at Kyogyal Ngangma, the dwelling of the local deity of his birthplace, he would achieve siddhi. Accordingly he journeyed there in secret, and practiced there for twelve years, emphasizing the six dharma of Naropa. He didn't achieve much during

that time, but began thereafter to frequently hear the sound of a pleasant female voice saying to him, “Have fortitude!”

He increased his efforts, but still continued to hear the voice, so one day he performed yogic exercises on bare rock without any mat or cushion. His body became covered in blood, and he felt great pain, so he meditated on the illusory body. He became free of all pain, and his mind gave birth to extraordinary realization; he achieved siddhi.

Later, out of necessity, he married; his wife’s name was Drölma. One day, while she was milking dris, a ferocious hailstorm occurred. She was wearing a cotton hat, which was struck by lightning, producing a flow of molten metal over her hat that did her no harm. This incident led to her nickname Lightning-Proof Drölma.

For yogis who bring adversity to the path
Sickness, demons, and obstructors are just mental drama.
Although they seem real to ordinary people,
They reveal the very meaning of relativity.

10 • Koru Topchu

Koru Topchu was a lama of the Drukpa Kagyu.

Although you achieved awakening many kalpas ago,
In order to free many beings from samsara
You perfected austere practice over many years.
With many bodies, lord, I bow at your feet.

Koru Topchu was a monk in a Drukpa Kagyu monastery. He gave rise to weariness toward samsara and relied upon Dzigar Dorje Drakpo, a siddha of the Drukpa Kagyu who was an emanation of Guru Padmasambhava. Koru Topchu received all of Dorje Drakpo's instructions and guidance, and then went to Dzikung, an extremely isolated, high mountain. On its upper slopes he lived on a single sheep's liver for three years, engaged in rasayana. At the end of that period he achieved siddhi.

The Fifteenth Gyalwang Karmapa Khakyap Dorje prophesied that Koru Topchu was an emanation of the peerless Gampopa. This prophesy was bestowed upon a man named Yushu Tritok Pema Dorje, who was from Yushu and had killed seven people. Pema Dorje went on pilgrimage to Lhasa in order to purify his obscurations, and met Gyalwang Khakyap Dorje there. When he told the Karmapa of his terrible sins and asked him for a way to purify them, Khakyap Dorje told him, “As you and I share no karmic connection I am unable to lead you to freedom. Return to Kham and purify your obscurations relying upon Drukpa Topchu, an emanation of the peerless Gampopa; and Yönten Chöpel, a monk from Rapshul Lungshö Monastery who is an emanation of the victor Maitreya.”

After Koru Topchu left his retreat he became very famous and received the patronage of many donors. In particular, he founded a new abbey for women that housed more than three hundred nuns. When he was on the point of passing away he said to his future mother, “I will soon visit your home; I will need you to provide me with lodging.”

A year after his passing he was reborn as her son, as he had predicted. He was given the name Karma Damchö and became a monk of Thrangu Monastery. Author’s note: He was known as

Bentra Karma Damchö. Bentra is the name of a place, but was also used as the name of his family, which was called the Bentra family. There were two branches of the Bentra family, the greater and lesser; Karma Damchö was born to the greater Bentra family. The Seventh Traleg Kyabgön Rinpoche, Karma Rangjung Kunkhyap Nyima, was also born to the greater Bentra family.

From an early age Karma Damchö was gentle. Because of his immeasurable compassion, everyone believed that he was the rebirth of Koru Topchu. He became known as a bodhisattva.

Along with the Lord Refuge Thrangu Rinpoche and my kind guru, Karma Damchö studied for five years in the college at Thrangu. During this time he also exhibited the wisdom of meditation; he immediately recognized the nature of his mind simply through receiving instruction on mahamudra and other guidance on the mind. He eventually became a khenpo of Thrangu Monastery. While he was presiding in that capacity over a summer retreat the monastery was invaded by the Communists, and he was arrested. Along with many other khenpos and tulkus he was sent to Siling. He jumped out of the vehicle in which he was being transported and was shot twice by the soldiers, killing him.

Victorious through genuine love and compassion for all

And the pure three trainings that pleased your guru,
You quickly gathered the two accumulations
And saw naked, primordial, self-arisen wisdom.

11 • Yönten Chöpel

Yönten Chöpel was a monk of Lungshö, a Gelukpa monastery.

Through the heart-jewel of the Kadampas,
Mind training, the good path to awakening,
You gave rise to unmistakable realization
Of emptiness and compassion. I bow to you!

Yönten Chöpel undertook renunciation in his youth. Extremely disciplined, he entered the Denmakang College at Drepung Monastery near Lhasa. He eventually became the Master of Discipline for great assemblies at Drepung. After completing his term of duty he returned to his birthplace. In an isolated hermitage he principally meditated on the gradual path of awakening and on mind training. His compassion was unlimited. He would often say, “Since all beings have sugatagarbha, they are all buddhas.”

Whenever he saw another person, no matter who it was, he would immediately rise and join his palms in respect. He even did this toward birds and other animals. Most of the offerings he received from donors were in the form of treacle, butter, and a type of ornamental bracelet, called “ngoney,” worn by nomad women in Eastern Tibet. Yönten Chöpel would smear butter on the rocks and decorate it with the bracelets. He would roll the treacle into balls and scatter them. Rodents would eat the butter and treacle and carry off the bracelets. Delighted, he would say, “I have presented offerings to the rodents!” and then bow with respect.

When donors came to see him, he would always correctly answer whatever question they intended to ask before they asked it; his wisdom was unlimited. When he passed away his heart and tongue survived the cremation fire, and many shariram emerged from his remains. As stated above in the biography of Drukpa Topchu, the Fifteenth Gyalwang Karmapa Kakhyap Dorje prophesied to Tritok Pema Dorje that Yönten Chöpel was an emanation of the victor Maitreya.

Although you had completed the guiding of others with your
actual body,
You still planted the seed of liberation

SIDDHAS OF GA

In all who formed a connection with you
By means of your heart, tongue, and shariram.

12 • Katak Ogyen Chöpel

Katak Ogyen Chöpel was a retreat master at Thrangu Monastery.

Although you were wealthy in samsara you were unattached
to it.

In the presence of your kind guru, peerless in samsara,
You gained the confidence to shatter the wheel of samsara.
I will bow to you with devotion until samsara is empty.

Ogyen Chöpel was born in Rapshul Borok; his father was the leader of that community. In his twenty-second year he and his brother took a wife. In his family it was common for disaster to strike when they reached their twenty-fifth year, so when he got close to that age he went with a servant to see the Drukpa Kagyu Lama Koru Topchu in order to request a divination. The lama told him, “Unless you undertake renunciation, you will certainly die and go to hell. If you undertake renunciation, you will live.”

Ogyen Chöpel asked, “May I go home and discuss this with my parents and family?”

The lama replied, “No. You must change your clothes and undertake renunciation right now.”

Drukpa Topchu gave Ogyen Chöpel a felt robe to wear. Accepting it, he changed into it on the spot and gave his fine clothing, knife, bow and arrows, and horse to his servant to return to his family. Terrified and saddened, the servant pleaded with Ogyen Chöpel to change his mind, but he refused.

His lama then said to him, “Throughout beginningless time your mind has been polluted by distraction and entertainment. You must first meditate on tranquility.” He taught him tranquility meditation, and Ogyen Chöpel practiced it for a month. Afterward, he requested permission to visit his home just once, but his lama refused. He then meditated on tranquility for four more months, becoming extremely stable. In order to test him, his lama stuck him with a needle; he didn’t feel it. His lama told him that his tranquility was now sufficiently stable. He instructed him to meditate in the accomplishment cave in Kardong Riwoche, the mountain behind that area.

Accordingly, he meditated there one-pointedly for three years. One day he saw a raven fighting with a hawk; in the end the raven killed the hawk. Other than that he saw no special signs. When he told his lama about this, Drukpa Topchu said, "The raven represents the dharmapalas; the hawk represents the spirit that was going to take your life. You are now victorious over the obstacles of Mara!"

After his lama passed away, he relied upon Palden Khyentse Özer, the Second Jamgön Rinpoche, for three years at the hermitage at Palpung Monastery. Once he experienced that, while everything seems real to us in our delusion, there exists not so much as an atom of anything. When he touched the wall of his cave, the clear imprint of his hand appeared. Elated, he told Jamgön Rinpoche of this. Rinpoche told him, "Check and see if your handprint is really there."

When he looked, he saw that there was no imprint of his hand there. Rinpoche told him, "Don't mistake transitory experience for realization. Meditate with fortitude!"

Accordingly, from then on he cast clinging to any experience behind him. Finally, Rinpoche praised him and assured him that he had achieved the realization of Beyond Embellishment.

Ogyen Chöpel later spent a few years in the Vairochana Retreat at Thrangu Monastery, and in particular was the retreat master of the Six Dharmas of Naropa Retreat for twelve years. Then, because of the changing times, he had to flee to India along with the Lord Refuge Thrangu Rinpoche, my kind guru, and others. He became gravely ill upon reaching India; his entire lower body swelled, and the pain was unbearable. Four monks, my kind guru among them, carried him to a hospital on a blanket. As soon as they hoisted him up, he sat up on the blanket and began to cheerfully and loudly sing the vajra doha of Marpa the Translator in which the latter described how in a dream he was carried on a palanquin by four dakinis to Mount Shripurvata in southern India, where he met the mahasiddha Saraha.

After Ogyen Chöpel had been in the hospital for two days, my kind guru went to see him. He said to my guru, “Last night I dreamed that a white snake bit my big toe and sucked out all my sickness. After doing so the snake told me, ‘You will have a slight scar on your toe, but other than that you’re cured.’ Have a look.” When my guru looked, there was a slight wound on his toe, but he was otherwise recovered. Ogyen Chöpel did not have to stay in the hospital after that.

At the time they were living in a refugee camp along with many other monastics, including monks from the great monastic seats. Ogyen Chöpel said, “Were I to meditate during the day others would see; it would be nothing more than hypocrisy.” During the day he would sneak into other monks’ rooms and carry off their most prized possessions. He would keep them for a few days and then return them to their owners. This is said to have been his skillful way of destroying the basis for their self-fixation, and helped them a great deal.

