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Angry Monk: Reflections on Tibet: Literary, Historical, and Oral Sources for a Documentary Film

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Abstract

ANGRY MONK: Reflections on Tibet is a critical discussion of the recent Tibetan history through the biography of the Tibetan monk Gendun Choephel (1903-51). The thesis comes in two parts on two different media: Part One on DVD consists of the documentary film ANGRY MONK (97 mins.) in four languages (English, German, French and Tibetan), as well as additional interviews and unpublished scenes from the original footage, covering topics which did not find their way into the film. Part Two on CD ROM consists of the contextualized and critically discussed sources for the film, namely the transcribed interviews and first time English translations of Gendun Choephel's Tibetan texts. The aim of the written part is twofold: first to make all research-materials and sources accessible to scholars for further research, and second to critically discuss and make transparent the process that led to the present film. ANGRY MONK is not the 'logical' consequence of the used sources, but as visual text highly constructed and subjective.

Angry Monk: Reflections on Tibet

Literary, Historical, and Oral Sources for a Documentary Film

**With Translated Excerpts of the Writings of the Tibetan Scholar Gendun Choephel
And the DVD of the Film ANGRY MONK**



**Thesis Presented to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Zurich
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**By Luc Schaedler
of Zurich, Switzerland**

**Accepted in Autumn Semester 2007
On the Recommendation of Prof. Dr. Michael Oppitz**

Zurich, 2007

(Image front page: the director with Tibetan pilgrims during the shooting in Tibet, 2002)

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For my father

(1925-1983)

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INTRODUCTION

The making of the documentary film *ANGRY MONK* goes back to a trip I took to Asia in 1988, which was initially meant to be four months but lasted over three years. Most of this time I spent in India and Tibet, traveling across much of the same territory – though I did not know it then – as *Gendun Choephel*, the protagonist of the film 50 years before. Somewhat like him, I had gone searching in foreign lands and returned home as a foreigner. Since that time I am constantly traveling between both worlds, at least conceptually if not geographically.

My experience has been extended as much through repeated trips to Asia as through the numerous film series on Tibet I have organized at the arthouse *Cinema Xenix* in Zurich. The initial idea of these programs was to present a comprehensive selection, including archival films, political documentaries, ethnographic films, as well as films on Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama. To my disillusionment (and irritation) I had to realize that the audience was almost exclusively interested in the latter category of films. An idealized and often distorted image of Tibet seemed to be more attractive than the actual political situation. This was all the more astonishing, since Tibet had frequently been in the news because of the repeated riots in Lhasa between 1987 and 1989 and martial law being declared as a consequence thereof. After the Dalai Lama's reception of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, the support for Tibet was at its peak. But the title of the film series – *The Myth of Tibet* – turned out to be more accurate than I had originally anticipated.

Through my involvement with Tibet, which itself has changed from one of naive mystification to more critical observation, I came across an interview about Gendun Choephel [GC] in 1998. The interviewee, a one-time student of GC, turned out not only to be an exile living in Switzerland, but also the father of a friend of mine. On this basis, I came upon the idea of making a film about GC as part of my dissertation in visual anthropology. Here finally was a Tibetan whose 'existential' nature pitted him in a fight against the narrow conditions of life in his country. I could see myself in part in his life spent constantly on the move, physically as well as intellectually, and in his critical view of his own country and culture. Drawing from my own experience, it was obvious though that my dissertation would not just be a biography of GC, but also reflect on Tibet and its recent history, thus the title of the film: *Angry Monk – Reflections on Tibet*.

In 1999 I set off across Tibet, India and Nepal in search of people for whom GC played an important role. I met young Tibetans – some in Tibet, some in China, some in exile in India – who spoke of him enthusiastically. I visited possible shooting locations, searched through archives and looked for old film material. I found, amongst other things, lost writings and photographs of GC, often in the least likely spots. Simple people showed me his letters and photographs, which they had hidden during the Cultural Revolution. The readiness of these people to work with me, especially in occupied Tibet, where such a thing is risky, touched me deeply. From this material I have developed the story, which – I believe – only film can tell. It was clear from the beginning, both to my doctor father Prof. Michael Oppitz and myself,

that I would not just work with *visual methods*, but the film as such would make the main part of my dissertation – the film as '*visual text*'. Therefore the current dissertation comes on two different media: DVD and CD-ROM.

The first two parts are in visual form on DVD. Part one is the film ANGRY MONK in four languages: English, German, French and Tibetan. The languages can be selected from the main menu of the DVD. The length of each language version is 97 minutes. Part two consists of, what I call, the 'bonus features'. They consist of an interview with the director about the film and its making; additional film scenes and excerpts from interviews; the trailer of the film (from the theatrical release); TV clips from international film festivals, as well as a photo gallery and the credits of the film. The main idea of the bonus features, in relation to the current dissertation, was to contextualize the film also through visual means. The length of the bonus features is roughly 70 minutes.

The third part comes in written form on CD-ROM. It consists of some introductory thoughts and remarks to the relevance and objectives of the film and its visual form; an explanation of the structure and the intentions of the bonus features; and a critical discussion and presentation of my main sources, namely: the interviews for the film; some translations of GC's own writings; and other written sources about him. The end makes part four (appendix) with a chronology of the whole project from 1998 until 2007; the list of dialogues (in English); the original screenplay; a filmography and bibliography; and finally a list of the (film-) archives I worked with. The above mentioned chapters or sub-chapters come with short introductions, discussing both, the purpose of the chapter, as well as my criteria of selection of the included sources and other materials.

Gendun Choephel's name is spelt in many different ways (e.g. Gedun Chopel, Gendun Chöphel, Gedün Chömphehl etc.); and to date there is no spelling of his name, everybody would agree upon. In my work I have therefore decided to use the abbreviation *GC*. In the *original* English texts, articles, political files and letters I have left the spellings of the respective authors and translators, adding *GC* in brackets. I used the Western spelling for all Tibetan names (e.g. Gendun Choephel, instead of the more complicated Wylie transliteration *dGe-'dun-chos-'phel*), making the names consistent throughout the whole text. Wherever the translators added the Wylie spelling in brackets, I left it in its original form.

For personal comments and additional information I have used following brackets [my comments]. Explanations and comments of the authors and translators are in other brackets (translator's comments).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I had all kinds of help with the film and the written part of my dissertation. Most I have already mentioned in the credits of the film. To the ones I forgot go my sincere apologies. For brevity I will not mention everybody again, but would like to thank all the institutions and individuals that provided me with the funds to do this film. Without their generosity and believe in me, this project could not have been completed. All over the world people have generously shared their knowledge and materials with me. These people are warmly thanked. They helped me to shape the film, but none is responsible for the deficiencies in my work.

In Tibet I would especially like to thank Yudrung Gya and Horkhang Jampa Tendar. Their extensive knowledge provided invaluable assistance in clarifying many difficult points, and they generously shared their materials with me. In England my gratitude goes to Yangdon Dhondup, who was my researcher and translator throughout the whole project. Without her guidance and insight, I could have never made this film. I also feel indebted to Tsering Shakya for repeatedly discussing Tibet's history with me. In France, Heather Stoddard has been of great help, sharing her extensive knowledge of GC's biography with me. In India, Tashi Tsering from the Amnye Machen Institute (AMI) in Dharamshala has been very supportive over all these years and graciously provided me with materials, and generously shared his knowledge about GC's biography and his work. The Delhi based filmmakers Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam, as well as Jaya Sankrityayan have been of tremendous help. In the USA I have enjoyed long discussions with Donald S. Lopez, who, already at an early stage of my project, provided me with his draft translations of some of GC's work. Also Pema Bhum from the 'Latse Library of Contemporary Tibetan Culture' has been of great help, giving me access to some of GC's original paintings from India. In New Zealand my gratitude goes to Misha Kavka, who helped me to write and structure the treatment. In Switzerland I have enjoyed long conversations with Rakra Tethong Rinpoche, a friend and biographer of GC's. He helped me to clarify many points in GC's life. Yonten Gompamitsang patiently worked through all the Tibetan interviews, helping me to find the best passages for the film – and he is a great cook. The work with my cameraman Filip Zumbunn was inspiring. Not only I had the pleasure to enjoy his craftsmanship, but also his friendship and advice. My editors Kathrin Plüss and Martin Witz saved me from many errors, and made me reconsider many judgments with patience and generosity. They both helped me to simplify and clarify my argument – and we had a great time. A number of people have commented on the rough-cuts of this film. Many of their suggestions have found their way in the film. Cyril Thurston and Beat Käslin from Xenix Filmdistribution promoted the film, both in Switzerland and internationally – and helped to make it a success. Christophe Besuchet did an amazing job as graphic designer of my website and the poster. Our endless talks about Tibet's history, present and future found their way in the film. The trust and intellectual generosity of Prof. Michael Oppitz, the director of the Ethnographic Museum in Zürich, made it possible to have the *film* accepted as main part of my dissertation in visual anthropology.

And last but not least my thanks go to Antonia Maino, Reto Tischhauser and Josy Meier, who encouraged me strongly, particularly when the going was hardest, and were always ready to put their work aside to help solving my endless problems.

PART 1:

THE FILM *ANGRY MONK* (on DVD)

Four Language Versions (German, French, English & Tibetan)

The German and the French versions of the film were made for a Swiss audience ('market'), being the two main languages for a theatrical release of the film in Switzerland. The English version was made for this dissertation and the international 'market', including international film festivals, libraries, universities and other educational institutions. These three language versions are identical, with the commentary being in the respective language – German, French or English – and with subtitles for the Tibetan and English interviews. The Tibetan version is identical in length and structure, but has no subtitles. Instead there is a Tibetan voice-over for the English interviews. I also decided to use the voice-over for some of the Tibetan interviews, spoken in a very strong Eastern Tibetan dialect (*Amdo* dialect). The Tibetan voice-over is in the *Lhasa* dialect, which is generally thought to be the most understood dialect for Tibetans in Tibet *and* the Tibetan exile community in India, Nepal and the West.

The Tibetan version was first and foremost a promise that I had made to Tashi Tsering from the *Amnye Machen Institute* (AMI) in Dharamshala. He made the Tibetan version a condition for sharing his knowledge and material with me. But in addition to keeping a promise to a friend, it was certainly the best way to show my gratitude towards all the Tibetans that had supported me during the long research and the making of the film between 1998 and 2005. Also the Tibetan version makes the film accessible to a wider Tibetan audience, which is not familiar with any of the Western languages used on the DVD. The first screening of the Tibetan version at the 11th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS) in Bonn in 2006 was highly appreciated, especially by the Tibetans from Tibet. And as I have been recently informed by people returning from Tibet, there already seem to be several 'pirated' copies of the film in Lhasa and elsewhere, including Northeastern Tibet [private communication, 2007]. This certainly helps to considerably widen the field for a critical discussion of the film as such, Tibet's recent history and its protagonist Gendun Choephel, beyond Western scholarship and Western audiences.

All four language versions can be viewed chapter by chapter. The chapters are corresponding to the structure of the 'List of Dialogues' in the Appendix. As a guideline, they follow the biographical stages in GC's life, with an *introduction* in the beginning and an *epilogue* at the end of the film.

PART 2:

ADDITIONAL VISUAL MATERIAL (on DVD)

THE BONUS FEATURES

The 'bonus features' are already a part of the *additional* information to my visual dissertation, the film ANGRY MONK, and would normally come in writing only. But as a visual anthropologist I decided to provide at least some of this additional information in visual form, too. For clarity I have to add here that the reason for doing the 'bonus features' was in fact twofold. I certainly hoped that with the 'bonus features' the DVD would sell better and guarantee a wider distribution internationally and thus help to recover some of the expenses of its production. I did the 'bonus features' with the financial help of my Swiss distributor *Xenix Filmdistribution*, though the content of the 'bonus features' was solely *my* responsibility. In other words I was absolutely free to do, whatever I thought important and necessary. At this point I decided to make the 'bonus features also' a part of my dissertation, providing information that I thought may be missing in the film and would help to put the film in the wider context of its making:

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR

The first part of the 'bonus' is an interview with the director (30 mins.). I thought the form of an interview to be a perfect way to provide information and at the same time being visual. The interview is intercepted with scenes from the film and some new footage. An additional effect of the interview is that the audience gets to 'know' the author of the film. Since I didn't want to make the interview with myself (although technically possible), I asked the Swiss journalist Johannes Binotto to conduct it. He had written an interesting review of ANGRY MONK in the 'Filmbulletin' (07/2005): *Images of Tibetan Resistance* (my translation). The interview for the DVD was done more than one year later, in Fall 2006. The questions – put together by myself – tried to raise the points that I was often asked during the Q & A's after the screenings – not just in Switzerland, but also at the international film festivals in Vancouver (Canada), Pusan (South Korea) and Sundance (USA). The interview comes in two parts, each about 15 minutes long. The first part is about the *content* film: Here I try to explain, why I did the film as a road-movie, with four different journeys. I also talk about what I think to be the shortcomings of the film, where I had the idea from etc. The second part is about the *making* of the film: How long did it take to complete the film, how did we shoot in Tibet, which images are not in the film and why? (Image 1: The cameraman Filip Zumbrunn in a school in Northeastern Tibet). Obviously I won't answer these questions here, you will have to watch the 'bonus' for that like reading an ordinary text (for the structure of the DVD, see below).



ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS

The second part of the 'bonus' consists of clips from interviews, which are not in the film. With these additional clips I try add some more facets to the protagonist of the film and his meaning for contemporary Tibet. I also included them in the 'bonus features' to show that many of the aspects that, in retrospective, I believe to be missing in the film – like GC as the first modern Tibetan writer, his importance for a younger generation of Tibetans etc. (points raised in the interview with the director) – could have been dealt with during the editing. I actually *had* the necessary statements, which would have helped to clarify some of my arguments. Why these statements are *not* in the film is hard to answer now. Like writing a book, the editing of a film is made up of countless decisions, which eventually give the film a certain direction. It is not only the filmmaker – and his vision for the film – taking all these decisions, but also the material itself, which 'speaks' to him. In this dynamic process or dialogue with the material, these statements got 'lost'. Judged from today, with the film being completed since over two years, I find it hard to explain, why some of these statements got 'lost'. That's why they are part of the 'bonus features' now.

DELETED SCENES

The third part of the 'bonus' consists of, what I call, *deleted scenes*. An euphemistic expression, considering the roughly 120 hours of footage I initially had to work with. Through several painful steps of radical selection together with a professional editor, we came down to 40 hours, which we worked with. In other words, most of the scenes (footage) had to be deleted in the end. But that's what editing is about. For further explanation of this point, watch the interview with the director on the DVD (About the filming). Additionally I do understand the eight selected scenes as homage to *all* the deleted scenes, but also to the work of my cameraman Filip Zumbrunn. He often got out of his way to shoot, what, in the end, I had to trash. The selection of the eight *deleted scenes* is in no way random, though. I wanted to include those that I had mentioned in the interview with the director (About the filming). I added some more to further strengthen the point already made in the film: *Chinese and global modernity taking over in Tibet*. The last scene is dedicated to the American missionary Griebenow (*Image 2: A prostrating pilgrim in Labrang, 1920's*). It's a series of b/w and tinted photographs from the old Labrang Monastery in Northeastern Tibet in 1925, the time when GC studied there. The music to the photographs is taken from a well know (and nationalistic) song from Amdo: *Aku Pema* (singer: Loten Namling). The lyrics go as follows:

*The white-necked eagle!
In the space above.
You are the jewel of the sky.*



*When perched on a rock
 You bring joy to the Snow Mountains.
 Without you the mountains are empty.
 The golden winged swan!*

*Soaring into the air.
 You are the jewel of the grasslands.
 On the water, you bring joy.
 Without you, the surface of the lake is empty.*

*The magnificent young man,
 When traveling,
 You take the pride of the village.
 On arrival, you bring happiness to your people [Tibetans].
 Without you, the heart is empty.
 © Sonam Tsering (translator)*

THE TRAILER(S) OF ANGRY MONK

The fourth part of the 'bonus features' is the trailer of ANGRY MONK in three languages: German, French and English. The main reason for me to include them here was to show, how my Swiss distributor tried to promote the film for its theatrical release in fall 2005. The idea of the trailer was to distinguish the film from the vast corpus of other films on Tibet previously and successfully released in Switzerland, like *Kundun* (Martin Scorsese), *The Knowledge of Healing* (Franz Reichle), *The Saltman of Tibet* (Ulrike Koch), *Samsara* (Pan Nalin), just to mention a few. The key distinguishing elements were: to establish a strong visual contrast: 'debating monks' vs. 'discotheque in Lhasa' or 'prostrating pilgrims' vs. 'modern traffic'; challenging the idealized image of Tibet (*In Tibet religion and politics are completely mixed up. If you mix sugar and salt, can you really it that?*); and introducing the *monk* Gendun Choephel, who was seeing *prostitutes* and drinking *alcohol*.

