

THE BIOGRAPHY OF GYELSE
RIGPAI RELTRI

BY TUBTEN CHODAR



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The Biography of Gyelse Rigpai Reltri
By Tubten Chodar
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*The playful display of the great being Jigme Nyinche
Once again genuinely manifested in the human realm.
Leading all the helpless students to the city of liberation
The erudite lord, Rigpai Reltri.*

CONCERNING THE NAMES OF HIS SUCCESSIVE LIFETIMES

As mentioned in *Drigung Monastery's Golden
Garland of Monastic Seat Holders*¹

- (1) The Great Brahmin of India, Saraha
- (2) The Dhama King, Dharmashoka
- (3) The Vidyadhara Humkara²
- (4) The King of Tibet's divine son, Mutig
Tsenpo³
- (5) Kuton Tsonдру Yangdrung (1011–1075)⁴
- (6) The Third Monastic Seat Holder, Chen
Ngawa Chokyi Drakpa (1175–1255)⁵

- (7) Gompa Rinchen Namgyel, elder
brother of The Fifteenth Monastic Seat
Holder, Kunga Rinchen (1475–1527)⁶
- (8) The Sixteenth Monastic Seat Holder,
Rinchen Puntsok (1509–1557)⁷
- (9) The Twenty-Third Monastic Seat
Holder, Urnyon Chokyi Drakpa, aka
Rigdzin Chodrak the son of Drigung
Chogyel Puntsok (1595–1659)⁸
- (10) The Twenty-Fifth Monastic
Seat Holder, Dondrub Chogyel, aka
Konchok Trinle Dondrub (1704–1754)⁹
- (11) The Twenty-Seventh Monastic Seat
Holder, Konchok Chokyi Nyima, aka
Konchok Tendzin Chokyi Nyima
(1755–1792)¹⁰
- (12) Drigung Gyelse, aka Jigme Tenpai
Nyima (1793–1826), the son of the
Omniscient Jigme Lingpa (1730–1798)¹¹



(13) Dechen Rigpai Reltri, the son of the
Refuge Lord, [Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje]
(1800–1866)¹²

Rigpai Reltri's previous birth, Drigung Rinchen Puntsok, was the father of the Refuge Protector [Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje's] previous birth, Drigung Choqyel Puntsok. Based on this, one time, Rigpai Reltri was the father of the Refuge Protector. Rigpai Reltri as well as his previous births [the First Drigung Chungtsang], Urnyon Chokyi Drakpa, and [the Forth Drigung Chungtsang], Jigme Tenpai Nyima, were the sons of the Refuge Lord. Thus, Refuge Protector's connection with Drigung and with Gyelse Rigpai Reltri is endowed with many essential auspicious connections.

Later, it seems Reltri's reincarnation was not recognized in Do Gar.¹³ However, the third incarnation of Dzong-ngon Rinpoche, Jigme Chokyi Gocha (1912–1953) recognized the reincarnation of Rigpai Reltri.¹⁴ The reincarnation's name was Tubten Jigme Gawa also known as Konchok Dargye.¹⁵ In the Iron Dragon Year of 1940, the sixteenth sexagenary cycle, he was born in the Beza [family] in Amdo's Bayul district,¹⁶ [which is located in the Chabcha prefecture in the south of the Tso Nonpo province].¹⁷ His father was Tutob and his mother was Bochok.¹⁸

At 12 years of age, he received the novice vows from Mewa Khenchen Tsewang Rigdzin (1883–1958) and was given the name Tubten Jigme Gawa.¹⁹ He then received many empowerments and instructions from Khenchen Tsewang Rigdzin and others. He received generalized and specific explanations of the sutras and tantras along with the pith instructions of the Great Perfection (Dzogchen) especially from

the supreme Khenchen Tsewang Rigdzin's heart son, Konchok Rinchen (b. 1922).²⁰ He studied and trained in these teachings to their completion. He then restored Dzong-ngon Jigme Chokyi Gocha's monastic seat of Orgyen Sangchen Chokhor Ling [in 1984].²¹ He died in the Fire Dog Year of the seventeenth sexagenary cycle, 2006.

CONCERNING HIS BIRTH

Dechen Rigpai Reltri was born in the place called Pema Rito located in Golok in the Iron Tiger Year of 1830, the fourteenth sexagenary cycle.²² He was the younger son of the Precious Refuge Protector [Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje] and Akyong Bumo Dzompa Kyi.²³ His birth was accompanied with a multitude of wonderful signs.

As soon as he was born, a sword made of a red gold, the size of a cubit (18 inches), fell from the sky and landed in the Refuge Protector's hand. Due to this suitable and auspicious interconnection, he was named Dechen Rigpai Reltri, or the Sword of Blissful Awareness. The top portion of the sword handle contains wondrous signs including the hand imprint of the Refuge Protector. This sword still exists in these present times.

The 126th folio of the Refuge Protector's *Autobiography: The Speech of the Dakini*:²⁴

“According to the prophecy of the excellent guru, a new shoot of the family of emanations (Sherab Mebar, 1829–1842) will be born in the Ox Year of 1829, as well as another (Rigpai Reltri) in the Tiger Year of 1830.”²⁵

Do Dasel Wangmo's work, *The Abridged Biographies: The Lineage of the Do Family*:²⁶



“The son, Dechen Rigpai Reltri, was born in the Iron Tiger Year, the fourteenth sexagenary cycle. At that time, a red-gold sword the size of a cubit fell into the hand of the Refuge Lord, and he was named after it. He was the reincarnation of Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa’s son, Jigme Nyinche.”