At night, he would sit up at midnight and briefly chant Calling the Guru From Afar in a haunting melody. He would then rest evenly in samadhi. In the morning, at seven, he would arise from meditation and delightedly perform the dance of dharma. He would also spontaneously sing many previously unheard songs based on his experience.

Finally, in the year 1969, his seventy-eighth year, he passed away. For three days afterward he remained in meditation. By that time all of the monks from the great seats had tremendous faith in him; after his passing they assiduously collected his hair and clothing, and treasured them greatly. It had become obvious that he was a holy being.

Through the virtue of eulogizing your utter liberation
On utterly white paper
With utterly few words,
May the teachings of our utterly perfect guide spread.

13 • Droril the Yogini

Droril was a yogini from Rima.

Through the unchanging faith and devotion in your heart
For the supreme deity, the great treasure of nobility of heart,
And your repetition of his six-syllable heart-essence,
You revealed the heart of everything. Yogini, I bow to you!

This yogini was from Rimar in Kham. She was called Droril because her hair was whiter than a conch, and she usually bundled herself in an outer garment of white felt. Droril means “wheat-colored and round.” As she worked constantly as a shepherd, she never learned to read. However, she continuously recited the MANI with stable faith and trust, and eventually recited more than three hundred million. Her brother recited one hundred million and had a good practice.

When Droril herded her sheep in cold weather she would recite MANIs on the mountain slopes and then, imagining a fence surrounding her flock, would blow air in their direction. She would say, “Through the compassion of Arya Avalokita, they’ll be fine.” Then she would sleep through the day, without checking on the sheep even once. The sheep would never stray from the area she had blessed for them as pasture. In the evening she would imagine summoning them to her, and they would follow her home.

When the weather was fine she would circumambulate the mountain’s peak while reciting MANIs.

At that time my kind guru was about ten years old, and loved to accompany her when she tended her flocks. He told me that there were several reasons for this. As she was a bodhisattva who had perfected love and compassion she was loving to all beings, including him. In addition, because she blessed her sheep they were protected from all harm, including the predation of wolves. They therefore did not require much actual shepherding, so accompanying her was free of stress. Also, although he had barely enough clothing to survive the weather, she would let him lie down to sleep inside her outer garment.

Because she used her mala so much, its cord was always breaking. He often helped her restring it with yarn.

She cured the blindness of both humans and animals simply by blowing on them; her benefit of others was not inconsiderable. It is said in authoritative sources that those who complete one hundred million MANIs will grow a new tooth even if they are advanced in age; accordingly, she grew three. They were as bright and white as a conch; everyone who saw them was amazed and inspired. I have heard from others that she passed away while sitting up with her palms joined in prayer.

It is said that in these times of decadence and short lives it is better to accumulate a spark of merit than a mountain of learning. I have never heard of a source of merit greater than meditating on the single deity Avalokita and reciting the single mantra of six syllables. Unfortunately, most people are like me; they neglect the accumulation of merit in favor of elevated, empty words about the view, meditation, and conduct while abandoning their bodies, speech, and minds to mediocrity. This is our worst problem, both for this life and for the future. I have not seen this do anyone any real good, only bring about their ruin and that of others.

Through the virtue of writing this may beings in the six states
Rely upon the six syllables, the king of mantras;
Purify the six kleshas that cause rebirth;
And reach the state of Vajradhara, the sixth buddha.

14 • Karma Tendzin

Karma Tendzin was a lama and lifelong retreatant from Thrangu Monastery.

Threefold guru drunk on the taste of the nature of being,
You bring unprotected, tormented beings
To bliss beyond being through nonreferential compassion
Beyond coming, going, or being. Realized one, I bow to you.

Karma Tendzin was from Bi in the vicinity of Thrangu Monastery. After doing a three-year retreat in the Six Dharmas of Naropa Retreat he went on to do continuous solitary retreat in isolated places such as the site of the great image of Vairochana in Bi.

When the livestock of the chieftain of Rongpo were struck by rinderpest, many of them dying, he was invited and went there along with another monk as his attendant. The chieftain sepa-

rated the animals that had contracted the illness from those that had not and Karma Tendzin inspected them, repeatedly saying, “Poor things, poor things.”

He promised to perform severance that evening. When he began, although two lamps had been lit, he pretended from time to time to be unable to see his text. At other moments he pretended to be somewhat illiterate. Then, he suddenly demanded that his attendant bring him a urination pot. Extremely embarrassed but unable to refuse, the attendant brought one and Karma Tendzin promptly urinated into it. The chieftain and his entourage were present for all this; they too became embarrassed and were struggling not to laugh.

In reality, Karma Tendzin was engaged in the essence of severance, which is the eradication of self-fixation, and purification with amrita; he later admitted this.

When he retired for the night he stripped off all of his clothing, including his skirt, and saying “Ow, ow!” he began to scratch his body as though he were covered with lice. Ashamed, his attendant immediately covered him with a blanket.

On the day afterward Karma Tendzin announced that he would make singed offerings and gathered the requisite materials. He

formed a lot of representations of horses, people, goats, and livestock. While doing this he described the value of each of the animals and the reputation of each of the people depicted. Then, all of a sudden, he told them to let all of the animals go. Everyone was shocked, but they didn't dare disobey him.

In the middle of the night he appeared to become very ill with diarrhea. When he was repeatedly asked what was going on, he told them that he was practicing taking and sending. Although rinderpest never spreads from animals to humans, he was able to take the animals' illness into himself.

On the next day he returned to Thrangu Monastery. Afterward, it was discovered that all of the livestock were completely cured of their illness. The chieftain and all his subjects became Karma Tendzin's devoted disciples. He passed away amidst wondrous signs when my kind guru was around thirty.

With the stream of your compassion free from samsaric
reference points,
You cooled unprotected beings tormented by samsaric heat,
Knowing them to have been your parents, kind beyond
samsaric repayment.
I pray to emulate your deeds and bring samsaric beings to
bliss.

15 • Arkham Serbal and his Wife

Arkham Serbal and his wife were hidden siddhas.

Although you reached the hidden meaning, dharmata's
exhaustion,

In the unhidden perception of beings

You displayed the deeds of hidden siddhas.

May you be victorious, hidden yogin and yogini!

Arkham Serbal was a water carrier at Dzodzi, a Kagyu monastery. His wife herded dzos for the monastery. One day a monk of that monastery saw them sitting and talking where they usually drew water. In front of them was a bloody human skull filled with brains, which they were eating with their hands. Shocked, the monk told the monastery about this, and they, along with their son, daughter, goats, and dogs were evicted from the monastery. They were brought to a narrow valley surrounded by high

mountains and rocks on all sides. It seemed impossible for them to escape from the valley, but they were also forbidden to leave it. Guards were posted on watch at all times.

Whenever the curious secretly spied on them they always appeared relaxed and at ease, but as soon as they detected that they were being observed they would start to quarrel furiously with one another.

After several days they began to quarrel so loudly that the sound of their shouting filled the entire valley. People gathered to watch, and saw that this time they were fighting with more than words; they had actually come to blows. The father of the family was seen seizing his daughter and striking his wife with her. The girl then dissolved into her mother, who shouted, "You've killed my daughter!"

Wailing loudly, she grabbed their son and struck her husband with him. The boy dissolved into his father, who exclaimed, "You've killed my son!" Weeping, the father seized his wife as though to wrestle with her. She seized her husband at the same time. The moment they did so, they dissolved into one another, seemed to ascend the rocks behind them, and disappeared. Their goats and dogs, bleating and barking, also seemed to ascend

the rocks and then disappeared. Afterward, people could see clear human footprints and goat hoof-prints on the rock wall. Recognizing that they had failed to appreciate the family's holiness and had treated them poorly, the entire monastery felt great regret and faith.

Although to our dim vision without clarity
 You seemed impure, without virtue,
 You had realized the nature without artifice
 And passed into rainbow bodies without exception.
 This revealed the state without knowledge
 Of beings' ignorance, which is without awareness.
 Let us never again point our finger without hesitation
 In rash judgment without careful examination.
 I dedicate whatever virtue is here, without reservation,
 To the happiness of all my mothers, without exception.

16 • Khenpo Gangshar

Khenpo Gangshar was from Shechen, a Nyingma monastery.

The clean face of wisdom present from the beginning
Was concealed by dirt and unseen by anyone.
You washed it on the spot with the water of mahamudra and
dzokchen
And bejeweled it with the trikaya. I bow to you.

Khenpo Gangshar was born at Shechen in Kham. He was descended from Adro Dra Rapjampa, who was a disciple of the Eighth Tai Situpa Chökyi Jungney. When the Gelukpa monastery Labrang Tashi Khyil asked the Tai Situpa to send his disciple Belo Tsewang Kunkhyap there, he sent Adro instead. This led to a lineage of instruction based on the Tai Situpa's *Great Exegesis of Grammar* at Labrang Tashi Khyil that still exists today. Adro was a tantrika, not a monastic, and therefore had descendants.

Among them was Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal of Shechen, who was a nephew of Shechen Gyaltzap Rinpoche. Khenpo Gangshar was Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal's nephew.

Khenpo Gangshar's parents had many sons and daughters, but they all died. For that reason, on the day after his birth his father gave him to a relative. When he later learned to speak he clearly described his father bringing him to the relative, including the mountains they passed on their journey and what he was wearing at the time. There were other extraordinary signs as well. One day there was a great snowfall, and many birds gathered, picking at seeds. Khenpo Gangshar threw a large flat rock from the roof of his home, crushing many birds underneath. When his mother scolded him, he immediately went outside and lifted up the stone. All the birds flew off unharmed. From an early age he did wondrous things.

He soon went to Shechen Monastery, where he studied reading, writing, and other subjects with his uncle, Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal. From there he went to the college at Katok Monastery, where he completed his studies under the guidance of Khenpo Nüden.

Khenpo Gangshar was an extremely gentle person, and in particular upheld the vinaya in an exemplary manner; he had all the qualities of the holy.

