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A Union of Religion and Politics: The Tibetan Regency of Ngawang Tsültrim

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by

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A Union of Religion and Politics: Ngawang Tsültrim as Tibetan Regent and Imperial Preceptor

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William Kent Dewey

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ABSTRACT

A Union of Religion and Politics: Ngawang Tsültrim as Tibetan Regent and Imperial Preceptor

by

William Kent Dewey

My dissertation is a study of the life of Ngawang Tsültrim (1721-1791), with a primary focus on his career as *sikyong* or regent of Tibet (reigning 1777-1786, 1790-1791), and a secondary focus on his religious positions and his service to the Qing emperor. By studying his life, I have sought to understand how and why regents came to serve as substitute rulers for the Dalai Lamas and dominated Tibet's Ganden Palace government for many years. As they were generally prominent Geluk monks with deep ties to the monastic system, I am especially concerned with how their rule was related to the doctrine and institutions of Geluk Tibetan Buddhism, and epitomized the “union of religion and politics” (*chösi sungdrel*) of Tibet. I have studied his life through two Tibetan-language biographies, a long biography focusing exclusively on his life and a short biography from an anthology of lives of the Ganden Tripa, and I have consulted secondary sources covering Tibetan (and sometimes Qing) history, religion, economics, political science and sociology to put his life and work in context.

As a political figure, I have found that he could be seen as a bodhisattva ruler, not only because of his supreme position in an ideal ritual cosmos (Tibet conceived of as a buddha-field), but also because of his practical actions, such as laws against corruption and abusive taxation, by which he promoted himself as a benefactor of the common people. I found that his religious background made him especially suited to leading the *chösi sungdrel*, as he had been enculturated in the scholastic system of the great Geluk monasteries and rose eventually to the position of Ganden Tripa at the top of the monastic hierarchy. His actions in office strengthened the ascendancy of the Geluk monks over Tibet. He also gained influence with the Qing by forming a patron and priest (*chöyön*) relationship with the Qianlong emperor, serving in his court as religious preceptor, both before his reign as regent (1762-1777) and afterwards (1786-1790). This relationship enabled him to negotiate to preserve Tibetan autonomy and Tibetan traditions as the Qing moved to consolidate power. In regards to the Dalai Lama, Ngawang Tsültrim's position as tutor symbolically affirmed that the Dalai Lama was being kept off the throne, but other actions of Ngawang Tsültrim affirmed that the Dalai Lama was the real, ultimate source of the Ganden Palace's *chösi sungdrel*. Although Ngawang Tsültrim's regency marked the beginning of an era when the high monks and lamas of the regency displaced the Dalai Lama as actual rulers of Tibet, he ensured that the Dalai Lama lineage would continue and maintain their spiritual supremacy.

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Dissertation Introduction

The Dalai Lamas are famous as the incarnate bodhisattvas who were kings of Tibet. However, there has been little study of the individuals who were more often the actual rulers of Tibet, the Dalai Lamas' regents. Almost as long as the Dalai Lamas headed the Ganden Podrang (Dga' ldan Pho drang) government, they had regents to assist or substitute for them. Rule by regents grew out of the problems of succession in reincarnate *tülku* (*sprul sku*) lineages, as well as the tension between the lineage as a locus of religious power and devotion and the need for experienced leadership. Whenever a Dalai Lama died, a child was recognized as the next incarnation, and someone had to be appointed to rule until the new Dalai Lama's adulthood. Even adult Dalai Lamas could prefer a religious life to ruling (as was said of the Eighth Dalai Lama) or be unfit for either the political or religious life (as was the case with the Sixth Dalai Lama) or fall out of favor with the ruling powers (as the Seventh Dalai Lama did with the Qing). In response to the need for a substitute ruler, the institution of the regency developed. It was usually filled by Geluk monks, drawn from the ranks of accomplished abbots, scholars and *tülkus*. Rightly or wrongly, rumors accused the later regents of intriguing to sideline the Dalai Lamas, and thus contributing to the decline of Tibet and its domination by the Qing (Manchu) emperors. In order to understand Ganden Palace and the history of the Dalai Lama lineage, one needs to take the regents seriously, and that is what I undertake to do in my project.

I initially wanted to study all these monastic regents, but such a project would have been too broad and, for many of the regents, lacking in sufficient source

material. I then narrowed my project to a fifty-year period between 1750 and 1800, in which three regents ruled (the sixth Demo Rinpoché, Ngawang Tsültrim who is also known as the first Tsemönling incarnation, and the eighth Tatsak Rinpoché who is also known as the first Kundeling incarnation), whose lives are detailed in a wide range of primary sources. I considered this period significant because the regency was in its formative stages, and decisions were made that shaped the norms of rule by regents, as Tibet's subjection to the Qing empire became increasingly evident. But the problems of scope and source availability remained, so I narrowed the three regents to one. I chose Ngawang Tsültrim (Ngag dbang Tshul khrims, 1721-1791), often known as the first Tsemönling (Tshe smon gling) incarnation, a lineage that was recognized posthumously. As a ruler during the adulthood of the Eighth Dalai Lama ('Jam dpal Rgya mtsho, 1758-1804), his reign more clearly exemplified the monk-regents' eclipse of the Dalai Lamas as actual rulers. An accomplished scholar and tantric master, he advanced through the Tibetan religious hierarchy to become Ganden Tripa, the head of the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism. This position made him especially powerful in the religious as well as the political sphere, at a time when the great Geluk monasteries were consolidating their power within Ganden Palace. His biographies also detail his time in Beijing as “Lama of the Seal” (*tham ka bla ma*) to the emperor as his primary personal tutor, at a time when Qing power was at its peak. Exploring these connections is key to understanding the basis of his rule and the unique role played by the regents in the Ganden Palace government.

Primary Sources

Another reason I chose to study Ngawang Tsültrim is that he happens to be

especially well-documented, compared with other regents. The primary source on his life is a long biography entitled *Ngawang Tsültrim Pelsangpö Namtar Dépé Goché* (*Ngag dbang tshul khrims dpal bzang po'i skyes rabs rnam thar dad pa'i sgo 'byed*, *Opening the Door of Faith in the Succession of Lives of the Glorious Ngawang Tsültrim*), written by Lobsang Tukjé (Blo bzang Thugs rje, 1770-1835).[1] Lobsang Tukjé was a retired abbot of Sera Me, who was recognized as the first of the Panglung (Spangs lung) *tülku* lineage.[2] As explained in the colophon, prior to being published in final form in 1798, early versions of the biography were originally compiled by a number of lamas and other officials from Sera Me.[3] Later, the emperor commissioned Jampa Tobden (Byams pa stobs ldan) to prepare a final edition for publication, and he also collected some of the source materials.[4] Jampa Tobden, who had the title of *jasak lama* from the emperor, was originally a treasurer in the monastic branch of Ganden Palace, served as treasurer for Ngawang Tsültrim, and was later appointed as a monk official in the Tibetan cabinet (*bka' shag*), serving 1791 to 1805.[5] Ngawang Tenzin Gyatso (Ngag dbang Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, 1748-1813), an abbot of Nalendra monastery, and Lobsang Tsöndru (Blo bzang brtson

[1] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngag dbang tshul khrims dpal bzang po'i skyes rabs rnam thar dad pa'i sgo 'byed*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Lhasa: Se ra bshad sgrub gling gi par khang, 1798), https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=W27212.

[2] "Blo bzang thugs rje (P2063)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P2063. Although he was recognized as a Panglung incarnation posthumously, he was apparently already linked with the Panglung hermitage in his lifetime, since the manuscript of the biography was completed there prior to publication, in 1798. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:399a.

[3] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:397b.

[4] Ibid., 2:397b–398a.

[5] Luciano Petech, *Aristocracy and Government in Tibet, 1728-1959* (Rome: Istituo Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1973), 219–220, 252. According to the biography, Jampa Tobden was appointed to the cabinet as a reward for completing the biography. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:397b.

'grus), another treasurer, were appointed as his assistants.[6] They turned to Lobsang Tukjé and asked him to prepare the manuscript for the biography. Lobsang Tukjé explained that he consulted a wide variety of sources: prayer texts, dharma histories (*chos byung*), histories of Tibet, and Ngawang Tsültrim's own notes. In addition, Lobsang Tukjé conducted interviews with former Ganden Tripas and other prominent monks who knew Ngawang Tsültrim personally.[7] A number of assistants are also listed in the colophon, including secretaries who took notes during Ngawang Tsültrim's service in the Beijing court as *thamka lama,* and scribes who put the document into written form.[8] The biography is in two volumes, consisting of four hundred folios each. The first volume begins with biographies of Ngawang Tsültrim's past lives, which place the text in the genre of *trungrab* (*'khrungs rabs*), a work that details the past lives of a revered religious master. It also contains Ngawang Tsultrim's life from his birth to 1777 (just prior to his becoming regent), covering his early life in the monastery, positions of monastic leadership, and his first posting as religious teacher for the emperor in the Beijing court.[9] The second volume, which served as the basis of the bulk of my research, describes the remainder of his life up to his 1791 death, including his service as regent and his second position as religious preceptor in the Beijing court. Most of the discussion of his regency is organized chronologically, detailing the (primarily religious) deeds he performed year

[6] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:398a, 399a.
[7] Ibid., 2:398b.
[8] Ibid., 2:397b–399a.
[9] According to Vostrikov, the text is exceptional in the number of previous incarnations it identifies of Ngawang Tsültrim. Andrei Ivanovich Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature*, trans. Harish Chandra Gupta (Calcutta: R.K. Maitra, 1970), 92–97. I did not attempt to translate this part of the biography due to time constraints.

by year, but some topics are treated thematically: discussion of his tutorship of the Dalai Lama, his legislative activities and so forth, as well as descriptions of his decrees.[10]

Ngawang Tsültrim's life is also covered in a shorter biography in the *Ganden Trirab Namtar* (*Dga' ldan khri rabs rnam thar*, "Biographies of the Lineage of Holders of the Ganden Throne"), entitled *Trichen Pelden Nominhan Chenpö Namtar* (*Khri chen dpal ldan no min han chen po'i rnam thar*).[11] According to the colophon, the author of this biography was Drakpa Khedrup, an abbot of Sera Me (Grags pa Mkhas grub, eighteenth cent.), who edited the entire anthology of the Ganden Tripas' lives.[12] It is similar to the longer biography and relies on it heavily, although topics are not covered in strictly the same order. However, it focuses more on Ngawang Tsültrim's duties as Ganden Tripa and other aspects of his religious life, and I have relied on it to cover his monastic career before he became regent and his first position in Beijing.

Dissertation overview

My dissertation begins with an overview of the political history of Tibet in Chapter One. I focus on the history of the development of the *chösi sungdrel* (*chos srid zung 'brel*) or the "union of religion and politics" in Tibet, the formation of the

[10] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*.
[11] Grags pa mkhas grub, ed., "Khri chen dpal ldan no min han chen po'i rnam thar," in *Dga' ldan khri rabs rnam thar*, n.d., https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=O4CZ1498%7CO4CZ14984CZ1600$W1KG1645. This particular volume covers the 47th through the 67th Ganden Tripas, who served from 1695 to 1807. Biographies of previous Ganden Tripas can be found in Desi Sangyé Gyatso's *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDU r+ya ser po*. "Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDU r+ya ser po (W8224)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2016, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=O1GS97909%7CO1GS979094CZ1653$W8224.
[12] "Dga' ldan khri rabs rnam thar (W1KG1645)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=W1KG1645. "Grags pa mkhas grub (P1099)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P1099.

Ganden Palace government of the Dalai Lamas, and the rise of the regents who assisted and sometimes displaced the Dalai Lamas. I then cover terminology relevant to Tibetan religio-political government in general, and the regency in particular, asking whether any set of Tibetan political figures can be called “the regents,” and attempting to clarify the bewildering variety of Tibetan terms for these figures. In Chapter Three, I provide a short biography of Ngawang Tsültrim—from his birth, through his monastic upbringing, imperial preceptorships, and regency, up until his death—before analyzing his life further in the next chapters.

One way to conceptualize Ngawang Tsültrim's regency is as an expression of the “union of religion and politics” (*chos srid zung 'drel*). Although this is often considered an inseparable union, and it can be difficult to disentangle one side from the other, Ngawang Tsültrim's responsibilities can be divided into those that fell more on the religious side, and those that fell more on the political side. In Chapter Four, I consider Ngawang Tsültrim as a religious figure, exploring the qualities of scholarship, leadership, and ritual mastery that enabled him to ascend through the Geluk hierarchy to the Ganden Throne (and indirectly, to the regency). I consider the religious duties he performed as regent and Ganden Tripa such as tantric rituals and initiations, pilgrimages, and preaching, and enforcing monastic discipline. I investigate why monks like Ngawang Tsültrim were increasingly chosen for the role of regent. Although many scholars focus on the similarity or identity of Buddhist rulers with buddhas and bodhisattvas, I see the source of his religious authority more in the institutions of Geluk Tibetan Buddhism, the mass monasticism of the

great monastic seats, and the “web” that connected them to far-flung local monasteries.

In Chapter Five, I consider Ngawang Tsültrim as a political figure and how he ruled Tibet. I examine how he was chosen to be regent (primarily by the emperor with some input from high Tibetan lamas) and what they were trying to accomplish by appointing him. While the Qianlong emperor wanted a loyalist who was enculturated in the ways of the court, Tibetan religious hierarchs wanted someone who would preserve the preeminence of the Geluk school. I detail his political responsibilities and some of his major initiatives, especially the decrees he issued to reform the taxation of the peasantry and the circulation of coins. I consider his attitudes toward the main groups in Tibetan society, the monks (whom he lavishly patronized), the peasants (whom he tried to protect, within traditional limits), and the aristocrats (whose influence he tried to limit). I analyze how he acted as a bodhisattva king, by taking his place in Ganden Palace's ritual cosmos, but more importantly by ensuring that the dharma flourished in a well-supported monastic system, and displaying compassion for his subjects through concrete reforms.

I then turn to Ngawang Tsültrim's relationships with the most politically important individuals of his day, considering his relationship with the Qianlong emperor in Chapter Six. I consider his service in the Beijing court as preceptor (*ti shi*) and and how it enculturated him into Qing ways and led him to be appointed as regent. I explore the religious and political duties he performed for the Qing court in this role, as regent and later as Lama of the Seal (*thamka lama*, *tham ka bla ma*). I also examine how the patron-priest relationship (*chöyön, mchod yon*) he formed with

the emperor influenced Qing-Tibetan relations. The trust he developed with the emperor allowed him to challenge the authority of Qing officials and even to negotiate for continued Tibetan autonomy. His competence as a ruler, contrasted with the incompetence of the Dalai Lama in the crisis of the Gurkha war, confirmed the emperor's distrust of the Tibetan government and his preference for regents to rule Tibet.

In the final chapter, I consider Ngawang Tsültrim's relationship with the Eighth Dalai Lama, and how the importance of the Dalai Lama lineage could endure in the face of dominance by regents. The Eighth Dalai Lama was deemed to need to finish his education, by the emperor and high Tibetan lamas, as an apparent pretext for appointing a regent. A new tutor had to be appointed, and the emperor chose Ngawang Tsültrim. I explore the influence of the tutorship and the curriculum on the Dalai Lama as a political and religious leader. I then consider the Dalai Lama's influence and importance to each side of the "union of religion and politics." Even though the Eighth Dalai Lama held power only briefly following Ngawang Tsültrim's reign, Ngawang Tsültrim ensured that the lineage of the Dalai Lamas remained an enduring symbol of the Tibetan nation.

Finally I look at what the career of Ngawang Tsültrim meant for the future of Tibet, after his death in 1791. I briefly consider how the regency developed into an institution that dominated Tibetan government over the next century, and how the *tülku* lineages and monasteries associated with it came to dominate Tibetan society and Tibetan Buddhism. I analyze the subsequent course of relations between Tibet and the Qing empire (and its Chinese successors), especially in terms of the *chöyön*

relationship. I examine the place of the Dalai Lamas in Tibet in the ensuing years, when they were overshadowed by the regents. I conclude that Ngawang Tsültrim's regency was formative for many of the features of Tibetan government and Tibetan Buddhism that we take for granted.

Chapter 1: Historical Background

Early history of the Tibetan state

Any discussion of Tibetan Buddhist polity must begin with the Tibetan empire. The Ganden Tripas' biography and the biography of Ngawang Tsültrim contain narratives of the rulers of Tibet, beginning from the early kings, continuing through the Sakya-Mongol regime and the origins of the Geluk school, and ending with the rise of the Dalai Lamas and the regents. I follow this sequence in tracing the history of Tibetan polity, as it illustrates well the precedents for Ganden Palace and the regency.[13] The empire brought Buddhism and unified government to Tibet, and its "three religious kings" came to be seen as exemplars of benevolent government and religious devotion. Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po, 605-650), who created this unified empire, is traditionally credited with "the creation of the Tibetan alphabet, the redaction of a law code, and the introduction of the Buddhist religion."[14] Mythical Tibetan narratives such as the *Mani Kabum* (*Ma ṇi bka' 'bum*, compiled c. 1150-1250) identify Songtsen Gampo with the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, prefiguring the the tradition of bodhisattva rule and the Dalai Lama (also considered to be his incarnation).[15] Tri Songdetsen (Khri srong de'u bstan, 742-c. 797) is the actual founder of Tibetan Buddhism according to modern Western scholars, and Tibetan tradition links him closely with the founding of Buddhist institutions. He created a

[13] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:2b–12b. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 8b–12a.
[14] Matthew Kapstein, *The Tibetans* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 56–57.
[15] Ibid., 57–59. Matthew Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 144–155.

monastic order, invited Śāntarakṣita from India to ordain monks, and built the first Tibetan monastery, Samyé, with the help of the tantric adept Padmasambhava who subdued the obstructing demons.[16] The three figures —Tri Songdetsen, Śāntarakṣita, and Padmasambhava—became the "trinity of the Tibetan conversion." Monks came to occupy key positions in the Tibetan court; for instance, Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo (Myang ting 'dzin bzang po, eighth cent.), gave teachings to the Tibetan rulers in exchange for a land grant, an early example of the tradition of "patron-priest relationships."[17] The last of the great religious kings, Relpachen (Ral pa can, 815-838), was assassinated by his anti-Buddhist rival Lang Darma (Glang dar ma), perhaps because of his excessive expenditures on Buddhist monasteries.[18] The empire collapsed and fragmented, and Buddhism fell victim to persecution (or at least the withdrawal of state patronage).[19] The fact that these kings were hereditary monarchs distinguished the empire from the later system of "government by incarnation." But they originated a close relationship between the Tibetan state and Buddhist patronage, as well as creating a mythical legacy to which future Tibetan rulers could claim to be heirs.

After a period of political fragmentation, during which many new Buddhist traditions developed, Tibet came under a new kind of Buddhist government ruled by religious hierarchs and patronized by one or another foreign empire. The eleventh century saw a "Tibetan renaissance" in which new Tibetan Buddhist sects arose,

[16] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 66–69.
[17] Jakob Leschly, "Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2007, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Nyang-Tingngedzin-Zangpo/6205.
[18] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 68.
[19] Ibid., 79–83.

including Nyingma (successors of imperial-era Buddhism), Kadampa (progenitors of the Geluk school), Kagyü, and Sakya.[20] These traditions were supported by local ruling families, which typically claimed some sort of connection to the greats of the imperial period. Sakya originated within the Khön clan, whose ancestors were said to be a Samyé monk and a disciple of Padmasambhava.[21] The religious masters of this family were initially laypeople who carried on the family line, and later celibate monks. They maintained a hereditary succession from uncle to nephew, so did not adopt succession by reincarnation.[22] The most celebrated of the early Sakya masters was the great Indian-educated scholar and monk Sakya Paṇdita or Sapen (Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, 1182-1251). During his lifetime the Mongols under the great Chinggis Khan (1167-1227) and his successors were gaining increasing power in Central Asia, China and eventually Tibet itself. As the various religious factions of Tibet sought the patronage of various branches of the Mongol ruling family, Sapen met in 1246 with Chinggis' grandson Kötan (1206-1251) and gave him Buddhist teachings, an event that is traditionally considered to be the start of Sakya rule. The actual establishment of Mongol-backed Sakya rule over Tibet happened in 1264, when Khubilai Khan (1215-1294) offered the thirteen myriarchies of Tibet to Sakya Paṇdita's nephew Pakpa Lodrö Gyeltsen ('Phags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1235-1280). In exchange Pakpa became Khubilai's preceptor, and "conferred tantric initiation on the emperor, thereby symbolically anointing him as a *cakravartin*, a

[20] Ibid., 94–107.
[21] Ibid., 110.
[22] Ibid., 101–102.

'wheel-turner,' or universal monarch."[23] The Sakya regime would rule until 1350.[24] Because Khubilai Khan's empire ruled from Beijing and took the Chinese dynastic title of Yuan in 1271, the official position of the People's Republic of China is that Tibet became an integral part of China at this time.[25] But aside from the fact that the Mongols were not ethnically and culturally Chinese, Tibetan administration was always completely separate from the Chinese state under the Yuan.[26] The Tibetans have traditionally seen the Yuan rulers as Mongols rather than Chinese.[27]

After the fall of the Sakya regime, Tibet reverted to fragmentation and lay hereditary rulership, but the *chöyön* relationship retained its importance in foreign and domestic affairs. Although the Pakmodrupa, Rinpungpa, and Tsangpa rulers were not religious hierarchs in their own right, they were dedicated patrons of either the Kagyupa or Gelukpa schools.[28] The Pakmodrupa rulers overthrew the Sakya rulers in 1350 under the leadership of Jangchup Gyaltsen (Byang chub rgyal mtshan 1302-1364).[29] They maintained much continuity with the Sakya regime in government, receiving recognition as the Sakya's rightful successors from the Yuan and the Ming emperors.[30] The Ming dynasty, whose rule of China began in 1368, is depicted by the official historiography of the People's Republic of China as ruling

[23] Ibid., 110–112.
[24] Ibid., 116.
[25] Ibid., 112. Elliot Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict: History and Polemics* (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 24–25.
[26] Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict*, 110–112.
[27] This can be seen in Tibetan histories, such as the sketch of historical governments of Tibet found in Ngawang Tsültrim's biography. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:7b.
[28] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 116–139.
[29] Ibid., 117.
[30] Ibid., 118.

Tibet along the same lines as the Yuan, but they actually had little political power.[31] Throughout this era the Ming continued to give titles and seals, and had offices dedicated to Tibetan affairs, but unlike the Mongols, their military power did not extend beyond the border with Tibet.[32] They played only a bit part in the history of Tibet (although they did make an appearance in the biographies of some Tibetan lamas who were invited to the Beijing court). The *Advanced Political History* of W.D. Shakabpa, a former finance minister for the Dalai Lama whose histories make the case for Tibetan independence, mentions the Ming in the context of the fourteenth to seventeenth century era briefly, only to dismiss the Chinese claims.[33] Eliot Sperling, in his examination of Sino-Tibetan relations, confirms this judgment, showing that one supposed Ming military governor of Tibet was completely unknown to Tibetan historians.[34] The exception to the obscurity of the Ming is in the realm of Tibetan Buddhist patronage. Despite a certain Confucian contempt for Tibetan Buddhism on the part of the literati of the bureaucracy, Ming rulers continued Yuan policies of Buddhist patronage, seeking political and sometimes spiritual benefits.[35] Their most favored sect was the Karma Kagyü: the Fifth Karmapa (De bzhin gshegs pa, 1384-1415) was given a spectacular reception in 1403 when he gave tantric initiation to the emperor Yongle (1403-1424), though this did not give the Ming the political influence over Tibetan affairs that they wanted.[36]

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[31] Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict*, 25–26.
[32] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 123. Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict*, 26–27.
[33] W. D. Shakabpa, *One Hundred Thousand Moons: An Advanced Political History of Tibet*, trans. Derek Maher (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1:249.
[34] Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict*, 26.
[35] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 124. Ibid., 124–125.
[36] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 125–126. Peter Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China: A Political History of the Tibetan Institution of Reincarnation* (New York: Columbia University Press,

Rise of the Geluk School and the Dalai Lamas

Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa, 1357-1419), the founder of the Geluk school, "saw himself…as a custodian and rectifier of received tradition" but ended up creating new religious institutions that eventually became dominant in Tibet. He studied with members of all Tibetan traditions, but he saw himself most of all as carrying on the legacy of Kadampa, a school founded by the Indian translator Atiśa (980-1054) in the eleventh century, at the beginning of the Tibetan Renaissance. Thus Geluk had the title of "new Kadampa."[37] Like Atiśa, he focused on ethics (especially strict adherence to the *Vinaya*) as well as textual study, dialectics, and *madhyamaka* philosophy as the foundations to successful tantric practice.[38] Based on Atiśa's texts on the Buddhist path, he wrote *The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path* and *The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra,* which laid out systematic, graduated paths to enlightenment in the sutra and tantra systems.[39] He promoted the transmission of tantra but eschewed its more antinomian elements, focusing on the necessity of discipline. One of his lasting legacies was the Great Prayer Festival (*smon lam chen mo*) held in Lhasa following the Losar (*lo gsar*) new year festival, which received royal Pakmodrupa patronage. The Geluk also received patronage from the Ming; Tsongkhapa declined an invitation to Beijing in 1409 and one of his disciples accepted such an invitation shortly thereafter.[40]

2015), 19–20.

[37] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 119–120.

[38] Ibid.

[39] John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1995), 481–483.

[40] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 126. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:267–268.

The *densa sum* (*gdan sa gsum*), or the three great Geluk monasteries near Lhasa, were another enduring legacy of Tsongkhapa. Tsongkhapa founded Ganden in 1409, and his disciples founded Drepung in 1416 and Sera in 1419.[41] These monasteries were not yet the city-like centers they would later become, but they grew rapidly; in the first century after its founding Drepung had between a thousand and two thousand monks.[42] Prominent Geluk monasteries were founded outside the central Tibetan region of U, including the Panchen Lama's Tashilhunpo in Shigatsé (the capital of Tsang), and Kumbum and Labrang in Amdo, established in cooperation with local rulers friendly to the Geluk.[43]

The Geluk school gained influence in domestic and foreign politics, particularly through the Dalai Lama lineage. The Pakmodrupa (though originally devoted to the Kagyü) became partisans of the Geluk school, while the Rinpungpa, were partisans of the Karmapa and his Karma Kagyü school.[44] Matthew Kapstein states that these sectarian rivalries were ultimately motivated by politics rather than religion.[45] When the Rinpungpa conquered the Lhasa area in 1498, they banned the Geluk from the Great Prayer Festival for nineteen years.[46] The Geluk response came through the *tülku* lineage which came to be known as the Dalai Lamas. Gendün Drupa (Dge 'dun grub pa, 1391-1474), who was posthumously recognized as the first Dalai Lama, had founded the great monastery of Tashilhünpo in Shigatse.[47]

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[41] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 119–121.
[42] Georges Dreyfus, "Drepung: An Introduction," *The Tibetan & Himalaya Library*, 2006, http://www.thlib.org/places/monasteries/drepung/essays/#!essay=/dreyfus/drepung/intro/s/b3.
[43] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 166.
[44] Ibid., 129–130.
[45] Ibid., 130.
[46] Ibid., 129–130.
[47] Ibid., 129. See also Shen Weirong, "The First Dalai Lama Gendün Drup," in *The Dalai Lamas: A*

Gendün Gyatso (Dge ‘dun rgya mtsho, 1476-1542) was recognized as his *tülku* but tensions arose over the two types of succession to the abbacy, election within the monastery or reincarnation. Gendün Gyatso was forced to give up the abbacy of Tashilhunpo, and he moved to Drepung monastery, where his successors lived up to the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Eventually Tashilhunpo came under the aegis of another *tülku* lineage, the Panchen Lamas (the second most important Geluk *tülku* and occasionally a rival of the Dalai Lamas), but this was not until much later.

According to Shakabpa, the Pakmodrupa regained power in Lhasa in 1518 and retained it over the next century with some relatively minor internal conflicts.[48] The Second Dalai Lama moved to Lhasa, and helped restore Geluk control of the Great Prayer Festival. The Pakmodrupa ruler then gave the Dalai Lamas an estate on the grounds of Drepung, the Ganden Podrang (or Ganden Palace), which continued to be the base of the Dalai Lamas’ *labrang* or personal estate for the next century.[49]

The Mongols also became a source of patronage for the Dalai Lamas. The Third Dalai Lama Sönam Gyatso (Bsod nams rgya mtsho, 1543-1588) became one of the most famed teachers of Tibet, and Altan Khan of the Tümed Mongols invited him to his court in 1577. Tibetan hierarchs continued their tradition of finding foreign patronage, while the Mongols wanted Tibetan lamas to give them their blessing as they had done in the days of Khubilai Khan. Altan Khan conferred the title of Dalai

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Visual History, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia, 2005), 32–41.

[48] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:295–297.

[49] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 129–131. Dreyfus, “Drepung: An Introduction.” See also Amy Heller, “The Second Dalai Lama Gendün Gyatso,” in *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia, 2005), 42–51.

Lama on Sonam Gyatso and his two predecessors, and thus the Mongols forged an enduring link with the Dalai Lamas.[50] These ties were strengthened when the Fourth Dalai Lama Yönten Gyatso (Yon tan rgya mtsho, 1589-1616) was recognized in Mongolia as the son of a Mongolian prince.[51] By the time the Fifth Dalai Lama Lobsang Gyatso (Blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617-1682) was recognized, the Geluk school was in trouble. The Tsangpas, Kagyü sectarians like their predecessors the Rinpungpa, conquered Lhasa in 1618 and deposed the Pakmodrupas. They turned on the Geluk school, sacking and temporarily exiling the Sera and Drepung monasteries and placing restrictions on religious practice.[52] Both sects competed for religious patronage over the next decade, the Gelukpa turning to Gushri Khan (1582-1655), ruler of the Qoshot (sometimes spelled Khoshut) tribe, as their champion.[53] In 1642, Gushri Khan defeated the Tsangpa king and brought the Fifth Dalai Lama to power. As Kapstein describes this transition of power: "In a famous symbolic gesture…the victorious Güshri Khan offered the thirteen myriarchies that were the basic administrative units of Tibet under the Sakyapa-Mongol regime to his spiritual master, the Great Fifth."[54]

Ganden Palace: Fifth Dalai Lama and the Desis

The Fifth Dalai Lama was a powerful ruler, unlike past Dalai Lamas, and came to be known by Tibetans as the Great Fifth (*Inga pa chen po*). A common view of his place in Tibetan history can be seen in Thomas Laird's *The Story of Tibet,* a

[50] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 131–132.
[51] Ibid., 133–135.
[52] Ibid., 134–135.
[53] Ibid., 136–137.
[54] Ibid., 137.

journalistic work based on interviews with the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. Laird states that "The Fifth reunified Tibet," controlled Mongol armies, met with the Qing emperor on equal terms, built the Potala, and in short "led a nation."[55] The Fourteenth Dalai Lama describes him as the first king who truly controlled a unified Tibet.[56] His personal rule was an ideal that other Dalai Lamas failed to match: "as for the Seventh through the Twelfth Dalai Lamas, none ruled Tibet as the Fifth had done."[57] Although Tibetan and Western narratives and histories often depict him as a sole, all-powerful ruler, such a picture of early Ganden Palace is complicated by the roles of the Mongolian kings and the Dalai Lama's regents (*desi, sde srid*).

One reason for this image of the Fifth Dalai Lama is that he perceived himself to be the sole ruler of Tibet and promoted himself as such in his biographies.[58] The Dalai Lamas moved into the Potala, which became in addition to his residence, the center of both the religious and secular bureaucracy.[59] The choice of the Potala was a way to show that the Dalai Lama was the true ruler of Tibet, because it had once been the location of Songtsen Gampo's palace and was named after Avalokiteśvara's mountain.[60] While there is some evidence that previous Dalai Lamas were seen as incarnations of Avalokiteśvara (known as Chenrezi in Tibetan), according to Tsyrempilov, the idea took root most strongly in the time of the Fifth

[55] Thomas Laird and Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, Fourteenth Dalai Lama, *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama* (New York: Grove Press : Distributed by Publishers Group West, 2006), 152.
[56] Ibid., 161–163.
[57] Ibid., 196.
[58] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 52.
[59] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 139.
[60] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 52.

Dalai Lama because it legitimized his rule.[61] By sponsoring biographies of previous Dalai Lamas, the Great Fifth established for the first time the lineages of their rebirths going back to Avalokiteśvara, and installed portraits of his lineage in the Potala.[62] The present Fourteenth Dalai Lama describes the Fifth Dalai Lama as the culmination of the master plan of Avalokiteśvara, in which "the remarkable growth of the spiritual and temporal power" culminated in the unification of Tibet under Geluk rule.[63] However, the Fifth Dalai Lama's rule of Tibet was not so straightforward, or uncontested.

The governance of Tibet in the early days of Ganden Palace, in addition to the Dalai Lama, also involved the Mongolian kings. According to Richardson, Gushri Khan "assumed no active part in the administration but sought to institute a constitutional convention in which the Dalai Lama should confine himself principally to religious matters while to conduct civil affairs there should be a minister-regent [the *desi*] appointed by the [Mongolian] King."[64] For Shakabpa, Gushri Khan's lack of political power is shown by the fact that he was equal in rank to the *desi* and only

[61] Nikolay Tsyrempilov, "Dge Lugs Pa Divided: Some Aspects of the Political Role of Tibetan Buddhism in the Expansion of the Qing Dynasty," in *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition (Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the IATS, 2003)*, ed. Bryan J. Cuevas and Kurtis R. Schaeffer (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 52–53. Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 132. Weirong, "The First Dalai Lama Gendün Drup," 33. Leonard van der Kuijp traces the tradition of recognizing incarnations of Avalokiteśvara to the Kadampa tradition, in which Atiśa had recognized his successor Dromtön as such. Since Dromtön was recognized as a prior rebirth of the First Dalai Lama, the Dalai Lamas thus took over this role of bodhisattva patron while maintaining a link to the progenitors of the Kadampa and Geluk traditions. Leonard van der Kuijp, "The Dalai Lamas and the Origins of Reincarnate Lamas," in *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia, 2005), 21–29.

[62] Michael Henss, "The Iconography of the Dalai Lamas," in *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia, 2005), 263–264.

[63] Laird and Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, Fourteenth Dalai Lama, *The Story of Tibet*, 138, 145, 149.

[64] Luciano Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," *T'oung Pao* 47, no. 2 (1959): 377–378.

concerned with the Mongol armies.[65] In the early years of Ganden Palace, Richardson agrees, the Mongols were too concerned with military expeditions elsewhere to try to impose their rule on Tibet.[66] But Schwieger shows documents signed by the Khan and histories in which their rule was considered a joint one, early on.[67] Although there is evidence (later in the Dalai Lama's reign) that the administration had been surrendered along the lines of the grant to the Sakyas, Schwieger considers that the Mongols "did participate in the administration of Tibet."[68] According to Kapstein, even in his initial concession of power to the Dalai Lama, Gushri Khan still claimed supreme kingship.[69] According to the autobiography of the Dalai Lama, it was the Dalai Lama who conferred titles on Gushri before he embarked on his conquest of Tibet, and then after the end of the war he was of the opinion that "the 13 Myriarchies of Tibet…were in their totality offered to me" by the Khan.[70]

To the extent that Gushri Khan did intend to delegate power, it may have been to the *desi*. Petech states that Gushri Khan was the one who appointed the first *desi* Sönam Chöpel (Bsod nams chos 'phel, 1595-1658, r. 1642-1658), and that in fact it was to him rather than the Dalai Lama that power was given.[71] This would

[65] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:359.
[66] Hugh Richardson, "The Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree Appointing Sangs-Rgyas Rgya-Mtsho as Regent," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43, no. 2 (1980): 336–337.
[67] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 52–54.
[68] Ibid., 60.
[69] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 137.
[70] Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, Dalai Lama V, *The Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama*, ed. Samten G. Karmay (Chicago: Serindia, 2014), 130, 166.
[71] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 377–378; Luciano Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early 18th Century: History of the Establishment of Chinese Protectorate in Tibet*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 8.

contradict the reports of some that the Dalai Lama was simply reluctant to exercise political power and therefore appointed regents. Schwieger notes one document in which the "priest" in "patron and priest" is the *desi* rather than the Dalai Lama, terminology that is continually used in the Dalai Lama's autobiography.[72] In this biography, the only time Sonam Chöpel is depicted as having a change of status is when Gushri Khan gave Sonam Chöpel the title of "Dalai Treasurer (*Phyag mdzod*)" which did not obviously indicate a change of roles.[73] When the Dalai Lama was offered the thirteen myriarchies, there was no discussion of appointing Sonam Chöpel to a new political position.[74] Sonam Chöpel took on responsibility for politics, and the Dalai Lama consulted him and Gushri on many subsequent occasions, but this appears to have been a continuation of his prior role as the Dalai Lama's assistant.[75] There are still some oblique references to Sonam Chöpel being a ruler; he was prophesied to rule Tibet (though that prophect may refer to the Dalai Lama), and the people of Lhasa mysteriously called his name as the Dalai Lama performs a ritual for success in battle.[76] Other *desis* were appointed with the assistance of

[72] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 57. Sonam Chöpel is usually referred to as Zhalngo (zhal ngo) in the Dalai Lama's autobiography. Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, Dalai Lama V, *The Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama*, 4.
[73] Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, Dalai Lama V, *The Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama*, 130.
[74] Ibid., 166.
[75] Ibid., 166–172.
[76] Ibid., 120, 158. The translation of the prophetic statement is confusing.The Dalai Lama's guru "said to Zhalngo [i.e. Sonam Chöpel) that he (the Dalai Lama) had the karmic connection to be the leader of Tibet." But the Dalai Lama in response wondered how Sonam Chöpel could become leader of Tibet. given the then-current ascendancy of Tsang It is possible that the translation is mistaken as to whom the prophecy referred, or that the mistake was the Dalai Lama's.

Gushri, but later on the Dalai Lama gained full control of the appointment of the *desi*.[77]

The biographies of Ngawang Tsültrim implicitly recognize the *desis* as a precedent for his regency, or at least as important figures in the history of the Ganden Palace. The Ganden Tripas' biography lists Sönam Chöpel and Gushri Khan as joint conquerors and rulers of Tibet from 1642 until 1658. It then lists the following rulers:

- Drongmé Trinlé Gyatso (Grong smad 'phrin las rgya mtsho) who ruled jointly with Tenzin Dalai Drongmé (Bstan 'dzin da la'i grong smad) for eight years (1660-1668)[78]
- Lobsang Thutob (Blo bzang mthu stobs), ruling for six years (1669-1675)
- Lobsang Chinpa (Blo bzang spyin pa), ruling for three years (1677-1680)
- Desi Sangyé Gyatso who will be discussed below.[79]

Tenzin Dalai was actually not one of the *desis* but successor to Gushri Khan as Mongolian king; Shakabpa describes him as increasing his own responsibilities upon succeeding to Gushri's throne, illustrating the shared nature of rule in the first decades of the Ganden Palace.[80] None of the later kings are listed as joint rulers, and other sources say that the power of the Qoshot kings declined at this time.[81] Tibetan historians like Ngawang Tsültrim's biographers recognized the importance of

[77] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 52–53.
[78] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 9a.
[79] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:8b–9b.
[80] Ibid., 2:8b. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:361.
[81] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 56–58.

desis in carrying out the political administration of Tibet throughout the Fifth Dalai Lama's reign, although they still saw the Fifth Dalai Lama as preeminent.

Although they were not powerful abbots or *tülkus* like the later regents, the *desis* tended to have religious vows of some sort or be attached to the Dalai Lama's *labrang*.[82] According to the Dalai Lama's decree appointing Sangyé Gyatso, "of those ministers who progressively increased the power of the Dga'-ldan Pho-brang in its two spheres [this included personal attendants dating back to the Third Dalai Lama, in addition to the *desis*]…none except for the Sde-pa Blo-bzang sbyin-pa has followed the example of fully dedicated acceptance of the Bka'-gdams-pa way of deliverance…and has maintained a life of celibate purity."[83] Lobsang Thuthob was a monk official before being *desi*, but was dismissed and disrobed for having an affair.[84] Sönam Chöpel and Trinlé Gyatso were assistants to his *labrang* from early on, when he was merely a religious figure with no political power.[85] All *desis,* even those who were laypeople, carried out their office with shaven heads and monastic robes.[86]

The *desis* may make it appear that the Great Fifth was actually a mere figurehead, or even a puppet, as later Dalai Lamas were, but there is still good reason to believe that he maintained ultimate control. In Kapstein's view, "the Fifth Dalai Lama was generally reticent to exercise political authority himself, and had established the office of prime minister to oversee governmental and administrative

[82] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 334–339.
[83] Ibid., 333–334.
[84] Ibid., 339.
[85] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 335, 338–339.
[86] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 338–339.

affairs."[87] There is some evidence of this reluctance in the Dalai Lama's own writings. According to his own autobiography, when the *desi* Sonam Chöpel asked him to issue seals shortly after the 1642 victory (which seems to be a request for the Dalai Lama to take on more responsibility in political affairs), he thought, "I had neither the competence nor desire to deal with these worldly affairs" and refused.[88] But he had been accepting petitions and conducting negotiations with the people of Tsang at the same time, in addition to exerting authority over the *desi*.[89] The Dalai Lama's decree at the end of his life appointing Desi Sangyé Gyatso also provides evidence that he was reluctant to rule personally: "I was unable by myself to take the government in both the religious and the temporal sphere." On the other hand, since the *desis* were still supposed to "follow his instructions," it again appears that the Dalai Lama was delegating power rather than relinquishing it.[90] One intriguing feature of the historical narrative in Ngawang Tsültrim's biography is that the Dalai Lama is described as taking personal responsibility for government at two intervals in the absence of a *desi*: "the Dalai Lama took up the responsibility of ruling (*srid skyong*) for three whole years [1658-1661]" and again in 1668.[91] He apparently had full control over the appointments of *desis* and made sure they were loyal to him; later Dalai Lamas would not have such influence over their regents. Richardson describes the Dalai Lama as asserting a right to influence the decision in the 1660

[87] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 141.
[88] Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, Dalai Lama V, *The Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama*, 172.
[89] Ibid., 169–170.
[90] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 332.
[91] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:9a. *Sikyong* is one of the names for the later regents, the title of Ngawang Tsültrim, but here it is simply a verb "to rule."

appointment of Trinlé Gyatso, although he ended up ratifying the choice of the Qoshot kings.[92] When Lobsang Thutob was appointed in 1669, the Dalai Lama made the decision himself, although the Mongols officially gave their approval.[93] The regents were depicted in Tibetan official documents as deriving their powers from the Dalai Lama.[94] Even when the *desi* took care of day-to-day politics, the Dalai Lama was still the ultimate power in Tibet.

More than previous forms of government, the Ganden Palace was based on "a reciprocal relationship between the religious and secular branches of government (*chösi nyiden*)."[95] Schwieger sees this union of religion and state as "total subordination of the secular sphere to the religious sphere," with tax revenue and land grants being directed almost exclusively to the monasteries after the Fifth Dalai Lama's rise to power. Generally, the Geluk school was the beneficiary of this largesse, but the Ganden Palace also favored other schools like the Nyingma.[96] The Dalai Lama was incorporated into the preexisting structures of the Geluk school, giving him at least nominal responsibility over appointments of the most prominent officials such as the Ganden Tripa.[97] The Panchen Lama became increasingly prominent and had close ties with the Dalai Lama, in which they recognized each

[92] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 338. This account is based on the autobiography, which is clearly trying to portray the decision as that of the Great Fifth alone. According to the autobiography, he consulted his officials and accepted their recommendation of the best candidates, although Richardson does not consider the list of candidates to be plausible.
[93] Ibid., 338–339.
[94] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 53–57.
[95] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 138–139.
[96] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 60.
[97] Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 481.

others' incarnations, tying the once rival Tsang region (Southwestern Tibet) to the Geluk hegemony in U (Central Tibet).[98]

The Qing and the Dalai Lama

The Fifth Dalai Lama's coming to power in 1642 coincided closely with the rise of the Manchu Qing, who invaded China from the north, and the Dalai Lama and emperor soon began to form a patron-priest relationship (*mchon yon*). The Manchus originated from a number of initially disunited Jurchen tribes living in modern-day Manchuria, whose ancestors had briefly conquered northern China as the eleventh century Jin dynasty.[99] They were gradually unified in the sixteenth century, and took the ethnic name Manchu and the dynastic name Qing in 1636 under Emperor Hung Taiji (1592-1643 r. 1626-1643), as they conquered the Ming.[100] Early scholarship saw them as a Chinese dynasty, or at least as one that became heavily Sinicized over time, but recent scholars like Mark Elliot have argued that they retained a distinct Manchu ethnic identity, which carried over into religious practices.[101] They did adopt the Chinese language to a greater extent than the Yuan,[102] and the Tibetans saw the Qing (unlike the Yuan) as Chinese.[103] But Elliot states that "A consensus is growing, among some scholars, that even if the Manchus were acculturated and ruled in part as Chinese, there always remained something palpably 'different' about

[98] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 139.
[99] Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 74–84, http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft7n39p1f5&brand=ucpress; Mark C Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), 47–52.
[100] Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 3, 47.
[101] Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 32–35.
[102] Ibid., 346–347.
[103] This can be seen in the long biography, for instance Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:40a. The emperor was called *rgya nag gong ma*, "the emperor of China".

them."[104] He refers here to scholars like Pamela Crossley. In her *A Translucent Mirror* it would be more accurate to say that she problematizes both identities as being constructed over time, and argues that the empire had an ideology of "simultaneity" in which they could act as Manchus, Chinese, Mongols, Uighurs, and Tibetans.[105] Manchus did maintain the Confucian traditions of China (or at least frequently resorted to Confucian rhetoric) but also patronized every other tradition of the empire, including Manchu shamanic rituals and Tibetan Buddhism.[106] The Qing moved quickly to gain the loyalty of the Mongols, claiming to be the true successors of Chinggis Khan.[107] Since the Mongols who followed the early Manchu leaders were devotees of Tibetan Buddhism, the religion became "a source of supernatural aid to the ruler and the source of an established code of dominion over the 'Mongols.'"[108]

The Mongol devotion to the Dalai Lama was one reason for the Qing's decision to establish ties with the Fifth Dalai Lama shortly after their (and his) rise to power.[109] The Dalai Lama was invited to Beijing around 1652 and met the emperor Shunzhi (1638-1661; r. 1644-1661), a diplomatic mission of supreme importance, showing that the Dalai Lama was more than just a figurehead.[110] Ngawang Tsültrim's biographer (writing at a time when Qing control of Tibet was stronger) describes the Fifth Dalai Lama as entering into a patron-priest relationship with the emperor at this point, receiving an edict that gave him titles and a seal.[111] Rockhill and Shakabpa

[104] Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 32.
[105] Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 3–6, 11–14.
[106] Ibid., 232–233.
[107] Ibid., 311–327.
[108] Ibid., 311–312, 328.
[109] Ibid., 313.
[110] Ibid., 329.
[111] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:9a. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar,"

analyze the protocol of this visit in detail. The protocol became an obvious focus of political propaganda for both sides. Shakabpa emphasizes how this meeting reveals a relationship between equals, disputing Chinese sources that claim that the Dalai Lama submitted to the emperor, i.e. by kowtowing.[112] Rockhill (based largely on Chinese sources, and with less obvious political motives) concludes that it was a meeting of equals, based on the fact that the Dalai Lama's entrance to Chinese territory was negotiated, and on the willingness of the emperor to meet the Dalai Lama at a distance from Beijing.[113] A patron-priest relationship was established that expressed the new diplomatic relationship between Tibet and the Qing, which did not yet involve Qing political power over Tibet.

Desi Sangyé Gyatso

The last and most well known of the Dalai Lama's *desis* was Sangyé Gyatso (Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, 1653-1705). Like the previous *desis,* he had been chosen at a young age to be educated for this position, and brought to the Potala in 1660 at age seven. He was still quite young when he actually took the throne in 1679, toward the end of the Dalai Lama's life.[114] Sangyé Gyatso's appointment also involved an element of hereditary succession (as was the case with a few previous *desis)*, Sangyé Gyatso being the nephew of the previous *desi*, Trinlé Gyatso.[115] The Dalai Lama confirmed the selection by other means: drawing of lots, prophecies, and

9b.
[112] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:354–357.
[113] W. Woodhill Rockhill, "The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa and Their Relations with the Manchu Emperors of China," *T'oung Pao* 11, no. 1 (1910): 13–18.
[114] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 340, 342.
[115] Ibid., 341–343.

consulting oracles.[116] Shakabpa says that this appointment made Sangyé Gyatso the equal of the Dalai Lama; the previous regents are described as being under the Dalai Lama.[117] Sangyé Gyatso's interest in religious practice delayed his taking up his post: “He request[ed]…he may keep his religious vows for two years”—but he ultimately decided to remain a layman and accept the post of *desi.*[118] “Whatever is done by him shall be the same as if it were done by me,” the Dalai Lama ordered, “and no rumors that there is a split between the *desi* and the Dalai Lama are to be tolerated.”[119] This emphasized the strength of Desi Sangyé Gyatso’s position, a functional equality with the Dalai Lama. Ngawang Tsültrim’s biography credits him with an unusual number of accomplishments, including construction of the upper Potala and the Fifth Dalai Lama’s stupa, writing ritual texts and biographies of the Fifth and Sixth Dalai Lama, and “being a pandit who knows the five sciences.”[120] This meant he was an accomplished scholar, especially in the field of “medicine, astronomy, poetics, and history.”[121] Sangyé Gyatso was perhaps best known for building the medical school at Chakpori in Lhasa in 1696, the first dedicated institution of its kind in Tibet, with a curriculum based on Sangyé Gyatso’s own medical scholarship. [122]

[116] Ibid., 332–333.
[117] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:348, 368.
[118] Richardson, “Fifth Dalai Lama’s Decree,” 333, 342–343.
[119] Ibid., 334.
[120] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:9b–10a.
[121] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 142.
[122] Janet Gyatso, *Being Human in a Buddhist World: An Intellectual History of Medicine in Early Modern Tibet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 95–96, 114–115.

Sixth and Seventh Dalai Lamas: Ganden Palace in flux

The death of the Great Fifth in 1682 meant that a regent was needed more than ever. There was no precedent for the political succession of the Dalai Lama incarnations. Aside from the fact that the new Dalai Lama would not be old enough to rule, potential problems with the succession included disputed claimants to the title, or the selection of an incarnation who was not capable of ruling. The legitimacy of an alternate ruler was not established enough for Desi Sangyé Gyatso to openly rule as regent as soon as the Fifth Dalai Lama died. Sangyé Gyatso chose to conceal the Dalai Lama's death, claiming that the Dalai Lama was in meditation retreat. Meanwhile, he secretly recognized a Sixth Dalai Lama (Tshangs dbyang rgya mtsho, 1683-1706), and arranged for him to be educated.[123] He maintained the ruse for fourteen years, but the increasingly powerful Qing empire became suspicious, and Sangyé Gyatso revealed the death of the Fifth Dalai Lama, as well as the identity of the Sixth, in 1696.[124] When the ruse was discovered by the Chinese and Mongols, it turned the emperor and the new Qoshot king Lhazang Khan against the regent.[125] These tensions were exacerbated by the *desi*'s friendship with the Dzungar Mongols (enemies of both the Qoshots and the Qing), and above all the behavior of the new Dalai Lama.

Desi Sangyé Gyatso's selection process did not succeed in recognizing a Dalai Lama that was an effective ruler.[126] The Sixth Dalai Lama reluctantly took the throne and assumed full power in 1702, but he proved more interested in drinking

[123] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 142.
[124] Ibid., 142–143.
[125] W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 124–128.
[126] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 103–106.

and womanizing than fulfilling his religious and political duties, and attempted to give back his monastic vows.[127] By 1703, war had broken out between the *desi* and Lhazang Khan and an uneasy truce saw Desi Sangyé Gyatso give up his title and name his son Ngawang Rinchen as *desi*, basically a puppet.[128] The truce did not last, and after Lhazang Khan won a decisive victory in 1706, Sangyé Gyatso was beheaded and his son went in exile to the Qing court.[129] The Sixth Dalai Lama was also deposed by Lhazang Khan at this time, exiled to Amdo and probably murdered. The last of the *desis,* Lhagyel Rabten (Lha rgyal rab brtan, 1645-1720), was appointed by Lhazang Khan but the Khan had become the real power in Tibet, and the position was quickly abolished.[130] Lhazang Khan declared the Sixth Dalai Lama an inauthentic reincarnation and declared Ngawang Yeshé Gyatso (Ngag dbang ye shes rgya mtsho*,* 1686-1717) to be the true incarnation, a choice that was not recognized by most Tibetans.[131]

The Dalai Lamas ended up being sidelined from power for the next half century (1700-1750), as Tibet became subject to lay rulers and contending foreign powers, with the Qing eventually coming out on top. Petech's history, *China and Tibet in the Early Eighteenth Century*, provides a good account of struggles involving Mongols, the Qing, and internal factions in Tibet during this era of the Seventh Dalai Lama (unfortunately he only covers the years 1700 to 1750 and stops short of the era when Ngawang Tsültrim ruled). After the death of the Sixth Dalai Lama,

[127] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 143.
[128] Ibid., 144.
[129] Ibid., 145.
[130] Richardson, “Fifth Dalai Lama’s Decree,” 337.
[131] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 15–20.

supporters of the *desi*'s candidate recognized Kelzang Gyatso (Bskal bzang rgya mtsho, 1708-1757) as the Seventh Dalai Lama, against Lhazang Khan's puppet Dalai Lama, and gave him refuge in Kokonor.[132] The Dzungar Mongols invaded Central Tibet in 1717 with the ostensible aim of enthroning Kelzang Gyatso, but they quickly exhausted the goodwill of the Tibetans by looting and pillaging, persecuting the Nyingmapas, and reneging on their promise to bring the Dalai Lama to power.[133] The Qing invaded in 1720, intending to subdue the last Mongol tribe that had not submitted to them, and brought the Seventh Dalai Lama with them. This invasion was the beginning of the end of the Mongol power in Tibet.[134] The Qing would periodically intervene in Tibetan affairs militarily through the eighteenth century; this was the first of four major Qing invasions. Aside from strategic considerations of border defense, the Qing were motivated by a desire to patronize Tibetan Buddhism, and thereby consolidate Mongol support.[135] The Qing followed the Mongols in their increasing favoritism toward the Geluk sect.[136] By most accounts the Qing were not opposed by Tibetans, due to this concern for Buddhist institutions. Additionally, Crossley sees the Manchus and Mongolians as (at least originally) being culturally similar.[137] It would be misleading to see the Qing arrival as a Chinese conquest of

[132] Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 133–134.; Petech, *China and Tibet*, 17–19.
[133] Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 137.; Petech, *China and Tibet*, 51–54.
[134] Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 319–320. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:419–420. Petech, *China and Tibet*, 66–73.
[135] Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 327–329.
[136] Ibid., 238–239.
[137] Ibid., 311–312. Elliot's *The Manchu Way* discusses the gradual sinicization of the Qing officials and Eight Banner armies (composed of Manchus and Mongols, and some Han Chinese); this did bring a degree of Chinese influence to Lhasa. Elliott, *The Manchu Way*.

Tibet, as it certainly did not lead to Chinese dominance in the religious or cultural sphere .

The defeat of the Dzungars did not immediately lead to a government in which the Qing had a direct role, but their power soon began to increase.[138] Following the invasion, the Dalai Lama held the position of "an honoured figure-head, with no power whatsoever," partly because he was too young and partly because the Qing may not have wanted him to take power.[139] Government was in the hands of a cabinet composed of the aristocratic governors of different regions of Tibet.[140] The rivalries caused by this arrangement led to the 1728 civil war in which Polhané (Pho lha nas, 1689-1747) took power as *miwang* (*mi dbang*) or "king". These other rulers of Tibet sometimes appeared in the list of regents, but calling them "regents" is a misnomer given that their powers did not really derive from the Dalai Lama.[141] Polhané's ascendancy is also significant because it brought to Tibet the *ambans*, or imperial residents, and a permanent Qing garrison. During the civil war Emperor Yongzheng sent troops to Lhasa in support of Polhané, who had won their favor.[142] Because the Qing blamed the Seventh Dalai Lama's court for intriguing with the Dzungars, the Dalai Lama was exiled from Lhasa for some time, further sidelining him from power.[143] Wars with the Dzungars continued, and even after they

[138] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:447–448.
[139] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 79–81.
[140] Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 140–144.
[141] Petech calls Polhané a regent at one point (Petech, *China and Tibet*, 241.) but elsewhere identifies 1706-1757 as a second period in which Tibet did not have regents because the Dalai Lama was not part of the political structure. Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 378.
[142] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 145–146.
[143] Ibid., 151–153. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 144.

were defeated in the mid-eighteenth century, they remained very much in the Qing consciousness and influenced their Tibet policy.[144]

The political stability provided by Polhané's rule did not last, as Polhané's son and successor Gyurmé Namgyel (‘Gyur med rnam rgyal, c. 1700-1750) soon ran into trouble with the Qing.[145] He complained to the *ambans* against the oppression of the Manchu armies, and further aroused suspicions by making friendly contacts with the Dzungars.[146] In Shakabpa’s account, the *ambans* invited the unsuspecting king to a reception, ambushed and killed him.[147] After the treacherous killing of Gyurmé Namgyel by the *ambans*, some of his officials instigated riots, which killed the *ambans* and other Qing who were living in the city. Petech describes the rebels as consisting largely of a mob of some minor officials and the “dregs of the populace,” although Shakabpa states that the Tibetan army was also involved.[148] At that point the Qing sent troops to restore order.[149] The Dalai Lama as well as the Ganden Tripa took the side of the Qing in helping to contain the rebellion, even before the reinforcements arrived, so that the Qing armies had no need to actually fight.[150]

Shakabpa characteristically sees this as a nationalistic uprising.[151] But despite the features of collective Tibetan identity that had developed by this time,[152] not everyone supported independence. At the time of the uprising, the rebels certainly

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[144] Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 319–320.
[145] Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 149. Gyurmé Namgyel’s birthdate is unknown.
[146] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 228.
[147] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:469–470.
[148] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 216–219.
[149] Ibid., 216–222. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:470.
[150] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 218. Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 153.
[151] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:471.
[152] Georges Dreyfus, “Cherished Memories, Cherished Communities: Proto-Nationalism in Tibet,” in *The History of Tibet*, ed. Alex McKay, vol. 2 (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 496–497.

saw Tibetan identity as antagonistic with the Qing, but the Geluk establishment (including the Seventh Dalai Lama himself!) did not. According to Tsyrempilov, reactions to the Qing were influenced by internal factional struggles among the Tibetans, with the Geluk establishment (especially monastic leaders) seeing the Qing emperors as important patrons.[153] Although other Dalai Lamas often desired independence from the Qing, in this case the Qing were key to bringing the Seventh Dalai Lama back to power. Families of the aristocracy were also divided between supporters of the Qing, like the Doring family who remained influential in the cabinet, and opponents of the Qing, like Gyurmé Namgyel's relatives who lost their aristocratic status.[154] While the Seventh Dalai Lama did remain religiously important in this period and played a part in its politics (though not as ruler), these events show that the future of the Dalai Lamas was not assured and that it was not a given that the administration of Tibet would remain in their hands.

The Qing reassertion of authority after this rebellion brought about major changes to the government of Tibet. Petech describes the post-1750 era as a drab "colonial period" but rather than being a time of political stasis, many of the characteristic institutions of Ganden Palace date to this time and not, as many assume, the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama.[155] Western scholars see the reforms as largely a Qing creation,[156] while Shakabpa claims they were inspired by the Tibetans

[153] Tsyrempilov, "Dge Lugs Pa Divided," 55–59.
[154] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 54–55, 211–216. Petech, *China and Tibet*, 219–221.
[155] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 368.
[156] Luciano Petech, *Aristocracy and Government in Tibet, 1728-1959* (Rome: Istituo Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1973).; David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 225. Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 147–159.

themselves. Shakabpa describes these changes as a modest reform of the cabinet without any change in the Dalai Lama's authority, in keeping with his argument that Qing intervention did not interrupt the continuity of Tibetan polity.[157] Petech by contrast sees a transformation of Tibet into a state based on "the spiritual power of the dGe-lug-pa sect and the military force of the Manchu empire," a Qing "protectorate" that remained in place until 1912.[158] While Tibetans could hardly have acted independently of the Qing at this time, some Tibetans made out well and would have hadreason to support the reforms. Power shifted away from the lay aristocracy to the monasteries which were patronized by the Qing.[159] Richardson and Snellgrove in their *Cultural History of Tibet* also see the reforms as diminishing the power of the lay aristocracy and allowing the Geluk hierarchy to acquire greater dominance. The *kashag* (*bka' shag*) or cabinet was reformed to minimize the influence of the regional factions. Cabinet officials would be appointed by the Dalai Lama and the *ambans* without regard to region, and included a monk official (who headed the branch of the government that dealt with monasteries) as a sign of increasing monastic influence.[160] Snellgrove and Richardson describe the resulting government as a bureaucracy, with monk officials being trained under the Geluk educational system and lay nobility forming a "civil service" and receiving estates directly from the government. The Dalai Lamas, even those that lacked personal

[157] Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 150–151.
[158] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 235, 260.
[159] Ibid., 222–223.
[160] Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 150–151; Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 161.

influence, continued to provide the spiritual warrant and authority of the government.[161]

At the same time, the powers of the *ambans* were augmented to give the Qing more of a say in the day-to-day running of Tibetan affairs.[162] The *ambans* became primarily responsible for communication between Tibet and the imperial court, acting as the mouthpiece of the emperor and relaying messages to him from Tibetan officials.[163] They had joint authority with the Dalai Lama over the cabinet, their consent being necessary to make important decisions.[164] This was also the point when the Seventh Dalai Lama was given formal political power for the first time, which he would hold until his death in 1757. The restoration of the Dalai Lama's power is seen as a Qing concession by some scholars like Kapstein, though Petech describes it as a restoration of ancient rights without much self-conscious reflection on the part of the Qing. But Petech also implies that the formal authority of the Dalai Lama over Ganden Palace dated from this time, at least from the standpoint of constitutional theory (given the complicated power-sharing arrangements at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama).[165]

Eighth Dalai Lama and the monastic regency

In 1757, Tibet again faced the problem of succession when the Seventh Dalai Lama died. The solution was a new kind of regency. Shakabpa describes the decision to appoint a regent thus:

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[161] Snellgrove and Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, 228.
[162] Josef Kolmaš and Orientální ústav (Československá akademie věd), *The Ambans and Assistant Ambans of Tibet: A Chronological Study* (Prague: Oriental Institute, 1994), 9.
[163] Ibid., 6, 9.
[164] Ibid., 9.
[165] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 255.