When the Refuge Protector was staying at Drigung, Drigung Gyelse [Tendzin Chokyi Gyeltsen] (1793–1826) said: “In my next life, I will definitely come close to you.”²⁷ In accordance with what was said, Refuge Protector recognized Reltri as the reincarnation of Drigung Gyelse.

The 111th folio of the Refuge Protector’s *Autobiography: The Speech of the Dakini*:

“Gyelse Rinpoche said, ‘At this time I thought there would be little to no need that we would be separated, but it wasn’t that way. The Lord Father, the Victor of the Doctrine, ended up giving me to Drigungpa, but that didn’t go very well.

“In some past life as well as this one, concerning our lineage— a lineage of mantra-holders and knowledge-holders, if we were to maintain our Lord Father’s personal lineage and pay service to him, then it would become supreme. However, now that it is under the influence of others, there’s nothing we can do. Consequently, if we don’t pay service to the teachings and worldly actions in Precious Refuge Protector’s life then it will become the cause for our root guru’s intentions to be discredited. Otherwise, I don’t have the intention to stay in this place; but there is nothing I can do. Therefore, in the next life I will certainly come to your side.”

Thus he made a completely pure prayer to never be separated in any lives, which create their connection.

CONCERNING THE ACTIVITIES DURING HIS LIFE

Since there is no written biography specifically for him, I do not have the good fortune to write about all the facets of his activities here. His life story is briefly accounted in the Refuge Protector’s *Autobiography: The Speech of the Dakini*, Do Dasel Wangmo’s *The Abridged Biographies: The Lineage of the Do Family*, Dharmavajra’s biography *The Excellent Wish-fulfilling Tree: The Biography of Dharmavarja, the Sovereign Dzogchen Yogin Who Appeared in the Eastern Land*,²⁸ and others. If I would give a brief account based on these sources, it would be the following:

From his first year to his second year, the Iron Tiger Year until the Iron Rabbit Year, [1830–1831], it is clear that he stayed in Pema Rito in Golok because the Refuge Protector’s camp and Dakkima [Losel Drolma] (1802–1861) were there.²⁹

From his third to fifth year, the Water Dragon Year until the Wood Horse Year, [1832–1834], he stayed at the Refuge Protector’s main seat of Maha Kyilung Monastery because the Refuge Protector and especially Dakkima were staying at that monastery.³⁰

From his fifth year to his seventh year, the Wood Horse Year until the Fire Monkey Year, [1834–1836], it appears that he stayed primarily at Yikok and the mountain hermitage of Chak Kyang Decha Gyelse because the Refuge Protector’s and Dakkima’s camp stayed in those places.³¹



From his seventh to his eighth year, the Fire Monkey Year until the Fire Bird Year, [1836–1837], he definitely stayed at Minyak Zhaktra Mountain and Lau Tang Monastery because the Refuge Protector’s and Dakkima’s camp was at those monasteries.³²

From his ninth year to his thirteenth year, the Earth Dog Year until the Water Dragon Year, it is clear that he stayed in the Maha Kyilung Monastery because the Refuge Protector’s camp and Dakkima, in particular, were staying at that monastery.

At the end of Reltri’s thirteenth year, his older brother and [Do Khyentse’s] son, Sherab Mebar, died [in 1842]. Consequently, having seen that Reltri had a significant demonic obstacle, that year the Refuge Protector exiled Reltri from the camp. Thus, Reltri resembled a beggar with a walking stick, and it is uncertain where he wandered.

He eventually arrived at Dzogchen Monastery where he stayed and received empowerments, oral transmissions, and instructions for many teachings of the sutras and tantras from Dzogchen Rinpoche Mingyur Namkai Dorje (1793–1870),³³ Dza Patrul Orgyen Jigme Chokyi Wangpo (1808–1887),³⁴ Gyelse Zhenpen Taye (1800–1855/1869),³⁵ Khenchen Pema Vajra (1807–1884),³⁶ and so forth. He was very young while he was staying there and was given clothes, necessities, and care.

There Reltri experienced many hardships including the monks repeatedly and terribly mistreating him and calling him, “Flat head!” At one time he became seriously ill on the verge of death. The Dzogchen guru’s residence took

care of him including performing healing ceremonies and giving him medicines.

One night during that time Reltri dreamt that his Lord Father the Precious Refuge Protector and Dakkima arrived. They gave him a skull cup full of nectar, and he drank it in its entirety. The very next day he was free from illness.

The Precious Refuge Protector saw with his clairvoyance that Reltri was free from the obstacle to his life, and he came to Dzogchen Monastery to check on him. Then the Refuge Protector and Reltri both went to Khenchen Pema Vajra and received many streams of instructions of the *Guhyaqarbhatastra*.³⁷

Khenpo Pema Vajra thought, “It seems that I am knowledgeable since even the Refuge Protector is listening to my teaching.” As soon as that occurred, the Refuge Protector realized it and intensely rebuked him: “I’m not receiving teachings because you are a scholar, you copper ladle head! You have an excellent *Guhyaqarbhatastra* lineage, and we are here to receive it for the benefit of my son.”