The Eleventh Trungpa Rinpoche went to Shechen Monastery in order to study. Afterward, he spoke to Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal of the lack of a khenpo for the college at Surmang Dutsi Til Monastery. He insistently asked that Khenpo Gangshar be sent there. Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal acceded to his request and wept with wonder, saying, “It is amazing that you are already taking on such great responsibility for the teachings!” Trungpa Rinpoche was only fourteen at the time.

So Khenpo Gangshar went to Surmang Dutsi Til. After he had been there for about two years he became extremely ill and passed away. While Khenpo Gangshar was in samadhi, Trungpa Rinpoche kept a vigil in the room. Khenpo Gangshar’s remains were behind a curtain, which Trungpa Rinpoche eventually lifted in order to view his teacher’s body. Khenpo Gangshar was seated upright in meditation, but when the curtain was lifted a breeze struck his face; he blinked and arose from samadhi.

He said, “Although my karmic lifespan is completed, I encountered Jamgön Kongtrul Yönten Gyamtso and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo after my death; they have sent me back to complete the liberation of their remaining disciples.

“In addition, I am the final emanation among the hundred and eight tertöns prophesied by Guru Rinpoche. Most tertöns reveal statues, books, and scepters from mountains and rocks. I am unlike them; I must reveal the treasure of the trikaya by directly pointing out through instruction the treasure-like sugatagarbha that lies hidden in everyone’s mind.

“Very soon the times will change; there will be no leisure for the practice of preliminaries.” Having said that, Khenpo Gangshar directly pointed out the nature to whomever he met by means of mahamudra and dzokchen. Of necessity he accepted a consort.

Once he convened a great ganachakra, saying, “We will need the feast substances described in the tantras.” The corpse of a small child was brought from a distance of three days’ journey, and excrement and so forth were gathered.

Khenpo Gangshar announced, “Whoever tastes these feast substances will achieve the state of Vajradhara in this life!” Everyone believed what he said and enjoyed the feast with devotion. Not only did they not perceive the feast as disgusting; they found it to have an amazingly fine taste and fragrance. All of the monastics and laity who partook of that feast had from then on little craving for the world; they delighted only in the practice

of meditation. In addition, that area became free from illnesses of both humans and livestock, and became more prosperous. There were amazing signs.

Wherever he went, Khenpo Gangshar bestowed guidance on the mind. He visited Thrangu Monastery for two days and gave instruction on the mind to about five hundred monks. My kind guru was there then, and has told me, “As soon as I saw him I was overwhelmed by feelings of devotion as intense as if meeting a mahasiddha such as Tilopa or Naropa.”

Khenpo Gangshar taught that, since sugatagarbha is present within everyone’s mind, we need to look directly at the nature of our minds using mahamudra and dzokchen. He taught that looking at one’s mind is extremely convenient; even when undergoing the hardships brought by the changing times that were soon to come, looking at one’s mind would be easier than any other form of practice. He also strongly advised those he taught to abstain from any violent resistance against the Communist occupation.

He gave instruction on the mind to everyone he met. He would begin by directly describing each person’s individual faults; his knowledge of their faults caused everyone to feel unfabricated

devotion. Then he would point out the nature of their mind. His compassion and blessing were so great that most of those who met him were liberated on the spot.

The instruction on the mind that he gave to a retreat master of Thrangu Monastery was to say to him, “First turn your back to this column. Now turn to face it. Now turn your back to it again.”

The retreat master did this. Khenpo Gangshar then asked him, “Do you understand?”

The retreat master answered, “I do.”

Years later my kind guru asked the retreat master, “What did he mean?”

The retreat master told him, “What he meant is very easy to understand. The meaning of turning my back to the column was that through not realizing the unity of things and their nature we turn our backs on it. My then facing the column was a symbol of the unity of things and their nature. My once again turning my back to the column was a symbol that through correctly realizing that unity one turns one’s back on samsara.”

Khenpo Gangshar gave many such skillful pointing-out instructions.

He continued to act in this way for more than a year. Then he sent his consort back to her family and returned to Shechen Monastery, where he resumed his former modest demeanor and observance of the vinaya.

Then the changing times of which he had spoken occurred. He, Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal, Shechen Kongtrul Rinpoche, and others were imprisoned in Dartsedo. It appears that he passed away there.

Yogis who realize that all that appears or exists is mind Freely perform the illusory dance of birth and death. This ability is born from the blessings of a realized guru In the lake of their own unfabricated devotion.

17 • Karma Dargye

Karma Dargye of Kori was a retreat master at Thrangu, a Kagyu monastery.

Everything that appears or exists is illusory drama.
Realizing this, you holy beings can transform it at will.
Help us, so bound by our belief in its reality,
To achieve freedom from fixation in this life.

Karma Dargye of Kori was born in upper Rongpo. He undertook renunciation at Thrangu Monastery at a young age. When he was in the retreat there his room was adjacent to that of the presiding retreat master. He practiced with diligence and recited mantras loudly and distinctly. From time to time, while reciting mantras, he would circumambulate the retreat. The retreat master heard him and wondered how he had got out, as the gate to the retreat was locked. The retreat master went out

to look and found that Karma Dargye was seated in his room reciting mantras as before. The retreat master heard him do this many times, and concluded that Karma Dargye had stabilized the practice of the illusory body. Later, after the retreat was concluded, many people witnessed Karma Dargye sometimes leaving his room through the walls, unobstructed by them.

When Lama Ganga was young Karma Dargye was his tutor. From time to time Karma Dargye would get up late at night after going to sleep and announce that it was time for his supper; on such days he ate supper twice.

Karma Dargye was the retreat master who trained Ogyen, who was later Lama Ganga's retreat master. One day Ogyen got hold of some clay in the retreat and made a statue of Jetsun Milarepa. He placed it on his table and was looking at it during a meditation session when his retreat master Karma Dargye suddenly opened his door, rushed into his room, and threw the statue to the ground. Karma Dargye then realized that it was an image of Milarepa, so he quickly placed it on his head and then threw it outside.

During the next day's assembly the retreat master Karma Dargye scolded Ogyen, saying, "Yesterday Ogyen not only wasted a meditation session; he also made me kill Milarepa!"

While Karma Dargye was the retreat master the discipline in the retreat was somewhat unsteady. One day he needed to go out, and did so. While the retreatants were assembled, performing Renewal and Purification of the Three Vows, the retreat attendant was seen pulling on the end of a rope. Then Karma Dargye returned, leading a dri. He said, "I have saved this dri from slaughter; do you all rejoice?"

Everyone replied, "We rejoice!"

Karma Dargye asked them, "Do you really rejoice?" Everyone replied, "We really rejoice!"

Karma Dargye said, "In that case you must all contribute grain to pay for the dri."

One monk was saving grain to pay for the woodblock printing of Traleg Rinpoche's biography, so he said, "I don't have enough grain to be able to contribute to this."

Karma Dargye said, "In that case touch heads with me." They did, and then Karma Dargye said, "By touching heads with me

you said goodbye, so I'm going." He started to prepare to leave, so everyone asked him to remain. In particular the monk who had objected to paying for the dri now promised to contribute.

There was an old monk named Nyenpa Rapgye. Although he was lame, he had been the best at the physical exercises among all the retreatants in the Six Dharmas of Naropa Retreat. One day he said to his attendant Karma Sönam, "I am definitely going to die tomorrow. Please invite Kori Karma Dargye here." Karma Dargye was brought there and spent quite some time conversing with Nyenpa Rapgye; then he left. Nyenpa Rapgye said, "They say Kori Karma Dargye is realized. He seems to be; he has helped me. Karma Sönam, please make my supper tonight. You won't have to make my breakfast tomorrow; I'll be dead by then." His attendant agreed to this, but didn't really believe what Nyenpa Rapgye said. The next morning when the cock crowed Karma Sönam heard Nyenpa Rapgye coughing and thought, "He said he was going to pass away, but he's still alive."

As soon as he thought that, Nyenpa Rapgye asked him, "Karma Sönam, has the cock crowed?"

Karma Sönam replied, "He has crowed."

Nyenpa Rapgye said, “Oh, good!” Then he was quiet. Karma Sönam thought “What’s happening?” and went to look. He found that Nyenpa Rapgye had put on his meditation hat and his formal robe, and was seated upright in posthumous samadhi.

In the shining mirror of mind-itself
Appear the reflections of outer and inner objects.
Ordinary beings are trapped in the net of delusion.
The noble ones realize them to be unreal illusions.
May this net of grasping, fixation, and delusion
Be cut by the razor of realization.

18 • Shagö the Severance Master

Shagö was a monk of Thrangu Monastery.

You severed the bonds of grasping at objects.

You severed fixation, internal kleshas.

You gained confidence in realization beyond dirty and clean.

Yogi, to you I prostrate!

When Shagö was around twenty his uncle told him to slaughter a pack animal. The beast took a long time to die, and lay there with tears streaming from its eyes. Seeing this caused Shagö to relinquish all worldly activity from then on. He undertook renunciation and spent one year in the Vairochana Retreat and three years in the Six Dharmas of Naropa Retreat. Whenever he practiced severance he would cry.

In order to practice the all-victorious conduct he took to wearing just a loin cloth and let his hair grow long and unbound. Practically naked, he began to wander around the area of Thrangu Monastery, blowing a thighbone trumpet. At the time my kind guru was around eleven years of age, and encountered Shagö while fetching water. Frightened, my guru hid behind a boulder. A woman with the marks of a dakini was relieving herself there; as soon as she saw Shagö she ran away in fear, yelling. Without hesitation Shagö ate her steaming excrement; by doing so he properly established the interdependence of all-victorious conduct.

Your habit of renunciation, accumulated over many kalpas,
 Was awakened in an instant by the slightest thing.
 You entered the supreme path beyond hope and fear,
 And reached the state of peace. I rejoice!

19 • Ju Mipham Jamyang Namgyal Gyamtso

Adorned by the fine jewelry of relinquishment and
realization,

You are world-famous for your learning, nobility, and
goodness.