> Immediately after the death of the seventh Dalai Lama, his attendants, members of the Kashag, and Tibetan government officials met to discuss whether a regent should be appointed to represent the future Eighth Dalai Lama or whether the Kashag should assume the duties of the Dalai Lama. It was finally decided to appoint a regent.

The sixth Demo incarnation (De mo Ngag dbang 'jam dpal bde legs rgya mtsho, r. 1757-1777) was appointed as regent to serve in the minority of the Eighth Dalai Lama.[166] According to the article in Lobsang Trinlé's *Dungkar's Great Dictionary* (*Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*), a Tibetan encyclopedic dictionary published in the People's Republic of China, the decision to appoint Demo was the *amban*'s and ultimately the emperor's, although they did take advice of the Tibetan cabinet and monastic leaders.[167] Other sources, including Ngawang Tsültrim's biography, do confirm that the emperor formally appointed regents from the mid-eighteenth century until late in the nineteenth century.[168] Ngawang Jampel Gelek Gyatso was the sixth incarnation of the Demo lineage. In addition to being a prominent *tülku*, Demo was closely tied to the big Geluk monasteries, having close connections with Drepung and its Loseling college from the fifteenth century.[169] His power was legitimized by his ties to the examination system, as well as his service to the Dalai Lama as personal attendant.[170] He and his previous incarnations hailed from Kongpo in Kham,

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[166] Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 153.
[167] Blo bzang 'phrin las, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2002), 1090. Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 382–393.
[168] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 162. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:12b. By the time of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dalai Lamas, the Qing had less influence on the appointment of regents
[169] Blo bzang 'phrin las, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*, 1090. The biographical page at TBRC calls him the seventh incarnation, but it seems to be counting an incarnation twice. "Dkon mchog 'byung gnas (P433)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://tbrc.org/#!rid=P433.
[170] Blo bzang 'phrin las, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*, 1090.

yet another example of *tülkus* and political rulers being brought in from regions outside the domains of Central Tibet.[171]

This began a 150-year era in which appointed regents dominated the Tibetan administration.[172] It corresponded to Petech's third period of the Tibetan regency (1757-1895), when "the regent is [theoretically] only the vicegerent exercising the secular and disciplinary rights of the Dalai-Lama during the latter's minority" and the decision to appoint such a figure was the emperor's.[173] He describes the regency in this form as an ad hoc, temporary office which served as a "caretaker of the Dalai-Lama's sovereignty."[174]

Demo's appointment was the beginning of a trend toward appointing prominent monks and reincarnations, with ties to the great monasteries and the Qing court, to the regency. Prominent *tülkus* (*sprul sku*) or incarnate lamas came to dominate the regency (including lamas of the Demo, Tsemönling, and Kundeling incarnation lineages), and were given the rank of *hothogthu* (*ho thog thu*),[175] a Mongolian title which originally designated *tülkus* in general, but came to designate a position in the hierarchy of lamas second only to the Dalai and Panchen Lamas.[176] The dominance by particular *tülku* lineages was not yet established in the eighteenth

[171] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 30.
[172] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 159–161. Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 242. L. A Waddell, *Tibetan Buddhism: With Its Mystic Cults, Symbolism and Mythology, and in Its Relation to Indian Buddhism.* (New York: Dover Publications, 1895), 253.
[173] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 378. Petech, *China and Tibet*, 242, 260.
[174] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 242.
[175] Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 186. Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 378. The spelling *qutuqtu* is also common.
[176] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 35–36.

century to the same degree, but ties to the Geluk monastic system, and existing lineages associated with them, still mattered quite a bit. Schwieger states that the regents' "powers did not derive from their *tülku* status per se" because they served at the pleasure of the emperor, and in general were instruments of Qing power over Tibet's religio-political system.[177] However, their *tülku* status was important because of their connections to the great monasteries, and in the relationships (both positive and negative) the lineages had with the emperor.[178]

The regency is seen by many authors as the part of a trend of increasing Qing control and a decline of Tibetan culture. Geoffrey Samuel and Georges Dreyfus see increasing scholasticism and diminishing originality in Tibetan Buddhism in this era. Tibetan cultural forms became ossified as outside influence diminished, partly because the Qing encouraged isolation.[179] Hugh Richardson, a onetime British colonial officer who is sympathetic to the Tibetan cause, depicts as symptoms of political decline the ascendancy of the regents over the "legitimate" rulers (the Dalai Lamas), the intrigues to which the regency was prone, and the growing interventionism of the Qing.[180] Shakabpa, however, implicitly disputes the equation of the regency with decline, and his biographical sketches of the three regents of the late eighteenth century (Demo, Ngawang Tsültrim/Tsemönling, and Tatsak/Kundeling) depict them as capable rulers.[181] Shakabpa believes that although

[177] Ibid., 160.
[178] Ibid., 161, 171.
[179] Georges Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 28–29. Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993). Snellgrove and Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, 230
[180] Hugh Richardson, *A Short History of Tibet* (New York: Dutton, 1962), 158. Ibid., 228–230
[181] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:493, 506. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 153.

"early regents were conscientious lamas," the later ones, in the nineteenth century, "acquired the custom of misusing their powers to further their own interests."[182]

Melvyn Goldstein's theory of the "circulation of estates" explains how government by regents could be related to the weakness of the Dalai Lamas and corruption in government. Monasteries and their aristocratic supporters, Goldstein claims, competed for a limited resource, namely productive land.[183] Land could only be acquired through government redistribution, via rewards to the favored and confiscations from the disfavored. This provided an incentive for intrigue at the highest levels of government, since monasteries could gain more influence if they kept the Dalai Lamas weak and elevated their own lamas and abbots to power.[184] Although Goldstein's is the best (if not the only) theoretical treatment of the Tibetan regency, it is short on specific events and biographical details and does not fully explain the religious forces at work in this system; monasteries and incarnation lineages are chiefly treated only in their capacity as landowners without reference to religious goals and concerns.[185]

On March 1, 1777, Demo Rinpoché died, raising the question of who should succeed him as ruler of Tibet.[186] It was ultimately decided not to have the Dalai Lama rule Tibet, and Ngawang Tsültrim was appointed as regent, taking office on September 17, 1777.[187] The Panchen Lama died on December 28, 1780, removing a

[182] Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 153. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:451.
[183] Melvyn C. Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (1973): 448–451, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2052683.
[184] Ibid., 452.
[185] Ibid., 448–452.
[186] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 383.
[187] Ibid.

powerful spiritual and political figure from the Tibetan political scene.[188] The emperor gave the Dalai Lama the seals of office on July 21, 1781, but Ngawang Tsültrim continued on as regent. According to Shakabpa, this was at the request of the Dalai Lama who did not want to take political power.[189] He continued as regent until June 24, 1786, when he was recalled to the Qing court to take up the position of imperial preceptor (*tham ka bla ma*).[190] Subsequently, the Dalai Lama, according to Petech, "conducted personally the government of Tibet during three years [1786-1789]."[191]

Having gained true power, the Eighth Dalai Lama soon confronted Tibet's most significant crisis of the eighteenth century, the war with the Gorkhas of Nepal. As it initially went poorly for Tibet and the Dalai Lama, the war would be crucial to the future of Tibetan-Qing relations and the political position of the regent. The initial motives (or at least pretext) for the war included economic disputes related to the circulation of devalued coins and the salt trade, as well as a proxy war over Sikkim.[192] Modern Tibetan sources, and to some degree contemporary Chinese and Tibetan sources, depict the war as having a sectarian component, blaming it on the Kagyü Sharmapa incarnation (Zhwa dmar pa Chos grub rgya mtsho, 1742-1792), who conspired with the Gorkhas in an attempt to gain the Panchen Lama's lands.[193] In the summer of 1788, the Gorkhas invaded and conquered some border regions of Tsang, Kyirong and Nyanang, and advanced on Shekar fort, threatening Shigatse,

[188] Ibid., 384n3.
[189] Ibid., 384. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:503.
[190] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:225b.
[191] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 384–385.
[192] Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 157–158.
[193] Ibid., 157. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:308b. Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 57–58. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:509–510.

the Panchen Lama's seat. At this point the Qing armies entered the action. Shakabpa portrays their intervention throughout the war as half-hearted and or even destructive toward Tibet, with the Tibetans taking the initiative in battle.[194] But most other sources see this as a largely Qing-fought war, at least to the extent that Qing intervention was eventually decisive.[195] The Tibetan armies did not fare well in this first phase (Shakabpa blames the Qing for pressuring Tibet to make peace), and Tibet was forced to sign a humiliating treaty with the Gorkhas in 1789, largely accepting the Nepalese demands and agreeing to pay tribute.[196]

At this point, the emperor decided that the Dalai Lama was not capable of ruling Tibet on his own. Tatsak Rinpoché (Rta tshag Ye shes blo bzang bstan pa'i mgon po, 1760-1810, also called Kundeling),[197] was appointed on May 26, 1789 as "an active grand Lama, to conduct the administration in agreement with the Dalai-Lama."[198] Petech states that he practically superseded the Dalai Lama, given that the emperor ordered the *kashak* to obey him. He was therefore effectively equivalent to Ngawang Tsültrim and the other regents.[199] Shakabpa describes him as the "Dalai Lama's assistant" and "Vice-Regent."[200] Corruption in Tibetan administration continued, from the emperor's perspective, and Tatsak may have been seen as being too close to the troublesome advisers who surrounded the Dalai Lama

[194] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:518–521, 544–546.
[195] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 175–176.
[196] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:509–521; Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 160–161.
[197] Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics," 448.
[198] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 161–163.
[199] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 385. Schwieger simply calls him a full regent from this point: Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 172.
[200] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:507; Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 163.

(including the Dalai Lama's brothers).[201] Seeing Ngawang Tsültrim as a capable leader, the emperor ordered him to return to Tibet as regent, on September 28, 1790, and in exchange Tatsak Rinpoché swapped places with him as the *thamka lama*.[202] Ngawang Tsültrim did not serve long in this role because he died on April 28, 1791.[203]

[201] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:327b. Schwieger disputes that Tatsak was considered part of the bad clique (although he may have been blamed for not taking full control of the government), quoting an imperial order that depicted Tatsak as an opponent of the Dalai Lama's brothers. Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 163.
[202] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 386.
[203] Ibid.

Chapter 2: Terminology

Before considering the life of Ngawang Tsültrim, it is necessary to briefly explain a number of concepts that are relevant to Buddhist kingship, Tibetan polity, and the regency. Any study of Tibetan polity must begin by considering the relationship between religious and political leadership, a relationship that is traditionally described as the *luknyi* (*lugs gnyis*), "two traditions," or the *chösi sungdrel* (*chos srid zung 'brel*), "union of religion and politics." Throughout Tibetan history, *chöyön* (*mchod yon*) or "patron and priest" relationships were formed between political patrons—Mongols and later Chinese—and Tibetan religious preceptors. The rulers exchanged political and material support for the religious legitimation provided by lamas. Any study of Ganden Palace and the Dalai Lama must also consider *tülku* reincarnation lineages, and the particular challenges of this unique form of succession, which resulted in the creation of the regency. The English term "regent" itself has been confusingly used to translate a number of Tibetan terms, each of which have referred to different political roles with varying relationships to the Dalai Lama's rule. Exploring all these terms will help to clarify Ngawang Tsültrim's precise role within Ganden Palace and his place in the history of Tibetan rulers.

Two traditions (*chösi sungdrel* and *luknyi*)

According to Peter Schwieger, Tibet's two traditions, *luknyi,* of combined religious and political rule, *chösi sungdrel*, began with the Sakya regime.[204] The modern Tibetan historian Lobsang Trinlé states that the rule of the Sakya lama

[204] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 50.

Pakpa was the beginning of the *chösi sungdrel*, defined as a system of government in which high-ranking clerics filled the positions of both political and religious leadership.[205] Given this union, were Tibetan religion and politics inextricably combined, or were they two separate things that Tibetan governments happened to bring together? Marina Illich maintains that there was no clear conceptual separation between religion and politics in Tibet and India, since the distinction is only maintained in "post-Enlightenment Western discourse on secularism." Though the words *chos* (dharma or religion) and politics (*srid*) might seem to imply the existence of two separate spheres, they were "mutually imbricated domains that constitute contiguous facets of a single cosmological order."[206] In this way, terms such as *luknyi sungdrel* stressed the unity of religion and politics. Lay rulers, no less than monastic rulers, were described as "masters of the two traditions," a title that applied to any ruler of Ganden Palace.[207]

But the etymology of a term like *chösi sungdrel* does imply a conceptual distinction between religion (*chö*) and politics (*si*), and religion and politics are frequent topics of discussion on their own terms. The law of dharma was traditionally compared into a "soft silken knot," the secular law of the king to a heavy golden yoke or one of the seven great mountain chains around Mount Meru.[208] The duties of

[205] Ibid., 50–51. Quoting Blo bzang 'phrin las, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*, 857.
[206] Marina Illich, "Imperial Stooge or Emissary to the Dge Lugs Throne? Rethinking the Biographies of Chankya Rolpé Dorjé," in *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition (Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the IATS, 2003)*, ed. Bryan J. Cuevas and Kurtis R. Schaeffer (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 18.
[207] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 5. Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics," 455–456. The leader in question was Polhané, who ruled during the time of the Seventh Dalai Lama. On a more mundane level, Ganden Palace was divided into a part of the administration that dealt with the monasteries and a part that dealt with secular law. Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 7–8.
[208] David Seyfort Ruegg, "Introductory Remarks on the Spiritual and Temporal Orders," in *The*

a monk observing the Vinaya and the duties of a political leader who sometimes had to engage in warfare were often in tension, as recognized by many Tibetan leaders, including the Fifth Dalai Lama.[209] However, any political leader was considered to have religious responsibilities, echoing the ancient Buddhist ideal of a *cakravartin* who conquers the world in order to spread the dharma.[210] Such ideas can be found in the Tibetan *Rāja Niti* literature of advice to kings, based on Indian political theory as found in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya (Cāṇakya).[211]

Within this "union of religion and politics", the roles of political and religious leadership were sometimes separated, sometimes combined or interwoven. In the Sakya government, there was a separation of political and religious roles. There were two religious leaders, the abbot of Sakya monastery and the imperial preceptor (*dishri* or *ti shri*), and one political leader, the *pönchen*.[212] The *pönchen* still had to undergo religious training, and was expected to be an accomplished scholar, but was not usually a monk.[213] In contrast, the Dalai Lama's government, as is frequently noted, combined political and religious leadership in a single person. A statement of Desi Sangyé Gyatso revealed a self-conscious desire to promote such a union: "Since the Fifth Dalai Lama came to that area (of Tibet), government and teaching have become one."[214] The regents might have appeared to separate this union by

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Relationship Between Religion and State (chos Srid Zung 'Brel) In Traditional Tibet, ed. Cristoph Cüppers (Lumbini, 2004), 9.

[209] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 332–333.

[210] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 33.

[211] This literature is quoted in Ngawang Tsültrim's biography in order to illustrate ideal kingship, as I will discuss later in Chapter . Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:221b.

[212] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 114.

[213] Ibid., 115. Luciano Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols* (Rome: Istituo Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990), 43–46.

[214] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 245n166. The quotation is from a collection of

taking political rule away from the Dalai Lama, but they were (like other kinds of rulers) also described as lords of the two traditions. Once he became regent, Ngawang Tsültrim was described as holding both the political and religious traditions of Tibet (*chos srid gnyis ldan gyi bdag por*), and the emperor described him as the master of the *chösi sungdrel*.[215] How he could be master of both will be explored in future chapters.

Chöyön

Another important concept to understanding how religion and politics interacted in Tibet is the "priest-patron relationship" (*chöyön, mchod yon*). The translation of c*höyön* is open to dispute, although I have continued to use "patron-priest relationship" due to its familiarity. David Seyfort Ruegg translates the compound more precisely as "preceptor-officiant and donor" and "officiant/spiritual preceptor-donee and donor."[216] *Mchod* is short for *mchod gnas* and "literally means worthy of…an honorarium, i.e. of the ritual present or fee…due the preceptor-official...from his royal disciple." This person worthy of this fee is the *lama* or *guru. Yon* is short for *yon bdag* or *dānapati*, "the donor who gives sustenance to a monk-

Tibetan source texts, published in the People's Republic of China: Rdo rje tshe brtan, ed., *Bod kyi yig tshags phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1997).

[215] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:12b, 366a. Ibid., 2:366a. Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 49–51. An alternative name for this union of religion and politics is *shungtensi* (*gzhung bstan srid*), or "the religious and political government." Ibid., 245n166.

[216] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 16. Quoting two articles by Seyfort Ruegg: David Seyfort Ruegg, "Mchod Yon, Yon Mchod, and Mchod Gnas/yon Gnas: On the Historiography and Semantics of a Tibetan Religio-Social and Religio-Political Concept," in *Tibetan History and Language: Studies Dedicated to Uray Géza on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ernst Steinkellner (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien, 1991), 441–53; David Seyfort Ruegg, "The Preceptor-Donor (yon Mchod) Relation in Thirteenth-Century Tibetan Society and Polity, Its Inner Asian Precursors and Indian Models," ed. Helmut Krasser et al., 2 vols. (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 2:857–70.

donee, or 'almsman', in the Buddhist structure of society," usually a political figure.[217] This idea invokes the Indian model of a king acting as donor to a brahmin priest or (more specific to Buddhism) the *saṅgha*, in addition to the Vajaryāna ideal of a lama giving tantric initiation to his disciples, who are to pay him homage as a buddha.[218] Seyfort Ruegg considers "patron" and "priest" to have connotations in Western culture that are not present in Indian or Tibetan culture. The lama does not have authority over the sacraments like a Christian priest. A patron in Western culture usually has a socially superior position, but the Buddhist donor is not superior in all respects to the lama.[219] While the patron may be politically superior and demand the obeisance due an emperor, the preceptor is spiritually superior due to the devotion due one's lama, implicitly challenging the emperor's absolute authority.[220]

The *chöyön* relationships between Tibetan lamas and foreign rulers often blurred the lines of the spheres of religion and politics. There are cases where it created a clear division of labor between a religious specialist and a ruler (as with the Third Dalai Lama and Altan Khan). But sometimes the political patron also had religious status (as with the Qing emperor, considered an incarnation of Mañjuśrī), or the religious preceptor was also a political ruler (as with Ngawang Tsültrim). Although Qing emperors formed *chöyön* relationships with Dalai Lamas or regents, the emperors already combined religious and political roles in their own persons.[221]

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[217] Seyfort Ruegg, "Introductory Remarks on the Spiritual and Temporal Orders," 9.
[218] Seyfort Ruegg, "The Preceptor-Donor Relation," 865–867.
[219] Seyfort Ruegg, "Introductory Remarks on the Spiritual and Temporal Orders," 9. Seyfort Ruegg, "Mchod Yon," 446.
[220] Seyfort Ruegg, "Introductory Remarks on the Spiritual and Temporal Orders," 10.
[221] Ibid., 11. Seyfort Ruegg, "Mchod Yon," 450. The *chöyön* relationship between Ngawang Tsültrim and the Qianlong emperor was a prime example of one in which both individuals were religio-political figures identified with bodhisattvas.

Kubilai's gift of the Thirteen Myriarchies of Tibet to Pakpa Lodrö Gyeltsen in exchange for tantric initiation as a *cakravartin* was the original and paradigmatic example of a *chöyön* relationship between a Tibetan lama and a foreign ruler.[222] When the Third Dalai Lama again sought patronage from the Mongols in the sixteenth century, they spoke in terms of reviving this relationship.[223] The terminology of *chöyön* could also be used for the relationship between a local Tibetan ruler and a religious sect that it patronized (as in the case of the Tsangpa rulers' patronage of the Karma Kagyü).[224] The office of *ti shri* or the imperial tutor is a similar position but not identical to that of the lama in the relationship; the *chöyön* is "by nature of a personal rather than institutional character."[225] The current exile government and the Fourteenth Dalai Lama refer to the historic relationship between China and Tibet as a "patron-priest relationship." This use of the terminology is controversial. Seyfort Ruegg agrees that *chöyön* is a relationship unknown in Western international law.[226] But this application of *chöyön* is criticized by Elliot Sperling as not clarifying the sovereignty situation, since these relationships existed under varying conditions of Tibetan independence or subordination to Beijing.[227]

Tülkus

The succession of Tibetan religio-political leadership increasingly took the form of the *tülku* (*sprul sku*) reincarnation lineage.[228] The idea of a *tülku* stemmed

[222] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 16.
[223] Ibid., 22. In fact, when the Third Dalai Lama's prior incarnation history was created, it included Pakpa as one of the prior incarnations.
[224] Ibid., 51.
[225] Seyfort Ruegg, "Introductory Remarks on the Spiritual and Temporal Orders," 10.
[226] Seyfort Ruegg, "Mchod Yon," 451–452.
[227] Laird and Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, Fourteenth Dalai Lama, *The Story of Tibet*, 199; Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict*, 30–31.
[228] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 17–21, 30–31.

from the buddhological theories of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In early Buddhism and Theravada, there was considered to be only one buddha in each era and the Buddha of this era left no manifestation after his final *nirvāṇa* besides his relics.[229] But in Mahāyāna, buddhas and advanced bodhisattvas continue to manifest in *saṃsāra* to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment. The bodhisattva path entails gaining supernatural powers including "choosing whatever appearance is necessary" to teach disciples.[230] Buddhas can manifest three bodies (*trikāya*): (1) the dharma body (*dharmakāya*), the ultimate nature of a buddha, (2) an enjoyment body (*sambhogakāya*) a perfected subtle body used for teaching the dharma in heavenly pure lands, and (3) an "emanation body" (*nirmāṇakāya*) or a body that appears to die and be reborn, and is manifest to ordinary mortals.[231] *Trülku* is the Tibetan translation for *nirmāṇakāya* (*sprul* means "emanation," *sku* means "body").

These doctrinal notions were the basis for the Tibetan idea of incarnation lineages. Drawing on these Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrines, Tibetans believe that highly evolved beings (buddhas, bodhisattvas, etc.) can emanate over a succession of human rebirths. Among the buddhas who are the source of these emanations, Avalokiteśvara is often associated with high Tibetan *tülkus* because of his status as Tibet's patron and his links to the founding mythology of Tibet.[232] Other *tülkus* are considered reincarnating bodhisattvas, who could be either higher or lower in their spiritual attainments and advancement along the *bhūmis*. Tibetans even claim that some individuals were able to control their rebirth not because they were high level

[229] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 188.
[230] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 10.
[231] Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 231–234.
[232] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 12–13.

bodhisattvas, but because of the blessings they had received or because of their connections to former saints. In any case, "ordinary" *tülkus* do not necessarily have the same aura of perfection and infallibility as "very high" t*ülkus* (e.g., the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa), although hagiographies tend to blur this distinction.[233]

Aside from this Buddhological explanation, from a secular point of view a *tülku* is a "unique form of ecclesiastical succession" in which the reborn child is "legal heir of a deceased master," and entitled to his position and property.[234] Although there were a handful of female *tülkus* such as Samding Dorjé Pakmo, the vast majority of these lineages, and all that would attain political power, were male.[235] The formal recognition of *tülku* lineages is usually said to begin with the Karmapa, head of the Karma Kagyü (Bka' brgyud pa) school, when the first Karmapa Düsum Khyenpa (Dus gsum mkhyen pa 1110-1193) "prophesied the manner and circumstances of his future birth."[236] The regular, institutionalized recognition of the Karmapa *tülkus* really occurred later with the third and fourth Karmapas in the fourteenth century, and in the following centuries the practice of recognizing lineages, in the Kagyü and in other schools, became more and more common.[237] Usually (though not always), a *tülku* had to be recognized through formal procedures, some very complex and involving multi-faceted examinations of the candidate. The *labrang* was a legal institution that maintains a *tülku's* property and

[233] Reginald Ray, "Some Aspects of the Tulku Tradition in Tibet," *The Tibet Journal* 11, no. 4 (1986): 54.
[234] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 109.
[235] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 23.
[236] Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 270. According to José Cabezón, certain individuals had been recognized as reincarnations in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, within the Kagyü and Kadampa schools. José Ignacio Cabezón, "On Tulku Lineages" 2015, 3–4.
[237] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 18–23.

other affairs across rebirths, in order to ensure the continuity of the lineage. Rebirths could also be recognized more informally, often retroactively as a sign of their spiritual attainments or connection to a revered religious master.[238] Some *tülkus* came to be associated with a particular bureaucratic or governmental office, as the Dalai Lamas were with the Ganden Palace government, and the Changkya lamas were with the position of preceptor to the Qing court. Others were influential charismatic figures associated with particular religious teachings.[239] Within monasteries, they formed something of a privileged class but they had greater responsibilities as well, such as "the strict discipline of study, religious practice, and carefully orchestrated public appearances."[240] Ideally, a reincarnation lineage would be more meritocratic and impartial than other forms of succession, avoiding the privileges of heredity or aristocracy (a *tülku* could theoretically be selected from any class), and reducing loyalties to any particular family, clan, or political or religious faction.[241] The selection process would often result in talented individuals such as child prodigies being chosen,[242] but there were often other considerations, geographic and political.[243]

[238] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 109.
[239] Ibid., 109, 220.
[240] Ibid., 229–230.
[241] Ray, "Some Aspects of the Tulku Tradition in Tibet," 61–65.
[242] Benjamin Bogin, "The Tulku as Prodigy: Reflections on the Childhood of the Tenth Karmapa" (The Tulku Institution in Tibetan Buddhism, University of San Francisco, 2013). Ray, "Some Aspects of the Tulku Tradition in Tibet," 57.
[243] Elliot Sperling, "Reincarnation and the Golden Urn in the 19th Century: The Recognition of the 8th Panchen Lama," in *Studies on the History and Literature of Tibet and the Himalaya*, ed. Roberto Vitali (Vajra Publications, n.d.), 99.

Regent

Precisely what a Tibetan regent is requires an exploration of the Tibetan terminology behind the words translated as "regent." The English word "regent" is usually defined as "a person appointed to administer a country because the monarch is a minor or is absent or incapacitated,"[244] but the term has often been applied to other kinds of Tibetan assistant rulers. Petech's "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study" usefully distinguishes three eras of the Tibetan regents. The first period of the Tibetan regents (1642-1706) was the era of the *desis* (also known as *depa*) of the Fifth Dalai Lama.[245] During the second period (1706-1750) a variety of leaders ruled Tibet, but there was not actually a regent in the strict sense of "the caretaker of the spiritual and temporal rights of the Dalai-Lamas" since the Seventh Dalai Lama was kept away from Lhasa by the Qing.[246] The third period (1757-1950) was characterized by monks "exercising the secular and disciplinary rights of the Dalai-Lama during the latter's minority" as *gyeltsab* and *sikyong*.[247] These terms do not exhaust the terminology that has been used to describe the Tibetan rulers of Ganden Palace, which is quite diverse, confusing, and overlapping.

Gyelpo

The term *gyelpo* (*rgyal po*) simply means "king." The first king of Tibet was traditionally held to be the legendary Nyatri Tsenpo (Gnya' khri btsan po), who ruled in prehistory.[248] He was the progenitor of a line that culminated in the great Buddhist

[244] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 242. "Regent," *New Oxford American Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[245] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 377–378.
[246] Ibid., 378.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 35–36.

kings of the empire, including Songtsen Gampo and Tri Songdetsen. They were referred to as *chökyi gyelpo* (*chos kyi rgyal po*, *chos rgyal*), dharma kings, because of their support for Buddhism.[249] *Gyelpo* and *chökyi gyelpo* referred most obviously to "kings" in the sense of lay hereditary monarchs, but also to such figures as the Qing emperor and even euphemistically to religious leaders like Tsongkhapa.[250] In the context of Ganden Palace, the biography of Ngawang Tsültrim uses *gyelpo* for Gushri Khan and the other Mongol kings, but also for the Fifth Dalai Lama.[251] The Ganden Tripas anthology refers to the *desi* Drongmé Trinlé Gyatso and the Mongol king Tenzin Dalai as "two kings" who ruled jointly for eight years during the Fifth Dalai Lama's reign.[252] The terms *gyelpo* and *chökyi gyelpo* were also applied to the later regents and to Ngawang Tsültrim himself.[253]

Depa

Depa (*sde pa*) is another general term for a ruler, meaning "leader" or "head." A *de* (*sde*) can be defined as a district, section, subclass, order, or unit.[254] A *depa* then can be defined as "one in charge of a sde", "one in charge of an estate or province," "district commissioner," "chief of a territory," or "governor."[255] In the context of Ganden Palace, it is generally encountered as a title for the regents of the Fifth Dalai Lama.[256] According to Richardson, these regents were most commonly known

[249] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:5a, 8a. In the historical narrative it can be seen that it applied to others who are noted for promoting Buddhism, such as the Phakmodrupa king Jangchup Gyeltsen.
[250] Ibid., 2:37b, 75b.
[251] Ibid., 2:9a–9b.
[252] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 9b.
[253] Ibid., 39a.
[254] "sde," *Tibetan Translation Tool* (Tibetan and Himalayan Library, n.d.).
[255] "sde pa," *Tibetan Translation Tool* (Tibetan and Himalayan Library, n.d.).
[256] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 140; Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 337.

as *depa* at the time they ruled. He cites such evidence as the Jesuit Johannes Grueber's narratives and Qing imperial correspondence, and Tibetan sources such as the Fifth Dalai Lama's decrees and Sangyé Gyatso's portion of the Fifth Dalai Lama's biography.[257] *Depa* also refers to "high-ranking district and provincial governors" and thus (unlike *desi*) may not carry a connotation of independent authority, according to Richardson; however, this is contradicted by the fact that the title was applied to pre-Ganden Palace kings.[258] The broad usage of *depa* can be seen in the autobiographical portion of the Fifth Dalai Lama's biography, in which the term is used for his regents Sonam Rapten and Trinlé Gyatso, but also for numerous other figures (such as district officials) who did not hold the regency.[259] Ngawang Tsültrim's biography uses *depa* for Ganden Palace rulers such as the regent Trinlé Gyatso and Taktsé Lhagyel (Stag rtse lha rgyal, 1645-1720), leader of Tibet during the Dzungar Mongol occupation of 1717 to 1720.[260] However, it also uses the term for the pre-Ganden Palace Tsangpa and Rinpungpa rulers, and as a generic term for lesser officials.[261] Shakabpa uses *depa* for political leaders other than the Fifth Dalai Lama's regents, including the Tsangpa rulers.[262] Some Western authors like Petech and Kapstein are at least aware of *depa* (as an alternative to *desi*), but they do not make systematic use of the term.[263]

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[257] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 336–337. The biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama was written in two parts, one by the Fifth himself and the other part by Desi Sangyé Gyatso.
[258] Ibid., 337.
[259] Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, Dalai Lama V, *The Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama*, 451.
[260] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:9a, 10b.
[261] Ibid., 2:8b, 315a.
[262] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:247.
[263] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 140. Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 377.

Sakyong

Sakyong (*sa skyong*) means "king", ruler or protector of the land. Like *desi* and *depa*, it was a common title of pre-Ganden Palace monarchs like the Rinpungpa kings.[264] Richardson notes that it was one of the terms used contemporaneously to describe the regents of the Fifth Dalai Lama like Trinlé Gyatso and Sangyé Gyatso,[265] and it also was a title of the Dzungar puppet ruler Taktse Lhagyel.[266] The latter in addition to being a *sakyong* was also known as a *sikyong,* suggesting a close link between these terms.[267] Richardson claims that *sakyong* (like *depa*) implied a subordinate rather than independent role; however, the fact that it was used interchangeably with *gyelpo*, "king," makes this unlikely.[268] Ngawang Tsültrim's biography uses this title for Lobsang Chinpa, one of the Fifth's regents.[269] *Sakyong* can also be found in quotations from the Kālacakra texts and Tsongkhapa's writings, which indicates that it is an old term, suitable for translations of Indian terms like *bhūmipati* or *bhūmipāla*.[270] Shakabpa also uses *sakyong* for one regent of the Fifth Dalai Lama (in this case, Trinlé Gyatso—he shows no consistency in giving particular titles to particular regents).[271] Western scholars such as Waddell, Petech,

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[264] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:344–345.
[265] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 337.
[266] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 241.
[267] "Stag rtse ba lha rgyal rab brtan (P1154)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://tbrc.org/#!rid=P1154.
[268] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 337.
[269] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:9b.
[270] Ibid., 2:247a–247b. These quotes discuss the duties of a king (*sakyong*) to uphold the dharma. *Sakyong* can also be found in many translations of Indian texts in the Kangyur and Tengyur, the Tibetan Buddhist canons, as a search of databases reveals. "The Buddhist Canons Research Database," *American Institute of Buddhist Studies*, 2013, http://www.aibs.columbia.edu/databases/New/index.php.
[271] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:391.

and Richardson note that this is one of the terms equivalent to *desi* or *depa* but do not make any systematic use of the terminology themselves.[272]

Desi

Desi (*sde srid*) means "governor," "ruler," or "regent."[273] Etymologically similar to *depa,* it could be translated as "one who has political power (*si*) over a *de* (group or political unit)." The title of *desi* was held by earlier lay kings, but in the context of Ganden Palace, it refers mainly to the regents of the Fifth and Sixth Dalai Lamas (though occasionally it is extended to other regents). [274] Richardson notes that the title *desi* was not used at time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, which he speculates was because "it may have had too strong overtones of independent authority," although that was equally true of other titles.[275] *Desi* did not become the standard term for these regents until the beginning of the eighteenth century, after the office had ceased to exist.[276] Shedra (Bshad sgra dbang phyug rgyal po, 1795-1864) was the only post-1757 regent to have the title of *desi,* as the only lay regent who ruled in the

[272] Waddell, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 253. Petech, *China and Tibet*, 241; Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 337.
[273] "sde srid," *Tibetan Translation Tool* (Tibetan and Himalayan Library, n.d.). Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:474.
[274] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 334.
[275] Ibid., 337. As described above, the fact that *sakyong* also means "king" is one reason Richardson is probably mistaken.
[276] Ibid. The history of *desi* is reflected in the terminology used by the Jesuit missionary Francesco Orazio della Penna (1680-1745). He actually used the term *tisri*, describing Sangyé Gyatso and the other assistants of the Fifth Dalai Lama. *Tisri* originally meant the "imperial preceptor," a key figure at the time of the Sakya regime. The Sakya regime was succeeded by the *desis* of Pakmodrupa, as was officially recognized by the Yuan and Ming emperors. Ganden Palace in turn viewed itself as the rightful successors of the Pakmodrupa. It is interesting to speculate that *desi* is somehow connected to *tisri* but this may be a coincidence, or an error on the part of della Penna. Francesco Orazio della Penna di Billi, "Brief Account of the Kingdom of Tibet," in *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet, and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*, ed. Clements Markham (London: Trübner and Co., 1876), 320. Richardson, *A Short History of Tibet*, 34.

nineteenth century.[277] Ngawang Tsültrim's biography describes most of the regents of the Fifth Dalai Lama as *desi*,[278] and at one point uses the term to describe all the regents of Ganden Palace (though *desi* is never the title of any particular regent of the later period).[279] Shakabpa follows the convention of labeling all the Fifth's regents *desi* in his *Advanced Political History.*[280] Western scholars since Waddell and Rockhill have used *desi* as a term for Tibetan regents and rulers in general, with some inaccuracies.[281] This usage of *desi* has continued in more recent works by Kapstein, Petech, Schwieger and so forth, usually (if not completely consistently) referring to the regents of the Fifth Dalai Lama.[282] Although "regent" is the most common translation for *desi*, Kapstein translates the term as "prime minister," while others use "governor" or just leave *desi* untranslated.[283]

Miwang

The term *miwang* (*mi dbang*) means "human ruler" or "someone who has power over people," essentially a king. Like the other terms, it was used for pre-Ganden Palace monarchs (specifically, the Pakmodrupa king Drakpa Gyeltsen) and even for Kubilai Khan.[284] But in the Ganden Palace era, it was used for the lay ruler Polhané and his son Gyurmé Namgyel, and fell out of use after the latter was

[277] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 2:605.
[278] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:9a–10a.
[279] Ibid., 2:228b.
[280] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:347–374.
[281] Rockhill calls the Tsangpa *desi* a "regent" for instance (although he was a king rather than acting as regent for another ruler). Waddell, like della Penna, uses *tisri* for *desi,* apparently confusing the term with the term for the imperial preceptor. Waddell, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 240, 253; Rockhill, "The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa," 7, 19.
[282] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 8–10. Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 141. Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 338. In the work cited above, Petech correctly distinguishes between the *desis* and the *gyeltsabs*, but in "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents" he makes no such distinction.
[283] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 141. Waddell, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 253.
[284] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:241, 316.

deposed in 1751.[285] Polhané took the title after victory in the 1727 civil war and was generally known by that title in his lifetime, as shown by missionary accounts and his own biography.[286] He is sometimes called a regent (e.g. by Petech),[287] and did rule during the reign of a Dalai Lama (the Seventh). But he may be considered an independent ruler rather than a regent because, at the time of his reign, the Dalai Lama had essentially no formal political power.[288]

Gyeltsab

Among all these terms, *gyeltsab* (*rgyal tshab*) is the one that most unambiguously means "regent." *Rgyal* is short for *rgyal po* (king) and *tshab* means "substitute," thus the term means a "substitute for the king" or "substitute king." The term *gyeltsab* was not used for rulers prior to Ganden Palace, but was used in Geluk religious contexts; the Panchen Lamas also had regents known as *gyeltsab*, and all the Ganden Tripas beginning with Gyeltsabjé were described as *gyeltsabs* of Tsongkhapa.[289] It could also refer to rulers in Bhutan.[290] "Regent" is defined in English as one who rules in the minority of a monarch, while they are too young to rule in their own right, and the term *gyeltsab* took on a similar meaning in Tibetan. Between 1757, when the Seventh Dalai Lama died, and 1950, when the Fourteenth Dalai Lama was given political power, the regents who were appointed to rule for the

[285] Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics," 446.
[286] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 121, 134.
[287] Ibid., 241.
[288] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 378.
[289] Rockhill, "The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa," 49. Samuel Turner, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet; Containing a Narrative of a Journey Through Bootan and Tibet* (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1800), 365–366, https://ia801408.us.archive.org/7/items/accountofembassy00turn/accountofembassy00turn.pdf. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:36a.
[290] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 161. Ironically, the *gyeltsabs* of Bhutan were not the actual administrators but in turn had another "regent", a *desi* who acted as the actual ruler of Bhutan.

young Dalai Lamas generally held the title of *gyeltsab*.[291] Due to the early deaths of Ninth through Twelfth Dalai Lamas, the *gyeltsabs* were able to rule nearly continuously throughout the nineteenth century.[292] Ngawang Tsültrim's biography and the Ganden Tripas' biography use *gyeltsab* for the first of these regents, Demo Rinpoché.[293] The biography has the emperor appointing Ngawang Tsültrim as *gyeltsab,* although this title is not otherwise used for him in the biography.[294] Perhaps the Dalai Lama was still considered a minor at the beginning of Ngawang Tsültrim's term of office (he was nineteen), but this was not the case later in Ngawang Tsültrim's reign. According to Shakabpa's definition of *gyeltsab*, the term applied to those who ruled in the interval between the death of the Dalai Lama and the ascension of the next one to the throne.[295] It was understood that way by my Tibetan colleagues, who thought that only a *gyeltsab* could be called a "regent."[296] The term is known to Western scholars but (like *desi*) is sometimes used inaccurately. The eighteenth century British diplomats Bogle and Turner knew the regents Demo Rinpoché and Ngawang Tsültri) as Gesub Rinpoché; Gesub being a corruption of *gyeltsab.*[297] Petech clearly distinguishes the *gyeltsab* from the other forms of regency in *China and Tibet* and describes it as a "temporary caretaker" position for young

[291] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 2:619.
[292] Waddell, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 253.
[293] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:12b. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 5a.
[294] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:15b.
[295] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 2:619. Although since Maher simply translates the term as" regent," it does not appear in the text often.
[296] While the regents of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are not widely remembered to modern Tibetans, the regents of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama (who are also *gyeltsabs*) are still widely known.
[297] Turner, *Embassy to Tibet*, 364.

Dalai Lamas.[298] Maher, in the appendix to *Advanced Political History*, lists all the regents from 1757 to 1950 under *gyeltsab,* although that is not the title most commonly used for Ngawang Tsültrim (and a few others).[299]

Sikyong

Sikyong (*srid skyong*) literally means "holder of political power" or "protector of the kingdom" (as in *rgyal srid skyong ba*); *srid* is the "politics" in *chos srid*. It is often encountered in verbal form, simply meaning "to rule" or "to hold political power." In some texts of the *rājanīti* or "political ethics" genre it is used interchangeably with "king." In the 1757-1950 period, *sikyong* referred to the regents who ruled when the Dalai Lama was an adult and held the seals of power: this includes Ngawang Tsültrim and his successor Tatsak Tenpé Gönpo. The title continues to be used in the present day, by the current prime minister of the Tibetan exile parliament, Lobsang Sangay (Blo bzang seng ge, 1968-).[300] But *sikyong* had a longer history as a general title for Tibetan rulers, often interchangeable with *gyelpo*. *Sikyong* was used of the Fifth Dalai Lama's regents (Trinlé Gyatso specifically) by the latter's nephew Sangyé Gyatso.[301] In the longer biography of Ngawang Tsültrim, the Fifth Dalai Lama is described as having "ruled" (*sikyang*) and as having "tak[en] responsibility for *sikyong*"; while it is striking to see the Dalai Lama described with

[298] Petech, *China and Tibet*, 242.
[299] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 2:1134. Calling all these figure *gyeltsabs* is slightly inaccurate according to Shakabpa's definitions. This list omits the *desi* Shedra but includes Ngawang Tsültrim and Tatsak Tenpé Gönpo (the Kundeling incarnation), both of whom had the title *sikyong*. Of course, equally inexact uses of the terminology can be found in Tibetan sources.
[300] Jamyang Norbu, "'Tibet's Next Incarnation?' Constitutional Crisis, Confusion and Conspiracies at the Central Tibetan Administration," April 23, 2013, http://www.rangzen.net/2013/04/23/tibet-next-incarnation/.
[301] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 337.

terms associated with the regents, they mean nothing more than that he ruled. [302] Many of the Fifth Dalai Lama's regents are likewise described as *sikyongs* or as "doing *sikyong*" (i.e. ruling).[303] The Dzungar Mongols' "regent" Taktsewa and Khangchenné (Khang chen gnas, d. 1727) are described as *sikyongs*,[304] and finally all the rulers of Ganden Palace in general are called *sikyongs*.[305] The longer biography does use *sikyong* more or less consistently as Ngawang Tsültrim's title, distinguishing him from Demo Rinpoché who always has the title of *gyeltsab*.[306] Writing 200 years later, Shakabpa makes a clear distinction between *sikyong* and *gyeltsab*: a *sikyong* ruled to "assist" a Dalai Lama who has attained the throne, while a *gyeltsab* rulesd when the Dalai Lama is still a minor.[307] This distinction is consistent with the titles Ngawang Tsültrim has in the biography, although the biography never explicitly explains the difference between *gyeltsab* and *sikyong*.

Tibetan sources include inconsistent enumerations of the *sikyongs*, some of which must include a number of previous rulers of various kinds within Ganden Palace. The Dzungar puppet ruler is described in the *Taksé Dzong Gazetteer* as the seventh *sikyong* of Ganden Palace, which probably means that the *desis* of the Fifth Dalai Lama are included among this enumeration of the *sikyongs*.[308] But Demo

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[302] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:9b.
[303] Ibid., 2:9b–11a.
[304] Ibid., 2:11b.
[305] Ibid., 2:228b. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:464.
[306] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:17a. The shorter biography usually uses *sikyong* as a generic term for ruler, and the term is only used once in conjunction with Ngawang Tsültrim, when he was appointed as regent: Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 8a.
[307] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 2:619. Following Shakabpa, my Tibetan colleagues did not consider Ngawang Tsültrim to be a "regent" at all, because he was a *sikyong* rather than a *gyeltsab*. They suggested that *sikyong* be translated as "prime minister" (as in the Tibetan exile parliament), or perhaps as "governor."
[308] *Stag rtse rdzong*, Grong khyer lha sa'i lo rgyus rig gnas (Lhasa: Grong khyer lha sa'i gzhung,

Rinpoché is described elsewhere as the first *sikyong,* a use of the term that includes only the regents after 1750 (including those who, like Demo, were usually known as *gyeltsabs*).[309] Western scholars (i.e. Goldstein and Petech) sometimes make note of the term *sikyong* as one of the generic translations of "regent" but generally do not make Shakabpa's distinction between *gyeltsab* and *sikyong*.[310]

Nominhan

Nominhan (also *nomun qan* or *nomihen*, Tibetan transliteration *no min han*) is the Mongolian term that translates "dharma king" (*chökyi gyelpo*). It was a Qing title given to the *sikyongs* and *gyeltsabs* of Tibet as long the Qing were in power, though it was given to other Gelukpa *tülkus* allied with the Qing, regardless of whether they had political power. Demo Rinpoché received the title in the early eighteenth century, long before he became regent.[311] The Qing also gave the title to several Gelukpa *tülkus* in Amdo and Kham as they sought to control the borderlands, shortly before their 1720 invasion of Tibet.[312] When the Qing began to appoint regents in 1751, it seems that they used *nomun qan* as the standard title. When Demo became regent again, he was formally given the title *nomun qan*, and Ngawang Tsültrim also held this title.[313] Ngawang Tsültrim's seal of the regency read thus: "seal of the glorious *nomun qan* who bears the responsibility for Tibetan affairs and holds the

1994), http://tbrc.org/#!rid=W20233.

[309] "Ngag dbang 'jam dpal tshul khrims rgya mtsho (P4533)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://tbrc.org/#!rid=P4533.

[310] Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics." Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 159. Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 377.

[311] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 121.

[312] Ibid., 130.

[313] Ibid., 159, 161.

doctrine of the Yellow Hats."[314] (According to the Ganden Tripas anthology, he received the title while still acting as *ti shri*, some time prior to becoming regent).[315] This practice continued throughout the nineteenth century and Shedra, the one lay *desi* of that era*,* was given the title of *nomun qan* like the others*.*[316] This is evidence that the Qing made no distinction between the regents with various titles like *sikyong* and *gyeltsab*. The title is frequently encountered in Ngawang Tsültrim's biography; it is part of the long string of titles in the biography's title,[317] and the emperor often addressed him simply as "my *nominhan*."[318] Rockhill and Waddell do mention *nominhan* and Schwieger discusses the term extensively, but it has not been a term adopted by Western scholars.[319]

Hothogthu

Hothogthu (also *hutuqthu*, *qutuqtu*, Tibetan spelling *ho thog thu*) is the Mongolian word for incarnation or *trülku,* although it more precisely corresponds to the title *pakpa* (*phags pa*), ''superior."[320] The Mongols began using this term as a general term for *tülkus* around the time Altan Khan recognized the Third Dalai Lama, and the Qing turned it into an official title, giving it to a select group of about thirty incarnation lineages.[321] However, the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama were in a class of their own as the highest lamas and did not have the title of *hothogthu*. According to Goldstein and Shakabpa, regents tended to be selected from the ranks of

[314] Ibid., 161.
[315] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 6b–7a.
[316] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:1a.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid., 2:13b–14a.
[319] Rockhill, "The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa," 49.
[320] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 35–36.
[321] Ibid.

hothogthus, a practice which began after Ngawang Tsültrim's lifetime. [322] The group of *hothogthus* considered for the regency came to include the lineages of Demo, Kundeling, Reting, and Tsemönling.[323] Ngawang Tsültrim's biography refers to a number of *trülkus* as *hothogthus,* including the regent Demo but also other lineages that were never associated with the regency.[324]

Conclusion

The wide variety of Tibetan (and sometimes Mongol and Manchu) terms relating to rule and regency can be confusing. Although some modern scholars have attempted to place the Tibetan regents into categories like *desi* and *gyeltsap,* they have not done so consistently. If one wants to use Tibetan terms to denote categories of regents, the problem is that few have a clear semantic range. *Desi* came to be the common term for the regents of the Fifth Dalai Lama, but it was also a common term for rulers far beyond the confines of Ganden Palace. The regents of the Fifth were often referred to by a wide variety of terms (*depa, sakyong* etc.) which were also terms for rulers in general. *Sikyong,* though used to describe Ngawang Tsültrim's position in his biographies and other regents who ruled in the lifetime of an adult Dalai Lama, was also a generic term for a ruler, or simply a verb meaning "to rule." Manchu and Mongolian do not offer a more coherent terminology: *nominhan* was the most common Manchu label for Tibetan regents of various kinds, but it was a common title given to lamas who did not hold political office; the Mongolian title *hothogthu* was likewise not exclusive to regents. It is not clear that anyone at the

[322] Ibid., 159–160.
[323] Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 19. This listing of *hotogthus* reflects the situation in the early twentieth century.
[324] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:13b, 162b.

time of Ngawang Tsültrim had a clear notion of “the regency”, or any definitive categorization of the different types of rulers. There are still some suggestive patterns in the terminology. On the other hand, *gyeltsab* is consistently used in Tibetan sources for regents in the 1750-1900 period, if they were monks and ruled in the minority of the Dalai Lama; in other contexts it has the parallel meaning of “substitute rulers.” Within the biography of Ngawang Tsültrim both *desi* and *sikyong* are used as generic terms for “the regents,” and also have the specific definitions described above.[325]

In my dissertation, I have chosen to simply use the English term “regent” as a convenient designation for all the figures who assisted or substituted for a Dalai Lama as part of his own administration.[326] If there is a need to distinguish the types of regents, I will use those Tibetan terms which are more familiar to both Western and Tibetan scholars. Thus, I use *desi* for the regents who assisted the Fifth Dalai Lama (“Desi Sangyé Gyatso” is universally known as such in modern scholarship). I have also followed Shakabpa (and Ngawang Tsültrim's biography) in distinguishing the *gyeltsabs* who ruled while the Dalai Lama was a minor, from the *sikyongs* who (like Ngawang Tsültrim) ruled while the Dalai Lama was an adult.

[325] Ibid., 2:228b; Grags pa mkhas grub, “Trichen Namtar,” 10b.
[326] This definition excludes such rulers as Lhazang Khan and Polhané, who ruled while the Dalai Lama was not even symbolically considered to be the ruler.

Chapter 3: Ngawang Tsültrim's biography

Early years (1722-1745)

Ngawang Tsültrim was born in the small kingdom of Choné (Co ne) in 1722, in the area of Chadaro (Cha dar 'o).[327] Choné is located within Domay (Mdo smad) or Amdo, and situated near the western border with China proper.[328] According to Gray Tuttle, the emperors of China had recognized the ruling family of Choné since the Ming dynasty, and the ruling family also had close ties of marriage with the local Qoshot Mongol khans.[329] Ngawang Tsültrim's parents were aristocrats: his father was a lord named Dampa Chökyab (Dam pa chos skyabs) and his mother was Gyelyum Tshülchen (Rgyal yum tshul chen), a name that suggests royalty (Gyelyum means "royal mother"), although she is not specifically said to be related to the Choné king.[330] Tuttle states that the Choné kingdom "took advantage of its connections with the Qing emperors to gain a great deal of power in Central Tibet."[331] This powerful connection developed in later years as Choné came to be the birthplace of subsequent incarnations of the Tsemönling line who were also appointed to the regency.[332] Ngawang Tsültrim's birth is described hagiographically as being accompanied by many signs; his body, speech, and mind as beautiful; his

[327] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 1b.
[328] Domey has sometimes meant Kham and sometimes meant Amdo in Tibetan history, but in the case of Choné most sources say Amdo; it is closer to major Amdo centers like Xining and Labrang monastery than the major kingdoms of Kham.
[329] Gray Tuttle, "THL Place Dictionary - The Kingdom of Choné," *The Tibetan & Himalaya Library*, 2011, http://places.thlib.org/features/24353/descriptions/81.
[330] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 1b.
[331] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*.
[332] Tuttle, "THL Place Dictionary - The Kingdom of Choné." Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 388.

childhood as manifesting his interest and talent in dharma practice even before he became a monk.[333] But it is important to remember that (unlike most of the other post-1757 regents) Ngawang Tsültrim was not recognized as a *tülku* at birth, and in fact the Tsemönling incarnation line was not established until after his death. Although he is frequently called Tsemönling in the secondary literature, he is never known by this name in the biographies.[334] Thus, at birth, Ngawang Tsültrim had no claim to any religious status or any political office in Lhasa, although his aristocratic family gave him the advantage of material support as he began life as a monk.

Ngawang Tsültrim is said to have showed an early talent for dharma practice, spontaneously making offerings to monks and to the "representations of the three jewels" (images, scriptures, and stūpas), imitating Buddhist practitioners, and learning prayers by heart.[335] At the age of seven, in 1728 he was enrolled into the monastic ranks in Tsador (Tsha dor) monastery, eighteen miles from the city of Choné, perhaps near his birthplace of Chadaro.[336] The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center states that Tsador was constructed as a Sakya monastery in 1260 and converted to Geluk in 1750 (although the dates seem approximate at best).[337] This monastery may well have been a feeder monastery into Sera Me, sending its most promising monks to be educated at this great Lhasa center; that Ngawang Tsültrim would later live in Sera's regional dormitory (*khang mtshan*) Tsador is likely not

[333] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 1b–2a.
[334] Tuttle, "THL Place Dictionary - The Kingdom of Choné"; Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics," 448.
[335] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 1b–2a.
[336] Ibid., 2a.
[337] "Tsha rdor dgon (G1KR1936)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://www.tbrc.org/?locale=en#!rid=G1KR1936.

coincidental.[338] He took the five vows of a layperson (*dge bsnyen*) at this point, shaved his head and took robes, and began his education with the memorization of liturgies. Knowing the ritual texts was the basic requirement for all monks in a typical monastery to begin the path of a specialized "textualist" monk.[339] Soon he was sent to Choné Shedrubling (Co ne bshad grub gling), closer to the capital city of Choné. This is a major center of learning, supported by the local rulers and the Qing emperors, with as many as 3,800 monks in the fifteenth century.[340] As he entered the monastery, he received the ten novice (*sramaṇera*) and full ordination (*bhikṣu*) vows, with the great scholar Drakpa Shedrup (Grags pa bshad sgrub, 1675-1748) serving as preceptor.[341] The fact that Drakpa Shedrup had been educated at Sera Me is a further suggestion that these monasteries had strong ties to the *densas*.[342] Ngawang Tsültrim began the philosophical curriculum in earnest, studying the Greater and Lesser Collected Topics and the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*.[343] He remained in these local monasteries for thirteen or sixteen years in total.[344]

Monastic education (c. 1745-1759)

Although it must have been common for monasteries like Choné Shedrupling to send monks to the Lhasa *densas*, Ngawang Tsültrim's decision to go to Lhasa

[338] Beatrice Miller, "The Web of Tibetan Monasticism," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 20, no. 2 (1961): 201–202. see also Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 56–57.
[339] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 2a. José Ignacio Cabezón, "Monks," *The Tibetan & Himalaya Library*, 2004, http://www.thlib.org/places/monasteries/sera/essays/#!essay=/cabezon/sera/people/monks/s/b1.
[340] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 2a–2b; Tuttle, "THL Place Dictionary - The Kingdom of Choné." The number of monks diminished to 700 by 1925.
[341] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 2a.
[342] "Grags pa bshad sgrub (P1629)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://tbrc.org/#!rid=P1629.
[343] Ibid.; Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 2a–2b.
[344] The Ganden Tripas anthology gives inconsistent dates, as will be explained below.

and enter Sera Me is depicted as a voluntary one, based on prophetic visions that he received.[345] Particularly, he had a vision of the golden throne of Dromtön ('Brom ston, 1005-1064) in the temple of Radreng, which was said to foreshadow both his coming to the Ganden Throne and his service to the Dalai Lama. Dromtön transmitted his master Atiśa's Kadampa tradition and in the Geluk *imaginaire* was one of the progenitors of the Geluk tradition, as one of the prior incarnation of the Dalai Lama lineage.[346] After this vision, Ngawang Tsültrim arrived in Lhasa for the Great Prayer Festival on February 14, 1745 (or 1742), entering at the auspicious moment when the chanting master (*umdzé*) was reading Tsongkhapa's *Secret Biography*. He decided that he would likewise "train in the myriad scriptural systems" and "spread throughout all of space the light of the sun of the precious teachings of [Tshongkhapa]," and he enrolled at Sera Me.[347]

He seems to have restarted the curriculum at Sera, repeating his studies of the Collected Topics and the Perfection of Wisdom, before moving on to the more

[345] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 2b.

[346] Ibid.; Weirong, "The First Dalai Lama Gendün Drup.""Rgyal ba'i byung gnas (P2557)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://tbrc.org/#!rid=P2557.

[347] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 2b. The date of 1745 is based on him being aged 23. But 1745 would be the wood-ox year, and the Ganden Tripas biographies identifies this date as the iron dog year (*lcags khyi*). This corresponds to 1730, which is implausible, as it would have Ngawang Tsültrim entering Sera at a very young age of eight. Possibly the water dog year was intended (*chu khyi*), which is the more plausible 1742, though that is inconsistent with his stated age. All dates are from the online Tibetan Pugpa Calendar Calculator. It may not perfectly reflect the system the biographers were using (in fact there seem to be several systems with slight differences). For instance, it repeats and skips dates for astrological reasons, which the biographies do not seem to be doing, and I have attempted to ignore. With slight adjustments, it more or less corresponds with the calculations made by Petech."Tibetan Phugpa Calendar Calculator," accessed January 5, 2016, http://www.digitaltibetan.org/cgi-bin/phugpa.pl. Based on Svante Janson, "Tibetan Calendar Mathematics," accessed January 5, 2016, http://www2.math.uu.se/~svante/papers/calendars/tibet.pdf.

advanced topics of Madhyamaka, Abhidharma, and Vinaya.[348] However, he completed his studies at Sera in a relatively short twelve years, compared with the twenty years it usually takes today, so his prior training may have allowed him to progress at an accelerated pace.[349] He completed the traditional exam in this curriculum, the *rikdra* (*rig grwa*) and the *tsoklang* (*tshogs langs*), the latter of which consisted of a monk debating an entire assembly. When he was a new monk, according to the long biography, he had a secret intention of becoming Ganden Throne Holder, and predicted his advancement by saying that there should be a victory banner on the roof of his regional dormitory (*khang mtshan*).[350] All monks entered one of these regional houses, which usually corresponded to the geographical unit from which they originated—Ngawang Tsültrim most likely joined Tsador.[351] His general and private teachers were Dargyé Lhundrup (Dar rgyas lhun grub) and Losang Gyeltsen (Blo bzang rgyal mtshan), respectively. He studied with such scholars as Ngawang Jampa (Ngag dbang byams pa, 1682-1762) the first Purchok incarnation, as well as the Seventh Dalai Lama, and received from them transmissions and empowerments above and beyond the usual Geluk curriculum. The biography praises his dedication to memorization and debate, his stringent observance of the Vinaya, and his frugality in the face of the typical poverty of the scholastic monk.[352] Showing skill in study, debate, Vinaya observance, and ritual, he

[348] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 3a.
[349] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 251,257.
[350] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:39b.
[351] Nowhere does it actually say that this was his *khangtsen*, but he was called the "Tsador *geshé*" in the text, and he continued to associate with Tsador during his regency. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 4b; Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:82a, 144b.
[352] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 3a–3b. See also Cabezón, "Monks."

received the *geshe* degrees of Lingse (*gling bsre*) and Lharampa (*lha ram pa*).[353]

Having completed fully mastered the exoteric subjects, Ngawang Tsültrim was now permitted to pursue studies of secret tantra, and he entered the Upper Tantric College.[354] His teacher and the head of the monastery was Sharchen Ngawang Chödrak (Shar chen Ngag dbang chos grags, 1710-1772), a lama from Sera Me, who later became Shartsé Chöjé and Ganden Tripa.[355] He also received empowerments such as Kālacakra from the Panchen Lama and others, outside the standard curriculum (doing so was not permitted until he reached this level of his studies).[356] These tantric studies would be practical for one who would become a religious teacher and administrator, and would need knowledge of how to perform rituals and the permissions to give empowerments.