Reltri then went back to the encampment and fully received from his father the cycle of *The Heart Essence (Nyingtik)*³⁸ in general as well as the empowerments, oral transmissions, and instructions for his father’s teachings in particular. He remained there to attend his Lord Father as much as he could.

When he was eighteen years old in the Fire Sheep Year of 1847, Reltri and the king of Gutang along with his entourage left Minyak Lau Tang Monastery and headed to Lhasa in central Tibet.³⁹



They visited the holy places of Lhasa such as the Jowo Shakyamuni Statue and the Jowo Mikyo Dorje Statue. They also made pilgrimages to [places of the] three supports⁴⁰ as well as Samye, Tsering Jong, and Drigung. He made spiritual connections [by giving and receiving teachings] and other activities. Having successfully completed the pilgrimage for the benefit of the teachings and beings, they returned to the encampment.

The 214th folio of the Refuge Protector's *Autobiography: The Speech of the Dakini*:

“As soon as he completed all of his sessions of teachings and their activities, Reltri held the name of the family lineage and then went with the king of Yutang and his entourage to Lhasa.⁴¹ Me (Do Khyentse) and my sister (Losel Drolma) went to Mt. Zhaktra to offer a feast and praises, then we returned to our place.”⁴²

After traveling to monastic centers such as Dzogchen Monastery, Reltri primarily went with the Precious Refuge Protector to Golok, Dege, Dzachukha, Yikok, Minyak, Gyelmo Tsawa Rong,⁴³ Rebkong in Amdo, and other destinations.

They benefited the teachings and beings by wandering to mountain retreats, practicing severance (*cho*) in rugged terrains, accepting disciples, and so forth. It appears that Reltri stayed and attended his Lord Father, because in the Refuge Protector's biography of the signs of accomplishment, *The Secret Biography of Khyentse Heruka: A Compilation Describing the Displays of the Signs of Accomplishment*, the first sign of attainment states:

“Among the six mountain ranges of Dokham, the supreme sacred place is the mountain Gyelmo Ranggi Gang.⁴⁴ In that area is the sacred place of the *Great Glorious One* (Pelchenpo) called Gyelmo Mudo.⁴⁵ Drubwang Rinpoche Kyebu Yeshe Dorje and his son Reltri stayed there together; they slept in the same bed.

“One night in the son's dream he experienced a magnificent blue-black deity with a wrathful expression. It had many faces and brandished various implements; it was overwhelming to behold. ‘This is the *Great Glorious One*.’ he thought. ‘Although, its faces and implements are unable to be distinguished— how wonderfully strange.’ As soon as he thought that, he awoke.

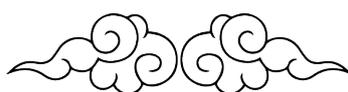
“The Lord Father Drubwang [Yeshe Dorje] asked him, ‘Retri, what did you see?’ Reltri told him about his dream.

“[The Lord Father Yeshe Dorje] reassured him, ‘Oh good. You had a vision of the *Great Glorious One*, who is the principle [deity] of Mudo.’”

The Secret Biography of Khyentse Heruka: The Compilation of the Displays of the Signs of Accomplishment, the second sign of attainment:

“Once again when we arrived at Yudra's Cave, the meditation cave of Yudra Nyinpo (8th cent.) in Gyelmo Mudo,⁴⁶ the Lord Father [Yeshe Dorje] slept in the center of the cave, and I (Reltri) slept near the entrance. After some time, there was a frightful spirit that appeared in the entrance of the cave. It rose above me and approached the Refuge Protector.

“Reltri was slightly afraid, and he pulled his head under his blanket and laid down. The pair



had a conversation about the words and meaning of the Great Perfection (Dzogchen).

“After a while it became quiet. I peeked out from under the blanket, but the spirit had vanished without a trace.

‘Retri, there is no need to be scared.’ The Lord Father [Yeshe Dorje] said. ‘The local protector of Mudo came here to listen to the teachings.’”

The Secret Biography of Khyentse Heruka: A Compilation Describing the Displays of the Signs of Accomplishment, the fourth sign of attainment:

“Again, when we stayed in a camp in Mudo, the Refuge Protector said to the monks and entourage ‘Reltri and I are going to visit the sacred site. You all stay here at the camp.’

“When we went up for a little while, we reached a cliff so high that [even] a vulture couldn’t settle on it. [Standing] on the ledge Do Khyentse said, ‘Reltri, you stay here. Do not follow me, nor go anywhere,’ and disappeared without a trace.

“I (Reltri) couldn’t move, let alone go to the frightening cliff’s edge of this red rock, so I diligently focused solely on my prayers. During this period, the sun was settling upon the mountain tops, and dusk was approaching.

“Meanwhile Drubwang [Yeshe Dorje] arrived back at the encampment and had a drink. When he finished, he inquired, ‘Hasn’t Reltri come back?’ The monks answered, ‘He has not returned, sir.’

“I thought, ‘I suppose the Refuge Protector isn’t coming back. Now, I will definitely die by

freezing, hunger, or by falling down this cliff!’ Thus I sadly decided to stay there.