You are the supreme crown-jewel of all the scholars and
siddhas of Tibet.

I bow to the great Mipham, Mañjushri in person.

Ju Mipham Namgyal Gyamtso was a direct disciple of both Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Jamgön Kongtrul. His full biography can be found elsewhere; here I wish to tell briefly of the five years he spent living at the Palace of Supreme Bliss in Ga. This was on the site of the present location of the Vairochana Retreat at Thrangu Tashi Chöling Monastery.

As soon as he moved there, Mipham painted a sword, representing Mañjushri, and a two-headed bird, representing the great translators, on the wall of his residence; these are also insignia of the Nyingma tradition. He later said that the isolated location of his residence was geomantically excellent, and that his experience and realization had flourished there. He named it Solitary Palace of Supreme Bliss.

While Mipham was living there several monks of Thrangu Monastery, including the lifelong retreatant Karma Tashi, met him. They said Mipham was tall and handsome, with reddish brown skin. It was while he was living there that he wrote the *Gateway to Knowledge* and his *Great Explanation of the Kalachakra*. He also wrote his *Response to Criticism* and his *Final Response* there. One day a man with the appearance of being from Amdo brought him several books and said, “I will need your response to these within a month from now.” Mipham Rinpoche placed the books on his head and then set them aside. About a month later the man returned and asked Mipham to return the books. They were exactly where Mipham had put them a month before; he had not touched them since, and they were a little dusty.

Mipham said, “Please wait here today.” Then he opened the books for the first time and, laughing a bit, added a few notes to them here and there and returned them.

His guest thought, “These books were written in committee by many great scholars such as Palri Lobzang Rapsal over many months. How could Mipham respond to them by adding a few notes one day?”

He returned to Labrang Tashi Khyil Monastery and offered the books to Palri Lobzang Rapsal, who immediately placed them on his head and then blessed all of his disciples with them, saying, “We must pray to become disciples of Mipham Rinpoche, the dharma king of the three realms, in our next lives!”

While telling me this story my kind guru shed tears.

Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche and his attendant Ösal kept a few dzos. They were tended by a monk of Thrangu Monastery called Bengap Dara.

Mipham Rinpoche would often tell Bengap Dara, “Eat whatever food you have; don’t hoard it!” Hearing this, Bengap Dara would think, “I eat as well as I can, and never hoard food. What does he mean?” He told this to many other monks.

Years later, when Bengap Dara was old, he began to hoard the butter and other foodstuffs he received in the assemblies at Thrangu Monastery. Not daring to consume them, he became pallid and wore shoddy clothing. When he died and it was discovered that all the butter he had saved had become rotten and turned blue, the truth of Mipham's prophecy became evident.

One day the previous Lord Refuge Thrangu Rinpoche, attended by the lifelong retreatant Karma Tashi, rode to Mipham Rinpoche's residence, the Palace of Great Bliss, in order to meet with him before he left the Thrangu area. He brought many offerings, a pot of ink, a pen, and several sheets of blank paper, and told Mipham, "Although, greatest of scholars and siddhas, you have been living here for several years, because of my advanced age, chronic ailments, and ceremonial duties in local communities I have been unable to study under your guidance. I regret this deeply. I am also unsatisfied by my service to the teachings. Please hold me in your compassion so that in my next life I serve the teachings and purely uphold your dharma lineage." Saying that, he held onto Mipham's clothing and wept.

Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche, extremely pleased, replied, "Certainly! Your offering of pen, ink, and paper is extremely auspicious. The sun is about to set, but I will help you pull it back

up into the very center of the sky!” At the time, the meaning of what Mipham said then was unknown. However, if we now consider that at this time when the Kagyu teachings have been seriously threatened the present Thrangu Rinpoche’s activity in upholding, sustaining, and spreading the Buddhadharma and especially the Kagyu teachings through instruction, practice, and work has been peerless, the meaning of Jamgön Mipham’s prophecy is extremely clear.

When the lord of scholars Mipham was about to pass away, he instructed his attendant Ösal to offer a fragment of his bones to Thrangu Rinpoche. When Thrangu Rinpoche received it, he enshrined part of it in a stupa that he kept in his room; part of it is in the locket that the present Thrangu Rinpoche wears at his throat to this day.

In the Palace of Great Bliss, a hermitage in Ga,
 Mañjushri in person, Mipham Rinpoche,
 Jampal Gyepay Dorje, bestowed the blessing
 Of his luminous three secrets.

20 • Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal

Lodrö Rapsal was a khenpo from Shechen, a Nyingma monastery.

From the peak of the mountain of learning, discipline, and
goodness
You sent forth the roar of tradition, reasoning, and practical
instruction,
Causing the foxes of dispute to flee to the darkness.
I bow to you who spread the impartial teachings of the
victors.

Shechen Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal was born at Shechen to the family of Adro Dra Rapjampa. His sister was a nun; she was the steward of both Shechen Gyaltsap and Shechen Rapjam. Shechen Gyaltsap Gyurmey Pema Namgyal, who was a disciple of both Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye and Mipham Jamyang Namgyal Gyamtso, was both Lodrö Rapsal's uncle and his guru.

Once Lodrö Rapsal, his sister the nun, and more than thirty pilgrims went on pilgrimage to Lhasa and Samye. Lodrö Rapsal told his companions that it would be unfitting for him not to visit Daklha Gampo, Gampopa's seat. As all the pilgrims were Nyingmapas and might say they didn't want to make the journey (in which case he would have been unable to go), he and his sister went there alone. They visited every part of it. According to Lodrö Rapsal's sister, while they were viewing an image of Gampopa, the eyes of the statue gazed intently at her brother. Later, Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal said that he had had three visions of Gampopa while he was at Thrangu Monastery.

Once, while Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal was singing the *Ocean of Songs* with his students, he suddenly began to gaze into space and dropped his text to the ground. He stayed in meditation for a little while, and then appeared surprised, saying, "I'm like a crazy person! What did I just do?" It seems that this was one of his visions of Gampopa.

Once, while the shrine custodian was walking to the college, he saw Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal gazing into the sky while dancing. Unable to avoid him, the custodian was observed by Khenpo, who immediately came over to him, touched heads with him,

and walked away. According to my guru, this seems to have been another occasion when Khenpo had a vision of Gampopa.

As other philosophical schools had a strong dislike for the dharma lineage of Mipham, when the Thrangu college was studying Mipham's writings under the guidance of Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal he said that there was a strong malignant magical influence present. They therefore invited the Drikung tertön Ösal Dorje, who showed up wearing a mirror over his heart. When he was asked to perform a protection blessing the tertön pulled a text out of his robe and began to chant a blessing. However, he appeared unable to read his text properly, and his voice became hoarse; he seemed unable to perform the ceremony. Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal had the thought, "This tertön is either a charlatan or a sophist!"

As soon as Khenpo had that thought, the tertön replaced his text in his robe and, while rubbing his mirror up and down, began to spontaneously tell many wondrous accounts of how he and Khenpo had been guru and disciple throughout many lives. As there were neither recording devices nor writing materials present, these were not recorded or written down. However my kind guru, who was there, has said that he clearly remembers the tertön saying that Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal was a rebirth of

Dakpo Tashi Namgyal. Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal often remarked that he was certain that he was the rebirth of a Kagyu lama.

The Drikung tertön Ösal Dorje was closely connected to Thrangu Monastery; in particular, his mind and that of Traleg Rinpoche were mixed as one. Ösal Dorje once predicted, “In the future Thrangu Monastery will expand greatly; I have seen the golden spire of its temple from the source of the Dragyal River.” Later, when my kind guru went to the source of the Dragyal River and looked, he said he was able to see the temple’s spire.

When Traleg Rinpoche passed away the Second Jamgön Rinpoche, Palden Khyentse Özer, was invited to the monastery and performed his funeral observances for a month. During that time Jamgön Rinpoche remarked, “Traleg Rinpoche is now hale and hearty, happily living at the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain in the company of Guru Rinpoche. Meanwhile I am left here, pallid and weak! I don’t want to live here anymore! I’m going there!” Immediately after completing the month-long funeral, Palden Khyentse Özer passed away in the hermitage Palace of Great Bliss. When he was cremated, the smoke from the fire rose into the blue sky and gradually formed a tent of rainbow light; this was seen by my kind guru and all of the monastics and laypeople present. Many relics appeared around the place

where the cremation was performed. A stupa was built to enshrine Jamgön Rinpoche's remains.

Once, after Jamgön Rinpoche's passing, while Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal and his students were singing the *Ocean of Songs* at the college, he suddenly joined his palms at his heart and exclaimed, "Children! The perfect Buddha has actually come here! It is certain that whatever aspirations you make will be accomplished, so make them!" When they subsequently asked him about this, he told them that Jamgön Palden Khyentse Özer had actually come there.

Later, after the invasion, Shechen Kongtrul Rinpoche, Khenpo Gangshar, and Shechen Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal were captured by the soldiers. They were later seen in the prison at Dartsedo by a monk who was also being held there. When Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal was dying he asked to be brought to Thrangu Monastery, but no one was able to do this. According to my kind guru, it is likely that he died in the prison at Dartsedo.

Shechen Kongtrul Rinpoche once said, "Although Khenpo Lodrö Rapsal was always extremely intelligent and learned in philosophy and logic, he had no realization. When he returned from Thrangu Tashi Chöling Monastery in upper Ga, however,

he was no longer merely learned; he had become a great lord of realization. Thrangu Tashi Chöling in upper Ga is a place with blessing unlike that of anywhere else!”

The renowned Karmapa, the Buddhas’ activity,
Has blessed with his three secrets the best place in Ga.
It is Thrangu Tashi Chöling Monastery in upper Ga.
Simply seeing it brings one to the path to freedom.

21 • Gongpen the Protector Lama

Gongpen the protector lama was a monk of Thrangu Monastery.

Dharmapala Bernakchen, you are the play of the victors' activity.
If accomplished through offering, praise, and faith you bestow
siddhi.

Although in your outer rupakaya you performed the dance of a
poor monk,

You were inwardly and really the wisdom dharmapala. I bow to
you!