FOUR TV CLIPS

The fifth part of the 'bonus features' consists of four TV-clips: two from Swiss Television (German and French), one from Park City Television (Sundance, USA) and one from EBS Television (South Korea). Next to bragging a bit, was also the idea to show how the film was received in the press (Swiss television) and at international film festivals (Sundance and Korea). Often films are exclusively seen as *pieces of art*, and are thus deprived of their 'history'. Following the arguments of Eva Hohenberger, I see 'films' (here my own), as much more than just the 'film as such' (the final product). Especially in visual anthropology, we try to understand 'films' in a wider context. For the analysis and better understanding of documentary films, Hohenberger (1988) suggested to work with, what she calls, different 'realities' of film. She distinguishes between five: the *non-filmic reality* (the world we live in, from where we draw our ideas; ideology etc.); the *pro-filmic reality* (what is actually in front of the camera during the shooting; the selections we take during the shooting); the *filmic reality* (the 'film as such'; the finished product); the *after-filmic reality* (when the finished product, the 'film as such', becomes part of the *non-*

filmic reality) and the *reality of film* (financing, production, shooting, postproduction etc.). So far – in the interview with the director, the additional interview-clips and the deleted scenes – we have discussed most of these 'filmic realities'. With the TV-clips (*after-filmic reality*), we close the circle. The clips serve as an example of how a film (here my own) transforms and in the end becomes part of the *non-filmic reality* again. ANGRY MONK now belongs to the ever-growing canon of films on Tibet. My film may influence future filmmakers in a similar way, as *previous* films on Tibet had influenced the making of ANGRY MONK [See Appendix: filmography].

STILLS AND CREDITS

The last part of the 'bonus features' is a short sequence of stills from the shootings in Tibet and India (2002), as well as from the film festivals in Pusan (South Korea, 2005) and Sundance (USA, 2006). The music is taken from the CD that Heinz Rohrer had composed for the film in 2003. The theme of the melody is the same, as I used for the road-movie sequences in ANGRY MONK. And last but not least on the DVD follow the credits and the bio- and filmographies of the cameraman Filip Zumbrunn, the two editors Kathrin Plüss and Martin Witz and the director Luc Schaedler.

TABLE OF CONTENT (on DVD)

Menu 1:

- German
- French
- English → Menu 2
- Tibetan (in Tibetan letters) → directly starts the film in Tibetan

Menu 2:

- Film → plays film
- Chapters → chapter by chapter (same as in 'List of Dialogues', Appendix 1)
- Language → switching language

Bonus (total length: 65 mins.):

- Interviews with Luc Schaedler
 - About his movie
 - What are the film's four different journeys?
 - The protagonist is visually elusive, why?
 - How did you become interested in GC?
 - What are the 'shortcomings' of your film?
 - Why these images of the 'flying' monks?
 - About the filming
 - How long did it take to do the film?
 - How did you shoot in Tibet?
 - Why these 'raw' images of contemporary Tibet?
 - How did you get so close to the people?
 - Which images did you leave out? Any regrets?
- Unpublished interviews about GC
 - The realist
 - A cultural hero
 - His rediscovery in Tibet
 - A 'crazy saint'
- Deleted scenes
 - Novices playing basketball in Rebkong (Northeast-Tibet)
 - Chinese tourists in the monastery of Kumbum (Northeast Tibet)
 - Nuns shopping on the Barkhor (Lhasa)
 - Ceremony in the Jokhang Temple (Lhasa)
 - Pilgrims on the move (Central Tibet)
 - Preparing tea in Varanasi (India)
 - Fishermen on the shore (India)
 - The Labrang Monastery, 1925 (Northeast-Tibet)
- Trailer
 - In English, German or French (depending on the chosen language)
- Angry Monk on TV
 - Swiss TV (German)
 - Swiss TV (French)
 - Park City Television, USA (English)
 - EBS TV, Korea (Korean/English)
- Photo gallery
 - With images from the shootings in Amdo, Tibet and India, and scenes from Pusan film festival 2005) and Sundance 2006.
- Bio- & filmographies
 - Luc Schaedler: director, producer
 - Filip Zumbrunn: camera
 - Kathrin Plüss: editor
 - Martin Witz: editor
- Credits (same as in film)

PART 3:

ABOUT THE FILM, THE MAIN SOURCES AND OTHER MATERIALS (on CD-ROM)

PERSONAL THOUGHTS AND REMARKS

Neither the film, nor the selection of my sources and the other materials are 'objective' in the strict use of the term. I rather see my work as a 'constructed' text in the postmodern sense, as discussed by Clifford Geertz (1973) and James Clifford (1986). In his book 'Kunst der Genauigkeit' (The beauty of exactitude), Michael Oppitz (1989) distinguishes between two semiological layers of each image: one carries the intended content of the image, the other always some information of the maker of the image. Oppitz calls this double-message, the 'added-value' of the image. In the present work I want to make this double-message more transparent. I find it necessary therefore to state, where I see the relevance of my own film (and its protagonist), what my objectives were for doing it and what structure and visual form I tried to give the film to achieve my goals. The aim is that each reader can directly apply my thoughts to the film (on the DVD) and judge himself, whether, and if so, how far I moved from my original ideas and intentions.

RELEVANCE

In my view, GC's life story offers a powerful alternative to the idealized image of Tibet, which seems to consist mainly of esoteric Buddhism, secret rituals, the Dalai Lama, ancient nomadic culture and traditional medicine. As a rebellious monk and a man driven by curiosity, GC felt imprisoned inside his own skin and his own community; his 'modern' concept of life, that of an individual thinking for himself, was not yet understood in his own time. Due to his critical observations of society, his interest in politics, and his attempts to implement his ideas in everyday life, GC was ahead of his time, a prototype for critical, intellectual thinking within Tibetan society. Wearing monk's garb but not fitting into either Tibetan tradition or our idealized image of Tibet, GC's very uniqueness makes him worthy of examination.

At the beginning of this century Tibet was not an inaccessible Shangri-La but a land caught in the tide of change, torn between being a traditional and a modern society. Significantly, the dates of this important period in Tibet's history also mark the birth and death of GC. In 1903 Tibet was violently brought into the twentieth century by a British military invasion. *(Image 3: Dead Tibetans on the way to Lhasa. Younghusband invasion in 1903/04).*



The 13th Dalai Lama proclaimed Tibet's independence in 1913 and began to institute much needed reforms in politics and the army. After the Lama's unexpected death in 1933, conservative monastic forces regained control and sought refuge in Buddhist traditions. The reforms, which had begun were

revoked. Unprepared for events to come, Tibet was occupied in 1951 by the Chinese People's Liberation Army. The attempt to break out of antiquated social structures and find their own way into the new century had failed.

Like a social seismograph, GC registers the tremors of this world caught between old traditions and new demands. His creative output always tended towards the new. During his monastic training he questioned the strict rules and inflexible teaching methods; as an artist he painted not religious pictures but sketches and portraits; in his writings and poems he made use of simple language and took up controversial political and philosophical positions; as an ex-monk he transgressed the moral code, smoking, drinking and having relationships with women. He questioned the political system, agitated for change and, most importantly, broke out of Tibet altogether, traveling for twelve years across India, hungry for new experiences, which he then attempted to convey to his people.

Eventually, he broke under the strain of being too little understood. *(Image 4: GC shortly before his death in 1951).*

GC's importance paradoxically lies in his failure, because it is this that makes him human, a figure with whom we can identify and empathize. GC was no saint; rather, he was a man full of contradictions, someone who posed more questions than he could answer. His life story is exemplary of the hope that the individual can make a difference, as



well as the risk of failure. It is precisely in his failure that we have the opportunity to understand his importance and to reflect on the fate of Tibet.

OBJECTIVES

The film is intended to be the story of 'modern' Tibet, encapsulated by a monk in the early 20th century whose intellectual curiosity led him to challenge the ancient traditions of his society. Feeling constrained in his homeland, GC (1903-51) broke out of Tibet and traveled in India, bringing his experiences and ideas home to his people through his writing, painting and translations. GC was ahead of his time, a prototype for critical, intellectual thinking in his society at a time when Tibet was torn between Buddhist traditions and modern demands. Today, he is once again important to Tibetans seeking to reclaim the promise held out by their homeland before the Chinese occupation. He is also important to Westerners seeking to understand Tibetans as agents rather than passive victims of their history. The film uses the journeys of this modern monk to build up a multi-faceted understanding of the present situation in Tibet.

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In addition to being a traveler between the worlds of conservative Tibet and colonial India, GC was dreamer, a rebel and an explorer. His journeys reflect the inner development of a man who was always searching for something new. His life spans a crucial period in Tibet, between the British invasion of 1903 and the Chinese occupation in 1951. During this time, when Tibet remained closed to the world, GC was open to new experiences and ideas, which he documented in his writing, articles, pictures and sketches.

In recent years, GC has become a figure of identification for young Tibetans, in Chinese-occupied Tibet and in Indian exile, who seek to voice the experience of a lost homeland. While their parents have 'lost' Tibet, the younger generation is searching for points of identification within their own history, which would allow them to see their society differently. In the West, we have not yet come so far in our image of Tibet; we prefer to see Tibetans as poor victims rather than as agents of their own history. By following the footsteps of GC, I will critically examine the history of Tibet and question our idealized picture of it by focusing on the equally fascinating image of 'everyday Tibet.'

Just as GC lived in two contrasting worlds, moving from a sleepy village in East Tibet to the colonial Indian metropole of Calcutta, so I aim to use the contrast of past with present to question the idealized image of timeless Tibet and reinvent it as a nation of people involved in the making of their own history.

STRUCTURE AND VISUAL FORM

The film unravels GC's life story in the form of a journey overlaid with interviews and excerpts from GC's own writing. We follow his traces from the barren nomadic regions near the Chinese border to the labyrinthine monastery town in Lhasa, after which we travel, as he did, over the Himalayas into tropically hot India. After a train trip – GC's first – to Calcutta and a pilgrimage across India ending at the open sea, we return to Tibet. Along the way we meet young Tibetans and older contemporary witnesses who speak of GC. The sense of an ongoing search, of being on the road, structures the drama of both his life and the film, for the journey symbolically mirrors GC's inner development.

Atmospherically, the film makes much of the mood of departure and breaking free, though the longing for open space is counterbalanced by the melancholy of never arriving. In the rhythm of movement and stasis, the film makes space for the associations and reflections of the viewers, enabling them to linger in certain places and immerse themselves in the everyday life of Tibet and India.

The interviews with GC's contemporaries and young Tibetans have a double purpose. On one level, they link the past to the present, and us as viewers to GC the man. On another level, their memories, anecdotes and reflections – which will inevitably sometimes contradict each other – pick up on the theme of the search for GC. In remembering him and voicing his importance to their lives, they 'use' him to reflect on contemporary Tibet and on their own lives.

The cinematic form is characterized by interplay between movement and rest, distance and proximity. Formally, these levels will be distinguished by camera work, shot composition and montage. On the spatial axis, departure and travel alternate rhythmically with staying put and being immersed in everyday life. The scenes of travel are quiet and in long shot, using tranquil montage and shot composition to open up a space for reflection. Once we arrive at a destination, however, we dive into the everyday situation and observe people at work and play; the camera movement and montage here picks up on the hectic pace of life.

On the temporal axis, the film contrasts the images of the present with archival pictures from the past – among them GC's own sketches, pictorial scrolls and handwritten notes, as well as images of the social and political climate in which he lived. In this juxtaposition of past with present, of archival images with my own footage, I hold a visual 'dialogue' with GC. To mark the awareness of the way the present always shapes the past, the archival pictures will be worked in some way: excerpted, detailed through close-ups, zoomed in or out, repeated on the screen, etc.

The link between past and present is to be found in 'broken' images which contain the multi-layered aspects and contradictions of everyday life; the bustling present, for instance, jars against an ancient building or rituals of the past, while in a karaoke bar in Lhasa pilgrims in traditional clothing dance under a strobe light together with modern Tibetans, Chinese and Western tourists. Just as GC lived in two contrasting worlds, moving from a sleepy village in East Tibet to the colonial Indian metropole of Calcutta, so I aim to use the contrast of past with present to question the idealized image of timeless Tibet and reinvent it as a nation of people involved in the making of their own history.

PRESENTATION OF THE SOURCES AND OTHER MATERIALS *

What follows is an almost integral presentation of the oral and written sources I worked with: the translated and/or transcribed interviews; excerpts from GC's writings (in English translations, many for the first time); and a selection of writings and files about GC (namely from his Indian friends and the British secret service).

The aim is threefold: first and foremost, I see the following presentation as a contribution to the *oral history*, regarding the recent *past* of Tibet (1903-51), the biography of an important Tibetan *individual* (GC) and a reflection of the *present* situation in Tibet (and how it relates to the past). Second, I find it important to make my research materials accessible for further research, especially to critics of my work. Third, I would like to make my decision-making process more transparent by presenting the entirety of the research materials and by critically discussing my criteria for selection (interviews, texts of GC etc.). An additional advantage of this kind of integral presentation of my research materials in digital form on CD-ROM is the fact that now they can be accessed easily, and thus encourage other scholars to actually use them and integrate them in their own works (copy/paste). Different than other visual works on DVD that come with 'bonus features' (e.g. 'The Making of Dead Birds' by Robert Gardner), is the fact that the bonus features (of which the present CD-ROM is an important part), is not yet another (*pre-*) *selection* by the director, but a more comprehensive *sharing* of the larger part of the research materials.

The discussion of one's sources is certainly a neglected field in anthropology. Too often informants (especially in filmed interviews) are seen as 'primary' sources, when, in fact, they are not. They may be *authentic* sources (especially, when seen on film or heard on tape), but what they say is not necessarily *true*, or does not necessarily reflect what they *actually* think (Schlumpf, 1996; Jones, 1992). In the case of one of my interviewees, Horkhang Jampa Tendar, he told us more about what his *father* thought, than what he *himself* actually thinks. In his case, this might have several possible reasons, one of them certainly being the fact that – under Chinese rule in Tibet – it is safer for him to relate to us, what his father *thought* (past), than what he himself *thinks* (present). Furthermore, what some of the informants talk about is often influenced, not by what they actually know or witnessed themselves, but by certain *topoi* (themes). In the case of GC, there are several such themes: his debating skills, his provocative style, his curiosity, his drinking and smoking habit, his seeing prostitutes in India etc. In this sense, already my 'primary' sources are thus part of an ongoing *construction* of GC, which was only accelerated by my own film. Also, most of the old informants look back to a time, when Tibet lost its independence. Retrospectively, they all appear to be more *critical* with their own past, than they actually were at the time.

As for the translations that I had made from some of GC's texts, there are similar problems, too. Since GC originally wrote them, they seem to be, not just authentic materials (of GC's thinking, political views etc.), but primary sources in the true sense of the word. What has to be taken into account, though, is the following: the translations are *not* the original texts, but only *translations* (and in my case, 'working' translations, rather than 'literary' translations). Much of the quality, which can be found in the Tibetan

original, is certainly lacking in the English translations. This goes, both for GC's exquisite *poetic style* (personal communication of Tashi Tsering), as well as the *content* of his writings. What was 'modern' and thus astonishing and surprising for many Tibetans *at the time* (like GC claiming the world to be round and not flat) is just a common place *today*. Furthermore, the selection of the passages of GC's writings that you will find below, were not made by GC himself, but by the director of the film (with the help of Tashi Tsering and others). They are in no way representative, as far as the *full* corpus of GC's writings is concerned. They rather reflect, what I (and others) thought to be important for a film, which tried to place GC in a rather *political* and '*social-rebel*' context. Luckily, there are some more accurate translations accessible; and hopefully more to come [See Lopez: 'The Madman's Middle Way' (2006) and Huber: 'The Guide to India' (2000)]

The same obviously goes for the writings and files about GC. Far from being *truthful* and *objective* accounts, they tell us a lot about their creators. There is a considerable and easy to observe 'added-value' in their writings: e.g. the British Files are full of anti-communist rhetoric, whereas the accounts of two of his Indian friends (Mukherjee, Krishna) are full of 'uncritical' admiration for their Tibetan friend, who opened a world to them, when they traveled through Tibet in 1938.

* *Not a part of the present work (on DVD or CD-ROM) is the video footage shot throughout my research and the shooting between 1998-2003, namely the footage from Tibet, Amdo and India (appr. 80 hours):*

TIBET AND AMDO (SPRING 2002)

—Amdo (Rebkong area, Labrang and Kumbum): 20 hours

—Lhasa and Drepung Monastery: 22 hours

—Central Tibet (Gyantse and Sakya): 8 hours

INDIA (FALL 2002)

—India (Varanasi & Bodhgaya): 12 hours

—Calcutta: 8 hours

—Fishing Village and the Ocean: 2 hours

—Kalimpong: 7 hours

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE (dating from 1922-1965)

—Total: 38 hours

Also not fully included are the many photographs, sketches and watercolors (appr. 1000) from the different archives and collections. Only a few images (62) and the portraits of the interviewees (31) are integrated in the text (on CD-ROM), with a reference to the respective source in the appendix. The list of archives and (private) collections, will give an idea of the extent of the collected materials.

THE INTERVIEWS (A)

Between 1999 and 2003 I recorded a total of 41 interviews. 25 of them were conducted in Tibetan language (with Tibetan translators) and fourteen in English, with me as the interviewer. Of the total of 41 interviews I had 29, either translated from Tibetan into English (22) or transcribed to English (7). Twelve I decided not to include in my first selection. Among the 29 pre-selected interviews, only twelve eventually found their way in the film, the majority (8) of which were in Tibetan, the remaining in English (4). Initially I had a total of 65 hours to work with. After the first pre-selection I was down to 42 hours. All the interviews were recorded between February 1999 (Hugh Richardson, Scotland) and March 2003 (Tsering Shakya, GB). In between I had traveled to Tibet, China, India, USA, France and England [For more details, see the 'Chronology' in the Appendix].

INTERVIEWS 1: THE RESEARCH IN TIBET 1999

From this trip with Yangdon Dhondup in Northeastern- and Central Tibet in 1999, I returned with 18 interviews, roughly 25 hours in Amdo and Lhasa dialect.