Monastic leadership (c. 1759-1762)

It is not clear from the Ganden Tripas' biography exactly when Ngawang Tsültrim finished his studies and began to ascend the Geluk hierarchy on the way to becoming Ganden Tripa.[357] In more recent times, the beginning of the succession was the appointment of three *ngakrampa*s from each tantric college as disciplinarians. After a year, one of them would be appointed as *lama umdzé* (*bla ma dbu mdzad*) or "vice-abbot" of the college; and after a three year term in that position, the *lama umdzé* would be promoted to abbot (*mkhan po*), for another three

[353] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 3a–3b.
[354] Ibid., 4b. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 118.
[355] "Ngag dbang chos grags (P2765)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, 1/21/2016.
[356] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:4b. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 119.
[357] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 118.

years.[358] Ngawang Tsültrim followed a similar course of promotions. Political power and influence entered the picture at this point, because the Dalai Lama usually made these appointments.[359] (Since the Dalai Lama was very young at this point, the regent Demo was presumably the one who appointed him.) The first appointment mentioned is the position of *lama umdzé* at Upper Tantric College, to which he ascended on August 13, 1760.[360] In this role, he had political influence early on, helping resolve a controversy over one of the Ganden Tripas (Bsam gtan phun tshogs, 1703-1770, in office 1757-1764), whose leadership was questioned by what the biographer characterizes as "false accusations." As a way of repairing the broken vows of those who had questioned Samten Puntsok's authority, and committed the grave sin of sowing dissension, Ngawang Tsültrim had the offending students take a transmission on the Guhyasamāja from the Ganden Tripa.[361] Then Ngawang Tsültrim was appointed to be head of the Upper Tantric College in October 1761, little more than a year after becoming *lama umdzé*.[362] In this final year before his departure to Beijing, he became *chöjé* of Ganden Shartsé, and in this role he gave the monks of Ganden a reading transmission of the *Lamrim Chenmo*.[363]

Ti shi (1762-1777)

In 1762, the Qianlong emperor sent a decree that someone who was a great

[358] Alexander Berzin, "A Brief History of Gyumay and Gyuto Lower and Upper Tantric Colleges," *The Berzin Archives*, accessed October 24, 2015, http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/study/history_buddhism/buddhism_tibet/gelug/brief_history_gyumay_gyuto_tantric_college.html.
[359] Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 481.
[360] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 4b–5a.
[361] Ibid., 5a.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:38b.

scholar needed to be appointed as *ti shi,* or preceptor to the emperor.[364] According to the Ganden Tripas' biography, "All of the monks of Sera, Drepung, Ganden and the two Tantric Colleges stated that there was no one worthier than this Lord [Ngawang Tsültrim]," and their decision was ratified by the decree of the regent Demo, the Dalai Lama, and the emperor.[365] Ngawang Tsültrim departed from Lhasa on October 22, and arrived in Beijing on March 6, 1763. For the next fourteen years he preached Tibetan Buddhism to Mongolians and Manchus, under the supervision of Chankya Rolpé Dorjé (Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje, 1717-1786), the head Tibetan lama who held the position of *thamka lama* (*tham ka bla ma*).[366] During this time he was the chief disciplinarian and preacher at the Yonghegong temple in Beijing, focusing his attention on texts such as Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim*, and giving tantric empowerments as well.[367] Every summer he went to Mongolia and preached in various monasteries, focusing especially on tantric empowerments such as Guhyasamāja, Vajrabhairava, and Cakrasaṃvara.[368] He performed a number of ritual duties as well, consecrating holy objects, making rain, and doing rituals for success in battle (during the Qing wars with Burma of 1765-1769, and a war with the Kham kingdom of Gyelrong, 1771-1775).[369] While serving as *ti shi*, at some time prior to his appointment as regent, the emperor granted him the title of *nominhan*.[370]

[364] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 5a.
[365] Ibid. Of course the Dalai Lama was too young to have actually made the decision, most likely.
[366] Ibid., 5a–7b.
[367] Ibid., 5b, 6b.
[368] Ibid., 6a.
[369] Ibid., 6b–7a.
[370] Ibid., 7a.

Regent of Tibet (1777-1786)

Ngawang Tsültrim was still serving as *ti shi* in Beijing when news from Lhasa reached the emperor that the regent Demo Rinpoché had died on March 1, 1777.[371] According to Ngawang Tsültrim's biography, his appointment as the next regent was made by the emperor in consultation with Changkya Rinpoché, and his close relationship with both counted in his favor.[372] In the account of his 1774 mission, George Bogle quotes the Panchen Lama as saying "the [Eighth] Dalai Lama will be of age in a year or two" and would take over from the regent Demo; the Panchen promised to lobby the emperor to encourage this handover of power back to the Dalai Lama.[373] But at this time, the Dalai Lama was deemed to be too young to begin to rule and to need to continue his religious studies in *sūtra* and *tantra*.[374]

Ngawang Tsültrim said farewell to the emperor on April 5 and Changkya Rinpoché on April 6, and then departed for Tibet.[375] Along the way he taught and preached at a number of monasteries.[376] He arrived in Lhasa with the emperor's golden seal of appointment on August 8, 1777 and as he was received by all the government officials, they were said to be astonished at an ordinary monk, not from a high *tülku* lineage, rising to such a high position (something of an exaggeration, since he already had held high positions like *ti shi* and was in line to be Ganden

[371] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:12b.
[372] Ibid., 2:12b–14a.
[373] George Bogle, "Narrative of the Mission of Mr. George Bogle to Tibet," in *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet, and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*, ed. Clements Markham (London: Trübner and Co., 1876), 153, 165. The Panchen Lama appears here as an opponent of the regents, but in the biography he is depicted as a supporter of Ngawang Tsültrim, as I will discuss in future chapters.
[374] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:495. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:12b–13b.
[375] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:15a.
[376] Ibid., 2:15b–16b.

Tripa). The Qing Queen Mother Xiaoshengxian had died on March 2 and he was tasked with doing her funerary rituals when he arrived in Lhasa.[377] He was formally enthroned on September 17, 1777, with the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama blessing and empowering him.[378] He performed the main memorial service for the Queen Mother shortly thereafter, on September 22, 1777.[379] In late October or early November, he issued the first of his major legislative decrees. On the basis of two decrees issued by the Seventh Dalai Lama in 1751 and by Demo Rinpoché in 1767, he issued a decree intended to root out corruption in tax collection and other abuses of the aristocracy toward the peasantry. At around the same time, he issued a simultaneous decree on the circulation of Nepalese currency, rejecting pressure from the Gorkhas to accept a devaluation.[380] He dedicated a new printing of the collected works of the second Changkya Rinpoché (Ngag dbang chos ldan, 1642-1714) on December 3. He also began the ceremonial duties that characterized much of his regency. In late December for instance, the Panchen Lama came to visit Lhasa and give teachings, and Ngawang Tsültrim was in charge of receiving him. He also arranged and presided over ceremonies such as "vow mending," and the commemoration of Tsongkhapa's death.[381]

The most important part of the annual ritual calendar in Lhasa is the Tibetan

[377] Ibid., 2:14a.
[378] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 383. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:18a–25b. His dates and those of online calculator either agree or have a one-day discrepancy.
[379] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:17b, 25b. The sources seem to link his performance of this service to his becoming regent, as if perhaps this was the reason the general public thought he was in Lhasa.
[380] Ibid., 2:221b–226b.
[381] Ibid., 2:27a.

New Year and the Great Prayer Festival that follows it, and in 1778, the first new year of his reign, Ngawang Tsültrim took responsibility for arranging the offerings and presiding over rituals such as propitiating the protector deities (although he did not yet preside as Ganden Tripa).[382] On April 28, he issued orders, to go into effect the following year, for renovations of the interiors of the Potala and its grounds, and revised the protocol regarding the area around the Potala.[383] Ngawang Tsültrim was appointed as Ganden Tripa by the Eighth Dalai Lama on May 11, 1778 after his predecessor Lobsang Tenpa (Blo bzang bstan pa, 1725-1782) resigned.[384] That month, the previous tutor of the Dalai Lama Ngawang Chödrak (Ngag dbang chos grags, 1707-1778) died and the emperor requested a tutor for the Dalai Lama.[385] Ngawang Tsültrim initially objected to being appointed, on the grounds that he had too many responsibilities.[386] After negotiations with the emperor and the Panchen Lama, he received his letter of appointment on June 2, 1778.[387] After leaving for Ganden Monastery on June 20, he was enthroned as the 61st Ganden Tripa on July 6.[388] He then preached his first teachings from the Ganden Throne, including an empowerment of Vairocana and an exposition of Tsongkhapa's *Great Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*.[389]

Summers were often a time of traveling during Ngawang Tsültrim's regency,

[382] Ibid., 2:27a–30b.
[383] Ibid., 2:207b.
[384] "Blo bzang bstan pa (P2766)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://tbrc.org/#!rid=P2766. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:33a–33b.
[385] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:30b.
[386] Ibid.
[387] Ibid., 2:33b–34a.
[388] Ibid., 2:34b. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 17b. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 2:494–495.
[389] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:37a–39a.

and the summer of 1778 was the occasion for an extended pilgrimage tour to many of central Tibet's most important pilgrimage sites. His itinerary included Meldro, Songtsen Gampo's birthplace and Tsongkhapa's retreat place, and Chökhorgyel, the monastery founded by the Second Dalai Lama as his hermitage.[390] On August 2 he went to the nearby Lake Muliting, where he saw a prophecy that he would return to China as Qianlong's *thamka lama.*[391] He continued to Sangri, the monastery of the *yoginī* Machik Lapdrön, originator of *chöd*,[392] then to Samyé, and Lhatotori's palace, before returning to Lhasa.[393] In what was more or less an annual event, on October 23 he received a delivery of gifts from the emperor along with a message of gratitude for his service.[394]

As 1779 began, for the first time he presided over the Great Prayer Festival as Ganden Tripa, a responsibility that included preaching from the *Jātakas*. He would continue to preach from this text for the next four years.[395] A decree arrived from the emperor on February 24, to be announced at the Great Prayer Festival, that the Panchen Lama was being invited to Beijing for the emperor's seventieth birthday.[396] Ngawang Tsültrim left for Tashilhunpo, meeting the Panchen Lama on March 23 to discuss the Panchen's upcoming journey.[397] Ngawang Tsültrim came to Ganden on May 20 for his annual summer teachings and inaugurated the

[390] Ibid., 2:45b–46a.
[391] Ibid., 2:47b–48a. This lake is also known as Lhamo Lhatso, the prophetic lake of the protectress Pelden Lhamo.
[392] Ibid., 2:50b–51a.
[393] Ibid., 2:53a–53b.
[394] Ibid., 2:56a.
[395] Ibid., 2:59a, 136b.
[396] Ibid., 2:62a.
[397] Ibid., 2:65a.

construction of a new tantric college there.[398] An official order from the emperor was received on July 4, stating that the Panchen Lama should depart for China, and Ngawang Tsültrim arranged for officials (*ambans* as well as Tibetan officials) to escort him from Tashilhunpo.[399] Beginning on August 7, Ngawang Tsültrim joined the escort party from Lhasa to Nakchu. He accompanied the Panchen Lama to an audience with the Dalai Lama at Yangpachen.[400] There was a final meeting with Ngawang Tsültrim, the Panchen Lama and other officials, at which the obstructing deities were propitiated, money was given for the Panchen's journey, and he was encouraged to spread the dharma in China and return to Tibet safely. But bad omens foreshadowed the Panchen Lama's later death in Beijing.[401]

After bidding farewell to the Panchen Lama, Ngawang Tsültrim took the opportunity to make another pilgrimage to Radreng, the home monastery of Atiśa and Tsongkhapa.[402] While he was attending on the Dalai Lama at Norbulingka, on August 22, he met diplomatic emissaries from Bhutan, who congratulated him on becoming Ganden Tripa.[403] In November, he sent the cabinet minister Gung Paṇḍita to Sangen, on the border with Kham, in order to subdue "bandits" who would not submit to Tibetan authority.[404] Shortly before the New Year of 1780, he was involved in patronizing a prayer festival at Sera, which was hosted by his own *khangtsen* of Tsador.[405]

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[398] Ibid., 2:70b–71b.
[399] Ibid., 2:72a–73b.
[400] Ibid., 2:74b–75b.
[401] Ibid., 2:75b–76a.
[402] Ibid., 2:78b.
[403] Ibid., 2:81a.
[404] Ibid., 2:81b.
[405] Ibid., 2:82a.

In order to celebrate the emperor's seventieth birthday and accrue merit, in 1780 Ngawang Tsültrim commissioned a replica image of Jowo Changchup Chenpo to be placed in Sera Me, and he oversaw numerous ceremonies related to it throughout the year.[406] Construction began initially in the Döpel workshop of Lhasa, on February 8, although the ultimate destination of the statue was Sera Me.[407] Ngawang Tsültrim led a ceremony when construction was completed on May 18, and the "opening of the eyes" of Jowo took place on June 10.[408] From a private donation of land, he helped arrange for a trust fund for a new *khangtsen* at Sera Me and its monks.[409] After spending the summer rains retreat in Ganden, where he taught Tsongkhapa's *Stages of the Path* and meditation *sādhanas,* he went on an extended pilgrimage. He returned to Lhasa, where he performed a service for the birthday of the emperor.[410] At Sera on September 24, he inaugurated the Jowo statue, retold its history, and gave other teachings (such as the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*).[411] On November 9, a ceremony was held in anticipation of the Dalai Lama receiving his official seals from the emperor.[412] News was received on December 28 that the Panchen Lama had died in Beijing.[413] Ngawang Tsültrim took charge of the funeral arrangements and promised the emperor that a golden stupa

[406] Ibid., 2:102a–102b. The original Jowo Changchup Chenpo statue is located in Samye, is said to have spontaneously arisen at the time that Padmasambhava founded the monastery. According to the legend, it ultimately dates from the time of the Buddha, when he was 35 years old.
[407] Ibid., 2:83b.
[408] Ibid., 2:91a.
[409] Ibid., 2:90b.
[410] Ibid., 2:92a–93b.
[411] Ibid., 2:105a–108b.
[412] Ibid., 2:109a–109b. He didn't actually receive the seals until the next year.
[413] Ibid., 2:110a.

would be built.[414] In this year, he issued a decree called *Gowar Jawa* (*go bar bya ba*) supplementing the earlier decree on corruption, with seven articles describing specific abuses by tax collectors and district officials, and their remedies.[415]

The Great Prayer Ceremony of 1781 saw a visit from the young Jetsundampa Hothogthu (Blo bzang thub bstan dbang phyug, 1775-1813) along with a large Mongolian entourage. Ngawang Tsültrim translated dharma sermons for them into Mongolian and took the Jetsundampa to Ramoche for an audience with the Dalai Lama.[416] Around May 9, 1781, more instructions were received from the emperor regarding funeral services for the Panchen Lama.[417] The transportation of the Panchen's remains became the context for a confrontation between the *amban* of Xining and the regent. As a party was taking the ashes of the Panchen Lama back from Beijing to Tsang, the *amban* refused to take responsibility for transportation, and demanded that the Tibetans provide pack animals themselves. The regent directly appealed to the emperor, over the objections of the Lhasa *ambans*, and the emperor ordered that the Xining *amban* be imprisoned.[418] Ngawang Tsültrim then appealed for clemency for the deposed *amban*, which the emperor granted.[419] In late June or July the relics arrived in Xining and were received by representatives of the Tibetan government. The Eighth Dalai Lama, aged twenty-four, formally received the emperor's seals of office on July 21, 1781.[420] However, there is no indication that

[414] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 384 n. 3.Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:111b.
[415] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:237b.
[416] Ibid., 2:113b.
[417] Ibid., 2:115b.
[418] Ibid., 2:116b–117b.
[419] Ibid., 2:117b.
[420] Ibid., 2:118b.

it marked any real shift in power, as Ngawang Tsültrim stayed on as *sikyong* (according to Shakabpa, at the behest of the Dalai Lama who did not wish to rule).[421] He went on another journey of pilgrimage visiting monasteries and hot springs renowned for their healing properties, during which he met the Karmapa in Tölung on August 29, and on September 25 visited the Shamarpa's monastery at Yangpachen where the Panchen Lama's relics were received. [422] He spent the end of the year giving teachings in the Tantric Colleges.[423]

The Eighth Dalai Lama's twenty-fifth year, 1782, was considered an inauspicious "obstacle year". Ngawang Tsültrim was in charge of numerous long life ceremonies for him, to deal with the bad influences, beginning on the eighth day of the Great Prayer Festival.[424] At this time Ngawang Tsültrim preached a scathing sermon against the corrupted Nyingma tantric practices of Guhyajñāṇa (*gsang ye* or *gsang ba ye shes*). which had been suppressed in the days of Polhané but had, according to Ngawang Tsültrim, resurfaced among the monks.[425] Then he stayed in retreat at Ramoché from March 14 to March 28.[426] An Amitāyus temple constructed for the long life of the Dalai Lama was dedicated on July 24.[427] His usual tour in the summer took him to Sera, Drepung and Ganden for teachings, followed by a visit to the Norbulingka to call upon the Dalai Lama.[428] In this year, he refurbished the

[421] Ibid., 2:119a–119b.Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:503.
[422] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:119b–120a.
[423] Ibid., 2:124a.
[424] Ibid., 2:124b. In a western reckoning he would only be twenty-three at the beginning of the year. But the year in which he is born was his first year, and he entered his second year at Losar.
[425] Ibid., 2:125b, 201b.
[426] Ibid., 2:127a–127b.
[427] Ibid., 2:130b.
[428] Ibid., 2:130b–132b.

jewelry that was part of the old style of dress, dating back to the period of Songtsen Gampo, and which Tibetan governmental officials wore on ceremonial occasions.[429] The year closed with more long life ceremonies for the Dalai Lama, attended by all the monks of the Lhasa monasteries.[430]

In the Great Prayer Festival preaching cycle of 1783, Ngawang Tsültrim finished the *Jātakas,* and began the *Udānavarga*, a text akin to the Pāli *Dhammapada*, which he preached at the following *mönlams* until the conclusion of his term as Ganden Tripa.[431] An order was received on February 26 from the emperor that the next incarnation of the Panchen Lama should be found.[432] On May 24, he was advised of rumors of an outbreak of disease in Neudong and sent an official to investigate.[433] In June he met with the monks of the Chakpori medical college and took charge of the preparation of the Rinchen Rilbu medical pills, made of precious materials and used to cure a wide variety of ailments, which had not been made since the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama due to its expense.[434] In July, he made offerings for the death of the Sakya Throne Holder (Kun dga' blo gros, 1729-1783).[435] He completed a printing of the collected works of Tsongkhapa, which had been compiled by Drakyab Rinpoché.[436] A printing of a Vinaya commentary by Lodrö

[429] Ibid., 2:217b.
[430] Ibid., 2:135a–136a.
[431] Ibid., 2:136b, 214a.
[432] Ibid., 2:138b.
[433] Ibid., 2:142a.
[434] Ibid.
[435] Ibid., 2:143a.
[436] Ibid., 2:143b–144a.

Leksang (Blo gros legs bzang), which had served as a manual for scholastic monks, followed on September 9.[437]

Since corruption in government continued, in this year he issued a further decree clarifying precisely how the grain tax was to be measured.[438] The second of the British missions led by Samuel Turner visited the Panchen Lama's court in Shigatsé in the autumn of 1783.[439] Turner did not come to Lhasa to see the regent, and the mission went completely unmentioned in the biography, but the regent's policy was felt in Shigatsé. Turner states that the Panchen's court blamed the regent for preventing them from coming to Lhasa.[440] He was said to have "usurped even, from the hands of the Dalai Lama, the greatest portion of his temporal power," and the combined influence of him and the *ambans* discouraged the Panchen Lama's court from cooperating with Turner or allowing him to see the Dalai Lama.[441] According to Turner, the emperor planned to recall Ngawang Tsültrim to Beijing and have the Panchen Lama be regent, but this was prevented by the death of the Panchen Lama.[442]

The latter years of Ngawang Tsültrim's regency were relatively uneventful. He held a feast for completed renovations of the Jokhang on May 27, 1784.[443] In this

[437] Ibid., 2:147a.
[438] Ibid., 2:239a.
[439] A new infant incarnation of the Panchen had just been found, and Turner dealt with a regent at the Panchen's court.
[440] Turner, *Embassy to Tibet*, 253. While elsewhere he refers to Demo as "Gesub Rinpochay" and Ngawang Tsültrim as "Nimoheïm," it would not make sense for Turner to blame the late Demo Rinpoché for obstructing him (although Demo had been blamed for obstructing the previous British mission in 1774).
[441] Ibid., 245.
[442] Ibid., 365. Here Ngawang Tsültrim is referred to as "Nimoheim" in distinction to "Gesub Rinpochay" which refers to Demo.
[443] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:157b.

year he published a volume of the collected works of the teachings of the Seventh Dalai Lama.[444] At his annual summer teaching in Ganden, it is noted that he completed the teaching cycle of Tsongkhapa's *Stages of the Path* and then started the *Extensive Mind Generation* (*Sems bskyed mchod pa rgyas pa*).[445] Along with the Dalai Lama, he departed for Tashilhunpo on September 23 to see the newly identified incarnation of the Panchen Lama (Bstan pa'i nyi ma, 1782-1853).[446] The reliquary of the previous Panchen Lama was inaugurated on October 2 and Ngawang Tsültrim gave the young Panchen *upāsaka* vows on October 23.[447] Before returning to Lhasa, he did some more traveling, visiting the monastery of Narthang on November 1.[448]

During the Great Prayer Festival of 1785, the cabinet ministers and Dalai Lama approached Ngawang Tsültrim and requested that he stay for a few more years as Ganden Tripa, in order to benefit the teachings "in this degenerate era."[449] He refused on the grounds that his term (as Ganden Tripa) was over, and that the Jangtsé Chöjé Lobsang Mönlam (Blo bzang smon lam, 1729-1798) should be able to succeed to the throne. But he agreed to finish up the preaching cycle of the *Udānavarga*, and judge the monks' debates, prior to resigning.[450] After the Great Prayer Festival he participated in the tradition (dating back to Tsongkhapa) of repairing the dam of Dokyel, which protected Lhasa and its holy shrines from

[444] Ibid., 2:163a.
[445] Ibid., 2:161a.
[446] Ibid., 2:165b–169a.
[447] Ibid., 2:169a.
[448] Ibid., 2:169b.
[449] Ibid., 2:181b.
[450] Ibid., 2:182a.

flooding on the Tsangpo River.[451]

The emperor made note of his resignation in a letter received May 16, 1785, expressing gratitude for his service as regent and Ganden Tripa and asking that he come to Beijing soon.[452] The new Ganden Tripa Lobsang Mönlam was installed on July 1.[453]

In January of 1786, Ngawang Tsültrim gave gifts to emissaries to celebrate the enthronement of a new *desi* of Bhutan.[454] At the Great Prayer Festival, he spoke of the possibility that he would have to go to China, although the order had not yet been received at this point.[455] Changkya Rinpoché died on April 30, leaving the post of *thamka lama* vacant. The emperor sent an order recalling Ngawang Tsültrim's return to Beijing to replace him. He set a departure date for July 23, despite health troubles involving his leg.[456] The officials of Tibet requested that he be allowed to remain as regent, but the emperor refused.[457] A number of bad omens appeared at the time of the Great Prayer Festival, foreshadowing Chankya Rinpoché's death and Ngawang Tsültrim's departure to China, as well as the troubles in Tibet that were soon to come.[458] He continued to do rituals, for instance consecrating a painted cloth *maṇḍala* of Vajrabhairava in the Upper Tantric College on April 11.[459] He made the rounds of the great monasteries, saying farewell, receiving gifts from the Panchen

[451] Ibid., 2:177b–179a.
[452] Ibid., 2:184b.
[453] Ibid., 2:185a.
[454] Ibid., 2:193a.
[455] Ibid., 2:194b.
[456] Ibid., 2:251b–252a, 255b.
[457] Ibid., 2:254b.
[458] Ibid., 2:255a.
[459] Ibid., 2:256a.

and Sakya lamas, giving teachings, and initiating some final restoration projects.[460]

Thamka lama (1786-1791)

As he explained to the monks of Sera, his departure meant that the "work of government and politics [was] offered into the hands of the Dalai Lama."[461] The real handover of power to the Dalai Lama took place as he departed for Beijing, even though he had received his seals earlier; this also marks the end of the tutorship.[462] After a final farewell reception with the Qing and Tibetan officials, Ngawang Tsültrim left on July 24 with a large sendoff party.[463] In the meantime the Dalai Lama, according to Petech, "conducted personally the government of Tibet during three years [1786-1789]."[464] Ngawang Tsültrim's journey to Beijing lasted several months, as he visited a number of monasteries in Tibetan and Mongolian regions along the way.[465] He crossed into Amdo and was greeted by the Xining *amban* near Kokonor, who gave him the emperor's official edict and seal giving him the title of *samati pakṣi*.[466] In October, he crossed the Lugou bridge into Beijing, and had his first meeting with the Qianlong emperor in the Mahākāla Temple "inside the golden wall."[467] They discussed his prior service, his duties in Beijing, the privileges he would have in the Forbidden City, and so forth. On October 22 he received many precious gifts in the Zhongzheng Dian temple (a Tibetan Buddhist shrine within the Forbidden City), then was invited into the emperor's own chambers.[468] He

[460] Ibid., 2:258b–261b.
[461] Ibid., 2:262b.
[462] Ibid., 2:254a.
[463] Ibid., 2:266a, 268b–269b.
[464] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 384–385.
[465] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:250b–283a.
[466] Ibid., 2:277a–278a.
[467] Ibid., 2:281b, 284a.
[468] Ibid., 2:284a–286a.

commenced his ritual duties at Yonghegong monastery with a long life ceremony for the emperor on December 1.[469] That winter, he started teaching *lamrim* to the emperor within his winter quarters.[470]

As in Tibet, the New Year's ceremonies were among the most important ritual occasions of the year, and Ngawang Tsültrim participated in rituals with the emperor at Tibetan Buddhist temples around the palace. The Great Prayer Festival of 1787 was celebrated much as it was in Lhasa later.[471] He began his dharma preaching soon thereafter, with a dharma sermon in Manchu, and then a week-long session on *lamrim* in Yonghegong.[472] On March 9, he performed a ceremony to remove evil influences in the queen's chambers, where a murder had occurred. He performed a consecration at the emperors' ancestral tomb at Tonling, on April 2.[473] In the summer, Ngawang Tsültrim sponsored a translation of the Kangyur into Manchu and taught in the Tibetan language school.[474] In the midst of these duties, he obtained the emperor's leave to go on pilgrimage to Wutaishan, arriving there on October 5.[475] He paid homage to the temples of the Five Families of Mañjuśrī, relics of the Buddha which (according to legend) were disseminated by Aśoka, and the relics of Chankya Rolpé Dorjé at Zhenhai temple.[476] Upon his return to Beijing later that year, his tantric expertise was called upon by the emperor to defeat the Lin Shuangwen rebellion in Taiwan. He performed a ritual to turn the winds so that the Qing invasion fleet could

[469] Ibid., 2:283a–327a.
[470] Ibid., 2:291a–292a.
[471] Ibid., 2:293a–294a, 295a.
[472] Ibid., 2:295a.
[473] Ibid., 2:295b.
[474] Ibid., 2:296b.
[475] Ibid., 2:296a–296b, 298a.
[476] Ibid., 2:299a–300b.

cross the channel.[477] According to the biography, the ritual was successful, and following the invasion, the Qing in fact won the war.[478] He returned to Yonghegong where he began teachings on Cakrasaṃvara, which continued into the next year.[479]

After the New Year's ceremonies of 1788, the emperor announced that the Tibetan temples and monasteries of the capital were to be refurbished, including Ngawang Tsültrim's own house.[480] In September, while spending the summer rains retreat preaching at the monastery of Yonghegong, and assisting in the Manchu translation of the Kagyur, Ngawang Tsültrim learned of the Gorkha attack on Tibet.[481] Subsequently, he performed a torma ritual for the defeat of the Gorkhas, while the emperor sent an order for Qing reinforcements to come to Tibet.[482] The emperor credited his ritual prowess for creating a victory, causing the Gorkha invasion to be turned back.[483] After further discussions with Ngawang Tsültrim, the emperor ordered further provisions to be sent to the armies in December 2.[484] But more bad news from the Tibetan front was soon received, that the Gorkhas had advanced into Nyanang, and that the Sakya lama and the Shamarpa had treacherously sought a treaty with them. The emperor resolved to send a large Qing army to defeat the Gorkhas.[485]

Shortly after the New Year festivals of 1789**,** an official investigator named

[477] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:521. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:301a.
[478] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:301b.
[479] Ibid., 2:304b, 305b.
[480] Ibid., 2:304b.
[481] Ibid., 2:306a–306b.
[482] Ibid., 2:306b–307a.
[483] Ibid., 2:307b.
[484] Ibid., 2:307b–308a.
[485] Ibid., 2:308b–309a.

Ngaucharjun returned with an account of the Nepalese war situation.[486] His report explained the political background to the war (the disputes over trade and coinage) and blamed the cabinet minister (*kalön*) Soman Wangyel and implicitly the Tibetan government led by the Dalai Lama for the diplomatic breakdown.[487] The emperor responded that "the officials of Tibet do not know how to do their work," and sent out an order that all Tibetan governance was to be placed under the *ambans*.[488] Ngawang Tsültrim drafted a reply, which argued that Tibetans should retain autonomy in religion and local political affairs, and in particular that Tibetan customs made it necessary that the Dalai Lama retain his traditional status. He convinced the Beijing *ambans* to deliver it to the emperor over their initial objections.[489] The emperor decided to relent, ordering on April 12 that the Tibetan government should continue to function under the 1751 "Thirteen Articles,"[490] and that Tibetan autonomy and the authority of the Dalai Lama should remain as before.[491] In this order, he also dismissed Sonam Wangyel, ordered the officials to not be corrupt or nepotistic in appointments, and demanded that Tibet settle its differences with Nepal over the salt trade and currency.[492] Schwieger and Petech indicate that the emperor responded more strongly than depicted in the biography; he blamed the crisis on the Dalai Lama's incompetence, and exiled the brother of the Dalai Lama who was seen as a

[486] Ibid., 2:310b.
[487] Ibid.
[488] Ibid., 2:311a.
[489] Ibid., 2:311a–313a.
[490] This is a kind of Tibetan constitution that had been drafted by the Qing after Gyurmé Namgyel's revolt, with the Dalai Lama sharing power with the ambans. Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 147–159.
[491] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:313b–314b.
[492] Ibid., 2:315a–315b.

bad influence.[493] As Ngawang Tsültrim resumed his usual teachings in Yonghegong, another letter was received from the *ambans*, explaining that Tibet had been well-governed under the regents and that Ngawang Tsültrim or at least someone like him should be sent back to Tibet to rule.[494] Tatsak Rinpoché was appointed as regent by the emperor on May 26, again removing political power from the Dalai Lama.[495] In late October or early November, he entered a retreat during which he became ill but was able to recover without breaking the meditation session.[496] He gave audiences to Mongolians in Beijing and had more discussions with the *ambans* about Tibetan affairs and the Gorkha war.[497]

Following the New Year ceremonies of 1790, Ngawang Tsültrim went to Shiling to meet the new Chankya incarnation on his birthday, and to consecrate the newly built temple there.[498] He had a meeting with the young Jetsundampa incarnation of Mongolia on July 29, in which he gave initiations and advice but, per agreement with the emperor, delayed giving him ordination vows.[499] Among the usual rituals and teachings at Yonghegong, he celebrated the emperor's eightieth birthday with a long life ceremony.[500] Later in the summer, word was received of a contentious but trivial dispute over protocol in Lhasa, which led the emperor to

[493] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 161–162. The punishment of the brother is obliquely referred to in the biography, but he is not clearly identified as the Dalai Lama's brother: Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:324b–325a.
[494] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:316b–317b.
[495] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 161–163. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:317b.
[496] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:319a.
[497] Ibid.
[498] Ibid., 2:321a.
[499] Ibid., 2:324a.
[500] Ibid., 2:322b.

suggest that Ngawang Tsültrim's return as regent might be desirable.[501] The Chaksam and Demo incarnations had been arguing over the seating arrangements at a festival at the Potala. It was decided by the emperor that Demo should receive priority, since Demo was a young Geluk lama whose previous incarnation had been regent, whereas Chaksam was "a small Nyingma lama."[502] On July 29, Ngawang Tsültrim had an audience with the Jetsundampa Hothogthu and held an audience with a large crowd of Mongolians in Shehor monastery.[503] Another message was received from the investigators in Tibet on September 16, indicating continued problems with the Tibetan administration and requesting that Ngawang Tsültrim be appointed regent again.[504] The emperor was reluctant to let him leave Beijing and had concerns about his old age but ultimately decided to send him back to be regent.[505]

Ngawang Tsültrim left Beijing on October 1, and signs and wonders are said to have occurred in Lhasa at that time.[506] Again he paid visits to various monasteries and princes on his way to Lhasa, giving teachings and audiences.[507] The journey was also an opportunity to make more religious visits, paying homage to past Dalai Lamas. In December he visited Litang, the Third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso's monastery.[508] Shortly thereafter, he paid a visit to the Seventh Dalai Lama's

[501] Ibid.
[502] Ibid., 2:322b–323b.
[503] Ibid., 2:323b–324a.
[504] Ibid., 2:327b.
[505] Ibid., 2:328a–329a.
[506] Ibid., 2:331a.
[507] Ibid., 2:333a–340b.
[508] Ibid., 2:336a.

birthplace.[509] He received messages from the emperor at intervals; a December 11 letter expressed concern over the regent's health and a desire to offer clemency to the brothers of the Dalai Lama.[510]

Return to the regency and death (1791)

As Ngawang Tsültrim approached Lhasa in severe winter weather, a Chinese official accompanying him tried to give him a fur coat and have him sit on a palanquin. He refused on the grounds that it was against the Vinaya.[511] This had the effect of endangering his health in the last year of his life.[512] Ngawang Tsültrim took the long journey back to Tibet, arriving in Lhasa on January 15, 1791, where he received a grand reception from the monks, *ambans*, and so forth, and an audience with the Dalai Lama.[513] He predicted that he would die soon but promised to make merit by sponsoring the *mönlam*, and delivered a sermon on virtue for common people.[514] He formally took the throne of the regency on January 21.[515] For the few remaining months of his life, he fulfilled at least the ritual part of his duties, and occasionally took part in political affairs.[516] The exhortation to the Dalai Lama he gave at the Great Prayer Festival indicated that he intended that the Dalai Lama return to political power soon. He made the usual rounds to various monasteries (like his own Sera), teaching texts of Tsongkhapa, visiting lamas and sponsoring construction projects.[517] On April 7, his illness became serious enough that a long life

[509] Ibid., 2:336b.
[510] Ibid., 2:338a.
[511] Ibid., 2:340a.
[512] Ibid., 2:342a.
[513] Ibid., 2:345a–347a.
[514] Ibid., 2:348a.
[515] Ibid., 2:349b.
[516] Ibid., 2:348b–377a.
[517] Ibid., 2:352a–367a.

ceremony was held for him, after which he requested others to take over his ritual duties.[518] As his condition seemed to be getting worse, on April 20 he met with the Dalai Lama and expressed his wish to go to Pabongka (Songtsen Gampo's hermitage) to die, rather than remain in the Potala, although it seems he never recovered sufficiently to carry out this wish.[519] He was able to carry out a brief discussion of the Nepalese situation, criticizing the large amounts of silver paid to Nepal and predicting that they would attack Tibet in the future.[520] Shakabpa claims that, prior to his death, Ngawang Tsültrim harshly criticized the *kashak* and instituted a policy of refusing to pay tribute to or negotiate with the Nepalese.[521] He participated in one last ceremony (commemorating the Third Dalai Lama) on April 30, and he died that afternoon—according to Shakabpa, of a heart attack.[522]

The biography goes on to describe the various funeral ceremonies in Lhasa which went on until July 28, and the disposition of Ngawang Tsültrim's relics.[523] The emperor gave money for the funeral service and ordered the next incarnation to be found, the second of what would soon become the Tsemönling lineage.[524] An "auspicious many-doored" stupa (*bkra shis sgo mang*, meaning one having many apertures for images) was consecrated at Sera on October 19.[525] Regular memorial

[518] Ibid., 2:366b.
[519] Ibid., 2:367b–368a.
[520] Ibid., 2:368b–369a.
[521] Ibid., 2:163. Shakabpa also credits him with exiling a general and the brothers of the Dalai Lama, but this seems to have been the emperor's doing (perhaps in consultation with Ngawang Tsültrim, while he was in Beijing).
[522] Ibid., 2:374a–376a. It is possible that he actually died a little bit later, because there is a discussion of bad signs in the early part of the fourth month, i.e. early May. Ibid., 2:373b.Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 163.
[523] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:377a–383b.
[524] Ibid., 2:382a–382b.
[525] Ibid., 2:392b.

services were subsequently held annually on the anniversary of his death, through 1798, when the biography was published.

Ngawang Tsültrim's life shows him to be a Geluk scholarly monk through and through. Much of his early life was spent on the arduous path toward *geshé,* which he achieved on the basis of his merits of a scholar. He gained valuable experience in administration though positions of monastic leadership, and became poised to embark on a career of spreading the Geluk dharma of Tsongkhapa, both in Lhasa (as Ganden Tripa and tutor to the Dalai Lama) and Beijing (as imperial preceptor). His time in the Qing court in Beijing, in addition to his origins in Amdo, may have made him less parochially tied to local concerns in central Tibet and more cosmopolitan in outlook. He was thus seen by the emperor as an ideal candidate for the regency, one who would be loyal to him, not tied to any particular faction, but broadly respected by Tibetans. As regent he focused on patronizing and regulating the Geluk monasteries, but he also tried to make sure that the peasants were not exploited, and that Tibet had a strong position against foreign rivals like the Gorkhas. When he returned to Beijing as preceptor again, he remained in touch with Tibetan affairs and negotiated with the emperor to defend Tibetan interests. The emperor saw Ngawang Tsültrim as a competent ruler (compared with the Dalai Lama), which had the immediate consequence that he was sent back to Tibet, and the long term consequence that the Qing apparently were quite reluctant to allow the Eighth Dalai Lama (and perhaps future Dalai Lamas) to rule again. The emperor's judgement that Ngawang Tsültrim was a competent regent is shared by scholars like Shakabpa, and this seems to be correct: while he supported existing social arrangement in Tibet,

generally he performed his duties according to Buddhist ideals of selflessness, and avoided the internal factionalism and external conflict that would plauge Tibet after his reign.

Chapter 4: Ngawang Tsültrim as a Religious Figure

Introduction

Ngawang Tsültrim as regent is described as the "lord of both the political and religious traditions of Tibet" (*chos srid gnyis ldan gyi bdag por*).[526] A regent obviously was the lord of politics, but how he functioned as a lord of religion is more difficult to ascertain. One might, naively, conceptualize the regent as a replacement for the Dalai Lama in both spheres. It is easy to see the regent as a substitute in the political sphere, a role clearly defined when the Fifth Dalai Lama expressed a desire to relinquish political duties in his decree appointing Desi Sangyé Gyatso.[527] However, since the Dalai Lama did not give up his religious status, "lord of religion" could not have meant that a regent was a spiritual substitute for the Dalai Lama as well.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, even lay rulers such as Polhané were described as being lords of both religion and politics. Such a designation may be appropriate in light of the fact that Ganden Palace's *raison d'être* was to support Geluk Buddhism, and that it was effectively divided into secular and religious branches. Regents had plenty of ritual and administrative duties that involved religion, and they were increasingly chosen from the monastic ranks after 1750. Ngawang Tsültrim had a great deal of religious expertise through his philosophical and tantric education and the succession of religious offices he held. Prior to his regency he was abbot of Upper Tantric College and imperial *ti shi*, and as regent he

[526] Ibid., 2:12b.
[527] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 333–334.

simultaneously served as Ganden Tripa and tutor to the Dalai Lama.[528] Even aside from his expertise and positions, Ngawang Tsültrim's status as regent required him to participate in the religious rituals of the state, as well as to direct patronage to the monasteries and sponsor religious activities. Ngawang Tsültrim's religious expertise and administrative experience put him on the pathway to become regent and bolstered his stature as "lord of religion."

Religious Education

Ngawang Tsültrim's monastic career should first of all be placed in the context of Tibetan mass monasticism, and the "web of Tibetan monasticism" connecting far-flung Geluk monasteries in Greater Tibet with the *densas* of Central Tibet. Tibetan mass monasticism emphasized sheer numbers of monks above all else.[529] Although monasticism expressed a Tibetan cultural and religious ideal of "renouncing attachments to materialism and family…to devote [one's life] to the pursuit of Buddhist teachings," Tibetans considered the mere wearing of robes and adherence to celibacy, even without further religious commitments, to be superior to the lay life.[530] Most monks would be entered into the monasteries as children, and stay there for life regardless of their aptitude for study or practice.[531] A frequently

[528] The positions in the Qing court and the tutorship to the Dalai Lama will be described in later chapters.

[529] Scholarly work on mass monasticism has usually focused on the twentieth century. There were not quite as many monks in the late eighteenth century, so the characterization of "mass monasticism" may not be quite as applicable to that era.

[530] Melvyn C. Goldstein and Paljor Tsarong, "Tibetan Buddhist Monasticism: Social, Psychological, and Cultural Implications," *The Tibet Journal* 10, no. 1 (1985): 16–17. Melvyn C. Goldstein, "The Revival of Monastic Life," in *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, ed. Melvyn C. Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 17–19.

[531] Goldstein and Tsarong, "Tibetan Buddhist Monasticism: Social, Psychological, and Cultural Implications," 16.

cited statistic claims that in the twentieth century 10-20% of the central Tibetan male population were monks (there were far fewer nuns, as there was no cultural ideal of selecting daughters for the monastic life).[532] These numbers were large enough to exert a certain dominance over Tibetan society beyond the confines of the monastery (with or without dominance over government). The dominance of these monasteries could also be seen in that they had larger agricultural landholdings even than aristocrats, estates on which the peasants (*mi ser*) worked land and owed obligations of labor and produce.[533] Ngawang Tsültrim's monastery of Sera, even in the eighteenth century, had a large population that was the epitome of “mass monasticism.” Sera had 2,850 monks in the late seventeenth century, rising to six or seven thousand by the early twentieth century. Ngawang Tsültrim's biography in the Ganden Tripas anthology states that each *dratsang* (college) of Sera and Drepung already had three thousand monks each, as of about 1780, which would give Sera as a whole a population of six thousand.[534]

Ngawang Tsültrim was tied to the “web of Tibetan monasticism” from the time he entered the monastery at Choné. According to Miller, all the Tibetan sects prior to 1959 had “mother” monasteries connected to branch monasteries (which she calls “daughter” monasteries) through which monks from the hinterlands of Tibet could

[532] Ibid., 15. Samuel questions estimates of 25% as exaggerations, and argues that the proportion of the male population who were monks is closer to 10%. The proportion of nuns ranges from 0 to 4% of women. He largely considers outling areas of Kham and Nepal, rather than Central Tibet (or for that matter Amdo). Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 578–582. Numbers may have been lower in the eighteenth century, when many monasteries were smaller; of course the proportion of monks depends on the population of Tibet at the time, but I do not have that information.
[533] Goldstein, “The Revival of Monastic Life,” 19. Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 180–182.There is a dispute as to whether the terminology of “serfs” is appropriate, so I have translated *miser* as “peasants”
[534] Dreyfus, “Drepung: An Introduction.” Grags pa mkhas grub, “Trichen Namtar,” 22b. Ibid., 4a.

advance up the monastic hierarchy. Mother monasteries exerted control through "the periodic visitations of high-ranking monks who assume[d] leadership of the local monastery during their stay," or else by appointing the abbots of the branch monasteries.[535] The Geluk system, in which the *densas* were connected to far-flung monasteries around the Greater Tibetan world, is the largest and best example of the web of monasticism.[536] All scholars, whether from central Tibet and peripheral regions like Amdo, who sought the highest scholarly degree of *geshé* would go to the *densas*.[537] Monks had a concentric circle of loyalties, to the monastery as a whole (Sera, Drepung or Ganden), the particular college or *dratsang* (like Sera Me and Sera Je), and the regional dormitories (*kamtsen*). Ngawang Tsültrim's time in the local monastery of Tsador served to initiate him into monastic life and provide him with some basic monastic education (such as the memorization of liturgies) before he went to the regional monastery of Choné to begin the philosophical curriculum in earnest. His preceptor at Choné monastery, Drakpa Shedrup (Grags pa bshad sgrubs) had been educated at Sera Me, before returning to be a prominent teacher and abbot of Choné.[538] When Ngawang Tsültrim went to central Tibet and entered Sera Me he probably entered Tsador *khangtsen*, whose very name shows the link between Tsador monastery and Sera. He maintained ties with Tsador *khangtsen* throughout his regency.[539]

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[535] Miller, "The Web of Tibetan Monasticism," 201. Mother monastery (*ma mgon*) is a real Tibetan term, but "daughter monastery" is Miller's own term. However, "branch monastery" (*yan lag gyi dgon pa*) is a term used in Tibetan.
[536] Ibid.
[537] Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 479.
[538] Tenzin Fedor Stracke, "Drakpa Shedrub," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2012, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Drakpa-Shedrub/2931.
[539] It is clear that he had ties of some kind with Tsador *khangtsen*, even though the biographies that I

Ngawang Tsültrim's chosen path in the monasteries was that of the scholar, a vocation that already set him apart from the majority of monks. A consequence of mass monasticism is that not everyone lived the contemplative or scholarly life, with monks fitting into a number of niches, including the notorious "punk monks" who fought and provided "muscle" for the monasteries, without being especially religiously observant.[540] But Ngawang Tsültrim was part of the minority (especially found within the larger monasteries) that did opt for rigorous Vinaya observance and scholarship, the ultimate ideal for a Geluk monk.[541] Ngawang Tsültrim showed a personal inclination toward study and dharma practice before he was entered into Choné, and later personally chose to go to Lhasa to enter Sera.[542] He is described as an ideal scholar in his dedication to study, his concern for others' learning while debating, and his commitment to learn both the words and the meanings of the great texts.[543]. He also showed a high degree of Vinaya observance, for instance doing the *chablen* (rinsing his mouth out with water after meals) and being satisfied with modest amounts of food.[544] The Ganden Tripas' biography also emphasizes his lack

consulted do not specifically say that he entered this *khangtsen*. He was known as Tsador Geshé. When it was Tsador's turn to patronize the Maitreya prayer festival, he was a participant. He also inaugurated new construction projects there. While I doubt this is a coincidence, as *khangtsen* are organized on a regional basis, I have not located a source that connects Tsador monastery with Tsador Khangtsen. Ngawang Tsültrim's other childhood monastery, Choné, has a namesake *khangtsen* in Drepung, to which he also paid a visit during his regency. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 4b. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:82a, 131a, 144b. See also José Ignacio Cabezón, "The Sera Monastery Project," accessed October 24, 2015, http://www.thlib.org/places/monasteries/sera/.

[540] Goldstein and Tsarong, "Tibetan Buddhist Monasticism: Social, Psychological, and Cultural Implications," 16.

[541] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 40–41.

[542] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 2a–2b. However, it still seems likely that his parents entered him into the monastery, as was true of other Tibetan monks.

[543] Ibid., 3a–3b.

[544] Ibid., 3a.

of selfishness and leadership on the debate ground (an environment where many fell into the pitfall of competitiveness and pride): “he had a superior intention, unlike that of others, to create an atmosphere where the members of his own class and those of adjacent classes exhorted and helped one another in debate and memorization.”[545] In spite of the tendency of mass monasticism to recruit many monks who were only minimally observant or learned, Ngawang Tsültrim stood above his peers, reflecting high ideals of devotion to scholarship and Vinaya observance.

First of all, Ngawang Tsültrim went through the exoteric curriculum, studying logic, Madhyamaka philosophy, Perfection of Wisdom, Abhidharma, and Vinaya. As noted by the Ganden Tripas’ biography, the exoteric curriculum is based not only on the works of the Indian masters, but on the commentaries of Tsongkhapa and his disciples, as well as the *yikcha* (*yig cha*) or debate manuals—in Ngawang Tsültrim's case, those of Sera Me (*yikcha* were often a source of fierce loyalty for the individual colleges).[546] These works strengthened his connection to the ideology and institutions of the Geluk monasteries and the state that supported them.[547] Among the five topics, Vinaya has the most obvious connection to governing monasteries and monks, a task for which Ngawang Tsültrim was responsible as abbot and Ganden Tripa, even though practical monastic administration is not based wholly on the root text of the Vinaya or even the commentaries studied in the curriculum.[548] Be

[545] Ibid., 4a.
[546] Ibid., 3a. The *yikcha* was written by Tenpa Dargyé (bstan pa dar rgyas, 1493-1568)
[547] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 124–125.
[548] Ibid., 116–117. Monasteries had their own rules, which were based on the Vinaya but also on local traditions. Ter Ellingson, “Tibetan Monastic Constitutions: The Bca’-Yig,” in *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, ed. Lawrence Epstein and Richard F. Sherburn

that is it may, he did have responsibilities that related to the curriculum directly. As regent and Ganden Tripa, he supervised the Geluk education system, as by overseeing the debate examinations at the Great Prayer Festival (which traditionally was when the degree of *Lharampa* was awarded).[549] As tutor to the Dalai Lama and preceptor to the emperor, he would teach these topics himself. Ngawang Tsültrim's own advancement within the *densas* was mainly an internal affair of the monasteries until he was examined to determine whether he could enter the *geshé lharam* class, which probably happened after he obtained the *lingsé* (*gling bsre*) degree.[550] This examination, and the final examination in which he finally attained the *geshé lharampa* degree, involved the political and religious authorities of Lhasa such as the Seventh Dalai Lama, the Dalai Lama's tutors, the Ganden Tripa, and so forth.[551]

Tantra is the supreme practice of Tibetan Buddhism, and going to the Upper Tantric College and becoming a *Ngakrampa* was the pinnacle of Ngawang Tsültrim's education. The two tantric universities—Upper Tantric College (Gyutö, *rgyud stod*) or Lower Tantric College (Gyumé, *rgyud smad*)—were open to those who had completed the Lharampa degree at the *densas*. Besides the *lharampa geshés* who

(Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990). José Ignacio Cabezón, "The Regulations of a Monastery," in *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, ed. Donald Lopez (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[549] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:58b. Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Academic Degress in Buddhist Philosophy*, NIAS Reports 43 (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2000), 20.

[550] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 4a. *Lingsé* was originally a degree separate from *geshé*, one that could be obtained as a final degree. It later came to be one of the four *geshé* decrees, one that could be obtained instead of *lharam* (or the other two degrees), and for which the curriculum was shorter. Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Academic Degress in Buddhist Philosophy*, 17, 19.

[551] Geshe Lhundup Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture* (Dharamsala, H.P.: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1983), 42–43. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 252–255. Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Academic Degress in Buddhist Philosophy*, 19–21. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 4a.

came from the *densas* and who normally spent just two or three years there, the tantric colleges also housed a permanent staff of monks who were ritual specialists. According to Geshé Sopa, monks at the tantric colleges learned Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, and Yamātanka, the three tantras most revered in the Geluk tradition.[552] The curriculum was based on textbooks and debate, but also included practical instruction on ritual performance: the biography explains that in addition to learning to recite the root tantras, "[Ngawang Tsültrim] also became an expert in the all of the great and subtle points of the practical arts of melodies, chants, playing musical instruments and the beating of drums."[553] In addition to the standard curriculum, Ngawang Tsültrim's study of tantra involved receiving elective teachings and empowerments under various lamas.[554] Among these teachers was the Panchen Lama, which may have been the first time that Ngawang Tsültrim came to the attention of lamas of pan-Tibetan stature (other than his own monastic teachers).[555] He became something of a tantric specialist, whose skills would become valued in Lhasa and Beijing alike. As head of the Upper Tantric College and as a court teacher for the Qing emperor, he gave tantric empowerments and teachings; he even responded to requests for teaching before finishing the *ngakrampa* degree.[556] In the Qing court, and as regent, he would be called on to do tantric rituals of defense and removing evil influences, rites that required the empowerments and teachings he had received at the Tantric College.

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[552] Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 59, 64.
[553] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 4b.
[554] While completing exoteric studies, students are not permitted to receive tantric empowerments on their own until late in the curriculum. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 119.
[555] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 4b.
[556] Ibid.

In what sense did the curriculum of the Tibetan monasteries serve as preparation for Ngawang Tsültrim's regency? While knowledge of the contents of the curriculum was important for all of Ngawang Tsültrim's religious positions, it could hardly be said that the scholastic curriculum, per se, was training to be a political administrator. Literacy was something important for a ruler, and monastic education was the primary means to attain it.[557] According to Ter Ellingson, education in government or monastic administration was necessarily informal, since it was not part of the traditional religious curriculum.[558] But in a sense the religious curriculum was still a prerequisite for office; most rulers of Ganden Palace, including the regents and the Dalai Lamas, went through it. The regent Demo is described as a great scholar,[559] and the tutorship of the Eighth Dalai Lama (by Ngawang Tsültrim and others) reaffirmed the expectation that Dalai Lamas were to be trained in the curriculum.[560] Ngawang Tsültrim advanced through the educational system, and from there into religious leadership, on the basis of his merit. In a government dominated by the monastic establishment, an ordinary Geluk monk could not rise by any other means. Compared with someone like Demo, Ngawang Tsültrim lacked the apparent privilege of high *tülkus* to be fast-tracked though the curriculum*,* or preexisting connections to the Potala that could lead to further advancement.[561] According to

[557] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 81–84. Of course, a ruler could delegate tasks that required literacy (i.e. drafting laws) to lower level administrators.
[558] Ellingson, "Tibetan Monastic Constitutions: The Bca'-Yig."
[559] Blo bzang 'phrin las, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*, 1090.
[560] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:106a–109a.
[561] The regent Demo was chosen early on as personal assistant to the Seventh Dalai Lama, and completed his exams at age twenty. Blo bzang 'phrin las, Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo, 1090. Tibetan authorities would probably not want to have *tülkus* fail their exams, or be put into a position where this would be likely.

Dreyfus, “Education in traditional Tibet was a means of social reproduction, not so much of a class structure as of a social organization dominated by monastic institutions.”[562] One who had gone through the curriculum knew everything that was to be known, from the Geluk point of view.[563] When he entered Sera, he had made a vow to spread the teachings of the second Buddha, Tsongkhapa,[564] and this vow was as relevant to a political position like regent as it was to a monastic position such as Ganden Tripa.

Monastic positions

Ngawang Tsültrim’s appointments to positions of leadership in the Upper Tantric College were the first indication that he would rise beyond the ranks of *geshé* to higher positions of leadership. The tantric colleges, although relatively small, were the key to leadership over the Geluk monastic system, as hosts to the prerequisite positions to become Ganden Tripa.[565] Shortly after completing the *ngakrampa* degree*,* Ngawang Tsültrim's first appointment was *lama umdzé* (which may be translated as vice-abbot, chanting master, or “lead lama”).[566] According to Berzin (describing the modern era), the succession begins with three *gekö* (*dge bskos*) disciplinarians who are appointed from the best tantric students.[567] As Geshé Sopa explains further, two of the best students (one from each tantric college) who complete the examination are selected to the “lead tikka-recitership” (*ṭikka skyor*

[562] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 260.
[563] Ibid., 259–260.
[564] Grags pa mkhas grub, “Trichen Namtar,” 2b.
[565] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 188–189. Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 495n 9.
[566] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:5a.
[567] Berzin, “A Brief History of Gyumay and Gyuto Lower and Upper Tantric Colleges.”

dpon). After arranging a debate, they become *gekö*.[568] A disciplinarian can become a "lead teacher" ('*khrid dpon*) and, after giving instructions on Guhyasamāja and going through another debate, ascend to be the *lama umdzé*.[569] Ngawang Tsültrim is not described as holding these lesser positions, which may be because the succession did not work in the same way in the eighteenth century, or because the Ganden Tripas' biography glosses over some early positions which he did hold.

According to Powers, the Dalai Lama appoints the *lama umdzé*, and since succession to the abbacy of the Tantric College was automatic after that, it would give him a say over the future Ganden Tripas.[570] If this system was also in place at during Ngawang Tsültrim's day, since the Dalai Lama would have been too young in 1760, the appointment of Ngawang Tsültrim as *lama umdze* probably have fallen to the regent Demo.[571] However, the Ganden Tripas' biography does not go into detail about how he was appointed and by whom ("he ascended to the throne of *lama umdzé*"); it could have been more like the appointment by examination described by Sopa. *Lama umdzé* is a position that lasts for three years, according to Sopa, after which one ascends to the abbacy of the tantric college for another three years.[572] Ngawang Tsültrim held *lama umdzé* and the abbacy for at most one year, which might suggest that he was being fast-tracked through the ranks, although the system

[568] Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 67.
[569] Ibid.
[570] Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 481.
[571] The appointment of the abbot of Sera, for instance, fell to the regent if the Dalai Lama could not make it. Other aspects of the appointment procedures (such as the governing board of the monasteries submitting a list of names) did not apply in the special case of the tantric colleges. Cabezón, "Monks."
[572] Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 67.

may have been different in his time.[573]

Holding positions of leadership over Upper Tantric College, Ngawang Tsültrim had the responsibility of monastic administration. Monasteries were run as miniature polities according to their own constitutions, and had judicial procedures for disciplining monks.[574] If Ngawang Tsültrim served as disciplinarian, that was a role that involved enforcement of the rules and punishing and even expelling wrongdoers.[575] Some disciplinary duties seem to have been involved in his service as *lama umdzé,* a position that Geshé Sopa describes as "giving the examinations, watching after the rules, performing the rituals of the tantra college, etc."[576] In this role, Ngawang Tsültrim gained valuable experience in reconciling disputes.[577] In response to the "false accusations" by a certain faction against the Ganden Tripa Samten Puntsok, "he saw that there was a great need for [the members of the faction] to repair their broken commitments." He had all the monks of the two tantric colleges receive teachings from the Ganden Tripa, including a transmission of the *Four Intertwined Commentaries* on the Guhyasamāja.[578]

Economic and financial considerations were also involved in the running of a monastery, and as abbot of Upper Tantric, Ngawang Tsültrim was particularly noted for his acumen at financial management.[579] According to Dreyfus, an abbot of a

[573] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 5a.
[574] Ellingson, "Tibetan Monastic Constitutions: The Bca'-Yig."
[575] Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 67. The Ganden Tripa Lobsang Tenpa who served prior to Ngawang Tsültrim was appointed simultaneously to *gekö* and *lama umdzé*. Perhaps that was true of Ngawang Tsültrim as well, although these positions are not mentioned in the biographies.
[576] Ibid.
[577] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 4b.
[578] Ibid.
[579] Ibid., 5a.

Tibetan monastery "certainly has some power, but he cannot do as he pleases; he has to follow the traditions of the monastery and the wishes of the monks, whose representatives can nullify the leader's actions."[580] In addition to their religious duties—leading rituals and giving sermons, overseeing debates, and heading the monastery's governing council—the abbots of the *densas* and the tantric colleges had a strong voice in the Tibetan government and were also responsible for carrying out its policy.[581] Although advancement through the ranks to Ganden Tripa was most obviously based on qualities such as skill in debate which are not immediately relevant to being a ruler, positions like *lama umdzé* would have given Ngawang Tsültrim relevant administrative experience, which was essential to his later political roles.

Upon retirement, abbots of Upper Tantric become Sharpa Chöjé (*shar pa chos rje* or *shar rtse chos rje*) and abbots of Lower Tantric become Jangtsé Chöjé (*byang rtse chos rje*).[582] The retired holders of these positions rotate in advancing to be Ganden Tripa, which can take some time due to the Ganden Tripa's seven year term.[583] The biographical information on the previous Ganden Tripas at the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center shows that they almost always held the titles of Shartsé or Jangtsé Chöjé, from the beginning of the eighteenth century at least.[584] According to Geshé Sopa, the abbacies (*mkhan po*) of the colleges of Shartsé and Jangtsé are

[580] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 45.
[581] Cabezón, "Monks."
[582] Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 481.
[583] Ibid., 495 n.9.
[584] "Dga' ldan khri rabs rnam thar (W1KG1645)." The Treasury of Lives project also contains numerous biographies of the Ganden Tripas. "Ganden Tripa - The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia and the Himalayan Region," *The Treasury of Lives*, accessed January 7, 2017, http://treasuryoflives.org/institution/Ganden-Tripa.

distinct from the position of *chöjé* or "dharma master." But other sources, including the primary sources on Ngawang Tsültrim, seem to equate the *chöjé* position with the abbacy, perhaps erroneously.[585]

The long biography says that Ngawang Tsültrim was "enthroned at Shartsé" (*shar rtse khri 'don yong*) prior to going to Beijing in 1762—the appointment would necessarily have been brief, because he left for Beijing a year after being appointed as Upper Tantric abbot.[586] Changkya Rinpoché's biography (according to Smith) calls Ngawang Tsültrim the *Shartsa Khenpo* or abbot.[587] The Ganden Tripas' biography has the emperor calling him the abbot of Shartsé as well.[588] In Ngawang Tsültrim's biography the Panchen Lama refers to him as the tantric abbot (*rgyud stod mkhan po*) at the time he was selected to go to the Qing court (in 1762), and as being destined for the Ganden Throne "and perhaps more."[589] In the biographies the title of Sharpa Chöjé appears for Lobsang Chinpa (Blo bzang sbyin pa) who was a candidate for tutor to the Dalai Lama, but *chöjé* is not used for Ngawang Tsültrim.[590]

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[585] A 2003 article in *Phayul* (a Tibetan exile paper) on the appointment of the 101th Ganden Tripa describes him as having been "abbot" of Ganden Shartsé. Powers also refers to the *chöjés* as "abbots." Thar Deu Ling Buddhist Association, "Nomination of the 101th Ganden Tripa, Supreme Head of the Gelugpa Lineage," *Phayul*, January 22, 2003, http://www.phayul.com/mobile/?page=view&c=1&id=3663.Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 479.

[586] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:38b. Shartsé Tripa is thus another title for the position.

[587] Gene Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts* (Somerville: Wisdom, 2001), 143.

[588] The emperor may have been unfamiliar with Tibetan titles but it is possible the biographer made the error. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 6b.

[589] Other prominent monks are frequently referred to as "retired abbots" in the text. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:14b.

[590] There is a reference to the *shar byang gi chos rje* attending prayers at the Great Prayer Festival. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 13a. Lobsang Chinpa does not appear in lists of Ganden Tripas, so he may have died before ascending to the Ganden Throne. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:30b.