Gongpen was an impoverished monk without wealth or possessions who continuously lived in the protector temple. Whenever there were thunder, lightning, and hail he would call out to the local deity Rakma Bukur, "Rakma Bukur, settle down! You are under my control!" As long as he lived, no one there was harmed by hail.

When he went to the bathroom at night he would make loud cracks with a sling. He said that he was shooting stones into the cauldrons of hell. People didn't believe him, and joked that his excrement roared and cracked.

When he was about to pass away he said, "On the fifteenth day of this month I will die. Thrangu Monastery has been very kind to me, so although I have nothing else to offer, I will leave you my skull. You will need to cremate my body, but if you can place my skull in the Yak Stupa there will be the greatest benefit. I cannot supply or pay for the wood and so on for my cremation; you will need the assistance of the local families and communities." He then passed away.

His skull survived his cremation unburnt, so it was placed in the Yak Stupa as he had directed.

For the sake of beings, our mothers,
 You accomplished the Mother and Lord, the dharmapalas,
 And led all our mothers out of hell
 And to the path to freedom, like a mother.

22 • Sherap Gyaltzen

Sherap Gyaltzen was a monk of Langchen, a Sakya monastery.

You realized the natural state, ultimate wisdom.

With great wisdom you traversed the stages and paths in one
life.

You raised the victory banner of freedom over this whole
earth.

The victory banner of your fame has reached the peak of
existence; I bow to you.

Sherap Gyaltzen was originally a monk of Kyergu, a Sakya monastery. His incompetence while serving as the monastery's steward caused him to be expelled from Kyergu, so he went to Darjay, also a Sakya monastery, where he also served as the steward. He again proved incompetent, and was expelled from that monastery as well. He then went to Langchen, another

Sakya monastery, where he took up residence. An elderly woman there with influence in the government protected him from punishment after the invasion. When he was dying he told her, “Langchen Monastery has been very kind to me. Burn my body, but preserve my skull as a support for the monastery.”

He died wearing his dharma robe. The elderly woman gathered wood and cremated his remains as he had requested, but his robe wouldn’t burn, so she removed it and laid it aside on a rock. After his cremation, his skull remained unburnt, his robe disappeared, and countless shariram arose. She gave these to all the faithful who wanted them. It is said that once it was decided that she had given too many away and should charge a bit of money for them, they stopped multiplying, and in some cases disappeared from within the paper in which they’d been wrapped.

You secretly traversed the pure stages and paths,
 Revealing the pure, primordial nature.
 Your pure remains gave birth to shariram.
 I dedicate your pure and holy virtue!

23 • The Blacksmith's Wife An Emanation of Vajravarahi

Supremely changeless great bliss
Appears as all types of rupakayas for the good of beings.
These guide pure and impure beings.
I devotedly bow to the mother of the victors.

In the region of Sakya, in Tsang, there lived a blacksmith and his wife. In those days to be a blacksmith was considered the lowest of occupations, and blacksmiths were little esteemed. In particular, no one liked the wife of a blacksmith. In the uplands nearby there lived in retreat a yogin and his disciple. Whenever the yogin performed a ganachakra, the disciple heard the sound of a beautiful female voice speaking, but never saw the speaker. When he told his guru that he wanted to see her, the yogin said, “She is a dakini; seeing her requires a little realization.”

The disciple insisted that he wanted to meet her, so the guru told him, “Go into the village today. Prostrate yourself without hesitation to whomever you meet; you will receive a bit of siddhi.”

The disciple walked to the village. On his way he encountered the blacksmith’s wife, who was walking toward him. She had removed her upper garments, exposing her breasts, and was carrying a few radishes. He immediately prostrated himself to her. She appeared displeased and loudly exclaimed, “You dull monk! What are you doing, prostrating to me?” She then rubbed a piece of turnip against her nipples and saying, “Here! Take this!,” threw it at him.

The disciple returned to his guru and told him what had happened. The yogin said, “As siddhi you received that piece of radish.” The disciple again insisted that he wanted to meet the dakini, so the guru told him, “Tonight go to the blacksmith’s home and sleep among the pigs in the pigsty there. No matter who shows up there, don’t think too much. Have faith!”

The disciple lay down to sleep that night in the blacksmith’s pigsty. Around midnight the pigs began to squeal and grunt loudly and run around. When the disciple got up and looked he saw that the pigs’ heads were blazing with fire. All of a sudden, amongst

them was a naked woman with upswept hair; Vajravaraḥi was really there! Terrified, he covered his eyes with his hands. When he looked again after a moment, he saw none of this.

When he related this story to his guru, the yogin appeared displeased and said, “Too bad! This is not good! Vajravaraḥi actually came to you, and you not only failed to have faith, you were afraid! You have impaired your samaya! This is inauspicious; Vajravaraḥi is now going to depart for other realms. Tomorrow go to the charnel ground and meet her there!”

The next day, when the disciple went to the charnel ground as the yogin had instructed him, he discovered that the blacksmith’s wife had died, and her corpse had been brought to the charnel ground. It was being consumed by vultures. The disciple saw that the vultures were really viras and virinis. They threw him a piece of one of the woman’s ribs and told him, “Samaya-breaker, this is all you get!”

Yogins and yoginis who’ve completed the stages and paths
Place disciples on the path to freedom in appropriate ways
Through skillful magical displays, pure and impure.
I rejoice in this with unchangeable great faith and devotion.

24 • Dorje Gyaltsen

The Upasaka Dorje Gyaltsen is a protector of Thrangu Monastery.

Guru Padmasambhava, the Second Buddha;
Nyima Gyurmey, Saltong Shogom's emanation;
And all the wise and accomplished have appointed you
To protect the victor's teachings. I bow at your feet, great
Upasaka!

The Upasaka of Thrangu Monastery is one of the twentyone upasakas commanded by Guru Rinpoche to protect the teachings. When Nyima Gyurmey, the Second Traleg Kyabgön, attempted to cross the iron suspension bridge at Sok, the Upasaka didn't allow it, and caused an earthquake, a hailstorm, and thunder and lightning in protest. While Traleg Rinpoche's party camped there for one day, he bound the upasaka to samaya and led him,

like an owner leading a dog, back to Thrangu Monastery, appointing him as its protector.

There is a story that when the siddha Tangtong Gyalpo began to build that bridge the resident gods, out of jealousy, tried to prevent him. The siddha then composed and performed the Lhamo Dance, which delighted the gods. While they were thus distracted, the siddha completed the construction of the bridge. It is near Sandalwood Monastery, a large Gelukpa monastery.

When Jamgön Mipham first came to Thrangu he observed the monastery supplicating the Upasaka of Thrangu. He thought, “Even this monastery propitiates an aggressive spirit!” One day, when a number of young monks were gathering juniper, he saw the Upasaka holding each of the monks with his hand, preventing them from falling over a precipice. He asked Bengap Dara, “What is the name of your local deity?”

The monk answered, “He is called Dorje Gyaltsen.” Mipham then wrote this activity entrustment:

HRIH Powerful, mighty lord of this place,
Known as Upasaka Dorje Gyaltsen,
Appearing as a wealth-lord along with your beloved consort,
the nagini:

Come here! I offer you purely-prepared torma, select
 beverages,
 Gifts, dress, and clouds and oceans of all you desire.
 May your heart be filled with pleasure!
 Always protect and assist us as you would your own children.
 Guard us against all enemies and harm.
 Though your mastery of magical transformation—
 Into a divine white yak, a terrifying great serpent,
 And a ferocious nagamara riding a crocodile—
 Protect us and utterly defeat our enemies.
 If I venerate and praise you, mighty one,
 Cause the teachings of all the accomplishment lineage and
 this monastery,
 The sangha, grain, livestock, and prosperity to increase.
 Accomplish everything that is truly good!

After the invasion of Tibet and before the lamas and monks
 began to flee, several lamas of Thrangu Monastery and several
 religious villagers dreamed of the Upasaka, who told them,
 “Flee, taking the lamas with you. I have to remain in China for
 the time being.” Then he cleansed them with water from a vase
 and blessed them. As a result of their dreams, many lamas and
 monks of Thrangu Monastery safely reached India.

Years later, when the Lord Refuge Thrangu Rinpoche was building a college at Namo Buddha in Nepal, the work became subject to many difficulties. There was a lama there called Lama Kundrak, who regularly saw spirits and had visions. Once, in a dream or vision, he saw the traditional protectors of Thrangu Monastery. They appeared angry, and said, “Since Thrangu Rinpoche fled to India he has not only neglected our supplication; he doesn’t even remember us!”

Lama Kundrak informed Thrangu Rinpoche of his vision. Up to then Thrangu Rinpoche had been privately supplicating the Upasaka and the Five Bodies of the King, longtime protectors of Thrangu; from then on he made sure that all the lamas and monks recited their daily supplications without fail. The construction work was soon completed without obstacle.

The reconstruction of the temple at Thrangu Monastery destroyed during the cultural revolution was undertaken with great exertion by the monks who remained there, including Dara Karma Rinchen, Bentra Tutop, Bentra Karma Chöpel, Gyara Dödül, and Rinchen Norbu. During the reconstruction Dara Karma Rinchen and other young monks went to Surmang to cut wood for the temple. While there, they stayed in a tent. People of Surmang

told them, “Every night a light brown yak with a white blaze sleeps beside your tent. It also circles the tent, snorting.”

One day the local people told them, “Be careful today! That yak is snorting and striking the ground with his horns; he seems agitated!” This was at the time when they were bringing the cut wood to Thrangu Monastery. That day one of the loads of wood became unbalanced and started to lean to the right. However, other than leaning it didn’t fall over, so neither the driver nor any of the monks were injured. The local people saw the load start to lean, and said they saw the same light brown yak with a white blaze they’d seen before support the load, preventing it from falling over, and protecting those transporting it. However, while the local people saw it, none of our monks did.

Thrangu Tashi Chöling in upper Ga

Is the source of millions of scholars and siddhas.

Its guardian, the great Upasaka,

Is the foremost protector of the teachings of accomplishment.

