



THE FIFTH LELUNG ZHEPE DORJE

Song of Experience:
The Gateway of
Manifold
Appearances

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Gateway of Manifold Appearances

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Gateway of Manifold Appearances

By Lelung Zhepe Dorje



Supreme mother of the sublime ones, Vajrayoginī,
Goddess Magzor,¹ guardian of the innermost secret Dharma,
Noble Sovereign Tsogyal, foremost among fortunate ḍākinīs—
To you three, my refuge through many lifetimes, I bow.

In Lhalung, in the eastern reaches of Ölga,
Before the worldly lord Great Gungyal,²
At the foot of Ger Tso's³ sacred abode, assembly place of the ḍākinīs,
Lies the land where successive emanations of the Lord of Secrets⁴ appear—
Lelung, the secret place of the ḍākinīs.

Above, a beautiful celestial pavilion like swirling lapis lazuli,
Youthful clouds drift and soar in billowing waves.
Emerald-bright trees spread wide their boughs and leaves,
And Spring, Earth's beloved, wears flowers as her ornament.
The softly flowing stream murmurs her melodious song,
Birds wheel and glide in graceful dance,
And wild creatures bound with joyful ease.

Behind, a mountain like heaped jewels shelters the land.
To the right, a soaring mountain rises like a lotus petal.
To the east, the mountain reclines like a sleeping elephant.
In front, a forested mountain stands in majestic splendour,
As if Vaiśravaṇa himself were present here.



Secret signs of many kinds are woven throughout this landscape,
 Vivid and clear even to the ordinary eye.
 Countless geomantic features for accomplishing wrathful activity
 Adorn every direction, crowding the entire land.

Here, in this sacred hidden⁵ land of serenity and splendour,
 For me, Zhepe Dorje, son of Garwang Dharmabhadra,⁶
 One who bears the name Karma,
 The gateway of manifold appearances opened vast and wide.

Now, at the end of this wretched, degenerate age,
 Disenchantment rises within me.
 I recall the sublime lives of the Sugatas
 And recoil from my own ordinary ways.
 Again and again, a great wind of anguish stirs from within.
 Tears fall for those who persist in harmful ways,
 Whose resolve is brief, whose perseverance so quick to falter.
 As I reflect, my heart longs for Pema Ö, the Realm of Lotus Light.⁷

Leaving behind the bustle and distraction of running a monastery,
 I leave kith and kin, that I might wander through hidden lands,
 Casting away all plans to linger long in this life.

Thus, I aspired to gather provisions, shelter and clothing for the life to come.
 Yet my wish remained mere longing,
 My intentions came to nothing, and once again I fell into distraction.

As I recalled this, on the fifteenth day of the fifth month of the Dog Year (1718),⁸
 The Lake-Born Vajra and his Consort appeared vividly in my mind.⁹
 A great wave of devotion welled up within me,
 And my heart ached with longing to utter a prayer.

These verses poured freely from my lips.
 There was scarcely time to fashion the words with care.
 Whatever arose clear within my mind, I swiftly set down in writing.
 Read this again and again, and take care not to forget;
 Keep it ever present at the very centre of your mind.
 For now is the time to remember impermanence and death.



From birth until now, I have lived in distraction.
 Twenty-two years have already passed,
 And it is hard to be certain that even a few remain.
 Who knows what will have changed by this time next year?

Without even a shred of certainty
 That I will not die this very night,
 What need is there to look elsewhere?
 Even dear companions have passed to the next life,
 And the holy ones, our sole protectors, have gone to the buddha-realms.

If even now I do not seek lasting refuge,
 What use is amassing riches, drawing close to friends and kin,
 Or courting the favour of others?

Resolve once and for all to use your wealth and possessions for the Dharma.
 Make offerings to the Three Jewels and honour and support the Saṅgha.

Accumulation ends in depletion.
 What rises high ends in a fall.
 Birth ends in death.
 Meeting ends in parting.
 Such is the common nature of all conditioned things—
 There is no way to alter it.

Especially nowadays, all food, clothing and possessions
 Are plainly seen with one's own eyes to be devoid of any essence.
 To crave them still is to be blind with eyes wide open.
 How good, then, to give up miserliness and use these things wisely!

The aims of this life, however pursued, come easily enough;
 But on the long road to the next, hardship awaits.
 And when at journey's end you remember,
 Regret will come, but far too late.

So, while you still have the freedom to act,
 Cast aside half-heartedness, procrastination, laziness,
 As if there were a snake in your lap or your head were ablaze.



Be like a prisoner desperate for release; devote yourself wholly to virtue.
In this way, both now and hereafter, your virtuous aims will be fulfilled.

A place of suffering like the hell realms
Will come swiftly, before long,
As the dream made clear.¹⁰
All you with mindfulness and awareness, reflect upon this;
Accept these heartfelt words of advice.

Encourage others towards virtue and strive that way yourself.
Make what remains of this life meaningful.

