THE BIOGRAPHY OF
KHYUNGTRÜL PEMA TRINLÉ GYATSO

BY KHEN ORGYEN NAMGYAL
The Biography of Khyungtrul Pema Trinle Gyatso
By Khen Orgyen Namgyal
Translated by Rinzin Dorjee Drongpa
KHYUNGTRUL RINPOCHE
A LIFESTORY

Khyungtrul Pema Trinle Gyatso, commonly known as Khyungtrul Rinpoche, was born nearby the shaded side of the [Kyangtang Khampa] Mountain in the Evaṃ Valley of Drongpa Meshung, Nangchen, Kham in 1886, the Fire, Dog year of the fifteenth sexagenary cycle. His father was named Mipam Tsönndru of the Jo [clan] and his mother Adroza Deden Tso. His father was a direct disciple of Drubchen Ngawang Tsoknyi the mantra holder, who attained accomplishment through the practice of Palden Lhamo Dusólma.

Shortly after his birth, Khyungtrul met the Fifteenth Karmapa, Khakyab Dorje, who performed the hair-cutting ceremony. Furthermore, he accepted the Three Jewels, received the vows of a lay disciple, and was given the name Karma Gyatso. The Karmapa described how the child was a reincarnation of a great being and made a prediction that the boy was undoubtedly going to be a person who would benefit sentient beings and teachings in the times yet to come.

At the age of five, his parents took him on a pilgrimage to meet lamas in eastern Kham. In Degé he met and received teachings from Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, who was at that time performing his last religious activity at Dzongsar Monastery before passing into peace. He also received many important teachings, such as empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, from Jamgön Kongtrul Rinpoche at Palpung Monastery in Degé.

After a successful pilgrimage to all the monasteries and sacred sites in the Degé, Kham, Khyungtrul returned home with his parents. His father took responsibility for his own father’s monastery, Druk Heru.
Monastery,\(^\text{12}\) [which comes under the management of Trulshik Monastery,\(^\text{13}\) the main Drukpa Kagyū seat in Nangchen]. Later, due to his realization in the practice of *Palden Lhamo Dusörlma*, his father was appointed as the lama of the protector’s temple at Trulshik Monastery. Khyungtrul spent the next couple of years at Trulshik Monastery with his parents.

During his time at Trulshik Monastery, even though he was very young, there were several marvelous signs that occurred, such as possessing a symbolically scripted inventory of treasures, indiscriminately extracting a variety of treasure-like substances, and receiving prophecies of the dākinīs. However, his father kept them secret and forbade revealing them [to the public], stating that they were insignificant. [Unfortunately], his father passed away when he was just seventeen years old, and he performed the funeral rites in a proper manner.

Until he was nineteen, Khyungtrul spent most of his time at his personal Heru Monastery in addition to Trulshik Monastery where he received empowerments and instructions from Satrul Rīgzin Chögyal\(^\text{14}\) and other Drukpa Kagyū masters. He diligently trained in the rituals of his tradition, the Drukpa Kagyū.

At the age of nineteen, Khyungtrul once again went back to Degé, Kham where he entered Dzoqchen Monastery.\(^\text{15}\) There he took full ordination from the Fifth Dzoqtrul Tubten Chökyi Dorje\(^\text{16}\) and received the name Tubten Chöpal Gyatso. From Gyalse Jampa Taye, Tubten Chökyi Nangwa,\(^\text{17}\) and others, he received oral transmission of the Kangyur (Translated Words of the Buddha) and such teachings as the *Bodhicaryāvatāra (A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life)* and *Kunsang Lame Shalung (The Words of My Perfect Teacher)*, achieving a great understanding of the Mahāyāna.