One of the first things I did, when I began working on the film, was putting together a list of potential interviewees. My first source in 1998 was Heather Stoddard's biography of GC (*Le Mendiant de L'Amdo*, 1985). I went through the index at the end of her book and marked all the people, who I believed were still alive. Already many of the contemporaries of GC had died during her research in the 1970's and 1980's. A great help was also Rakra Tethong Rinpoche in Switzerland, who went through my initial list and added some new names. But only with the help of Tashi Tsering from the Amnye Machen Institute (AMI) in India, I was able to 'complete' the list. He was able to give me many new names of contemporaries in Tibet, as well as of young Tibetan scholars; he thought to be interesting enough to be interviewed. In general terms I would compare my working method with that of a 'hunter and gatherer'. Whoever I talked to or emailed with, I asked, whether they could suggest people to interview. Obviously many of the names I was given were already on the list, confirming my choice, but also some new names occasionally popped up, among them *Golok Jigme*, who later became one of the key figures in the film [thanks to Hubert Decler].

My criteria for selection were initially rather simple and open. I wanted to get hold of *as many* of the contemporaries of GC *as possible*. I was not only looking for people, who had known GC personally or had even been his friends, but also for people, who would be able to talk about the old days (1903-51) – what is often referred to as the 'Old Tibet' – the time of Tibet's Independence (declared in 1913 by the 13th Dalai Lama). As for younger Tibetans and Western scholars, I was not in a hurry. I wrote down their names, though, but they were not on top of my list. I was afraid that many of the older people could possibly die soon. My immediate concern therefore was to meet them as quickly as possible. This may sound cynical, but it was a decision, which unfortunately proved to be right. Quite a number of my informants died shortly after I had made the interview with them, among them *Hugh Richardson* (94), *Golok Jigme* (84) and *Amdo Champa* (86).

Since I don't speak Tibetan myself, I was dependent on a competent translator and co-researcher, who would travel with me to China and Tibet. In Yangdon Dhondup, at the time herself a PH. D. student, I

found the perfect person. Our collaboration began in 1999 for the research and extended to the shooting in Tibet in 2002. Our main aim during the 1999-research trip to Central Tibet and Northeastern Tibet (Amdo) was to trace as many of the old people as possible. The first step was to go through the list with a Tibetan professor in Beijing. He not only added some new names, but also gave us the coordinates of many people, who were on the list. I already had the camera with me during this research. For the reasons mentioned above, I believed it to be crucial to interview the old people already during the research. In retrospective this had the obvious advantage, that we could interview quite a number of people (who had passed away, when we came back for the shooting three years later in 2002). At the same time this method had the disadvantage of interviewing them at a stage of the project, where our knowledge of GC was still limited. The more interviews we made, though, the more we learnt about GC and we grew more competent as the interviewing went on.

For the interviewing in Tibet we faced three major problems: First, *tracing* the people, second, the distinct *Tibetan dialects* and third, Tibet being under *Chinese rule*. Although we had some coordinates of most of the people on our list, it still turned out to be difficult to actually find them. And with the huge distances that you often have to travel between different places – Tibet being considerably larger than the whole of Europe – our problem got worse. Some of the potential interviewees had left their villages or monasteries for good; others were just away for an unknown period of time. But when you travel several hundred miles on bad roads in even worse buses for 15 hours, you can't just come back the next day or wait until they were back. A missed chance was a missed chance. But we were lucky, too, especially in the case of *Alak Yongtsin*, who had not been on our initial list. His name was given to us by a high-ranking monk in Kumbum, who himself didn't want to be interviewed. We had traveled for two days to a distant monastery near Mangra, south of *Tsongnombo* (Lake Kokonor), not knowing, whether Alak Yongtsin would actually still be living there. And we couldn't make a phone call, either. Luckily he was there and he was happy to talk to us. After only 30 minutes talking to him on camera him, he abruptly stopped the interview and said he was tired now. That's all he gave us – 30 precious minutes – it was enough to include some of his statements in the film.

Once we had traced the people and they had agreed to talk to us, we often faced a language problem. Yangdon fluently spoke Tibetan (Lhasa dialect) and Chinese, but she did not speak the distinct dialect of Northeastern Tibet (Amdo dialect). And to do the interview with a Tibetan, who would answer in *Chinese* was no option for us. So, often we ended up posing the question to a third person, which could speak some Lhasa dialect (or Chinese). He would then rephrase the original question in the Amdo dialect and pose it to the interviewee, who would then answer in Amdo dialect. Luckily Yangdon often understood enough of the answer to briefly summarize it to me and I would then decide, whether we should ask more to the same topic or move on to the next question etc. Once we were in Central Tibet (Lhasa), we didn't face this problem anymore and it was much easier and more productive to conduct the interviews. And by the time Yangdon and myself had worked out a more efficient way for the interviewing.

What I had feared to be our worst problem and the one least in our control, the political situation of Tibet, turned out to be almost no problem at all. Under Chinese rule Tibetans are officially not allowed to give interviews, unless the filmmakers have permits, which, obviously, are hard to get (more to the permit-question you will find in the 'bonus' on the DVD: Interview with Luc Schaedler: About the filming). Whenever we had traced one of our interviewees, we explained the film project to them. We informed them that the film was my Ph. D. in Visual Anthropology, but was also intended for *theatrical release* and may also be *screened on TV*. Only in a few cases people then decided *not* to talk to us on camera. In one case the main reason was the Communist Party membership of the interviewee. The majority was happy to talk to us, as long as we wouldn't discuss politics or offend the People's Republic of China. In Amdo Champa's case it was a bit more complicated, but tells us something about the political pressure and social control in Tibet. At the time he was still the director of the Thangka Painting School in Lhasa. When we went to see him in his house within the compound of the Potala Palace, he had a Tibetan visitor from the Bureau of Religious Affairs, of which he was a high-ranking member himself. We still asked him for an interview, but he strongly declined, although he seemed interested to talk about GC with us. The next day we went to see him again. This time he had no visitor and he immediately agreed to do the interview, but he asked us to hurry up.

INTERVIEWS 2: THE RESEARCH IN INDIA 2000

From India I returned with only seven (7) interviews, roughly another 10 hours. I also had all the interviews from Tibet translated into English, which would later help me to work with them.

Before I started my research in India, combined with interviewing some more people, I had to find translators for the interviews from Tibet. Again the distinct Amdo dialect of some of the interviewees turned out to be the major problem. None of the (official) translators felt confident enough to translate these interviews, whereas the ones who spoke the Amdo dialect, didn't know English well enough. What I did in the end was having the 'Amdo'-interviews transcribed to written Tibetan, which is almost the same for all the Tibetan dialects. But at the same time this process posed another problem. Written Tibetan and spoken Tibetan are quite different from each other. In other words, colloquial Tibetan cannot really be transferred one to one to written language, which always comes in a rather 'literary' form. Therefore the translated 'Amdo'-interviews turned out to be more 'formal' than they actually were on tape. But then again, these translations still provided me with good enough material to work with for a start. It certainly helped me to decide which interviewees I found more interesting than others and which statements could later be useful for the film.

In India I had the same working method as in Tibet, except that I had to work alone this time. Luckily most of the interviewees were fluent in English (in the other cases, I worked with local translators). I was particularly looking for older Tibetans, who would talk much less about GC (I already had a wealth of anecdotes from Tibet), but more about the political situation of Tibet during GC's days (1903-51), among them *George Tsarong* and *Rinchen Dolma Taring*. How did they analyze the efforts of the 13th Dalai

Lama for reform, how did they experience the time shortly before the Chinese invasion etc. The exception to the rule was *Golok Jigme (84)*, whom I interviewed during my second trip to Nepal in Spring 2000. I had heard of him through Hubert Decler already in 1998, but interviewing him then was impossible, because he was seriously ill. He was even believed to die soon. But by 2000 he had miraculously recovered from his illness and I went to see him with one of his friends, a young art dealer. I was immediately taken by Golok Jigme's personality and without really understanding the conversation that I recorded; I still hoped to be able to include this 'funny' monk in the film. His anecdotes from the time with GC in India in the 1940's later proved to be priceless. Golok Jigme unfortunately died shortly after the interview.

Back in Dharamshala I gathered the translated (Tibetan) interviews and with Tashi Tsering I did the first evaluation of the interviews I had made so far. It was interesting for me to see that his focus as a Tibetan national and scholar was completely different from mine, as an anthropological Western filmmaker. Whereas I had mainly focused on anecdotes of GC's life and personal memories of Tibet's immediate past, Tashi would have preferred a more intellectual approach towards GC's writings about Tibetan history and Buddhist philosophy. On the one hand, not speaking the language myself would have made Tashi's approach almost impossible for me and on the other hand, I never really intended to do it at this stage of the project. I always had an audience in mind, educated though, but who had no detailed pre-knowledge of Tibetan history and culture, not to mention GC. Through the memoirs and anecdotes of the interviewees, I hoped to bring to life GC and Tibet of those days. But Tashi's critique and what he thought were the shortcomings of the interviews certainly influenced my selecting of the interviews to come in 2002/03.

EVALUATION 1: FIRST IMPRESSIONS, SWITZERLAND 2000/02

After the research in Tibet (1999) and India/Nepal (2000), my main task was now to put all the gathered information together, to make a preliminary selection of the material and to start writing on the production dossier, with which I hoped to get the money to produce the film. For this I read through all the transcriptions and translations of the interviews and gained my first rough overview. I was happy with what I had so far, but at the same had to agree with Tashi's observation that still a lot was missing. In this process I made the interesting observation that some of the interviews of which I had expected a lot, turned out to be rather poor, and others, where I had no expectations at all, turned out to be rich in new information. By interviewing *Hugh Richardson* (Scotland, 1999), for example, I had expected to be able to shed some (new) light on the still rather obscure British involvement in GC's arrest in 1946. I had hoped that Richardson, after all these years, would be willing to openly discuss the role he played then. But whenever I directly asked him about his involvement, he claimed not to remember or refused to answer and in some cases even threatened to end the interview right there. What luckily still comes through in the interview is the fact that he had something to hide. Quite differently the interview with *Golok Jigme*, I had never heard of him before and none of my other informants had previously mentioned

him. He came as a surprise. I didn't have much time for preparation, either, but the interview with him turned out to be one of the funniest and richest in anecdotes and on top of that he was the *only* person still alive, who could talk about the time, when GC had traveled through India. Golok Jigme was much less discussing GC as a brilliant Tibetan scholar, but as a curious human being, who traveled through this world (colonial India) with open eyes. It is often these unexpected 'gifts' you get as a filmmaker, researcher or writer that add the salt to the story you are trying to tell. It is, what I like to call a 'controlled coincidence', that often comes with the method of '*hunting and gathering*', mentioned above.

Despite the fact that I already had a corpus of very interesting interviews (appr. 35 hours), I realized that some aspects of GC's life were still missing. Tashi Tsering had been right, when he was 'criticizing' my interviews. I already had a rather comprehensive selection of anecdotes of GC's life, but hardly any interviewees, who would help to interpret his life in relation to the political events in Tibet. And only a few had reflected on the meaning GC could possibly have for a younger generation of Tibetans today. Only the interviews with *Ju Kesang* and *Yudrung Gya* (from Amdo) were helpful in this respect so far. Now it was time to put together a new list of interviewees, to help to cover some of these shortcomings. Some had been in my mind since the very beginning of the project but I was never in a hurry to do the interview, because most of them were still rather young [See below: Interviews III]. I had also decided at an early stage of the project to only talk to them on camera, once I knew more about the direction my film would take. I have to add here that I was in touch with most of them (e.g. *Tashi Tsering*, *Jamyang Norbu*, *Tsering Shakya*) throughout the whole project and we had already agreed to do the interviews towards the end of the shooting for the film.

INTERVIEWS 3: THE SHOOTING IN INDIA, USA AND EUROPE

In this last phase of the shooting I made another 16 interviews, most of them in English (11). For the few Tibetan interviews (5) I worked with local translators. Altogether roughly 30 hours on tape.

Among the people to interview during this phase of the project were still four contemporaries of GC, among them *Rakra Tethong Rinpoche* (77), who lived in Switzerland. In his case, I had frequently been in touch with him and he had always been in good health. I assumed I could take the risk to not interview him at the beginning of the project. Among the other people to be interviewed were a number of Tibetan scholars and writers (e.g. *Tashi Tsering*, *Jamyang Norbu*, *Tsering Shakya*, *Hortsang Jigme* and *Pema Bhum*), as well as three Western Tibetologists (*Heather Stoddard*, *Donald Lopez* and *Gene Smith*), who had previously worked on GC or still did. From the Tibetans I hoped to get the information that Tashi Tsering had thought was missing in my previous interviews [See above]; in general a more intellectual approach towards GC's writings and Tibet's complicated history of the times before the Chinese invasion in 1951. I also expected them to be able to shed some light on *whether*, and if so, *why* GC had become an important figure in their life. As for the Western Tibetologists, I not only saw them as scholars and specialist in Tibetan and religious studies, but also as being my '*alter ego*'. I assumed their view on GC and his importance, as well as their analysis of Tibet's history, would be quite different from how the

Tibetans themselves looked at their own country and GC. Through this expected difference, I aimed to look at GC and Tibet from a slightly more distanced, *Western* perspective. I also hoped them to be the mediators between the mainly *Western* audience and the dominantly *Tibetan* topic of the film. Why this idea of mine didn't really work out, I will try to explain in the last chapter [Evaluation III: Selection for the film]. Since most of these interviews were conducted in English I had fuller control over the content and the unexpected directions they frequently took. In retrospect I have to say, though, that it was a mistake to interview Rakra Tethong Rinpoche in English [More to this below: Evaluation II: Preselection].

EVALUATION 2: PRE-SELECTION 2003/04

After the shooting was over in Spring 2003 I went through all the materials that I had gathered between 1998 and now [See chapter: 'Chronology' in the appendix]. I had about 80 hours of footage from Tibet and India, 30 to 40 hours of archival footage, several hundred photographs and roughly 65 hours of Interviews.

Here I will only focus on how I pre-selected the interviews for the first phase of the editing. So far I had the English translations ready of all the Tibetan interviews. But as for the interviews conducted in English, they were still only on tape. Until now I had never really viewed them carefully. I eventually had to decide, which ones I wanted to work with, forcing me for the first time in this project to *narrow down* my material (instead of just gathering more and more). In the process of pre-selection for any documentary – quite different from a *written* work – not only the *intellectual quality* of an interview needs to be considered, but also the *aesthetic quality* of the image (and sound), as well as, what I will call, the *charismatic quality* of the interviewee. Needless to say the best interviews being, where all three factors come together:

- The *intellectual quality* or in less dramatic terms, the *content* of an interview is not exclusively in the hands of the interviewee, but also the interviewer (in this case myself), who should help to bring out the best in the interviewee. If the questions or the way the questions were asked are bad (e.g. wrong structure of the interview, inadequate research and/or preparation), it is very frustrating for an interviewee and difficult for him to give his best, no matter how hard he tries.
- The *aesthetic quality* of the image and the sound is the sole responsibility of the filmmaker and/or the cameraman/soundman. No matter how good an interview is if the image and/or sound are bad, the interview cannot be used in the film.
- With the *charismatic quality* of an interviewee I mean both, the *content*, but also the *way* the interviewee is presenting himself during the interview, adding more credibility, humor or irony to what he says. Interestingly, also for this aspect, the responsibility lies to a considerable extent in the hands of the interviewer. If you don't manage to establish a creative atmosphere during the interview, again it is hard for an informant to show his 'best' side and to grow 'beyond himself'. But luckily there are these rare occasions, when the interviewee completely takes over. If this happens, no matter how bad the interviewer, the interview itself will still be good. This certainly happened to me with *Golok Jigme* in Nepal and with *Alak Yongtsin* in Northeastern Tibet.

I wrote about this in detail because the previously mentioned factors were the main criteria to decide, which interviews I wanted to work with. Quite a number of the English interviews (9) were already sorted out during this phase of preselection, which meant that I never had them transcribed (and they won't be part of this work): e.g. *Lobsang Lhalungpa*, *George Tsarong*, *Rinchen Dolma Taring*, *Gene Smith*, *Ngawangthondup Narkyid**, *Radhu Abdul Wahid* etc. Among these nine interviews was also the one with *Rakra Tethong Rinpoche**. Especially in his case these seems surprising, since he is widely regarded as one of *the* Tibetan specialists of GC. Rakra had not only been a student of GC in Lhasa in 1946, he was also among the first to write a biography of GC (in Tibetan) and he was also one of my main informants during the whole project. I frequently met Rakra in his home in Jona (Switzerland) and we discussed the texts of GC or watched at photographs that I had brought back from my research trips. Now, why is he *not* in the film? I had already mentioned above that it was a *grave* mistake to interview Rakra Tethong in English. His English was certainly good enough for a person-to-person conversation, but on tape, for the film, I couldn't really use it in the end. I faced another problem in this interview, too. What we had been casually discussing in his home was more consistent, than what he said during the interview. There were many contradictions and dates mixed up, which may have happened, because he couldn't speak in his native language. On camera, he was obviously under more *pressure* and I had not been able to ease that pressure during the interview. I should have done it in Tibetan in the first place. Unfortunately I realized this too late and the prospect of having to do the interview again, this time in Tibetan with a translator, then sending the tape to India, having it translated, which was always a very complicated process, had prevented me from doing so. Although from a point of view of production (time, money), this may make perfect sense, in retrospect, it still seems incomprehensible – *the full responsibility of this mistake lies with me.*

In the case of the Tibetan interviews, this process of preselection was a bit more complicated and time consuming, since, as it turned out, I couldn't do it alone. By reading the English translations, I could only judge the content (*intellectual quality*), but I had no reference, as to whether the translations were accurate and/or whether the statements on tape were said exactly in the way I had them in writing. I therefore began to work with Yonten Gompamitsang, a young Tibetan refugee from Kham in Eastern Tibet. He was interested in filmmaking and I could offer him a job. Yonten turned out to be invaluable, also in the later phase of the editing [See below]. We soon realized that what the interviewees were 'saying' on paper didn't really match the 'real' statement on tape. Not that the translations were wrong as such, but the order of the things said during a statement, was frequently not accurate. To make a long story short, Yonten realized that many of the Tibetan interviews were considerably more concise in their translations, compared to the matching passages on tape. I have already mentioned the difference of *spoken* and *written* language in Tibetan [See above]. Here again I had to deal with this problem. In this complicated and often frustrating process of selection, which lasted for several weeks, we had to sort out eight of the Tibetan interviews. Among them many of the contemporaries of GC, e.g. *Lhade Akhutsang*, *Alak Chongsay*, *Gurung Gyalsay*, *Lobsang Samten* etc., but also the son (*Horkhang Jampa Tendar*) of one of the best friends of GC from Lhasa, *Horkhang Sonam Penbar*, who had published GC's 'Political

History' in 1952. But since I have the Tibetan interviews in their English translation, they will all be included here.