25 • Lama Tsoknyi and the Hermit of Miyul

Lama Tsoknyi and the hermit of Miyul were lifelong retreatants associated with Thrangu Monastery.

Grounded in great renunciation for samsara,
With great courage you gathered the two accumulations on
the path.

You gained great fame for achieving the result, the two
bodies.

Realized yogins, I prostrate to you!

Lama Tsoknyi was from Kutse in Derge; he was born to a poor family. He eventually became a mule driver for a merchant from Derge called Karma Zöpa. Traveling with the merchant Tsoknyi passed through Kyergu and reached Thrangu Monastery, where he undertook renunciation. As he never stopped talking he was

given the derogatory nickname Parakha, which means the cup in which dice are shaken with a clattering sound.

When Lama Tsoknyi was accepted into the Six Dharmas Retreat, Karma Zöpa came and offered him a pack load of food for the winter that he had purchased. On the next morning, while beating the gong signaling the beginning of a meditation session and singing the call to meditation, Lama Tsoknyi gave rise to true renunciation. He returned the pack load of provisions to the merchant so that they could be used to sponsor life-release, and gave up eating meat. After the completion of the retreat Lama Tsoknyi entered a lifelong retreat, during which he performed a thousand nyungnes. His merit brought many offerings to him; he used them to sponsor the painting of eighty thangkas for the new temple at Thrangu Monastery. He hired an artist from the lowlands, and the paintings were completed within three years. He paid the artist three measures of gold for each painting. Since the thangkas were sized to fit the pillars of the new temple, he intended each of the pillars to have a painting hung on it. However, because of the invasion the paintings were never installed, and Lama Tsoknyi died in prison.

His rebirth was born in Nupri in Nepal and was recognized by the Lord Refuge Thrangu Rinpoche. From the time when he

could first speak he repeatedly declared, “I will go to Thrangu Monastery!” This caused his mother to bring him to Thrangu Rinpoche. She asked Rinpoche to allow her son to undertake renunciation and to take care of him. This was just after Rinpoche first arrived in Nepal, and he lacked any facilities, so he told her that it would be very difficult to assemble the resources needed for her son’s care and upbringing.

After a few days she came to see Rinpoche again with her son. This time she was insistent in her request. Nevertheless he did not rush anything, but repeated what he had said during the previous audience about his lack of resources.

Although at the time the tulku was very young, his behavior was unlike that of other small children. In response to Thrangu Rinpoche’s reply to his mother’s request, he touched his head to Rinpoche’s feet, weeping and asking to undertake renunciation. Rinpoche finally agreed, and gave him the name Karma Damchö.

Tulku Damchö studied and served Thrangu Rinpoche for many years with great diligence. In 1998 he was enthroned at Thrangu Tashi Chöling Monastery in Nepal along with the Lord Refuge Lodrö Nyima Rinpoche. He has now completed his studies at Varanasi University and a three-year retreat in the Six Dharmas

of Naropa Retreat. You may learn more about him from those who know him well.

Even when your rupakaya was young
Your wisdom was unobscured.
Even though you passed into the dharmadhatu,
Your compassionate activity is unending.

As for the hermit from Miyul:

He gained accomplishment in the Palace of Great Bliss.
He was inseparable from the viras and dakinis.
He appeared and gave prophecy
To countless realized men and women.

Although the hermit from Miyul was quite famous, I don't know much about his life, but here is what my kind guru heard from Sönam Yönpel, the custodian of the Vairochana of Bi:

Sönam Yönpel and the hermit from Miyul were in retreat at the same time in separate cabins at the hermitage called Palace of Great Bliss. One day, as it was a sacred occasion, they were supposed to perform a ganachakra. Sönam Yönpel went to bring a load of feast offering materials to the hermit. As he approached

the hermit's door he heard beautiful singing from inside. As the voice he heard was that of a woman, he thought, "He's got a woman in there with him!" Distraught, Sönam Yönpel threw open the door.

He saw the hermit sitting there with several sheets of paper in front of him, in the process of writing something down. Gazing into space, the hermit said to him, "Oh, my friend, it is unfortunate that you have come here right now!" He then burned all that he had just written in his fire.

Sönam Yönpel told me, "The hermit was undoubtedly receiving prophecy from the dakinis. My disapproval ruined the interdependence, which I regret very much."

Because you saw your own unaltered face
 The mothers and dakinis offered you unmistakable prophecy,
 But the uncontrolled impure thoughts of another
 Ruined and undid the interdependence.

26 • Gogyu Aku Rinpoche

Gogyu Aku Rinpoche was from Bumgang, a Gelukpa monastery.

The moment the moon of your countenance was revealed,
Self-arisen interdependence was also revealed.
Your fame, revealed, fills the domains of gods and men.
I bow to you who revealed how stainless you were.

My kind guru remembers hearing one day in his seventeenth year that his niece Gyamtso Wangmo was due to give birth in a month. The place where she gave birth a month later was known as Pelungnang. Her labor began while she was milking sheep, so she rushed home, carrying a small bowl of milk, which she placed on the side of the stove. She then gave birth to a son without injury. Later it was discovered that the milk in the bowl had turned into yogurt. Herders and other people saw a tent

of rainbows over the tent in which the birth occurred, but no member of the family saw them.

An elder monk from Bumgang Monastery realized that the young boy was extraordinary and attentively undertook his education. One day, while the family was moving its tent to a different pasture, the young incarnation looked back at the site they had vacated and began to rub his hands together. His tutor thought, "He seems to be killing insects, but unless I'm gentle with him he'll be frightened." He went over to the boy and unobtrusively looked at his hands. The incarnation was kneading a rock between his palms, rolling it into a ball and then flattening it out without any difficulty.

The tutor said to the boy, "Please roll that rock into a ball and give it to me." The incarnation did so. Then, seeing a flat rock, the tutor picked it up, removed his boots, and placed his bare feet on the rock. He then told the boy to do the same thing. Laughing, the incarnation took off his boots and placed his bare feet on the rock, leaving clear impressions in it of both his feet.

By his eighteenth year the times had changed, and the communist government issued an order requiring everyone to kill marmots. The incarnation didn't kill any. When he was told that if he

didn't kill any marmots he would be punished, he said, "Okay; tomorrow I'll kill the biggest marmot." That night he stabbed the local communist leader with a knife and fled. He was captured and killed by the soldiers, who left his remains where he died.

When his mother heard of this she went looking for his body, grieving terribly. She found that he had carefully folded his clothing and placed it on a rock, and that he had been killed while seated upright in vajra posture, his hands in equipoise; he had remained in that position after death. She later told my kind guru that as soon as she saw her son's remains, all her grief disappeared and she became filled with faith, wonder, and joy.

In the appearances of delusion
 You violently liberated the violent.
 Yet, because you transcended killing and passing away,
 You became an expanse of light, the luminous dharmakaya.

27 • Rigyar Sergyi Dorje

Rigyar Sergyi Dorje, the Siddha of Kojo, was from Ranyak, a Gelukpa monastery in Ga.

I bow to Sergyi Dorje,
The siddha of glorious Ranyak Monastery
Where flourished the study and practice
Of the teachings of Tsongkhapa, the second victor.

I have not seen an extensive biography of Kojo Tulku Sergyi Dorje, the siddha of the glorious Ranyak Monastery, but I am certain of the following:

He is known to have been an emanation of Lhalung Palgyi Dorje. The reason for his being known by the name Rigyar is said to be this: Although his birthplace is unknown, when he was around five his mother died and his father remarried. His

stepmother constantly beat him. For some time this did not affect his ability, present from an early age, to remember events from his past lives. One day, however, she took her boot in her left hand and struck him nine times on the head; this obscured him so much that he could no longer remember past events as clearly as before. Thinking “Remaining here is pointless!”, he fled his home in order to meditate in the mountains. That night he first covered his back with two willow leaves when he went to sleep. Later, two ravens appeared and covered him with their wings while he slept. Starting the next day, while he continued to meditate, he followed the ravens further into the mountains. It is said that because he lived in the mountains and came from a place called Gyar, he came to be called Mountain Gyar, or Rigyar.

He eventually reached Gegye Yushu, where he was adopted by an old woman. Each day he herded sheep, meditating while he did so. One day the old woman died, and a lama with a lot of monks was invited to her home to pray for her. The siddha thought “I wonder how much good these monks are capable of doing her consciousness?” and watched them. The lama and monks sang well and were skilled musicians; they performed their ritual with great pomp. In fact, because of their fine voices and liturgical expertise they recited the ceremony in a state of pride. There was, however, one monk at the end of the row who served as

the groom for the rest. While the others were chanting he was thinking, “They are performing an elaborate ritual. I don’t know how to do any of it, so I will recite as many MANIs as I can for the good of the deceased.” Thinking that, he sat there doing so. Although the consciousness of the deceased woman was flying around among the monks in the form of a flying insect, none of them other than the groom even noticed it. The groom thought, “This insect might be the consciousness of the deceased!” Praying for her, he blew on the insect, which helped her a great deal.

Observing all this the siddha thought, “I must deflate this lama’s pride.” When it was time for them to eat, the siddha filled the lama’s porcelain bowl with rice and then bent it so its mouth was closed. The lama’s pride was dispelled; he signaled to the siddha to reopen the bowl’s mouth. He did so, leaving it as it was before he bent it closed. However, the rest of the monks saw none of this.

To tell you a little about this siddha’s deep connection to Thrangu Monastery, during the time of the Fifth Traleg Kyabgön Trinley Nyima, a temple with eighty columns called Victory Over Mara Unaffected by the Four Elements was built at Thrangu. The siddha of Kojo promised to provide all of the vermillion needed for the temple, so after the construction was completed the monastery’s

custodian came to him and asked for the pigment. The siddha gave him just one kidskin bag of vermillion, so the custodian said, “If you had told us that this is all the pigment you have, we could have made arrangements to find more elsewhere. How will this be enough for such a large temple?”

The siddha replied, “Not only will this suffice for the painting of the entire temple; you will have enough left over to fill any cracks in the columns.”