He later went to Palpung Monastery, where under the care and tutelage of Khenchen Tashi Öser\(^\text{18}\) the lord of the extraordinary family, he received bodhisattva vows in accordance with the tradition of Śāntideva the heir of the victors and was named Jamyang Lodrö Gyatso. With Lord Khenchen Tashi Öser, he studied all the sūtra and tantra teachings and received empowerments and instructions. Khenchen identified him outwardly as an embodiment of Gyalwang Dechen Dorje, inwardly as an embodiment of Taksham Nuden Dorje, and secretly as an embodiment of Longchen Rabjam.\(^\text{19}\)

Khyungtrul also received and studied the sūtras and tantras along with the fields of knowledge from Katok Khen Tubten Gyaltser, Jamgön Mipam Namgyal Gyatso, Khenpo Shenga, Nesar Karma Tashi Chöphel (one of the three chief disciples of Jamgön Kongtrul), Gyarong Tokden, Choktrul Pema Dechen Sangpo, Jamyang Tashi Rinchen, Katok Situ Chökyi Gyatso, Chokling Tershe Tsewang Norbu,\(^\text{20}\) and many other non-sectarian masters.

Though this Lord was not said to be an emanation of any particular lama, he was called Khyungtrul because there was nobody who could rival his innate wisdom when he was studying and contemplating. Since everyone was discussing that he was an emanation of an excellent, superior being, he was considered an emanation. In those days the political relationship between Degé and Nangchen was not so friendly. So, for the safety of Khyungtrul,
when anyone asked Khenchen about where the emanation was from, he would answer, “The emanation’s place of origin is Khyungpo.” As a result, being called Khyungtrul in addition to his real name, Pema Trinle Gyatso, he became widely known as Khyungtrul Pema Trinle Gyatso.

At the age of twenty-five, he began the traditional three-year retreat at the Samten Chöling retreat center of Palpung Tubten Chökhorling Monastery, during which Karma Tashi Öser the extraordinary lord of the family and Karma Tonglam [shared the role of retreat master]. Khyungtrul completely mastered Mahâmudrâ, the six yogas of Nâropa, and all other essential Kagyu practices during the retreat. His spiritual practices were so impressive that he was, for a short while, appointed master of the retreat center in accordance with the lama’s command.

[When he turned thirty-three], he led the life of a renunciant, abandoning everything and practicing meditation at various secluded places, such as Tashi Palri, Pema Shelpuk, and Karmo Taktshang and eventually left for his homeland. On the way back home, he visited Netan Chokling Monastery Gyurmê Ling, met the Second Chokling, Pema Gyurmê Tekchok Tenpel, and received many teachings, such as the Chokling treasure teachings, empowerments, transmissions, and instructions from him. He subsequently visited Kham Riwo Monastery, Dilyak Monastery, and Jang Tana Monastery where he received a grand welcome and gave instructional teachings and maturing empowerments.

After returning to his homeland, Khyungtrul stayed at Druk Vaṃlung Monastery for a while and turned the wheel of the teachings for his karmically fortunate followers. Since he was a treasure revealer and particularly an accomplished practitioner of the profound secret mantra, there were requisites for him, such as relying on the mudrâ of another’s body, so he took Tanaza Rîgzin Drölma as a consort. However, some ordinary people [from his homeland] objected and disapproved of his taking a consort and criticized him explicitly and implicitly. As a result, Khyungtrul Rinpoche decided to leave his homeland for a period to embark on a pilgrimage to U-Tsang with his secret consort Tanaza Rîgzin Drölma.

He remained in U-Tsang for many years, visiting various sacred sites, practicing meditation at sacred places of Guru [Rinpoche], such as Samye Chimpu, and composing many treatises and songs of realization. He conducted many religious activities while in Lhasa, including giving the empowerment and transmission of the Kinchen Terdzö (The Treasury of Precious Revealed Scriptures).

Then he returned to his homeland, and at his Druk Heru Monastery, he expanded the assembly hall and other areas and rebuilt temples and shrines. Thereafter, it received the name Heru Ngedön Sangngak Chökhorling. He also built his residence named Changlochen and the Secret Mantra Palace meditation hall and stayed there regularly.