EVALUATION 3: FINAL SELECTION 2004/05

Through the initial process of pre-selection I was now down to fifteen (15) interviews: five (5) in English, ten (10) in Tibetan; two (2) Western scholars (Donald S. Lopez, Heather Stoddard), one (1) Western contemporary (Hugh Richardson), six (6) young Tibetans (Ju Kesang, Tsering Shakya, Tashi Tsering, Jamyang Norbu, Hortsang Jigme, Yudrung Gya) and seven (7) contemporaries (Alak Chongsay, Alak Yongtsin, Amdo Champa, Tseten Yudron, Golok Jigme, Thubten Wangpo).

Considerably different from the previous phase of selection, was the fact that we now were in the middle of the editing of the film. More and more the film began to take shape and we now knew much better, which way we were heading to. To the previously mentioned criteria of selection for the interviews – the *intellectual, aesthetical* and *charismatic* quality – another one had to be considered: the *dynamics of the editing process*. This criterion is probably the strongest of them all. At the end of the day a film needs to tell a story and during the editing the story gains momentum, often 'dictating' the editor what to do. In other words, not every good or even brilliant statement, initially selected by the editor and/or the director, will eventually find its way in the finished film. On the contrary, sometimes you may even have to use some 'bad' or sub-optimal statements/interviews, just because they help you to tell the story.

I would like to illustrate this process with the interviews of the two Western scholars (*Heather Stoddard* and *Donald S. Lopez*) and the interview with the wife of GC (*Tseten Yudron*). In the case of Tseten Yudron I can say that the interview with her was certainly not among the best. The *aesthetical quality* of the image is questionable, the actual information (*intellectual quality*) we get from her is rather limited, but there is a strong *charismatic quality* to her statements. Only that the *charismatic* quality, in this case, does not come from the old lady alone, but more so from the 'needs' of the film. When she talks about GC's '*bad state of health*' towards the end of the film, and that '*they only had a very short time together*', this adds an *emotional* impact, which no other person could have delivered at this point. It had to be her, therefore I decided – or rather the *film* decided – to include her under any circumstances.

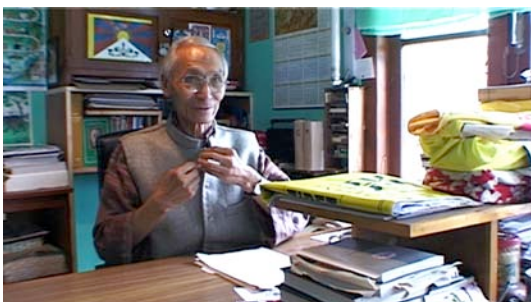
In the case of the Western scholars it was quite the opposite. Despite the quality of the interviews (my editor liked them as much as I did), we still couldn't include them in *this* film. During the editing the film progressively developed into a kind of dialogue between *my* own perceptions and observations of GC and Tibet (past/present) and the *Tibetan interviewee's* anecdotes and reflections. Although I had initially intended to use the Western scholars as my 'alter ego', it didn't work the way I expected. In the process of the editing I realized that I only let them say, what I wanted to say about Tibet and GC, instead of giving them enough room to develop their own ideas. More and more I wanted the film to be *my* reflection on Tibet and GC and not *theirs* (although in many points we would have agreed). I therefore decided – or rather the *dynamics of the editing process* did – to work with a personal commentary, instead of using the Western scholars as my 'alter ego'. To be accurate I have to add here that it was my editor, long before I

realized it, which suggested working with a personal commentary. But only when this decision was taken, the editing gained momentum again and progressed into what is the film now. What may seem a painful and long process of decision making – involving a lot of doubts and regrets – beautifully illustrates at the same time that it needs *all* the components for the final film. The left out footage and interviews are equally important [For more information, watch the 'bonus' on DVD: Interview with Luc Schaedler, About the filming].

Still I have to admit that many statements are not in the film, which could or should have been included. That's why some of them are now presented in the 'Unpublished interviews on GC' [See 'bonus' on DVD]. My main purpose of presenting twenty-nine (29) interviews below is to pay homage to the ones that didn't find their way in the film, but helped to develop and shape my own ideas. My gratitude equally goes to the informants, whose interviews I had never even transcribed or translated: *Aku Ngawang, Rakra Tethong Rinpoche, Lobsang Lhalungpa, Rinchen Dolma Taring, George Tsarong, Radhu Abdul Wahid, Ngawangthondup Narkyid, Gene Smith, Dorje Tseten, Thubten Jinpa, Pema Wangchen, Choeten Kyid*. Luckily, in some cases, their autobiographies and contributions to Tibetan history, culture, language and literature had been published in English [See: bibliography].

* Here I will briefly summarize the most interesting passages of the interviews with *Ngawangthondup Narkyid* and *Rakra Tethong Rinpoche*. Although, in the end, I did neither included these interviews in the film, nor did I have them transcribed, they were still valuable to give me a more complete picture of GC:

Ngawangthondup Narkyid (India 2002)



1. Narkyid was forced to prostrate in front of GC three times, when his teacher had brought him to prison to meet his former friend from Drepung. He felt awkward doing it.
2. Narkyid can understand the fact that some people interpret GC as being a 'crazy saint'. He himself doesn't see it that way, but believes that there are enough indications for such an interpretation (GC's 'mad' behavior, his drinking and smoking habit, GC provoking his former classmates from Drepung).
3. Once, when Narkyid accompanied GC to the Barkhor, GC stopped in front of a food stall, where they sold '*shapale*' (a fried Tibetan meet-'ravioli'). To the embarrassment of Narkyid, who was a government official from a noble family, GC forced him to publicly eat some on the spot.

4. Narkyid remembers that GC frequently advised his students to go abroad for studies to India, Europe, and America and apparently he even mentioned Russia and China. We need to know the outside world, GC said.

5. According to Narkyid, GC also spoke about the need for change in Tibet. He was convinced that without change, Tibet would be lost and fall to the Chinese. One of the changes he seemed to have mentioned was the fact that monasteries should not be landowners in the future. Narkyid was intimidated by this kind of 'revolutionary' talk and was advised by his friends not to discuss it in public.

6. Narkyid remembers GC as being very serious, often drunk and depressed, but sometimes even angry (which incidentally would match the title of the film).

Rakra Tethong Rinpoche (Switzerland 2003)



1. In contrast to Narkyid, Rakra Rinpoche never described GC as being serious or even angry – sad maybe, but always soft and kind.

2. Rakra mentions that it had always been his wish (in the early 1940's, when GC was still in India) to meet GC and become his student. Apparently he had read some of GC's writings that he had sent back to Tibet (among the texts that Rakra read, was GC's *'Tibetan Arts of Love'*, which is astonishing for a Tibetan monk of that time).

3. Rakra describes the night before GC's arrest. He had bad dreams, was fearful and felt very sad the whole day. On that day, GC was arrested and Rakra later heard of it through his servant.

4. Together with his cousin Horkhang Jampa Tendar (who later published GC's *'Political History of Tibet'*), Rakra went to see a member of the Kashag to ask for GC's release. Apparently they were advised to leave the matter alone, because it was 'deep running' and 'too dangerous' for them to handle. Even their families could suffer from the consequences.

5. Rakra talks about GC being severely punished in prison a story that is confirmed by another friend of GC's and his wife [See interviews: Amdo Champa and Tseten Yudron].

6. Rakra also mentions that his main interest in GC was less politics or social matters, but rather to learn about Buddhist philosophy and poetry.

THE INTERVIEWS (B): TRANSLATIONS AND TRANSCRIPTS

Following you will find the transcripts and/or translations of the interviews. All come with a photo of the interviewee during the shooting and some additional information to his or her biography. The language in which the interview was conducted is given at the end of each introduction. So is the information, as to whether he or she is in the film or not.

HUGH RICHARDSON



Recorded in St. Andrews, Scotland, 3rd of February 1999

Hugh Edward Richardson, born in St. Andrews, Scotland 1905. Working for the Indian Civil Service. Stationed in Tibet between 1936 and 1950. He was partly responsible for GC's arrest. Author of several books on Tibet, among them 'A Cultural History of Tibet'. Died in December 2000 in St. Andrews, aged 95. English, in the film.

Please describe your first meeting with GC?

Well, it was at a lunch party in the Horkhang's house [See interview: Horkhang Jampa Tendar]. There were a number of people sitting at low tables, two separate tables, and GC was on one and I was on another one. I went over to talk to him, I knew that he had a reputation as a great scholar, also he had helped giving me some information through my particular friend the Trijang Rinpoche, about where I should look for inscribed pillars and I talked to GC. But unfortunately he wasn't in a very good mental state, when I met him. It was well known that GC was heavily into opium and alcohol [the alcohol is confirmed by many, but not opium]. I'm afraid it has left a mark on his mental state, he was very slow to answer and it wasn't a very successful meeting. Rather disappointing... he was an important figure in the Tibetan scholarship.

Any rumors about GC at the time?

Oh yes... I knew that there were some stories from Kalimpong. He was working with Changlochen on some sort of curious propaganda activities it sounded... very scatterbrained to me... talking about Revolutionary Parties etc. They produced a little leaflet with a hammer and sickle on it [in fact it was a hammer, a sword and a loom]. It was sent up to me [from Kalimpong to Lhasa] and I showed it to the Lhasa Government, to the Kashag [the Cabinet], which seemed a little surprised about what was going on..., but GC got back to Lhasa all the same and as soon as he got back they put him into prison... [GC was observed for some time, before he was arrested] and kept him there for quite some times... they beat him, too... but he was allowed out and he later lived with the Horkhang's family. I really... I found that... more interesting than meeting him, was reading his book, The 'White Annals' and also what he did with

George Roerich, the 'Blue Annals' [a Buddhist history], but GC's own history was a very interesting compilation, I didn't agree with it all, but it was a very important works. And I don't know, whether the Tibetans are aware of its existence, now?

Why was this book, the 'White Annals', so important?

Well, it was the writing of Tibetan history from a somehow Western point of view, not the kind of... not purely a religious history, not a *namthar* [biographical] history! And it hadn't been done before. But GC had worked with Roerich and realized the value of a continuous series of facts. And he did his best in the 'White Annals'. He must have seen the Chinese annals, probably the Tang annals, translated into English. I think he spoke Chinese, didn't he, I can't remember... he could read the Tang Annals in translation about the early period of Tibetan history [7th to 9th century]... I haven't read his history for quite some time, I should have read it before you came...

Do you remember when you heard of GC for the first time?

I think I must have heard of GC first about his activities in Kalimpong. This must have been in 1950 or 1949 [actually it was in 1945/46]. It was to get intelligence reports from the [British-Indian] police in Kalimpong about his activities and those of Changlochen... one time the [British-] Indian government considered sending them all to China, deporting them. Because they were producing these curious broadsheets with hammer and sickle on them, those kind of things... childish really... I can't imagine why such an intelligent man [GC] got drawn into this kind of pointless propaganda... I don't remember, whether Heather Stoddard has described that period [in her book], have you read it? **Yes.** Does she talk about that? The most mischievous of them [the founders of the Tibet Improvement Party] was Rapga [Pangdatsang]... [Laughs] ... he went to China, didn't he? And Changlochen... I don't know what happened to him, he was another of those opium takers. He was of not much use... probably, intellectually...

Back to GC, as a British Official, did you look at him as a subversive?

Yes... well the stuff he was producing in Kalimpong was aimed against the Tibetan government, subversive not on the British government, but on the Tibetan government. GC was producing sort of ill digested republican material, and consequently, my duty is, representing the Indian government in Tibet, to tell them what was going on. We were a friendly government and these people [the party members] in India were taking inimical actions, therefore I informed the m [Tibetan government] about everything we knew about them...

Do you remember the reports you wrote to Lhasa?

No! I'm not even sure I did write reports to Lhasa; I think I made verbal statements to them, the Kashag and the Foreign Office. I was *in* Lhasa and therefore I wouldn't write reports *to* Lhasa...

Do you remember this note in your papers [meaning the secret British files], where you wrote: 'I know all about Choephel...'

Which paper? Do you mean 'Melong', the Tibet Mirror? [HR is referring to the first Tibetan newspaper that was printed in Kalimpong]...

[HR is confused: I try to explain to him that with 'papers' I was actually referring to the 'secret political files' the British Indian police had on the activities of the members of the 'Tibet Improvement Party'. In these files, Richardson's name was frequently mentioned. He pretends not to understand what I mean]

...I reported... [Pause]... I can't remember that I wrote a detailed report about him... why do you think I said that?

In one of your reports you said that you knew all about Choephel. Can you tell me more about his activities if you remember?

I don't remember anything more about him, I'm afraid... I saw him in the flesh, he was not in a very good mental state, I thought... [Pause]

Can you describe him physically?

He was wearing... he had short hair and he was wearing an ordinary layman's dark maroon colored *chuba* [Tibetan dress], quite ordinary, well, a white shirt... I don't remember... his clothes didn't strike me as anything extra ordinary; they were just simple Tibetan layman's clothes...

...and his face?

[Pause] ...difficult to describe anyone's face... it was ... I can't really give a description of his face... a kind of... [Pause] critical smile... rather, he was looking... but he wasn't really mentally alert, this was quite unfortunate... but he was a considerable intellect...

Do you think GC had an impact on Tibetan society?

Oh yes. He was talked about... the people [in Lhasa], I think, were surprised that he had come back from Kalimpong. **Why?** ... Well, he had been plotting against his government... been writing some subversive material, and he must have known that it [this material] was being passed on to the government [in fact it was Richardson himself, who passed this material to the Kashag. See interview: Tashi Tsering]... and they did beat him, when he came back, they arrested him, put him in prison and beat him, didn't they? I think people were surprised that he should come back... [Pause] I'm not sure, why he came back, I think, possibly, he thought that he was going to be sent to China, but I don't know, why he should have worried about that, he had friends in China... [Pause] ...anyhow, he wanted to come back to Lhasa and he did... as far as I can make out, he settled down quite easily after that... [Pause] When did he die? I know he didn't live long after the Dalai Lama arrived [in Lhasa, after his escape to the Indian border, when the Chinese army invaded Eastern-Tibet in 1950/51]. I don't remember, whether GC was there at the time, I suppose he was... he must have been in Lhasa, when the DL came back...

From today's perspective, did GC leave a trace in the Tibetan society?

...It probably died out by now, I don't think anybody would remember him, except some people like Rakra Rinpoche and... [Pause] very few people would remember him. He may have left a trace... you'd have to ask Narkyid, he could tell you much more, than I could... [Pause] I haven't been in Tibet since the 1950's, so why should I know? I never heard them mention him, nobody has asked me about him, no Tibetan in exile... [Pause] The only one, who would be interested, is Rakra Rinpoche, really ...the other one is Rakra's brother [Tomjor Tethong. See interview: Jamyang Norbu]. He [Tomjor] died, no he didn't, his mind... he may be dead by now, but his mind went... he was, I'm sad, I liked him very much... drugs and drinks I'm afraid...

Is GC important for a younger generation of Tibetans?

Interesting... interesting, I'm not sure important... I don't think important... I... [Laughs], Tsering Shakya, does he mention him [See interview: Tsering Shakya]? Well, I haven't read that he [TS] would find him interesting, I don't think Tsering Shakya would like to share his ideas, at least, not as they were expressed in Kalimpong... I hope not... [Laughs]. I'm sure he wouldn't. No, GC was an eccentric... and the fireworks went wrong...

What ideas did GC express in Kalimpong?

No, I don't know what else he was doing there. The only person who might have written something about him was Tharchin Babu [a Tibetan missionary and the editor of the 'Tibet Mirror']... **did you know him?** Oh yes! He played both sides, very carefully, well informed and very cautious. He wanted to keep in with everybody... [HR is referring to rumors that Tharchin was an informer of the British secret service. This would partly help to explain, why Tharchin could still print his newspaper during the War, when paper was heavily rationed]

When you were in Tibet, did you feel the struggle between tradition and modernity?

I was always conscious that there were Tibetan officials, nobles, who were interested in events outside Tibet... [Pause] And the main drag on *any* modernizing influence was of course the monasteries... [Pause] **why?** It was common knowledge that they didn't want Tibet to be involved with foreign powers. They wanted Tibet to be hermetically sealed, under their control or under their influence... they thought that the outside world was damaging to religion, the firmly believed that.

Did you have talks about that in the monasteries?