Whether the title of the position, not much is said about his duties (Geshé Sopa describes it as more or less an honorary position, serving no purpose besides being a placeholder for future Ganden Tripas). However, it may have involved conducting a reading transmission of Tsongkhapa's *Great Stages of the Path*, foreshadowing his preaching role as Ganden Tripa.[591]

Ganden Tripa

Ganden Tripa or the throne-holder of Ganden is arguably the most important position in the Geluk hierarchy, but what does the post actually entail? The position is often described as the spiritual leader of the Geluk sect, and sometimes this fact is contrasted with the supposed misconception that this role is held by the Dalai Lama.[592] According to Kapstein, the Dalai Lama had "ecclesiastical offices as the preeminent hierarch of the Gelukpa order" so it is often thought of as the head, but the Ganden Tripa is actually "titular head of the order."[593] It would be mistaken to take statements such as these as diminishing the great spiritual importance and influence of the Dalai Lama, who at least as regards his metaphysical status (as a *tülku* and incarnation of Avalokiteśvara) is superior to the Ganden Tripa within the Geluk school, and as an object of pan-Tibetan devotion. But the position of Ganden Tripa uniquely carries on the legacy of Tsongkhapa, who chose his disciple Gyeltsabjé Darma Rinchen (Rgyal tshab rje Dar ma rin chen, 1364-1432) as

[591] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:39a–39b.
[592] Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 481; Alexander Berzin, "Special Features of the Gelug Tradition," *The Berzin Archives*, 2014, http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/study/comparison_buddhist_traditions/tibetan_traditions/special_features_gelug_tradition.html. Thar Deu Ling Buddhist Association, "Nomination of the 101th Ganden Tripa, Supreme Head of the Gelugpa Lineage."
[593] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 188–189.

successor to leadership of Ganden.[594] Sopa describes the position as a successor or representation of Tsongkhapa:

> He carries on in a likeness to the model life of the lord, the great Tsong kha pa, as exemplified by his bearing generally the responsibility of the doctrine through his exposition and practice of the complete (training of the) sutras and tantras in general, and in particular through his teaching religion to the assemblages of the 'Bras spungs, Se rwa, and Dga' ldan daily at the *smon lam* and *Tshogs mchod* festivals.[595]

The long biography explains that Tsongkhapa had founded the monastery of Ganden and appointed his disciple Darma Rinchen as his successor or *gyeltsab*, who hence has the name Gyeltsabjé, and after that the successors of Gyeltsabjé continued to occupy the throne. Ngawang Tsültrim himself explained that this lineage is intended to care for all of the *densas* and the unbroken lineage of the teaching of sutras and tantras according to the system of Tsongkhapa.[596] From the late fifteenth to the seventeenth century, the Ganden Tripa was not the head of the whole Geluk school but just the abbot of Ganden, a monastery that was often actually eclipsed in importance by Drepung and Sera. Reforms by the Fifth Dalai Lama increased the importance of Ganden by placing the *tripa* at the head of the annual Great Prayer Festival.[597] Miller likewise sees the Ganden Tripa as "the nearest approach to a concept of final authority in dGe-lugs-pa doctrine" as well as a way to keep Sera and Drepung in check as independent powers.[598] The Ganden Throne was not inherited or the property of a given *tülku*, but, as described above,

[594] Ibid., 121. Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 481.
[595] Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 67–68.
[596] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:36a, 38a.
[597] Dreyfus, "Drepung: An Introduction."
[598] Miller, "The Web of Tibetan Monasticism," 201.

depended on success in the scholastic curriculum. A common saying to express this ideal of meritocracy was that "the throne of Ganden has no owner."[599]

Ngawang Tsültrim rose to be the 61st Ganden Tripa soon after becoming regent. His predecessor in the position was Lobsang Tenpa (Blo bzang bstan pa, 1725-1782).[600] In early 1778, Ngawang Tsültrim offered the name of this Ganden Tripa as one of the candidates who could be tutor to the Dalai Lama.[601] But even before the emperor's appointment of the tutors arrived in Lhasa, Lobsang Tenpa resigned as Ganden on May 8, 1778, clearing the way for Ngawang Tsültrim to take his place.[602] Lobsang Tenpa had taken the post in 1772, so that he only served six of the full seven years of the term. It is possible that he resigned so that Ngawang Tsültrim could take his place, although there is no firm evidence for this.[603] Ngawang Tsültrim was appointed Ganden Tripa by the Dalai Lama on May 11. The biography does not discuss any deliberations surrounding the appointment; once his predecessor had resigned, his succession was automatic.[604] However, the biography includes remarks and prophecies that indicate that ascending the Ganden Throne was hardly assured at the outset. Prophetically or simply revealing his ambition, he purportedly said as a new monk that his *khangtsen* at Sera should have a victory banner on the roof, and he left his robes and hat behind at Ramoché prior to going

[599] Cabezón, "Monks."
[600] "Blo bzang bstan pa (P2766)."
[601] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 14b. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:30b. He was appointed as assistant tutor (with Ngawang Tsültrim as head) later that year.
[602] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:33b–34a.
[603] Samten Chhosphel, "The Sixtieth Ganden Tripa, Lobzang Tenpa - The Treasury of Lives: Biographies of Himalayan Religious Masters," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2011, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Trichen-60-Lobzang-Tenpa/4498.
[604] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:33a–33b.

to China, in both cases expressing the fact that he saw himself as destined to assume the Ganden Throne.[605] The biography describes the regency and the Ganden Throne, as well as the tutorship of the Dalai Lama, as the three important posts he held,[606] an unprecedented concentration of power in the hands of one individual. It is not always the case that the regent became Ganden Tripa. None of the Demo, Tatsak, or Reting incarnations held the post, although the next two Tsemönling incarnations (following Ngawang Tsültrim) were also Ganden Tripas.[607]

The enthronement ceremony took place accompanied by many auspicious signs connected with the legacy of Tsongkhapa.[608] Ngawang Tsültrim was enthroned three hundred years after Tsongkhapa's original appointment of Darma Rinchen as Ganden Tripa.[609] The throne was held up by lions representing the eight *siddhis*. He received robes like those Tsongkhapa had passed on to his disciples, as well as the yellow hat, the symbol of Tsongkhapa and his Geluk school.[610] The golden color is explained to symbolize the virtues of wisdom and method; the sharp peak, insight into the Madhyamaka philosophy.[611] Ngawang Tsültrim's first act upon sitting on the throne was the preaching of short dharma texts. He began with the *Heart Sutra* (a classic short exposition of emptiness), followed by *dharaṇīs* and tantric ritual texts that confer blessings (such as the *Rigs gsum mgon po* and the *Tshe gzungs*).[612] This

[605] Ibid., 2:39b–40a.
[606] Ibid., 2:1b.
[607] "Ngag dbang 'jam dpal tshul khrims rgya mtsho (P4533)."
[608] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:36a–38b.
[609] Perhaps 360 years was meant, corresponding to six *rabjung* cycles; Darma Rinchen succeeded to the throne in 1419 which is about 360 years prior to this ceremony.Ibid., 2:35b–36a.
[610] Ibid., 2:36a.
[611] Ibid., 2:37b.
[612] Ibid., 2:36a.

was followed by a "dharma discussion" with the two *geshés* (perhaps the *chöjés*) of Jangtsé and Shartsé colleges.[613] Then he preached on the history of the Ganden Throne: how Tsongkhapa took vows in a previous lifetime to become a Buddha, took rebirth in Tibet where he explained the systems of sutra and tantra, and in order to continue this learning, built Ganden Monastery and created the Ganden Throne for his successors. He continued with the story of his own advancement through the monasteries and his preaching in China.[614] In the next few days he began to teach the *Great Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, Tsongkhapa's magnum opus, resuming his preaching from the time he was *chöjé* of Shartsé.[615]

Great Prayer Festival

As Ganden Tripa, the most important event for which Ngawang Tsültrim had responsibility was the Great Prayer Festival (*Smon lam chen mo*), a month-long occasion which is part of the Tibetan New Year celebration (*Lo gsar*) that takes place in Lhasa. The Ganden Prayer Festival was instituted by Tsongkhapa in 1409 at Nalendra and later moved to Lhasa, was periodically suppressed by Kagyü rulers in the sectarian rivalry with the Geluk school, and then was permanently restored in 1642 when Gushri Khan reconquered Lhasa for the Geluk.[616] Sopa describes it as celebrating the Buddha's magical competition with the six non-Buddhist teachers (the Miracle at Śrāvastī or *cho 'phrul dus chen*).[617] According to Richardson, on the third day of the year, authority over Lhasa was turned over from the secular powers

[613] Ibid., 2:37b.
[614] Ibid., 2:38a.
[615] Ibid., 2:38b.
[616] Dreyfus, "Drepung: An Introduction."
[617] The specific commemoration of the Miracle was on the fifteenth day. Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 43.

to the Shengo officers of Drepung and the *dopdop* monastic police under their command, for the duration of the *mönlam*.[618] Once the monks of all the *densas* arrived and the *mönlam* actually began (on the sixth day), a daily session consisted of preaching by the Ganden Tripa, short debates between monks, and longer debates for *geshé* candidates.[619] The Great Prayer Festival was the occasion on which the debate examinations for *lharampa* were held.[620] There were a number of rituals throughout the *mönlam,* honoring the protectors, consulting oracles, commemorating the Miracle of Śrāvastī, and showing off Tibet's military might.[621] The final day was the "Invitation of Maitreya"—in which a statue of the deity was brought into the ritual grounds. The event was also marked by footraces and horseraces and a final sermon by the Ganden Tripa before he ceremonially departed.[622]

Supervising debates, which took place every afternoon at the Great Prayer Festival, was another of Ngawang Tsültrim's duties as Ganden Tripa.[623] The examination system had been reformed a short time before by the Seventh Dalai Lama, creating the scholarly ranks such as *lharampa*.[624] Each of the *densas* would hold their debate in turn on each successive day, and then the candidates were

[618] The monastic police and Shengo officers happened to come from Drepung, but could also come from Sera. Hugh Richardson and Michael Aris, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year* (London: Serindia, 1993), 21–22.
[619] Ibid., 25–26.
[620] Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 43.
[621] Richardson and Aris, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, 26–55.
[622] Ibid., 52–55. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:63b–64a.
[623] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:181b–182a.
[624] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 144–145. Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Academic Degress in Buddhist Philosophy*, 19.

assigned a rank by the Tibetan government.[625] According to Dreyfus, the afternoon debates were considered the greatest and most well attended debates, on the subjects of Abhidharma and Vinaya: "At these debates, which were real Tibetan *casse-têtes,* surprises occurred and reputations were done or undone."[626] After the debates were finished he would have receptions with the *geshés* who had newly been given the title (*ming btags*), who would offer food to the monks of their college.[627] By his supervisory role in the debates, Ngawang Tsültrim controlled access to the highest ranks of monastic scholarship, the pathway to further advancement in the system.

The Great Prayer Festival is the occasion on which the Ganden Tripa most characteristically served in his role as preacher of the Buddhist dharma.[628] At this and certain other regular festival occasions, he would preach on a certain foundational Buddhist text over the course of the festival, and the following year he would start where he left off in the previous year.[629] What he preached at the Great Prayer Festival were not Geluk sectarian texts, but scriptures that are held in common even with Theravāda Buddhists.[630] The first text he preached was the *Jātakamala* (*Skyes rabs so bzhi pa*) by Ārya Śura (c. 7th century), the Sanskrit version of the Jātaka tales of the past lives of the Buddha.[631] After finishing this text,

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[625] Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 43.
[626] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 259.
[627] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:86a. Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 59.
[628] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 19a.
[629] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:113b. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 26b, 32b.
[630] However, this specific translation (and perhaps some of the content) was exclusive to the Mahāyāna.
[631] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:84b. Sometimes he is also called Aśvaghoṣa.

he preached on the Udānavarga (*Ched du brjod pa'i tshoms*). This is a verse collection of the sayings of the Buddha, the Tibetan equivalent of the Pali *Dhammapada* which shares many verses in common with it.[632] This should dispel any notion that the historical Buddha or the "Hīnayāna" teachings were irrelevant to Buddhism as it was conceived by the Geluk tradition, even if the *geshé* curriculum was more focused on philosophical treatises. The life stories of the Buddha were taught at this most important of monks' gatherings, as indeed Tsongkhapa intended, to commemorate the life of the Buddha in creating the festival. Narrative scriptures like these were probably more widely accessible to monks who were not advanced scholars, compared with philosophical treatises. Ngawang Tsültrim connected these texts to his own Geluk sectarian tradition as well. He would give word commentaries on them, and their application to practice in terms of the bodhisattva path and the three levels of individuals.[633] He would also explain the Indian and Tibetan commentaries according to various sectarian philosophical traditions, leading ultimately to the orthodox Geluk point of view. Particularly, he explained commentaries and thr secret instructions or *man ngag* from the Seventh Dalai Lama, his tutor Ngawang Jampa (Ngag dbang byams pa, 1682-1762), and Changkya Rolpé Dorjé; essentially these represent the views of the leading lamas of central Tibet in the eighteenth century.[634] Explaining the particular views of the *yikcha* of the

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"Jatakamala - Rigpa Wiki," *Rigpa Wiki*, 2016, http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Jatakamala.

[632] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:59b. "Ched du brjod pa'i tshoms (W4CZ15380)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2016, https://www.tbrc.org/?locale=en&both=yes#!rid=W4CZ15380.

[633] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:60a.

[634] Ibid., 2:60b. Ngawang Jampa was the first Purchok (Phur lcog) incarnation, and the first tutor to the Eighth Dalai Lama.

various monasteries, he encouraged them not to be too partisan regarding them but to clarify the competing views and judge for themselves.[635] Ngawang Tsültrim's Great Prayer Festival preaching was designed to elucidate the dharma with increasing doctrinal specificity from the broadest, pan-Buddhist level, through Indian Mahāyāna and Geluk masters, to the highest expressions of Buddhism in the doctrines of the particular Geluk monasteries.

Ngawang Tsültrim preached not only on scripture and commentary but also on practical matters of monastic discipline in the *densas*. Sermons about monastic discipline were preached during the *sungchö* ("dharma talks") at the Great Prayer Festival, as well as at the smaller gathering of *Tsokchö Chenmo* and the prayer assemblies of the monasteries on his periodic visits. In these sermons, Ngawang Tsültrim's constant themes were the state of discipline in the monasteries and the proper duties of monks.[636] He taught that monks have a duty to serve the laity and be good examples to them. They should maintain their proper ritual traditions: the transmission of *sūtra* and tantra, the recruitment of monks from the villages, and monastic order and discipline (*sgrig lam*).[637] But Ngawang Tsültrim rebuked them for not living up to these standards. Monastic leaders were overly proud and growing careless and lazy, not enforcing the rules as they should.[638] He warned those on retreat not to "meditate like wild beasts sleeping on the mountain, without sense" (perhaps meaning in an unfocused or lazy manner, without following the proper ritual

[635] Ibid.
[636] Ibid., 2:199b–202b; Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 20b–23b.
[637] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 20b.
[638] Ibid.

sequence).[639] On another occasion he criticized the monks of Sera and Drepung for asking too many questions of him regarding the five great texts, as that suggested they were not studying enough. (He seems to have been concerned about the fact that many monks did not dedicate themselves to a life of scholarship). In addition, the monks were not seeing their lamas as Buddhas, but spreading insulting gossip such as that they came from low castes.[640] Most of these problems seem to have been the sort of problems common to monastic life, but he also addressed more specific incidents.

Ngawang Tsültrim's sermon on distorted or "malevolent" tantric practices, which took place during the Great Prayer Festival of 1782, receives particular attention in both biographies.[641] It was targeted against the practice known as Guhyajñāṇa (*gsang ye* or *gsang ba ye shes*). This was a Nyingma practice, which likely focused on the *ḍākinī* of that name, who had an erotic, wrathful form sometimes associated with Vajravarahī.[642] It was originally practiced by Polhané but

[639] Ibid., 21a.
[640] Ibid., 23a.
[641] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:201b. Perhaps Jampa Rinpoché was the above-mentioned Ngawang Jampa, the first Purchok incarnation, who was an influential figure in Polhané's time, and who was revered by Ngawang Tsültrim himself. Dönyo Khedrup was Polhané's preceptor.
[642] "Gsang ba ye shes (T697)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=T697. Shepé Dorjé (bzhad pa'i rdo rje, 1697-1740) was a teacher of Lhazang Khan and a (Geluk) Lelung Jedrung incarnation, and wrote the *Mkha' 'gro gsang ba ye shes kyi chos skor,* which is identified as a Nyingma teaching. He is also listed as a teacher of Polhané. Another possibility for the originator of the Sangwa Yeshé practice is Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755), who wrote a number of texts on the Sangwa Yeshé practice. The ultimate revelator of the practice was Terdag Lingpa (gter bdag gling pa 'gyur me do rje, 1646-1714). I cannot assume that Ngawang Tsültrim is condemning these forms of the practice, however. "Mkha' 'gro gsang ba ye shes kyi chos skor (W9209)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=W9209. "Bzhad pa'i rdo rje (P675)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P675. "Tshe dbang nor bu (P676)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P676.

he was said to have repented after his lamas Jampa Rinpoché (Byams pa rin po che) and Dönyo Khedrup (Don yod mkhas grub, 1671-1737) convinced him that it was an improper practice.[643] Ngawang Tsültrim claimed that this practice was returning to regions like Penyül in southern Tibet, and he wanted to put a stop to it.[644] He appealed to his Ganden Tripa status on this occasion: "I did not attain the Golden Throne for the sake of destroying people like you."[645] People were falsely claiming to be sufficiently realized (and "beyond discrimination" of good and bad), and able to use to alcohol, sex and so forth as spiritual practices. They were using the antinomian practices of tantra as an excuse to sin.[646] This would lead to many negative karmic consequences, including rebirth in *vajra* hell.[647] Thus he told them to repent and invoked the protectors to punish them, and "not long after some of their bodies and souls appeared with signs of thunderbolts and hailstones falling." Ngawang Tsültrim then had the representations of false protectors thrown into the river.[648] In contrast with this evil practice, he described the correct way to practice tantra, which would transform poisons (sinful actions) into ambrosia such that they would truly lead to enlightenment through the union of bliss and emptiness.[649] But this was not something that most people can do; "secret mantra (*gsang sngags*)" by its very nature is only supposed to be practiced by a very select few; in fact it is extremely rare for it to appear in the world.[650] Misuse of tantric power was a great

[643] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 201a–201b.
[644] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:201b.
[645] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 22b.
[646] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:201b.
[647] Ibid., 2:204b.
[648] Ibid., 2:202a.
[649] Ibid., 2:203a–204a.
[650] Ibid., 2:204a.

threat and Ngawang Tsültrim emphasized the Geluk tradition of keeping it under tight control, under the watchful eye of the monasteries rather than in the hands of freelance tantric practitioners. This campaign was also strong evidence of Geluk sectarianism, as it was directed against practices that had Nyingma origins.[651]

Many aspects of the Great Prayer Festival as Tsongkhapa envisaged, according to the biography, had become a "mere reflection," and Ngawang Tsültrim restored them.[652] These elements included the evening debate session (which was supposed to be the most important one), and many parts of the preaching session, including a reading of the *Heart Sutra,* and the refuge and *bodhicitta* prayers.[653] The longer biography states that Ngawang Tsültrim revised the schedule (which had previously been disorganized and had events occurring at the wrong times, i.e. morning sessions at night) to ensure that monks had enough food and sleep so that they could focus on the preaching sessions at the proper times.[654] He also revived the practice of circumambulating the temples at midnight and the so-called "water offering" during the early morning tea.[655] Finally, he restored the traditions of taking a great image of Maitreya outside for worshippers to make prostrations, and the foot and horse races in the streets of Lhasa which concluded the festival.[656] This restoration of the festival is compared to a previous restoration by the Second Dalai Lama Gendün Gyatso, and ultimately is intended to show Ngawang Tsültrim as

[651] Elsewhere in the biography, it is explained that Nyingma activities had run the risk of provoking the Dzungars (for instance this had motivated their pillaging of temples in 1717-1720). Ibid., 2:323b.
[652] Ibid., 2:213a–213b. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 19a.
[653] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 19b.
[654] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:213b.
[655] Ibid., 2:214a–214b.
[656] Ibid., 2:216a.

carrying on the work of Tsongkhapa who initiated the ceremony.[657] The *Mönlam Chenmo* in its complete form was the greatest public symbol of Ganden Palace's ideology of continuing the legacy of Tsongkhapa and spreading his interpretation of the dharma.

Tsokchö Chenmo and other monastic gatherings

Another Lhasa festival over which Ngawang Tsültrim presided as Ganden Tripa was the *Tsokchö Chenmo* (Tshogs mchod chen mo), the "Great Assembly of Worship." It had originally been instituted by Desi Sangyé Gyatso as a lesser version of the Great Prayer Ceremony lasting for twelve days, taking place in the second Tibetan month. It was focused on the preaching of texts and "attended almost entirely by Geshés and learned lamas" (a much smaller group than the full assembly of monks at the Great Prayer Festival).[658] Richardson sees it as a way "to enhance the prestige of the Dalai Lama," perhaps because the *Mönlam Chenmo* long predated the Fifth Dalai Lama's rule and a new festival would be appropriate for the new regime.[659] At this festival, Ngawang Tsültrim, as Ganden Tripa, mainly preached from the cycle of the *Kadampa Father and Son* (*Bka' gdams glegs bam*) texts, written by Atiśa, as well as the *Chögyel Kabum* (*Chos rgyal bka' 'bum*) or *Maṇi Kabum*, the legendary account of how Songtsen Gampo brought Buddhism to Tibet.[660] The *Kadam Lekbam* consists of instructions from Atiśa, as requested by his chief disciple Dromtönpa ('Brom ston pa, 1005-1064) and other disciple, organized as a commentary on Atiśa's *Bodhisattva's Jewel Garland*. It is a foundational text of

[657] Ibid., 2:213a–213b.
[658] Richardson and Aris, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, 60.
[659] Ibid.
[660] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 20a.

the Kadampa tradition, the precursor of Geluk. In particular it contains practices of devotion to Avalokiteśvara, and played a role in the history of the link between this bodhisattva and the Dalai Lamas.[661] As in the Great Prayer Ceremony, Ngawang Tsültrim gave a reading transmission along with commentary, expounding successive parts of the text in each successive year.[662] Continuing the theme of devotion to the Geluk masters, at one time during the *Tshokchö Chenmo* he taught, by request, the "Hundred Deities of Tushita" (*Dga' ldan lha rgya ma*), a ritual text that contains the famous *Miktsema* prayer.[663] The "Hundred Deities" is a practice of guru yoga to Tsongkhapa as the root deity, a prayer of worship, confession, and aspiration to follow his example and become a Buddha.[664] (This was one of his most frequently taught texts on other occasions as well, and one of his daily personal practices.)[665] The *Tsokchö Chenmo* also included prayers to Pelden Lhamo, protector of the Dalai Lama lineage.[666] Like the *Mönlam Chenmo*, the *Tsokchö Chenmo* emphasized devotion to the Geluk progenitors, in addition to the Dalai Lama.

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[661] Dromtönpa is depicted as an emanation of Avalokiteśvara in the text, and the First Dalai Lama Gendün Drup (who was important to the transmission of the *Kadam Lekbam*) came to be seen as his reincarnation, making Dromtönpa a kind of "pre-incarnation" of the Dalai Lama lineage. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:68a. Thupten Jinpa, *The Book of Kadam*, The Library of Tibetan Classics 2 (Boston: Wisdom, 2008), 1–31.

[662] He also preached from the *Mdo sde za ma tog bkod pa*.Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:67b.

[663] Ibid., 2:88b.

[664] Alexander Berzin, "Hundreds of Deities of Tushita," *The Berzin Archives*, accessed October 24, 2015, http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/practice_material/prayers/guru_yogas/hundreds_deities_tushita.html.

[665] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:16a, 115b.

[666] Ibid., 2:68a.

Aside from the prayer assemblies, Ngawang Tsültrim participated in numerous other Lhasa festivals during the year. The most common theme was the life cycle of the Buddha. The fifteenth day of the fourth month was called "the day when three festivals are gathered together" (*dus chen gsum 'dzom*) or Saga Dawa (*sa ga zla ba*), commemorating the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death. Aside from the usual prayers in the Jokhang, Ngawang Tsültrim arranged an offering and lighting of thousands of butter lamps from the people of Lhasa.[667] Similarly, he arranged the observances of the "festival day of the sixth day of the fourth month" which commemorated the Buddha's turning of the wheel of dharma,[668] and the "day of the divine descent" (*lha babs dus chen*) which commemorated the Buddha's descent from Tuṣita heaven.[669] Turning to a more Geluk theme, the festival of the "great twenty-fifth" (*lnga mchod chen po*), was celebrated on the twenty-fifth day of the tenth month and commemorated the day of Tsongkhapa's death. Ngawang Tsültrim's participation with the Dalai Lama in the observances is noted every year without exception, indicating the importance of yet another festival which reaffirmed devotion to the Geluk school.[670]

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[667] Ibid., 2:89b. The name Saga Dawa refers to the fact that the festival occured on the full moon day of the constellation Saga. There are other festivals, found in the biography and not in Richardson, that were also associated with constellation days, such as Purvaśadha (*chu stod*). Ibid., 2:129b. According to Richardson, there was a distribution of food to the people at the time of Saga Dawa, as charity to the poor, but this is not mentioned in the biography. Richardson and Aris, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, 85.

[668] Richardson and Aris, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, 96; Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:91a.

[669] Richardson and Aris, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, 109.Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:57a.

[670] It is still celebrated as the "Geluk holiday" (all the other sects have at least one special day of *püja*) in the Central University of Tibetan Studies, as I witnessed staying at Sarnath at the Geluk monastery. Richardson and Aris, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, 114. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:26b.

As Ganden Tripa, Ngawang Tsültrim was also responsible for three ceremonies prescribed for monks in the Vinaya: the confession ceremony (*poṣadha* or *gso sbyong*),[671] the opening of the rains retreat (*dbyar gnas*), and the closing of the rain retreat (*dgag dbye*).[672] These rituals gave him a kind of symbolic authority, though not concrete power, over monasticism. The *sojong* consisted of "assembling together, the recitation of the *prātimokṣa* precepts, confession of infractions of the precepts," more of a ritual confession than a real opportunity to address specific infractions.[673] It took place on the fifteenth and last days of the month but he only performed it when he was presiding over a larger ritual occasion (for instance, during Losar and the Great Prayer Ceremony).[674] The summer retreats are supposed to be observed for two or three months, with the monks observing extra vows such as remaining within a short distance of their monastic residences.[675] As with the confession ceremony, Ngawang Tsültrim would initiate or conclude the rains retreat if he happened to be at a monastery, although this does not seem to have been a regularly scheduled occurrence.[676] In 1780, for instance, he visited Ganden Monastery at the time of the rains retreat and taught the *Condensed Stages of the Path* (*Lam rim bsdus don*).[677]

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[671] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:29b.
[672] Sometimes these three together are called the *'dul ba'i phyag len gzhi gsum cho ga*. Ibid., 2:56b.
[673] Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 62.
[674] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:29b.
[675] The Tibetan situation is different from India; sometimes the summer retreat is called the "rains retreat" (according to the text of the Vinaya) but there is no monsoon in Tibet and summer ends early. The version of the retreat observed by the *densas* lasts from the 16th day of the 6th month until the 30th day of the 8th month. Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 65.
[676] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:49b, 93a–93b.
[677] Ibid., 2:92a–92b.

His final regular teaching session as Ganden Tripa was a "summer session" at Ganden Monastery (distinct from the rains retreat and held earlier). This is an example of the Ganden Tripa presiding as a kind of symbolic head of the whole monastery. The session focused on a reading transmission of the quintessential Geluk text, Tsongkhapa's *Great Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* (the *Lamrim Chenmo*) supplemented with commentaries like that of Chankya Rolpé Dorjé.[678] Despite the centrality of this text to the Geluk school, laying out the goals and the means of practice, it was not actually a focus of the monastic curriculum, so such a session might have great pedagogical value. Ngawang Tsültrim also used this text as a stepping stone to introduce tantric teachings, since the stages of the path are the preliminary practices for tantric practice. His tantric teachings at this session included the Mind Generation (*sems bskyed*) and a transmission of the root text of the Guhyasamāja Tantra.[679] He instituted another regular teaching session, in Lhasa (at Pendeleksheling Temple), which was focused on the inner *sādhana* of the Kālacakra Tantra.[680]

Ganden Tripa succession and the end of his term

Ngawang Tsültrim completed his term as Ganden Tripa once he had served the allotted seven years, which happened a year before finishing his term as regent. In 1785, during the Great Prayer Festival, the cabinet ministers and Dalai Lama approached him and requested that he stay on for a few more years, as it would be helpful for the dharma "in this degenerate era."[681] He refused on the grounds that his

[678] Ibid., 2:70b–71a.
[679] Ibid., 2:161a, 162a.
[680] Ibid., 2:69b–70a.
[681] Ibid., 2:181b.

term should have been completed, and that the Jangtsé Chöjé Lobsang Mönlam (Blo bzang smon lam, 1729-1798) should be able to succeed to the throne in due course. But in order to avoid a dispute, Ngawang Tsültrim would remain as Ganden Tripa during that year's *mönlam,* completing his preaching of the *Udānavarga* before resigning.[682] Taken at face value, the cabinet supported the continued concentration of power in Ngawang Tsültrim's hands beyond his appointed term. This could have set precedents bringing the position of Ganden Tripa under greater control by the central Lhasa government and its regents.[683] However, Ngawang Tsültrim decided to let the Ganden Tripa succession continue in the traditional way, with a minimum of government interference. The next Ganden Tripa, Lobsang Mönlam, had no apparent connection to Ngawang Tsültrim, being from Kham and Drepung Loseling (he had been appointed *lama umdzé* in Lower Tantric while Demo was still regent).[684] A message was received from the emperor at this time congratulating him on completing his term as Ganden Tripa, and requesting him to come to Beijing now that he had finished.[685] Even Ngawang Tsültrim held the post of Ganden Tripa as part of his concentration of political and religious power, he did not alter the traditional meritocratic succession to the Ganden Throne.

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[682] This is more evidence that the current succession pattern of Jangtsé and Sharpa Chöjé was in effect in Ngawang Tsültrim's day. Ibid., 2:182a.

[683] One might speculate whether the emperor wanted Ngawang Tsültrim to stay in power, or if Ngawang Tsültrim's own desire was to stay in power, but there is no direct evidence in the biography. Regardless, Geluk monks would be the dominant powers, but if the regent and *kashak* took control the succession of Ganden Tripa it would shift the balance of power subtly away from the monasteries as independent entities, to the central Lhasa government.

[684] "Blo Bzang Smon Lam (P2767)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://tbrc.org/#!rid=P2767.

[685] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:184b.

Tours of monasteries

Beyond his regular visits to Ganden as the throne holder, Ngawang Tsültrim frequently visited the large *densas* and smaller monasteries to give teachings and oversee discipline, inaugurate construction projects, and make pilgrimages. On these visits it was not always easy to distinguish between his roles of regent and Ganden Tripa. Ganden Tripa was a respected position across the Geluk web of monasticism, especially as guardian of monastic discipline, even as monasteries jealously guarded their privileges from interference from Lhasa. (Ngawang Tsültrim would also have particular influence in Sera as a former student). Matters of administrative oversight and patronage, and participation in state functions in Lhasa, clearly belonged to the regency. Still, all monks would know that Ngawang Tsültrim was simultaneously regent, Ganden Tripa, and tutor to the Dalai Lama, so that it would not necessarily be relevant whether he was acting in a particular role at a given time.

As he made occasional visits to the *densas* and tantric colleges, Ngawang Tsültrim would observe the discipline of the monks and exhort them to be diligent in their studies. He gave advice to the monks, much as he would during the *mönlam* prayer sessions.[686] His typical advice to students was to study hard in their classes and to exert themselves on the debate ground, become *geshés*, study at the tantric colleges, and "unfurl their banner in the monastic retreats."[687] In other words, monks should not just be there to fill space and increase the populations of monasteries; they should complete their education, and not rest content with a theoretical

[686] Ibid., 2:199b.
[687] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 24a.

knowledge, but put it into practice. Ngawang Tsültrim frequently visited Sera in this way, sometimes as a short stopover on the way to Ganden.[688] On one occasion, as mentioned above, he led the grand ceremony installing the Jowo Jangchup Chenpo statue.[689] He also maintained ritual ties with Sera, participating in Tsador *khangtsen*'s sponsorship of the Maitreya prayers at the Great Prayer Ceremony.[690] Drepung did not receive that sort of attention, although he did make a brief visit there with the Dalai Lama in 1785.[691] He also maintained ties to Upper Tantric College of his former abbacy, as when the monks of that college came to Ganden and received a special transmission of the Guhyasamāja Tantra.[692] His previous ties to Sera Me and Upper Tantric College gave him more influence at those monasteries, and he more often visited and participated in rituals with them.

He visited many other smaller monasteries and hermitages on his way to other places, or as part of pilgrimage tours. These visits fit Miller's description of how branch monasteries in a “web of monasticism,” were supervised by periodic visits fromlamas from the large *densas*.[693] For instance, during his summer pilgrimage in 1778, he paid a visit to Yerpa *dratsang,* which is an affiliate of Upper Tantric College.[694] Such smaller monasteries were often the seats of important lamas, and visiting them was a good opportunity to meet with the leading religious figures of the

[688] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:35b.
[689] Ibid., 2:104b.
[690] Ibid., 2:82a.
[691] Ibid., 2:184a.
[692] Ibid., 2:70b.
[693] Miller, “The Web of Tibetan Monasticism,” 201.
[694] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:41b. “Yer pa grwa tshang (G3063),” *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=G3063. Many of the other monasteries he visited must have been similarly affiliated, but their affliations are not always recorded.

Geluk and other sects outside Lhasa. Examples included the monasteries of Dagpo and Nenang where he met and offered long life ceremonies to the Gampo and Nenang Pawo incarnations (the latter from the Drigung Kagyü tradition).[695] In a 1785 visit to Gepel (Dge 'phel), he had a meeting with the Tatsak incarnation who was soon to replace Ngawang Tsültrim as regent.[696]

As described in Chapter Three, Ngawang Tsültrim went on many pilgrimages, paying homage to the dharma history of Tibet. He paid visits to imperial-era sites associated with the progenitors of Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan state. Most prominent among these was Samyé.[697] Here he participated in the "Sutra Offering" (*mdo sde'i mchod pa*), one of three parts of the ancient tradition of the offerings of the scriptural baskets (*sde snod gsum ka'i mchod pa*) with accompanying *cham* masked dances.[698] He also paid homage to the protector Pehar (the deity behind the state oracle of Nechung) with whom he had "established a great connection over many lifetimes."[699] Many of Ngawang Tsültrim's pilgrimages were to sites associated with the progenitors of the Geluk lineage, most notably Radreng.[700] Radreng was historically important to the history of the Kadampa and Geluk traditions, and also home to the Reting (or Radreng) incarnation, who was sometimes appointed

[695] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:49b. The Nenang incarnation received Nenang monastery from the Fifth Dalai Lama who confiscated it from the Shamarpa, so ironically despite being from the Pakmodrupa Kagyü sect, he was more on the Geluk side of Tibet's sectarian rivalries. The Pakmodrupa clan had long had close ties with the Geluks, in any case. "Gnas nang dgon (G194)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=G194.
[696] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:188a.
[697] Ibid., 2:53a–53b.
[698] There were also Abhidharma and Vinaya offerings, but they had died out. Ibid., 2:53b–54a.
[699] Ibid., 2:263b–264a, 265a.
[700] Ibid., 2:78b.

regent.[701] He also went to Meldro, a retreat place and the burial site of Tsongkhapa.[702] He did not restrict himself to Geluk sites, as shown by his visit to Sangri Khangmar which is associated with Machik Labdrön and her *chöd* practice. This was followed by a visit to Pakmodrupa monastery, whose Kagyü founder Dorjé Gyelpo (Rdo rje rgyal po, 1110-1170) is identified by the biographer as one of Ngawang Tsültrim's past incarnations.[703] Even though he promoted a Tibetan historical narrative that foregrounded the Geluk tradition, he still recognized that other sects were important in the spread of Buddhism and even his own karmic history.

Lhasa festivals and the regency

Ngawang Tsültrim was involved in numerous religious festivals of the Lhasa court in his capacity as regent, not just as Ganden Tripa.[704] He was responsible for organizing and financing them, as well as playing a ceremonial role as head of government. Richardson's observations of Tibetan state and religious ceremonies during the 1930s and 1940s note the participation of the reigning regents (Reting and then Taktra), in addition to the young Fourteenth Dalai Lama and the Ganden Tripa.[705] Of course the situation was not the same as in Ngawang Tsültrim's day; new festivals were added by later rulers and others faded away.

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[701] Keith Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet: The Pilgrim's Guide* (London; New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), 91–95. Radreng is another lineage that would later be associated with the regency. "Blo bzang ye shes bstan pa rab rgyas (P304)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P304.

[702] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:45a–45b.

[703] Ibid., 2:51a–51b.

[704] Of course, he is often simultaneously involved in the same rituals as Ganden Tripa. But the regent and Ganden Tripa would have different responsibilities if (as usually was the case) the positions were held by two different individuals

[705] Richardson and Aris, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, 8–9.

Even in the first year of his regency when he was not Ganden Tripa, he was extensively involved in Losar, the Tibetan New Year, and the Great Prayer Festival that follows. Just prior to Losar, he collected sums of money from private donors to prepare for the Great Prayer Festival.[706] The biography makes note of the sums involved in every year, which vary considerably depending on whether there were particular projects that had to be funded. The 1783 *mönlam* was supported by a relatively modest donation of 7,886 silver *sang*.[707] There were larger donations in following years in which the government patronized an event of great significance and expense: 1780 saw a sum of 25,723 *sang* collected because of the Panchen Lama's going to Beijing; 1781 saw an even larger sum of 33,324 *sang* in honor of the Panchen Lama's funeral and the construction of the Jowo Jangchup Chenpo statue.[708]

Two days before the New Year, Ngawang Tsültrim and the Dalai Lama observed the *cham* sacred dances of *Deyang Shar* and enjoined the protector deities (such as Damchen Gyatso) to continue their protection of the Buddhist dharma. Richardson describes this as a performance "to purge the accumulated sins and mischances of the past and to clear the way for the year to come."[709] The morning of Losar usually saw the regent go to the Potala for public and private

[706] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:27b.
[707] Ibid., 2:136a. This is recorded even when Ngawang Tsültrim is away from Lhasa; i.e. in 1790 a collection of 3,762 *sang* is collected, perhaps diminished due to the war. Ibid., 2:319b–320a. A *sang* (*srang*) is equivalent to an ounce of silver.
[708] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:83a, 112b. A *sang* is equal to 37.3 grams of silver, worth $20.52 as of January 19, 2017. At this rate, the collection for the 1781 *mönlam* would be worth around $684,000. "Silver Prices Today," *APMEX*, accessed January 20, 2017, http://www.apmex.com/spotprices/silver-prices.
[709] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:27b. Richardson and Aris, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, 124.

audiences with the Dalai Lama and offerings to the protector Pelden Lhamo. The opening of the Great Prayer Ceremony also involved state ritual at which the regent's presence was necessary, including a consultation with the state oracle Nechung.[710] On the eighth day he would go to the Jokhang, make offerings, and distribute food and money to the monks from the proceeds of the *mönlam* collection.[711] He was also present, in his capacity as regent, at the *torma* offering that concluded the *mönlam*. This ceremony was centered on the Nechung state oracle, to whom the regent conveyed his prayers, and the oracle in turn burned the *torma* butter sculpture effigies, casting out all the evil influences that had accumulated over the year.[712] Similar "torma throwing" (*gtor rgyag*) rituals would be performed on numerous occasions as a means of combatting enemies of the faith and bad spiritual influences.[713] At this most important festival time of the Lhasa calendar, Ngawang Tsültrim represented the Ganden Palace and was called upon for his unique tantric expertise in *tormas*.

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[710] Ngawang Tsültrim consulted with Nechung at other times, often within the Great Prayer Ceremony. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:27b–28a. Richardson and Aris, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, 12.

[711] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:29a. Similar donations to the monks, in which they would receive small sums of money (in silver coins) and measures of grain and *tsampa*, occurred on many other special occasions. An extensive vocabulary surrounding the donations is evident in the biographies: for instance *mang ja ja thug gsum* refers to two different kinds of tea service (*mang ja* is tea for the assembled monks), and *thukpa* noodles. A common phrase in the biography is *mang 'gyed kyi bsnyen bkur* which can be literally translated as "the reverence of alms to the monks"; *nyenkur* mainly occurs in the context of these donations. Ibid., 2:182b., Ibid., 2:185a.

[712] The last days of the *mönlam* was not conducted in the same way as when Richardson observed it. The *torma* ceremony occurred on a different date and there are different ceremonies such as an offering to a Maitreya *tangka* around this time. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:30a. Richardson and Aris, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, 10.

[713] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:116a. The biography explains at one point the various kinds of *tormas*, empahsizing that they can be part of a regular observance, or done on a particular occasion to remove evil influences. Ibid., 2:192a.

Patronage of monasteries, books, and medicine

Ngawang Tsültrim was not only a ritual leader, but was responsible for the regulation of monasteries, since Ganden Palace had a branch dedicated to the affairs of monastics.[714] He issued many decrees (*rtsa tshig*) on the subject of monastic discipline, and would regularly send inspectors to the *densas* and tantric colleges to make sure that these decrees were duly promulgated and observed.[715] These decrees were, like his sermons, concerned with monastic discipline and diligence in studies and ritual. This was only way that that the supreme teachings of Tsongkhapa could be maintained, but there were clear signs that the dharma was declining.[716] Numerous practices contrary to the Vinaya or monastic propriety were enumerated. They included obvious violations like sex with women and drinking alcohol. Monks were forbidden from conducting business or handling money, a prohibition with Vinaya roots.[717] Other actions forbidden as contrary to the lifestyle of a monk (if perhaps acceptable for householders) included traveling for pleasure, smoking, engaging in sports and gambling, and wearing the wrong sorts of clothing. Treating the monastery as a householder's residence was also forbidden, as evidenced in such activities as hanging prayer flags from the roof and planting trees and flowers in the inner courtyards of the monasteries.[718] Ngawang Tsültrim had some concern for corruption as well (although less so than with the lay officialdom),

[714] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 7–8.
[715] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:199b–200a.
[716] Ibid., 2:200a.
[717] According to the Vinaya, all Buddhist monks are forbidden from handling gold and silver (i.e., money). Of course there were loopholes, since individual monks were often given offerings of small sums of money and were otherwise economically compensated.
[718] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 31b. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:200a–201a.

as monks were forbidden from giving promotions and *geshé* degrees to the undeserving.[719] Penalties were set for these offenses, and guilty officials were to be punished by expulsion from their positions.[720]

Ngawang Tsültrim benefitted the monasteries materially by sponsoring the renovation and construction of new buildings and installation of new images. He inaugurated the first of these construction projects, in the first year of his regency, at Ganden Shartsé college, where there had been complaints that living quarters and teaching space were cramped.[721] It consisted of a new assembly hall *('du khang*), with kitchen, a courtyard for debate, a chapel for the protector deity, a classroom building (*chos grwa*), and ornamentation such as *tangka* paintings.[722] Additionally, he had monastic quarters built at Ganden for the monks of Upper Tantric College (who would visit Ganden regularly for teachings).[723] He did not neglect his own institution of Sera Me, instituting a new prayer ceremony for Maitreya in 1780, and arranging a grant from an aristocrat so that it could be adequately financed.[724] During his final term as regent in 1791, he consecrated a new communal hall for Jetsa *khangtsen* in Sera Je.[725] He also sponsored the construction of new images or consecrated them via tantric rites.[726] The most important of these images was the Jowo Jangchup Chenpo image, which was originally built in Lhasa,[727] but ultimately placed in the

[719] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:200a.
[720] Ibid., 2:32a.
[721] Ibid., 2:39b, 44a, 70b.
[722] Ibid., 2:70b.
[723] Ibid.
[724] Ibid., 2:90b.
[725] Ibid., 2:362b.
[726] Ibid., 2:169a.
[727] Ibid., 2:89b–90a.

main assembly hall of Sera Me.[728] He sponsored a number of rituals so that it would be completed successfully, took up a collection for it (amounting to 25,377 *sang*), and gave gifts of gratitude to the craftsmen.[729] As is discussed at length in the biography, this is one of the many Jowo images representing the Buddha at specific ages in life: Jowo Jangchup Chenpo is the one that represents him at age thirty-five. It originated in India, where it served as the main image in the Bodhgaya temple, and it spontaneously appeared in Tibet during the construction of Samyé.[730] Numerous other images were sponsored by him: for instance, he had the Jokhang renovated with new tangka images and paintings, and installed a new Śākyamuni Buddha image in the Trithok house (the Ganden Tripa's residency) and a Guhyasamāja image at Ramoché.[731]

Land grants and endowments had to be arranged by Ngawang Tsültrim so that these monastic construction projects could be supported. When the Upper Tantric dormitory at Ganden was constructed, he received the property of one aristocratic family, Tolung, that died off without an heir and granted all their property to the monastery, a donation which also supported a regular summer preaching session.[732] The Maitreya festival at Sera was similarly financed by a grant from an aristocrat, which created a trust fund supporting the monks on a permanent basis.[733] A similar grant from aristocrats supported the new dormitories and temple for his

[728] Ibid., 2:105a–105b.
[729] Ibid., 2:90a, 103b–104a.
[730] Ibid., 2:95b–103b.
[731] Ibid., 2:256a. Ibid., 2:162b–163a.
[732] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:70b–71a.
[733] Ibid., 2:90b.

own Tsador Khangtsen.[734] Land was given by the Orongpa family to sponsor services within the Great Prayer Ceremony for the Seventh Dalai Lama.[735] These donations were hardly the most important means of support for the monasteries, since they already had large landholdings and received support from the government. They do illustrate Ngawang Tsültrim's determination to use the most valuable of resources, land, not for personal gain but to support the dharma, spreading patronage to all the Geluk monasteries without excessive favoritism towards his own institutions.

Ngawang Tsültrim's patronage to monks, monasteries, and other Buddhist projects offers some support for Melvyn Goldstein's theory that the regents sought control the machinery of government to direct resources toward the monasteries.[736] Goldstein suggests that beyond a general preference for the *saṇgha* over the nobility, regents would favor their particular monasteries and *labrangs.*[737] There is not much discussion of Ngawang Tsültrim's *labrang*; the estate of Tsemönling does not appear in the biographies. Nevertheless, Ngawang Tsültrim's course through the ranks did connect him with a number of institutions: Sera (and specifically the *dratsang* of Me and the *khangtsen* of Tsador) and the Upper Tantric College, and to a lesser extent Ganden (although the Ganden Throne was really a pan-Geluk phenomenon). Did Ngawang Tsültrim favor the monasteries to which he was connected over the others, and did this set the stage for later conflicts? Many of his construction projects benefited Sera Me and Tsador *khangtsen*. These institutions

[734] Ibid., 2:144b.
[735] Ibid., 2:62a.
[736] Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics."
[737] Ibid., 449.

were not only beneficiaries of new dormitories and Buddha images, but also of monetary donations and trust funds, funded by land and aristocratic wealth. (There is a possibility that the biographers, themselves being from Sera, overemphasized the regent's ties to Sera). There was even a case of what Goldstein called the confiscation and redistribution of aristocratic wealth[738] when the extinct Orongpa estate was used to fund religious patronage.[739] However, the endowment did not benefit his own monastery, but rather supported a regular offering ceremony for the late Seventh Dalai Lama. (The “confiscation” also does not appear to have been political punishment). Sera Me was far from the only beneficiary of Ngawang Tsültrim's largesse. It is notable that his first project was not related to his own monastery but rather to Ganden (the dormitory at Shartsé). It showed an attitude of equality and magnanimity in using money and other resources to spread patronage to the different monasteries, which may have been helpful in avoiding the intermonastic disputes that would come to plague the Ganden Palace government. Although the author of his biography may have wanted to project an image of harmony, Ngawang Tsültrim did not show the sort of blatant favoritism that would cause conflict.

Ngawang Tsültrim’s material support to the dharma extended beyond monasteries to the publication and printing of religious works. These often were new compilations of classic Buddhist works, such as the collected works (*gsung ‘bum*) in thirty volumes of Butön (Bu ston rin chen grub, 1290-1364), one of the greatest of all

[738] Ibid.
[739] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:62a.

Tibetan scholars,[740] and the collected works of Tsongkhapa.[741] Other works paid homage to the most prominent lamas in eighteenth century Tibet, some of whom were Ngawang Tsültrim's own gurus. At the request of the Sixth Panchen Lama, he commissioned a new printing of a *Vinaya* commentary by Lodrö Leksang (Blo gros legs bzang, c. 16th cent.), which served as a manual for the Vinaya curriculum at Sera Me, and had been promoted by the Panchen Lama and Seventh Dalai Lama.[742] Additionally, Ngawang Tsültrim commissioned a volume of a "record of teachings received" (*gsan yig*) of the Seventh Dalai Lama,[743] and the collected works of the previous Changkya incarnation Ngawang Chöden (Ngag dbang chos ldan, 1642-1713), for which the Panchen Lama wrote the colophon.[744] In all this he showed himself to be a patron of Buddhist scholarship, particularly favoring lineages which were the basis of the Geluk school and its links to the ruling powers in Tibet and China: Tsongkhapa, the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, and the Changkya *huthugthus*.

Finally, Ngawang Tsültrim was a patron of Tibetan medicine, particularly the great Rinchen Rilbu or "Precious Pills" (*rin chen ril bu*) preparation, used to treat a wide variety of ailments.[745] The long biography extensively summarizes of the origin

[740] Ibid., 2:240a. Butön is the Sakya master who compiled the Kangyur and Tengyur in their original form and among his sutric and tantric scholarship is known for his great history of the dharma (*chos byung*). Tsering Namgyel, "Buton Rinchen Drub - The Treasury of Lives: Biographies of Himalayan Religious Masters," accessed May 10, 2016, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Buton-Rinchen-Drub/2845.

[741] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:143b–144a.

[742] Panchen Lodrö Leksang was an abbot at Tashilhunpo but was not part of the Panchen Lama lineage. Ibid., 2:147a.

[743] Ibid., 2:163a.

[744] Ibid., 2:26b.

[745] The tradition of Precious Pills continues today in the Men-Tsee-Khang Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute. These pills are "traditionally used to treat a wide range of conditions, including blood disorders, cancer, neurological problems, allergies, arthritis, chronic wounds, as well as used as tonics and antidotes to chemicals and poisons." Sarah Sallon, "Mercury in

of the Rinchen Rilbu, beginning with the Medicine Buddha's emanation of the four medical tantras, which contain alchemical methods for making medicine from precious substances (like mercury, gold, and gems). The preparation of Rinchen Rilbu was put into practice by the court physicians of the Fifth Dalai Lama. But it had fallen into decline due to its great expense (100,000 *sang*), and although the Seventh Dalai Lama tried to revive the preparation, he could not complete it.[746] Ngawang Tsültrim took up the project again, with the involvement of the Dalai Lama's personal physician Rongpa Emchi Khutshen (Rong pa em chi khu tshan).[747] He began collecting all the medical materials in 1780, and Rongpa Emchi, all the scholars of the medical college Chakpori, and other medical specialists prepared and distributed the Rinchen Rilbu preparation in 1783.[748]

Conclusion

The political leadership of Tibet had always been closely tied to Buddhism, but under the Ganden Palace regime, especially as it came to be ruled by *gyeltsabs* and *sikyongs*, there was truly a "union of religion and poltics" in governmental leadership and policy. There had been lay rulers such as Desi Sangyé Gyatso and Polhané in the regime's first century, but from 1750 on the rulers were almost exclusively monks. The theocratic nature of the rule of the Dalai Lama is widely recognized by scholars, but the rule of regents reveals an even stronger tendency toward clerical domination. While the Dalai Lama often had some independence

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Traditional Tibetan Medicine--Panacea or Problem?," *Human & Experimental Toxicology* 25 (2006): 411.

[746] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:218a–218b.

[747] Ibid., 2:218b.

[748] Ibid.

from the Geluk monastic establishment, rulers like Ngawang Tsültrim were the perfect embodiments of the system of mass monasticism, from which they derived a great deal of their religious stature and political influence.

Ngawang Tsültrim's life experience made him a product of the "web of Tibetan monasticism" through and through. From his time as a novice in the outlying monasteries of Amdo up through his attainment of the *lharampa* degree from Sera Me and *ngakrampa* from Upper Tantric, the Geluk monasteries were his world. While receiving little formal education in law and administration, he became a master scholar in Buddhist doctrine, philosophy, and tantric ritual. As he advanced through the ranks leading to Ganden Tripa, largely on the strength of his scholarly talents, he attained positions of monastic leadership in which he gained valuable experience in administration and resolving disputes. But this practical experience was perhaps less important than the authority he held by taking the throne of the Geluk "second Buddha" Tsongkhapa and preaching his doctrine. As the Ganden Palace became ever more dedicated to upholding Geluk orthodoxy under the shared influence of the great *densas* and the imperial government, this sectarianism was reinforced by having a regent who held the Ganden Throne. Although connections to the emperor were also part of his path to the regency, he would not have been considered for service in the Beijing court without his advancement through the Geluk ranks. It is true that being *sikyong* was already a position of "mastery of religion and politics" regardless of any particular religious status. But being Ganden Tripa gave Ngawang Tsültrim additional religious stature, and an additional degree of influence over the monasteries, even if he was not considered an incarnate Buddha or part of an

influential *tülku* lineage with a wealthy *labrang*. (He held another quintessentially monastic and scholastic position as tutor to the Dalai Lama, which will be discussed in Chapter Seven). This confirms that Ngawang Tsültrim could truly be considered a master of both dharma and politics—*chö* and *si*.

Ngawang Tsültrim's political stature grew out of the administrative, bureaucratic, and scholarly aspects of the Geluk religion, and less from the charismatic forms of Buddhist kingship that are usually the subject of scholarly theory. Indian Buddhist kingship is commonly conceptualized in tantric terms, as discussed in Ronald Davidson's *Indian Esoteric Buddhism* and *Tibetan Renaissance*. Davidson sees a close connection between the "feudal" (*samānta*) politics of medieval India (500-1000 CE) when tantra first developed, and the *maṇḍalas* of deities over which the tantric master has power. This is not merely a metaphor, because a king who is also a tantric master can use tantric rituals in an attempt to subdue the state's enemies. The feudal model of tantric kingship is most relevant in a time of political fragmentation, and Davidson finds it to be most applicable to Tibet in the "dark ages" after the fall of the empire.[749] As Tibet became more politically centralized, it became less relevant. It is true that the regent was an accomplished tantric scholar and did participate in tantric rituals that are a fixture of religious calendar, as in the case of the torma rituals periodically conducted against the enemies of the dharma. But it is hard to see these roles as central to Ngawang Tsültrim's power, as his participation in militaristic tantric rituals (at least to the extent

[749] Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 72, 133–144. Ronald M. Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 65.

that they were directed against live human armies) took place in the Qing court outside the context of the regency. [750]

Another popular model of Buddhist kingship is that of the *cakravartin,* the world-conquering emperor, who bears the same thirty-two great marks as the Buddha.[751] He is equated with the bodhisattva in a way that, in Tambiah's words "makes the king himself…a ritual officiant of central importance". As a general model, the *cakravartin-bodhisattva* mythology says nothing about the ruler being a monk; to the extent that it applies to Ngawang Tsültrim, it applies equally to other Tibetan rulers and even lay rulers."[752] Buddhist rulers from Aśoka to the Dalai Lama have been depicted in this way, and elements of this narrative are to be found in the biographies' description of Ngawang Tsültrim as a ruler. In a Tibetan context an incarnate bodhisattva in a *tülku* lineage may better fit this role, and of course Ngawang Tsültrim was not seen as a *tülku* in his lifetime (although, as with other Tibetan rulers, his biography hagiographically describes him as one). Ngawang Tsültrim did act as a "ritual officiant of central importance" at times, for instance in leading the Great Prayer Ceremony, but these ritual duties did not do much to establish him as a *cakravartin*—they were simply what a regent or a Ganden Tripa was expected to do on certain occasions.

Geoffrey Samuel's notion of "clerical" religion perhaps better explains the religious role played by Ngawang Tsültrim, given the rationalized context in which he

[750] Ngawang Tsültrim did perform tantric war rituals for Qing wars in Taiwan and Burma as well as for the Gorkha war, while in the Qing court. But he did not perform these rituals while he was regent.
[751] Stanley Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 43.
[752] Ibid., 96. Tambiah's observations are mostly about nineteenth century Thailand, but his theory has wider applicability in the Buddhist world: Ibid., 482.

attained his philosophical and tantric education, as well as the positions of Ganden Tripa and the regency. Centralized states in the Tibetan world tended to favor "clerical Buddhism", associated with settled, state-sponsored monasticism and a "Karma Orientation" that emphasized morality, merit-making donations, and future rebirths. Samuel contrasts clerical Buddhism with the tantric and visionary practices of "shamanic" Buddhism, which predominated in situations of less state control.[753] The Geluk tradition, although containing shamanic elements such as tantric meditations and oracles, is the most clerical form of Tibetan Buddhism and has historically been most closely associated with the state. This can be seen even in the way that it controls tantra, by restricting it to a small elite and avoiding sexual practices.[754] These tendencies were strengthened with the establishment of the Geluk state, and became still further entrenched as the eclecticism of the Fifth Dalai Lama gave way to the greater sectarianism of the Qing emperor and the regents like Ngawang Tsültrim.[755] Samuel's theory has been criticized for lumping together a number of practices of meditation and altered states as "shamanism," and ignoring the fact that meditation and similar practices of spiritual development can be found even in the "clerical" tradition of the monastery, not just on the margins.[756] The Geluk tradition did have a strong tantric component, which it could be said that Samuel neglects.[757] It should not be forgotten that Ngawang Tsültrim was a learned and

[753] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 6–7.
[754] Ibid., 511.
[755] Ibid., 525–533.
[756] Reginald A. Ray, "Tibetan Buddhism as Shamanism?," ed. Geoffrey Samuel, *The Journal of Religion* 75, no. 1 (1995): 96–100.
[757] Samuel states that all forms of Tibetan Buddhism are a clerical-shamanic synthesis, and furthermore that even the Geluk synthesis leans toward shamanism. However, he tends to emphasize the clerical aspects of the Geluk, especially within the monasteries, and in Tsongkhapa's

accomplished tantric practitioner, from his time in the Tantric College, but the actual practice of tantra (while seen when he performs *torma* rites) was not so essential to his duties as regent. Ngawang Tsültrim as a religious figure had what Samuel would call a pronounced clerical bent, as he gained power through the institutional power of the Geluk monasteries and within a system in which tantric education and ritual were under strict disciplinary control.

writings, and sees the ideal of shamanism as relatively more predominant in the non-Geluk *rimé* traditions. Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 499, 506–515.

Chapter 5: Ngawang Tsültrim as a political figure

The “two traditions of Tibet,” religion and politics, are often viewed as an inseparable whole, as discussed in the previous chapter, but they can still be conceptually separated. Although Ngawang Tsültrim (like other rulers of Tibet) was a lord of both traditions, his title of *sikyong* emphasized that he was the holder of *si* (political power). He was the one who represented the state in a ceremonial sense, made laws, enforced them, named people to be appointed to the cabinet, and defended the realm against foreign enemies. The biographies focus much more on his actions related to *chö* than to *si,* but there is still considerable discussion of his political rule (especially in the longer biography). Ngawang Tsültrim was ceremonially enthroned as ruler, after being selected to replace the late Demo as regent. As regent, he made appearances in state functions and received foreign representatives. He issued decrees on matters of basic political economy, ordering that taxes be collected and currency circulated in a proper manner, and that the various segments of the population act virtuously in making their living; he also ensured that the laws were enforced and obeyed. He took charge of the Tibetan army, overseeing their activities in war, and making sure that the borders were defended. While performing all of these duties, his rule was legitimized in Buddhism terms, and his actions supported Buddhist institutions and even helped to ritually bring about an ideal Buddhist order. But Ngawang Tsültrim's Buddhist kingship also included the sorts of concrete activities of government that any rulers had to deal with, matters of this world such as warfare, taxation, and the functioning of the bureaucracy.

His selection as regent

Ngawang Tsültrim's elevation to the regency needs to be placed, first of all, in the context of the selection of past regents of Ganden Palace. The regents of the Fifth Dalai Lama were chosen by the Dalai Lama from his close associates. As we have seen, the *desis* of the Fifth Dalai Lama were usually personal assistants to his *labrang*. At first the appointment was formally made by the Mongolian kings, but with later *desis,* it was done by Fifth Dalai Lama himself.[758] When a *gyeltsab* was appointed for the young Eighth Dalai Lama, a wider range of Qing and Tibetan officials had influence over the appointment. According to the *Dungkar Tsikdzö Chenmo*, when Demo was appointed regent for the Eighth Dalai Lama, the *ambans* selected him in consultation with Tibetan government officials:

> Concerning who is worthy to be regent, the *ambans*, the representatives of the Emperor, consulted as to which of the Tibetan Hothogthu served the longest as the personal attendant of the [Seventh] Dalai Lama. All Tibetan clerical and lay officials such as the four Kalön ministers responded unanimously it was [the Sixth] Demo Tülku that had served the longest as the Dalai Lama's attendant and he was the chief heart son.[759]

According to Shakabpa, the decision to appoint Demo as regent was taken by "the cabinet ministers, the Dalai Lama's personal attendants, the masters of Drepung, Sera, and Ganden monasteries, and the monk and lay officials."[760] It seems unlikely that the *ambans* were not involved, since most major appointments in this era were made by the consent of the Qing, but it is possible that the *ambans* and emperor simply ratified the desired candidate of the Tibetan officials. Like the previous *desis* Demo was one of the Dalai Lama's personal attendants. But in a new development

[758] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 336–340.
[759] Blo bzang 'phrin las, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*, 1091.
[760] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:489.

for the regency, he was also from a *tülku* lineage, and had close ties to the emperor as well. The Demo lineage, prominent Geluk masters from the beginning of their lineage, had been connected with the Dalai Lamas ever since the fourth incarnation (Lha dbang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1631-1668) accompanied the Fifth Dalai Lama to Beijing.[761]

Goldstein's description of selection of the *gyeltsab*, following the 1933 death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, reveals how the process had evolved in the latter days of Ganden Palace. The pool of candidates included the *Hothogthu* incarnations who had previously served as regent (Reting, Tsemönling, Kundeling, Demo, and Ditru), a few other *tülku* lineages, the current and former Ganden Tripa, in addition to the Dalai Lama's personal assistants.[762] The actual appointment was in the hands of the *kashak* and the National Assembly.[763] Despite the existence of strong candidates who were not lamas, tradition and the abbots favored appointing a *tülku,* resulting in the selection of Reting Rinpoché.[764] Of course, there were many differences between the selection of Reting and of Ngawang Tsültrim, since in 1777 the Qing emperor

[761] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 29–30.
[762] Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 186. He lists "Tengyeling" which seems to be another name for the Demo incarnation since some of the incarnations were associated with that monastery. However, the Demo lineage had fallen into disrepute by the 1930s thanks to the last Demo incarnation's treason against the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (one more incarnation was still recognized, but didn't attain political power). "Bstan rgyas gling (G303)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=G303.
[763] The National Assembly was an institution created in the time of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, consisting of high-ranking officials and abbots of the *densas*.
[764] As Goldstein acknowledges, it had become an uncommon occurrence (at least by the twentieth century) for a *tülku* not to be chosen. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 146, 188–189. Melvyn C Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 2*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 8, http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=314087.

and *ambans* had the final say, and there was no pool of *tülku* lineages associated with the regency, nor a National Assembly.