“Then I heard the Lord Father’s call, ‘Reltri, come here.’ In front of me a blue rainbow appeared like a stretched-out piece of woolen cloth. Feeling happy, I sat on the rainbow and came to the Refuge Lord without any trouble at all.

“The Lord Father asked, ‘Why did you stay and not come until now?’ I told the story in detail and the Lord Father responded, ‘Oh, it is great that you were able to stay in that place.’”

The Secret Biography of Khyentse Heruka: A Compilation Describing the Displays of the Signs of Accomplishment, the fifth sign of attainment:

“One day when the Refuge Protector, the Vajra-Holder [Yeshe Dorje] was staying again at Lau Tang Monastery he said, ‘Reltri, let’s go take in the scenery.’ When we arrived at the foot of the monastery there appeared a splendid crystal house that was beautiful to behold. Arriving at its door, a beautiful goddess appeared and invited the pair inside.

“The Precious Refuge Protector [Yeshe Dorje] sat upon a throne where four goddesses offered him a drink. They offered me (Reltri) some white cheese-like food with an excellent and strong taste that was greater than any human food. While Drubwang [Yeshe Dorje] was eating he said, ‘Go to the roof and look around, but don’t bring back whatever you see.’

“I immediately went to the top of the house and saw all kinds of things, which were like visual illusions. There were objects representational of the enlightened body, speech, and mind that were beyond comprehension. It took a little bit



of time for me to look at them all. Then I came back downstairs and Drubwang [Yeshe Dorje] was sitting there about to leave, so I accompanied him, and we began to set off. The four goddesses escorted us to the door. [While they turned to go back, one goddess gave me an iron dagger. When she returned to the crystal house everything vanished and we were [back] at the foot of the plain.

“Do Khyentse Rinpoche said, ‘Don’t tell anyone about the gifts or food, about what you saw or heard, or about things like that. This ritual dagger is for your own allotment, so keep it at your side.’

“Later when I felt hungry, I remembered the food I had before [in the crystal house]. I went out to the plain at the foot of the monastery, but there was nothing to be seen.”

The Secret Biography of Khyentse Heruka: The Compilation of the Displays of the Signs of Accomplishment, the eighth sign of attainment:

“Again when Drubwang [Yeshe Dorje] was staying at Lau Tang Monastery with his entourage, [his] sister (Losel Drolma) was teaching Dzogchen to the students at Garnang [Hermitage]. One time as soon as the sun arose, the Refuge Protector said, ‘Reltri, go get two horses and a white mule. The time has come for us to go.’ Thus he did accordingly, and they rode the horses out to the foot of the plain.

“Do Khyentse [Yeshe Dorje] said, ‘Reltri, close your eyes!’ It was as if a wind had come about and lifted us away. After a while, Do Khyentse said, ‘Open your eyes!’

“When he opened his eyes, he realized that they had appeared at the Garnang Kardza

Hermitage as [Yeshe Dorje’s] sister (Losel Drolma) had just finished the teaching.⁴⁷ They met the students as they were being dismissed and moving about, but nobody could see the pair. However, [Yeshe Dorje’s] sister saw them. Then all of the students could see them, and they came to prostrate on the ground.

“When [Reltri] looked at the sun, it was similar as when they departed Lau Tang Monastery. Everyone was struck by the wonder of this.”

The Secret Biography of Khyentse Heruka: The Compilation of the Displays of the Signs of Accomplishment, the ninth sign of attainment:

“While [Yeshe Dorje’s] sister was staying at Lau Tang Monastery, Drubwang [Yeshe Dorje] was staying in Pelri Monastery,⁴⁸ both accompanied by their entourages. One day when the sun had reached an armlength past midday, Do Khyentse said, ‘Reltri, go right now and get a white mule [and two horses].’ Reltri did as he was told, and they rode out to the foot of the plain.

“Do Khyentse [Yeshe Dorje] said, ‘Reltri, close your eyes,’ and I did accordingly. It was like a wind lifted me up. A moment later Do Khyentse said, ‘Open your eyes and don’t make a sound.’ I realized that we had arrived at the lower plain by Lau Thang Monastery. When we had arrived at the monastery, the people who were wandering about such as the monks didn’t see us. I took the saddles and packs off our two horses and mule, then went to an empty building.

“Drubwang [Yeshe Dorje] went and sat on his throne. At that moment, his sister saw him. ‘Oh, the Refuge Protector has arrived!’ She



announced and all the monks came to greet him. When I looked at the sun, it was around the same time as when we left Pelri Monastery. Everyone was astonished.”

The Secret Biography of Khyentse Heruka: The Compilation of the Displays of the Signs of Accomplishment, the tenth sign of accomplishment:

“Again Drubwang [Yeshe Dorje] arrived at Zhaktra Karmo Mountain [in Minyak] with his entourage and set up a camp in front of the mountain.

“One day, when the Lord Father was alone in his tent, I was sneaking about. I raised up a side of the tent to peek in, and in front of the Lord Father was a majestic and handsome white man dressed in a white robe with a white turban. I saw him offer the Lord Father silks of the five colors. I heard their many conversations and eventually I went back down [to my area].

“A short time later I brought some tea for the Lord Father and asked, ‘Sir, just then, there was a white man with you. Who was that?’