I certainly didn't criticize the monasteries in my conversations with Tibetans. This would have been a very foolish thing to do... I talked to them in general terms about international connections, that it would be a good thing to have some international connections... the Tibetans never really got down to that until the trade mission, headed by Tsepon Shakabpa, that was the first real excursion in the outside World after 1914... [Pause]... There were always some young nobles, who were a little restive about the power of the monasteries, they liked to have connections with the outside world, liked to know what was going on... The great interest of almost every Tibetan was, whether noble or farmer, trade and trade meant India, or

China... the monasteries were also involved in trading ventures, by no means only devoted to meditation, they had political interests, political power...

Going back to GC, what were his talents?

Oh, he was an artist for one thing, and he was a writer, a historian, who had studied old documents, which other Tibetans had not... [Pause] he also had this political interest to ideas that other Tibetans didn't seem to have entertained... about changes, possible changes in the form of government... [Pause] you have read Heather Stoddard's book [Le mendiant de L'Amdo, 1985], well that explains quite a lot about his character, his abilities...

...But I'm interested in *your* view?

I didn't know him particularly well; I only met him in the party, when he wasn't at his best. However he did... he was helpful to my staff [HR himself did research into the old history of Tibet]. I asked GC some questions... my personal assistant went on my behalf... in many ways it was easier for him to talk to GC than me. I was never quite sure about his attitude towards the British after his experiences in Kalimpong... [GC was certainly aware of Richardson's involvement in his arrest]

The 'Tibet Improvement Party', do you remember the visions they had for Tibet?

I don't know, except it was to be a different one... to be more open to the outside world. I never saw detailed plans... if I did, I can't remember them, I don't think they are on record... they just wanted to change the old system... I don't think they were ever democratically inclined, they just wanted a different layer of influence in the government.... more intellectuals, I suppose... [See interviews: Tsering Shakya, Jamyang Norbu, and Tashi Tsering].

Were you afraid, when the Communist started their advances to Tibet?

Of course, concerned for the fate of Tibet, which was important to India, relations with India... but it was equally clear that the Indian government could do nothing physical or practical in the matter... and the diplomatic influence disappeared more or less with the arrival of the Communist government in China [after 1949]. We had some influence on Chang Kai Shek, but no longer... Though it was clear what the Chinese were going to do, what they had said they were going to do... Mao Tse Tung more or less proclaimed the fact that he was going to take over Tibet...

Back to GC, what was his reputation?

In his personal life he was supposed to be rather a bit of a libertine, an individualist in every way, but he was, as I say, he was always regarded as a great intellectual, and I... [Pause] and the Tibetans always had a kind of respect of the intellectual eccentric... [HR is referring to the old Tibetan tradition of 'crazy saints']

Why this respect, is this a Tibetan tradition?

Well, Tibetans... why do the Tibetan respect the eccentric? It was part of their tradition, I suppose, you can say... Milarepa [probably the most famous of these 'crazy saints'], there are a whole lot of them... you read the Blue Annals and you will hear, large numbers of so called mad intellectuals, *nyonpas*... they were always greatly respected, there was this Lady, who was another of that sort of character... she was always very much respected... [Long pause]... you probably don't know the work of Coleridge, who describes in a poem the... [Long pause]

The man touched by the divine

Yes. Beware. Beware.

His flashing eyes, his floating hair

For he on honey-dew has fed

And drank the milk of paradise [HR is quoting from Coleridge's poem 'Kubla Khan'*].

Well that was the sort of idea the Tibetans would have of their eccentrics intellectuals...

*(...)

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!

His flashing eyes, his floating hair!

Weave a circle round him thrice,

And close your eyes with holy dread,

For he on honey-dew hath fed,

And drunk the milk of Paradise.

AKHU LAMA TSERING

***Recorded in Lingya, 16th of August 1999 in a Nyingma monastery near Rebkong.***

Born 1929 in Ling gya, Northeastern Tibet (Amdo), where he joined a Nyingma monastery. He himself is a famous Nyingma practitioner (ngagpa) in Amdo. He was very close to the mother of GC, who, later in her life, became a nun. He never met GC himself. What he knows of GC was through GC's mother, GC's relatives and the texts he read of GC. He died some years back in early 2000. Tibetan, not in film.

What is your name?

My name is Lama Tsering. I am 71 years old. My native land is Lingya [near Rebkong in Northeast-Tibet].

Tell us about GC, how did you hear about him?

Earlier, our monastery was Yama Tashi Khyil [YTK, near the home of GC], the monastery of Kyabgon Shabkarpa. In YTK all the tantric practitioners of Rebkong area assembled for a special *puja* [prayer festival]. In YTK they know about GC's life. GC's father's name was Alak Gyalpo. He was actually from Kyagya. Due to some problems he came to Yama Tashi Khyil and stayed there. The mother, Ani Pema Tso, was from Zhoepang. After taking her as his bride Alak Riglo [GC] was born. Alak Riglo, from a very young age [4 years], entered the monastic community of Yama Tashi Khyil and studied under Akhu Tsampa. Akhu Tsampa was both the *guru* and teacher of Alak Kyabgon. Akhu Tsampa also taught GC Tibetan grammar. After few years GC went to another local monastery, where he took the monk's name Gendun Choephel. There he was trained as a poet and linguist, and studied Tibetan grammar thoroughly. At Ditsa monastery he started studying Buddhist scriptures. He was nicknamed the thin guy from Ditsa [Ditsa gambo]. The reason why GC was also called Alak Dhodak: the abbot of Minling Dhodak monastery, Jigme Sonam Namgyal, was once invited to Amdo [Northeast-Tibet] by the second Kyabgon of Yama Tashi Khyil, where he founded the tradition of holding the prayer festival of *Yamaraj*. He also taught many sacred dances, which were the same as that of *Gyud*. The tantric practitioners from Rebkong established a spiritual relationship with the abbot [of Minling Dhodak] and many of them still recite his prayers in their daily morning prayer:

The great chariot that spread the new words in Lhadrak,

Son of virtue was Thinley Namgyal.

Purposely taking low birth, he became the holder of tantric teachings

I pray to Jigme Sonam Namgyal.'

Alak Riglo [GC] was said to be the reincarnation of the abbot of Minling Dhodak. That was the reason why GC was later called Dhodak *Tulku*. So Alak Ditsa [another name for GC] was said to be his reincarnation. He was called thin Alak Dhodak, because he had no flesh on his body. While at Ditsa GC reached the pinnacle of his understanding of Tibetan language and this caused others to feel jealous of him. Thus he left for Labrang [saying that Ditsa was too small for him, see interview: Yudrung Gya]. At Labrang [a huge Gelugpa monastery] he studied Buddhist philosophy by way of dialectics. It was said that GC used Sanskrit instead of Tibetan, when he shared secrets with his friends. Gendun Choephel's class when he was studying *The Collected Topics* was known as the 'terminology class' [for GC's use of Sanskrit, see interview: Alak Yongtsin].

[In Labrang] he built small mechanical planes and mice. His mouse looked so real that even a cat got deceived and pounced on it. GC flew his mechanical plane to and fro across the Sang River [flowing through Labrang]. Such actions of him resulted in developing a rift with others and eventually he left for Lhasa [1927]. He stayed in Lhasa for a long period of time [1927-34]. GC corrected the Translation *Of Buddha's Words* [he is referring to GC's last text on Buddhist Madhyamika philosophy, which stirred quite a controversy] and made counterfeit notes. While making counterfeit notes he was arrested by the Tibetan government, because the thread in one of the notes was broken [See interview transcript of Tashi Pelra, the magistrate, who arrested GC]. After completing the prison term he left for India and there he wrote a traveler's guidebook [Akhu Lama Tsering mixes up the events here]. GC had written many works. He was 47, when he died in Lhasa after his visit to India. He completed *The White Annals* [his work on Tibetan history] at 47. Rebkong Kyabgon visited Lhasa, when GC was working on his book. GC went to greet him and informed Rebkong Kyabgon that he was working on a book and asked Rebkong Kyabgon to go through the book. GC also asked Rebkong Kyabgon to finish the book. Although Rebkong Kyabgon accepted, he couldn't finish the book, which was left incomplete. At 47, whilst on the deathbed, GC asked some of his friends to recite the long mantra of *Ushnisha Vijaya* and *The Prayer Pleasing Manjushri* composed by Lama Mipham. He seated himself in the posture of *Maitreya* [the Buddha of the future] and facing northwards, he breathed his last [this account, and the following, are part of the legend, surrounding GC's death. In reality, GC died in his room, alone]. It was said that GC was a great tantric practitioner and had reached a higher state of mind. Because of that, it was also said that, inscribed on his bones, were clear letters. Others accepted it, without any dispute that from his skull many relics flowed, and that GC was a great tantric practitioner. He died that way [such accounts add to the discussion, whether GC was in fact a *naljorpa*, a 'crazy saint'. See interview: Ju Kesang].

You know GC's mother. Did his mother tell you stories about him?

No, she never told me any stories. She told me that she had sent letters to him and had received replies from him [See GC's letters from India]. However, she said that since they were separated by great distance they would not meet again. Saying such things, she would shed tears. Except for that she never told me any stories. In her later life she received the layperson's vows [became a nun]. In her youth she gave birth to GC, and in the evening of her life she became a nun. She wore maroon robes. She received the celibacy vows and became nun. *Badho* was her dharma [Buddhist] name and her lay name was Pema

Tso. That was the only story that she told me. 'I will not meet my son again. I have written to him. Now we will not meet,' she said and would cry. The two of us spent time together, receiving the teachings on *The Oral Instruction of Lama Kunsang* from Alak Tsethar of Lun monastery and I had also stayed in her retreat house.

Did she tell you, what the letters contained?

Except for her telling me that she was receiving these letters, I didn't see the letters myself. I heard that in one of the letters GC had sent greetings to his mother and the only other thing that he had written beside his greetings, was about an Indian tree, mentioned in a verse from Shantideva's guide to the 'Bodhisattava's Way of Life':

*'Other joys are like chu-shing,
Which, after producing fruits, disappear.'*

He wrote that *chu-shing* is a tree, growing near a lake called *Kuda* in India, whose shape is like that of a thigh of a young woman, contrary to the claims made by Mar Nang Tsang and Shamar Tsang [Tibetan authors]. He further wrote that this tree, even if the layers of its skin were taken out, its inner core couldn't be reached. Many Amdo scholars agreed that *chu-shing*, in the context like, 'the chu-shing has no essence', was the long shoot of an onion. But GC argued that the shoot of an onion was a type of grass, but not a species of a tree. He wrote that the shape of the *chu-shing*, growing near the Lake Kuda, is looking different and he had even sent skins of that tree. I have heard such stories, but haven't seen the letter with my own eyes. It was said that he had written such things in his letters.

Out of this [*chu-shing* discussion], a spiritual argument developed. Others claimed that an onion, when observed from the outside, seemed to be a big solid thing, but its inside was filled with empty space, with no essence. Its roots dry out and die right after the seeds formed the top of the shoot. Likewise, the joy that arises from its positive causes, the virtuous deeds, disappears after giving its resultant joy. It might be possible to increase the material wealth in this worldly life with such causes, but these causes couldn't be transformed into a continuum resulting in the state of *Nirvana*. So, some scholars from Amdo believed the 'onion' to be a metaphor for 'lacking of essence'. But GC stated that, what they were actually talking about, was not an onion at all, but in fact a tree, growing near Lake Kuda whose shape was like that of a thigh of young woman. And this tree dies after bearing fruits and whose trunk is made of many layers of skins. As mentioned in the verse '*Other joys are like chu-shing, which, after producing fruits, disappear.*'

More stories about GC?

No, not many. I have heard about reasons and analogies, used by GC to explain the rarity of 'a fully endowed human life'. But he was someone, who would not listen to other people's explanations. There are some chapters of analogies, used to describe the rarity of 'a fully endowed human life'. Older tantric practitioners used to describe how GC would explain these things, when their prayer session ended. But even with such explanations, it was very difficult to understand the point. GC used to say that it would be very useful to hold wind by meditating on wind, when one is small. There were only few of the monks,

who practiced 'wind yoga' [levitating]. They say that in the assembly hall, when GC meditated on wind and held the wind, then his face would appear through the windows of the second floor [another story, adding to the ongoing discussion, whether GC was a 'crazy saint', in possession of special spiritual power]

How did your interest in GC develop?

At first I didn't have any real interest in him. Earlier, I didn't understand his beliefs. Akhu Lodroe [a monk from Amdo] would often tell us about Gendun Choephel's stay in Lhasa [in Drepung monastery]. When it was known to the monks that GC would attend a debating session and would actually debate there, then even the old monks, leaning on their crutches, would come to the debating ground, saying, that today they would learn new logics and gain new knowledge, and would listen to GC's arguments attentively:

In a debate there are two participants, the questioner and the answerer. One day, GC was the answerer and another monk questioned him. The questioner first recited few words from *The Golden Rosary of Eloquent Speech* and then asked GC to recite the words immediately preceding them. GC told the monk that the words were not coming to his mind. To that the monk replied snobbishly that if the words were not coming to his mind, then why did GC ask for this quotation. Then GC asked the monk to recite the words preceding one sentence, which GC himself recited, from *The Prayers to the Twenty-one Taras*. The monk told GC that he couldn't recite that. GC mockingly told the monk that if he was unable to recite the sentence from *The Prayers to the Twenty-one Taras*, then how could he – GC – recite the words from *The Golden Rosary of Eloquent Speech*. The logic here is that *The Prayers to the Twenty-one Taras* was a short prayer, which was recited daily by all the monks, whereas *The Golden Rosary of Eloquent Speech* was a huge text, which was not recited daily. If the questioning monk couldn't recite the sentence preceding the one, which GC recited, then how could GC recite the words from such a thick volume of text as *The Golden Rosary of Eloquent Speech*?

After the People's Liberation Army came to Tibet [1950-51], GC was known by people of Tibetan nationality to be a great scholar, and hence some asserted that he was the second greatest scholar in the world and some asserted that he was third. Although he was highly honored, his assertions were not really known then. In the expression of worship at the beginning of his book, *The Ornament of Nagarjuna's Thoughts* [the controversial text on Buddhist Madhyamika philosophy], GC wrote that, even though he hasn't put his assertions before, he had practiced the teachings of the Nyingma tradition, particularly *The Great Perfection* practice of highest yoga tantra. At first [when GC was still alive], his beliefs were not understood and his beliefs were not valued. Now, after recognizing him to be a great scholar of the Tibetan nationality, GC is placed at such a high status. But before, it was not like that.

He didn't stay long around here [in Amdo]. He had not founded any monastery here. And except for a few disciples, like Nyagrang Dasang, he didn't really have many famous students. GC didn't have many great achievements in his name. Because of that, he was not given high status, when he was still alive. He went to Lhasa and India and stayed in those places. He had also written a guidebook.

From your viewpoint, in what way is GC important?

From a *religious* point of view it is said that GC had the five main Buddhist texts as his belt. He was highly knowledgeable on the five main texts. He was particularly good in *Pramana*. From the *secular* side, what GC said was very compatible with science. It is also believed that GC's ideology was very similar to that of Marx's and Lenin's.

GC never accepted that conventional phenomena could be perceived by valid cognition. Hence, he tried to disprove Tsongkhapa on this point, which resulted in many [Gelugpa] lamas disliking him. But he was very learned in *Pramana*. From the secular side too, he had stated that, except for the lack of facilities, he could have built an airplane. In every field he was a man of great knowledge.

What about science?

GC was good in science. It was believed that, despite of the lack of material facilities, he had great technological knowledge. It is recorded in his biography that GC made paper planes and flew them over Sang River [in Labrang]. Even though he had the know-how to build airplanes, he had no material facilities and no financial backing. And of course he was also very knowledgeable in the five main Buddhist texts. He was good in science, but lacked the means and facilities. It is said that H. H. the Dalai Lama had said, 'If GC was living now; he would be a very big help. He would be like a staff for an old man. However he is no more.' Even his nationality [Tibetans in Tibet] stated things like that. Since GC had such a deep knowledge of science, it is said that, even if GC was in another world, it wouldn't be a waste of money, to bring him back from there. GC had the knowledge, but was lacking in facilities. At that time they couldn't even built an explosive here.

Why did many people take interest in GC only after his death?

That is difficult to say. Of all his achievements, the main achievements are his many writings. Going through his writings one would know that GC was a great scholar and thus he was respected. Otherwise he had not established any monastery and he had not given teachings over a long period of time, thus acquiring himself many disciples. However, after his death, like a Tibetan proverb expresses: 'We love the dead ones, and we like the previous year better', by reading his writings, people realized that he was in fact a great scholar. Except for his writings, GC had no other great achievements... [Thinks] There are many new terms that GC had used and clarified in his writings, which were not used by earlier scholars. There are points GC had resolved, which were left undecided by earlier scholars. He had written and explained all this in his *Wandering Around the Country: The Story Called Spread-Out Gold* [travel account from India]. And then there is *The Ornaments of Nagarjuna's Thoughts* [his controversial thoughts on Madhyamika philosophy]. He had written so many works. I have read only a few. Only a few books reached my hands: *The Ornament of Nagarjuna's Thoughts*, *Wandering Around the Country: The Story Called Spread-Out Gold* and *The White Annals* [on Tibetan history]. GC has many writings to his credit. In Kham area in East-Tibet *The Ornament of Nagarjuna's Thoughts* is studied mainly. If one reads his *Collected Works* [published in Lhasa by Horkhang Sonam Penbar in 1990], one will have a sense of

awe. Usually, we develop adoration after reading collected works. If the work is a very good one, then we hold the author in great esteem. But I haven't read much.