As he said, the pigment was enough for the whole temple. Because in those days they lacked modern tools, the columns had many cracks and uneven surfaces. The pigment was also used to fill these, making the columns smooth. Later, when that temple was destroyed, people dug the pigment out from the cracks in the columns and used it to write with.

At one time all attempts to build a bridge across the Jachu River were unsuccessful; every time a bridge was attempted it was carried off by the current. They invited the siddha of Kojo, and together with Traleg Trinley Nyima he visited the Margo Ngakhang Shrine. While circumambulating the shrine the siddha smoked tobacco. He walked to the east of the temple and asked about the names of the mountain and other features to

the east. Traleg Rinpoche told him their names, and the siddha dropped his tobacco ash in a pile to the east. He then walked to the south, west, and north of the temple in turn, asking the same questions and leaving some ash in each direction. Then he left. Traleg Rinpoche's manager asked Rinpoche, "We prepared all the materials for a fire offering, but the siddha didn't recite even one word of liturgy. What should we do now?" Rinpoche replied, "The siddha performed fire offerings of pacification, enrichment, attraction, and force to the east, south, west, and north. What better fire offering than that could we need?"

That night there was a fierce hailstorm accompanied by thunder and several lightning strikes. The rock on either side of the Jachu River collapsed, leaving self-arisen holes in the rock ideal for the planting of pylons to support the bridge. This time, when the bridge was built, it remained unharmed by the water.

Usually the siddha dressed as a layman. He wore fine clothes and a long sword at his hip. He made his attendant carry a rifle. Whenever he visited nomad communities he would let off a few shots with his rifle at the request of the faithful in order to bless their livestock and sheep. For one year afterward they would never lose any animals to wolves. The faithful would also offer him ammunition; he would present them with a corresponding

amount of gunpowder, which they would mix with fumigation substances and use every evening to purify their livestock.

My kind guru told me that when he was a child his father would use this fumigation mixture to purify his livestock, daily circling his corral while burning it. As the gunpowder within the mixture exploded loudly while it was burnt, my kind guru very much enjoyed being given the job of carrying it around.

I have heard that this siddha composed many songs. When my kind guru was in his fourth and fifth years he often slept in his grandmother's lap. She would always chant "Rigyar Sergyi Dorje Khyenno!" One of his songs begins:

Peerless lord Mila Töpaga,
 You are the most splendid of beings.
 You are this unprotected beggar's only refuge.
 I cry to you from afar; look upon me with compassion!

Disciples who look to me,
 Listen with undistracted minds and attentive ears!
 Although you've bodies born from past virtue,
 You need the complete eight freedoms and ten resources.

After that the song continues, but my kind guru didn't remember the rest, except the conclusion:

I pray that in my next life I return home
To Uddiyana, the dakinis' land.

AH! May this be auspiciously and instantly accomplished AH
AH!

While singing this song to me, my kind guru shed tears.

The chieftain of the Deta clan of Rongpo is said to have been an emanation of Langdarma, the king of Tibet who persecuted Buddhism in the ninth century. As a sign that he was Langdarma's rebirth the chieftain is said to have had little horns growing on his head. Because it was Lhalung Palgyi Dorje who assassinated Langdarma, and because the siddha Rigyar Sergyi Dorje was an emanation of Lhalung, the life-debt incurred by the assassination caused the Deta chieftain to try to kill the siddha. However, no matter what weapons were used he and his men couldn't kill him, so they sewed him into a sack of leather, attached a millstone to his neck, and cast him into the Drichu River. When the leather sack was later recovered, all it contained was a brilliant golden vajra; there were no other remains of the siddha. Everyone agreed that the siddha had turned into a golden vajra. I have already

explained the derivation of the name Rigyar; this is the source of the name Sergyi Dorje, Golden Vajra.

One morning not long after the siddha was cast into the Drichu River Traleg Rinpoche's groom noticed that both of Rinpoche's horses were sweating heavily, as though someone had been riding both of them. Afraid that someone was stealing the horses for their own use, the groom slept in the stable that night. Traleg Rinpoche entered the stable and asked the groom what he was doing there; the groom told him what he had seen. Traleg Rinpoche told his groom, "Last night I escorted the siddha of Kojo halfway to Lhasa; that's why both my horses were sweaty!"

There are other accounts of many people seeing the siddha in Lhasa and Tsang after he was cast into the Drichu.

Eventually the Deta chieftain realized what he had done and came to very much regret it. He insistently petitioned both the Ruta Kyabgön, a lama of Ranyak Monastery, and the Traleg Kyabgön to protect him from rebirth in a lower state. They both promised to do so. In order to fulfill their promise they both passed away when the chieftain died. It is also said that because of the connection they formed then the Ruta Kyabgön was sometimes reborn at Thrangu Monastery, and the Traleg Kyabgön at Ranyak Monastery.

You realized the middle way beyond extremes.
In order to guide beings with form and those without
Your display of deeds was like a water-moon.
Siddha, who could fail to respect you?

From a song by Nyima Tashi, the First Traleg Kyabgön:

You men and women of precipitous Kham
Would denigrate even the Buddha if he appeared.
Not knowing how to think, you are sectarian
And partisan about philosophical systems.
How can you refute another's outlook
With mere empty attachment and anger?
You incur a downfall and meander in the dark!

And:

Because you've never developed an impartial, pure outlook,
You've built hell for yourself with your sectarian speech.
For sure, if you don't tame your minds,
Loud talk of dharma is a mass of attachment and hatred.
The service without concealment
Of great centers for the practice of the Buddha's doctrine
And of holy, authentic gurus

Will increase your merit in this and future lives.

And:

From now on, at all times,
Abandon sectarian attachment and hatred
Within the All-Doing's expanse.
Cultivate impartial, pure outlook
Within the All-Doing's expanse.
Virtue and wrongdoing arise from the All-Doing's expanse.
The various philosophical systems that exist nowadays,
Whether they are good or bad,
All come from the All-Doing's expanse.
When virtue arises it is wondrous.
When wrongdoing arises it is depressing.
I have taken many births in Jambudvīpa.
I have passed through all four dharma traditions.
I have entered all four of their dharma gates.
I have seen no difference in quality among them,
No reason to say, "This is good and this is bad."
All their dharma leads to buddhahood.
All their dharma comes from the Buddha's mind.
Among all the dharma taught by the Buddha,
He never taught good dharma to one person

And bad dharma to another.

There are no good and bad in the experience of a Buddha.

Good and bad arise in the experience of ignorance.

Through many successive births I have helped beings

Through Mahamudra, the Path and Result, Five-Fold

Mahamudra,

The Dictates as Instructions, the Great Perfection,

And each of the dharma traditions and philosophical systems.

I therefore have no sectarianism toward philosophical

systems.

I have been liberated through abandoning sectarian

attachment and hatred.

Future followers and disciples, abandon sectarianism.

Cultivate impartial, pure outlook.

The sources of refuge are infallible.

Keep this in mind.

As he says here, the magical display of such holy beings' births
is inconceivable!

28 • Lama Ganga

Lama Ganga was a monk from Thrangu, a Kagyu monastery.

You anointed the good ground of pure morality
With the amrita of your bodhichitta
And grew the beautiful tree of mantra,
Heavy with the fruit of generation and completion.
I bow a hundred times to you, the threefold vajra holder.

Lama Ganga was born on June 13, 1931. In his thirteenth year he undertook renunciation at Thrangu Monastery in upper Ga. Under the guidance of the retreat master of Kori he began his studies and memorized the liturgies used at Thrangu. In his eighteenth year he received the vows of a bhikshu, the bodhisattva vow, and ripening empowerments of secret mantra from Palden Khyentse Özer, the Second Jamgön Rinpoche. He then entered the Six Dharmas Retreat, which he completed three times under

the guidance of the retreat master Katak Ogyen. Because of the changing times, in 1958 he fled to India with other lamas and monks of Thrangu. He lived at Buxa for nine years along with my kind guru. While there he studied the treatises of many Buddhist traditions. He later received the complete empowerments of the *Precious Treasury of Terma* from the Lord Refuge Kalu Rinpoche.

In 1976 he moved to the United States of America, along with my kind guru and others, at the command of the Sixteenth Gyalwang Karmapa. Lama Ganga eventually became the lama of the Karma Teksum Chöling centers in California. Starting in 1980, he served as the retreat master at Kagyu Samye Ling while continuing to oversee the California centers.

When the Sixteenth Gyalwang Karmapa Rigpe Dorje displayed illness while in the United States Lama Ganga served him well, causing the Karmapa to delightedly remark, “Because of our previous karma, this person has helped me a lot!”

In the years 1986 and 1987 Lama Ganga accompanied the Lord Refuge Thrangu Rinpoche when he visited Thrangu Monastery in Tibet. In 1988 Lama Ganga returned to Tibet with my kind guru. Before leaving for Tibet, Lama Ganga told a few of his western disciples, “I will not be coming back from Tibet this time; I’m going to die there.”

Also, Yeshe Namdak, an assistant to Tendzinla, the president of Karma Triyana Dharmachakra, told the following story: When he invited Lama Ganga and Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche to his wedding, due to occur after their return from Tibet, Lama Ganga laughed and said, “That would be amazing, because I’ll be dead by then!”

A tumor appeared on the back of his neck. He said to my kind guru, “I’m not going to escape this tumor.”

My guru jokingly replied, “Why are you whining so much about a tiny growth like that?”

Lama Ganga responded, “This is no ordinary tumor! We’d better hurry up and get to Thrangu Monastery! Once we get there, no matter what happens to me, you won’t have any problems.” He repeated this often.

After they arrived at Thrangu Monastery, Lama Ganga’s tumor began to grow and he became ill, so he was brought to the Kyergu General Hospital. When my kind guru visited him there, Lama Ganga’s neck was covered in bandages. Joking a bit even then, and free from any pain, he passed away.

His body was brought to Thrangu Monastery and, dressed in a dharma robe and meditation hat, was placed in a seated position. Although he was seated upright, because by the end of his life he had been unable to raise his head due to the tumor on his neck, his head still fell forward after his passing. A friend of his who had been in the same retreat, Gyara Gegen Karma Düdül, performed the clarification of samadhi. From then on Lama Ganga's head, needing no support, remained upright. He remained in samadhi for five days. His cremation was overseen by his nephew, Gegen Rinchen Norbu, who built a stupa enshrining his uncle's remains.