“‘Oh, Reltri, your eyes are mischievous. You look at everything that you shouldn’t, and you see everything that you shouldn’t. But now it is alright. This is good.’ Do Khyentse pulled out a meteoric dagger from front pocket of his robe and said, ‘This was offered to me by the deity of Zhaktra. It is for your allotment, so keep the dagger at your side.’ He then gave it to me. It was a miraculous liberating event.”

When Reltri was thirty-seven years old in the Fire Tiger Year of 1866, the Precious Refuge Protector [Do Khyentse Yeshe] Dorje died in

Dartsedo in Minyak. Then Do Drime Drakpa (1846–1886), the assistant Ozer Taye, Abu Yeshe Dorje, Gyalse Reltri, and others extensively conducted the Refuge Protector’s funeral rites.⁴⁹ Most of the remaining items and tiny pearl relics (*ringse*) were offered to the major monasteries from all directions to use as objects to support people’s faith. They proceeded to construct [memorials] including the Lord Father’s reliquary stupa.

After the passing of the Refuge Protector Yeshe Dorje, Reltri was the head of Do Gar. In the same manner of his father’s tradition, he stayed and performed the duties at the monastic seats such as Maha Kyilung Monastery, Lau Tang Monastery, Garnang Kardza Hermitage, and the supreme Gyelrong Kachok Monastery to benefit the teachings and beings.⁵⁰

Some people said that after the Refuge Protector’s death, Reltri usually stayed at the monastic seat of Minyak Kyernang Monastery.⁵¹ It does appear that Reltri stayed at Kyernang Monastery; but it seems that his principal monastic seats were Garnang Kardza Hermitage and Lau Tang Monastery. [This is supported] because the 139th page of the Gansu Nationalities Publishing House’s 1974 publication of *The Biography of the Past and Future Lives of Gurong* states:⁵²

“From the Great Monastery of Dege he arrived at Rudam Orgyen Samten Choling (Dzogchen Monastery). From there he traveled along with the supreme Khenpo Kelden (b. 1837(?)) to Kardza Hermitage and then Gyelrong.”⁵³

Also the 140th page:



“Gyelse Reltri, along with everyone else, received many sacred teachings from the supreme Khenpo Kelden. Like a teacher and disciple who cannot bear to be apart, they went together to his homeland. The king of Gyarong Dzong Gak invited [Khenpo Kelden] to his place and in this way, he bestowed a longevity empowerment to the king and his entourage.”⁵⁴

Thus, it clearly states at that time Reltri was living and maintaining the monastic seat of Kardza Hermitage.

After the death of the Refuge Protector, it is certain that Reltri stayed for a long time at Lau Tang Monastery. Reltri told many prophecies to the tulkus and gurus of Lau Tang that this monastery needed to be moved to a new place. However, they were not able to move the monastery in a timely manner. Subsequently, once Reltri set up a tent nearby the monastery and he brought the monasteries three main supports [of the enlightened body, speech, and mind] to that tent. A couple of days after that, there was an earthquake, and the monastery was destroyed. Then in accordance with Reltri’s orders, they moved the monastery to a place with a large plain on the right side of the monastery.

The remains of the destroyed ramparts and the rubble of the monastery even exists in these present times. Additionally, the gurus and monks of the monastery reported that Reltri [later] passed away in that monastery. A stupa made from earth and stone remains there, which is said to be the reliquary stupa of Reltri.

At the age of thirty-eight in the Fire Rabbit Year of 1867, Reltri had acquired the various necessary provisions to build the Lord Father’s

silver stupa. That silver stupa was constructed at Rigzin Jigme Lingpa’s monastic seat of Tsering Jong. Furthermore, the Refuge Protector’s great disciple Abu Yeshe Dorje built an extremely high reliquary at Kyernang Monastery in Minyak. It is said that the stupa was built so large to appear the size of a mountain. These days, the main temple of Kyernang Monastery was constructed at the [site] of the reliquary remains. Reltri, Abu [Yeshe Dorje], and others then stayed in one common camp. Needless to say, Reltri took to heart the great responsibility for constructing the stupa.

After the Refuge Protector’s passing, Abu stayed at Kyernang Monastery and maintained that monastic seat in particular. Even today, remnants remain of Abu’s house at Kyernang Monastery.

At the age of forty-five in the Wood Dog Year of 1874, Trozur Dharma Vajra became severely ill,⁵⁵ and the supreme Gyelse Reltri was invited to Minyak Senge Monastery.⁵⁶ There he performed the healing rites of such practices as *Assembly of the Wrathful and Great Glorious One*, *The Thread-Crossing Ritual of Magon’s Army*, and *The Dakini Who Invites or Dispels*.⁵⁷

In that year, Trozur Dharma Vajra passed away. Hundreds of gurus and tulkus were invited including: Gyelse Reltri; Do Drime Grakpa; Abu Yeshe Dorje; the throne holder of Lhagang; Awa Lama; Domlung Tulku; the throne holder of Pelri; the throne holder of Kyernang; Champa Sang-ngak; Ala Dorje Gyeltsen; the throne holder of Chukmo; Kharpa Tulku; Ba Ne Tulku; Dira Khenpo; the throne holder of Trag Khar; Rashar Tulku; Garje Lama; Gyade Rabsel; Kugyab Khenpo; the



throne holder of Gartar; Lau Tang Tulku; Chaktong Tulku; the throne holder of Chiluk; the throne holder of Kazhi; Gyade Osel; A Tro Lama Lobzang; Kyernang Gyurme Lhundrub; Riku Tulku; Tongkor Tulku; Drapa Tulku; Tsara Lama.⁵⁸