Please explain why you like *The Ornament of Nagarjuna's Thought*.

In *The Ornament of Nagarjuna's Thought*, one of the four philosophical views of Buddhist tenets, GC had expounded clearly the Consequentialist's view and had further established it. The Consequentialist's view and 'The Great Perfection' [Tsogchen] view are the same. Nagarjuna's view and Padmasambhava's views are similar. In *The Ornament of Nagarjuna's Thought*, GC has explained the Middle Way Consequentialist's view, in great detail. And the view is similar to that of *Tsogchen* [by Padmasambhava, the founder of the Nyingma school]. We, the elder tantric practitioners [of the Nyingmapa tradition], practice 'The Great Perfection'. What is not clear in the Tsogchen texts is clearly explained in *The Ornament of Nagarjuna's Thought*. So, reading both texts, gave us many new insights. Therefore I like to read GC's text.

In *The Ornament of Nagarjuna's Thoughts* some assertions of the Gelugpa tradition have been refuted. What is your opinion on this?

In GC's text the philosophical views of different tenets are explained. 'The Middle Way Autonomists' accept that conventional existing phenomena can be perceived by valid cognition. The 'Mind Only School' also accepts this. But 'The Middle Way Consequentialists' [GC's position in his book] do not accept it. In that respect, GC had given many metaphors. One metaphor, given by GC, is River Ganga of India. It gives me joy to explain these things, but it is difficult to understand [here Akhu Lama Tsering also refers to us, the interviewers. He is afraid that we can't follow his explanation]. This is a problem. Also we [learned monks] didn't understand the concept of valid cognition, perceiving conventional things, but when it was explained to us by using the metaphor of River Ganga, then even we feel it must be true. The lower tenets accept valid cognition perceiving conventional things. It is really difficult to grasp this concept. If we tried to explain the concept to those, who have not studied Buddhist texts, then they won't understand it [again he refers to us]. The difference lies in the view of each tenet. It is not easy to say, this is right and that is wrong. You have to analyze it in your mind, and must not exceed what you have established in your mind. There is an end to investigations. It depends on the intellect of the investigators. I am not saying that Tsongkhapa had a lower intellect. Like the Sun and the Moon, Shantarakshita was very famous, both in India and Tibet. From the philosophical point of view, he was a proponent of the 'Autonomy School'. He was neither a proponent of 'Mind Only School' nor a proponent of the 'Consequence School'. It is just that he held the view of the 'Autonomy Middle Way School'. It was not that Tsongkhapa practiced the paths, propounded by the 'Autonomy School', because he didn't realize the presentation of the base, the path and the resultant state, proposed by the 'Mind Only School' or the 'Consequence Middle Way School'. At that time [16th century], his main disciples were proponents of the 'Autonomy School'. Therefore he held the views of that school. Except for that, we cannot say this is correct and that is incorrect. It is just how each tenet proposes their views [we couldn't really follow his philosophical explanations, but for people trained in Buddhist philosophy, it might be interesting].

What do you think about *The White Annals*?

In this book, the history of the Tibetan kings was dealt with mainly; when did the kings live, how long did they live and what achievements they had. Except for these points, I don't think there is anything special. So mainly GC's book discusses the Tibetan kings; how the kings ruled their country etc. There are many inconsistencies regarding the dates. GC had made decisive points on many such issues. For example, in one of the old Bon texts [pre-Buddhist religion in Tibet], it is written that King Songtsen Gampo lived for thirty-five years, but GC had stated that this was a misunderstanding; in fact the king had lived for eighty-two years. He also had coined many new terms by deciding on many points.

Could you describe GC in just a few words?

I wouldn't know how to describe him in just a few words. If asked, who GC was, then I would say he was a person of very high intelligence, a special person, and superior to ordinary people. Of the three levels of intelligence, low, middle, and superior, he was a person of a superior level of intelligence. If asked, why GC was of higher intellect, then the answer is that he had perceived the 'Madhyamika view' [discussed above: *The Ornament of Nagarjuna's Thought*]. Except for those, who possess a sharp intelligence, intelligence like a precious jewel, others couldn't perceive the 'Madhyamika view'. Not only had GC perceived the 'Madhyamika view', he had also written commentaries on it [see above]. What he had perceived, he had written down and explained. He was a person, who had renounced other worldly work. He had no attachment for worldly wealth; he let go of all worldly attachments [again Akhu Lama Tsering is putting GC in the context of a 'crazy saint']. Throughout his whole life GC had renounced mundane strivings and wandered everywhere. Because of that, I would say, he was an extraordinary person. Otherwise I don't know how to describe him.

Is there any other thing that you want to add?

I have nothing special to add. If GC's reincarnation was found and enthroned, then anyone would place high hope in him. For GC even the Tibetan nationality pays tribute. If some kind of meeting were held to find and locate the reincarnation of GC, and then enthrone him, then I would have great hope. Except for that I have nothing special to say.

INTERVIEW YUDRUNG GYA

***Recorded in Zhoepang, Northeastern Tibet (Amdo), 15th of August 1999***

Yudrung Gya was born in Zhoepang 1946, where he still lives today (in the family house of GC's parents). He is the grand nephew of GC. He is a co-founder of the 'Gendun Choephel Foundation' in Zhoepang. He is in possession of several items, originally belonging to GC. Learned about GC through the stories and anecdotes of his older relatives. Tibetan, in the film.

What is your name?

I was born in 1956. So, I am 46 years old. I am his grand nephew, his sister's daughter's son.

How did you start taking interest in him?

Well, GC's ancestors were closely related to us. We have a kinship. This is why I have concern for him. To add another point, either from the perspective of the Tibetan people or the people of Amdo [Northeast-Tibet] or the people of Zhoepang [GC's home village], he was a great man. Because he was a great man, I started taking interest in him. Except for the fact that he was a relative, I didn't know anything about him, when I was small. He had an elder sister, who was seven years older than him. I was always staying with them [Yudrung Gya's step mother]. They told to me about his childhood days, what studies he undertook, how he left for Labrang monastery, how he fared in Zhoepang and things like that, many times. However, at that time, I didn't know much about him, but due to the constant narration from the elders, I too developed some kind of liking toward him.

What did your parents or relatives told you about GC?

They told me that he was very sharp and intelligent, when he was small. Whether it was during his stay at Labrang or at Yama Tashi Khyil [the monastery belonging to Zhoepang village], there were many who were impressed and delighted by his intelligence and knowledge of Buddhist scriptures. There are many stories about how GC, when he was young, from Yama Tashi Khyil etc. The stories tell, how he debated with his colleagues and what sort of stand the Geshes [scholars] took, when GC argued his points. When I was small, except for the fact that GC was one of our family members, I never heard about him being a great scholar. As I grew older, by reading books and seeing many people, who had interest in him visiting our home, I came to realize that GC was a great man.

Have your parents ever told you stories about GC?

They never told me any stories about him. They said that his actions, manners and his intelligence were very sharp. Earlier, when he was in the monastery [probably Yama Tashi Kyil, where GC stayed, when he was still very young] he had a teacher. People say that one day GC broke his teacher's cup. He felt very scared, for it was sure that his teacher would beat him up. Although it was not the cat but him, who broke the cup, he however caught a small cat that day and kept it inside the room, whose windows and doors were shut. When his teacher returned, GC told him that it was the cat, which broke the cup. I was told such stories about his cunning and sharpness, when he was very small kid.

Are there any other stories like this about him?

Not many. I can't recall much. However my relatives were always telling me how sharp he was, when he was a small boy. His father had already died when he was nine or ten and GC was staying in Yama Tashi Khyil. His father was a lama [a lay practitioner], called Alak Gyalwo [See interview: Akhu Lama Tsering]. After his father's death, they were three of them, his mother, his sister and GC himself. Even when he was small and staying at Yama Tashi Khyil, he was very good in painting and writing. *(Image 5: An early sketch of a white crane from around 1908).* We saw his other paintings yesterday. Do you remember?



When he was small and after his father's death, what kind of livelihood they had?

His father died when he was about 9. After his father's death only GC, his mother and elder sister were left in the family. Their condition was very miserable and hard then. At that time, GC was not a Gelugpa, but rather a Nyingmapa [old translation school]. His mother felt that, since GC's father was Nyingmapa, her son must become one, too. Thus she advised her son, how important it was to practice according to the Nyingma tradition. When GC was still young, he went to Labrang monastery to study Nyingma teachings from a great Nyingma lama, Khagya Tertön. So that's why, even when he grew up, also when he was staying at Labrang, or at Drepung monastery [in Central Tibet], GC held on firmly to his Nyingma ideology. Because his father and mother had emphasized this to him, when he was still a small boy, so, naturally GC developed a strong liking towards Nyingmapa [the discussion, whether GC was a Nyingma or a Gelugpa practitioner, goes on to the present day and also tells the story of the internal competition of the different traditions within Tibetan Buddhism]. To tell you another thing, GC studied in a Gelugpa monastery, till he reached the age of about 20. He went to Ditsa monastery, a local monastery, and later to Labrang [1920-27] and Drepung in Lhasa [1927-34]. Later, when he was at Labrang, he didn't face much difficulty in his livelihood. His family members were nomads, but had land, too. He had three families, so to speak, his peasant family planted crops, the nomadic family herded cattle and he even got a house at the monastery. He had led quite a comfortable life. Whatever gold, silver and precious stones his father had left, they were kept by his mother. Later she had sent money to him when he was at Drepung monastery. That's why I think he didn't lead a very difficult life in the beginning.

Why did he become a monk?

GC was the only son of his parents and his family was a lama family [Nyingma lay practitioners]. So I guess this had an influence on him. And then it was also believed that he must have been the reincarnation of Dhodak Rinpoche. I feel this, too, might have conditioned him to adorn himself with maroon robes and become a monk.

Name the different places where he stayed during his childhood days?

He stayed at Yama Tashi Khyil till he was about nine. After that, he stayed in a local monastery, which is in Zhoepang Lakha. It was a good Gelugpa monastery. You can even call it a secluded place [a retreat monastery]. There was a very good Geshe [scholar] at that monastery; I am not sure whether he was from Sera or Drepung monastery, whose name was Akhu Tsultrim. He was a great intellect from Lhasa. GC took him as his teacher and studied poetry, Sanskrit etc. from him. He stayed there for three years, from 9 to about 11. Then, as I have mentioned earlier, his mother had a strong liking for Nyingma doctrine. And GC's father was a spiritual friend of Khagya Terton, both of whom were Nyingmapas. Khagya Terton had a son, who was also a lama. GC received many Nyingma teachings from Khagya Terton. These teachings have become one of the main conditions, which had influenced GC's mind towards Nyingma ideology. Gendun Choephel had told Khagya Terton that for Geluggas there were many big monasteries like Sera, Drepung and Ganden in Lhasa and Labrang Tashi Khyil in Amdo, but there were no huge monastery for Nyingmapas. He had on many occasions discussed with Khagya Terton, how to increase the feeling of inclination towards the Nyingmapa tradition and its teachings. He used to say that to spread the Nyingma teachings, one must study Gelugpa doctrines extensively. At that time Ditsa monastery was the most famous monastery in the locality in whatever fields of study. His teacher Khagya Terton then told GC to join Ditsa monastery. So GC stayed there for three years, from twelve to sixteen, and eventually left for Labrang monastery, where he spent five years. He arrived in Lhasa when he was 25 [in 1927]. We knew his age from a note he had written on the back cover of a text in which he wrote that at 25 he finished reading the *Collective Works* of Shabkarpa [the head of Yama Tashi Kyil], which had many volumes. On the back of one of the texts, in small letters, GC had written that he had great faith in Shabkarpa Rinpoche and that Shabkarpa's '*Collective Works*' were as authoritative as the words of Avalokitesvara [the Buddha of Compassion]. 'I wrote this when I was 25, in my native land,' he wrote. I think, GC left Labrang when he was about 25 and came to his native land, where he stayed a short time, before he left for Lhasa [See text of GC: *My Journey to Lhasa*]. He was 32, when he left for India from Drepung monastery, where he had stayed for about 7 years.

Do you know any stories from his early days in all these monasteries?

I don't remember much. According to his sister, Gomme, who was seven years older than GC, and who died in 1983, GC liked drawing and painting very much, when he was still very young. He was so good that, once, while he was studying at Ditsa monastery; he painted a man stealing timber from a nearby forest. The thief was later recognized through GC's painting. He was also a good poet. At 16 or 17, he left Ditsa monastery to join Labrang monastery [at the time the largest Gelugpa monastery in Northeast-Tibet]. The reason, why he left Ditsa is that he had already become a great Geshe there. He had said that

Ditsa monastery was now too small for him to fit in. He said, 'in a ladle of water, a meter long fish can't fit, and for a fish, who has grown to a full length, to remain in a small pool will be unbearable. Therefore I will leave for Labrang monastery.'

Tell us some stories about Labrang of that period?

GC was given the nickname 'the skinny guy from Ditsa' [Ditsa gambo] because he was from Ditsa and he was very thin. If you went inquiring about GC at Labrang, using his real name Gendun Choephel, some wouldn't know him, but if you asked for 'Ditsa gambo', the monks of Labrang would immediately know! According to his mother and sister, GC had many foreign friends [referring to the American missionary Griebenow], while he was at Labrang. His mother and sister told me that he might have studied English and science at Labrang. He had also built small toys, like trains and ships, which he sailed on water. The *geshes* [learned monks] had watched the spectacle. Thubten Ngawang [a monk from Labrang] told me that he had seen such things with his own eyes. Sometimes he faced problems because of this He was in a monastery and they obviously had rules and regulations. There were many complaints about GC making many such strange objects. The other monks complained that it was not right. He often received a scolding for engaging in complicated matters, instead of studying scriptures.

Was he good in his studies, when he was at Labrang?

Yes, he was good. He was famous there. While at Labrang, he became known as a great scholar. But the monks and his family said bad things against him for his friendly relationship with foreigners [the American missionary. See interviews: Hortsang Jigme, Alak Yongtsin]. Some women had scorned him that the constant interaction with the foreigners had resulted in his hair turning yellow and his eyes becoming blue. 'You were now like a foreigner,' they accused GC. So, when he visited his native land [Zhoepang and Yama Tashi Kyil], he used to tease his mother and sister by asking them, whether his hair had actually become blond and his eyes blue?! I didn't hear much more. Except for the fact that GC befriended many foreign friends. I don't know how he took up this relationship... most probably he stayed at Labrang from seventeen to twenty five.

Why did GC leave Labrang?

GC possessed a strong Nyingmapa ideology, when he was studying and debating at Labrang and, as you have to understand, Labrang was a Gelugpa monastery. Therefore the monks of Labrang had shown their feeling of disapprobation, a little. I think a contradiction had arisen between Gelugpa's view and GC's own view. Later, GC got the idea of going to Drepung monastery in Lhasa, and eventually after one year he left for Drepung [joining a caravan in 1927. See text of GC: My Journey to Lhasa].

What was the biggest quality of GC in your opinion?

One of GC's best qualities was that he had no greed for wealth. GC had no cravings for wealth and achieving a high status. He had firmly kept the history of the Tibetan people in his mind and had a great concern for the Tibetan people. At the end of his book, 'The White Annals', he wrote:

*The pure affection for my race [people]
 Manifests in the center of my heart,
 For our king and the subjects of the snow-land [Tibet]
 I bestow a small service with all my potential'.*

Just by looking at this verse [at the very end of his historical opus], it is clear that in his heart resided neither his family, nor his parents, nor his local community, but the history of the Tibetan people and its culture. Looking at that, I feel GC was not just a small, ordinary man. He was a great man, indeed. Whether it was his writings on Tibetan history or commentaries on Buddhist philosophy or poems, whatever he wrote, he had written with a deep analysis, like a goldsmith, checking the purity of gold by melting, cutting and rubbing it. Those works are the result of his deep research and therefore they are very valuable. Various things he stated in those books, and most of them were accurate. Another thing I like about him, is, that GC had left a letter for Horkhang Sonam Penbar [a friend in Lhasa, with whom GC worked on the White Annals], before he died in a Lhasa prison. The letter is in the hands of Horkhang's son. In this letter GC wrote:

*This body, which is just like a corpse,
 Wherever it may, die I will not repent.
 But it is a great loss if it perishes together,
 With my gold like wisdom.'*

What do you plan to do for GC in your life?

I was not able to do anything great for him. I have helped his mother and his sister, who were left after his death in some small ways. Later, I stayed at his ancestral place [we actually interviewed him in the house of GC's parents in Zhoepang]. Whether you consider that as a service or not I don't know. I wrote many letters to the old Horkhang, and also visited him in Lhasa and requested him many times to publish the three volumes of GC's writings called 'Essays of Spread-Out Gold' [published in Lhasa, 1990]. I told Horkhang that he must work to publish these books. I reminded him that he was the only disciple of GC, who is left now. And as for us, we have little understanding of his work. Except for this, I don't think I have done any kind of service for GC. Some youths from our community, like Pema Wangchen, Rinchen Gyal and Dorje Gyal, have formed a group, consisting of about 60 members. It was a fund raising group. GC was from our community and he was a famous person. Using his famous name and ideas, we formed this group, and started to publish a journal called 'Snow Waves' in 1985. I too, joined this group. All these things that we have done were done in the spirit of gratitude towards GC or you may say, in support of him.

Tell us more about this group?