What was the process for selecting the new regent in 1777? Shakabpa downplays Qing responsibility in favor of Tibetan autonomy in the matter:

> Immediately thereafter, the cabinet, the Dalai Lama's personal attendant, the abbots and officials of Drepung, Sera, and Ganden monasteries, and the monk and lay government officials unanimously requested that the Dalai Lama assume the religious and political responsibilities since he had reached the age of twenty. However, he said that he would be unable to take up these responsibilities for the time being, as he wished to continue with his studies. Because they could not persuade him, they sent an invitation to the retired abbot of the Tantric College of Upper Lhasa Tsador Ngawang Tsültrim who was spreading Buddhism in China.[765]

Shakabpa does not admit that the emperor had any role in the process, but rather claims that Tibetan officials alone appointed Ngawang Tsültrim after failing to persuade the Dalai Lama to take up political power. (I will discuss the Dalai Lama's "reluctance" to take power in Chapter Seven). Lobsang Chopri, making selective use of Ngawang Tsültrim's *namthar* in a brief article published for the People's Republic of China, emphasizes that the decision was made by the emperor and thus that Tibetans had a "lively concern for the motherland."[766] The actual text of the long biography does support the contention that the emperor had the primary role in the appointment, if not the notion that Tibetans considered themselves part of the Chinese motherland. After Demo died, the *ambans* immediately sent an official order (*dreltsé*) to the emperor informing him of this fact; the emperor's reply was that since the Dalai Lama needed to continue to focus on his studies he could not rule, and so

[765] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:495.
[766] Lobsang Chopri, "The Course of Securing the Succession to the Regency by the Tshe-Smon-Gling," *Tibet Studies*, no. 2 (1989): 79.

"a great lama should be sent, and begin to do the work of Tibet."[767] The emperor called Ngawang Tsültrim and Changkya Rinpoché into his presence when he received this message.[768] Changkya Rinpoché at this point requested to be the one to go to Tibet, but instead the emperor gave the golden seal (*gser yig*) to Ngawang Tsültrim and told him to give it to the Dalai Lama and take up responsibility for Tibet's religion and politics.[769] Immediately after that, the emperor issued an edict, offering the *nominhan* Ngawang Tsültrim the seals of the regency and ordering that Tibetans should respect his authority.[770]

The emperor clearly wanted a personal loyalist in the regency. The emperor's stated reasons for appointing Ngawang Tsültrim as regent were that he "has vast wisdom in the two traditions [of religion and politics] and strives without slacking in the service of religion and politics for me."[771] While the Demo lineage had a legacy of service to the emperor, Ngawang Tsültrim had closer personal ties to him, and lacked Demo's competing ties with the Dalai Lama. According to Schwieger, Ngawang Tsültrim and his successor "were very much trusted by the emperor, the Tsemönling especially so, having served for fifteen years as the emperor's private tutor in Beijing."[772] The emperor's statements about him emphasized his long service and loyalty to the court.[773] The Tibetan lamas to whom Ngawang Tsültrim had ties, the Panchen Lama and Changkya Hothogthu, were themselves quite close to the

[767] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:13a.
[768] Ibid., 2:12b–13a.
[769] Ibid., 2:13b.
[770] Ibid., 2:14a.
[771] Ibid., 2:13a.
[772] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 160.
[773] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:13b; Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 7a–7b.

emperor.[774] It is not that the emperor, by turning to a personal loyalist to fill the regency, was responding to a problem with Tibetan governance that imperiled the empire, since Qing control was already secure. The Qing empire was at the peak of its power and Qianlong could extend its influence without much resistance.

The biographies make it clear that the Qianlong emperor had the sole authority to appoint the regent, but that does not mean that others did not influence him. The *ambans* had a potential influence on his policy, as the emperor would have needed advisers, and they were close to the Tibetan situation. They might have told the emperor that a regent needed to be appointed, rather than have the Dalai Lama take power, and even suggested whom to appoint, as implied in their letter which requested that "a lama should be sent [*btang*, presumably from Beijing] and begin to do the work of Tibet."[775] The emperor had other advisers (including Tibetan lamas like Changkya), however, and he was certainly not constrained to follow the suggestions of the *ambans*. The *ambans* would likely have wanted a lama from Beijing so that the regency would remain under Beijing's control. An independent Tibetan ruler, whether the Dalai Lama or a powerful regent, was more of a threat to the *ambans* than to anyone else (even the emperor), considering such episodes as the uprising of 1751 in which the *ambans* were murdered.

There is a stronger case for Changkya Rinpoché being involved in Ngawang Tsültrim's appointment. (His life will be discussed in Chapter Six.) The emperor's

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[774] These lamas and Demo Rinpoché had led the search for the Eighth Dalai Lama. Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 160.

[775] The biography reads thus: "…*da sgos 'di nas bla ma che ba zhig btang nas bod kyi las don byed bcug dgos pa 'dug*." Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:12b. This is probably not a direct quote, and is perhaps influenced by the fact that this is Ngawang Tsültrim's biography and he (residing in Beijing at the time) was in fact the one chosen.

dreltsé appointing him regent said that the emperor had had a discussion with his preceptor Changkya Rinpoché, presumably about whom to appoint, before making his decision. Although Changkya requested to be regent himself (a request the emperor denied), he also spoke favorably of Ngawang Tsültrim.[776] However, Changkya's own biography (according to Gene Smith) indicates that he did not initially recommend Ngawang Tsültrim for the position of regent, but rather Tsenpo Nominhan, a candidate that the emperor rejected.[777] Still, this source corroborates that Changkya and the emperor eventually agreed upon Ngawang Tsültrim. The strong personal connections that Ngawang Tsültrim had formed with such a highly-regarded and highly-placed lama were surely influential in expanding the former's influence at court.

In supporting Ngawang Tsültrim's appointment to the regency, Changkya Rinpoché had a strong interest in preserving the Qing patronage of the Geluk, as well as the prominent position of his own lineage and its relationship to the Beijing court. As discussed above, Tibetan lamas like Changkya seemingly supported or acquiesced to Qing rule as a way to advance Geluk interests, but they did not unconditionally accept imperial hegemony in every sphere.[778] As Max Oidtmann argues, Tibetan lamas insisted that the subordination to the Qing under the patron-priest relationship take place under the condition that the Qing support the extension

[776] Ibid., 2:13b.
[777] Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 143. The Third Tsenpo Nominhan would have been contemporary with Ngawang Tsultrim; the previous incarnation died in 1737 and the subsequent incarnation was born in 1789. However, he does not seem to be in the TBRC database, or in the Treasury of Lives, unlike his predecessors and successors at Tsenpo Monastery. Lan Wu, "The Second Mindrol Nominhan, Lobzang Tendzin Gyatso," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2014, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Second-Mindrol-Nominhan-Lobzang-Tendzin-Gyatso/9690.
[778] Tsyrempilov, "Dge Lugs Pa Divided."

of Buddhist law, and in particular the sectarian interests of the Geluk.[779] In keeping with this understanding of the ideal political order, Changkya had advocated for the extension of Geluk law and Tibetan influence in Amdo. He suggested to the emperor that the second Jamyang Zhepa lama (Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, 1728-1791), the head of Labrang Monastery, be appointed as prince of Kokonor instead of the ruling Mongolian princes.[780] By suggesting the appointment of himself or Ngawang Tsültrim as regent, Changkya was similarly advocating for the preservation of the Geluk legal and religious hegemony within central Tibet—even though it would be patronized by the Qing rather than an independent Tibetan government. Although he was not given the regency, he ensured that both the government of Tibet, and later, his own office of *thamka lama*, would remain in the trusted hands of Ngawang Tsültrim.

The Panchen Lama was possibly involved in recommending Ngawang Tsültrim for the regency, although the biographies do not specifically say so. He regularly advised the emperor on Tibetan matters. They had formed a religious connection when the Panchen Lama taught Kālacakra to Ngawang Tsültrim as a tantric student.[781] They had recommended Ngawang Tsültrim for his original position

[779] Buddhist law, to Geluk lamas, in practice meant *Tibetan* law, as it had developed from the time of Songtsen Gampo through the formation of the Ganden Palace regime. While Qianlong was admired for taking Tibetan lamas as his gurus, he was criticized for imposing "Chinese" (or rather Manchu) imperial law on Tibet, which was not based on Buddhism. Max Oidtmann, "A Case for Gelukpa Governance," in *Greater Tibet : An Examination of Borders, Ethnic Boundaries, and Cultural Areas*, ed. P. Christiaan Klieger (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2016), 131–136.

[780] The emperor did not follow his advice in this case, but in other ways, Tibetan lamas convinced the local Mongolian rulers and the Qing to adopt Tibetan law in the Amdo region. This development contributed to the Tibetan acculturation of regions of Amdo that had once been more culturally Mongolian. Ibid., 139.

[781] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 5a.

in the Beijing court as *ti shi*, and prophesied that he would become Ganden Tripa as well as regent.[782] He was also key to Ngawang Tsültrim being appointed tutor to the Dalai Lama, explicitly recommending him for the post.[783] Within the biographies he is always portrayed as supporting Ngawang Tsültrim's rule, giving him all due formal recognition, and engaging in a relationship of mutual respect. Ngawang Tsültrim met with the Panchen Lama on the occasions of his entrance to Tibet in 1777 and again (with the young new Seventh Panchen Lama) when he departed to Beijing in 1786, indicating that the Panchen Lamas and the regent maintained close relations, at least for the sake of diplomacy.[784]

The Panchen Lama's motives are unclear, if he did influence the decision to appoint Ngawang Tsültrim. Like Changkya, he wanted to promote the spread of the Geluk school by forming a patron-priest relationship with the emperor. If nothing else, the Panchen Lama viewed Ngawang Tsültrim (with whom he had many religious connections) as someone who could effectively spread the Geluk dharma.[785] But at times he could be seen as a rival of Ngawang Tsültrim. Bogle and Turner record that the Panchen Lama's court was often at odds with Lhasa, and expressed critical sentiments toward the regents to British representatives, so he should not be assumed to have had uncritical support for Ngawang Tsültrim.[786] In particular, he supported the rule of the "great lamas" over that of the regents—but

[782] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:14b.
[783] Ibid., 2:33b.
[784] Ibid., 2:20b.
[785] Ibid., 2:4b, 5b.
[786] Turner, *Embassy to Tibet*, 362–365.

that could have meant himself as much as the Dalai Lama.[787] The Panchen Lama may have thus resented the regency as a barrier to his own power.

Other influential Tibetan Buddhist lamas and abbots also had a stake in the appointment of the regent, although they did not have a direct say in the decision. Tsyrempilov argues that Geluk hierarchs supported greater Qing control because a strong Dalai Lama threatened the independence of the *densas*, and because the Qing were reliable patrons.[788] They might have supported Ngawang Tsültrim as one who would increase the influence of the Geluk monastic institutions in Lhasa and Beijing alike. Ngawang Tsültrim's long absence from Tibet perhaps meant that he was less tied to his home monastery of Sera Me (from which he had been absent for almost twenty years) than to the Geluk school as a whole, which he was in line to lead as Ganden Tripa. His connection to Sera Me had enduring relevance, however, and might have provoked the resentment of the other monasteries, although there is scant evidence for open intra-Geluk factionalism in the biographies.

The Tibetan cabinet, abbots and so forth are not portrayed as having any say in the decision, contrary to the appointment of Demo in which the Tibetan government had been consulted.[789] Still, the biography makes no indication that they had any objections or reservations about the choice, and the Tibetans of Lhasa (including the monks and cabinet officials) are said to have greeted him enthusiastically.[790] It is possible that there was more consultation with Tibetans than is depicted in the biography, since the biographer tends to emphasize Ngawang

[787] Bogle, "Narrative of the Mission of Mr. George Bogle to Tibet," 152–169.
[788] Tsyrempilov, "Dge Lugs Pa Divided," 55–56.
[789] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:13b–14a.
[790] Ibid., 2:17a–17b.

Tsültrim's connections with the emperor and high lamas like Changkya, rather than Tibetan aristocrats and abbots. Other aristocrats had very little say in the appointment of Ngawang Tsültrim as regent, and they were increasingly marginalized in Ganden Palace after the eighteenth century. After the Qing interventions of the first half of the eighteenth century, the high levels of the aristocracy had been purged of families that had opposed the Qing.[791] The aristocrats would not have been benefitted in an obvious way by the appointment of a lama or a Qing loyalist to the regency, but they had long since been sidelined from power so would not be especially harmed either. Some alliances between Ngawang Tsültrim and aristocrats on the *kashak* would manifest later but he would not have had time or opportunity to form these ties at the time of his appointment.

The biography emphasizes Ngawang Tsültrim's humble origins as he ascended to be regent, despite the influential positions that he had already attained, indicating that he was relatively obscure on the Tibetan scene. Prophetic rumors at the time of Demo's death said that the regent would be chosen from the ranks of ordinary monks from the monasteries, and someone who was not from one of the great *tülku* lineages.[792] After recounting the people's astonishment that he had risen to such a high position, the biographer retells the story of Aśoka, who despite being the poorest of King Nimita's six sons, and born to a servant, rose to be a great emperor.[793] Even by hagiographical standards, the comparison is an exaggeration: Ngawang Tsültrim neither shared Aśoka's initial poverty and obscurity nor Aśoka's

[791] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 15.
[792] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:12b.
[793] This is reminiscent of the biblical story of King David. Ibid., 2:13b–14a.

greatness as the conqueror of a subcontinent.[794] It is true that Ngawang Tsültrim had no particular status at birth, but this was not true at the time of his appointment as regent, given his previous service as the tantric abbot and his place in the succession to Ganden Tripa, not to mention his service to the emperor as *ti shi*. But he had been absent from Tibet for fifteen years, so perhaps he had been forgotten in Lhasa. He was relatively obscure in Tibet, if compared with the Panchen Lama or other prominent *tülkus*.

Comparing Ngawang Tsültrim with other potential candidates is one way to consider why he was the one chosen. A motivation for elevating a relatively obscure person is to make him a creature of your interests, or to avoid one faction gaining power over the others. There were others in Tibet with more stature or power than Ngawang Tsültrim: the current Ganden Tripa, and other *tülkus,* especially the Panchen Lama.[795] Changkya Rinpoché was the other main candidate for the appointment, according to the biography.[796] Why was he not selected regent? He was quite close to the emperor, and a much-respected Geluk scholar (his life will be detailed further below). There was the matter of his old age: Changkya predicted that he would have to be replaced soon as *thamka lama* even if he was not

[794] Was this an attempt to say that Tibet is as great as the Indian empire? A poem by Doring Kalön Tendzin Peljor *The Story of the Bird and Monkey* about the Gorkha war puts Tibet on an equal footing with China, India, Nepal, and Mongolia as having *rangwang* ("independence", although Tibet was not independent by modern standards). Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Matthew Kapstein, and Gray Tuttle, eds., *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 572–573.

[795] Later regents would be chosen from existing incarnation lineages. Some of these lineages were already well respected before being selected as regents (including Demo and Tatsak), others were quite obscure prior to being selected for the regency. Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 25.

[796] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:13a.

appointed regent.[797] Arguably he had a greater stature than Ngawang Tsültrim as a scholar and ambassador to the Qing court, and the emperor may not have wanted someone with such a strong reputation ruling Tibet.[798] But he also lacked strong ties to central Tibet, having been born in Amdo and lived in Beijing for most of his life, so Tibetans in U may not have accepted him. In this respect, Ngawang Tsültrim's experience in the monastic system of central Tibet gave him an advantage.[799] The Panchen Lama was another potential candidate for the regency—the Seventh Panchen Lama was regent, for nine months beginning in 1844.[800] Regional rivalries pitting U against Tsang would be a potential problem (evidence of which can be found in Turner's narrative, in which the Panchen criticized the Lhasa government under the regents), and the Panchen Lama also was perhaps too powerful and independent a figure.[801] High cabinet officials could also be chosen for the regency, according to Goldstein.[802] But this was clearly against the policy of the Qing government at this point, since their recent reforms of 1751 had increased the power of the clergy at the expense of aristocrats like Polhané and his family.

Enthronement

As Ngawang Tsültrim actually assumed the office of the regency, the enthronement ceremony established his new royal status in the eyes of Tibetans. Upon his entrance to Lhasa, a very large crowd of the great officials and the ordinary

[797] Ibid., 2:15b.
[798] Changkya is depicted in his biography as having higher status at court than even the Panchen Lama. Illich, "Imperial Stooge?"
[799] Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*.
[800] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:588–589.
[801] Turner, *Embassy to Tibet*, 362–365.
[802] Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 186.

laypeople and monks of Lhasa came out to greet him, an unusual occurrence according to Shakabpa.[803] A procession followed to the Potala where he met the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, and showed them the imperial seals and order giving him authority as regent.[804] Afterwards, he was received by the monks of Sera Me in his residence, the Ganden Khangsar. (Ganden Khangsar was originally Polhané's residence, and Ngawang Tsültrim lived there during his regency, "lacking a special residence" of his own.)[805] In a procession from the Ganden Khangsar up to the Potala, the regent rode on a white horse through the crowds of monks, laypeople, and "nobles of China and Tibet."[806] He then went through the gate of the Potala up the stairs to the assembly hall. The biography describes the scene in poetic and metaphoric language, with Lhasa being described as the eight-petalled lotus and the *vajrāsana* (the "vajra seat," a name usually given to the "dharma throne" of Bodhgaya) and the Potala being its anther, adorned by Songtsen Gampo and the saints of Tibet and especially the Dalai Lama lineage.[807] On September 17, 1777, he was enthroned in the western assembly hall of the Potala (Tshoms chen srid zhi'i phun tshogs, which means "Great Hall Excellent in Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa").[808] This is the largest hall in the Potala and the Dalai Lama's formal throne room.[809]

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[803] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:495; Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:17a–17b.
[804] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:17b.
[805] Ibid., 2:262b. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:495.
[806] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:19b. The "Chinese" in the *rgya bod kyi mi drag* must be Manchu officials or bannermen.
[807] Ibid., 2:20b.
[808] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 12b.
[809] Namgyal Phuntsok, Shawn X Ye, and Zhonghua chu ban she, *The Potala Palace: Splendor of Tibet* (Dumont, N.J.: Homa & Sekey Books, 2002), 124.

He was then enthroned in an elaborate tantric *abhiṣeka*, at which both the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama were present.[810] As described in the biography, ceremonies like this occur in one way in the perception of ordinary people, and in another as perceived by those with the "eye of wisdom" (in other words, those who had attained sufficient spiritual progress on the bodhisattva path). From the ordinary point of view, he was seated on the throne of the lion of five faces, and affirmed as part of the lineage of Tibetan sovereigns going back to Nyatri Tsenpo. Two great scholars (*lobpöns*) of Sera and Drepung performed a debate before him.[811] Then he was invested with all the powers of religion and government (*chos dang srid kyi las don shes su bcug*) of the "thirteen myriarchies of Tibet", the territory under the dominion of all the past *sikyongs* of Tibet, as authorized by the emperor's seal. As the Dalai and Panchen Lamas touched him on the head, they exhorted him to "help sentient beings" and preserve the source of their benefit, the Geluk dharma. "If you do this, we will help you," they said.[812] Ngawang Tsültrim's power clearly derived from the Dalai Lama, and the strong influence of the Panchen Lama could be felt.

Those with the divine eye, according to the biographer, could see that Ngawang Tsültrim had all the marks of the Buddhas, and that countless retinues of bodhisattvas and Buddhas led by Mañjuśrī and Amitābha were all initiating him.[813] Ngawang Tsültrim's initiation by the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lamas is compared to Songtsen Gampo's initiation by Buddhas (with Mañjuśrī tying the cloth around his head, Samantabhadra pouring water on his head, Amitābha touching him on the top

[810] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:20a–24a.
[811] Ibid., 2:22a–22b.
[812] Ibid., 2:23a–23b.
[813] Ibid., 2:21a–22a.

of head to initiate him, and so forth).[814] The biographer interprets these events as a revelation of Ngawang Tsültrim as the Buddha Krakucchanda, forming a triad with the Dalai Lama as Avalokiteśvara and the Panchen Lamas as Amitābha. His elevation to the regency fulfilled his aspirations in previous incarnations to help sentient beings.[815] The enthronement ceremony supports the interpretation that *chö* and *si* were completely intertwined. Not only did it take the form of a tantric consecration ceremony, conducted by the two most religiously and politically prominent Geluk lamas in Tibet, but it also revealed Ngawang Tsültrim himself as a bodhisattva, whose task as ruler was to help sentient beings and spread the dharma.

The Qing *ambans* were hardly involved in this part of the ceremony at all, but they made an appearance afterwards when they handed over the official seals of office:

> Then, as soon as they came to the Kunsel chamber, Demo Rinpoché's seals of office (*las tham*)—which had as soon as the regent died, been stamped with the seal (*the'u*) of commission (*do dam*) by the two *ambans*—in accordance with the local customs, by the command of the Chinese leaders [i.e. *ambans*] Chargochi and Bichachi were handed over [to Ngawang Tsültrim]; accordingly, the seal was stamped upo na new decree which was to be disseminated to the lamas of the three great monasteries and the newly appointed heads of districts and all the people and monks (or those from monk and lay estates). [816]

The regent did not officially have power, at least in the eyes of the Qing suzerains, until the emperor's representatives recognized that the emperor had given him authority, and issued the orders that the people of Tibet were to obey him. This

[814] Ibid., 2:21b–23b.
[815] Ibid., 2:24a–24b.
[816] Ibid., 2:25b.

handing over of seals, which did not involve the religious side of the "union of religion and politics" at all, receives much less space in the biography than the tantric consecration. At least from the biographer's perspective, this aspect of Ngawang Tsültrim's inauguration was very much secondary to the Tibetan and Buddhist enthronement ceremony, which took place on both the temporal and cosmic planes.

After serving for nine years, Ngawang Tsültrim departed the regency with much ceremony as well. After announcing in 1786 that he was handing over the seals of office to the Dalai Lama,[817] he had a final meeting with the monks of the *densas* telling them not to relent in their service for the dharma, then held an assembly in the Potala with the Dalai Lama and promised that he would return again.[818] At this point the imperial seals were handed over to the Dalai Lama, with the *ambans* and *kalöns* in attendance. Ngawang Tsültrim received traveling money from the emperor (along with all the gifts that were typically exchanged on these occasions).[819] There was a final reception with the *ambans*, attended by five hundred Manchu soldiers and other Chinese and Tibetan officials. Ngawang Tsültrim then gave his personal entourage in Ganden Khangsar some final advice and left for Beijing.[820] As when he began the regency, the parting ceremonies emphasized the religious nature of his rule, and balanced Tibetan authority in the person of the Dalai Lama with Qing authority in the person of the *ambans*.

[817] Ibid., 2:262b.
[818] Ibid., 2:265a.
[819] Ibid., 2:265b.
[820] Ibid., 2:266b.

Matters of hierarchy and protocol

Matters of hierarchy and protocol are important in displaying and reinforcing the regent's rule. According to my adviser at the Central University of Tibetan Studies, Professor Jampa Samten, officials in attendance at many of the ceremonies were listed in order of their rank within the hierarchy, and sat or stood arranged in that order as well (although this rule cannot be applied too strictly). At the enthronement ceremony, for example, the *ambans,* those with the Manchu ranks of *gung* and *jasak,* and then the generals are listed, followed by various lower-level Tibetan officials: secretaries, managers, and treasurers.[821]

Ngawang Tsültrim also became heavily involved in protocol when he made rules for the grounds of the Potala, as part of a larger renovation project.[822] A horse path was marked around the Potala, and rules were established regulating the distances that different sorts of people could approach to the mounting platforms.[823] The common citizens were not allowed on the route at all but had to approach on foot.[824] Women were not to be allowed into the palace, unless they were there for worship.[825] Cabinet officials, those of the inner retinue (*nang ma*) of the Dalai Lama, followed by the monks of the *densas* and officials of lesser ranks, were allowed to approach to varying degrees before they reached different designated platforms, and to enter through the back gate.[826] No one of any rank was allowed to stop in

[821] Ibid., 2:25a.
[822] Grags pa mkhas grub, “Trichen Namtar,” 15b–16a.
[823] Ibid., 15b.
[824] Ibid.
[825] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:208a.
[826] Ibid.

front of the palace of the Dalai Lama.[827] Hierarchy was symbolically displayed in the protocol surrounding the Potala, the very symbol of the Dalai Lama and his Tibetan government.

One of the most important disputes over hierarchy and protocol occurred in 1790 when Ngawang Tsültrim was in Beijing as *thamka lama* rather than regent. Still, he was involved in negotiating the solution from afar, and it is illustrative of issues that must have recurred frequently within the Tibetan government at this time. Word was received in Beijing that the Chaksam (Lcags zam) and Demo incarnations had been fighting over seating arrangements and protocol at a festival at the Potala. Tenzin Yeshé Lhündrup (Bstan 'dzin ye shes lhun grub, 1739-1795) was the seventh incarnation of the Nyingma Chaksam lineage.[828] The Demo incarnation Ngawang Thubten Jikmé Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang thub bstan ‘jigs med rgya mtsho, 1778-1819) would ascend to the regency in 1815, but was only twelve years old at the time.[829] Chaksam Hothogthu had been placed near the head of the line, closest to the Dalai Lama, displacing Demo from this place of honor. There was also a dispute over who should receive tea from the Dalai Lama's kettle.[830] Ngawang Tsültrim was asked by the emperor what the proper arrangement had been when he was regent. He replied that only Demo and the *ambans* had the right to sit on the left

[827] Ibid., 2:207b.
[828] The lineage was connected to the Chaksam Chuwo Ri hermitage, founded by the famous bridge-builder and yogi Tangtong Gyelpo. The monastery and lineage were associated with the Shangpa Kagyü school as well as the Nyingma. The Chaksam lamas were not Thangtong Gyelpo’s incarnations, despite being connected to his monastery, and the founder of the lineage, Nyima Sangpo (Nyi ma bzang po), does not have extensive biographical information. “Bstan ’dzin ye shes lhun grub (P2691),” *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P2691.
[829] “Ngag dbang blo bzang thub bstan ’jigs med rgya mtsho (P1812),” *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P1812.
[830] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:323a.

side of the Dalai Lama. It was decided by the emperor that Demo should receive precedence, since Demo was a Geluk lama whose previous incarnation had been regent, whereas Chaksam was "a small Nyingma lama."[831]

These disputes over the seating order were not trivial but were pivotal to maintaining order. Both the emperor and Ngawang Tsültrim accorded great status to the Demo incarnation due to the fact that the previous incarnation had been regent, though his present incarnation could not have been "in line" for the regency yet. Both agreed that the supremacy of the Geluk over the Nyingma sect should be maintained. The failure to maintain proper hierarchy also called into question the competence of the *ambans* and the incumbent regent Tatsak Rinpoché (who himself had been appointed regent, after the failure of the Dalai Lama's administration in the Nepalese war). This influenced the emperor's decision to send Ngawang Tsültrim back to Tibet, and contributed to the emperor's increasing distrust of the Tibetan government.[832]

Enforcing the laws

A regent like Ngawang Tsültrim necessarily had the political tasks of enforcing the laws and overseeing the government bureaucracy. The secular law was known as *gyeltrim* (*rgyal khrims*), as contrasted with *chötrim* (*chos khrims*), the religious law. It was generally connected with virtue and ethical conduct, "adopting and discarding what is right and wrong" (*khe nyen glang*).[833] The secular law was believed by Tibetans to have its origins with the first laws of Songtsen Gampo: the

[831] Ibid., 2:322b–323b.
[832] Ibid., 2:323a.
[833] Ibid., 2:222a.

Ten Virtuous Acts (*dge bcu khrims*) and the Sixteen Pure Human Moral Rules (*mi chos gtsang ma*). Ngawang Tsültrim's biography likewise describes these laws as the symbolic basis for later Tibetan law. [834] Although the legal history of Tibet after the imperial period does not get so much attention in the biography, it credits the development of a more modern law code to Jangchub Gyeltsen of the Pakmodrupa regime. Rebecca French describes this tradition as erroneous and credits the Tsang legal code as the basis of the Ganden Palace laws.[835] The actual law codes of Ganden Palace had come into effect in 1650 at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama; and in 1679 under Desi Sangyé Gyatso, based on the legal codes of the Tsangpa government.[836] The Ganden Palace law codes are described by French as "hortatory instead of definitive… suggestive and admonitory instead of commanding" and allowing for much individual discretion on the part of officials.[837]

Much as he admonished monks to study and uphold their vows, Ngawang Tsültrim exhorted officials to do their work, and ordinary people to obey the law. For instance, he advised the officials of Do *dzong* (county) to collect the taxes and carry out the laws properly, and to act with kindness toward the peasants and common people.[838] Admonitions to "not oppress the peasants on the road" were commonly given, especially in regard to transport obligations, where corruption was a frequent

[834] Ibid., 2:4a, 228a. Rebecca French, "Tibetan Legal Literature: The Law Codes of the dGa' Ldan Pho Brang," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger Jackson (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1995), 443, http://www.thlib.org/encyclopedias/literary/genres/genres-book.php#!book=/studies-in-genres/b26/. The attribution to Songtsen Gampo is mythical, but the laws did trace their origin to the imperial Yarlung dynasty era.
[835] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:8a. Ibid., 2:449a.
[836] French, "Tibetan Legal Literature," 448–449.
[837] Ibid., 441.
[838] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:157a–157b.

concern.[839] In Lhasa also, he gave similar advice to the multitudes when he preached from the throne in the Dalai Lama's chamber. His typical advice to the district officials (*rdzong gzhis sdod*) was to enforce the laws and taxes correctly and honestly so as not to oppress the peasants.[840] The *bsher dpang* (financial auditors) were told to judge tax disputes fairly.[841] To a large degree, the biography treats his interactions with officials in terms of such general advice. Although Ngawang Tsültrim did not frequently interact with ordinary laypeople apart from religious contexts, he would frequently admonish them to obey the law and act virtuously, for instance in his farewell speech as regent and at other times when he spoke to large audiences of monks and laypeople.[842] Ngawang Tsültrim was involved in preparing the *Rilung Tsatsik* (*Ri klung rtsa tshig,* "Mountains and Valleys Decree"), a notice for district officials to read to illiterate villagers, an annual summary of the most relevant laws and changes in regulations to those in outlying areas. This tradition, going back to the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, is what many Tibetan exiles have recalled as an annual "reading of the laws." [843]

In order to enforce the laws, monitor the behavior of officials, and maintain the security of the state, Ngawang often sent inspectors (*don dpyod pa*) on various missions. The idea of inspecting the regions of the kingdom is advocated in the *nīti śāstra* literature of advice on ethical living and just rule, which would have been known to Ngawang Tsültrim. One of the fullest treatments of *nīti śāstra* is the

[839] Ibid., 2:142a.
[840] Ibid., 2:66b.
[841] Ibid., 2:109a.
[842] Ibid., 2:228a, 267a–267b.
[843] There are references in Ngawang Tsültrim's decrees to the past *rilung tsatsik* of Demo as precedents. Ibid., 2:227a–227b. French, "Tibetan Legal Literature," 441.

Treatise on Ethics for Kings (*Rgyal po lugs kyi bstan bcos sa gzhi skyong ba'i rgyan*), written in 1895 by Ju Mipham Namgyal Gyatso ('Ju mi pham rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, 1848-1912).[844] Mipham explained the duty of the king to inspect the kingdom and its officials: "From time to time he spies on criminals, thieves,/cheats and the like, and banishes them./He controls the independence of the regions/And does not allow troublemakers to remain."[845] The cabinet minister Gung Paṇḍita was sent by Ngawang Tsültrim to Sangen (Sa ngan) in eastern Tibet, near Kham, in order to inspect conditions on the border, to make sure officials there were not being corrupt. However, "inspection" is a euphemism, in this particular case, for sending troops to fight against a small kingdom that refused to accept Lhasa's authority and sponsored banditry against passing traders.[846] On another occasion a *kadrung* (a secretary to the *kashak*) and a monk official were sent to investigate a situation at the border in Tsona (Mtsho sna, located near Bhutan and what is now Arunachal Pradesh). The situation is described as being harmful for the government and urgently needing to be resolved, but no further details are given—perhaps it again involved corruption and extractions from the peasantry, or "banditry."[847]

[844] Although this work considerably postdates Ngawang Tsültrim, it draws on Indian and Tibetan sources which have been influential throughout the history of Tibet. Much of the Indian *nīti* literature (much of which was translated into Tibetan) and Tibetan Gelukpa *lekshé* (*legs bshad*) literature (including a work by the second Changkya incarnation), which Mipham used as sources, could have been familiar to Ngawang Tsültrim and his contemporaries. José Ignacio Cabezón and Mi pham 'jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, "The Just King: Mipham's Treatise on Ethics for Kings" 2016, 8–33.
[845] The importance of "spies" to investigate the internal affairs of the kingdom is recognized in Indian political theory, going back to the *Arthaśāstra* of Cāṇakya. Ibid., 171–172.
[846] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:503.
[847] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:157a–157b.

Decrees: reforming the taxation system

Ngawang Tsültrim also issued decrees to reform the laws, and his particular concern was the tax system. Wealth and production in central Tibet were fundamentally based on land and agriculture.[848] Peasants (*mi ser*) had hereditary land rights granted by the state, i.e. the Ganden Palace, but they were still considered to belong to estates (*gzhis ka*), held either by aristocrats, monasteries, or directly by the Ganden Palace government. [849] *Miser* owed a share of their produce to the holders of these estates, and could be called upon for labor obligations such as household service for the lord. They were bound to estates but they could not be stripped of their land involuntarily.[850] The Ganden Palace government levied taxes on the aristocrats of a share of the grain harvest, who passed on the cost to the peasants by making them work *demesne* lands. The government also imposed taxes directly on those *miser* who worked the government's own estates.[851] On the estates of nobles (and sometimes other estates) some peasants were thus potentially subject to many taxes, owing a large share of their produce and labor.[852]

[848] Pastoralism, while important to a number of Tibetan communities, was relatively peripheral to the economy of Ganden Palace, although there were some pastoral "estates," owing meat and daily products as taxes in kind. Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 175. Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics."

[849] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 176. There is a long running controversy, between Goldstein and other scholars, over whether to call the *mi ser* "serfs" (which is politicized due to the Chinese government's use of the term). Compared with European serfs under feudalism, *miser* had similar obligations to their lords, but they had more rights, like the right to keep their property as long as they fulfilled their obligations.

[850] Ibid.

[851] Ibid., 176–177.

[852] C. W. Cassinelli and Robert B. Ekvall, *A Tibetan Principality: The Political System of Sa sKya* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 249. Ibid., 246. This is a dedicated study of the administration of the Sakya region, which was not directly under the administration of Lhasa, but the systems of estate obligations and tax collection were the same, in broad outline; they bear many similarities to what is described in Ngawang Tsültrim's own decrees. Goldstein's study of central Tibet also depicts peasants in a particular community as having to pay taxes of produce, money, and labor

There was also a *corvée* tax (*'u lag*) on the estates, requiring *miser* to provide transportation for those who had official orders from the government to requisition this labor.[853] Peasants were obligated to provide yaks or ponies, and to pay money if they could not provide animals.[854] Failure to pay taxes usually meant having to pay more taxes in later years. The revenue work was delegated to local officials in outlying posts, which meant little direct supervision from Lhasa; often the officials considered themselves underpaid and did not want to work in these outlying regions.[855] For these reasons, corruption was a constant concern, and it was the general practice (if not a legal one) to engage in revenue farming, in which the excess taxes collected become the property of the tax collector.[856] The Ganden Palace did not extract wealth through the cash economy but to "goods and services flowing generally from those of lower to those of higher rank," to aristocrats, monasteries, and the central government.[857]

Ngawang Tsültrim issued several decrees over the course of his administration, dealing especially with taxation and abusive practices by aristocrats and officials, as well as the disputed currency minted by Nepal.[858] As explained in the

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to the local district, a regional monastery, and the central Lhasa government—eighteen forms of tax in all. Melvyn C. Goldstein, "The Balance Between Centralization and Decentralization in the Traditional Tibetan Political System," *Central Asiatic Journal* 15, no. 3 (1971): 10–14.

[853] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 178.

[854] Ibid.

[855] Cassinelli and Ekvall, *A Tibetan Principality: The Political System of Sa sKya*, 332–334.

[856] Pedro Carrasco, *Land and Polity in Tibet* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959), 93. Corruption and overtaxation continued to be problems throughout the history of Ganden Palace, and in 1847 the Lhasa government introduced the office of the lang (*glang,* bull) who was supposed to represent the interests of the peasants on government estates against overbearing landlords and officials, so that they would be able to pay their taxes. Melvyn C Goldstein, "Taxation and the Structure of a Tibetan Village," *Central Asiatic Journal* 15, no. 1 (1971): 25–26.

[857] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 178.

[858] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:221b–239a.

preamble to the first decree, Ngawang Tsültrim's legislation was based on previous decrees, one issued by the Seventh Dalai Lama in 1751 called the *The Great Parcel: A Sun of Happiness* (*'Thum mo che phan bde'i nyin byed*) and two others issued by the regent Demo in 1767 also called *'Thum mo che*,[859] as well as the general guidelines provided by Demo in his annual *rilung tsatsik* (*ri klung rtsa tshig*).[860] These previous decrees were said to root out evil practices (such as corruption within officialdom), protect the common people, reduce tax burdens, and so forth. But officials continued to be corrupt and disobey these laws, so Ngawang Tsültrim found further rules and clarifications to be necessary.[861] As justification for issuing the decrees, Ngawang Tsültrim invoked the fact that the emperor appointed him and encouraged him to uphold the laws of Tibet, but he did not credit the emperor or the *ambans* with proposing or drafting them and there is no clear evidence of their involvement.[862]

Extensive descriptions and at least part of the original text of several decrees are included in Ngawang Tsültrim's *namtar*.[863] The first of his decrees and the most comprehensive was issued in 1777. It focused on various forms of misconduct by aristocrats and officials, such as in the management of estates and transport

[859] Ibid., 2:229a–229b. *Thummoché* means having a great parcel or cover, and Ngawang Tsültrim's own decree was classified thus. The term may refer to major pieces of legislation.
[860] Ibid., 2:229b.
[861] Ibid., 2:222b.
[862] Ibid., 2:229a–229b, 236b.
[863] The original copies of the decrees are not readily available. The transition from biographical narration to quotations from the decrees is evident from a clear difference in writing style. This can be seen in the vocabulary of taxation, and in structural elements like explanatory preambles and a division into articles but it can also be seen in sentence structure, the decrees using far fewer particles.

privileges, as well as the circulation of Nepalese coins.[864] The biography describes two follow-up decrees that he issued in 1780 and 1783, in response to continuing corruption and abuses. As the biography explains:

> Regarding violations which arose, in disregard of the laws, in the iron mouse year [1780], he again issued a decree, along with clear instructions for suppressing (offences), which collects into seven articles definitive regulations of the official activities which should be adopted and discarded.[865]

After a section detailing punishments for corrupt officials, the decree in seven articles went into detail on abuses and correct practices in matters such as collecting the grain tax, keeping records of debts on estates, and obtaining permits for *ulak* labor.[866]

The last decree reprinted in the biography was issued in 1783, a relatively brief "clarification" in response to continuing corruption in the collection of the grain tax.[867] The need for multiple decrees and regular clarification is evidence that merely having an anti-corruption law did not guarantee that it would be followed in letter or in spirit. But Ngawang Tsültrim clearly was concerned with implementation, taking note of ongoing problems and taking steps to correct them.

The 1777 decree was especially focused on abuses in the corvée tax. Many officials were requisitioning transport without the required official documents (*lamyik*), or altering or forging the documents in order to demand *ulak* services they were not entitled to.[868] Tactics included duplicating the documents so that the services could be demanded multiple times, falsifying dates, and rewriting the

[864] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:221b–227b.
[865] Ibid., 2:227b.
[866] Ibid., 2:227b–237b.
[867] Ibid., 2:237b–239a.
[868] Ibid., 2:223a–223b.

number or weight of the loads after getting the permits approved.[869] Officials were using the *ulak* system as free labor (at the peasant's expense) to have loads carried that were part of their own personal business andd not approved by the government.[870] To avoid these abuses, permits for *ulak* transportation were to be be used in such a way that the proper dates, size of load, and number of animals required were clearly visible, with permits strictly followed by officials.[871] The sixth article of the 1780 decree reaffirmed the neccessity of obeying these laws explaining that government duties:

> …should be performed by everyone without exception, according to the intention of the official notices for the district officials [*spyi khyab*] which have been successively issued, about the prohibition on ordering the requisitioning of horse loads without a sealed permit, and the limits of what actions can be taken on the road [regarding corvée labor].[872]

The grain tax was another source of corruption, a particular focus of the 1780 and 1783 decrees. According to those documents, landlords used tactics of dishonest bookkeeping to avoid paying their taxes, and tax collectors were using similar tactics to enrich themselves.[873] When the grain tax was collected, the grain was supposed to be cleaned of rocks, chaff and other impurities, for which some allowance was made in the tax quotas, but sometimes this became an opportunity for embezzlement.[874] In the last decree of 1783, a system was established of measuring and keeping a running account of the grain tax, with an option of paying an

[869] Ibid., 2:224b.
[870] Ibid.
[871] Ibid., 2:225a.
[872] Ibid., 2:235b.
[873] Ibid., 2:237b–238a.
[874] Ibid., 2:238b.

equivalent in silver, to make sure officials were delivering the correct amounts to the government.[875] Dishonest bookkeeping of the peasants' debts was forbidden.[876]

Punishments for corrupt officials included fines to compensate for unpaid taxes and theft from peasants, expulsion from their posts, losing aristocratic status and being demoted to the rank of ordinary farmer, and banishment to remote places—though Ngawang Tsültrim claimed to restrain himself from the last punishment because "no one would be left."[877] Particular officials were named as corrupt in the 1780 decree. One official named Chushur Drakdongpa forcibly enlisted the peasants in stealing all the grain of his district storehouse under the pretext of cleaning it, and extorted money from peasants such that "fourteen families were completely unable to pay taxes."[878] Also, three county officials and tax collectors were cited for embezzlement: Draknangpa, Tashi Lobsang, and Lepé Changpa.[879]

The decrees also addressed a number of economic practices deemed exploitative by the regent, which gave him a rationale for regulating commercial activities. Officials were warned that the service of the government was of primary importance, and that they were not supposed to create factories or workshops for

[875] Ibid.
[876] Ibid., 2:234b.
[877] Ibid., 2:231b.
[878] Ibid., 2:230b.
[879] Ibid., 2:231a. The tactic of public shame had precedent in the disciplinary procedures of Sera Monastery. The *Great Exhortation* of Sera Je mandates that on the first offense of the monastic regulations, the exhorter should deliver the remprimand in such a way that the culprit is not singled out; on the second offense, the exhorter should address himself to the section where the offender is seated; on the third offense, the offender should be named outright. In the cases of major offenses (one of the four infractions that entail expulsion), the offender may be named immediately. Cabezón, "The Regulations of a Monastery," 341–342.

their own benefit (*rang don gyi bzo grwa*), especially on Ganden Palace's own estates.[880] This was probably a restriction on using government resources for private commercial purposes, though it may also have been a broader restriction on manufacturing or business not controlled by the government. *Ulak* was due for any sort of government business, and the relevant distinction made in the decrees was whether the loads were actually government business or not.[881] In this case it is clear that trading was a special government privileges that was maintained as a monopoly.[882] Monasteries too were forbidden from trading and private business, a prohibition solidly roots in the Vinaya, as commercial activities could have distracted the monks from their studies or ritual duties.[883] Exploitation was also an issue; landlords were said to be lending money at interest and subjecting the peasants to exorbitant prices on monopolized goods.[884] Since *miser* were often subject to unpaid labor obligations to their lords, exploitation could be a concern with any business. According to Carrasco, the government kept the profits from any commercial enterprises to itself, in accordance with the proverb that "[p]rivate fortunes run into the royal treasury as water runs into the valley," and thus prevented the formation of an independent middle class.[885] These regulations had the effect of limiting the

[880] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:230a.
[881] Carrasco, *Land and Polity in Tibet*, 90–91. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:224b–225a.
[882] Carrasco, *Land and Polity in Tibet*, 213.
[883] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:232a.
[884] Ibid., 2:224b.Ibid., 2:227b.
[885] Carrasco, *Land and Polity in Tibet*, 214. This strategy of preserving the existing economic system calls to mind a recent theory of economic development promoted by Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson. According to them, "absolutist" governments (or any governments that concentrate power in the hands of a few) generally oppose economic innovation and non-traditional economic activities, or at least heavily restrict them and monopolize them for the government elite. Although trade and industry could theoretically create prosperity and thus more revenue for the government, these

economy (aside from certain government monopolies) to the traditional agrarian economy that supported the monasteries, and preventing concentrations of wealth outside the system.

Decrees: regulating the currency

One of Ngawang Tsültrim's 1777 decrees also addressed the circulation of Nepalese coins, an important economic issue that helped spark the war with Nepal. In 1650, Tibet and Nepal (under the Mallas) had signed a treaty mandating that Tibetan coins be minted in Nepal in exchange for Tibet sending the raw silver and gold, and also granting Newari merchants the right to establish trading houses in Lhasa and trade without customs duties.[886] For the Malla rulers, this became a way to earn revenue through seigniorage by heavily minting debased coins and selling them as face value. Tibet thus did not have control over its own currency, nor did the Qing control it, but rather the Nepalese who otherwise had no political stake in Tibet or vice versa. When the Gorkhas took control of Nepal in 1769, they wanted to continue the profitable currency trade, but in order to win Tibetan acceptance of the coins, they minted them at the original purer ratio of silver. This led to conflict over how Nepal would compensate Tibet for the older coins, with the Gorkhas pushing the Tibetans to accept a heavy devaluation, and Tibet demanding a more favorable exchange rate of one to one. Tibetan leaders, including the Panchen Lama, had

activities also threaten traditional elites who supported the government, risk enriching newcomers who might demand representation, and provid the exploited subjects a means of escaping dependency on the government. Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail* (New York: Crown Business, 2012), 213–244.

[886] Leo Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 13–15.

been trying to negotiate a settlement when Ngawang Tsültrim took over the regency.[887]

As portrayed in the biography, Ngawang Tsültrim tried to assert Tibetan interests aggressively in the currency issue, which unsurprisingly had the effect of antagonizing the Nepalese. According to his 1777 decree, the merchants of Lhasa refused to take the old coins, on what he described as "false pretenses"—that they were worn or filed down.[888] Tibetans would have had much of their savings rendered valueless if the old coins were not accepted, and the situation was also said to be disrupting business, as people were unsure which coins to take to the market.[889] Ngawang Tsültrim's decree forced both currencies to be accepted at the same value and cracked down on counterfeiters.[890] In economics, Gresham's Law states that "bad money drives out good." When that pure coins and debased coins are accepted by merchants at par (something they would prefer not to do), the better coins with greater metal content are likely to be hoarded rather than spent, a situation that might disrupt commerce.[891] Another problem from the Nepalese perspective would be that an equal exchange rate would be less profitable for the Nepalese, when the Tibetan government purchased new coins. This decree furthered a Tibetan policy of holding firm against devaluation or other concessions to Nepal. The resultant tension

[887] Ibid., 26–27.
[888] Although many of the merchants were Nepalese, many of them were Tibetans as well, so it cannot be assumed that this dispute with the merchants was simply an extension of the conflict between nations.
[889] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:225b.
[890] Ibid., 2:226a–226b.
[891] George Selgin, "Gresham's Law," *Eh.net Encyclopedia*, 2003, http://eh.net/encyclopedia/greshams-law/.

over the currency and trade contributed to the outbreak of war with Nepal in 1788 after the end of Ngawang Tsültrim's regency.[892]

Foreign relations and defense

Ngawang Tsültrim had a lot of responsibility for foreign affairs, which can be seen first of all in his reception of foreign dignitaries in the Lhasa court, who arrived for political or religious purposes. Emissaries of the *desi* of Bhutan arrived regularly in court, as well as Sikkimese representatives who offered a summer audience from time to time.[893] Representatives of the King of Ladakh also arrived on an annual tribute mission (as they had done since Tibet's victory over Ladakh in the war of 1679).[894] Many foreigners, both monks and laypeople, came for the sake of pilgrimage. Travelers from Mongolia also regularly arrived for blessings,[895] and in particular, a 1781 delegation from the Mongolian lama Jetsundampa Hothogthu came to receive teachings and attend the funeral of the Panchen Lama.[896] Ngawang Tsültrim received delegations of *kaché* (*kha che*) as well, from the Tibetan Muslim community.[897] Curiously, the visits of Nepalese diplomats are not recorded while he was regent, perhaps because they were not Buddhist, although there were surely ongoing diplomatic relations.[898] These relationships were not carried on with overt

[892] Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 37–38.
[893] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:141a–141b, 158a–158b. Bhutan had frequently been at war with Tibet since the establishment of Ganden Palace, while Sikkim was traditionally a Tibetan ally. However, following the 1775 Bhutan-Sikkim war (in which Tibet supported Sikkim), Tibet was at peace with both countries. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:324, 413, 484.
[894] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:58b, 83a, 141a–141b.
[895] Ibid., 2:83b, 85b.
[896] Ibid., 2:113b.
[897] Ibid., 2:132a.
[898] Perhaps the biographer was not interested in the Nepalese diplomats, because he was more interested in religion than in politics, and these visits were not religious in nature.

Qing involvement, but continued patterns of diplomacy, tribute, and warfare that predated the imposition of Qing rule.

The biography offers little indication that a monk like Ngawang Tsültrimwas expected to avoid warfare.[899] War and punishment are rationalized by the biographer as a necessary component of Ngawang Tsültrim's "peaceful and wrathful actions," which entailed the just punishment of offenders and enemies of the faith.[900] The Tibetan army generals appear at numerous times in the biography, frequently on ceremonial occasions in which they were a regular part of the audience.[901] For the most part, Ngawang Tsültrim did not send the army into war while he was regent (the Gorkha wars occurred before and after his regency) but the Sangen affair of 1779 to 1780 did involve the army and the use of physical force.[902] The Tibetan troops, led by the *kalön* Gung Paṇḍita, attacked and captured the rebellious Sangen Castle, and the rebel leaders were executed or sent into exile.[903] This assertion of Tibetan authority over a frontier region was an independent act of the regent without any explicit involvement of the *ambans* or the Qing, although the Tibetan military leaders were told by the regent to "perform service of the emperor" before going into battle.[904]

When Ngawang Tsültrim returned from Beijing for his second term as regent, near the end of his life, he was especially concerned with the military due to the

[899] The idea that monks should not fight can be found elsewhere in Tibetan political literature of this era, as in the Fifth Dalai Lama's decree appointing Desi Sangyé Gyatso. Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 334.
[900] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:227a.
[901] Ibid., 2:194a.
[902] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:485, 503.
[903] Ibid., 1:503. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:81b.
[904] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:82b.

ongoing Nepalese crisis (although there was a lull in the actual fighting). He announced rewards of money, muskets, clothes and promotions for those who served well. Among the recipients of such honors and rewards was a certain Tömenkhap, who displayed bravery in battle and was appointed as a general. Ngawang Tsültrim is credited by the biographer with prescience, since Tomen served well in the second phase of the Gorkha war, refusing to surrender in the crucial battle of Dzongkha.[905] Perhaps more importantly, Ngawang Tsültrim punished those he held responsible for the poor performance in the war.[906] The biography describes this episode obliquely, depicting Ngawang Tsültrim merely as ordering that "those who are bad should be punished." According to Shakabpa, however, he harshly criticized the *kashak*, demoted a general who surrendered, and exiled certain government officials who had performed badly.[907] He also demanded that the *kashak* refuse to negotiate with the Nepalese over tribute, and ordered the military into a state of readiness, in preparation for the renewal of war that occurred after his death.[908] Even though Ngawang Tsültrim was old and dying, if Shakabpa is correct, he took one of the boldest actions of his regency at this time.[909] Although he could not act with complete independence from the Qing, he assertively pushed his own policies in military affairs in order to serve what he saw as Tibetan interests.

Another matter of foreign policy in which the regent possibly played a role was the British trade mission of Turner in 1782 (a follow-up to Bogle's mission of

[905] Ibid., 2:360b.
[906] Ibid., 2:360a–360b.
[907] Ibid., 2:360b.
[908] Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 163.
[909] There is some indication that Ngawang Tsültrim relinquished control of the government near the end of his life. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:365b.

1774). Turner's account of the mission blamed the regents for obstruction in preventing a trade deal and not allowing the ambassadors to continue to Lhasa, based on the rather self-serving reports of the Panchen Lama's court.[910] This policy in turn was blamed on Chinese influence.[911] The British trade missions don't seem to have been considered noteworthy by Ngawang Tsültrim's biographers, even though they happened during Ngawang Tsültrim's reign. (If there was any conflict between the regent and the Panchen Lama, the biographers may not have wanted to mention it, and the diplomats never actually went into Lhasa). Did the regent have a policy of refusing European foreigners admission into Tibet? The narrative of an isolated Tibet has been criticized as Eurocentric, since Tibet was certainly not closed to Asian foreigners in this period. It has been argued the policy of excluding the British was a defense against British colonialism, rather than a blanket exclusion of all foreigners.[912] All in all, Ngawang Tsültrim did hew closely to the Qing imperial policy of excluding the British—his favored Geluk monasteries may have been opposed to foreign influence, and the Qing would not have turned a blind eye to unauthorized diplomacy in this matter.

The Tibetan social order: aristocrats and monks

Although the aristocracy was one of the great estates of Tibet and controlled a good share of the wealth and power of the Ganden Palace, discussion of

[910] Turner, *Embassy to Tibet*, 364–365.
[911] Ibid.
[912] Beatrice Miller, "Lhasa: An International Politico-Economic Center Through the Centuries: A Very Preliminary Examination," in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 4th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies Schloss Hohenkammer – Munich 1985 (Studia Tibetica: Band II)*, ed. Helga Uebach and Jampa L. Panglung (Munich: Kommision Für Zentralasiatische Studien Bayerische Akademie der Wisenschaften, 1988), 253–62.

aristocrats is relatively absent from the biographies. Petech does find enough information in Ngawang Tsültrim's large biography to use it as a source for his *Aristocracy and Government*, but as far as documenting aristocratic families is concerned, Petech criticizes it (and other biographies of religious figures) for ignoring politics and other matters involving laypeople.[913] Petech divides the aristocracy into three classes: the *yabshi* (*yab gzhis*), families of the Dalai Lama who were ennobled, the five families of the *depön* (*sde dpon*) who owned the majority of the land and dominated appointments to the *kashak*, and the ordinary members of the aristocracy called *kudrak* (*sku drag,* also *sger pa*) who were not necessarily wealthy or influential.[914] The eighteenth century was a time of decline for the aristocrats vis-à-vis the monasteries, as I have already discussed in relation to Goldstein's thesis in "Circulation of Estates."[915] When Polhané rose to power in 1728, he selected a number of aristocrats for his council of ministers, largely composed of Qing loyalists. Since they remained loyal to the emperor after the revolt of 1750, most of these families remained influential by the time of Ngawang Tsültrim and had seats on the *kashak*.[916] These families included Doring, with whom Ngawang Tsültrim had close ties, as well as Thön and Dokhar.[917] The result was that the most

[913] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 2.
[914] Ibid., 19. Other than *sger pa* or simply *sger* as a general term for "private" estates (not belonging to the central government) the biographies do not make much use of Petech's terminology for aristocrats.
[915] Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics."
[916] The lineage of Polha itself suffered a major blow with the overthrow of Gyurmé Namgyel and lost most of its land and all of its influence in government, but Polhané's descendants (under the name of Changchen (Lcang can)) still held the title of *gung* and some estates under the reign of Ngawang Tsültrim. Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 15, 65, 71, 212. The family appears briefly in the biography; one Changchen is a general in Tsang. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:64a.
[917] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:51–53. Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*,

powerful aristocrats in Ngawang Tsültrim's day were loyal to the monastic establishment and the Qing; opponents of the emperor or the Ganden Palace establishment had long since been purged.

Aristocrats primarily appear in the biographies when they attended state functions or gave patronage, or served as government officials. Among the most prominent of the lay aristocrats were Doring Paṇḍita (Rdo ring paNDi ta Mgon po dngos grub rab brtan, 1721-1792) and his son Tenzin Peljor (Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor, 1760-c. 1810), and they receive the most attention in the biography, perhaps indicating a special connection between Ngawang Tsültrim and the Doring family.[918] In addition to being present at the inauguration of the younger Doring to the *kashak*,[919] Ngawang Tsültrim gave *upāsaka* vows to the elder Doring in his retirement.[920] The Dorings appear in such contexts as receiving the Panchen Lama as he departed for Beijing,[921] sponsoring a long life ceremony for the Dalai Lama,[922] and requesting a reading of the Hundred Deities of Tushita.[923] As for the other lay aristocrats in the *kashak,* Thön Shisi is mentioned only in passing on similar

65, 71.

[918] The Doring family was also known as Gashi (Dga bzhi). Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 50. It was also known as Gung, after the Qing aristocratic title they held, as can be seen in Ngawang Tsültrim's biography: Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:16b. The elder Doring's biography is the most famous legacy of this family, and deserves attention as a work which provides another perspective on Tibet in the late eighteenth century, especially relating to the Gorkhas and the Qing. Rdo ring pa bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor, *Dga' bzhi ba'i mi rabs kyi byung ba brjod pa zol med gtam gyi rol mo* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1988).

[919] The son Tenzin Peljor also fell into disfavor with the emperor following the Gorkha war, but this is omitted from the biography. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:139b. Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 57–58.

[920] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:141b.

[921] Ibid., 2:64a.

[922] Ibid., 2:85b.

[923] Ibid., 2:273a.

occasions, as when all of the *kalöns* (and a number of other government officials) sponsored the creation of new ritual implements for the 1780 Great Prayer Ceremony.[924] Dokhar Sonam Wangyel was singled out by the emperor as being to blame for the Gorkha debacle, in the biographer's account; otherwise he does not receive much attention at all, which seems to indicate that he was out of favor.[925] Lesser lords are frequently mentioned in passing as well, receiving Ngawang Tsültrim on his travels, giving donations for ceremonies and other religious projects (such as renovating monasteries), and requesting teachings.[926] Although politics does receive some attention, the main role of the aristocracy (at least from the biographers' perspective) was to support the dharma by giving donations and participating in ceremonies. Whatever the implicit tensions between the aristocracy and the monasteries, it should be noted that these families surely saw themselves as devoted Geluk Buddhists, and some of them even took robes and became prominent monks. Although there are some tensions that are glossed over in the biography (especially involving the emperor), overall the aristocrats appear to be supporters of Ngawang Tsültrim

Ngawang Tsültrim's relative attitudes toward the aristocracy and monks are revealed in his taxation decrees. The decree show a clear preference for monks over aristocrats in that they are primarily concerned with the abuses of aristocratic landowners and district officials.[927] He did issue a few decrees regulating monastic

[924] Ibid., 2:217a–271b.
[925] As discussed in a previous note, other sources blame the Doring minister, but perhaps Ngawang Tsültrim (or the biographers) had a more favorable view of that family. Ibid., 2:313b.
[926] Ibid., 2:69a–69b.
[927] The decrees did discuss the government estates, but mainly in relation to the conduct of officials supervising them. Ibid., 2:224b.

discipline, and forbidding monks to go into commerce, but he was not trying to curb their power as much as limit certain excesses that might have brought the monasteries into disrepute, or distracted from their religious vocations.[928] Aristocrats rather than monks tended to be the sort of officials who were accused of corruption, and they were also the ones primarily accused of and punished for abuses toward the peasantry in managing estates. In theory the monks could have been oppressing the peasants on the monastic estates, or they could have engaged in corrupt practices like abuse of the *ulak*, but the decrees of Ngawang Tsültrim are not concerned with these possibilities.[929] This favoritism mainly applies to Geluk monks, as Ganden Palace did not support the other sects extensively. Ngawang Tsültrim displayed a clear preference toward Geluk Buddhism in taking action against non-Geluk practices (in his polemic against the *Sangyé Yeshé* practice) and lamas (in his resultion of the protocol dispute, favoring the Geluk lama Demo over the Nyingma lama Chaksam Hothogthu).

Ngawang Tsültrim was concerned with the aristocrats gaining too much wealth at the expense of the government, and in turn, the monasteries. Whether gained through corruption or trade and industry that was not under the control of the government, this wealth may have threatened monastic hegemony and therefore the system by which Ngawang Tsültrim gained his power. If acquired corruptly, it could also have deprived the government and monasteries of tax revenues. This bias in

[928] Ibid., 2:232a.

[929] It is possible that the aristocrats actually were more corrupt or burdensome toward the peasantry, but I am assuming that the incentives for corruption were similar on any of the estates (and that the monks were not less prone to corruption by nature). It is also possible that Ngawang Tsültrim dealt with abuses on monastic estates in other ways, without a public degree, or that the biographer, a monk from Sera, did not want to mention abuses on estates.