The prime of youth and extensive learning,
High rank and power, a retinue of servants—
None of this will be of help at the final hour.

So apply yourself to the essential points of practice.
Earnestly make virtuous aspirations for the next life.
Place your deepest trust in the Three Jewels and the deity.
Reflect well on karma and its results.
And you will turn towards virtue.

COLOPHON

Thus, the simple-minded Trinle Pema Zhepe Dorje Wangpo set these words down then and there, one morning in the Male Earth Dog Year (1718).



NOTES:

¹ Magzor (*dmag zor*), more fully Magzor Gyalmo (*dmag zor rgyal mo*), is a wrathful form of Palden Lhamo (*dpal ldan lha mo*, Skt. *Śrī Devī*), one of the principal female Dharma protectors of Tibetan Buddhism and a deity particularly associated with the Dalai Lamas. She was also important in Lelung's own religious practice: his collected works contain ritual texts devoted to Magzor, and elsewhere he presents Magzor Gyalmo as the inner, wrathful form of the goddess Nyi ma gzhon nu. During the Dzungar crisis he also performed extensive rites before an image of Magzor Gyalmo sent from Drepung. See Bailey 2017, 45, 150–151.

² Gungyal (*gung rgyal*), more fully 'O de Gung rgyal, is an ancient Tibetan territorial and mountain deity associated with the Ölga (*ol kha*) region and with a prominent mountain bearing his name. Lelung elsewhere describes the local snow mountain as “the palace of Great Gungyal, the great deity of existence” (*srid pa'i lha chen gung rgyal chen po'i pho brang*), confirming the close identification of deity and landscape here. See Karmay 1996; Bailey 2017; Hazod 2020.

³ Ger Tso (*ger mtsho*), also called Nyenchen Ger Tso (*gnyan chen ger mtsho*), is a powerful gnyan deity who appears in Gesar traditions as Gesar's divine or spirit-father. Lelung himself calls him *srid pa'i lha gnyan chen po ger mtsho*, “the great gnyan Ger Tso, a deity of existence.” Here *ger mtsho'i gnas means* “Ger Tso's abode,” indicating a locality associated with the deity, although its precise geographical identification remains uncertain. See Sle lung 1983–1985a, 17–25; FitzHerbert 2016, 303; Lelung Zhepe Dorje 2021.

⁴ The “Lord of Secrets” (*gsang bdag*) is Vajrapāṇi. The Lelung Jedrung lineage is traditionally regarded as an emanation lineage of Vajrapāṇi. The First Lelung Jedrung, Lhodrak Namkha Gyaltsen, was himself considered an emanation of Vajrapāṇi, and subsequent Lelung incarnations are understood as continuing this lineage. See Loden 2013, 63.

⁵ It is noteworthy that Lelung explicitly describes Lelung itself as a *shas yul dam pa*, a “sacred hidden land.” The surrounding description suggests more than simple geographical seclusion: he presents Lelung as a secret sacred place whose landscape displays hidden signs and ritually potent features, and immediately afterwards invokes the end of the degenerate age and his aspiration to travel through hidden lands. The passage therefore appears to draw on the wider religious conception of *shas yul*, although no treasure prophecy or guide has yet been identified that presents Lelung itself as a land concealed by Padmasambhava and destined to be revealed in the manner of better-attested hidden lands such as Pemakö. On Lelung and the eighteenth-century hidden-land tradition, see Greensmith 2021.

⁶ Dharmabhadra refers to Damchö Sangpo (*dam chos bzang po*, 1677–1724), Lelung's root guru, whom he elsewhere calls Garwang Damchö Sangpo; *sras*, literally “son,” here denotes a spiritual son or disciple.

⁷ Pema Ö (*padma 'od*, “Lotus Light”) refers here to a pure realm or sacred celestial abode of Padmasambhava. Lelung's own usage elsewhere makes this identification clear: In his *Aspiration to Travel to the Hidden Land of Pemokö*, Lelung prays, “May they ultimately be liberated in Pema Ö” (*mthar thug padma 'od du grol bar shog*), explicitly treating it as a destination (Sle lung 1982, 518). For the published English translation, see Lelung Zhepe Dorje 2020.

⁸ In the Tibetan text, the date—the fifteenth day of the fifth month—is written separately beneath the line rather than incorporated into the verse, presumably to preserve the metre. We have inserted the date into the translation, since the English translation is not constrained by the Tibetan metre.

⁹ “The Lake-Born Vajra” refers to Padmasambhava; the accompanying consort is most likely Yeshe Tsogyal, who is invoked explicitly at the opening of the song, although she is not named in this line.

¹⁰ The date and precise referent of this dream are uncertain, but its warning of an imminent “place of suffering resembling a hell realm” is striking when read against the Dzungar invasion and anti-Rnying ma persecutions of 1717–20, followed by the Dbus–Gtsang civil war of 1727–28. Lelung recorded other prophetic dreams during these crises that prompted concrete ritual responses; see Greensmith 2021, 190–194; Bailey 2017, 43–68.



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