Whether it is in Central Tibet or in Rebkong area or in Zhoepang [Northeast-Tibet], the education system is very backward. We lack in external facilities, like textbooks and other materials. By establishing the so-called 'Gendun Choephel Fund Raising Organization', we hope to gain some financial support and collect funds from people of the West, from our Lamas and *tulkus* [reincarnations], from the public or

from our community. That is our plan, to use the money for education. This was the aim and purpose of founding this organization. At present our people have lot of financial difficulties. Many people don't have money to pay for books and texts. We provide financial support to those children, who are very bright, yet don't have money to study.

What happened to GC in his later life?

Something happened after he returned from India [1946]. Then he was around 46 or 47. I think this involved a big controversy. I don't understand the main reasons. What I don't understand is the social situation of that time [the 1940's and 50's. According to the books by Horkhang Sonam Penbar, Rakra Rinpoche and an English woman called *Dechen Sangmo* [Heather Stoddard, who wrote the first biography of GC in English, 1985], in which the history of that period was discussed, the reason why GC was imprisoned was because he committed a political crime by keeping close contact with many foreigners. Other than that, I think, these rumors that GC had made counterfeit notes, are lies. A woman named *Lhazom Dolkar* [?], who was in Lhasa at the time, has written about the reasons, why GC was imprisoned. *Lhazom Dolkar* is still living in Lhasa now.

Which part of the 'The White Annals' did you like most?

GC was able to lay his hands on some very important and ancient manuscripts about Tibetan history, which were discovered in the Buddhist caves of Dunhuang [a place in today's Xinjiang province]. Other documents were written in *Pali* [the language of the original Buddhist texts] and some other foreign languages; it could have cost him his life if others knew they were actually in his hands [this might be slightly exaggerated]. GC's book contains many citations from these manuscripts. So, by looking at this, it is clear that GC had put lot of effort in compiling his book on Tibetan history. I think this book is very valuable. If those historical events were not so important, than GC would not have put so much effort into researching it.

If you were to describe GC...

If I were to describe GC to someone, I would do it, by describing his best attitudes, how he led his life in accordance with the teachings of his religion and his good political ideas. I would describe that GC was a child of Amdo [Northeast-Tibet], who was a great being, who had the qualities of both scholar and practitioner, whose knowledge of both external and internal phenomena and ancient and radical changes had no limitation and boundary, and whose ideas were compatible with both science and Buddhist doctrines. He was a person, who was a part of the history of a complicated and unstable society.

Yudrung Gya, it is said that you are the reincarnation of GC. Is that true?

No, I don't think so. It may be true if I were said to be a grand nephew of GC, but it is not true if I were said to be the reincarnation of GC. In Tibet if a great lama was born in a family, then every nephews and grand nephews of him were also said to be his reincarnation. That is a bad custom. I don't like that. Your own lama, being reborn in your own family, don't you think this is partial and unfair. For example if GC

had a great fortune and if his nephew was not his reincarnation, then the family would lose all the wealth to someone else. This fear of losing everything is the only reason for such believes. That is a sad case.

Do you see some relation between GC and Milarepa [a famous 'crazy saint']?

No, I don't see any relation between them. But GC liked Milarepa very much. Many paintings that GC had drawn, when he was small, were on Milarepa and his life. The only thing that I can relate between them is that GC was very fond of Milarepa. It was probably the case, because Milarepa's practices were true *dharma* [Buddhist] practices.

Is there anything that we forgot to ask you?

No, you didn't forget anything. My future wish is that, whether it is our organization or some other organization, I think it would be nice to construct a GC memorial in his native-land. (Image 6: The office of the 'Gedun Choephel Education Fund' in Zhoepang, 2002). I would feel great joy if,



with the support and aid from foreigners, as well as local people, we could promote GC's ideas, thoughts and deeds, so that many people can learn from him. If a GC memorial group could be formed, which would strive to make this Tibetan son, who was born in this land, known to the whole world and to foreign countries, like America and China, I would feel a deep joy.

LHADE AKHUTSANG



Excerpt of an interview, conducted in Rebkong monastery, 17th of August 1999.

Born in 1920 near Rebkong in Northeastern Tibet. Met GC once after his release from prison in Lhasa 1949. He had previously studied in Drepung monastery. Later he became the tutor of the late Shar Kalden Gyamtso, the highest and most influential lama in Rebkong. He died in the monastery of Rebkong in 2006 (Qinghai Province). Tibetan, not in the film.

What is your name Geshe-la?

Gendun Tenzin.

How old are you?

Eighty-seven years old.

How did you meet GC?

I saw him just one time, during which I heard him making a conversation with somebody else. It was at the time that Rebkong Kabgyon [a high monk from Rebkong monastery, near GC's home in East-Tibet] visited Lhasa. GC also came to see Rebkong Kabgyon. That was the only occasion to see him, and I never saw him again. That was later, when he was already released from the prison [after 1949]. He could not sit straight and he was trembling. His whole body was shaking. According to the attendants of Rebkong Kabgyon, GC said to him: 'I have been writing a Tibetan history and now I am moving to another place [in Lhasa]. When I have shifted to my new house, I will invite you and I will then show you the book that I wrote on Tibetan history'. This conversation is not something that I witnessed personally. The attendants of Rebkong Kabgyon told this story to me. The book was the so-called 'White Annals'. You might have seen it.

At that time, did the monks talk about GC?

Yes, but I heard only very little. He was imprisoned, before we arrived in Lhasa [in 1946]. He spent three years in prison. He was released, when we were in Lhasa [1949]. It was said that GC was released on the assurance, given by the Lubum Khangtsen [colleague] of Drepung monastery. GC was not allowed to leave Lhasa.

What sorts of discussion were going on about the cause of Gendun Choephel's imprisonment?

You might have heard about his detention from the book written by Rakra Tulku [Rakra Tethong Rinpoche, a friend of GC's]. But nowadays I hear a different interpretation of his arrest. When GC was in India [1934-46], during which India was under British occupation, it was said that the British demarcated a boundary between Mon in the South of Tibet [presently Arunachal Pradesh] and India. In those days some patriotic people, such as the 13th Dalai Lama's attendant Chensel Kunphela, Pomdha Rabga [Rabga Pangdatsang] and others had sent GC to examine the border, by expressing to him their doubt that the British would not be honest. It was said that GC gave a written report about his investigation to the Tibetan government. At the time, the British knew that GC had given this report to the Tibetan government. Thus GC was arrested as incited by British [this rumor, regarding the border conflict goes back to the material that was confiscated, when GC was arrested. Among his notes, the magistrates found some maps from the border between India and Tibet].

Have you ever read some of GC's compositions?

Yes, I read one or two of his compositions. He once sent an alphabetical composition to the [monks in Labrang] Tashi Khyil monastery [East-Tibet]. I used to remember a few lines of this alphabetical composition. [See: Horkhang, Vol. 10 & 11]

What do you like about GC

He had an immense love for his country and he interpreted Tibet's history very clearly. The sources might have been Tibetan or Indian, but he had authentic sources. He wrote about the Tibetan history, conducting a research, based on ancient documents and inscriptions he found on the stone-pillars [in Lhasa and Samye, dating back to the 8th century].

Please tell us more?

His book, the 'White Annals', gives a different interpretation of early Tibetan history. It was written after a careful research [of the inscriptions] on the old stone-pillars, other anecdotes, and of course, by studying historical documents, written in Chinese language. He studied the early [Chinese] documents of Dunhuang. I think, he had done good job, though, some people don't like, because GC is in disagreement with some of the early accounts.

Can you give us an example?

The early accounts of the Tibetan history claim that the king Songtsen Gampo lived for eighty years, whereas on the contrary GC wrote that the king only lived for thirty fours years. This ratification of the king's age was done through comparing all the accounts of Dunhuang and other Chinese accounts. Some people don't accept this new idea, since it disagrees with other early accounts.

When did you hear about GC's death?

It is said that he died, when we were already traveling back to our village [Rebkong in Northeast-Tibet]. After we had arrived in Rebkong, some people coming from Lhasa brought us the news of his death.

Did you feel sad?

No, I did not really feel sad. Though, I thought, alas! Why didn't GC live a bit longer?! Alas! We lost him. We both belonged to the same place [East-Tibet] and that's the reason, why I had a little concern about him.

Was GC important during his lifetime?

Of course, I feel that he was important. He was a great scholar. He had historical knowledge of many different countries and obviously, Tibetan history. He had a deep concern for Tibet, which compelled me to feel that his presence in our community was very essential.

What exactly do you mean by that?

GC was not the only person, who thought Tibet had remained backward. The 13th Dalai Lama also felt the same thing. There was the same opinion among many of the aristocratic officials. But they did not take to much interest in it. Tsipon Lungshar, Tsarong and many other [officials] got exposed to foreign countries [England]. They knew about the backwardness of Tibet. In fact, there were many other [officials], who never had any exposure to the outside world and did not know, whether Tibet was remaining behind or backward. Obviously, there was no unanimous consent, and thus important changes could not be made. Another reason could be that the reformers couldn't gain the power. During that time, GC was the most learned person in both, the spiritual matters and temporal knowledge.

Why is GC still important to you?

I think if we Tibetans had somehow listened to his opinions, we would have had advantageous results. But nobody really listened to him, because he did not have any power. He was not a government employee. Therefore, no higher or lower aristocrats would really listen to him. The aristocrats desired a luxurious livelihood for themselves and a poor lifestyle for general public. Thus, they never really wanted to change the society.

What sort of man was GC according to your opinion?

He was very different and nobody could match him. He was a man, having allegiance to his ethnic group [Tibetans as opposed to Chinese], and he was also an altruistic man. He was highly qualified in terms of learning Dharma [Buddhist teaching] and worldly knowledge [science]. He was also a great poet and talented author. He was a man, who desired to benefit his own people [in Tibet]. I can't find better words to explain it to you, than with the above words.

Again, how was he, when you met GC the first time?

He was trembling and shaking. It was the sign of being depressed after his long term in prison [3 years]. Somebody said it was also due to his drinking too much alcohol. GC wore old clothes. He was very thin and didn't look like a cultured man, then.

LOBSANG SAMTEN



Conducted near the monastery of Lamo Dechen in Amdo, 19th of August 1999.

Born in 1932 in Northeastern Tibet. Studied in Drepung Monastery (Gomang College) between 1949 and 1955. That was the time, when he briefly met GC. His mother's relatives and GC had become friends in Lhasa. For some time they were taking care of GC after his release from prison. Tibetan, not in the film.

What is your name?

My name is Lobsang Samten. I am 68 years old. I went to Lhasa on 30th of July 1949. I returned home to Amdo in 1955. Till then, I lived at Gomang *khangtsen* [college] of the Drepung Monastery.

When did you first hear of GC?

When I first came to Lhasa, my mother's relative and GC were friends. He was staying there. At that time, I came to know GC. I was 18 but I don't know how old he was.

What sort of person was GC, when you first saw him?

After visiting the holy places in Lhasa, I went to my mother's relative. GC came there the next day. In the past, the Tibetan army's drill commands were in English. I was told that GC was translating them into Tibetan. GC was lying on a bed and talking to some friends. He said the drill commands in Tibetan would go like *Gong, Toed, Tson, Dralak Tson*, etc. 'Isn't this good', GC jokingly asked them. I didn't know him well, then.

How did your family come to know GC?

My family and GC had known each other since long time back. My teacher in Lhasa, he is now in India, he and GC had known each other, since their time in the monastery [of Drepung]. I came to know GC through him. Around 1950, during the time of the Losar festivities [Tibetan New Year], GC came to Drepung. On his way back, I was told to lead GC's horse. You know what that means. When we were below the Drepung monastery, GC said that he wanted to ride the horse now. He asked me to push down the stirrup. I thought he wanted me to push down the stirrup on the other side. So I went towards the other side. But GC said I should hold down the stirrup on his side. He scolded me, saying, 'what kind of a man are you?!' We then continued to Lhasa.

What sorts of conversation did you have with GC?

I was very young then. That's why I did not have many conversations with him. My teacher and GC frequently had conversations on ordinary subjects. My teacher knows a lot about him. He is now in India. Champa [Amdo Champa] of Lhasa would also know a lot about him. Being young, I didn't discuss spiritual matters with him. I did not even talk about normal things with him. But we knew each other. I don't remember how many times I met him. He used to come to my teacher's place. When he came, I had to serve him tea and food. Other than that, I did not have any particular conversations with him.

Tell us about prison?

GC had already been released from prison, when I reached Lhasa. The person who got him released was the Senior Lubhum, Ghen Palden Ludrub. My mother's relative, who is now in India, assisted him. To secure his release, they took some money and eatables to the aristocrats [government officials]. The person who paid up for all this was Gendun Zoepa [a friend from East-Tibet]. But the person, who actually went and spoke to the aristocrats, was Palden Ludrub. It was said that GC was released on the condition that he would not leave Lhasa. Xining Abo from Kumbum [famous monastery in East-Tibet] stood surety for him. It was said that GC was free to move about in Lhasa. But he was not to go out of Lhasa, to places like Amdo [East-Tibet] or India. He was released on this condition. He was in Lhasa at that time.

Did you talk with Gendun Choephel when you met him?

As I said earlier, GC came to Drepung and spent time there during Losar, three or four days. At that time, GC said there was nothing special about photography. He brought an Indian hat, the ones with three eyelets in it. He closed two eyelets and left only one open. Then he put one of his hands inside the hat and covered his head with a shawl, so that others could not see it. He said if there was a house, one could see the house through the eyelet, and if there was a man walking, one could also see this man. Photography, he continued, didn't have much to it. It was just like that, he said. Ghen showed us this. He also said that he would make something with soap. But this is a more scientific matter. I did not get to experiment with this. Then there were also lots of normal talks. I did not interact directly with him. The elders talked among themselves. They were elders and scholars. I was young. I did not get to ask him about scriptures etc. I did not even have ordinary talks with him. I used to see him every day, though. Amdo Champa in Lhasa should be able to tell you more. He was a thangka painter.

You said that Gendun Choephel had a photo taken of him before his death?

Before GC's death, Palden Ludrub, the senior monk of our *khangtsen* [college], went to him one night to ask after his health. Palden Ludrub saw a lot of write-ups at GC's place. He had asked Palden Ludrub to take the write-ups with him to his *khangsten* [in Drepung]. My teacher saw that GC had brought a man to his house. GC wrapped a blanket around the lower part of his body. His upper body was naked. He had his photos taken in that state. Palden Ludrub asked him, why he was having his photo taken. GC said that in India, a person, who has his photo taken before death, would be considered famous. 'That's why I am having my photo taken.' This is, what Palden Ludrub said GC had told him. He promised GC to take the

write-ups on the following day. So he left the write-ups that night at GC's place. GC died the following day. But the write-ups had disappeared. The aristocrats, he had many students among them... [Thinks] They had taken the write-ups. My teacher said he did not get the write-ups.

Where are those photos now?

That I wouldn't know. I only heard that such photos had been taken. They probably don't exist now. If Amdo Champa doesn't have them, the photos may not exist now. Champa and GC were friends. They talked a lot to each other.

When you were in Drepung, what did the older monks say about GC?

There used to be a huge *geshe* [title in Buddhist philosophy] examination sessions during the Drepung congregation. The monks from Loseling and Gomang [different colleges within Drepung] had to go to each other for these *geshe* examinations. So, two Gomang monks went to Loseling for these exams and the monks of Loseling had to debate with them. At that time, there was a famous monk called Minyak Kyorpon. He is not alive now. [See interviews: Amdo Champa, Alak Chongsay, and Alak Yongtsin]. When I was in Drepung, Minyak Kyorpon was the abbot of Gyutoe College. He asked a question, to which GC pretended not to have any answer. He thought GC really did not know the answer. He then said, 'You wouldn't know this, but you can answer the question, I will give you this *chabri*.' A *chabri* is the rectangular thing that the monks wear on their lap. Now there was a bet. GC actually knew the answer. He said that the answer to his question was in such and such book and in such and such lines. Then GC insisted on having the *chabri*. He took the *chabri*. This story was going around.

There were many other such stories. But I can't remember them properly now. In those days, there were 7,700 monks in Drepung. GC caused Minyak Kyorpon to lose face in front of the whole congregation. This story was going around. But it didn't happen during my time in Drepung [the story goes back to GC time in Drepung between 1928-34]. GC was a spectacular debater. He was also a spectacular writer. But again, this debate incident took place, before I joined Drepung. I am just telling you one or two things that I heard from other people. I wasn't there at that time.

What other things did the monks of Drepung say about GC?

It was said that GC followed the Nyingma doctrine [old translation school]. He wrote a book, entitled '*Ludrub Gong-gyen*'. It was said that he had written a lot of [bad] things in that book, that he had refuted Je Tsongkhapa [the founder of the Gelugpa doctrine], etc. I have seen the book myself, but I can't say anything about this. GC was said to be a Nyingma follower [GC actually had a Nyingma family background, but got his formal education in Gelugpa monasteries]. He was said to have refuted Je Tsongkhapa. Tsangpa Geshe Choejor of Gaden Jangtse wrote a refutation of GC's contention. But GC was dead by the time the refutation was completed... GC died a day or so before the wood blocks of his work was completed. I have neither seen GC original text, nor this refutation. I only heard about this...

Have you read some of GC's works?

Lobsang Samten starts reciting, without any further explanation:

The eastern land of Tibet,
Where the knowledge is greatly sought after,
Is the place I see the Vajra-like mother
And the spiritual father of the adept practitioners.
From there, I, as wayfarer, come to this place.

As a sign of the Karmic wind of previous lives,
I now know not which path to tread.
Though I, as Tibetan, am born in Tibet
My life was spent in this Land called India

This son of A-long-'khor, for twelve long years,
Have not seen the beautiful fatherland [1934-46].
Not able to see my kind old mother
Anger rages to consume my heart,
And more when I reflect on our separation.