Gyelse Reltri, Tulku Songtsen, Tulku Rigden Dorje, and Ba Ne Choktrul performed the funeral rites for the guru. When offerings were being given to the gurus and tulkus of various regions, a set of one hundred and twenty-seven offerings were given to Reltri while sets of twenty-five offerings and sets of thirteen offerings were given to the other gurus and tulkus. Therefore, Gyelse Reltri was regarded to be ranked as one of the greatest gurus in the eastern direction of Minyak at that period of time. Reltri also offered silk, a woolen hat, a fox [pelt], bolts of fabric, and a horse for Dharma Vajra's reliquary.

The front of the 286th folio of *The Excellent Wish-fulfilling Tree: The Biography of Dharmavarja, the Sovereign Dzogchen Yogin Who Appeared in the Eastern Land* composed by Dharma Vajra's doctrine holder and attendant Ga Mipam Tenpai Gyeltsen states:⁵⁹

“Tulku Reltri came and engaged in the appropriate practice of *Assembly of the Wrathful and Great Glorious One*, *The Thread-Crossing Ritual of Magon's Army*, and *The Dakini Who Invites or Dispels*.”

The frontside of the 340th folio states:

“The master Tulku Reltri and tens of students practiced *The Peaceful and Wrathful Deities: Purifying the Lower Realms*.⁶⁰ The master Tulku Songtsen and tens of students practiced *The*

Peaceful and Wrathful Deities: The Naturally Free Wisdom Mind.⁶¹ The master Tulku Rigden Dorje and tens of students practiced *The Molten Dagger*.⁶² The master Ba Ne Tulku and tens of students individually performed *The Great Compassionate One: The Natural Release of Suffering*.⁶³ Through these [practices] they individually performed the fire offerings.”

The back of the 346th folio states:

“In total, one hundred and twenty-seven items were offered to Tulku Reltri including: silk, a statue, a text of *The Root Stanzas of the Middle Way: Wisdom (dbu ma rtsa shes; prajnanama mulamadhyamakakarika)*, a ritual mirror, a hand-drum, bell and vajra, a mandala, a pair of vases, a pair of peacock plumes, a set of containers [for the inner offerings of] medicine and *rakta*, a pair of bellows, a set of seven [water] offering bowls, a pair of *tormas*, an incense box, a set of seven [lamp] offering bowls, a cushion cover, a golden face,⁶⁴ a bronze alloy dish, a tamboura,⁶⁵ a pair of clarinets, a pair of red conchs, a white conch, a small topmost offering bowl,⁶⁶ cymbals, fabric for clothes in the colors of black, red, green, stripped rainbow, and liquid gold, thin fabric in the colors of white, yellow, red, green, and sky blue, silk in the colors of white, yellow, red, green, and dark blue, woolen cloth in the colors of green and red, bolts of cotton cloth in the colors of white yellow, red, green, blue, and red stripped, a few blue stripped cotton clothes, six ornamental fabrics for making red monastic shirts, bolts of a blue-black wool, a yellow bolt of cloth, a bronze alloy vase, a bolt of dark red cloth, a variegated rope, a bag made of brocade, a burl wood bowl decorated with silver, a porcelain cup with the eight auspicious



symbols, a porcelain dish, a pitcher for alcohol,⁶⁷ a large bowl made of *zilung*, spectacles, a brocade, a seat covering, a Chinese knife, a soup spoon and plate, a red knotted-string accessory for the hair,⁶⁸ black earrings, a circular piece of coral, a circular piece of turquoise, a *zi* stone, amber, brass, a silver reliquary box (*gau*), a pair of ornaments that people wear on their waist,⁶⁹ a pair of mala counters, *bodhi* [seed], a sewing needle case, a flint, a gold bracelet, Mongolian boots, a long sword, a knife for the waist, *bur li*,⁷⁰ *zangtib*,⁷¹ a bridle and [saddle] crupper, molasses, yarn with the colors of white, red, green, and dark blue, multi-colored rope for the neck [of a horse], half a bolt of blue animal hide, a woolen hat, pelts from a fox, monkey, sable, lynx, wolf, bobcat, and leopard, a brass ladle, a copper ladle, a metal flask with a cover,⁷² a tea strainer, a skin-bellow, a hearth covering, a pouch for tea, a bowl used for roasted barely flour, a butter container, a set of seven dishes, a gun, a bag of gunpowder, a pair of primary boxes [used by nomads],⁷³ a complete saddle, a riding horse, instruments, a mule, a *dzo*, a female *dzo*, a female yak, a yak, and five ounces of silver coins, and white [scarfs offered at the end].⁷⁴

At the age of sixty-five in the Wood Horse Year of 1894, Rigpa Reltri conferred [teachings] such as the empowerment and instructions for his father's heart essence teachings to those who kept the tantric commitment such as his noble son Do Kham Sum Zilnon Gyepa Dorje (1890 – 1939).⁷⁵ Wondrous signs of the blessings from the empowerment arose for the disciples including his son.