There the teachings of scholars and adepts pervaded in all directions, and he constantly turned the wheel of the teachings to unfathomable assemblies of disciples and emanations—chiefly the lamas and emanations of the non-sectarian movement. Sometimes he
traveled to other regions to give empowerments and teachings. He conferred the empowerment and transmission of the Rinchen Terdzö at Netan Monastery in Chimé and Shakchö Monastery in Khyungpo, the empowerment and transmission of the Damngak Dzö (The Treasury of Precious Instructions) at Tsangsar Monastery, and the empowerment of the Kaγγu Ngakdzö (The Treasury of Kaγγu Mantras) at Rago Tsokha Monastery.

Among the chief disciples: his son Pema Gyurme was the main lineage holder of both his family lineage and teachings. He was a sovereign of loving-kindness and compassion, a vegetarian, a realized yogin intent upon the profound meaning, a holder of the fields of knowledge, a holder of his father’s lineage of Karma Garsar calligraphy, a disseminator of his father’s empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, and a preserver of his father’s collected works. For this, I wish to express much gratitude to him.

Khyungtrul Pema Trinle Gyatso’s teachings, which are contained in about four volumes, are:

- Secret Embodiment of the Three Kāyas: Accomplishing the Enlightened Mind of the Guru
- The Ocean of the Dohās of the Early Translation Nyingma School, The Ocean of Drukpa Dohā, The Excellent Vase of Nectar from The Grand Ritual of Severance, instructional manuals on the creation and completion stages, songs of spiritual experience, a large volume of mind treasure teachings, and many other texts.

COLOPHON:

Composed by Khen Orgyen Namgyal
Drongpa chieftain. Nangchen King, and his mother was fifteenth sexagenary cycle. His father was the sixth reincarnation of Satrul Rigzin Chögyal located in Nangchen Sharda. Through personal communication, a resident of Meshung said the name of ri bo me ltar ‘bar ba is Drongza Lhamo Dröl. He passed away in 1888.

Kham king, born in 1828.

Drongpa Meshung (brom pa rme gzhung) was formally known as Sengshung (seng gzhung), the valley looking like a resting lion, located in Nangchen.

4 ‘byo mi pham brtson ‘grus and a gro bza’ bde Idan mtsho

5 Drubchen Ngawang Tsoknyi (grub chen ngag dbang 'byams) was Drongza Lhamo Dröl. He passed away in 1888.

6 dpal Idan lha mo dus gsal ma

7 kar ma pa 15 mkha’ khyab rdo rje, 1870–1921?, BDRC P563

8 The vows of the lay disciple (dge bsnen qgi sdom pa, upāsakasāmvara) consists of the five precepts (bslab pa lṅga, pañcasī): (1) Not to kill, (2) Not to steal, (3) Not to engage in sexual misconduct, (4) Not to lie, and (5) Not to use intoxicants.

9 ‘jam dbyangs mkhyen bse dbang po, 1820–1892, BDRC P258

10 rdzoṇ sar dgon, BDRC G213

11 ‘jam mchog kong sprul blo gros mtha’ yas, 1813–1899, BDRC P264 and dpal spungs, BDRC G36, seat of Situ Pema Wangchuk Gyalpo and Jamgön Kongtrul

12 Druk Heru Monastery (‘brug heru dgon) was initially founded by Gyalwang Dechen Dorje.

13 Trulshik Monastery (khrul zhiṅ dgon) is the seat of Satrul Rigzin Chögyal located in Nangchen Sharda.

14 Satrul Rigzin Chögyal (sa sprul riṅ ’dzin chos rgyas) was the sixth reincarnation of Satrul, born in the fifteenth sexagenary cycle. His father was a prince to Nangchen King, and his mother was a daughter to the Drongpa chieftain.