Ngawang Tsültrim's legislative decrees, like his religious patronage, could support Melvyn Goldstein's thesis that regents encouraged a transfer of land and wealth from the aristocrats to the monasteries.[930] The remedies in these decrees sometimes entailed confiscation of estates or money (the mechanism of redistribution identified by Goldstein), which would be redistributed to either the monasteries or kept by the government.[931] Ngawang Tsültrim did not clearly have a way to personally profit from such a transfer of wealth, in the way suggested in Goldstein's "Circulation of Estates," but as the foremost monk in the Geluk system he might have viewed the monks' interests as his own. Qianlong too showed a tendency to rein in the aristocracy (a possible source of resistance to his rule), and he radically shook up the *kashak* in the wake of the Gorkha wars, dealing the aristocrats a further blow.[932] If Ngawang Tsültrim displayed favoritism toward the monasteries, it could have also been motivated by a desire to promote strong monasteries for the sake of both religion and politics; they would promote the Geluk dharma and the stability of the Ganden Palace.

The Tibetan social order: ordinary people

The Tibetan government was hardly organized to encourage much popular participation, but common people, who did not wear robes or hold titles, do appear at times in Ngawang Tsültrim's biography. The term *mi ser* appears frequently,

[930] Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics."
[931] Luciano Petech, *Aristocracy and Government in Tibet, 1728-1959* (Rome: Istituo Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1973), 75.
[932] Confiscation of estates also came at the hands of the emperor, as the punishment for the *kalön* Dokar Sonam Wangyel who was blamed for the Gorkha war. Many of the aristocratic families were rehabilitated in the decades following, and regained their estates and places on the cabinet. For instance, another member of the Dokar family was appointed *kalön* in 1840. Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 74–75.

referring to the peasants who were tied to the land and owed labor and land to the estate owners, as we have already seen, or else it refers simply to laypeople who were not nobles. Other common terms include *chabang* (*chab 'bangs*), "servants," and *ngabang* (*mnga' 'bangs*), "subjects" which also refer, primarily, to these ordinary farmers. Some slight distinctions between the terms can be seen in the biography, although they are used synonymously and equated as well.[933]

Each of these words expresses something different about the regent's relationship to the people. *Ngabang* is used in the context of subjects of the government, and particularly legal subjects. The great Tibetan kings are described as "doing good and turning away from the bad" as regards the *ngabang*,[934] and the regent was admonished by the emperor to enforce the law strictly over the *ngabang.*[935] They were expected to obey Songtsen Gampo's Law of the Ten Virtues.[936] The large number of *ngabang* under the Tibetan government made it impossible to have laws that are absolutely comprehensive.[937] But the term *miser* is not so flat and neutral, for it it is generally used in the context of rulers expressing concern or compassion for them, as befits bodhisattvas such as the Dalai Lama or indeed Ngawang Tsültrim. It is said that Ngawang Tsültrim had kindness and compassion for the *miser*[938] and that officials should have a similar concern of cherishing the *miser.*[939] In addition, his duty as ruler was to give them *khrims*, which

[933] For example it is noted that the Dalai Lama gave blessings to the *miser chabang*: Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:122a.
[934] Ibid., 2:2a.
[935] Ibid., 2:13b.
[936] Ibid., 2:157a.
[937] Ibid., 2:237a.
[938] Ibid., 2:66a.
[939] Ibid., 2:73a.

can be translated either as “justice” or “law.”[940] *Chabang* is also a rather generic term but “servants” is a good translation; for instance, all the people of Tibet are described as *chabang* of Avalokiteśvara.[941]

While all these terms are frequently seen in the biography this does not mean that Ngawang Tsültrim had a great deal of direct interaction with the peasantry. If they saw the regent (as they did, on occasion) it would have been mainly in religious, not political contexts. The neighborhoods of Lhasa would traditionally offer long-life ceremonies for the Dalai Lama, and the men and women of Lhasa *zhol* (at the base of the Potala) offered a dance.[942] Provisions were made for ordinary people entering the Potala as “the masses who seek audience” (*mjal dmangs*).[943] *Jelmang* also means an audience for ordinary people, which was given by Ngawang Tsültrim on certain occasions, such as during the Great Prayer Festival or while he was on the road.[944]

The biography depicts Ngawang Tsültrim as supporting the economic interests of peasants in concrete ways, although certainly not to the extent of removing their labor and tax obligations, or providing them new economic opportunities. According to Mipham's *Treatise*, in a section on compassion based partly on Śantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, “The king ought to think/'Who, in this land, except for me/can protect the most poor and powerless/those who suffer and have no refuge.” Since there is no one more

[940] Ibid., 2:95a.
[941] Ibid., 2:64a.
[942] Ibid., 2:29b.
[943] Blo bzang ‘phrin las, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*, 208a.
[944] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:77a, 86a.

powerful or wealthy than the king, no one else is in a better position to help those in in need.[945] Ngawang Tsültrim's decrees were intended to "protect all the peasants of the government, religious and private estates, from destitution."[946] In the taxation decrees Ngawang Tsültrim was obviously concerned that they would be overburdened by excessive or corrupt tax collections in the grain tax and *ulak*, or else by fraud. He also claimed to be protecting them, in the matter of devaluation of their savings in Nepalese coins.[947] However, it is unlikely that most *miser* would be especially tied to the cash economy or have large cash savings. Ngawang Tsültrim had other reasons for his currency policy than supporting the *miser*: This was a struggle between nations, and the finances of Ganden Palace and other large monastic institutions were at stake, not just the savings of ordinary people.

Ngawang Tsültrim's everyday advice to government officials encouraged a concern for the common people. A constant piece of advice he gave officials was to refrain from oppressing (*brdab gsigs*) the peasants. Usually he told this to traveling parties (like the one accompanying the Panchen Lama),[948] and also to the owners of estates[949] and district officials and tax collectors.[950]. The biographer takes pains to show that the regent himself did not harm the people while he was on the road; for instance, when he was returning from Beijing in 1790, he made sure that he did not stay too long at a given place, so as not to burden the peasants with the necessity of

[945] Cabezón and Mi pham 'jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, "The Just King: Mipham's Treatise on Ethics for Kings," 141–142.
[946] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:221b.
[947] Ibid., 2:225b.
[948] Ibid., 2:66a–66b. Literally *dabsik* can be defined as "beat, rob, or torture." "Brdab gsigs," *Tibetan Translation Tool* (Tibetan and Himalayan Library, n.d.).
[949] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:39a–39b.
[950] Ibid., 2:55b.

having to provide pack animals or food.[951] The *ulak* was often burdensome, and the typical requirements of official delegations could impose great costs on the peasantry. They had to be provided horses, food and lodging, and sometimes there would be a huge retinue, as with the Panchen Lama's journey to Beijing. One rationale for soliciting donations from the aristocracy for religious projects was that otherwise the expense or the appropriation of property would burden the peasants.[952] Even the *ambans* Puhuchan and Chinglingchan are described as burdening them with construction projects.[953] In all this, Ngawang Tsültrim intended that the peasants, within the confines of a traditional way of life, could maintain a decent standard of living rather than being squeezed excessively by exploitive activities such as extortion by landlords.

Ngawang Tsültrim was also concerned to a limited extent with trade and commerce, and therefore with the artisanal and merchant classes. These activities involved relatively few people, as they were mainly urban activities and only a small part of the Tibetan population lived in cities. Trade was economically important in promoting some domestic industries (woolen goods), and providing goods that could not otherwise be obtained (including imports of cotton and tea). But artisanal production did not make up a lot of Tibet's economy compared with agriculture and the monasteries, and the cash economy was quite limited compared with barter.[954] Traders and merchants were often foreigners (Nepalese or Kashmiri) and even if

[951] Ibid., 2:333a–333b.
[952] Ibid., 2:62a–62b. Of course, if the aristocrats did not donate it might increase the demands on Ganden Palace's treasury.
[953] Ibid., 2:314a.
[954] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 16–17, 178–179.

they were Tibetan, they were frequently from outlying regions such as Kham or belonging to low-caste groups.[955] Merchants, often travelers from outlying Tibetan regions, also made an appearance in the biography at several points, when they were received at audiences or gave donations.[956] Insofar as merchants were pilgrims and patrons, they were valued for their support of Buddhism, but they were also seen as exploitative. Ngawang Tsültrim's decrees on the Nepalese coinage portrayed the merchant class in an especially negative way. They were blamed for false dealings in the marketplace and crookedness, particularly in making false accusations against the currency and passing off counterfeit coins of various base metals.[957] The decree was against their economic interests, forcing them to accept currency that they considered comparatively worthless. Another group that Ngawang Tsültrim dealt with occasionally was the craftsmen and artisans (*bzo rigs pa*) who constructed Buddhist stupas, monasteries, and other sacred objects. They were much more highly valued than merchants, given their contributions to Buddhism, and they were frequently given praise and donations.[958] But again, this was a relatively marginal group, not one associated with a great deal of wealth, production, or influence.

Conclusion

What did it mean to be the *sikyong*, one who is the guardian (*kyong*) over politics (*si*), in a state whose ideology affirmed the inextricable unity of *chö* and *si*? One school of thought would see Ngawang Tsültrim's political activities as a

[955] Carrasco, *Land and Polity in Tibet*, 214.
[956] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:128b, 146a.
[957] Ibid., 2:226b.
[958] For instance, Ibid., 2:89b, 124b.

religious expression, a ritual means of recreating the Buddhist cosmos in Tibet, a manifestation of the pure land of Avalokiteśvara. In contrast, others would see Tibetan politics as similar to politics elsewhere (including modern states), as being primarily concerned with the material world, and matters of government institutions, control of persons, and the distribution of wealth.

Political theories of South and South Asian states often see their primary purpose in terms of religious ritual and a desire to affirm the cosmological order, rather than concrete matters of enforcing laws and promoting subjects' livelihoods. The relevance of these theories to Tibet may be questioned, because Tibet lies outside these regions and has distinct cultural forms, but Tibet did share influences with these states in its ideas of religious kingship. The reigns of the Dalai Lamas and often regents, and the institutions of Ganden Palace, were justified as the actions of bodhisattvas.

Clifford Geertz describes “theatre states,” in which “mass ritual was not a device to shore up the state, but rather the state…was a device for the enactment of mass ritual.”[959] These rituals are central to the state’s purpose. The state exists for the sake of the “exemplary center,” and through such ceremony the exemplary center is “paradigmatic, not merely reflective of social order” and reflective of the order of the gods.[960] Status distinctions and protocol at court are “not merely the drapery of political order, but its center,” and reflect the hierarchy of the universe.[961] The leaders who took charge of the exemplary center often had little actual control

[959] Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 18–19.
[960] Ibid., 13.
[961] Ibid., 32, 102.

over the concrete governance of their states, which tended toward fragmentation under “dozens of independent, semi-independent, and quarter-independent rulers”.[962] Geertz sees the exemplary center and the messy world of more concrete politics as two sides of the same coin. He would reject a distinction between “that part [of the state] devoted to treaties [and] that devoted to temples” seeing both as symbolic ideas made visible in the “dramas of the theatre state.”[963]

The galactic polity model of Stanley Tambiah, and related ideas of the maṇḍalic organization of South Asian states, also emphasize ritual and cosmological order. Tambiah’s “galactic polity” model, as found in *World Conqueror and World Renouncer* (a study of the Buddhist kingdoms of Southeast Asia), has been especially influential. In this model, a central government and surrounding vassal states or provinces resemble a maṇḍala, an idea that goes back to the Indian political theory of the *Arthaśāstra.*[964] “The center represents the totality and embodies the unity of the whole” and the capital and the king himself represent the kingdom as a whole. The palace is a representation of the sacred mountain Meru, representing centrality.[965] In terms of the king’s activities in the kingdom, he is supposed to be politically inactive to promote stability and regularity (the law in Thailand and Burma was ideally eternal, not to be permanently altered by decree), though this inactivity has an exception in waging warfare.[966] The ideal cosmos of the maṇḍala is nowhere manifested in perfect form, but characterized by dynamic

[962] Ibid., 18–19.
[963] Ibid., 136.
[964] Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, 102–113.
[965] Ibid., 114–115.
[966] Ibid., 118–119.

change and shifting potentialities. The king's rule relies on "tributary relationships" rather than a fully formed bureaucracy, and cannot meaningfully be described in terms of separate spheres of religion and politics.[967] Tambiah has a different emphasis from Geertz, focusing on the relation between center and periphery, rather than the ritual of the center, but the two theories are quite similar in describing an exemplary, idealized center and a fragmented, hierarchical periphery that is constantly in flux. The idea of the eternality of law (in other words, dharma) can be found in the Tibetan and Indian *nitiśāstra* tradition of ethical rule,[968] but not the idea that the king should remain inactive, as it prescribes all manner of active responsibilities, to promote morality and improve the lives of subjects.[969]

Another theory that is similar to Burton Stein (studying the Cholas of South India) describes a "pyramidally segmentary state," similar to Tambiah's galactic polity in which only the apex, that is the king, gives unity to the whole.[970] Legitimation is not created by the exercise of governmental power but through ritual and sacral means of incorporating subordinate rulers. Among the specific rituals that give the king such divine power is the *mahābhiṣekha* or consecration,[971] which is commonly used in Tibet (as in Ngawang Tsültrim's own enthronement). Ronald Davidson

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[967] Ibid., 123.
[968] In Mipham's *Treatise*, the law is believed to come down from the dharma kings of the past; the king is expected to enforce it and obey it himself, and is not allowed to change it on his own authority. Cabezón and Mi pham 'jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, "The Just King: Mipham's Treatise on Ethics for Kings," 38.
[969] Chapter Seven of Mipham's *Treatise* describes, for instance, the duties of kings to protect the environment, collect taxes in a just manner, and fight wars in a compassionate way. Ibid., 87–103.
[970] This is similar to Tambiah's galactic polity, but in addition to the hierarchy of vassals, there is horizontal rivalry between polities at the same hierarchical level. Burton Stein, *Peasant Society and State in Medieval South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), 264–265.
[971] Ibid., 275.

similarly describes the idea of the maṇḍala and the tantric *ābhiṣekhas* as giving a king power over his vassals.[972] In all of these theories, divine kingship is central, and the kingdom does not exist apart from the king and his use of religious ritual. The notion of divinization is problematic in Mahāyāṇa and Tantric Buddhism, however. Even if bodhisattvas were sometimes viewed as deity-like beings, they were not identical to gods in the cosmology (even an ordinary person can exhibit the bodhisattva qualities of showing compassion and striving on the path to Buddhahood). According to Davidson, who emphasizes the continuities of Buddhist and Śaiva tantra, consecration rites affirm the divinity of the king at the hands of the consecrating priest, although he acknowledges that Buddhist monks often saw real monarchs as falling short of divinity in their behavior.[973] According to Cabezón, however, Indian Buddhist texts do not really see the *cakravartin* as a god, and Mipham and his Indian sources see him as a human being who can gain or lose the support of the gods.[974]

It is not difficult to see parallels between Ganden Palace under Ngawang Tsültrim and Geertz's and Tambiah's ritual states, even if the theories are based on polities with stark differences from Tibet. The exemplary center of Lhasa was central to Tibetan identity. Lhasa physically represented the ideal realm of Avalokiteśvara's pure land (the Potala was symbolically a "terrestrial replica" of the bodhisattva's celestial mountain palace),[975] and was host to sacred embodiments of the Buddha

[972]The imagery of royalty is used in initiation rites for spiritual adepts who are not rulers, as well. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 131–144.
[973] Ibid., 130–131.
[974] Cabezón and Mi pham 'jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, "The Just King: Mipham's Treatise on Ethics for Kings," 34.
[975] Marpori, the "red hill" on which the palace was built, was also said be on the site of the palace of

(the two Jowo images, Tibet's holiest statues) and annual rituals that brought into the present the paradigmatic Buddhist past (the Great Prayer Festival). The ruler could be considered a bodhisattva king, whose position was confirmed by rituals like the *abhiṣeka.* Ngawang Tsültrim maintained Lhasa as such an exemplary center through his participation in Buddhist and state rituals and sponsorship of restoration projects, which linked him to historic paragons of the Buddhist dharma. He was especially concerned with hierarchy and protocol, and even his decrees that dealt with “secular” matters such as taxation portrayed him as a bodhisattva king. The biography's description of Ngawang Tsültrim's consecration ritual does show a “divinization” of sorts (or rather a Buddhaization): he was empowered by buddhas, and affirmed to be one himself. Ngawang Tsültrim was not a good example of a ruler who is ritually central but comparatively inactive in matters of administration (as in Geertz and Tambiah)—the Tibetan *nitiśāstra* tradition expects the king to perform a wide variety of duties. But that description does fit the Eighth Dalai Lama, and other Dalai Lamas, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven. The model of the maṇḍala only loosely describes Tibet, at least in the Ganden Palace era. Tibet was characterized by some political fragmentation with many states outside Lhasa's control, or only partially under its control, especially in the border regions. Mipham wrote his *Treatise* against the background of the late nineteenth century Nyakrong wars, which pitted two Kham kingdoms (Nyakrong and Dergé) against each other, and attracted intervention from Lhasa into a region that had previously been under its

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Songtsen Gampo, Tibet's original incarnation of Avalokiteśvara. Anne Chayet, “The Potala, Symbol of the Power of the Dalai Lamas,” in *Lhasa in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Françoise Pommaret, trans. Howard Solverson (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 42–44.

control.[976] The Lhasa government was itself in an ambiguous relationship of suzerainty to the Qing empire, a pattern of control which is somewhat like the hierarchical structures that Geertz and Tambiah describe. But I find the descriptions of *maṇḍalas* to be too idealized, as there is not a systematic chain of lord-vassal relationships from the Qing empire down to the local village level. The language of mandalas and vassals is not much used or even implied in the biographies, and Ganden Palace had become reasonably territorially stable and bureaucratically centralized compared with medieval Tibet.[977]

The biography's own political theory supports a cosmological interpretation of Tibetan polity, in terms of Buddhism and also Indian ideas of kingship. Its historical account of the world's rulers shows how Ngawang Tsültrim fit into the lineage of the over 100,000 kings that have been rulers the world (with varying enumerations from the Vinaya, Abhidharma, etc.). It begins by saying that the spread of the dharma is held to depend on the rule of a virtuous king. [978] Indian political theory would have influenced Tibet primarily through the *nitiśāstra* literature of ethical kingship, which is based on Indian texts like the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya (also known as Cāṇakya). This can be seen in the biography's quotes from Cāṇakya's *Rāja Nītiśāstra* (*Rgyal po'i*

[976] Mipham was also influenced by the internal disputes among the rulers of his native kingdom Dergé. Cabezón and Mi pham 'jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, "The Just King: Mipham's Treatise on Ethics for Kings," 42, 46.
[977] The administration of *dzong* (counties) was one aspect of Lhasa's rule that does not fit the *maṇḍala* model, since they were fully under the control of the central government. Also, it has been disputed that there were many autonomous political units in central Tibet only marginally under Lhasa's control. Goldstein sees the Lhasa government as centralized, with supposedly independent polities like Sakya being really under the Ganden Palace's control. Goldstein, "The Balance Between Centralization and Decentralization in the Traditional Tibetan Political System."
[978] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:1b–2b.

lugs kyi bstan bcos) on the qualities of the ideal king.[979] The *Arthaśāstra* is well known for its theory of the *maṇḍala* of allies and vassals,[980] but also says that the king is supposed to uphold the *dharma* (which for Kauṭilya means the three Vedas). This is because following the *dharma* not only leads to personal happiness, but "when *dharma* is transgressed, the resulting chaos leads to the extermination of this world."[981]

In the decrees, Ngawang Tsültrim's legislation was justified as a way of supporting the Buddhist *dharma,* which was the original justification of Ganden Palace. The introduction to his 1777 decree explained that Buddhism, the source of all happiness in the world, depended on the continued support of the *saṇgha* by the government, proper conduct within the monasteries, and the virtuous actions of the subjects:

> The Buddha's dharma—the holy source from which arises all happiness and benefit, prosperity and well-being in the world without exception—depends on it spreading and increasing by means of both teaching and practice, and it lasting for a long time; and the deeds of upholding, protecting, and spreading the dharma, depend on the vast deeds of the emperor, the patron and the priest [Dalai Lama]; and the unity, pure conduct, study and reflection, teaching and reflection, and so forth of the dharma-practicing order of the saṇgha depends on the monasteries abiding by their own law and ethical conduct; The laypeople also must abide by the Pure Human Moral Rules [the laws of Songtsen Gampo, which are the legal basis of Ganden Palace] adopting what is beneficial and discarding what is harmful, without being confused.[982]

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[979] The verses take the form of *subhāṣitas*, aphoristic pieces of wisdom that "are clever stanzas of worldly wisdom that set forth fundamental truths about life and offer practical moral advice." *Subhāṣita* verses make up a large share of the *nitiśāstra* literature, but they often offer general advice on life not specific to a ruler. Ibid., 2:221b. Cabezón and Mi pham 'jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, "The Just King: Mipham's Treatise on Ethics for Kings," 13–14.

[980] Kauṭalya, *The Arthashastra*, ed. L. N Rangarajan, trans. L. N. Rangarajan (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1992), 95.

[981] Ibid., 85.

[982] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:222a.

The 1780 decree likewise explained that all the religious and political traditions of Ganden Palace (including the reigns of the Dalai Lama and the original laws of Songtsen Gampo) were ultimately manifestations of Avalokitesvara's Buddha-field, which he established in Tibet to offer the inhabitants a means to enlightenment.[983] Ngawang Tsültrim's project of reforming the government, and in particular of ensuring the continued support of the dharma, was a way of extending the intentions of Avalokiteśvara (or in other words, that of the Dalai Lamas), and the benefits of his Buddha-field.

However, models that emphasize a ritual state do not fully explain Ngawang Tsültrim's rule as far as practical governance is concerned. It would be quite an exaggeration to say that the state was wholly devoted to court ritual and spectacle to the neglect of practical administration. Another related critique of theorists like Tambiah, Geertz, and others, is that their models are overly static with their presumption of a recurring, eternal ritual order. According to Maurice Bloch, in most societies, time may be conceived in either a cyclical or linear way, the cyclical being connected with ritual and eternality, and the linear being connected to more practical activities.[984] An idealized version of the social structure may be affirmed in the course of ritual, but the same society may recognize more informal relations in relevant contexts (e.g. an informal relation between patron and client). Tibetan historiography recognizes that events happen in linear time, even as they may fit into an overarching Buddhist cosmology. According to Bloch's theory the linear conception

[983] Ibid., 2:228a–228b.
[984] Maurice Bloch, "The Past and the Present in the Present," *Man*, New Series, 12, no. 2 (August 1, 1977): 285–286, doi:10.2307/2800799.

of time would correspond with practical expedients in government, such as the rise of the regent as a substitute "god-king." In the part of the biography that details the history of Tibet, Ngawang Tsültrim is compared to a number of exemplary rulers of the past, but the sometimes messy power struggles in the century prior to his reign are also acknowledged.[985] Peabody in *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India* similarly criticizes other theorists for depicting traditional polities as static, while his own understanding involves "conceptual ambiguities and tensions informing political relations" which are exhibited in "instances of non-recurring political innovation and transformation".[986] In the Rajput kingdom (Koṭa) that was the focus of his studies, a *divan* or prime minister ruled for over fifty years as the king was kept a prisoner in his palace, yet expressed great devotion and a desire to serve him.[987] This situation was quite similar to the dynamic between the regents and some Dalai Lamas in Tibet, and calls attention to the non-recurring changes that occurred as Ganden Palace developed, against enduring factors like the mythology of Avalokiteśvara.

Scholars who have looked at Tibetan government have often seen it in terms of bureaucracy. Franz Michael's *Government by Incarnation* controversially describes Tibet as a Weberian bureaucracy, in which the government had a monopoly of force, specialization of roles, and a rationalized rule of law rather than depending on the Dalai Lama's charismatic authority.[988] Max Weber actually describes bureaucracy as a modern development. Most premodern states (as he

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[985] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:6b–12b.
[986] Norbert Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 14, 168.
[987] Ibid., 112–113, 116.
[988] Franz Michael, *Rule By Incarnation: Tibetan Buddhism and Its Role in Society and State* (Boulder: Westview, 1982), 24–25.

would probably describe Tibet) lacked offices with clearly delineated responsibilities; the ruler delegated tasks to his chosen favorites, who did not have permanent specialized roles.[989] Michaels' interpretation is forcefully rebutted by Geoffrey Samuel who argues that there was no rationalized code of law applying equally to all territories under the control of the central government: instead, "Tibetans tended to approach government in terms of patronage and influence rather than impartial bureaucratic decision-making."[990] Samuel does see an analogy between his "clerical Buddhism" and Weber's "bureaucratic authority," although he criticizes Weber for naively believing in a social reality that can be described objectively, and ignoring the centrality of religious ideas in creating reality.[991] Thus, if Tibet was becoming increasingly dominated by clerical Geluk Buddhism in Ngawang Tsültrim's day, it was also becoming more bureaucratic. Aspects of both personal rule and bureaucratic rule can be seen in the regency of Ngawang Tsültrim. He attempted to make the tax administration more rational and bureaucratic, even though corruption stymied his efforts. At other times he relied more on personal connections with the emperor, high clerics, and aristocrats.

The Indian and Tibetan Buddhist models of rulership, which influenced the Ganden Palace polity, ultimately came down to practical action, though of course such action supports religion and is justified in religious terms. The *Arthaśāstra* while

[989] Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 196–197.
[990] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 123.
[991] "Shamanic Buddhism" then corresponds to Weber's charismatic authority, involving as it does charismatic tantric lamas and masters—this form of Buddhism is most predominant in regions of Tibet that are not under highly centralized government, and among the Kagyü and Nyingma sects.. Ibid., 361.

placing the king's rule in the context of *dharma* is much more focused on *artha* as the primary responsibility of the ruler. Thus it is concerned with the practical side of governance: taxes, laws, the bureaucracy, and warfare (if in an idealized fashion that was unlikely to be implemented in every particular by any given state).[992] This is even more true of the later *nitīśāstra* literature, more familiar in translation to eighteenth century Tibetans, which advocate *dharma* in the sense of ethical behavior, more so than in the sense of religious worship or doctrine.[993] They consisted of pithy aphorisms and often extended beyond advice for kings to general ethical advice.[994] The verses that the biographer quotes from Cāṇakya are a good example of such advice: a king should guard his realm, as a farmer would protect the bees that give honey and the cows that give milk.[995] When Ngawang Tsültrim justified his decrees in terms of spreading the dharma, he invoked an overarching cosmological frame in addition to specific actions in the world. Ngawang Tsültrim described his 1777 decree both as an act of Buddhist compassion in itself and also as a means of ensuring that the Tibetan political economy would continue to serve the monastic system. The dharma was to be upheld by providing concrete economic relief to the peasants, by encouraging monks and laypeople to act ethically and

[992] Kauṭalya, *The Arthashastra*.
[993] Cabezón and Mi pham 'jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, "The Just King: Mipham's Treatise on Ethics for Kings," 8–9.
[994] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:8–13. Cabezón and Mi pham 'jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, "The Just King: Mipham's Treatise on Ethics for Kings," 13–14.
[995] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:221b. Mipham's treatise is filled with such verses. For instance: fiscal prudence and patience are encouaged: "The ant hill, honey,/the waxing moon, the trained mind,/the wealth of the king, and the wealth of the beggar/all increase in small increments." Cabezón and Mi pham 'jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, "The Just King: Mipham's Treatise on Ethics for Kings," 120.

according to their proper roles,[996] as well as by making sure that revenue flowed properly from the estates to the tax collectors to the government.[997] It was not enough for Ganden Palace to represent Avalokiteśvara's Buddha field symbolically or ritualistically, and it was the Dalai Lama rather than the regent who provided this symbolism in any case. As a regent who was master of *si*, Ngawang Tsültrim was responsible for carrying out such worldly tasks as taxation, warfare, supporting the monasteries as institutions, and overseeing the government bureaucracy, and doing so ethically.

[996] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:221b.
[997] Ibid., 2:222a.

Chapter 6: Ngawang Tsültrim and the Qing

Introduction

In previous chapters we have considered Ngawang Tsültrim as a political and religious figure in Tibet, covering both sides of the *chösi sungdrel* over which he was master. Ngawang Tsültrim also served both religion and politics in Beijing, as imperial preceptor and *de facto* Tibetan ambassador. Considering these roles first requires an exploration of Qing policies, both religious and political, toward Tibet in Ngawang Tsültrim's day. Tibet was not a fully independent country during Ngawang Tsültrim's reign, by any means; there was a great deal of Qing influence in Tibet, which reached a peak shortly after his reign. We will consider how Ngawang Tsültrim established strong connections with the Beijing court of the Qianlong Emperor (1711-1799, r. 1735-1796) as preceptor (*ti shi*) from 1762 to 1777. Here he served the emperor religiously and promoted the Geluk school, while laying the groundwork to be appointed regent. As he established a priest-patron or *chöyön* relationship with the emperor, he also was the protégé of the lama Changkya Rinpoché, who had an even more critical *chöyön* relationship with Qianlong. Then we will consider his service as *thamka lama* from 1786 to 1790, as he returned to Beijing after his regency. Much as he did as regent, Ngawang Tsültrim served the emperor, and the Tibetan people, as “master of religion and politics” in the Qing court. While he performed religious duties with greater responsibility than previously, he maintained political influence in the midst of crises in Tibetan politics, particularly the 1788-1789 Gorkha war. He was not subservient, as Ngawang Tsültrim is portrayed as challenging the *ambans* and the emperor in order to preserve Tibetan autonomy in religion and politics. We will examine how the emperor saw him as the

antidote to an ineffective Dalai Lama and *kashak* and returned him to the regency, a personal triumph that prefigured the decline of the Dalai Lama lineage in the next hundred years.

Qianlong's policies and patronage of Tibetan Buddhism

The Qianlong Emperor 's stance toward Tibet, including his close relationship with Ngawang Tsültrim, grew out of his unprecedented personal devotion to and patronage of Tibetan Buddhism. In accordance with the ideal Buddhist pattern, the Qing emperor was depicted as a *cakravartin* who is also a bodhisattva, specifically Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of wisdom. This identification helped legitimate the rule of the emperors by showing how they combined spiritual and temporal authority into one. The Qing practice of depicting the emperor as Mañjuśī began at least as early as the reign of Kangxi emperor (1654-1720), who was so depicted in a 1667 Mongolian pilgrimage manual to Wutaishan; these pilgrimage manuals were one means by which this ideology was promoted to Mongolian and Tibetan Buddhists.[998] (However, the development of Wutaishan had promoted an association between the emperors and Mañjuśrī from a much earlier time, as will be discussed below). The Qianlong emperor sponsored many *tangka* scroll paintings, in a hybrid Sino-Tibetan style which depicted him iconographically as Mañjuśrī and as a universal ruler and promoter of Tibetan Buddhism.[999] From the Tibetan perspective, this made him the spiritual equal of their own most revered lamas, not just a powerful political ruler.

[998] Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 241–242. Evelyn Rawski, *The Last Emperors* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 261. Even at the beginning of the empire, the Fifth Dalai Lama referred to Abahai (1592-1643) as "Mañjuśrī Great Emperor" in reference to a prophecy that the emperor would help the Dalai Lamas unite Tibet. Patricia Ann Berger, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 55.

[999] Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 262. Some of these *tangkas* were present in the Potala, for instance.

Qianlong's personal practices and patronage also expressed the Qing Empire's deep ties to Tibetan Buddhism. Qianlong's mother (Xiaoshengxian) was a devotee of Green Tārā and frequently received sacred objects like Buddha images as gifts from her son the emperor. Qianlong himself was particularly devoted to Tibetan Buddhism in his personal practice, meditating daily in a specially constructed chapel in the Forbidden City. He received instruction in tantra as well as philosophy from imperial preceptors such as Changkya Rinpoché and Tibetan lamas.[1000] In tantric practice he was especially inclined toward Geluk deities like Cakrasaṃvara[1001] but also continued the Sakya tantric practice of Mahākāla, which had been a symbol of imperial political power and military might since the initiation of Kubilai Khan by the Sakya lama Pakpa in 1244.[1002] At least at first, Qianlong's connections to Tibetan Buddhism were not merely motivated by politics but by genuine devotion and a desire to use its power to his benefits.

Qianlong's devotion to Tibetan Buddhism extended to projects of patronage. Like his predecessors, he constructed a number of Tibetan monasteries in China proper and Mongolia.[1003] These included the Putuozongchengmiao in Chengde, Yonghegong in Beijing, and Zhongzhengdian and the emperor's private chapel Yuhuage in the Forbidden City itself.[1004] Many of these were copies of Tibetan sites; the Putuozongchengmiao, for instance, was a replica of the Potala in Lhasa.[1005]

[1000] Ibid., 258–259.
[1001] Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 25, 60; Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 240; Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 258.
[1002] Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 24–26. Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 240–241. Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 251–252.
[1003] Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 252–253.
[1004] Ibid., 252. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:301b, 306a.
[1005] Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 19.

Qianlong also constructed (or converted) Tibetan Buddhist monasteries at Wutaishan, the “five peaked mountain” to the northwest of Beijing that had been long been a Buddhist pilgrimage site dedicated to Mañjuśrī.[1006] He also sponsored publications Tibetan Buddhist texts such as the Kangyur and translations of them into Mongolian and Manchu, and images of the Chinese deity Guandi (a god of war) as the legendary Tibetan hero Gesar.[1007] There was evidence in this era of a Sino-Tibetan synthesis in art, and an increasing mutual influence made itself felt in other spheres as well.

Over the course of his reign, the Qianlong emperor formed a number of *chöyön* relationships with Tibetan Buddhist lamas who came to Beijing to teach and perform rituals. Some took up permanent residence in Beijing. The most important lama during Qianlong’s reign was the third Changkya incarnation, Changkya Rolpé Dorjé (1717-1786). He served as the Beijing Lama of the Seal (*tham ka bla ma*), the emperor’s lead preceptor, from 1737 until his death in 1786.[1008] He initiated the emperor in Mādhyamika philosophy and tantric practices, gave him political and military advice, and served as a kind of ambassador between the Qing Empire and Tibet.[1009] He is also credited with negotiating with the emperor to keep the Dalai Lama on the throne and otherwise maintain Tibetan autonomy after the revolt of 1751.[1010] Changkya's service to the emperor formed the precedent for Ngawang Tsültrim's own service in Beijing.

[1006] Ibid., 18–19, 34, 57, 161.
[1007] In this era, Guandi was often included in Tibetan altars as a dharma protector. Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 253–254. 259–261.
[1008] Ibid., 257. Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 133–149.
[1009] Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 8, 37–38, 178.
[1010] Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 140.

The Sixth Panchen Lama Losang Pelden Yeshé (1738-1780) was also a favorite of the emperor. He had an ambassadorial role similar to that of Changkya Rolpé Dorjé, expressed most strongly when he visited Chengde in 1780 and gave initiations and teachings to the emperor (before dying of smallpox).[1011] He was so influential with the emperor that Crossley describes him as "outranking the Dalai Lama." Although this is an exaggeration, since the Panchen Lama did not usurp the Dalai Lama's position as head of state, Losang Pelden Yeshé had more influence as an individual than the Eighth Dalai Lama.[1012] As described in Chapter Five, the Panchen Lama negotiated with the emperor to try to put the Dalai Lama back on the throne, although at other times he recommended Ngawang Tsültrim for religious appointments.

Other lamas with close connections to Changkya Rolpé Dorjé also served as teachers for the imperial court. Changkya's biographer Lobsang Chökyi Nyima (Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1737-1802), the third Tuken (Thu'u kwan) incarnation and one of the most prominent Geluk scholars in this period, was sent by the emperor to teach in Mongolia.[1013] Yeshé Gyeltsen (Ye shes rgyal mtshan, 1713-1793), the first Tsechokling (Tshe mchog gling) incarnation, was preceptor of the Eighth Dalai Lama and also served the Qianlong emperor as a teacher.[1014] Also the seventh Tatsak incarnation (prior to the one who served as regent) held the position of abbot of Ganden Chinchak Ling (Dga' ldan byin chags gling) in Beijing, where Ngawang

[1011] Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 261–262.
[1012] Ibid., 178.
[1013] Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 147–170. Samten Chhosphel, "The Third Tukwan, Lobzang Chokyi Nyima," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2010, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Lobzang-Chokyi-Nyima/3008.
[1014] Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 171–176.

Tsültrim would preach.[1015] All these lamas formed an interlocking network, serving as each other's biographers or teachers, demonstrating a robust connection of ties between the most influential lamas and the Qianlong emperor. They made it easier for the emperor to rule Tibet, but also used their relationship to promote the Geluk school of Buddhism, and brought the emperor in touch with a Tibetan perspective.

Qing-Tibetan relations

What was the relationship of the Qing empire and Tibet in Ngawang Tsültrim's era? The official position of the People's Republic of China is that Tibet was "an integral part of China" at this time. This is inaccurate, if somewhat more plausible than their claims that Tibet was under full Chinese sovereignty during the Ming dynasty.[1016] As discussed in Chapter One, Tibet was never incorporated into the legal order of China proper, much less into a Chinese nation-state (which the Qing Dynasty was not).[1017] But at the time of Ngawang Tsültrim's regency, Tibet was clearly subject to the Qing Empire as a vassal state, and Beijing's power had increased considerably over the course of the eighteenth century.[1018] The Thirteen Article Decree, issued in the wake of the 1750 anti-Qing revolts, defined the powers of the Qing emperor and their representatives in Tibet, the *ambans*.[1019] This document regulated the appointment and duties of Tibetan officials. It reaffirmed the emperor's power to appoint the *kashak*, ensuring the cabinet's loyalty to the

[1015] Sonam Dojre, "The Seventh Tatsak Jedrung, Lobzang Pelden Gyeltsen," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2014, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Seventh-Tatsak-Jedrung-Lobzang-Pelden-Gyeltsen/9693.
[1016] Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict*.
[1017] Ibid., 28–30.
[1018] Ibid., 27–31.
[1019] This document was issued by the governor-general of Sichuan and other officials, acting under the emperor's orders, after the 1750 revolt against the *ambans*. Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 146–159.

emperor, and established procedures for the *kashak* to meet and make decisions according to a proper chain of command.[1020] Lesser officials (district officials and Lhasa bureaucrats) were to be approved by the Dalai Lama and *ambans* jointly, and some bureaucratic positions were eliminated on the emperor's orders.[1021] Military affairs likewise had to be approved by the *ambans* and the Dalai Lama.[1022] While the Tibetan government remained intact and was not totally subservient to the Qing, the *ambans* and the emperor still had a great deal of influence in Tibetan affairs.

The emperor had control or influence over who held the highest positions in Tibet. As we have already seen, the emperor appointed the regent and made the decision whether to have a regent (as in the case of Demo and Ngawang Tsültrim himself). He also appointed the tutor to the Dalai Lama (as in the case of Ngawang Tsültrim).[1023] Although the Golden Urn procedure did not yet exist, the emperor had some control over the recognition of the Dalai Lama, choosing the search committee that found him. After the Seventh Dalai Lama died in 1757, Qianlong appointed Changkya Rinpoché to head the search for his successor, with the participation of Demo and the Panchen Lama, and he sent an official decree confirming the appointment of the Dalai Lama.[1024]

The *ambans* were the most tangible form that Qing authority took in Lhasa. *Amban* was a common traditional rank of the Manchu nobility rather than a position

[1020] Ibid., 149–150.
[1021] Making the Dalai Lama and *ambans* responsible had the effect of taking appointments out of the sole hands of the *kalöns*; their power to appoint lamas was also removed and given to the Dalai Lama. Ibid., 150–152.
[1022] Ibid., 152–153.
[1023] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:33a–33b.
[1024] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 160.

specific to the outlying regions of the Qing empire.[1025] Some of the officials in the palace in Beijing were also known as *ambans*.[1026] It was also the common title of the head Qing officials in the outlying regions, not just in Tibet but in places like Xining. The *ambans* in Tibet were initially mere observers, but came to function as representatives of the emperor in his absence. Many decrees, such as a 1728 decree on the powers of the Dalai Lama, were in the emperor's name but actually written by the *ambans*. In the decrees, the *ambans* speak imperiously toward the Dalai Lama ("you, lama") as if they were superiors, which would be more justified if they were considered to represent the emperor.[1027] By Ngawang Tsültrim's time, the *ambans* had gained more power so that they were equal with the Dalai Lama in having authority over the cabinet.[1028] Their role of representation can be seen in the ceremony (described in Chapter Four) in which the *ambans* handed over the seals of power to Ngawang Tsültrim.[1029] Communications with the emperor had to go through the *ambans*, which can be seen in the negotiations over Ngawang Tsültrim's appointment as the Dalai Lama's tutor.[1030] The regent consulted with the *ambans* on a number of other occasions, for instance about the Panchen Lama's journey to Tibet.[1031] Ngawang Tsültrim also interacted with *ambans* other than those in Lhasa—he had a dispute at one point with the Xining *amban* and dealt with *ambans* in the

[1025] Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 163.
[1026] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:311a.
[1027] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 149.
[1028] Kolmaš and Orientální ústav (Československá akademie věd), *The Ambans and Assistant Ambans of Tibet*, 6–9.
[1029] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:25a.
[1030] Ibid., 2:31a.
[1031] Ibid., 2:63a.

Qing court—but as will be seen these did not have authority over him.[1032] Ngawang Tsültrim could not do whatever he pleased, but was accountable to Qing officials who ensured that the imperial policy was followed.

Ti shi, preceptor of the emperor (1762-1777)

Within Ngawang Tsültrim's lifetime, he first felt the emperor's influence when his religious expertise was requested. In 1762, the Qianlong emperor sent a decree to Lhasa that a *ti shi* (a preceptor or tutor to the emperor) was to be sent from Tibet to Beijing. The requirements for the position were that he be “an expert in both sutra and tantra” and have “mastery over explanation, debate, and literary composition”; in other words, that he be an accomplished Geluk scholar who had mastered the curriculum.[1033] Due to his scholarly reputation, “all the monks of Sera, Drepung, and Ganden and the two Tantric colleges” are said to have put him forward as the best candidate.[1034] However, the actual appointment was decreed by the regent Demo Rinpoché and the Eighth Dalai Lama; presumably Demo made the decision, as the Dalai Lama was still a young child of five.[1035] This account of his selection seems overall to be plausible, in terms of who made the decision, although more deliberations may have taken place than in this idealized picture of consensus. One might ask why the emperor himself or the *ambans* did not select a candidate. The position was more significant in religious terms than in political terms and the Tibetan lamas may have been considered more competent to choose a religious

[1032] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 135.
[1033] Grags pa mkhas grub, “Trichen Namtar,” 5a.
[1034] Ibid.
[1035] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:5a.

specialist than the *ambans*.[1036] It is possible that the emperor was already considering him for the regency, but that would have required a great deal of foresight on the part of the emperor (he would not necessarily have decided at this point whether to allow the Dalai Lama to rule as an adult). Still, the act of sending such a preceptor shows deference to the Qing on the part of the regent and the Tibetan government.

On the fifth day of the ninth month, Ngawang Tsültrim departed for Beijing. The lamas who sent him off, including the Demo and the Panchen Lama, expected him to return safely to Tibet and become Ganden Tripa.[1037] This first position of service in the Qing court would continue for fourteen years, until his appointment as regent in 1777. When he reached China in early 1763, the emperor assigned him to preach on the Golden Throne at Ganden Chinchak Ling (located in Beijing) and in particular to "spread...the precious teaching of the second Buddha [Tsongkhapa]" by teaching *Tsongkhapa's Great Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*.[1038] He spent much of the next fourteen years in this role.[1039] He did not just stay at Beijing but went to Mongolia every summer and made a tour of monasteries.[1040] He presided over monastic ordinations and the three Vinaya rituals, in addition to doing reading transmissions of various tantras, New Year's prayers, and consecrations of

[1036] As discussed below, Ngawang Tsültrim would later argue that the ambans were incompetent to handle religious affairs.
[1037] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 5b.
[1038] Ganden Chinchak Ling is another name for Yonghegong, a palace which had been converted into a monastery for Mongolian monks in 1744 by Qianlong. The Golden Throne is a clear allusion to the original Throne of Ganden. Ibid. Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 34.
[1039] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 6a.
[1040] Ibid.

images.[1041] His preaching focused on tantric transmissions like Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, and Vajrabhairava (the most revered tantras in the Geluk tradition) and other texts such as the Hundred Practices of Narthang.[1042] He also performed rituals for the welfare of the empire, for instance to make rain.[1043] Rituals for the Qing armies included protective spells for weapons, the "Tārā battle thread-cross ceremony", and tantric rituals to turn back the enemy armies in Gyalrong and Burma.[1044] The war with Burma was fought from 1766 to 1770 and ended in Qing defeat, and "Gyalrong" refers to the Jinchuan campaign of 1772, which resulted in victory over the Bönpo kingdoms of Kham near Sichuan. Changkya Rolpé Dorjé was also involved in performing tantric rituals for the success of these campaign.[1045] Ngawang Tsültrim, like many other lamas, used his position in the Qing court to promote Geluk orthodoxy, while offering his tantric mastery in the service of the empire.The *ti shi* position provided valuable experience for his future religious and political positions. He gained diplomatic experience, establishing valuable ties with the emperor and becoming involved in his foreign policy. He also gained further experience in preaching, overseeing monastic discipline, and performing tantric rituals.

The biographies depict Ngawang Tsültrim as forming a close relationship with the emperor during his time in Beijing, which continued during his regency. Although this closeness may be exaggerated in order to boost Ngawang Tsültrim's stature, we

[1041] Ibid., 6b.
[1042] Ibid., 6a.
[1043] Rainmaking rituals were also done for Mongolia. Ibid., 6b.
[1044] Ibid.
[1045] Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 156–157.

have already seen how it led to his appointment as regent. At the time of Ngawang Tsültrim's entry into Beijing in 1762, "[he and the emperor] immediately became like close friends" and the emperor gave him a title "great crown ornament of the Buddha's teachings [*Tendro Tsukgen Chenpo*]."[1046] As Ngawang Tsültrim prepared to return to Lhasa in 1777, the emperor is described as sad to see him leave, such that "the patron and priest cannot bear to be apart."[1047] He promised the emperor that he would return to Beijing within three years, although his various duties in Lhasa prevented this from happening.[1048] Official letters (with gifts) are received throughout his reign with praise for his political work and devotion to Buddhism, saying things like "I have a very great desire to see my *nominhan*," and expressing a desire for him to return to Beijing after he completed his duties.[1049] One might think of these as routine pleasantries, but it certainly seems that Ngawang Tsültrim, in his time at court, had won the trust of the emperor sufficiently to be subsequently appointed as regent and *thamka lama*. Perhaps this is because he was the emperor's personal favorite, or perhaps this is because he was seen as encultured in the ways of the Qing court, and better positioned to serve the emperor's interests in Tibet.

Changkya Rinpoché

While in Beijing, Ngawang Tsültrim also formed a close relationship with Changkya Rolpé Dorjé, which was similarly influential in his selection as regent and later service to the emperor as *thamka lama*. The Changkya incarnation lineage,

[1046] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 5b–6a.
[1047] Ibid., 7b.
[1048] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:34a. The emperor's letter appointing him to be *yongdzin* notes that because of this appointment he would not be able to come to Beijing within his desired timeframe. Ibid., 2:30b–31a, 266b.
[1049] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:133a.

which began in the seventeenth century and continued into the twentieth, had long been key to the Qing empire's relations with Tibetan Buddhism.[1050] The first recognized Changkya lama was Ngawang Lobsang Chöden (Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, 1642-1714), who acted as a diplomatic emissary between Tibet and China during late-seventeenth century Tibetan wars, was invited to Beijing by the Kangxi emperor in 1693, and continued to serve as his emissary in dealing with Desi Sangyé Gyatso. He was given the abbacy of Dolonnor Monastery in Inner Mongolia and split his time between there and Beijing. As a religious leader for the Mongolians, he served as a "counterweight" to the Jetsundampa incarnation, which the emperor considered too independent.[1051] The lineage would continue to be a link between the Tibetan Buddhism establishment and the Beijing government even up to the time of the Nationalist Chinese.[1052] As discussed in Chapter Five, this connection between the emperor and the Changkya lineage has been viewed by scholars either as a Qing scheme to gain domination over Tibet or as a Geluk

[1050] Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 256–257. Gray Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 20.

[1051] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 114–115. "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan (P209)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P209. Sometimes Drakpa Öser (late 16th cent.-1641) is considered to be the first Changkya incarnation. He had little significance other than Ngawang Losang Chöden being recognized as his incarnation and being abbot of Gönlung monastery in Amdo. The final incarnation (Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan pa'i sgron me, 1892-1957) performed rituals for military protection as late as the Second World War. He sided with the Nationalists in the Chinese Civil War and relocated to Taiwan in 1949; the Communist takeover of Tibet severed this incarnation's connections with both Beijing and Lhasa. The Taiwan government saw little use for the Changkya incarnation, and did not recognize another. The Dalai Lama recognized a Changkya incarnation in 1998, removing the lineage from Chinese affairs. Sonam Dojre, "The First Changkya, Drakpa Ozer," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2013, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/First-Changkya-Drakpa-Ozer/2441. Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*, 296–297 n131.

[1052] Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*, 75–77, 215–219.

project (Changkya being a product of Amdo's monastic establishment) to spread the faith and gain the emperor's submission to it.[1053]

At the time of Ngawang Tsültrim's posting as *ti shi*, Changkya Rolpé Dorjé had held the post, since 1736, of *thamka lama* (*tham ka bla ma*) or Lama of the Seal.[1054] As the head Tibetan lama in the Qing court, Changkya had a close relationship with the other Tibetan lamas in Beijing. In addition to initiating the emperor in a number of tantric practices, Changkya was a renowned scholar who took charge of the translation of the Kangyur into Mongolian and wrote works on topics such as Madhyamaka and Buddhist iconography.[1055] Changkya was also key to Beijing-Lhasa relations throughout the eighteenth century; the emperor sent him to Lhasa on several occasions, and after the death of the Eighth Dalai Lama Changkya recommended that the regent Demo be given full religious and political power.[1056] Changkya Rinpoché's reign persisted through many Tibetan upheavals, encompassing the reigns of Polhané and Demo Rinpoché, as well as the riot against the *ambans* in 1751. Many Western scholars, including Gene Smith and Patricia Berger, have portrayed him as an "imperial stooge" or "willing agent" of Qing power over Tibet, a judgment they could equally apply to Ngawang Tsültrim.[1057] However, other authors including Jeffrey Hopkins and Marina Illich see Changkya as promoting his own agenda of spreading the Geluk religion and co-opting the

[1053] Tsyrempilov, "Dge Lugs Pa Divided," 59–62.
[1054] Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 138.
[1055] Ibid., 133–146; Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 88.
[1056] Dominique Townsend, "The Third Changkya, Rolpai Dorje," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2010, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Chankya-Rolpai-Dorje/3141.
[1057] Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 133–134. Illich, "Imperial Stooge?," 17.

Manchus for this purpose.[1058] Ngawang Tsültrim is portrayed in a similar way in his own biography.

Ngawang Tsültrim was a protégé of Changkya Rolpé Dorjé, who was his lama. He received teachings from Changkya Rinpoché in a lama-disciple relationship.[1059] As Ngawang Tsültrim left Beijing for Tibet, he received Changkya's gifts and advice to govern Tibet well, and a recommendation to eventually take Changkya's place as *thamka lama* (the head Tibetan lama in Beijing).[1060] The Ganden Tripas' biography says that, at this point, Changkya instructed him in the *Blue Annals*, the great history of the spread of the dharma in Tibet.[1061] Ngawang Tsültrim was expected by his lama to continue the work of the great Tibetan Buddhist masters, providing a narrative that put his rule in the context of the Tibetan national story, even at a time of Qing dominance. As discussed earlier, Changkya was heavily involved in the decision to appoint Ngawang Tsültrim as regent.

Service to the Qing as regent

From the very beginning of his regency, Ngawang Tsültrim continued to perform important rituals for the emperor. Qianlong's mother Xiaoshengxiang (Hung tha'i hu'i, 1693-1777), a devotee of Tibetan Buddhism, had died earlier in the year. Ngawang Tsültrim's appointment as regent raised a question for the emperor: who would perform the queen mother's memorial service? Originally, *jasak* Tsendrok Khenpo (another Tibetan lama with a connection to the court) had been tasked with

[1058] Illich, "Imperial Stooge?," 17–18.
[1059] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 7a. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:12b–13a, 296b.
[1060] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:15a–15b.
[1061] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 22b–23a.

performing the ceremony, but when Ngawang Tsültrim was appointed, he was also put in charge of this ceremony and Tsendrok was sent back to Beijing.[1062] The biographer clearly considers the funeral services important because it is mentioned repeatedly as he prepared to depart for Lhasa. His party carried a letter with two orders, the first of which affirmed his authority as regent, and the second of which ordered him to perform the funeral rituals.[1063] Ngawang Tsültrim began making offerings for the queen mother almost immediately upon entering Lhasa.[1064] He performed the main ritual after his enthronement, taking opportunity to show off his new authority by giving gifts "as the newly enthroned one".[1065] These rituals show that the regent and other Tibetans were intimately connected with the imperial family through religious ritual, even in Lhasa.

Ngawang Tsültrim continued from time to time to do other rituals for the emperor in Lhasa. The emperor's seventieth birthday in 1781, was a major ritual occasion celebrated in Lhasa, referred to as the *Bayer Chenmo* (Sba yer chen mo).[1066] The Tibetan government sent the Panchen Lama to Beijing, and also arranged long life ceremonies to the emperor.[1067] There was a prayer ceremony for this birthday during the summer preaching session at Ganden, and the emperor

[1062] *Jasak* was a title often given to abbots of large monasteries, who were incorporated into Qing administration of religion. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:13a–14a. Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 171–172.
[1063] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:13a–14a.
[1064] Ibid., 2:17b–18a.
[1065] Ibid., 2:25b.
[1066] The emperor's eightieth birthday, as celebrated in Beijing, is another occasion described as a *bayer*. My Tibetan colleagues were skeptical that *bayer* meant birthday, however. There is also a Bayer *kenpo* at a number of monasteries, so the term may have other meanings. Ibid., 2:124a. Ibid., 2:329a.
[1067] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:62a.

acknowleged Ngawang Tsültrim's efforts in his annual message.[1068] Long life ceremonies for the emperor's birthday were performed at other times as well, much as is done for the Dalai Lama.[1069] The regent's performance of state ritual, though mainly focused on Tibet and the Dalai Lama, also incorporated a concern for the welfare of the emperor.

Ngawang Tsültrim remained in contact with Beijing throughout his regency, by means of the *dreltsé* or the official imperial letter. *Dreltsés* were sent by Tibetan and Qing officials in Lhasa to the imperial court in Beijing and in return sent by the imperial court to Tibet. Occasions when *dreltsés* were exchanged with Tibet include the emperor's appointment of Ngawang Tsültrim as regent,[1070] negotiations over his appointment as tutor to the Dalai Lama,[1071] exchanges of gifts on the occasion of the emperor's seventieth birthday (and other occasions),[1072] disputes involving the *ambans* (as described below),[1073] and the recall of Ngawang Tsültrim to be *thamka lama*.[1074] According to Schwieger, Tibetan officials were not allowed to communicate directly with the emperor. A 1778 *dreltsé*, requesting that Kelsang Namgyel be appointed monk *kalön*, was drafted by Ngawang Tsültrim and the other *kalöns*, but could only be delivered to the emperor via the *ambans*.[1075] The biographer

[1068] The birthday is mentioned in the letter from the emperor (perhaps in gratitude for Ngawang Tsültrim's service) so this is an interesting reversal of the typical Western custom of giving birthday gifts. Ibid., 2:94a.
[1069] Exile Tibetans in Dharamsala express devotion to the Dalai Lama in the same way, there were long life ceremonies for the Dalai Lama's birthday while I was doing research for this project. Ibid., 2:188a–188b.
[1070] Ibid., 2:14a.
[1071] Ibid., 2:31a.
[1072] Ibid., 2:94b.
[1073] Ibid., 2:116b–118a.
[1074] Ibid., 2:251b.
[1075] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 161–162.

contradicts this, claiming that Ngawang Tsültrim sent personal (*sku sger*) letters to the emperor negotiating his appointment as *yongdzin* (however, this had been considered personal business), and again in the matter of the Xining *ambans*.[1076] In the later incident, Ngawang Tsültrim indicated that the emperor had given him special permission to send personal letters to the emperor.[1077] From the other side, when Ngawang Tsültrim was in Beijing as *thamka lama*, *dreltsés* were received from investigators sent by the emperor to look into the Tibetan administration during the Gorkha war.[1078] The *dreltsé* appointing him regent was apparently carried by his traveling party, but at other times they must have been carried by relays of messengers.[1079] Despite the long distances between Beijing and Lhasa and the slowness of travel in premodern times, Ngawang Tsültrim and the emperor maintained clear lines of communication, and Ngawang Tsültrim apparently had special privileges to communicate more directly with him.

The emperor and Ngawang Tsültrim frequently exchanged gifts. Ngawang Tsültrim received gifts when he departed from Beijing to be regent,[1080] and again when he arrived in the emperor's court as *thamka lama*.[1081] The gifts also arrived with a *dreltsé* that the emperor sent on an almost annual basis,[1082] typically containing his message of gratitude: “my *nominhan* does the best service for the kingdom of U and

[1076] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:31a, 117a.
[1077] Ibid., 2:117a.
[1078] Ibid., 2:310b, 313b. Ibid., 2:308a–308b.
[1079] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:14a.
[1080] Ibid., 2:13b.
[1081] Ibid., 2:255a–255b.
[1082] For example, such gifts arrived in 1778 (Ibid., 2:56a.), 1781 (Ibid., 2:122a.), and 1782 (Ibid., 2:132b–133a.).

Tsang and the Dalai Lama, and benefits the common people."[1083] As an example of the gifts that might be given, the *dreltsé* that the emperor sent at the time of the Xining *amban* incident contained bolts of cloth, rolls of silk, and khatas (silk scarves), the traditional gifts of respect and greeting.[1084] Valuable products of China made up a large proportion of all these gifts, including porcelain and glass vases, bowls, and so forth; jewels and furs as well as brocades and cloth came from Mongolia and various parts of the empire.[1085] But some of the emperor's gifts are religious in nature, including *tangkas* of the seven heroic Buddhas, with dedications in four languages (Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan);[1086] a conch shell inscribed with the same seven buddhas; and a plaque with a blessing written in Tibetan: "may virtuous prayers spread everywhere."[1087] At one point there is a "foreign" or European watch (perhaps from England, a rising trading and colonial power in India), so these gift exchanges implicate a wide range of foreign trade beyond just China and Tibet.[1088] Sometimes Tibet is described by scholars as being in a tributary relationship to Beijing, so it is interesting that so many gifts come the other way, from the Qing emperor.[1089] Gifts from the emperor show the emperor's generosity and recognition of those who are loyal to him. With the emperor being the ultimate source of wealth and power, Ngawang Tsültrim's reception of gifts from him greatly raises his status (or so the biographer may want us to believe).

[1083] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:122a.
[1084] Ibid., 2:117b.
[1085] Ibid., 2:133a.
[1086] Ibid., 2:56a.
[1087] Ibid., 2:94a–94b.
[1088] Ibid., 2:94a.
[1089] Ibid., 2:290a–291a.

The Tibetans did give gifts, as one would expect given the regent's deference and submission to the emperor at this time, and usually these involved Buddhism. Of course, they performed ceremonies for the emperor and his family and sent lamas to Beijing, but Tibetans gave material gifts as well. Long life prayers and rolls of silk brocade were frequently what the Tibetans gave in return for the gifts of the emperor.[1090] When the regent came to Beijing he offered a number of gifts, in several rounds as he approached the inner sanctum of the palace. These were largely ritual objects of Tibetan Buddhism: bronze images (as of long life deiites like Amitāyus, and White Tārā), tridents, vajras, a *kapāla* skull bowl (with elaborate jewel inlay), and *tangkas*.[1091] This gifts reaffirmed that Buddhism was what made Tibet most valuable in the eyes of the Qing.

A number of prophecies foreshadowed Ngawang Tsültrim's continued ties with China during his regency. While going on pilgrimage during the first year of his reign, he went to Lake Muliting, better known as Lhamo Latso (Lha mo bla mtsho), a "prophetic lake" used in finding incarnations of the Dalai Lama. It is the home to a Naga queen, a protector of the desire realm who is also identified as Pelden Lhamo, the protector of Tibet.[1092] After making a torma offering and prayers for Tibet, Ngawang Tsültrim looked into the lake for a prophecy. He saw "the great realm of China" and nine monastery gates, a sign that he would see the emperor again and take Changkya's place as *thamka lama*.[1093] Near the end of his regency, when he preparing to return to Beijing (in 1786), another prophecy marked this transition.

[1090] Ibid., 2:95a.
[1091] Ibid., 2:285a–285b, 286b.
[1092] Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet*, 255–259, 303.
[1093] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:47b–48a.

Pelden Lhamo's statue in the Jokhang turned around and faced east, indicating that he was to go to China. Then, the Dalai Lama made some prayers and the statue returned to its former position, indicating that Ngawang Tsültrim was to return to Tibet as promised.[1094] When the local protector deities of Tibet are shown to approve of Ngawang Tsültrim's connection with the Qing, the biographer is in a sense arguing that loyalty to the emperor is not in conflict with loyalty to Tibet or the dharma. Despite Ngawang Tsültrim's enduring links to the Qing, they did not remove his deep connections with Tibet.