The back of the fifth folio of Do Rinpoche's (Zilnon Gyepa Dorje) *Autobiography: A Garland of Beautiful Flowers* states:

“In the Male Wood Horse Year, the Lord Father (Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje), the Dharma Lord (Reltri), opened the door of the profound maturation and liberation empowerment. When the blessings had descended into my body, speech, and mind there was a transformation of perception. At the end, he physically bestowed auspicious articles and emblems to support [the blessings].”

Rigpai Reltri was sixty-six years old in the Wood Sheep Year of 1895, and as mentioned earlier [in this set of texts], Gurong Orgyen Jiktrel Choying Dorje (1875–1932) had entered into the monastery in the Water Snake Year of 1893.⁷⁶ He stayed there and relied upon teachers such as Dzogchen Khenpo Kelden [Gyamtsol].

At the age of twenty-one in the Wood Sheep Year of 1895, Reltri went with Dzogchen Khenpo Kelden [Gyamtsol] to Kardza Hermitage, and he met Reltri there. Through this, it is apparent that Reltri lived at Kardza Hermitage and occupied its monastic seat at that time.

When Reltri died, Do Rinpoche [Zilnon Gyepa Dorje] was very young and Reltri's wife Ragza Rigche Wangmo loved Kyernang Monastery.⁷⁷ Therefore, after Reltri's death, it is evident that Kardza Hermitage or Kardza Monastery gradually became empty.

CONCERNING HIS DEATH

At the age of sixty-seven in the Fire Monkey Year of 1896, Rigpai Reltri bestowed and



entrusted to his son [Zilnon Gyepa Dorje] the empowerments, oral transmissions, and instructions for the entire cycle of his heart essence teachings accompanied with supplications. He then enthroned his son as the holder of the Heart Essence teachings. Later, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month of that year, Reltri died and subsumed himself into the basic space of phenomena. As he passed into the state of the great noble ones, many signs occurred such as the sound of music, emanations of various light, earthquakes, and the blossoming of flowers.

On the front of the 6th folio of Do Rinpoche's *Autobiography: A Garland of Beautiful Flowers*, it states:

“When I was seven years of age in the Fire Monkey Year, my Lord Father (Rigpai Reltri) relinquished his entrustment and command as a keeper of the teachings to me along with the three Enlightened Heart Essence (*Tugtik*) teachings of his own tradition and the Heart Essence (*Nyingtik*). He told many prophecies about the future passed away peacefully. As he attained the state of the great noble ones, there appeared many signs such as sounds, lights, earthquakes, and even the blossoming of flowers in the winter.

“Having mixed together the oral transmission of the omniscient hierarchs Marpa (1012?–1097),⁷⁸ Milarepa (1040–1123),⁷⁹ Dakpo Lhaje [Gampopa] (1079–1153),⁸⁰ and the pure visions of the treasure tradition into one stream, Reltri transmitted the direct lineage of his father to me, and I received it.”

Do Dasel Wangmo's work, *The Abridged Biographies: The Lineage of the Do Family* states:

“On the thirteenth day of the victorious month (the twelfth month), when he turned sixty-seven years old, he passed into the peaceful space accompanied with the sound of “May Vairocana come.”

“When his body was being cremated, there were many miraculous sights such as a white cloud in the shape of a dragon floating above, an interlaced net of various colored rainbows in the surrounding environment of the earth and sky, and the simultaneous blossoming of azalea flowers.”

*In the beginning you sought out study and
Became rich in the transmission of the sutras and tantras.
In the middle you solely endeavored in attending your
sacred father.
At the end, you made a family and widely spread your
father's teachings.
The hidden yogin, the supreme Dechen Reltri: to you I
bow.*

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¹ 'bri gung gdan rabs gser phreng

² The text reads et cetera.



³ Referring to Trisong Deutson's son mu tig btsan po

⁴ khu ston brtson 'grus g.yung drung, a junior disciple of Atiśa

⁵ spyan snga ba chos kyi grags pa; There are various sources that have a slight variance in the order of the monastic seat holders of Drigung Til Monastery.

⁶ sgom pa rin chen rnam rgyal and kun dga' rin chen

⁷ rin chen phun tshogs chos kyi rgyal po

⁸ 'bri gung chung tshang 01 chos kyi grags pa

⁹ 'bri gung chung tshang 02 don grub chos gyal

¹⁰ 'bri gung chung tshang 03 chos kyi nyi ma

¹¹ This is also 'jigs med nyi byed as mentioned on the cover page. 'bri gung chung tshang 04 bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal mtshan and 'jigs med gling pa

¹² rig pa'i ral gri and mdo mkhyen brtse ye she rdo rje

¹³ Around Zhaktra Mountain there is a place called Ma Khaka (rma kha ka). In that area is the place called Yu Tso (g.yu mtsho). There Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje built the Do Gar Mountain Hermitage (mdo sgar ri khrod); however, it no longer exists.