15 rdzoṇ chen dgon pa, BDRC G16

16 rdzoṇ chen grub dbang 05 thub bstan chos kyi rdo rje, 1872–1935, BDRC P701

17 ‘bya’ khyans pa mtha’ yas and thub bstan chos kyi sanq ba

18 mkhan chen bkra shis ’od zer, 1836–1910, BDRC P1373

19 It is said that Gyalwang Dechen Dorje (rgyal dbang bde chen rdo rje) built a hundred and eight Guru temples, including Heru Monastery and Vamlung monastery, stag sham nus ldn rdo rje, b. 1655, BDRC P663 and klong chen rab ’byams, 1308–1364, BDRC P1583

20 kaH thog mkhan thub bstan rgyal mtshan ’od zer, b. 1862, BDRC P6048; ‘jam mchog mi pham rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, 1846–1921, BDRC P252; mkhan po gzhang dga’, 1871–1927, BDRC P699; gnas sar bkar ma bkra shis chos ’phel, BDRC P6173 (one of the three chief disciples of Jamgön Kongtrul); rgya rong rtags Idan; mu ra sprul sku 03 pad+ma bde chen btsan po, BDRC P8693; ‘jam dbyang bkra shis rin chen; kaH thog si tu 03 chos kyi gya mtsho, 1880–1923/1925, BDRC P706; mchog gling gter sras tse dbang nor bu, BDRC P2713, the second son of Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa

21 khyung po, a place in Kham

22 dpal spungs thub bstan чос ’khor gling gi sgrub sde bsams gtsam chos gling

23 karma bkra shis ’od zer

24 karma mthong lam

25 According to the oral account, he was appointed as a retreat master for the next three-year retreat program.

26 According to the oral record, at the age of thirty-three, he left the Palpung Monastery for his homeland.

27 bkra shis dpal ri, a sacred site in Kham

28 pad+ma shel phug, BDRC G3624

29 dkar mo stag tshang, BDRC G3625

30 gnas bstan mchog gling 02 pad+ma ’gyur med that mchog bstan ’phel, 1873/1874–1927, BDRC P1AG97

31 byang rta rna dgon pa, BDRC G2628
32 Druk Vamlung Monastery (‘brug vaM lung dgon) was initially founded by Gyalwang Dechen Dorje in the twelfth sexagenary cycle, located in Drongpa Meshung.  
33 rta rna bza’ ri’ dzin sgrol ma  
34 bsam gas mchim phu, BDRC G3528  
35 rin chen gter mdzod  
36 lcang lo can  
37 Netan Monastery (gnas brtan dgon, BDRC G1AG98), the seat of Chokgyur Lingpa, is located in Chime, southwest of Nangchen. Shakchö Monastery (khüng po zhag gcod dgon), is a Karma Kaqqu monastery, founded by Shagchö Tashi Palzang in 1533 in Khüngpo.  
38 gdam ngag mdzod; Tsangsar Monastery (tshang’s sar dgon) is a Barom Kagyū Monastery and the seat of Tsangsar Lodrō Rinchen.  
39 bka’ brgyud snga’gs mdzod and ra mgo mtho kha dgon  
40 gser rtsa bkra shis gling (a Bön Monastery in Sertsa) and tshangs sar bla khyabs  
41 Drogon Sangye Yelpa (gro mgon sangs rgyas yal pa) is the founder of Yalpa Kaqqu School.  
42 pad+ma’ ‘gyur med 1929–1999; kong sprul blo grus rab ‘phel, 1901–1958, BDRC P1PD108567; tshangs sar blo gros rin chen; rta rna spen pa sprul ku; rta rna sgrub rgyud sprul sku; gzu ru jo skyabs  
43 a bde’u sgrub rigs khyu mchog, 1930–2007, BDRC P6757; ban chen sangs rgyas gnyen pa 09 karma bshad sgrub bstan pa’i nyi ma, 1897–1962, BDRC P934; dil yag zla bzang; ja pa sangs rgyas bstan ‘dzin 1919–2001; ta’i si tu 11 pad+ma dbang mchog rgyal po, 1886–1952, BDRC P925  
44 Some of his teachings include gu ru’i thugs sgrub sku gsum gsang ba’ dus pa, snga’ ‘gyur smting ma’i mgur msho, ’brag pa’i mgu’r msho, and gcod kyi tshogs las bdud rtsi bum bzang.