Challenging the Xining amban

Ngawang Tsültrim was not always subservient to the Qing officialdom. On one occasion he stood up to the *amban* of Xining (named Noktashin), drawing on his personal ties to the emperor to defend Tibetan interests. After a war between Mongol clans and the Qing in 1724, Amdo had come under Qing rule and an *amban* had been posted there.[1095] A party travelled from Beijing to Tibet to return the Panchen Lama's remains after his 1780 death in China from smallpox.[1096] When the party reached Xining, near the border of Tibet with Amdo, Noktashin wouldn't give them the provisions they were supposed to receive—pack animals and fodder—demanding that they be supplied by the Tibetans.[1097] This was seen by Ngawang Tsültrim as a corrupt act, and he had the Lhasa *ambans* relay the message (*dreltsé*) that the Tibetans would not provide Noktashin with what he wanted. The Lhasa *ambans* refused on the grounds that complaining to the emperor about another

[1094] Ibid., 2:254b–255a, 261b.
[1095] Ibid., 2:135.
[1096] Ibid., 2:116b–117a.
[1097] Ibid.

amban was insubordination, as they represented the emperor and “the emperor's order is for one time only.” He insisted that communicating with the emperor was necessary in order to defend the emperor's own policy, and that since the emperor had authorized Ngawang Tsültrim to send him private letters, he could bypass the *ambans* and avoid implicating them in any insubordination.[1098] Ultimately the emperor sided with the regent, concluding that Noktashin had acted corruptly, and had the *amban* imprisoned. Both the emperor and the Lhasa *ambans* praised Ngawang Tsültrim for encouraging honest government. [1099] The close ties between the emperor and the regent allowed him to challenge the authority of *ambans* in the emperor's name. The Qing strategy of inviting Tibetan lamas to the court to acculturate them to Qing values and norms also put these lamas in direct contact with the emperor and therefore undermined Qing power through the ambans. Following this incident, Ngawang Tsültrim asked the emperor to pardon the Xining *amban*, at the request of the Lhasa *ambans*. According to the biographer, this request for mercy demonstrates Ngawang Tsültrim's greatness as a being, since the amban was justly subject to punishment.[1100] The biographies do not say, however, whether the emperor granted his request.

***Thamka Lama*: Lama of the Seal (1786-1790)**

In 1786, Changkya Rolpé Dorjé died in the mountains of Wutaishan, where he had gone on retreat. The emperor sent a *dreltsé* saying that Ngawang Tsültrim was to come to Tibet to replace him as *thamka lama*. Changkya Rinpoché himself,

[1098] Ibid., 2:117a.
[1099] Ibid., 2:117b.
[1100] Ibid., 2:117a–117b.

knowing that he was old and soon to die, had requested Ngawang Tsültrim as successor.[1101] Ngawang Tsültrim's visions in the prophetic lake of Lhatso, along with signs that he would return to China, included visions in which Changkya Rinpoché had appeared, and other signs had shown that he was going to China. More recently, he had made certain statements predicting Changkya's death and that he would be his replacement.[1102] Derek Maher suggests that at this point the emperor wanted to remove a strong and independent personality from the scene in order to rule Tibet without constraints.[1103] However, the immediate result of the emperor's decision to recall Ngawang Tsültrim was to place the Dalai Lama and the *kashak* in charge of Tibetan government, with undesireable results from the Qing perspective.

As *thamka lama,* Ngawang Tsültrim was the highest ranking Tibetan lama in the Qing court and the emperor's personal tutor. His entrance into Beijing, as depicted by the biographer, showed that he was highly respected, and even that the *chöyön* relationship he had formed with the emperor was one of near equality. As he approached Beijing and entered the city, princes, officials and ordinary people came out to pay their respects and bow down before him, and he was given an escort into the city.[1104] He first went to the Mahākāla monastery just inside the wall and was received by Pa *Amban*, a palace official.[1105] Here he was given the emperor's instructions. The emperor inquired about his journey and his handing over the seals of office to the Dalai Lama. Then he described the rights and privileges Ngawang

[1101] Ibid., 2:251a–252a.
[1102] Of course Changkya had earlier told Ngawang Tsültrim that he would probably be his replacement. Ibid., 2:251b. Ibid., 2:14b.
[1103] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:483–484.
[1104] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:281a–282a.
[1105] Ibid., 2:284b.

Tsültrim would be given: a seat of honor would be arranged for him in imperial festivals; he would be allowed to bring horses into an inner part of the palace (though presumably not the emperor's part); and he would have the assistance of the emperor's minister Alihata.[1106] On the tenth day of the first month, Ngawang Tsültrim went into the temple Zhongzhengdian inside the Forbidden City and met with the lamas of the palace, laid out the gifts he was offering, and awaited the emperor. When the emperor arrived, Ngawang Tsültrim knelt down and paid obeisance, but the emperor told him "there is no need for you to kneel."[1107] After he accepted the gifts, the other lamas left and then the two had a private conversation.[1108] At an audience shortly thereafter at Yonghegong monastery, the emperor again told Ngawang Tsültrim not to kneel.[1109] Throughout these ceremonies, Ngawang Tsültrim obeyed and paid deference to the emperor in matters of protocol,[1110] but the emperor also recognized him as someone who could speak to him on equal terms, and granted him special privileges in the palace. Tibetan biographies often depict the great and unequalled privileges enjoyed by Tibetan lamas in the Qing court as a kind of propaganda that raised the status of Tibet and Geluk Buddhism vis-à-vis non-Tibetans and other Buddhist schools, and showed that they were not in a state of abject submission to the emperor.[1111]

[1106] Ibid., 2:284a.
[1107] Ibid., 2:285b.
[1108] Ibid., 2:285b–286a.
[1109] Ibid., 2:287a–287b.
[1110] Ngawang Tsültrim's reception can be contrasted with the dispute over protocol when the Fifth Dalai Lama visited Shunzhi, he initially did not agree to enter Beijing but tried to convince the emperor to meet him at some distance outside the city. Even when he met the emperor in Beijing, he was much less deferential than later Tibetan vistors. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:353–357. Rockhill, "The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa," 14–16.
[1111] Illich, "Imperial Stooge?," 27–28.

What were Ngawang Tsültrim's religious duties as *thamka lama*? He was instructed to perform all the duties performed by Changkya Rinpoché, “at the proper times, long life ceremonies, pilgrimages, and audiences with the king [the emperor]”[1112] Much like the teachings he gave before going to the capital, he focused on the teachings emphasized by the Geluk school, both sutra and tantra. At Yonghegong, he taught the *Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* of Tsongkhapa, the paradigmatic Geluk text that expounds all aspects of its doctrine.[1113] He was assigned to teach in the Tibetan school (for Mongolian and Manchu monks) in the summer and work on translation projects, while the emperor went off to his summer palace in Inner Mongolia.[1114] Visitors to the capital (especially Mongolians) would come and request dharma teachings.[1115] But he did not go to Mongolia and preach at monasteries as he had done as *ti shi,* but remained at Yonghegong. He directly preached from the sutras from time to time—with another lama, Ta Lama, translating the scriptures into Manchu—and offering commentaries in response to monks' questions.[1116] He also taught the full range of tantras according to the Geluk tradition: elaborate empowerments of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrabhairava, following the quintessential instructions of Tsongkhapa,[1117] as well as Kālacakra and Vajrāvalī.[1118] As with the first time in Beijing, he promoted Geluk Buddhism in the Qing capital and played a role much like that of Ganden Tripa, carrying on the legacy of Tsongkhapa.

[1112] Grags pa mkhas grub, “Trichen Namtar,” 35a.
[1113] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:304a–304b.
[1114] Ibid., 2:296b.
[1115] Ibid., 2:319b–320a.
[1116] Ibid., 2:306a.
[1117] Ibid., 2:302a, 309b.
[1118] Ibid., 2:305a.

He taught on the *lamrim* texts of Tsongkhapa to the emperor in winter sessions in a private room called Trilkhang (they were seated on the same level, as the biographer takes care to point out).[1119] For the service, Ngawang Tsültrim received the title *samati pakshi* in recognition of his superior religious learning, and this was his title while in China, rather than *sikyong*.[1120] The emperor would surely have had a say over what he was taught, but he also had to obey his lama who would direct him in a traditionally Geluk direction. He also received ritual instructions, "explanations of the maṇḍala," on occasions such as the New Year.[1121] Although Changkya Rinpoché had taught to Qianlong some advanced teachings in philosophy and the Kālacakra and Cakrasaṃvara tantras,[1122] teachings like these appear to be absent in the longer biography. The emperor did receive teachings on *pramāṇa* ("valid cognition" or epistemology), according to the Ganden Tripas' biography.[1123] But for the most part, Ngawang Tsültrim spent his time teaching the monks and lamas who lived at or visited the court, rather than the emperor. Perhaps he was not really as close to the emperor as Changkya; it is also possible that the emperor's personal interest in Buddhism diminished because of the Nepalesecrisis. These political troubles led Qianlong to publicly disavow any non-political interest in Tibetan Buddhism a few years later in 1792.[1124]

In addition to teaching, Ngawang Tsültrim's religious service in Beijing included tantric rituals intended to benefit the empire. As he had done as regent of

[1119] Ibid., 2:291a–291b.
[1120] Ibid., 2:292a.
[1121] Ibid., 2:303b.
[1122] Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 140–142.
[1123] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 25b.
[1124] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:35–36.

Tibet, he performed numerous long life ceremonies for the emperor, almost from the moment he arrived in Beijing.[1125] As he did as *ti shi,* he also performed rituals in order to make rain.[1126] But most importantly, he performed rituals that produced great successes in battle for the Qing. In 1786, the Heaven and Earth Society (a mainland organization composed of Han Chinese who wanted reinstate the Ming dynasty, and led by Lin Shuangwen) organized a rebellion in Taiwan, which was at first successful at taking over large parts of the island. The emperor requested Ngawang Tsültrim to be the leader of tantric ceremonies, with wrathful rites aimed at the ringleaders whose names were written on effigies.[1127] The general Fukangan planned to launch a marine invasion of the Qing forces, but he was having difficulty because the winds were barring the fleet from leaving the coast. Ngawang Tsültrim therefore performed more wrathful rituals similar to the above, in which he destroyed an effigy torma (perhaps representing the rebels, or the obstructing spirits responsible for the unfavorable winds), and called on the dharma protectors to turn the winds. Because of these rituals the winds were said to be favorable to the Qing armies, allowing them to land safely and emerge victorious.[1128] This ritual of averting war or turning back armies (*dmag zlog*) was also used in the Nepalese war on behalf of both Tibetan and Qing armies after the initial Gorkha attack in 1788.[1129] Ngawang Tsültrim's tantric prowess was drawn upon to fulfill the emperor's military goals, one of the clearest expressions of his loyalty to the Qing.

[1125] Ibid., 2:286b.
[1126] Ibid., 2:322b.
[1127] Ibid., 2:301a.
[1128] Ibid., 2:301a–301b.
[1129] Ibid., 2:306b.

During his sojourn, Ngawang Tsültrim intended to make a pilgrimage to Wutaishan, the “five-peaked mountain” that was one of China's premiere Buddhist pilgrimage sites and the location of Changkya Rinpoché's *labrang*.[1130] This region had been a Buddhist site from ancient times, and was believed to be the Buddha-field of Mañjuśrī.[1131] Nārāyaṇa's Cave from the *Avataṃsaka Sutra,* identified as early as the Tang Dynasty, was an important place of pilgrimage within Wutaishan.[1132] The Mongolians of the Yuan Dynasty were the first to link the site, the emperor, and Mañjuśrī together.[1133] Because of this association the Qing emperors were eager to promote the pilgrimage, publishing guidebooks that depictedthe emperor as Mañjuśrī. Many Chinese Buddhist temples were converted into Tibetan temples Kangxi, a project continued by Qianlong who intended the region especially to be a center for nearby Inner Mongolians.[1134] In this site, a long history of Chinese Buddhist pilgrimage, the Qing and Mongol inclination for Tibetan Buddhism, and the bodhisattva status of the emperors, were intermingled.

In his first year as *thamka lama* Ngawang Tsültrim requested leave from the emperor to take this pilgrimage.[1135] He expressed a desire not only to see the places of Mañjuśrī but also to visit the remains of Changkya Rinpoché, his root guru, who had died at Wutaishan. He visited a number of monasteries in the area, paid respect to their resident lamas, viewed the holy images, and received donations.[1136] He

[1130] Ibid., 2:296b–300a.
[1131] Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 2, 27.
[1132] Ibid., 53. The association of the site with the Avataṃsaka Sutra and Mañjuśrī is even mentioned in the biography: Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:297b.
[1133] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:63.
[1134] Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 253, 260–261.
[1135] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:297a.
[1136] Ibid., 2:298a.

visited in turn all five of the mountain peaks, which represent the five families of Mañjuśrī.[1137] He also visited the temple of Mañjughoṣa and its relics of the Buddha which were said to date from Aśoka's time.[1138] The most important place of pilgrimage for Ngawang Tsültrim was the Changkya lineage's monastery, where the body of Rolpé Dorjé rested and the new incarnation Yeshé Tenpé Gyeltsen lived.[1139] By doing this pilgrimage, Ngawang Tsültrim affirmed China's long connection to Buddhism, and maintained a connection to his root lama Changkya (who was himself so closely linked with China and the Qing).

Ngawang Tsültrim reaffirmed Chinese and Qing connections with Buddhism at other sites as well. He venerated and performed rituals at the Tsenden Jowo sandalwood image in Beijing, said to have been painted by the Buddha himself in Tuṣita. The statue's movements are said to have "charted the course of Buddhist conversion across Central and East Asia," and it eventually ended up in Beijing as Buddhism spread to China.[1140] He performed a tantric consecration for the queen mother's tomb, located in Xiling with the other tombs of the Qing imperial family, after which the emperor came and paid his respects. Much like an image consecration, the ritual involved bringing down the presence of a tantric deity into the tomb, indicating the identity of the emperor's family with buddhas.[1141]

Ngawang Tsültrim was involved in other aspects of Qing imperial politics, including the emperor's religious policy and relationships with Mongol lamas. In 1790

[1137] Ibid., 2:298b.
[1138] The biography tells the story here of how Aśoka sent missionaries to spread the 84,000 relics of the Buddha around the world, and how some of them eventually came to China. Ibid., 2:300a.
[1139] Ibid.
[1140] Ibid., 2:297a.
[1141] Ibid., 2:321a.

there was a dispute over ordaining the fourth Jebstundampa Hothogthu (Blo bzang thub bstan dbang phyug 'jigs med rgya mtsho, 1775-1813), whose lineage spiritually ruled Mongolia, a land currently subject to Qing suzerainty.[1142] The emperor thought that, at fifteen, the Jebtsundampa was of the age to be ordained, and that Ngawang Tsültrim should ordain him. According to the Vinaya, a young man cannot take full ordination until age twenty. The regent persuaded the emperor that he was still too young and should continue with his religious education for a while. It is depicted as a risky act for Ngawang Tsültrim to have challenged the emperor; the biographer explains that one should obey one's lama, but there are conditions under which one should clarify the lama's instructions to avoid doing an improper act.[1143]

The Gorkha war and the Qing response

Ngawang Tsültrim was soon involved from afar in Tibet's most serious crisis of the late eighteenth century. The currency dispute with the Gorkhas of Nepal continued without resolution in the 1780s, and the Nepalese also began accusing Tibet of interfering with the salt trade. In Tibet, a dispute had arisen over land and inheritance between the Kagyü Shamarpa Lama and the Geluk Panchen and Dalai Lamas, all of whom were blood relatives to each other. The Shamarpa went to Kathmandu to seek support for his side of the dispute; he was heavily involved in negotiations throughout the affair, and Tibetan sources accuse him of encouraging the Nepalese to invade. The Nepalese ruler Bahadur Shah desired to consolidate

[1142] Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 314–315, 320. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:321b.

[1143] In the analogy the emperor is the "lama" (as a political superior and, perhaps, as an incarnate bodhisattva) even though in the actual religious relationship, the emperor was Ngawang Tsültrim's student. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:321b.

power internally and may have seen an opportunity to do so in an invasion of Tibet.[1144] Nepal sent Tibet an ultimatum in the spring of 1788, demanding that they devalue the old currency and export the desired quantity of salt without impurities, and reduce tariffs on Nepalese traders.[1145] The Tibetan *kashak* refused to accept the ultimatum, and war broke out in July. The Gorkhas invaded the southern border regions of Tibet, including the crucial passes of Kuti and Kerong.[1146] Up until the start of the war, the Qing were not especially involved in these disputes, so that the Tibetans carried out diplomacy and early military actions independently.

Soon afterwards, Ngawang Tsültrim was aroused out of a meditative retreat with a *dreltsé* informing him that the "Gorkha thieves" had attacked Tibet. The emperor immediately tasked him with doing war rituals, which were said to lead to the success of two hundred Qing troops in a battle at Shelkar.[1147] Since these were all the forces that the emperor could spare at the time from the garrison, the early part of the war was fought mainly with the Tibetan army. Qianlong did dispatch several thousand troops, horses, yaks and other supplies which arrived later.[1148] Although the Tibetans had independently made the decision to go to war, and the Qing troops had followed, the emperor is depicted as being solely concerned with

[1144] Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 35–37. The close blood relation between all these lamas eventually led the Qing emperor to be concerned about nepotism, and to impose the Golden Urn on the selection of Tibetan *tülkus*.
[1145] Ibid., 37.Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:509.
[1146] Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 38. It is interesting that the Dalai Lama was not personally involved in the negotiations (as I will discuss in Chapter Seven), nor were the ambans.
[1147] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:307a.
[1148] Ibid., 2:307b–308a.

defeating the Nepalese. But it would soon be clear that the Qing were not pleased with the effective independence shown by Tibet.[1149]

In the early phase of the war, the Nepalese could not be moved from the districts of Tsang they had conquered.[1150] According to Shakabpa, the Qing troops were ineffective and not interested in fighting, and pressed the Tibetans to make a treaty. A peace treaty was signed which gave the Nepalese most of what they wanted (according to the biographer as well as Shakabpa). In exchange for withdrawing their troops and promising not to invade again, the Tibetans agreed to trade exclusively with Nepal, to accept the new coinage on Nepalese terms (with a lesser valuation of the old coins), and to pay an annual tribute to Nepal.[1151] In the biography, the emperor blamed the Sakya Hothogthu and Drungpa Hothogthu, the Panchen Lama's brother, for conducting a treaty without authorization and had them punished.[1152] According to the sources consulted by Leo Rose (official documents of the Tibetan and Qing governments), neither the Tibetan ministers nor the Qing *ambans* accepted responsibility for the treaty and there was an effort to prevent Beijing from learning of the details.[1153] Whoever is right, all involved saw this first phase of the war as a victory for Nepal and a disaster for the Tibetan side.

The emperor was not content to blindly support the Tibetans in this misadventure, and after the treaty was signed, the official inspector Ngaucharjun

[1149] Ibid., 2:307b.
[1150] Shakabpa relies on Doring's autobiography for his account of Qing actions. He is clearly biased toward portraying Tibet as independent but the biography is equally biased toward not portraying the emperor in an overly negative light. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:512–513, 516.
[1151] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:42–43. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:516–519.
[1152] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:308b.
[1153] Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 43–44.

returned with a report that was quite damning to the Tibetans. One cabinet minister, *jasak* Sonam Wangyel (Bsod nams dbang rgyal, served 1773-1788) in particular received a lot of blame, for refusing the demands of the Nepalese in an imperious way and precipitating the war. In the words of the emperor, "the Tibetan officials don't know how to do their work".[1154] Although Tibet did not eschew military force entirely, and had a small military, they clearly were dependent on the Qing for defense in the case of invasion.[1155] Thus the emperor was somewhat sympathetic to the Nepalese position, even if he would naturally want to defend the empire and use the opportunity of war to expand its power.

Reform proposals and Ngawang Tsültrim's response

The emperor saw the weakness of the Tibetan administration as a consequence of a weak Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama appears not to have had full control of the government, since the *kashak* made the decision to reject the Nepalese demands in 1788 without him.[1156] According to Petech, official Qing documents depicted the Dalai Lama as incompetent. The younger brother of the Dalai Lama (Lobsang Gedun Drakpa) and other members of his entourage were seen as a poor influence on him.[1157] But blame did not fall explicitly on the Dalai

[1154] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:310b.
[1155] The thesis that the dominance of monasteries led Tibet to be pacifist was memorably advanced by Bataille. He saw Tibet as an extreme of a society diverting all its excess energy to religion, rather than production or warfare. Georges Bataille, *The accursed share: an essay on general economy*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1988). Although Tibetan Buddhism was not really pacifist in the sense of being absolutely morally opposed to warfare, I think there is some merit to this view. Tibet relied on foreign militaries for defense after the establishment of the Ganden Palace, and directed its resources to monasteries, to a far greater degree than its relatively small military. Of course, as I explained earlier, Ngawang Tsültrim had authority over the Tibetan army and performed rituals for the military success of Tibet and the Qing armies.
[1156] Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 37–38. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:510.
[1157] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 383–385.

Lama in the biography; the biographer would obviously be reluctant to depict him as blameworthy. Nevertheless, the emperor's initial proposal revealed clear disapproval of the Dalai Lama's government. He resolved to strip all powers from the Dalai Lama. From this time forth, according to the *dreltsé* he sent to Tibet, all the tasks of Tibetan government would be handled by *ambans*.[1158] Their supremacy would extend to "the affairs of Tibet's religion and politics"—similar language to that used to describe the duties of the regent and other Tibetan rulers.[1159] Tibet up to this time still had a degree of independence from Beijing, but under this plan it would become a directly ruled colony. Making the *ambans* responsible for religion, if that was really the emperor's intent, would have been an especially drastic change. The connections between the Qing and the Geluk school were crucially important to both sides, and inserting an imperial bureaucrat into the religious hierarchy would upset the balance. Although the emperor must have been considering reforms at this time, the *ambans* were clearly not qualified to administer religious affairs. Removing religious responsibility from the Dalai Lama and other Tibetans would have been unacceptable to the Tibetans and would have thwarted the Qing's own reasons for supporting Tibetan Buddhism. However, the biographer's portrayal of such an extreme proposal was an implicit criticism of the emperor and allowed Ngawang Tsültrim to be portrayed as Tibet's savior.

By the time Ngawang Tsültrim heard of the emperor's plan, the order had already been dispatched to Tibet.[1160] He began to prepare his response to try to

[1158] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:310b.
[1159] Ibid., 2:311a.
[1160] Ibid.

convince the emperor to change his mind. He had to tread carefully. As the *ambans* had said to him previously, “the order of the emperor is for one time only”: it must be obeyed immediately, and should not be questioned or changed.[1161] Despite his status as imperial tutor, he had to go through multiple intermediaries to send a message to the emperor. The resident *ambans* objected to delivering it and were quite fearful about challenging the emperor.[1162] The regent convinced them to send it via a minister named Hotrungtang, who in turn refused to deliver it to the emperor. But Ngawang Tsültrim and the ministers approached another minister, Atrungthang, who agreed to deliver the petition, reasoning that Ngawang Tsültrim was a trusted adviser of Qianlong. Throughout these negotiations Ngawang Tsültrim remained calm, propitiating the protectors such as Mahākāla (presumably, so that the results would be favorable to Tibet) and predicting that the emperor would change his mind.[1163] Again, Ngawang Tsültrim's special privileges allowed him to communicate with the emperor in a frank way.

The letter he drafted expressed much deference for the emperor, containing a lot of humilifics (“I, a small lama”).[1164] Nevertheless, it was clearly a bold challenge to the emperor. First of all, he reminded the emperor that under the Thirteen Points, local Tibetan affairs and religious matters could be handled by Tibetan officials without seeking the *amban*’s approval, an arrangement that had worked since 1751 without problems in Tibetan administration.[1165] The *ambans* may have been

[1161] Ibid., 2:311a–311b.
[1162] Ibid., 2:313a.
[1163] Ibid., 2:312b–313a.
[1164] Ibid., 2:311b–312a.
[1165] Ibid., 2:312a.

competent in political affairs but there was no need for them to interfere in matters of religion where they had no inherent authority or expertise.[1166] Ngawang Tsültrim warned the emperor that Buddhism, and in particular the position of the Dalai Lama, were of paramount importance to the Tibetans—"all the people of Tibet whether high or low are devoted to the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama"—and without respect for these, Qing rule would not be accepted.[1167] Based on this discussion the emperor rescinded his order, sending another official message or *dreltsé* that the previous message should be disregarded. The Dalai Lama would continue to be "entrusted with the tasks of Tibet" or in other words to be the ruler of Tibet.[1168] Ngawang Tsültrim had saved Tibetan autonomy and its most important symbol, the Dalai Lama.

Is any of this description accurate? One might question whether some or all of this is propaganda on the part of the biographer to show Ngawang Tsültrim as a savior of Tibet at a time when Tibet had lost autonomy. Changkya Rinpoché's biography also depicts him, in Gene Smith's description, "pleading with the emperor to lighten the punishment that he had decided to impose on Tibet."[1169] This raises the possibility that Ngawang Tsültrim's biographer was influenced by (or even plagiarized) this episode in the narrative. The aftermath of the Nepalese wars did eventually lead to the Qing gaining more power in Tibet and the biographer of Ngawang Tsültrim may have wanted to portray the situation in the best possible light, so that he did not receive the blame. Showing his boldness with the emperor

[1166] Ibid., 2:312b.
[1167] Ibid.
[1168] Ibid., 2:313a.
[1169] Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 140.

would show him as a spiritual equal, even as an enlightened Buddha; only an incarnate Buddha could challenge another incarnate Buddha. Still it seems plausible that the emperor was concerned at this time with the Dalai Lama's role in Tibet, considering that a few years later, in 1793 he issued decrees that reorganized the Tibetan government. (As will be discussed later, these decrees did increase the powers of the *amban*, while leaving the Dalai Lama on the throne). There would have been no reason for the biographer to implicate Ngawang Tsültrim in these changes if he had been uninvolved.

Although he relented from putting the *ambans* in total control, the emperor is portrayed as taking some immediate actions to rein in the Tibetan government. He dismissed and banished officials he saw as blameworthy for the outbreak of war and the poor performance of Tibet's government. Sonam Wangyel was blamed not only for not meeting the Nepalese demands, but also for deceiving the *ambans* and concealing from them the negotiations with Nepal.[1170] His family was punished by removing their titles and their right to be appointed to the *kashak* in the future.[1171] A large scale reshuffling of the Tibetan cabinet can be seen in Petech's *Aristocracy and Government,* where almost all of the cabinet ministers were replaced in two waves at the time of the Nepalese war, in 1789 (when this discussion is said to have taken place) and after the end of the Nepalese war in 1792.[1172] Although the Qing had long tried to ensure that the *kashak* was made up of loyalists, this was a much

[1170] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:313a–314b.
[1171] Ibid., 2:313b–314a.
[1172] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 231.

stronger assertion of imperial power, prefiguring the sweeping changes that would take place after the end of the war.

The appointment of another regent was another sign that the emperor intended to strip the Dalai Lama from power. The *ambans* who were sent to investigate the Tibetan government sent a *dreltsé* saying that during the reigns of the Seventh Dalai Lama, Demo, and especially Ngawang Tsültrim, Tibet had been ruled well without war or internal dissension.[1173] The *ambans* praised Ngawang Tsültrim for filling the storehouses of Lhasa with grain and gold, crucial in preparing for the war and provisioning the Qing army.[1174] They recommended that either Ngawang Tsültrim or Tatsak Rinpoché (Rta tshag 08 Bstan pa'i mgon po 1760-1810) be appointed as regent, and Tatsak was chosen since Ngawang Tsültrim was to stay in Beijing as *thamka lama*.[1175] The Tatsak lineage dates back to a disciple of Tsongkhapa. A prior incarnation (Rta tshag Blo bzang dpal rgyan, 1708-1760) had served as a diplomat for Ganden Palace and established a relationship with the Kangxi emperor.[1176] The current seventh incarnation had been designated by the emperor as Tsodün *thamka lama*, a religious teacher for the inner Mongolians.[1177]

[1173] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:316b–317a.
[1174] Ibid., 2:317a.
[1175] He is also known the first Kundeling incarnation after the *labrang* he was given during his regency. Ibid., 2:317a–317b. Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics," 448.
[1176] Despite his service to Kangxi the sixth Tatsak also fell out for a time with the emperor (Kangxi blamed him for conspiring with Sangyé Gyatso to conceal the Fifth Dalai Lama's death), showing that good relations between an lineage and the emperor were not a given. Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 80–83.
[1177] The Tsodün *thamka lama* is not the same as the Beijing *thamka lama*, but had responsibilities over Inner Mongolia; Tsodun is also known as Dollonur. Tatsak never actually reached his position, as he was sent back to Tibet. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:217b. Liz Flora, "The Eighth Tatsak Jedrung, Yeshe Lobzang Tenpai Gonpo - The Treasury of Lives: Biographies of Himalayan Religious Masters," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2013,

The emperor responded to the recommendation of the *ambans* by saying that he would rather have Ngawang Tsültrim as regent, but since he was even more needed in Beijing, Tatsak was the best person to fill this role.[1178] According to Petech, he was appointed as a "joint ruler with the Dalai Lama" at this time, which could imply he was not a full regent like Ngawang Tsültrim; however, the *kashak* was directed to answer Tatsak alone, so he was clearly the real power in government.[1179] Ngawang Tsültrim is not portrayed as objecting to any of these proposals of the emperor, and may well have agreed with purging the incompetent cabinet or removing the Dalai Lama from power.

Another imperial investigator returned from Lhasa in 1790 and recommended that Ngawang Tsültrim should be appointed as regent again, after which a discussion was held by the emperor and his foreign ministers.[1180] It is not clear what further problems had arisen in Tibet, but the emperor's discussion suggested that there were continued internal dissensions and conflicts among *ambans*.[1181] The dispute between the Chaksam and Demo incarnations over seating precedence convinced Qianlong of the Tibetan government's incompetence, and ongoing tensions with Nepal increased the need for a strong government. The emperor was reluctant to have him go back to Tibet because of his age (fears for his health soon became justified) and his service as *thamka lama*. But he thought that the situation

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http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Eighth-Tatsak-Yeshe-Lobzang-Tenpai-Gonpo/5328.

[1178] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:317b.

[1179] Shakabpa calls Tatsak the "Dalai Lama's assistant" and erroneously (perhaps to minimize the emperor's role) says that he was appointed by the Tibetan government in 1786, as Ngawang Tsültrim departed. Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 385.

[1180] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:317b–318a.

[1181] Ibid., 2:328a.

in Lhasa necessitated it, since similar problems had not occurred under his administration.[1182] After he left, Tatsak was summoned to Beijing because the Dalai Lama had not been following the advice of the regent.[1183] The return to the regency did not last long because he died in 1791. Tatsak was sent back to be regent, having not even made it to Beijing, and would serve until his death in 1810.[1184] The regency was again in the hands of *trülku* lineages, and would remain so throughout the nineteenth century.[1185]

Conclusion

In order to understand the roles that Ngawang Tsültrim played as the emperor's personal teacher in Beijing, and de facto ambassador between the Qing and Tibet, one has to consider the overall context of Qing-Tibetan relations in this era. Many scholars look at this era from the perspective of the sovereignty debate between Tibet and China, which has much contemporary relevance, asking questions such as how much control the Qing had over Tibet and whether their rule was accepted. Elliot Sperling argues that the Qing did have a degree of suzerainty over the “vassal state” of Tibet.[1186] According to him, the Tibetan high clergy and the aristocracy mostly supported the Qing suzerainty after it was established. In his study of the cabinet minister Doring ,who was summoned to court in 1793 over the Gorkha war, he sees evidence that Qing overlordship over Tibet was acknowledged by aristocrats like him; they “made no attempt to withstand Qing domination, as it

[1182] Ibid., 2:328a, 329a.
[1183] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 162.
[1184] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 386.
[1185] Goldstein, “The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics,” 447.
[1186] Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict*, 28–30.

disrupted neither their roles within Tibet nor the bureaucratic structure supporting their positions."[1187] His study of the Golden Urn comes to the same conclusion that the political and religious authority of the emperor was generally accepted by the Tibetan elite.[1188] Petech similarly calls Tibet a colony in this era, especially after the Qing reforms of 1793: "the colonial period of Tibetan history: a time of peace but not of prosperity, drab and uninteresting by all standards."[1189] Western scholars do not place much credibility in Chinese claims of centuries of continuous sovereignty, but they do see these claims as credible regarding the Qing dynasty, especially in the immediate aftermath of Ngawang Tsültrim's life.

Shakabpa, on the other hand, argues that Tibetans never saw themselves as as subservient to the Qing, but rather as the priests within a patron-priest relationship that went beyond a hierarchy of power. Lamas went willingly to Beijing to fulfill this relationship, and the Qing intervention in the Gorkha war is also described as fulfilling the *chöyön* relationship (although Shakabpa also thinks that they imposed this on the Tibetans).[1190] The emperor avoided giving the *ambans* too much power (even after 1792) so as not to jeopardize this relationship.[1191] He perhaps excessively downplays the Qing role in Tibet, but calls attention to the fact that many Tibetans resisted their domination. Shakabpa is still mainly asking whether Tibet had been incorporated into the Qing empire, a question rooted in modern nationalistic concerns.

[1187] Elliot Sperling, "Awe and Submission: A Tibetan Aristocrat at the Court of Qianlong," *International Review of History* 20 (1998): 329, 334.
[1188] Sperling, "Reincarnation and the Golden Urn," 104–106.
[1189] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 368.
[1190] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:491–492, 511.
[1191] Ibid., 1:546.

Other scholars look at Qing-Tibetan relations in this period more from the perspective of the Qing empire and what role Tibet played in it, politically as well as religiously. This has the advantage of focusing on what Tibetans, Manchus, and others in the eighteenth century would have considered significant. Many scholars see the relationships between the emperor and Tibetan lamas, and other forms of imperial patronage of Tibetan Buddhism, as modes of representation depicting Tibet's place within the Qing empire. To the Qing, Tibet was diplomatically valuable source of religious power. Patricia Berger sees Qianlong's Tibetan projects (portraying himself in *tangkas* as Mañjuśrī, and learning the Tibetan language) as a examples of his "means of self-depiction," portraying himself compellingly to his empire as one who encompassed all the various constituencies: Manchu, Mongol, Han, and in this case Tibetan.[1192] Qianlong was eager for the blessings of lamas (such as Rolpé Dorjé and the Panchen Lama) who came to pay him visits, and used them as ambassadors to the Tibetans and Mongols and generally to reinforce the greatness of the empire.[1193] According to Pamela Crossley, "Tibet was an odd constituency among the Qing collection, in that it appeared primarily as an idea, a set of cultic practices, and a language" but had "virtually no history." While the Qing court extensively patronized Tibetan Buddhism, it did not sponsor a conquest history of Tibet (unlike Xinjiang) or incorporate Tibetans into the Eight Banners (unlike the Mongols); the Tibetans as a people were quite peripheral to the empire. Crossley also emphasizes the political uses to which Tibetan Buddhism was directed in winning over the Mongols in particular, but additionally sees Qianlong as having a

[1192] Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 195–196.
[1193] Ibid., 177–180.

strong religious motivation in gaining supernatural aid from Tibetan Buddhism and becoming a supremely enlightened world leader.[1194] The emperor was a “mirror” who reflected back, in idealized form, the essence of all the constituent parts of the Qing empire.[1195] Rawski, in a view closer to Shakabpa's position, argues that relations between the Qing empire and Tibet were determined by the patron-priest relationship between the emperor and Tibetan lamas. While the emperor as Mañjuśrī was reaffirmed as a universal lama, Rawski sees the Dalai Lamas (and other lamas) as mirroring the emperor's position as a universal ruler over a spiritual realm.[1196] The view of the emperor as mirror of the empire is valuable because it shows that there is a strong connection between the emperor's patronage of Tibetan Buddhism in the capital, including his relationships with lamas like Ngawang Tsültrim, and the Qing-Tibet relationship as a whole. However, such an idealized picture of Tibet ignores the imperfect everyday realities of imperial politics, including the fact that Tibet (and its relationship to the Qing) *did* have a history and individuals like Ngawang Tsültrim played an active role in shaping this history.

As far as the question of sovereignty is concerned, it is clear that the emperor had a lot of power over the Tibetan government in eighteenth century, and Ngawang Tsültrim in particular owed his position to the emperor. He obeyed the emperor in going to Beijing twice as religious teacher, and in accepting the appointment as regent to the Tibetans. The biography, at first glance, has hardly a harsh word to speak against the Qing or China, even going so far as to defend contemporary

[1194] Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 328–329.
[1195] Ibid., 23.
[1196] Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 261–263.

Chinese monks against the traditional Tibetan story of the heresy of the Chinese monk Hashang.[1197] Ngawang Tsültrim for the most part showed loyalty and deference toward the emperor, and never openly criticized him. But there were also clear signs of resistance (a striking fact, considering the biography was written after the Qing had clamped down hard in Tibet in the 1793 reforms). This can be seen in Ngawang Tsültrim's negotiations with the emperor over the status of the Dalai Lama and his confrontations with the *ambans* and other Tibetan officials; even if the biography is not totally accurate, these accounts are notable as a subtle expression of resistance to the Qing.

Ngawang Tsültrim was able to defend Tibetan interests to the emperor because of the traditional *chöyön* relationship, in addition to his years of enculturation in the Qing court. Such an individual relationship mattered in conducting diplomacy, even if Sperling is right that *chöyön* does not correspond to a particular mode of international relations. His early years in the Qing court allowed him to master the intricacies of Qing protocol, and led him to be highly trusted by the emperor. Ngawang Tsültrim was clearly valued for the religious service he could give to the emperor, such as Geluk teachings and tantric war rituals, in addition to being a loyal political figure who could help him rule the empire. He also played a similar role in the microcosm of Beijing as in Lhasa, being the equivalent of Ganden Tripa in the Beijing religious world, and acting as political adviser to the emperor. But these forms of representation are much less passive than the “mirrors” described by Rawski and Crossley. With Changkya Rinpoché gone, only Ngawang Tsültrim could

[1197] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:5a.

represent Tibet to the emperor at the critical juncture of the Gorkha war, acting not as a passive symbol of Tibet's subordination to the empire, but an active defender of the Tibetan union of religion and politics

Chapter 7: Ngawang Tsültrim and the Dalai Lama

Introduction

The union of religion and politics, the *chösi sungdrel*, of the Ganden Palace did not originally belong to the regent, but to the Dalai Lama. One might think that when a regent was entrusted with the *chösi sungdrel,* he “took over” and the Dalai Lama was left with nothing to do, but that would be mistaken. The continuing role of the Dalai Lama could best be seen in the religious sphere, but it would still be inaccurate to describe the union as a division of labor in which the regent took charge of political affairs while the Dalai Lama retained control over religious affairs. Even with a regent, the Dalai Lama was still the symbolic master of the *chösi sungdrel,* and performed many duties for both religion (*chö*) and politics (*si*). The appointment of Ngawang Tsültrim as tutor confirmed that the Dalai Lama was not yet considered fit to rule, and was consigned to “tutelage.” But the tutorship simultaneously reaffirmed the Dalai Lama's irreplaceable religious role, as like all other Dalai Lamas he was given special instruction in the philosophical curriculum and in tantric rituals, in preparation for his religious duties. He took a leading role in religious rituals and received all the respect due an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara. In the political sphere, decrees were still issued in the Dalai Lama's name, and he was affirmed as the ultimate source of political power. The Eighth Dalai Lama was given the seals of office in 1781 during Ngawang Tsültrim's reign—apparently a symbolic act—and five years later was elevated to actual power when Ngawang Tsültrim departed for Beijing, just before the Gorkha war broke. But the Dalai Lama's

perceived incompetence as a ruler in the eyes of the Qing court led to a diminished influence for the lineage in the years following. Despite this, the symbolic capital of the institution persisted, making it possible for the Dalai Lamas to persist and much later for the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to emerge as a strong leader, the first Dalai Lama to do so in about 150 years. In this chapter we explore the role of the Eighth Dalai Lama in Tibetan religion and polity, and his relationship to Ngawang Tsültrim, who was not only his regent, but also his teacher.

When should the Dalai Lama take power?

In the late eighteenth century, the precedents for whether and when the Dalai Lama was expected to take power were somewhat unclear, although it was expected that the Dalai Lama would eventually take power. The Fifth Dalai Lama had taken control of Tibet at the age of twenty-five, as the result of Gushri Khan's conquest of Tibet, and was generally seen as the dominant power in Tibet despite having the *desi* to assist in his rule. The Sixth Dalai Lama was educated by Sangyé Gyatso to be elevated to power, and he formally "ascended the golden throne" in 1697 at the age of fourteen.[1198] But he was not interested in ruling or in religion, and was deposed by Lhazang Khan in 1705, before he had ever taken full control of government.[1199] As explained in Chapter One, the Seventh Dalai Lama did not come to rule until late in life due to initial uncertainty over whether he would be the preferred incarnation (Lhazang Khan opposed him) and political instability (the Jungar Mongols and the Qing invaded successively in 1717 and 1720). Even after the Qing brought him to Lhasa in 1720, his family ended up on the wrong side of the

[1198] Martin Brauen, ed., *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History* (Chicago: Serindia, 2005), 96.
[1199] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:385–398.

civil war of 1727, and the Qing sent him into exile at the age of nineteen, a time at which other Dalai Lamas tended to take power. The nominal political authority of the Seventh was still recognized to an extent in the early part of his life; some political documents on the subject of taxes were issued in the Dalai Lama's name in 1737.[1200] He was forty-three, well into middle age, by the time the Qing restored him to power in the aftermath of the 1750 revolt in Lhasa.[1201] The Ninth through the Twelth Dalai Lamas either died too young to take power or took power formally between the ages of fifteen and nineteen.[1202] Tshering Shakya asserts that the norm was for the Dalai Lama to take power at the age of seventeen, and it seems that this was usually the case, give or take a few years.[1203] At the time of the Eighth Dalai Lama and Ngawang Tsültrim, there was an implicit expectation that the Dalai Lama should take power, but there was some uncertainty, especially about timing.

When the regent Demo Rinpoché died in 1777, it meant that decisions had to be made about the future of the Tibetan government and the Dalai Lama. Should the Eighth Dalai Lama, who at the age of nineteen was close to the age of majority, be elevated to the throne? If he was not, should a new regent be appointed, and who should it be? After the Qianlong emperor received a message from the *ambans* that Demo Rinpoché had died, he said that “the Dalai Lama is young in age and must

[1200] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 136–137.
[1201] Ibid., 147–159.
[1202] The Ninth and the Tenth Dalai Lamas died before taking power. The Eleventh and the Twelfth took power at age seventeen but died shortly thereafter. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama delayed taking power until age nineteen. Derek Maher, “The Ninth To The Twelfth Dalai Lamas,” in *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia, 2005), 129–135. Tsering Shakya, “The Thirteenth Dalai Lama Thupten Gyatso,” in *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, by Martin Brauen (Serindia, 2005), 140.
[1203] Shakya, “The Thirteenth Dalai Lama Thupten Gyatso,” 140.

continue his studies in sutra and tantra" and therefore a regent should be appointed.[1204] In a subsequent discussion Changkya Rinpoché also affirmed this, and said that appointing a regent would be a good idea because then the Dalai Lama could study without the distraction of ruling.[1205] This rationale was again affirmed in one of the regent's decree of 1777, although he added the qualifier that the education was only a display for the sake of training ordinary people (common honorific language for the deeds of the Dalai Lama and other high lamas), since an enlightened being did not need to learn.[1206] The major influential figures in Tibet all affirmed this course of action: the emperor, *ambans*, Changkya Rinpoché, and Ngawang Tsültrim, but it is not depicted as the Dalai Lama's own choice.

What are the motives for this decision? Ngawang Tsültrim's biography does provide much explanation on the emperor's or other officials' reasoning, beyond the Dalai Lama's education. It is commonly thought that the Eighth Dalai Lama was disinclined to exercise political power and preferred the religious life.[1207] Shakabpa depicts Tibetan officials as wanting the Dalai Lama to rule, and him refusing:

> Immediately thereafter, the cabinet, the Dalai Lama's personal attendant, the abbots and officials of Drepung, Sera, and Ganden monasteries, and the monk and lay government officials unanimously requested that the Dalai Lama assume the religious and political responsibilities since he had reached the age of twenty. However, he said that he would be unable to take up these responsibilities for the time being, as he wished to continue with his studies.[1208]

[1204] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:12b–13a.
[1205] Ibid., 2:13b.
[1206] Ibid., 2:223a–223b.
[1207] This is Schwieger's assumption for instance: Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 160.
[1208] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:495.

The biography does not support Shakapa's interpretation on this point, as it does not portray Tibetan officials asking the Dalai Lama to rule (they did not take part in the decision to appoint a regent), nor the Dalai Lama either wanting or declining to rule. There may have been a real concern (on the part of both Qing and Tibetan officials) with the Dalai Lama's youth, given that no previous Dalai Lama had successfully ruled at this age. The life of the Sixth Dalai Lama in particular showed that there was no guarantee that the Dalai Lama would be a competent ruler.

An obvious motive for keeping the Dalai Lama from power is that the emperor wanted to consolidate power and have Tibet have ruled by someone loyal to him. If he could appoint loyal regents, he did not need the Dalai Lama, who ran the risk of being an independent force.[1209] There is no evidence from the biography that the young Eighth Dalai Lama had an anti-Qing attitude, but it was still a plausible fear. Previous Dalai Lamas had been strong independent rulers, like the Fifth, or had caused political problems for the Qing, like the Sixth and at times the Seventh. This decision could be seen as beginning an unofficial Qing policy to keep the Dalai Lamas off the throne in favor of regents. The Qing reluctance to have Dalai Lamas on the throne was not new, as they helped elevate Polhané to power as a substitute ruler for the Seventh Dalai Lama. On the other hand, it had been the decision of the Qing to restore the Dalai Lamas to power when the Seventh was brought to the throne in 1751.

The circumstances under which a Dalai Lama would take power were not to be taken for granted but were a subject of contestation. There was some expectation

[1209] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 171.

that the Dalai Lama should take power at age twenty, but the Qing and others had reasonable doubts as to whether he was yet ready to rule. There is also some evidence that the Qing and lamas like Changkya (and, of course, the regents) did not really want the Dalai Lama to rule for political reasons. Since the death of the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1682, Tibet had not really experienced the rule of a strong Dalai Lama for more than a few years. Still, the religious significance of the Dalai Lama remained undiminished, and he was still considered to be the rightful master of Ganden Palace's *chösi sungdrel*, creating an enduring expectation that he should rule.

Tutorship (*yongdzin*)

If the Dalai Lama was to be educated, he needed to have a tutor (*yongdzin*) officially designated to perform this task. All Dalai Lamas, of course, had had religious teachers. But before the establishment of Ganden Palace, there was no officially appointed tutor, and the Dalai Lama's education was much like any other lama's monastic education, with philosophical studies and tantric empowerments taken from various masters.[1210] Prominent Geluk hierarchs and lamas took key roles in the education of the Dalai Lamas. The Fifth Dalai Lama had as teachers Lingme Zhangdrup Könchok Chöpel (Gling smad zhabs drung dkon mchog chos 'phel, 1573-1646), a holder of the Ganden Throne like many future *yongdzins*, and the Fourth

[1210] The first Dalai Lama had an ordinary monastic education in Narthang and Ganden Monasteries, also studying at several Kadam monasteries in central Tibet. The second Dalai Lama (though recognized as a *trülku* in his lifetime) likewise was educated with other monks, at Tashilhunpo, and the Third was educated in a similar way at Drepung. The Mongolian Fourth Dalai Lama did his education at Tashilhunpo as well. Weirong, "The First Dalai Lama Gendün Drup," 33. Heller, "The Second Dalai Lama Gendün Gyatso," 50. Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz, "The Third Dalai Lama Sönam Gyatso and the Fourth Dalai Lama Yönten Gyatso," in *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia, 2005), 53. Ibid., 60.

Panchen Lama Lozang Chökyi Gyeltsen (Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan 1570-1662), whose incarnation lineage often played a role in the education of Dalai Lamas.[1211] During the youth of the Sixth Dalai Lama, the monastic education of the incarnation took on a new political significance, as he was destined to rule Tibet under Ganden Palace. In the Sixth Dalai Lama's youth he was taught secretly by the Desi Sangyé Gyatso, and after he was revealed as the new incarnation, the Fifth Panchen Lama Lobsang Yeshé (Blo bzang ye shes, 1663-1737) served as his tutor (the Sixth famously gave back his vows to him when he came of age).[1212] Some sources say that he held the title of *yongdzin*, the first time this title is used of a tutor of the Dalai Lama.[1213] When the Seventh Dalai Lama was a disputed incarnation living in exile, he was initially taught by tutors (Kelsang Trinlé and Lobsang Tenpé Gyeltsen) who had not received any formal appointment from the Tibetan government. After he was formally recognized and brought to the throne by the Qing, he had tutors like the Panchen Lama and the Ganden Tripa Lobsang Dargyé; for tantric subjects, Ngawang Chokden was appointed *yongdzin* in 1728.[1214]

Yongdzins chosen from prominent Geluk figures were duly appointed for the Eighth Dalai Lama as soon as he was identified. The first of these *yongdzins* was

[1211] Kurtis R. Schaeffer, "The Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lopsang Gyatso," in *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia, 2005), 65.
[1212] Eberto Lo Bue, "The Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso," in *The Dalai Lamas*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago, 2005), 96–97.
[1213] "Blo bzang ye shes (P106)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P106.
[1214] The Seventh Dalai Lama continued his education well into his twenties, like the Eighth Dalai Lama, although prolonging his education did not have quite the same political implications since he was already being kept off the throne for other reasons. Matthew Kapstein, "The Seventh Dalai Lama, Kelzang Gyatso," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2013, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Seventh-Dalai-Lama-Kelzang-Gyatso/3107.

Ngawang Jampa (Ngag dbang byams pa, 1682-1762) of the Purchok *trülku* lineage (one of many Purchok incarnations who were appointed) but he died early in the Eighth Dalai Lama's life.[1215] After his death early in the Eighth Dalai Lama's life, the Ganden Tripa Ngawang Chödrak (Ngag dbang chos grags, 1707-1778) was appointed *yongdzin*, and gave the Dalai Lama his ordination vows.[1216]

Shortly after the appointment of Ngawang Tsültrim as regent, the position of tutor to the Dalai Lama became vacant when Ngawang Chödrak died in 1778.[1217] At this time, the Panchen Lama had a discussion with Ngawang Tsültrim, suggesting that he be the replacement as *yongdzin*. The regent was reluctant to accept, arguing that he already had too many responsibilities between his duties in the regency and Ganden Tripa, and he would be unable to fulfil his promise to the emperor to return within three years.[1218] He put forward instead two alternative candidates: Lobsang Tenpa (Blo bzang bstan pa, 1725-1782), the sixtieth Ganden Tripa who had served prior to Ngawang Tsültrim, and Lobsang Chinpa (Blo bzang spyin pa), the Sharpa Chöjé who was in line for Ganden Tripa.[1219] Ngawang Tsültrim did agree to do the reading transmissions and empowerments, but wanted these other individuals to be responsible for the bulk of the curriculum. He sent a private *dreltsé* via the *ambans* to the emperor informing him of the result of this discussion.[1220]

[1215] "Ngag dbang byams pa (P108)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P108.
[1216] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:30b. "Ngag dbang chos grags (P2764)," *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center*, 2014, http://tbrc.org/#!rid=P2764.
[1217] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:15b.
[1218] Ibid., 2:30b.
[1219] Ibid., 2:30b–31a. Lobsang Chinpa never actually attained Ganden Tripa, presumably dying first.
[1220] Ibid.

The emperor sent back his response. He accepted the Panchen Lama's argument that Ngawang Tsültrim was the best candidate, and thus he was appointed.[1221] However, he did appoint Lobsang Tenpa a junior tutor (*yongs 'dzin chung*) who would do some of the teachings when Ngawang Tsültrim's other duties interfered with teaching the Dalai Lama.[1222] The tutorship was the third of Ngawang Tsültrim's three powerful or important positions, in addition to the regency and Ganden Tripa.[1223] Tibetan religious figures like the Panchen Lama had more influence over the emperor's decision to appoint the tutor, compared with his appointment of the regent, due to greater Tibetan autonomy in the religious sphere. In a move rich in symbolism, the emperor, who had appointed a regent on the grounds that the Dalai Lama needed to finish his studies, made the regent the one who would provide this education. This underscored the Dalai Lama's state of "tutelage," which means in English "protection of or authority over someone or something; guardianship" and has the secondary meaning of "instruction; tuition." (The Tibetan word *yongdzin* is short from *yongs su 'dzin pa* which has a similar double meaning; although it is used to mean "tutor," it literally means "to hold" or "receive into one's care," in other words "guardian").

The curriculum taught by Ngawang Tsültrim to the Dalai Lama was similar to what scholarly Geluk monks were taught, with a more or less exclusive focus on religious topics. It followed more or less the same sequence, structure and content as the Geluk scholastic curriculum. But in certain respects the Dalai Lama's

[1221] Ibid., 2:33b.
[1222] Ibid.
[1223] Ibid., 2:1b.

education was different; he had a private tutor (which was common to other *tülkus*, even those who attended one of the *densas*), and did not study or debate with the other members of a monastic class.[1224] The Dalai Lama received instruction in both sutra and tantra. The sutric curriculum followed the "five great texts" on the five subjects of Buddhist philosophy and doctrine: the *Collected Topics* (covering basic logic and an introduction to Buddhist philosophy), Perfection of Wisdom, Madhyamaka, Vinaya, and Abhidharma. In addition, he may have received some instruction in the secular topics among the Five Sciences: grammar, logic, engineering, and medicine. In the end, the Buddhist topics were the focus of the curriculum.[1225] By the time Ngawang Tsültrim became tutor, the Dalai Lama had already completed the Collected Topics and Perfection of Wisdom subjects, and was beginning his studies in Madhyamaka and Vinaya.

As he negotiated with the emperor, Ngawang Tsültrim did not provide instruction in the Dalai Lama's entire curriculum. The longer biography states that only when Lobsang Tenpa, who had been appointed as the junior tutor, became sick, it fell to Ngawang Tsültrim to teach Vinaya and Madhyamaka. This suggests that Ngawang Tsültrim was not expected to conduct the majority of the Dalai Lama's education, which supports the view that his appointment was made for symbolic reasons. He ended up being responsible for a large share of the curriculum nevertheless. The longer biography explains that the curriculum went slower than

[1224] In order to practice debate, the Dalai Lamas needed debate partners or *tsenshap* (*mtshan zhabs,* also *mtshan nyid zhabs*). They make a few appearances in the text; for instance they assisted Ngawang Tsültrim in giving examinations to the Dalai Lama. Ibid., 2:90b–91a.
[1225] The fifth science is "Buddhist science" which is already encompassed by the five great texts. Ibid., 2:197a–198a.

normal due to Ngawang Tsültrim's many duties in religion and politics (i.e. his position as regent and as Ganden Tripa).[1226] According to the Ganden Tripas' biography, the first teaching Ngawang Tsültrim gave was a word commentary on the "rituals of the three grounds," the three Vinaya rituals of confession, opening the rains retreat, and closing the rains retreat, followed by other teachings and examinations focused on the Vinaya.[1227] Aside from teaching, Ngawang Tsültrim usually conducted the Dalai Lama's *tsishak* examinations, which checked on how much he had memorized.[1228] These examinations were said to be especially time consuming due to the length of the Vinaya texts. In 1782, a second teacher, Yeshé Tsenchen (Ye shes mtshan can) substituted for Ngawang Tsültrim, and taught the remaining part of the Vinaya curriculum, followed by teachings from the *Abhidharmakośa*.[1229]

The Dalai Lama received a number of tantric teachings and empowerments as well from Ngawang Tsültrim. Although it did not appear to follow a scholastic curriculum (like that of the tantric college), his tantric education still had a fair amount in common with the education of a typical monk, who might seek out a selection of empowerments from various masters. The regent gave the Dalai Lama the four empowerments of Chakdor Khorchen, a form of Vajrapāṇi. This tantric teaching was originally transmitted by the Geluk founder Tsongkhapa, since Chakdor Khorchen was one of Tsongkhapa's *yidams*. To give him a connection with the history of his

[1226] Ibid., 2:196b.
[1227] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 19a.
[1228] Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 60, 64.
[1229] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:196a. Yeshé Tsenchen actually mean "the one called Yeshé."

own lineage, Ngawang Tsültrim gave him an oral transmission of the *Collected Works* of the Second Dalai Lama.[1230] He intended to give the Dalai Lama an empowerment in Kālacakra but the Dalai Lama was unable to receive it due to "mental distraction." It is unclear whether the mental distraction was Ngawang Tsültrim's or the Dalai Lama's is unclear, but in the verses following, the biography appears to be arguing that the Dalai Lama was a brighter student than he appeared. He was "originally wise" as a bodhisattva, but needed to be prodded by Ngawang Tsültrim. This suggests that the Dalai Lama did, at times, appear to be a poor student.[1231] Whether because of the regent's busy schedule or the Dalai Lama's difficulty with the curriculum, his studies progressed slowly.[1232] Like other Dalai Lamas prior to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, he did not attempt to be a full *geshé*, and thus did not undergo public debating exams.[1233]

How did the curriculum serve as actual preparation for his duties? Missing conspicuously from the Dalai Lama's studies was any specific training in government. (The same is true of Ngawang Tsültrim and other religious figures, like Demo, who ruled Tibet). Any education in government that the Dalai Lama received would necessarily have had to be informal—if the regent and the other tutors were even interested in giving him this kind of education—or would have been acquired through experience while he was actually in power. Another way he could have learned to govern is by the example of Ngawang Tsültrim's actions in office. It is possible he received some instruction in the *rājanīti* literature, as it was well known

[1230] Ibid., 2:196b.
[1231] Ibid.
[1232] Ibid., 2:196a–196b.
[1233] Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Academic Degress in Buddhist Philosophy*, 20.

to Tibetan rulers, although this is not specifically mentioned in the biography. There was a practical side to the religious curriculum, as it included instruction in Vinaya rituals and tantric empowerments that the Dalai Lama would have to perform in his ceremonial duties.[1234] Also, it is the responsibility of the Dalai Lama to lead the preliminary examinations of the candidates for the decree of *geshé,* prior to the final judging of candidates at the Mönlam Chenmo*,* and for that it would be helpful to go through the curriculum himself.[1235] Although the philosophical portion of the curriculum was not likely to have been directly put into practice, it was important for the Dalai Lama to be familiar with the ideas taught in the curriculum for reasons that went beyond using it in practice or ritual. The Dalai Lama was expected to spread Geluk Buddhism in Avalokiteśvara's Buddha-field of Tibet; that he would "turn the wheel of dharma of sutra and tantra" was one of the stated goals of Ngawang Tsültrim's tutorship.[1236] Thus it was important for him to be an accomplished scholar who knew everything there was to know about the Geluk tradition of Buddhism. The curriculum prioritized spreading the dharma of Tsongkhapa to sentient beings over knowing the practical arts of governance, which could be delegated to the regent and other government officials.

How did the tutorship relate to the Dalai Lama's place in the *chösi sungdrel*? There is a tension between the apparent use of the Dalai Lama's education as a political pretext to keep him from power, and a genuine religious motivation on the part of the Dalai Lama and his tutor, the regent (as well as the others responsible for

[1234] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:196a–196b.
[1235] Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 43. Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 4a. Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Academic Degress in Buddhist Philosophy*, 21.
[1236] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:196b.

this arrangement). The biographies partly confirm the judgment by many scholars that the Eighth Dalai Lama was disinclined to rule and preferred to focus on the religious side of his duties.[1237] He passively accepted the appointment of a regent and did not demand a political role. However, he did also expresses some dissatisfaction with the weighty responsibilities of a Dalai Lama, indicating that he would have preferred a purely religious life: "I would like to go into retreat, but in the palace I am like a bird kept prisoner in a cage."[1238] (He did do some tantric retreats, in order to be able to give religious empowerments).[1239] Despite the vague suggestions that he was not always the most brilliant of students, the biographies do try to portray the Dalai Lama as having a genuine and active interest in the curriculum. For instance, he made a special request to study valid cognition through *[A Commentary] on the Pramāṇavarttika: Clarifying the Path to Emancipation* (*Rnam 'grel thar lam gsal byed*) of Gyeltsabjé.[1240]

There is also a contradiction between educating the Dalai Lama in preparation for his duties, and the idea of the Dalai Lama as an enlightened, omniscient being who should already know everything necessary. The Dalai Lama as an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara was one "[who has] previously perfected all the good qualities of learning and realization" and knew everything there is to know.[1241] His education was a means to "tame disciples," to lead ordinary people who are not

[1237] For instance, Richardson contends that "he was a mild and contemplative person with no great interest in temporal affairs and…for most of his life he was content to let a Regent conduct the administration." Richardson, *A Short History of Tibet*, 59.
[1238] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:26a.
[1239] Ibid., 2:188b.
[1240] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 19a; Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:196a.
[1241] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:196b.

advanced bodhisattvas, setting an example to encourage them to make effort on the path to enlightenment.[1242] Unenlightened beings actually study need to in order to learn Buddhism, and might encounter difficulties such as “mental distraction,” the illness of their tutors, and dissatisfaction with their chosen way of life. The Dalai Lama's education, in setting such an example, fulfilled one of the primary missions of the Ganden Palace: creating the conditions under which many are able to learn the dharma and obtain its benefits.

In this light, the dual roles of the Dalai Lama and the regent can be understood as a consequence of the gap between the ideal qualities of one who can incarnate as a *tülku* and the full range of human flaws that the *tülkus* displayed in reality. In human terms, there were ways in which Ngawang Tsültrim was actually superior to the Dalai Lama, and therefore it made sense for him to take on his duties of the *chösi sungdrel*, in addition to serving as his *yongdzin*. In the religious sphere, he had many more years of training, and had been recognized as mastering the philosophical and tantric subjects. Ngawang Tsültrim also had greater learning and experience in the political sphere. But if the Dalai Lama's relative youth and experience were merely a display, he could serve as the true master of Ganden Palace's *chösi sungdrel*, while the regent outwardly performed many of the duties for both religion and politics.

Dalai Lama and the religious sphere

The regent's duties for the religious side of the *chösi sungdrel* clearly did not usurp the Dalai Lama's preeminence in that sphere. Even though he was still young,

[1242] Ibid.

the Dalai Lama served over his full range of ceremonial duties, sometimes assisted by the regent. The Dalai Lama's presence was essential to the Losar ceremonies and the Great Prayer Festival. Just before New Year's, he would receive the annual offerings in preparation for the ceremony and assemble the lists of the order of ceremonies.[1243] The New Year's ceremonies always began with a private ceremony in the Dalai Lama's quarters, attended by both Dalai Lama and regent. [1244] The Dalai Lama was the leader of the festival of the miracle of Śrāvastī on the eighth day, receiving offerings, and leading the ceremonies of worshipping the Jowo images.[1245] Later on in the ceremony, he invoked Pelden Lhamo and circumambulated on the Barkor with the *ambans*, making visits to all the temples, especially the Jokhang.[1246] (The Dalai Lama often focused his devotion on Pelden Lhamo as his protectress, doing meditative retreats to her at other times).[1247] He gave audiences to large crowds of laypeople at this time, and led prayers to the great tankga of Maitreya which was taken outside of the Potala.[1248] The Dalai Lama's presence was also required at the other religious events of the Lhasa calendar, like the commemoration of Tsongkhapa's death[1249] and torma ceremonies performed on fixed dates.[1250] At every ceremony in which the regent's appearance was customary, the Dalai Lama's presence was essential.