29 • Gyara Gegen Karma Dödül

After completing the Six Dharmas Retreat, Gyara Gegen Karma Dödül had learned all of our ritual traditions, including how to lead our liturgical practices, from his uncle Umdze Gyara Palga. The existence nowadays of an undiminished tradition of proper ritual performance at Thrangu Monastery is primarily due to Karma Dödül's kindness. During his life he served for two terms each as the umdze and master of discipline at Thrangu Monastery.

After the times had changed Dara Karma Rinchen, the retreat master Tsewang Dorje, Bentra Karma Tutop, Karma Chöpel, Mora Gegen Karma Tsultrim, Gegen Kartsa, Denshul Gegen Karma Dödül, and the physician Gegen Rinchen Norbu gathered at the Vairochana of Bi and through great effort soon rebuilt the Temple at Thrangu.

More recently, for several years Gyara Gegen Karma Düdül was seriously ill. All his attending physicians agreed that he was definitely dying. Karma Düdül, however, repeatedly told them that he was going to wait until he saw Traleg Rinpoche again. In October of 2004, Traleg Rinpoche returned to Thrangu Monastery in order to preside over the opening of the newly completed temple there, called Victory Over Mara Unaffected by the Four Elements. While there, Traleg Rinpoche performed the ejection of consciousness for Karma Düdül's benefit. Afterward, that evening, Karma Düdül said to the retreat master Rinchen Tsering, "Please don't be angry with me for the many harsh words I've spoken to you; I'm short tempered. Go back up to the retreat and sleep well; as I had hoped, I've received the ejection of consciousness from the precious Lord Refuge, so I'm going to sleep well tonight!" After affectionately saying this, Karma Düdül went to sleep. That night he passed away. His remains were dressed in his dharma robe and meditation hat, and he remained in samadhi for several days. Afterward he was cremated at the Hermitage of Great Bliss.

30 • Bentra Gegen Karma Chöpel

Bentra Gegen Karma Chöpel also completed a Six Dharmas Retreat. Throughout his life he was harmonious and disciplined, and became like the very life-tree of Thrangu Monastery. Near the end of his life he accompanied Trinley Palzang, a khenpo of Thrangu Monastery, to Lhasa, Tsurphu, and a long tour of the south. After traveling through much of Nepal and India, Karma Chöpel became ill. At the sacred place of Namu Buddha in Nepal, he geomantically determined the best place for his cremation and, indicating it in his will, passed away. His sister, a nun, also remained in samadhi when she passed away, as did Gegen Kartsa, Denshul Dödül, and Karma Tsultrim, as well as the protector lama of the previous Zuru Rinpoche when he passed away at Namu Buddha in Nepal.

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This brief account of the small part of the ocean-like outer, inner, and secret lives of a few siddhas of Kham that has appeared to our common, mundane perception came to be written in the following way: The activity of the learned and accomplished Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso, the life-tree of the teachings of our accomplishment lineage, has filled every land, both east and west. While turning the dharmachakra in accordance with disciples' needs, he visited Karma Triyana Dharmachakra Monastery in America, the third seat of the glorious Gyalwang Karmapa, the activity of all victors. While there he discussed with my kind guru, the abbot of the monastery, the lives of siddhas of Ga in Kham. Delighted, my guru described the wondrous deeds of several hidden yogins, in response to which Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso enjoined me to write these stories down.

I had already written down some of them in the hope of collecting them. Further encouraged by Khenpo Tsultrim's instruction, I wrote down all the stories told by my guru and offered them to Khenpo Tsultrim. Not content with that, I have since added the stories told by my guru while teaching in our retreat, and those he told in response to questions posed by retreat lamas while I was in the retreat. I have included all of the stories told by my guru with no exceptions. I have repeatedly questioned him about them, and offered him the manuscript to review after

completing it. I have only published it after receiving his assurance of its correctness. I have not trusted my own unsupported recollections, nor have I written down whatever occurred to me in the manner of a mouse gathering grain.

I therefore have no vain sense of personal accomplishment based on having published a few biographies of siddhas, and have written them down honestly. Even the verses of veneration and dedication with which I have preceded and succeeded the accounts are merely expressions of appreciation of these siddhas based on my sense of how rare and precious it is to hear of their deeds.

Many of these accounts concern lamas and retreatants from Thrangu Tashi Chöling Monastery in upper Ga, which is my monastery, but there are also stories here about holy upholders of many other traditions among the Sakya, Geluk, Kagyu, and Nyingma. My great guru said, “Because I am a monk from Thrangu Monastery, I know most about the lives of holy beings from that monastery and have told their stories. I would be delighted if I knew and could tell you of the lives of yogins of all traditions, including the Sakya, Geluk, Kagyu, and Nyingma, so you could write them down, but I only know these stories so there is nothing to be done about it.”

The need for this is that if one is able to set down even a few accounts of the lives of holy upholders of the dharma of various traditions, they form a cloud of offerings pleasing to the victors, a repayment of the kindness of one's parents in the six states, amrita for the devoted, a spur for renunciates, a resource for the practice of holy dharma, proof of its greatness, the best way to please the guru, and instruction in the need to have a pure perception of everyone. Especially, such accounts definitely inspire devotion and confidence in holy dharma.

Because I lack extensive learning I am unfamiliar with the norms of elegant composition and poetic imagery, so my writing will undoubtedly embarrass those who are extremely learned. However, I have written this with words easily understood by others like myself. It will be accessible to ordinary, worldly people and will plant the seed of liberation in them by inspiring faith and devotion.

I would also remind learned monastics and laypeople of the future that the worldwide fame of Tibet, our land with such a long history, is primarily due to the holy dharma. That holy dharma was taught by the compassionate Buddha and disseminated by holders of the teachings of many traditions. Therefore, I dare to extol what I have done and assert that to be able to

set down even a few honest accounts of the lives of learned and accomplished masters of the Sakya, Geluk, Kagyu, and Nyingma traditions; and especially of hidden yogins and yoginis who are the display of rupakayas in accordance with disciples' needs, is to serve the Buddha's teachings. Why? Because based on these accounts people will develop confidence in and devotion for the holy dharma so well taught by the Buddha, and especially for the quick and profound path of secret mantra.

Anyone who reads these accounts or has them read to them will naturally feel inspiring faith. That is enough to plant the seed of liberation within their being. It is extensively taught in the sutras and tantras that faith is the essence of all the dharma taught by the victor. Especially, it is taught that devotion is the key that opens the door to wisdom and is therefore essential to the realization of natural, connate mahamudra. The authentic term *mahamudra of devotion* is for that reason used by the holy masters of our lineage with great reverence.

Giving birth to it depends upon learning of the lives of these well-known and lesser-known holy beings. If, therefore, Tibetan writers benevolently concerned with the many traditions of the victor's teachings could research and write down, with altruism, devotion, and honesty, the stories of their monasteries,

their lamas, and of yogins and yoginis that they hear or learn from others, this would definitely benefit people throughout the world, since Tibet is now so well-known all over the world.

Digressing, I would point out that previously well-known histories of sacred places of accomplishment; of Sakya, Geluk, Kagyu, and Nyingma monasteries; and of their many holy lamas are disappearing or already forgotten. These days it seems that their names and number of incarnations are rarely known, let alone their biographies. It is therefore our responsibility to assiduously research, preserve, and publish accounts of holy beings of the past. I also pray, with a pure motivation and joined palms, that preceded by the relinquishment of antipathy and the contempt born of familiarity, the great deeds and biographies of those khenpos, tulkus, yogins, and yoginis, the marks and signs of whose rupakayas we have the good fortune to still encounter, may be fully written down.

Supreme Buddha Siddhartha, our teacher who accomplished
 everything,
 Saw the dharmakaya's face, accomplishing dual good.
 He didn't rest in peace without further accomplishment;
 He accomplished the teaching of infinite dharma, vast and
 profound.

That teacher, whose kindness we could never repay,
Taught his first entourage, the good Group of Five,
And ever since has led beings in appropriate ways
Out of the fearsome dark abyss of samsara.

The three great dharma kings transformed
Tibet, a barbaric land without dharma,
Into a wondrous, holy field of dharma, so that
Tibet is now universally known for its dharma.

Especially, through the kindness of the abbot, master, and
king,
The special, superior dharma of secret mantra was taught
there.
It filled all Tibet without distinction.
Many special hidden yogins and yoginis have appeared there.

Realized beings who purified thought in dharmakaya
Have displayed all kinds of pure rupakayas.
These wondrous, brief pure biographies
Are worth more than pure gold.

I've no fine or pretty words.
There are no feats of grammatical elegance here,

Nor any long-winded quotations or arguments,
So, scholars of quotes and dispute, read something else.

Those who, with renunciation, seek freedom from the six
states of being;
Those who, with love, recognize all beings as their parents;
Those who, with pure perception, recognize all beings as
deities:
Please read these biographies of beings' protectors.

Through this virtue, in this life, the future, and in between,
May I and all my parents come to see all the wrong
We have done through self-fixation and confess it from our
hearts.
Compassionate deities, please attend my prayer!

May the impartial teachings flourish everywhere and forever.
May impartial great beings live to the end of time.
May all beings, my mothers, without partiality,
Achieve impartial omniscience.

I, the devoted one called Karma Drodhul, possess merely the
name of the nephew and disciple of my kind guru, Khenpo
Karthar Rinpoche, and am the least of the monks of Thrangu

Tashi Chöling Monastery in Ga. After revising the biographies I had written in accordance with my kind guru's wishes, I completed this while engaged in the inner sadhana of Vajravarahi, the mother of all victors, during my second retreat at Karme Yiwong Samten Ling, the glorious Gyalwang Karmapa's retreat in America, on an auspicious day in the ninth month of the Wood Bird year, the Tibetan year 2132, the year 2005 of the Western calendar. Virtue!



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May All Beings Be Happy!