¹⁴ rdzong sngon 'jigs med chos kyi go cha

¹⁵ thub bstan 'jigs med dga' ba, or don mchog dar rgyas

¹⁶ 'be bza' and 'ba' yul/'ba' rdzong

¹⁷ chab cha and mtsho sngon po

¹⁸ mthu stobs and bo chog

¹⁹ rme ba khan chen tshe dbang rig 'dzin

²⁰ kon mchog rin chen

²¹ o rgyan gsang chen chos 'khor gling. He restored this in 1984 according to BDRC W20214.

²² pad+ma ri mtho and mgo log

²³ a skyong bu mo 'dzom pa skyid

²⁴ rang rnam mkha' 'gro'i zhal lung, BDRC W21847

²⁵ shes rab me 'bar

²⁶ mdo tshang gi brgyud pa'i rnam thar mdo bsdu, BDRC W1GS60403

²⁷ bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal mtshan

²⁸ Yul shar phyogs su byung ba'i rdzogs chen rnal 'byor pa mnga' bdag d+harma badz+ra gyi rnam thar dpag bsam yongs 'du'i ljon bzang

²⁹ blo gsal sgrol ma, BDRC P1GS138134

³⁰ ma hA skyid lung dgon

³¹ g.yi khog and lcaqs rkyang sde cha rgyal sras

³² mi nyag bzhaq bra and la'u thang dgon

³³ rdzogs chen grub dbang 04 mi 'gyur nam mkha'i rdo rje

³⁴ rdza dpal sprul o rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po

³⁵ rgyal sras gzhan phan mtha' yas 'od zer

³⁶ pad+ma badz+ra

³⁷ gsang ba snying po

³⁸ snying thig

³⁹ 'gu thang rgyal po and lha ldan

⁴⁰ rten gsum

⁴¹ yu thang

⁴² bzhaq bra

⁴³ rgyal mo tsha ba rong

⁴⁴ rgyal mo rong gi sgang

⁴⁵ dpal chen po and rgyal mo dmu do

⁴⁶ g.yu sgra phug and g.yu sgra snying po

⁴⁷ gar nang kar mdza' ri khrod

⁴⁸ dpal ri'i dgon

⁴⁹ mdo dri med grags pa, 'od zer mtha' yas, and a bu ye shes rdo rje

⁵⁰ rgyal rong khaH mchog dgon

⁵¹ mi nyag sker nang dgon

⁵² dgu rong gsku phreng snga phyi'i rnam thar

⁵³ skal ldan rgya mtsho

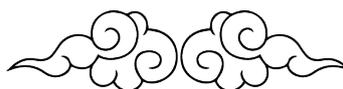
⁵⁴ rgya rong rdzong 'gag

⁵⁵ khro zur d+harma badz+ra

⁵⁶ mi nyak seng ge dgon

⁵⁷ drag po dpal chen 'dus pa, ma mgon gyul mdos, and mkha' 'gro'i bsu zlog

⁵⁸ /lo der khro zur d+harma badz+ra sku gshegs rgyal sras ral gri dang /_mdo dri med grags pa/_a bu ye shes rdo rje sogs gdan drangs/_lha sgang khri pa/_a ba bla ma/_dom



lung sprul sku/_dpal ri'i khri pa/_skyer nang khri
 pa/_lcam pa gsang sngags/_a bla rdo rje rgyal
 mtshan/_phyug mo'i khri pa/_mkhar pa sprul sku/_ba
 gnas sprul sku/_rdi ra mkhan po/_brag mkhar khri
 pa/_ra shar sprul sku/_sgar rje bla ma/_rgya sde rab
 gsal/_sku rgyab mkhan po/_mgar thar khri pa/_la'u
 thang sprul sku/_cag stong sprul sku/_spyi lug khri
 pa/_ka bzhi khri pa/_rgya sde 'od gsal/_a khro bla ma
 blo bzang /_skyer nang 'gyur med lhun grub/_ri khud
 sprul sku/_stong skor sprul sku/_dra pa sprul sku/_rtsa
 ra bla ma sogs bla sprul rgya phrag mang po gdan
 drangs/

⁵⁹ nye gnas sga mi pham bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan

⁶⁰ zhi khro ngan song sbyong ba

⁶¹ zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol

⁶² khro chu'i phur pa

⁶³ thugs rje chen po sdug bsngal rang grol

⁶⁴ gser zhel

⁶⁵ gsol tam

⁶⁶ phud skong

⁶⁷ tam bhe

⁶⁸ tong skud phon dmar

⁶⁹ glo zungs cha

⁷⁰ bur li

⁷¹ zangs rtib

⁷² lcags 'gu khebs lden

⁷³ tso sgam

⁷⁴ mtha' dkar

⁷⁵ mdo khams gsum zil gnon dgyas pa rdo rje, Dates from
 BDRC W1KG987

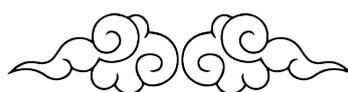
⁷⁶ o rgyan 'jigs bral chos dbyings rdo rje

⁷⁷ ra bza' rig byed dbang mo was one of Rigpai Reltri's
 wives and mother of Do Kham Sum Zilnon Gyepa Dorje.

⁷⁸ mar pa chos kyi blo gros

⁷⁹ mi la ras pa

⁸⁰ sgam po pa bsod nams rin che





TIB SHELF

TRANSLATE | PRESENT | PRESERVE