[1243] Ibid., 2:83a, 124a.
[1244] Ibid., 2:28a.
[1245] Ibid., 2:28a–28b.
[1246] Ibid., 2:29b.
[1247] Ibid., 2:49b.
[1248] Ibid., 2:30a.
[1249] Ibid., 2:57a.
[1250] Ibid., 2:69a.

The Dalai Lama made regular appearances in Lhasa and elsewhere to perform rituals, give audiences, receive dignitaries, and inaugurate new state projects. Everyday rituals that he performed in the Potala included observing Kālacakra dances and making rain by doing ablutions and smoke offerings to the protector deities and *nāgas*.[1251] He also, from time to time, observed debates by monks from Sera and the other great *densas*.[1252] Those who had newly received the title of *geshé* would have an audience with the Dalai Lama and the regent in the Sunshine Room of the upper Potala.[1253] He held monthly audiences with lamas and officials, at which tea was served and exhortations given to serve the dharma, and received minor *trülkus* when they came to Lhasa.[1254] The Dalai Lama was also in charge of the party that saw off the Panchen Lama as he departed for Beijing and gave him the parting offerings.[1255] Before the regent departed for Beijing at the end of his service, the Dalai Lama extended his protection, and performed rituals for favorable conditions on his journey.[1256] The Dalai Lama, even more so than the regent, was the face of Ganden Palace's support for Buddhism, particularly for monasteries and lamas.

The Dalai Lama carried his role as premier religious representative outside of Lhasa. He visited the great Geluk monasteries from time to time, granting audiences to the monks and receiving offerings and long life ceremonies in return.[1257] He was

[1251] Ibid., 2:33b.
[1252] Ibid., 2:42a.
[1253] Ibid., 2:90b–91a.
[1254] Ibid., 2:32b, 195a.
[1255] Ibid., 2:75a, 76a.
[1256] Ibid., 2:265b.
[1257] For instance he paid a visit to Drepung: Ibid., 2:189a–189b.

often present at the inauguration of the regent's construction projects, as when the new Upper Tantric College was inaugurated, and when a new monastic college at Ganden was erected.[1258] When the great statue of Jowo Jangchup Chenpo was consecrated, he presided over the ceremonies,[1259] and he received donations for the new Maitreya prayer ceremony and temple at Sera Me.[1260] At times, the Dalai Lama accompanied Ngawang Tsültrim on pilgrimages and visits to temples, as on the *lingkor* of Ganden,[1261] and the regular offerings which were made at Ramoché.[1262] In this vein, they visited hot springs at Serden, which were renowned for the healing powers.[1263] The Dalai Lama's most important prilgrimage was a visit to the prophetic Lhamo Lake at Chökorgyel, a fulfillment of an intention he had previously made. The lake is associated with the second Dalai Lama, so this was a way to establish a connection with the previous members of his lineage.[1264] As the Eighth Dalai Lama travelled outside Lhasa, he reaffirmed the Ganden Palace's support of the Geluk monasteries, and the preeminence of his own lineage.

The Dalai Lama had control over the Geluk administrative hierarchy, including the Ganden Throne. Ngawang Tsültrim's official appointment to the Ganden Throne was in the hands of the Dalai Lama, rather than the emperor. While Ngawang Tsültrim was already slated to hold this position by virtue of having been a former abbot of one of the tantric colleges, in an effectively automatic succession, the Dalai

[1258] Ibid., 2:44a.
[1259] Ibid., 2:83b.
[1260] Ibid., 2:90b.
[1261] Ibid., 2:44b.
[1262] Ibid., 2:87a–87b.
[1263] Ibid., 2:78b.
[1264] Ibid., 2:30a.

Lama still had to make the formal appointment. As discussed earlier, the Dalai Lama oversaw the ranking of *geshés*, and the appointment of *lama umdzé*, that entered monks into the succession to become Ganden Tripa.[1265] (However, the Dalai Lama was too young to do this for Ngawang Tsültrim himself). When Ngawang Tsültrim resigned from the Ganden Throne and the cabinet minister implored him to stay on for a few years, the Dalai Lama was present at the negotiations, also encouraging him to stay. He was the one who ultimately accepted Ngawang Tsültrim's resignation.[1266] In this way, the Dalai Lama was not only a ritual leader but one who had control over the monastic leadership of the Geluk order.

While the Dalai Lama and the regent shared many of the religious duties of Ganden Palace, the ritual support of the Dalai Lama necessarily had to be performed by another, specifically the regent. The regent frequently performed "long life ceremonies" (*zhabs brten*, literally "foot firming") for him. These *shapten* were done at specific set times during larger rituals (during the Great Prayer Ceremony), and on special occasions when it was deemed especially necessary. Offerings were often done for the long life of both the emperor and Dalai Lama, simultaneously.[1267] The long life ceremonies were typically performed at the same time as his teachings from the Ganden Throne, and accompanied by an offering of a maṇḍala and explanation of its deities.[1268] The twenty-fifth birthday of the Dalai Lama was an occasion for an unusual number of *shabten* ceremonies, since it was one of the "obstacle years" for the Dalai Lama. An obstacle year occurs every twelve years in

[1265] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 4a–4b.
[1266] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:182a.
[1267] Ibid., 2:57b.
[1268] Ibid., 2:89a, 116b.

someone's life, requiring extra caution, and extra rituals to remove inauspicious influences. In addition, he sponsored and consecrated an Amitāyus statue for the Dalai Lama, and built a temple to enclose it, in order to bring about the auspicious influence of the Buddha of longevity at this critical time.[1269] The Dalai Lama and regent also performed a ceremony with the protector of Samyé Tsiu Marpo (Tsi 'u dmar po, called *sokdak* (*Srog bdag*) or “lord of life”) in order to ward off these evil influences.[1270] The regent was called upon at other times to ritually remove inauspicious conditions for the Dalai Lama.[1271] The protection of the Dalai Lama was one of Ganden Palace's religious tasks which the Dalai Lama could not perform himself, and thus fell on the regent.

The Dalai Lama and the regent were intertwined religiously in a way that affirms they were both competent in the religious sphere of Ganden Palace. One way concerns the relationship of the bodhisattvas and buddhas with which they were identified. The biography takes care to show that Ngawang Tsültrim was a bodhisattva or buddha equal to the Dalai Lama, perhaps to boost Ngawang Tsültrim's status or to avoid the unseemliness of the Dalai Lama being replaced as ruler by an ordinary being. When he was being initiated as regent, the Dalai and Panchen Lamas were said to form a triad with him, as Avalokiteśvara, Amitābha, and Krakucchanda respectively.[1272] The Dalai Lama's empowerment, the blessing of

[1269] Ibid., 2:124b, 130b.
[1270] Ibid., 2:129b.
[1271] Ibid., 2:123a.
[1272] Ibid., 2:24a–24b. While the distinction between bodhisattvas and buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism is often fuzzy (especially when it comes to incarnate lamas), Krakucchanda was the first Buddha of the present eon. Identifying Ngawang Tsültrim with him is perhaps meant to show that he was a full Buddha, not merely a bodhisattva. Although Avalokiteśvara is a “mere” celestial bodhisattva, I do not think this is meant to make Ngawang Tsültrim *superior* to the Dalai Lama.

Avalokiteśvara, is necessary for the regent to take his place as ruler of Tibet. The regent and Dalai Lama are linked to each other through prophecies and omens. When Ngawang Tsültrim was appointed as *thamka lama*, it was the Dalai Lama's testimony that the statue of Pelden Lhamo turned east and then returned to its original position, indicating that Ngawang Tsültrim was to go to Beijing for a time but return home eventually to Tibet.[1273] Ngawang Tsültrim is connected through prophecy to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas as well. In the Ganden Tripas' biography, Ngawang Tsültrim had an early vision of being seated on the throne of Dromtön ('Brom ston, 1004-1064), a previous incarnation of the First Dalai Lama. This indicated that he was to do "both the religious and political work of the omniscient Lord of Conquerors" as Ganden Tripa and regent.[1274] The prophecy is compared to one found in the Fifth Dalai Lama's history of Tibet, fortelling that the Dalai Lama would come to rule Tibet.[1275] Karmic connections like these belie the notion that the regent was a secular or unelightened replacement for the Dalai Lama, even in the religious sphere. Still, the Dalai Lama was more essential to the religious side of the *chösi sungdrel*. He and the regent shared religious and ritual responsibilities, and much of the regent's responsibility in the sphere of *chö* involved being the caretaker and promoter of the Dalai Lama.

Dalai Lama and the political sphere

The political side of Tibet's *chösi sungdrel,* just as much as the religious side, was seen as stemming ultimately from the Dalai Lama, regardless of whether the

[1273] Ibid., 2:255a.
[1274] "Rgyal ba'i byung gnas (P2557)"; Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 2b.
[1275] Grags pa mkhas grub, "Trichen Namtar," 2b.

regent was the one who actually wielded it. According to the author of the Ganden Tripas' biography, all regents prior to Ngawang Tsültrim performed all their duties in accordance with their respective Dalai Lamas' wishes.[1276] (Of course, to suggest otherwise would be too subversive for any publication coming out of a Tibetan institution and too impious for a hagiographical *namthar*.) Even when the biographer depicts a popular perception that the Dalai Lama and regent were at odds, specifically in regard to Desi Sangyé Gyatso and the Sixth Dalai Lama, he claims that this was not true in reality and that they had not the slightest disagreement.[1277] The biographers take care to depict Ngawang Tsültrim and the Eighth Dalai Lama likewise as being free from disagreement. Ngawang Tsültrim's authority and his policies derived from the Dalai Lama. The regent described his own regency as "doing the work of the two traditions for the Dalai Lama."[1278] His advice to lesser officials described the governance of Ganden Palace as "the work of the Dalai Lama" in both religion and politics:

> To each of the leaders and workers of the districts and estates, he gave thorough instructions, both peaceful and wrathful [*zhi drag*], about how they must have sincerity, reverence, and respect in whatever activities of the government's religion and politics which have ripened in the service of the Dalai Lama; and must cherish the *miser*.[1279]

The revenues of Ganden Palace are also described as belonging to the Dalai Lama in Ngawang Tsültrim's decrees, which urged officials not to use government revenue inappropriately as it would dishonor the incarnation.[1280] In the biographies, there are

[1276] Ibid., 9b.
[1277] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:10a.
[1278] Ibid., 2:34b.
[1279] Ibid., 2:55b.
[1280] Ibid., 2:219a.

few indications that Ngawang Tsültrim and the Dalai Lama directly interacted to formulate policy. They did meet in regular audiences to “discuss religion and politics,” but what they said is not recorded.[1281] Still, according to the biography even Ngawang Tsültrim's own successes in leadership are described as not due to his own efforts, but ultimately “due to the kindness of the Dalai Lama,” whose government was an expression of the Buddha-field of Avalokiteśvara.[1282] This appears to have been an expression of humility, indicating that he was not usurping the Dalai Lama in terms of prestige, or seeking personal credit for his actions. As regent, he was just a caretaker of responsibilities that really belong to the Dalai Lama. On the other hand, Ngawang Tsültrim was legitimizing his actions. He may not have been able to claim much authority on his own, or in his role as the emperor's chosen leader (after all, the emperor was an outsider and did not necessarily understand Tibetan ways). But if his actions came from the Dalai Lama, whom all Tibetans accepted (at least ideally) as the rightful owner of Ganden Palace's *chösi sungdrel*, all loyal Tibetans and devotees of Geluk Buddhism would have to obey him.

The Dalai Lama had a diplomatic role in receiving foreigners and pilgrims. He greeted visiting Mongolian monks at the Potala and performed tantric rituals for them.[1283] He held an audience with representatives from the Bhutanese *desi* while spending the summer in Norbulingka.[1284] He received gifts from the emperor in his

[1281] Ibid., 2:123b.
[1282] Ibid., 2:221b.
[1283] Ibid., 2:69a.
[1284] Ibid., 2:81a.

annual *dreltsé*, just like the regent.[1285] He visited Tsang on a state visit of sorts in 1783, and returned the next year to visit the new incarnation of the Panchen Lama in Shigatsé.[1286] There he gave the vows and tonsure of an "intermediate *upāsaka*" to the Panchen Lama.[1287] On the return journey from Zhigatse, he gave many audiences to the villagers on the way, thousands of whom stopped what they were doing to come and see him.[1288] This indicates that the Dalai Lama was the focus of popular devotion in this era.[1289] In all these cases, while it can be difficult to separate his political and religious roles, one can see the Dalai Lama serving as head of state.

The Dalai Lamas' families were crucial to the Tibetan political structure, as the families of Dalai Lamas (beginning with the Seventh) were often given titles of nobility and estates.[1290] The appointment of members of these families to the *kalön* or lesser offices led to rampant nepotism within Tibetan government in the eyes of the Qing. The emperor had the power to appoint members of the *kashak*,[1291] but regents like Ngawang Tsültrim suggested who should be appointed, so they had influence of the composition of the *kashak*. The Seventh Dalai Lama's family, named Samdrup Podrang (Bsam grub pho brang) was still prominent in Ngawang Tsültrim's

[1285] Ibid., 2:139a.
[1286] Ibid., 2:152b, 165b.
[1287] The text says that he was given an *upasaka* (*dge bsnyen*) ordination, but that is a lay ordination does not require tonsure. The intermediate *upasaka* (*dge bsnyen bar ma*) ordination is often given to young monks who are not old enough to be ordained as a novice; the Panchen Lama would have been very young at the time. Ibid., 2:169a.
[1288] Ibid., 2:171b–172a.
[1289] Ibid., 2:18b.
[1290] The practice of elevating the Dalai Lama's family to the aristocracy continued throughout the Ganden Palace period. Although the emperor's 1793 reforms addressed nepotism and curbed the independent power of the *tülkus* through the Golden Urn ceremony, he did not end the ennobling of the Dalai Lamas' relatives. Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 22.
[1291] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:149.

day. included his nephews Tashi Namgyel (Bkra shis rnam rgyal, d. 1791?) who served for a brief time in the cabinet during the Gorkha war, and Kelsang Namgyel (Bskal bzang rnam rgyal) who was the monk *kalön* or minister from 1779 to 1792.[1292] It was Ngawang Tsültrim who sent a *dreltsé* via the *ambans* suggesting that the Seventh Dalai Lama's nephew Kelsang Namgyel be appointed as the monk *kalön*.[1293] The *dreltsé* explains that these officials were typically chosen from among the personal servants of the Dalai Lama, and Kelsang Namgyel and his uncle were loyal chief stewards (it is not mentioned that both were related to the Dalai Lama himself, though of course the emperor would have been aware of that).[1294] Another prominent official closely tied to the Dalai Lama was Jampa Topden (Byams pa stobs ldan), a monk official tasked with finance. He was not part of these aristocratic families, but the personal treasurer of the Dalai Lama and one of Ngawang Tsültrim's students, who helped write Ngawang Tsültrim's biography. His connections mattered when he received a *kashak* appointment from the emperor in 1792, which is described as a reward for writing the biography.[1295] Being connected with the Dalai Lama made it more likely that one would be close to Ngawang Tsültrim, and be appointed to a high position in the Tibetan government.

When the Eighth Dalai Lama took the throne, his Lalu (Lha klu) family rose to prominence. The Dalai Lama's nephew (Blo bzang thub bstan dbang phyug, 1775-

[1292] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 34–35. These relative of the Seventh Dalai Lama receive brief mentions in the biography. For instance, Tashi Namgyel was part of the regent's reception party and Kelsang Namgyel was involved in the restoration project at Trulnang. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:16b, 51a.
[1293] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 161–162.
[1294] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:161–162.
[1295] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 219. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:397b.

1813) became the Jebtsundampa of Mongolia, and Ngawang Tsültrim took responsibility for his education.[1296] (Educating the Jebtsundampa could also be considered service to the Qing, who wanted to gain the loyalty of the Mongols by patronizing Tibetan Buddhism). Ngawang Tsültrim was close to the younger brother of the Dalai Lama, Tsültrim Dargyé (Tshul khrims dar rgyas). He was given an appointment to the monastery of Penpo Nalendra in 1780, and Ngawang Tsültrim helped appoint him as private treasurer.[1297] At the end of his life, Tsültrim Dargyé was involved in Ngawang Tsültrim's funeral services, as well as helping to write his biography.[1298] Most notoriously, two of the Dalai Lama's relatives, his brother Lobsang Dorjé (Blo bzang rdo rje, d. 1791) and his cousin Lobsang Gedun Drakpa (Blo bzang dge 'dun grags pa, d. 1792) were blamed for being poor influences on the Dalai Lama's government, and were temporarily exiled to Beijing in the wake of the Gorkha War.[1299] The long biography glosses over the emperor's judgement of the Dalai Lama's family: after rescinding his plan to put the *amban* in charge, he is depicted as punishing only the *kalön* Sonam Wangyel. Even when the emperor declared that the Tibetan government was incompetent and reappointed Ngawang Tsültrim, he blamed the Tibetan officials in general without singling out the Dalai Lama's brothers by name.[1300] This episode highlights the negative side of the influence of the Dalai Lama's family, which ultimately led the Qianlong emperor to try

[1296] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 40. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:321b.
[1297] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:109a.
[1298] Ibid., 2:377a, 397b–398a.
[1299] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 40–41. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:324a.
[1300] Ngawang Tsültrim did participate in Lobsang Dorjé's funeral service, so this brother was not totally disgraced. Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:313b–314a, 365a.

to curtail the power of the lineage through such reforms as the Golden Urn. Still, the practice of ennobling the families of the Dalai Lama continued through the end of Ganden Palace in 1959, a concrete way that the Dalai Lama remained politically important whether or not he actually ruled.

The Eighth Dalai Lama did not play much of an active role in politics until 1786. Still, there were clear ways that the *chösi sungdrel* could be said to belong to him anyway. All the actions of the Ganden Palace government were said to derive from him, even though they were actually undertaken by a regent. The Dalai Lama continued to act as state representative in religious ceremonies and diplomatic visits. His family and personal associates were among the first in line to be chosen for high political office under Ngawang Tsültrim, a way of confirming the Dalai Lama's political influence.

Dalai Lama as symbol of Ganden Palace

Under his government, Ngawang Tsültrim continued to affirm the centrality of the Dalai Lama to the identity of Tibet, as embodiments of Ganden Palace's *chösi sungdrel*. He used the regalia of the Tibetan court as a way to reinforce the continuity of his reign with the past Dalai Lamas (and the Ganden Tripas). He had restored the ceremonial costumes, associated with great rulers from Songtsen Gampo to the Fifth Dalai Lama, which were used by government officers on state occasions.[1301] These costumes are particularly composed of turquoise earrings and “soul” (*bla*) turquoises (which attract deities which protect the *sok* (*srog*), life-force, of the people), and also other sorts of earrings, scarves, robes, and a hat with

[1301] Ibid., 2:217b–218a.

ornaments on top.[1302] The traditions of these costumes originated (at least according to legend) with Songtsen Gampo, and was continued by Desi Pakmodrupa and the (Geluk-friendly) Rinpungpa reigme, before falling into disuse in the (Kagyü-friendly) Tsangpa regime.[1303] The Fifth Dalai Lama, when he came to power, revived this traditional dress for ceremonial occasions, Tibetanizing the ceremonies at a time of great Mongol influence.[1304] This restoration extended to other forms of government regalia, such as horses' ornamentation and banners, dancing costumes, and equipment for traveling.[1305] George Dreyfus sees these periodic restoration projects as an expression of Tibetan nationalism, which emphasize the shared links that Tibetans have with the imperial legacy whose rightful successor is the Ganden Palace.[1306] Of course there were many other symbols of Tibet which Ngawang Tsültrim promoted, many of which involved the Dalai Lamas.

The Potala is the primary symbol of the Ganden Palace and the Dalai Lamas, as the place from which the *chösi sungdrel* is carried out, so it is no surprise that one of Ngawang Tsültrim's greatest projects was renovating it. His renovation project of the Potala renewed the original vision of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama for the palace, an edifice that strongly associated with the Great Fifth and contains many of his relics.[1307] The temples along the Barkor, which had originally been constructed by Desi Sangyé Gyatso were refurbished.[1308] The woodwork, stone flooring, beams, and

[1302] Ibid., 2:217b.
[1303] The sectarian nature of this narrative is evident, with the intent of writing a Kagyü regime out of the story of Tibet and its dharma. Ibid., 2:217b–218a.
[1304] Richardson, "Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree," 339.
[1305] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:218a.
[1306] Dreyfus, "Cherished Memories, Cherished Communities: Proto-Nationalism in Tibet," 312.
[1307] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:207a.
[1308] Ibid., 2:210b–211a.

frescoes of the shrines and the Barkor were all restored.[1309] and temples within the palace were renovated as well.[1310] The Fifth Dalai Lama had wanted to make paintings of the life of the Buddha on the Barkor, and was not able to do so in his lifetime. Ngawang Tsültrim completed this project.[1311] He drafted a number of new rules, and reaffirmed old rules to further protect the sanctity of the Potala. For instance, the rules forbade builders from encroaching on the Tsuklakhang (Jokhang) or building higher than it.[1312] They also defined how the different kinds of people (servants, aristocrats, monks) could approach and enter the Potala, affirming the Dalai Lama's place at the apex of the Tibetan hierarchy.[1313] In addition, Ngawang Tsültrim ordered people to maintain silence around the chamber where the Dalai Lama received his teachings, and made provisions for the protection of birds and wildlife.[1314] Aside from this project, Ngawang Tsültrim was generally in charge of the material goods belonging to the Dalai Lama and the Potala, commissioning or refurbishing *tangkas*, ritual articles, and a tent for the Dalai Lama.[1315] By taking charge of the renovations of the Potala, Ngawang Tsültrim was affirming that the Dalai Lamas were still considered central to Tibet as a nation, its government and religion, in a way that the regent was not.

Accordingly, the regent paid homage to the Dalai Lama lineage directly or indirectly through other forms of patronage. He arranged a commemoration of the

[1309] Ibid., 2:211a.
[1310] Ibid., 2:211b.
[1311] These paintings are located on the outside wall of the Jokhang, which no longer forms part of the Barkor. Ibid., 2:212b.
[1312] Ibid., 2:210a.
[1313] Ibid., 2:207b.
[1314] Ibid., 2:208b.
[1315] Ibid., 2:217a–217b.

life of the Seventh Dalai Lama, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death.[1316] Three extra days of rituals were announced during the Great Prayer Festival, supported by an endowment that Ngawang Tsültrim put together from the property of an extinct aristocratic line.[1317] Many of Ngawang Tsültrim's publication projects also honored the Dalai Lamas. As described earlier, they included a record of teachings received by the Seventh Dalai Lama, and a Vinaya manual that the Seventh Dalai Lama had treasured.[1318] The Dalai Lama was also the object of the dedication prayers of the colophon when the Collected Works of Tsongkhapa were published (and probably other works too).[1319] Ngawang Tsültrim (and his biographer) viewed the past Dalai Lamas as the standard by which all other rulers of the Ganden Palace should be judged. The Fifth Dalai Lama is viewed by the biographer as an ideal ruler to be emulated: Ngawang Tsültrim is said to have filled the state storehouses with grain as in the time of the Great Fifth.[1320] The greatness of the Fifth is also discussed in Ngawang Tsültrim's decrees, in which he is held up as the greatest example of Avalokiteśvara's kindness since the time of Songtsen Gampo, and depicted as one who created a golden age in Tibet.[1321] As described previously, many of Ngawang Tsültrim's and the Dalai Lama's pilgrimages were to places associated with past Dalai Lamas, affirming the position’s supreme political and religious importance. Through various means of paying homage, Ngawang Tsültrim reinforced the centrality of the Dalai Lama lineage to Tibetan religious and political identity. This is

[1316] Grags pa mkhas grub, “Trichen Namtar,” 29b.
[1317] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:62a–62b.
[1318] Ibid., 2:147a–147b, 163a.
[1319] Ibid., 2:144a.
[1320] Ibid., 2:221a.
[1321] Ibid., 2:228a–228b.

one way that the Dalai Lama lineage was encouraged to endure, even when much of the work of the *chösi sungdrel* was being undertaken by the regent.

The Dalai Lama returns to power

The Eighth Dalai Lama's "tutelage" eventually ended, and he was gradually given more power until the regent left for Beijing. The accounts of British diplomats such as Saumel Turner indicate a certain level of intrigue and political tension in these decisions. The regents Demo and Ngawang Tsültrim wanted to keep the Dalai Lama out of power, while the Panchen Lama asked the emperor to return the high lamas to the throne.[1322] In an 1784 letter to Warren Hastings, Samuel Turner recounted the political situation in Tibet.[1323] He based much of his information on the testimony of officials in the Panchen Lama's court: the brother of the Sixth Panchen Lama who served as the regent of the young Seventh Panchen Lama, and the Panchen's cupbearer or "Soopoon Choomboo" (probably *gsol dpon chen po*). These officials were obviously biased toward the Panchen Lama, exaggerating his favor with the emperor, as well as flattering the British officials by claiming that the Panchen Lama was sympathetic to their desire to open up trade. According to them, the Sixth Panchen Lama, while visiting Beijing, requested the emperor "that the administration of the different governments, as had been anciently the custom in Tibet, to be restored to the Lamas." The emperor promised to replace Ngawang Tsültrim ("Nimoheim" or *nominhan* Ngawang Tsültrim) with the Panchen Lama, but the latter died in 1780 so the regent had to stay.[1324] The Panchen's entourage

[1322] Turner, *Embassy to Tibet*, 363–365.
[1323] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:361–380.
[1324] Turner, *Embassy to Tibet*, 363.

blamed both Ngawang Tsültrim (like his predecessor Demo) for blocking the English diplomatically and for being hostile to Tashilhunpo, motivated by "a conformity to popular opinions, knowing that the time of his authority was limited."[1325] The regents were seen as diminishing the influence of both the Panchen and Dalai Lamas, but the emperor "as a votary of their faith and naturally jealous of their dignity" was interested in restoring them to power. Consequently, it was expected that Ngawang Tsültrim's time in office would soon be over and that the Dalai Lama would "rise to [his] former glory and splendor."[1326]

The Dalai Lama was given the seals of office by the emperor in 1781, perhaps due to the intervention of the Panchen Lama , but apparently little changed.[1327] Offerings were received throughout the year in recognition of this upcoming event, and eventually the edict with the golden seal was delivered by the Qing officials.[1328] There was an elaborate festival in Namgyel monastery with incense, banners, and music, long life ceremonies and banquets following, and monetary donations from the monks of 3,400 *sang* for the ceremonies.[1329] But all this festivity did not mean that the Dalai Lama was permitted to rule at this point; the biography does not record him making major governmental decisions as long as Ngawang Tsültrim remained in office. Shakabpa claims that the Dalai Lama personally requested that the regent continue to serve even after he "took up the

[1325] Ibid., 364.
[1326] Ibid., 365.
[1327] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:119a. Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 384.
[1328] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:109b, 118a.
[1329] It is unclear from whom this donation came; perhaps from the government, perhaps from the monks in attendance. Ibid., 2:119a.

political and religious responsibilities," and he appointed his own *yongdzin* (Yeshé Gyeltsen) in order to continue his studies.[1330] Ngawang Tsültrim's biography does not portray the Dalai Lama as taking an active part in either of those decisions.[1331] Regardless of who was responsible, the Dalai Lama continued to study, rather than rule, until Ngawang Tsültrim left for Beijing in 1786. In the meantime, Ngawang Tsültrim continued to rule as regent.

The Dalai Lama was finally given actual power once the regent departed for Beijing in 1786. Ngawang Tsültrim, just before departing, formally offered the work of government and religion into the hands of the Dalai Lama, this time for good.[1332] The biography does not use similar language when the seals were handed over in 1781. Ngawang Tsültrim also confirmed to the emperor, upon arriving in Beijing, that he had handed over his seals and "the work of the two traditions" to the Dalai Lama, as (it is implied) the emperor had requested.[1333] The emperor had allowed a true transfer of power to the Dalai Lama, but he soon changed his tune. As discussed earlier, after the Gorkha War, the emperor perceived the Dalai Lama's rule to be incompetent and saw his brothers as a corrupting influence. Although he was responsible for more decisions, the Dalai Lama did not have full control of the government, since the *kashak* made the decision to reject the Nepalese demands in 1788. The Dalai Lama's involvement is not mentioned, even to ratify the decision.[1334] When the emperor suggested that the Dalai Lama be stripped of his powers,

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[1330] Ibid., 2:503–504.
[1331] The biography notes that the appointment of Yeshé Gyeltsen was made but it does not say by whom (most likely, it was by the regent). Ibid., 2:130a–130b.
[1332] Ibid., 2:262b.
[1333] Ibid., 2:285a.
[1334] Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 37–38. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:510.

Ngawang Tsültrim insisted that he should continue to have full responsibility for appointments of local officials and religious figures.[1335] However, the emperor moved to limit the power of the Dalai Lama and increase the power of his own chosen officers. The Eighth Dalai Lama's tasks were again delegated to the regent Tatsak in 1789, as discussed in Chapter Six, and (aside from the brief reign of Ngawang Tsültrim) this arrangement lasted until the Dalai Lama's death. The result of the emperor's reforms of 1793 was that the Dalai Lama's powers would be greatly reduced and shared with the *ambans* (and practically, the regents), but he still remained responsible, in a symbolic sense, for the *chösi sungdrel*.

Conclusion

A popular theory among both Tibetans and Westerners holds that the Dalai Lama lineage was in decline or even inauthentic at the time of the ascendancy of the regents. The current Fourteenth Dalai Lama, as he was interviewed for Thomas Laird's *Story of Tibet,* said of the Seventh through the Twelfth Dalai Lamas that they were not capable rulers, did not feature in his dreams (unlike the Fifth and the Thirteenth, with whom the Fourteenth had strong connections), and were not particularly related to "Chenrizi's master plan."[1336] In an interview with Glenn Mullin, the Dalai Lama noted several prophecies that suggested there would be only seven Dalai Lamas (although he disputed this interpretation), and speculated on rumors that the next seven formed a separate reincarnation lineage.[1337] Mullin and other authors have claimed that Tibetans were unsure whether to appoint another Dalai

[1335] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:314b.
[1336] Laird and Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, Fourteenth Dalai Lama, *The Story of Tibet*, 196.
[1337] Glenn H Mullin, *The Fourteen Dalai Lamas: A Sacred Legacy of Reincarnation*, ed. Valerie M Shepherd (Santa Fe, N.M.: Clear Light Publishers, 2001), 324–326.

Lama after the Seventh died and held a conference to decide whether to search for a new incarnation, although it is unclear what contemporary evidence there is for this.[1338] General works on Tibet generally portray the Dalai Lamas in the era as weak, with the Eighth Dalai Lama being disinclined toward politics and the subsequent Dalai Lamas dying young.[1339]

While there is some support in Ngawang Tsültrim's biography and other contemporary sources for the perception of decline, the position of the Dalai Lama lineage as the basis of the *chösi sungdrel* does not seem so insecure as is often portrayed. Turner's Tibetan narratives do indicate that the Dalai Lama was perceived as falling short of his former glory, due to the power of the regents which was supported by the emperor, and that many Tibetans—the Panchen Lama among them—wanted to restore the lineage to prominence. The biographies of Ngawang Tsültrim portray the Dalai Lama as passive in the face of being sidelined from power, dissatisfied with his life in the Potala, and losing the trust of the emperor as a competent ruler. But the symbolic centrality of the Dalai Lama to both the religious and political tasks of Ganden Palace never disappeared. The language of government used by Ngawang Tsültrim and his biographers depicted the Dalai Lama as the ultimate source of the *chösi sungdrel* (and even Ngawang Tsültrim's governing actions) and the Dalai Lama still served as ceremonial head of state. There was certainly no sign of his being sidelined in the religious sphere, since he participated in the full range of religious ceremonies that would be expected of a

[1338] Shakabpa states that a discussion was held about the recognition of the Eight Dalai Lama, and whether to appoint a regent, but not about whether to recognize a Dalai Lama at all. Ibid., 325. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:489.
[1339] For instance, Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 173.

Dalai Lama. The emperor (if the biographies can be believed) was persuaded of the great devotion that the Tibetans had for the Dalai Lama, and allowed him to stay on the throne amidst reforms that brought Tibet under closer Qing control.

The continuing role of the Dalai Lama, in spite of the ascendancy of the regents, was influenced by Tibetan nationalism. George Dreyfus describes Tibetan proto-nationalism in his article “Cherished Memories, Cherished Communities.” An important part of national identity, according to Dreyfus, is nostalgia or memory. Certain figures are continually evoked from the past, and connected with the present, to reinforce a communal identity. Songsten Gampo, the original incarnation of Avalokiteśvara, is evoked in this way at many points throughout Tibetan history.[1340] We already saw how his costumes were revived by successive Tibetan regimes, up through the Ganden Palace regime. Dreyfus also describes the 1751 constitution as the moment when Tibet came to be transformed from a “galactic polity” on Tambiah's model to a Weberian “semi-bureaucratic state.” However, it was still far from a modern nation-state due to its weak control over many regions and subordination to the Qing.[1341] Dreyfus does not emphasize this point but the Dalai Lama himself served as a “proto-nationalistic” symbol of the state and its *chösi sungdrel*, legitimizing the continued dominance of that incarnation lineage in theory if not in practice. Although many contemporary theorists of nationalism such as Benedict Anderson exclude pre-modern states, Ngawang Tsültrim's support of the religious and political status of the Dalai Lama, as depicted in the biography, can only be described as nationalistic.

[1340] Dreyfus, “Cherished Memories, Cherished Communities: Proto-Nationalism in Tibet,” 512–514.
[1341] Ibid., 505–506.

Conclusion

Having considered Ngawang Tsültrim's religious and political roles within the *chösi sungdrel*, and his relationships with the Qing court and the Dalai Lama, we can now reflect on his legacy in these spheres. What did Ngawang Tsültrim's regency mean for Tibetan government and religion, Tibet's relationship with China, and the role of the Dalai Lama? It is all too easy to read the past through the present, and from the perspective of the present, the regents can often appear as an inconvenient footnote. The Tibetan national narrative of today emphasizes the rule of strong Dalai Lamas, such as the Great Fifth and the Thirteenth, who were accomplished religious masters, wielded true political authority over an effectively independent Tibet, and stood up to the ruling powers of their times. By contrast, when the regents ruled Tibet in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Dalai Lamas were relatively marginalized and the Qing empire became increasingly influential in Tibetan affairs. It is easy to see the regents simply as a fall from Tibet's true potential, if they are remembered at all. But the reign of Ngawang Tsültrim, when seen from a different perspective, had far reaching consequences over later developments in the Ganden Palace. His influence extended to both the Tibetan government and Tibetan Buddhism, bolstering the political and religious influence of the Geluk monasteries and *tülku* lineages, the *chöyön* relationship with the emperors of China, and even the centrality of the Dalai Lama to Tibet's *chösi sungdrel*.

Ngawang Tsültrim and the future of Tibetan politics

The regency of Ngawang Tsültrim marked the beginning of a number of trends in Tibetan government that would continue through the next century. Most immediately, the era was only the beginning of Petech’s third period of the Tibetan

regency (1757-1895), in which the regents dominated the government to the exclusion of other figures (even though the Dalai Lamas formally remained the rulers of Tibet).[1342] The early deaths of the Ninth through Twelfth Dalai Lama allowed the regents to take power more or less continuously for the next century. The regency at this time came to be dominated by *tulkü* lineages.

The search for Ngawang Tsültrim's own reincarnation began shortly after his death, and Ngawang Jampel Tsültrim Gyatso (Ngag dbang 'jam dpal tshul khrims rgya mtsho, 1792-1864) was recognized as his successor. The *labrang* or "lama estate" of Tsemönling was only created later, sometime in the reign of the Jiaqing emperor (r. 1796-1820), probably around 1800.[1343] Ngawang Jampel Tsültrim Gyatso was also from the royal family of Choné, like Ngawang Tsültrim. The Tsemönling lineage became strongly tied to Choné and its royal family, who thus gained prestige and influence in Tibetan affairs, despite being from the Tibetan periphery.[1344] Meanwhile, after Ngawang Tsültrim's death, Tatsak Rinpoché was sent back to Tibet to continue as regent, a position he would hold until 1810.[1345] Another Demo regent rose to power in 1811, serving until 1818, the first instance of a *trülku* lineage being nominated twice to the regency.[1346] When he died, the second Tsemönling

[1342] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 378. Petech, *China and Tibet*, 242, 260.
[1343] Blo bzang thugs rje, *Ngawang Tsültrim Namthar*, 2:382a–382b. Chopri, "The Course of Securing the Succession to the Regency by the Tshe-Smon-Gling," 83n2.
[1344] Samten Chhosphel, "The Second Tsemonling, Ngawang Jampel Tsultrim Gyatso," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2011, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Trichen-73-Ngawang-Jampel-Tsultrim-Gyatso/6979.
[1345] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 386. He received a *labrang* of his own and became known as Kundeling.
[1346] "Ngag dbang blo bzang thub bstan 'jigs med rgya mtsho (P1812)." Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 2:565–568.

incarnation was appointed regent in 1819 and served until 1844; like Ngawang Tsültrim, he also served as Ganden Tripa during his regency (from 1837 to 1843).[1347] It is likely that he and other *tülkus* like Demo were already being groomed for the regency by the Qing. Evidence can be seen in the high status they were accorded, which we saw with the protocol dispute that involved the young Demo, and the recognition of more Tsemönling incarnations within the Choné kingdom, which had strong connection to the Qing.

The political history of Tibet over the ensuing years was marked by coups and intrigues based on inter-monastic rivalry. The Geluk hierarchy, however, always maintained power.[1348] The monasteries and their *tülku* lineages became more and more powerful within Tibetan power politics, and even in the choice of the Tibetan regent, as Qing influence eventually receded. Decreasing Qing oversight, coupled with the concentration of power in the hands of regents, led to corruption. The second Tsemönling regent was deposed by the *ambans* for abuse of power in 1844 at the instigation of his enemies in the cabinet, and the monks of Sera attempted unsuccessfully to free him.[1349] But this did not stop the future dominance of the regency by *tülkus*. The Seventh Panchen Lama (Blo bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma, 1782-1853) served as regent for nine months in the wake of Tsemönling's fall. The fourth Radreng incarnation (Ngag dbang blo bzang ye shes bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1816-1863) followed, serving from 1845 to 1862, with a brief interlude when the Eleventh

[1347] Chhosphel, "The Second Tsemonling, Ngawang Jampel Tsultrim Gyatso." Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 2:589.
[1348] Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics," 447. Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 386–393.
[1349] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 388–389.

Dalai Lama took power.[1350] Ganden and Drepung banded together to revolt against Radreng in 1862, and deposed him, bringing to power a lay cabinet minister Shedra (Bshad sgra dbang phyug rgyal po, 1795-1864) who ruled as *desi* for two years.[1351] There was an unsuccessful revolt against the next regent Lobsang Kyenrab Wangchuk (Blo bzang mkhyen rab dbang phyugs, the first Dedruk incarnation, r. 1864-1872) in 1871, again by the monks of Ganden.[1352] As *tülkus* continued to dominate the regency, and the Qing influence faded, the monks of the *densas* became the dominant influence in the politics of Lhasa.

These trends continued in the late nineteenth century, and Qing influence faded entirely. According to Petech, the Tibetan "ecclesiastical assembly" (*tshogs 'du*) was now making the appointments of the regents, with only perfunctory approval from the *ambans*.[1353] However, other sources record corrupt *ambans* demanding bribes for the appointment of regents, so they did not lose all influence.[1354] All three of the regents who served in the time of the Eighth Dalai Lama—Demo, Ngawang Tsültrim (Tsemönling), and Tatsak (Kundeling)—had reincarnations who succeeded to the regency. Another Kundeling incarnation (Ngag dbang dpal ldan chos kyi Rgyal mtshan) was appointed in 1875 by the *tsokdu*, serving until 1886.[1355] Finally, a Demo incarnation (De mo ngag dbang blo bzang 'phrin las rab rgyas, 1855-1899) served a third time as regent from 1886 to 1895.[1356] This third Demo regent would be charged

[1350] Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics," 448. Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:577–578.
[1351] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 2:604–606.
[1352] Petech, "The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," 391.
[1353] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 392–393.
[1354] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 199.
[1355] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 2:615.
[1356] Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics," 448.

with attempting to murder the Thirteenth Dalai Lama by means of esoteric tantric rites and died in prison. This put an end to the era of the regents; the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's place as ruler was secured.[1357] A third Tsemönling incarnation (Ngag dbang blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1864-1919), who was also from Choné and served as Ganden Tripa, served as a temporary regent in 1912 when the Thirteenth Dalai Lama fled a Qing invasion in the waning days of the empire.[1358] In the childhood of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama two *gyeltsaps* were appointed, another Radreng incarnation (Thub bstan 'jam dpal ye shes bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1912-1949) and Taktra (Stag brag ngag dbang gsung rab, 1874-1952). The great monasteries were involved in the politics over the regency up to the end of Ganden Palace. In 1947, the former regent Radreng was arrested, and his *labrang* seized*,* at the behest of the regent Taktra, leading to a revolt by some of the monks of Sera Je.[1359] Taktra stepped aside without incident when the Dalai Lama took power as requested by the *kashak* and other officials. Shortly thereafter, the People's Liberation Army crossed into Tibet in 1950. By the end of the Ganden Palace regime, the regency had reverted to its original purpose of substituting for a young Dalai Lama, and no longer had a monopoly over political power.

There is much evidence to support Goldstein's thesis that the Gelukpa monasteries continued to win the lion's share of power, land, and other resources in central Tibet, at the expense of the aristocracy.[1360] Ngawang Tsültrim had been tied

[1357] Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 43, 63.
[1358] Samten Chhosphel, "The Third Tsemonling, Ngawang Lobzang Tenpai Gyeltsen," *The Treasury of Lives*, 2011, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Trichen-87-Ngawang-Lobzang-Tenpai-Gyeltsen/6978.
[1359] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 2:900.
[1360] Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics"; Snellgrove and

to Sera and to the Geluk school as a whole, but he was positioned “above the fray” and did not foster intermonastic rivalries. (What Goldstein perhaps misses is that the Qing, before their influence receded in the mid-nineteenth century, did much to support this arrangement in which the monks had the upper hand). As Qing power declined and the regency came into the hands of rival *tülku* lineages, a united Geluk establishment gave way to factionalism between the individual *densas* and colleges. The phenomenon of mass monasticism would continue after Ngawang Tsültrim's reign; for instance, the numbers of monks more than doubled in Drepung from the time of Desi Sangyé Gyatso to the mid-twentieth century.[1361] The return to strong Dalai Lamas did not end these trends. The great monasteries successfully resisted the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's efforts at political reforms, particularly his efforts to tax them to strengthen the central government.[1362] Meanwhile the aristocrats were sidelined, something that can be seen in the statistics cited by Goldstein, which show that aristocratic estates reduced to ownership of 21 percent of the land of Tibet, the rest being divided between monastic and government lands.[1363] Aristocrats played increasingly smaller roles in the intrigues of Ganden Palace. Even the lay Shedra (who ruled only briefly) was a former monk who owed his rise to the monasteries of Drepung and Sera, but later disrobed.[1364] The reigns of Ngawang Tsültrim and his successors reveal that Tibetan “theocracy” was not just about the rule of the Dalai Lamas as bodhisattva kings of Ganden Palace, but also about the

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Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, 237.
[1361] Dreyfus, “Drepung: An Introduction.”
[1362] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 544.
[1363] Goldstein, “The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics,” 454.
[1364] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 165, 174–175.

clerical institutional power of the monasteries with their ritual and scholastic networks and landed wealth.

Future of the regency in religion

Schwieger states that the regents' "powers did not derive from the *tülku* status per se" because they served at the pleasure of the emperor, and in his view they were instruments of Qing power over Tibet's religio-political system.[1365] However, their *tülku* status was important because of the connections of their *labrangs* to the great monasteries. Moreover, these *tülku* lineages allowed for continued relationships with China's emperors.[1366] Following the regency of Ngawang Tsültrim, the *tülku* status of regents became the main source of the regents' religious prestige (some of his successors also had positions like Ganden Tripa). The successful religious career of Ngawang Tsültrim, and the ties he formed with the Qing and with the Geluk establishment, led to the establishment of the Tsemönling *tülku* lineage, endowed with a *labrang* in Sera Monastery. The Tsemönling lineage retained spiritual prestige and a high position within the political and religious hierarchy.[1367] The practice that developed of choosing regents from a small set of *tülku* lineages ensured a smooth succession, limiting the number of potential claimants to the position while ensuring that there was always someone who could fill the position at any given time. That said, the increasing political power of the *tülkus* who succeeded to the regency exposed the lineages to conflict and corruption that diminished their spiritual prestige. In the contemporary Tibetan setting it is often said, "a lama is not

[1365] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 160.
[1366] Ibid., 161, 171.
[1367] Cabezón, "The Sera Monastery Project."

necessarily a *tülku*, and a *tülku* is not necessarily a lama," as the wealth and influence of reincarnation lineages is not always accompanied by high moral standards, spiritual charisma, or learning.

The increasing power of the great *densas*, to which the regents owed their position, gradually reshaped Geluk Buddhism. According to Geoffrey Samuel, the relatively "clerical" emphasis of Geluk Buddhism in central Tibet, centered as it was on monasteries, ethical codes and scholasticism, was an outgrowth of political centralization and lavish state patronage.[1368] He sees this tendency as restricting originality and creativity, compared with the "shamanic" Buddhism (often of the nonsectarian *rimé* tradition) that prevailed in regions such as Kham with less state control. As he describes the trend toward clerical ossification: "there were still Gelugpa scholars whose work displayed originality and insight, but many of the authors of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries did little more than write commentaries, summaries, and textbooks based closely on the works of Tsongk'apa and his immediate followers."[1369] In support of Samuel's thesis, two contrasting works of Geluk scholars might illustrate this decline. According to Kapstein, Tuken Lobsang Chökyi Nyima (Thu'u bkwan blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1737-1802) had a rather ecumenical outlook that grew out of his experience in the Qing court, in the cosmpolitan world of Beijing. This led him to be a relatively original scholar. His *Collection of Tenets* (*Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*) was a masterpiece of synthesis, and demonstrated tolerance toward other sects, Buddhism outside Tibet, and even

[1368] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 559–560.
[1369] Ibid., 538.

other religions.[1370] But by the end of the Ganden Palace era, scholars were doing little other than reaffirming the existing tradition. Samuel depicts the works of Pabongkha Rinpoché (Pha bong kha bde chen snying po, 1878-1941) as promoting a highly sectarian view of the Geluk tradition, one that was the logical outgrowth of a state centered so strongly on that tradition.[1371] There came to be an inward turn in the outlook of Geluk Buddhism, encouraged by Tibet's increasing isolation and the union of religion and state. Ngawang Tsültrim had elements of the cosmpolitan outlook of those enculturated in the Qing court, but also displayed a sectarianism that increasingly defined Geluk Buddhism over the next century.

Future of relations between Tibet and the Qing (and China)

In the realm of Qing-Tibetan relations, the immediate aftermath of Ngawang Tsültrim's rule saw the Qing consolidate power further. Following Ngawang Tsültrim's death in 1791, the Gorkha war flared up again later that year after the Tibetans tried to renegotiate terms. The war initially went even worse for Tibet than the previous phase, with the Nepalese sacking Shigatse and Tashi Lhunpo and forcing the Panchen Lama to flee.[1372] Lhasa itself seemed to be threatened, but Tibetan and Qing troops counterattacked and advanced toward Kathmandu, forcing a Nepalese surrender.[1373] The Nepalese signed a treaty in the summer of 1792, which rescinded the tribute owed by Tibet, and settled the border and trade disputes

[1370] Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, 128–130. Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma and Roger R. Jackson, *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems : A Tibetan Study of Asian Religious Thought* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009). Although the Qing were often Geluk sectarians, and the *Crystal Mirror* depicts Geluk as ultimately the highest tradition

[1371] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 545–546.

[1372] Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 164–166.

[1373] Ibid., 165–167.

in favor of Tibet; The Nepalese agreed themselves to pay tribute to the emperor.[1374] But the victory was a costly one from the Qing point of view, as they would have preferred to avoid the war entirely. It was against this background that the Qianlong emperor now saw the need for major reforms.

By 1792, the emperor perceived the Tibetan administration to be even more incompetent than he had during Ngawang Tsültrim's recent sojourn in Beijing. He was especially concerned with nepotism in selection of incarnations, which helped to precepitate the war.[1375] Consequently, he issued the Twenty-Nine Article Decree in 1793, which increased imperial control of Tibet by further regulating the *tülku* system and increasing the duties of the *ambans*.[1376] The decree sought to stamp out nepotism by mandating the use of the Golden Urn procedure in recognizing the Dalai Lama and other incarnations. In this ritual, the names of candidate reincarnations (already chosen by the usual Tibetan procedures) would be placed in the Golden Urn along with a blank tablet (in case all choices were invalid), and one name would be ceremoniously drawn out in the presence of the *ambans* and Tibetan high lamas. [1377] This had the effect of randomizing the selection process and avoiding nepotism, and by removing the influence of certain families and high-ranking officials over the selection process, diminished an independent source of Tibetan power.

The powers of the *ambans* were increased to give them administrative responsibility equal to or greater than the Dalai Lama. According to Kolmaš, the

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[1374] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:534–536.
[1375] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 176. Fabienne Jagou, "The Use of the Ritual Drawing of Lots in the Selection of the 11th Panchen Lama," in *Revisiting Rituals in a Changing Tibetan World*, ed. Katia Buffetrille (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 49–51.
[1376] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 176–193. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 169.
[1377] Ibid., 189–191

emperor's decree “plac[ed] all responsibility for military, political, economic and administrative control over Tibet upon the Chinese central government acting through the *Ambans* as its intermediaries.” The *ambans* had full responsibility for foreign affairs and the selection of government officials, and at least veto power over other decisions.[1378] The emperor fired more *kashak* ministers whom he suspected of incompetence or connivance with the Gurkhas.[1379] Having previously begun to use the regents as an instrument of control over Tibet,[1380] it may be that the emperors were determined not to repeat the mistake of having the Dalai Lamas rule Tibet again.

Qianlong even appears to have repented of his personal practice of Tibetan Buddhism, but he did not end imperial support for the religion. The *Lama Shuo* stele of 1792 declared that Qing support for Tibetan Buddhism had been a political expedient and explained that the religion and its lamas needed to be reformed. It would be a mistake, however, to see this as the end of Qing support for Tibetan Buddhism. This decree was in part a response to criticism from the Han Chinese officials of Qianlong’s support for lamas, and all the apparatus of patronage remained in place.[1381] The temples and monasteries of Beijing continued to receive support, and the Changkya lamas continued to act as preceptors to the emperor.

The result of the 1793 reforms was that Beijing's control of Tibet reached a peak, which would not be exceeded until the 1950 invasion.[1382] Petech argues that

[1378] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 189–191. Kolmaš and Orientální ústav (Československá akademie věd), *The Ambans and Assistant Ambans of Tibet*, 9–10.
[1379] Petech, *Aristocracy and Government*, 231.
[1380] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 171.
[1381] Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 35–36.
[1382] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 186–192. Tieh-Tseng Li, *Tibet, Today and*

the 1793 decree ushered in a “semi-colonial epoch corresponding to the 19th century” in which the Qing had full control over Tibet, thanks to the power of the *ambans* and the loyalty of the regents.[1383] According to Snellgrove and Richardson, Chinese influence was greatest in the wake of these reforms, but diminished rapidly later in the nineteenth century, as the Qing empire went into decline (due to the Opium Wars of 1838-1842 and 1856-1860, and a number of civil wars). [1384] This perception accords with that of Tieh-Tseng Li, who also sees much evidence of declining Qing influence. Tibet was becoming involved in internal and external disputes without imperial sanction, and there was increasing corruption among the *ambans*.[1385] The post of *amban* continued to be filled up until the end of the Qing empire, and the *ambans* are recorded as intervening in the various disputes over the regency, as well as demanding heavy bribes for the appointment of regents (specifically, Lozang Khyenrap Wangchuk in 1864, and the Kundeling regent in 1876).[1386]

The Qing suzerainty over Tibet, especially after 1793, and the relationships emperors formed with Tibetan lamas, laid the foundations for later debates over Tibetan sovereignty. In the early twentieth century, the Qing Empire was reinterpreted in light of Chinese national aspirations, with the various constituent peoples of the empire coming to be viewed by nationalists as China's “five races”

Yesterday, (New York: Bookman Associates, 1960), 53–57.

[1383] Petech, “The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study,” 387.

[1384] Snellgrove and Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, 223–224.

[1385] Li, *Tibet, Today and Yesterday,* 59–65.

[1386] Petech, “The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study,” 388–393. Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 198–200.

(Manchus, Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetans, all led by the Han Chinese).[1387] The Qing Empire invaded Tibet in 1909 to try to impose full sovereignty, but with the collapse of the empire in 1912, their forces withdrew completely and Tibet became *de facto* independent.[1388] The new Republic of China sought to claim the former Qing subject territories as its own, according to international law. Meanwhile, Tibet sought international recognition as an independent state. The *chöyön* relationships of the past were a crucial point of conention in this debate. The Republic of China based its claim to Tibet on Pakpa's submission to Kublai Khan as vassal, which created a relationship that persisted through the Qing dynasty.[1389] The Tibetan government's position was that the relationship between Tibet and China should be considered as a *chöyön* relationship, in which neither side was superior, on the model of the Fifth Dalai Lama's 1653 meeting with the Shunzhi emperor. By this they implied that Tibetan-Chinese relations had mainly been religious in nature, epitomized by the service that Tibetan lamas provided for the Qing emperors, who had to submit to them in the religious sphere. Even when there appeared to be Tibetan submission to Beijing, as during the Qing dynasty, it was still a manifestation of the patron-priest relationship, although at times the Qing abused this relationship and behaved imperiously.[1390]

As I showed in Chapter Six, the term "patron and priest relationship" in the late eighteenth century was not really used in the same way, but the relationships

[1387] Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 359–361.
[1388] Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 50–59.
[1389] The position of the People's Republic of China goes further, claiming that Tibet has been under full Chinese sovereignty, not merely a vassal state, since the Yuan Dynasty. Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict*, 11–14.
[1390] Ibid., 15–23.

between individual lamas and the emperor (like that between Ngawang Tsültrim and the Qianlong emperor) were always important in negotiating the relationship between nations. China's and Tibet's arguments about their historical relationship would remain roughly the same, even after the 1950 invasion and the Dalai Lama's subsequent exile in 1959. Where originally the "patron and priest relationship" was an individual relationship between two individuals, like the Qianlong emperor and Ngawang Tsültrim, it is now invoked to describe a relationship that took place between nations.

Future of the Dalai Lamas

A great Dalai Lama is one of the emblems of Tibetan nationalism, with the memory of the Great Fifth's unification of Tibet, and then the Thirteenth's and the Fourteenth's battles for Tibetan independence, serving as models by which other Dalai Lamas are judged. But as we have seen, the Dalai Lamas retained their importance as symbolic heads of the Ganden Palace institution in Ngawang Tsültrim's time and thereafter. If the biography can be believed, Ngawang Tsültrim's intervention may have helped save the Dalai Lama lineage at a weak point in its history—not that the Tibetans would have ever accepted eliminating all powers of the Dalai Lamas, even if this had been the emperor's decision. In any case, the significance of this episode in the biography is that the Dalai Lamas (even if politically impotent) did have a place under the Qing-dominated regime which followed 1793. They were brought under the control of the Qing government by means of the Golden Urn ceremony, as well as the authority of *ambans* and the regents whom the Qing appointed. According to Shakabpa, the Golden Urn was

often ignored in practice, not being used at all for the Tenth Dalai Lama, and in other cases ratifying a choice already made by the Tibetans.[1391] Schwieger disputes Shakabpa's interpretation, showing that it was used in accordance with the Twenty-Nine Article Decree for the Tenth through the Twelfth Dalai Lama, and that official exemptions by the emperor were made in the case of the Ninth and Thirteenth Dalai Lama (which did not mean abolishing the procedure).[1392] In spite of the power of the regents and the Golden Urn, the Dalai Lamas retained their symbolic status as masters of the *chösi sungdrel* and were still regularly enthroned, publicly venerated, had court biographies written about them, and so forth.[1393]

Following Ngawang Tsültrim's regency, a pattern developed in which the Dalai Lamas continued to be recognized, but they were almost invariably kept from ruling by regents. The Eighth Dalai Lama never regained power after 1789, with Tatsak Rinpoché continuing in office. He died in 1804 at the age of forty-seven from pneumonia, an age that is not inherently suspicious.[1394] Four more Dalai Lamas were recognized over the next century, but none of them lived long enough to become important political leaders. Their death before the age of twenty is one of the great

[1391] Shakabpa, *Advanced Political History*, 1:557–558.
[1392] Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 193–194.
[1393] Maher, "The Ninth To The Twelfth Dalai Lamas," 132–134.
[1394] Derek Maher, "The Eight Dalai Lama Jampel Gyatso," in *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia, 2005), 127. Although premodern life expectancies worldwide were very short by modern standards, a major reason for this, was the very high rates of mortality in infancy (by one estimate 40% of people born in 1800, worldwide, did not live to age five). If you were lucky enough to survive early childhood, you could expect to live to age fifty, and possibly to old age. One rough estimate of premodern life expectancy in Asia is 27.5 years, but that did not mean that it was especially common to die at that age. Adult mortality from disease and the like was higher than today, but not overwhelmingly so, leading many to live long lives. Thus the early deaths of so many Dalai Lamas were not to be expected. Max Roser, "Child Mortality," *Our World In Data*, accessed February 4, 2017, https://ourworldindata.org/child-mortality/; Max Roser, "Life Expectancy," *Our World In Data*, accessed February 4, 2017, https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy/.

mysteries of Tibetan politics, leading to speculation (with little in the way of proof) that power-hungry regents or the *ambans* murdered them.[1395] For instance, Richardson and Snellgrove assert that "there is good reason to believe that the tenth Dalai Lama was assassinated, with the connivance of the then regent," and Waddell (a British colonial officer, writing in 1895) relates suspicions that all four had been murdered by regents.[1396] Other speculation centers on the Qing officials, who may have been motivated, according to Maher, "to perpetuate the power vacuum in which official Manchurian influence could flourish."[1397] Given the corruption and power struggles that were common among both the regents and the ambans, and Qing dissatisfaction with the Dalai Lamas as rulers, neither of these theories is implausible, but my present research does not offer any proof.

The Ninth Dalai Lama (Lung rtogs rgya mtsho, 1805-1815) is said to have died of a cold at the Great Prayer Festival, at the age of ten.[1398] The Tenth (Tshul khrims rgya mtsho, 1816-1837) lived long enough to be educated in philosophy and receive full ordination from the Panchen Lama, but was said to be sickly and died at age twenty-two (just before he was to take power).[1399] Both these Dalai Lamas died under the regency of the second Tsemönling, who was deposed for misconduct in 1844 and considered a weak ruler, although his poor reputation does not automatically mean he was responsible for their deaths. The Eleventh Dalai Lama (Mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 1838-1856) actually did take power in 1855, the first time

[1395] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 160.
[1396] Snellgrove and Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, 225. Waddell, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 234–235.
[1397] Maher, "The Eight Dalai Lama Jampel Gyatso," 129.
[1398] Ibid., 131.
[1399] Maher, "The Ninth To The Twelfth Dalai Lamas," 132–133.

since 1789 that a Dalai Lama had done so, but like the previous two Dalai Lamas, soon succumbed to illness.[1400] The Twelfth ('Phrin las rgya mtsho, 1857-1875) took power in 1872 and was the ruler until his death three years later, which theoretically should have made him the longest serving Dalai Lama in this era. But even then, he was still assisted by the *sikyong* Lobsang Jampa Gyatso, much as the Eighth Dalai Lama had been assisted by Ngawang Tsültrim.[1401] The Thirteenth Dalai Lama (Thub bstan rgya mtsho, 1876-1933) finally broke the pattern by living to adulthood, surviving a tantric assassination attempt by the third Demo regent, and gaining clear control over the government after assuming full powers in 1895.[1402] The Dalai Lamas were clearly weakened over the course of the nineteenth century, but having maintained their symbolic centrality to the *chösi sungdrel*, they could now resume their former glory.

Final remarks

The regents like Ngawang Tsültrim are often seen as a footnote in Tibetan history, or else seen as a marker of Tibetan decline. But the life and work of Ngawang Tsültrim also reveal trends that are formative for Tibet as we know it today. He rose to prominence through the Geluk monastic system and strengthened the power of the monasteries through his actions as regent. The great monasteries and the Geluk school would only grow more prominent in the Ganden Palace era, putting a “clerical” and scholastic stamp on Tibetan Buddhism, and they continue to be politically important in Tibet and in the Tibetan exile community. Ngawang

[1400] Ibid., 133–134.
[1401] Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 160.
[1402] Ibid., 168.

Tsültrim was posthumously recognized as the Tsemönling *tülku*, and similar *tülku* lineages increasingly came to dominate the Tibetan regency and Tibetan political life. The Dalai Lamas continued to be sidelined after Ngawang Tsültrim's reign for over a century. However, they continued to be considered the ultimate source of Tibet's “union of religion and politics,” remaining an important national symbol, as Ngawang Tsültrim always acknowledged. This enabled the Dalai Lamas to eventually return to political prominence after the fall of the Qing. At present, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has once again renounced political power, and a *sikyong* (Prime Minister Lobsang Sangyé) now leads the Tibetan government-in-exile. It continues to be important to conceptualize Tibetan political leadership, and leadership within the Geluk school, beyond the figure of an all-powerful Dalai Lama.

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