The northern road of mind is long
And the southern ocean is vast.
The path treaded by the courageous beings
Is the root cause of all weariness and frustrations.

Though, I see no reason here to utter harsh words
Which are like stones covered in gold,
The despair that filled my mind
Spilled, beyond control, to this mutable friend.

Being a man from the farthest end of this world
The yearn to see my land is greater than before.
With my friends' love at my heart's core
I long to return home, as early as can be.

Have you read the White Annals?

Ye, I did. The Tibetan government arrested GC, when the writing of the 'White Annals' was still in progress. After releasing him, the Tibetan government told him that he must complete the 'White Annals'. As a fee, the government gave him 80 khel of barley. GC and I were from the same *khangtsen* [college in

Drepung]. The younger monks of our *khangtsen* went to transport the barley. It was later said that GC had died the night before the 'White Annals' was due for completion. Whether this is true or not, I don't know.

You arrived in Lhasa in 1949. The Chinese came there in 1950 and 1951?

They came in 1951. In the beginning, about 500 Chinese came. Then followed, as they said, 1'000, 2'000. Many came. You ask others about this... [Hesitates] As I said, about 500 came. They were received in Lhasa. There was a military camp in Lubhuk [outside of Lhasa]. After that, now what should I say. Some said there were 2'000, 3'000. There were many Chinese in Lhasa, when the Panchen Lama came. It was said that there were 20'000 Chinese. After that I did not hear anything...

Were you surprised or scared?

No. No. It was not that scary. They [the Chinese] came as a part of a joint initiative with the Tibetans. They did not indulge in atrocities. They did not fire at people. They came to help the people. They were not scary.

Did you hear of GC's death?

Yes. I was in Lhasa at that time. His body was taken to the Sera cremation ground [north of Lhasa]. He was given a sky burial according to the Tibetan tradition [actually GC was cremated]. Palden Lhundrub, my teacher, told me. We all were from the same *khangtsen*. He [Palden Lhundrub] had lived in the same room. GC drank and his body had swelled this much [See interview: Amdo Champa].

Were you sad when he died?

Yes. On the one hand, the Tibetan [Central Tibet] and Amdo [East-Tibet] people were fond of him. He was a great scholar. He was from the same *khangtsen* as me. If he had lived, he would have benefited the *khangtsen* and the Tibetan people. This is, why I was sad. Anyone, who would not feel sad at the death of such a great scholar, would be a strange person. That's it. He wrote the 'White Annals'. You read it, and you will find that he had feelings for his people [for Tibet]. I will not say more now.

Was GC significant or not?

Well, he is no more. But his works represent him. All his works serve as his representative. I have not been able to study his works thoroughly. In one way, what GC really was... [Thinks] ...are his works. The things he said for the benefit of his people... He said beneficial things. Since I am not learned, I can't really describe GC in just a few words...

But if you were to describe GC, how would you do this?

I don't know. If I were to describe him... He was born in Amdo, in the village of Zhoepang. At a young age, he went to Ditsa monastery and studied Buddhist scriptures there. Then he studied scriptures in Labrang. Then he came to the monastery of Drepung [in Lhasa] and studied scriptures there. Then he stopped the scriptural studies [in 1934] and went to India on pilgrimage for 12 years. Then he went to England or France and learned foreign languages [here Lobsang Samten is wrong]. Then he came back to

Lhasa [1946]. On reaching Lhasa, the Tibetan government soon arrested him. Later he was released. That's all I can say. The fruits of his life are really his works. More I don't know.

Why was GC imprisoned?

What could have been the reason? Even if I had heard it, I don't remember now. There must have been some reason for his imprisonment. When I reached Lhasa [in 1949], he had already been released. And I was young then. Even if I had heard, I don't remember.

Do you think that your meeting with GC helped you in your life?

I can't say. I went to Lhasa in 1949. GC died in 1951. I did not go to *his* house. He came to *our* house – every day.

How did your teacher meet Gendun Choephel?

They were at the same monastery [Drepung, between 1928-34]. They were in Lhubum *khangtsen*. I don't know, where they came to know each other. My teacher said that he met GC on the Barkhor in Lhasa, after GC's return from India [in 1946]. My teacher saw GC on the Barkhor with a friend. GC asked my teacher if he had a house and my teacher replied in the affirmative and brought him to our house. He spent a day at our house. Later, he had many students in Lhasa. Many aristocrats were his students. They arranged a house for him.

Did Gendun Choephel have a wife in Lhasa?

Yes, he had a wife in Lhasa. I know, who his wife was, but I never met her. I heard that his wife did not serve him well... [Thinks] Palden Ludrub was a senior monk of our *khangtsen*. Since GC belonged to our *khangsten*, we would look after him. The monks of Rebkong [in general, monks from East-Tibet] belonged to Lhubum *khangtsen*. Palden Ludrub was a senior monk of Lhubum *khangtsen*. He was the head of our *khangtsen*. When he heard that GC's wife did not treat him well, he went to GC's house and scolded the wife. That is what Palden Ludrub told me. He told her that if she was interested in serving GC well, she should really do it. Otherwise, she should leave. That's how, as Palden Ludrub told us, he had scolded GC's wife. That's how I came to know.

What was GC's physical appearance, when you first saw him?

He was not at all that thin [anymore]. He must have been very thin earlier. He had a nickname to that effect [*Ditsa gambo*, the skinny guy from Ditsa monastery]. The people of Rebkong brought a photo of GC, in which he looked very thin. I don't know when that photo had been taken. When I met him [in 1949], he was about 50 years old [actually 46].

GC smoked and drank after his release from the prison. Did you see him do this?

I saw him drink. He was very strange, when he drank. I saw him drunk many times. Although he looked drunk, some people said, he was not drunk from their perspective. But I did not see him remain sober after drinking, although he drank regularly. He really drank a lot.

What did the monks say about his drinking and smoking problems?

Earlier, he had been a Gelugpa follower. At that time, he neither had a wife, nor did he drink, nor did he smoke. Later, he took a wife, drank and smoked. He defrocked. Then he went abroad and returned [Lobsang Samten's order of events are a bit mixed up]. The monks criticized him from a sectarian point of view. But they did not criticize him over his works, which showed that he had feelings for the Tibetan people. There were people, who said that he was a proselyte [Christian]. Whether he was really a proselyte or not is something that could be understood only if one went into his mind. That's something we can't judge from the external appearance. I don't know whether he was a proselyte or not.

Why did he drink?

I don't know. I did drink, too. I wouldn't know. It has been many years since then. I don't remember what he said. He did not talk much. He slept most of the time in a state of drunkenness.

Was GC sad or happy?

I can't be sure. We are ordinary people. I did not find him any different from other people...

JIGME THECKCHOG



Recorded on the 21st of August 1999 in Kumbum monastery, Amdo [Northeast-Tibet].

Born in 1954 in Northeastern Tibet. He is a highly regarded Tibetan Buddhist scholar and author of several books on Tibetan Buddhism and history, among them one on the history of the Rebkong Monastery. He became the tutor of the reincarnation of the late Shar Kalden Gyamtso. He died at a very young age in 2001 in Rebkong (Northeastern Tibet). Tibetan, not in the film.

Akhu, what is your name?

My name is Jigme Theckchog. I'm 45 years old. My native land is Rebkong. I am a teacher at the Qinghai Buddhist Institute.

How did you first hear about GC?

I was perhaps 7 or 8 years old, when a small boy, who was said to be the *tulku* [reincarnation] of GC, stayed at my home. That was the first time I had ever heard GC name. At that time, I didn't know what kind of person GC was. Later, when reached 24 or 25 years and was studying at the Qinghai Nationalities College [in Xining], there was a scholar named Akhu Sungrab Gyatso. We had very good connection. During our conversations I learned that Akhu Sungrab Gyatso had been GC's teacher, when the latter was studying in Ditsa monastery, as we talked about Ditsa he said that GC was a man from my place, Rebkong [not far from GC's home village Zhoepang]. GC was such an intelligent person, he said. That was the first time I heard such things about GC. According to his teacher Akhu Sungrab, GC managed to memorize ten pages in a day. And that would not even take long to memorize. He said that one day GC had written a word by word commentary to Je Rinpoche's [Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug tradition] 'Praise for Dependent Origination', a valuable concise text, covering all the essential points of the 'Middle Way' [Madhyamika] philosophical view, which even great scholars would find difficult to comment on [he is referring to GC's controversial work 'Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts' that GC wrote at the end of his life]. GC had not really studied the text of Tsongkhapa earlier. Nor had he consulted any other books. He knew it spontaneously, as he was gifted by nature. Hence Akhu Sungrab was surprised by that. He said it would be difficult to find anyone like that.

Even after GC had moved to Labrang monastery, Akhu Sungrab had kept that writing intact [here he must be wrong, since GC had written his text in the late 1940's, whereas he moved to Labrang in 1920]. During 1958-59 [the time of the Tibetan uprising against the Chinese], he had lost that original. So, he did not have it anymore. He explained that if anyone wishes to write something like that in the future, they should

have a good knowledge in the language. For him GC did not have any difficulty composing such pieces or explaining Tibetan grammar. GC did not have any problems learning, whatever he was taught. He even learned things, which were not taught to him. Even at childhood he was bound to become a scholar. When he joined Labrang monastery, GC stayed with an acquaintance of Akhu Sungrab. Being concerned about GC, Akhu Sungrab said, he used to check on GC regularly. During those times there were many scholars at Labrang. GC was young at the time [17 years]. But my teacher was telling me that hearing that GC had an unparalleled intellect, made him very happy. Then, for the first time, I had thought that GC might be a very good and a gifted person. I was only about 24 then.

Have you ever heard any childhood stories about GC?

I have heard that, when he was staying at Zhoepang [GC's home village] in his childhood, Yama Tashi Kyil was his monastery. It was in YTK, where he already practiced Prana Yoga, which was only taught to six or seven of the young monks. GC was said to have been the first one to accomplish the yoga immediately. He was young [GC entered YTK, when he was 4 and stayed there for about 3-5 years]. At that time some of his companions had already practiced it before. I had been told that, however, he exhibited a special ability by showing the signs of accomplishment of Prana Yoga so quickly during the training. I was told this by one of my teachers, who was there at the time. He is nowhere to be seen anymore these days. My teacher was a Nyingmapa practitioner. He already was old. He said that he had observed it himself. Generally, we believe that GC's father was a highly realized person [a lay practitioner]. GC's father was one of the three sons of the father [grandfather of GC], who had achieved high realization. This was one of the reasons, why we in Rebkong, we regarded GC as having special qualifications.

Have you heard anything unique about GC?

I won't tell you things that everybody knows already, things that can be known from the books and now everyone talks about. I have not heard anything that nobody talks about.

Have you heard any stories about GC's debate with his own teacher or other people?

When GC was studying at Labrang monastery all everyone in his class were said to be bright. All his classmates were nicknamed collectively as *Tha nyad dratsang*, the Conventional Monastery because of their peculiar way of talking. It seems that they had special ways of talking. They abbreviated their words and expressions, or used riddles in their speech or talked by reversing the words, because of which, even though they were speaking Tibetan right in front of their fellows, no one else would understand what they were actually talking about. Such things were said about their brilliance. It's said that, while debating, they seemed to have had a certain code, which they used amongst each other if they wanted to help one another [during the debates]. But no one else would be able to tell, what kind of help they were actually giving each other, nor what they were saying. This code was actually GC's make. Likewise, at Labrang monastery, whether it was a normal debate or a 'standing debate' in the main hall, it is said that GC was extremely brilliant [See interview: Alak Yongtsin]. When it came to using only logic, without any recourse to scriptural quotations, it is said that he had stunned the monks many times. When he was at

Labrang it may not have been easy for people to answer his questions [to debate with him]. Later on there were some bad stories about him. It wasn't a case of GC being ignorant about the [Buddhist] textbooks or the traditional methods of interpretation. But GC had the power of intellect to go *beyond* those old conventions. There are so many stories about people being unable to answer his questions. If you go to Labrang yourself, they may tell you. Even today people talk about it. Regarding his skills in making mechanical toys and machines, they are also told in Labrang.

Which aspect of GC's life, do you think, is the most important one?

In my opinion, there are two aspects. Firstly, he was renowned as a great scholar. Why is that so? Unlike other students [fellow monks], GC had not studied for a long time in the monastic universities, but his intelligence was almost matchless in any respect – whether in debate or other fields. In regard to the great treatises [Buddhist texts], he was renowned for his brilliance. The other aspect is the one of his thoughts and ideas. Whether it was a religious or secular matter, GC was able to think them through to the end. Whatever the work may be, it is important to know how to go about them well. He knew what the conditions and authentic means are in order to spread the Dharma [Buddhist teaching] in the best possible way. Even in terms of worldly activities, he was very clear about all these things himself [JT does not give us an example]. It was not only about the intellectual learning. On the other hand, he had a broad view about secular activities. He was renowned for these two aspects of his life.

Could you explain what you mean by 'broad view'?

As far as I'm concerned, Tibet had great sciences [as part of the Buddhist teachings in the monasteries] – really great and profound sciences. I think that at that time, probably even including India, from where Buddhism originally spread to Tibet, didn't have the same intellectual tradition as we had it. Tibet was the center of the Buddhist sciences. If these sciences were to make any progress, the old system could not have brought that about. But for this change we had to find recourse to different and new methods. GC had said that this was the case, and that the old system was no good for making progress. Similarly, there were no means of spreading our sciences to other countries, but our own. With regard to these issues, he must have had great aims. Whether it was the language, or relations with other countries, he had thought of spreading our sciences and religion everywhere in the world. It was not just a thought, but he really had the capability to actually translate his ideas into actions if he had been allowed to work on them. But on the one hand, the old Tibetan system was not really suitable to make any progress. No one else, except GC himself, had any idea about what the drawbacks were of that old system, and what the necessary conditions would be, and by what means the progress should be made, taking into account the circumstances of those days. It was not only about thinking, but if they [the old society?] had let him to work on all his projects, he would have had the knowledge to go about them. Even if other people had similar ideas, they actually lacked the required knowledge. But he had all the necessary qualifications. He was thinking both ways: looking at the experience of *other* countries from the viewpoint of both politics and religion, and thinking about progress by looking at *the world at large*.

In your opinion, what was the mentality of the Tibetan society at that time?

Tibetans on the whole, were very narrow-minded. The reason was, because the Tibetan administrators at that time were neither experienced in politics, nor learned in the sciences, nor had they experience with other cultures and people. They were not knowledgeable people at all. The country was ruled by power, but not by learned people. Therefore, they have been very narrow-minded people. In my opinion, those people at that time, were not able to think for Tibet. I think they were not even able to think for Lhasa city. The officials and the aristocrats were not concerned about the Tibetan people. Probably, they had not been able to think properly about administering Lhasa and the Tibetan areas included in the *Trikor Chusum*, the 13 circles of 10000 people [JT is referring to Central Tibet].

Do you think that people took interest in his ideas or not?

They may have given thoughts to his ideas, but they could not have put them into action. Why was this so? If we compare them with GC, we know that he was much more knowledgeable, as well as an able person. But under those people GC could not have worked. So, because there was too much oppression at that time, GC's knowledge met with too many obstacles. All the officials probably knew that he had a good motivation, good knowledge and good objectives, but nobody supported him. It was imperative for that old system to change and to resort to a new one. However, that would threaten the officials' and aristocrats' power and prestige, they feared. They understood GC's words, but, even if some agreed with him in their own minds, they did not want to lose their power. Therefore, they would not have said that his ideas were good. But they would have said something else.

Which of GC's works did you like most?

Out of his writings, I best like his [travel] 'Guide to the Holy Buddhist Sites in India'. No one in Tibet knew them until GC. Tibetans very much liked to go to India on pilgrimage. But most pilgrims didn't know the sites well. In the whole history of Tibet, there had never been any guide to help people by clearly showing and identifying the places. It is unprecedented in Tibet and I've heard that it is true also in India. He had thought from all angles for the religious people [monks and scholars], as well as for the ordinary pilgrims. In this way, GC's book is also a symbol of his admiration for the Buddha and the Dharma. The fact that he had thought for those, who have faith in the Buddha and the Dharma, also indicates something. The other work is that of the 'Treasury of Sanskrit'. In this work, GC had given much thought to Buddhist terminology, while translating some terms into Tibetan by checking with the original source in Sanskrit. This indicates how much he loved and cared about the Dharma. At that time, there were no great translators [tib.: *lotsawas*] like him. Despite his lack of resources, he had thought so much for the Dharma alone. This is not an easy job. He did not go to India, carrying a bunch of scriptures on his back. If he hadn't known the Tibetan scriptures [by heart], it would have been very difficult for him to look at the original Indian sources and check them [with the Tibetan translations], even if he had the intention to do so. But since all the Tibetan translations were in his mind, they were like his witness. So, using his knowledge of the texts, he compared the Tibetan translations with the Indian original sources to check them thoroughly. This really shows his great enthusiasm for the Dharma, as well as that GC was familiar with all the different teachings. I think, looking at it from all angles, it is very rare to find such a

translator in Tibet, who had experienced so much hardship and had very little financial resources. In the past, all the translators had patrons, who supported them [e.g. the Tibetan kings in the 8th century]. But GC did not have any patrons to support him. He was a lonely wanderer. In such a situation, it would have been very difficult for others, to have the same determination to carry out the work he had done. They would not have had the capability to work like him as well. This is one reason, why I like him.

Similarly, with regard to his historical writing 'The White Annals', previously the old documents of Dunhuang from the Tang dynasty were not available to reading. But GC searched for them and put them together. Here also if he hadn't been thoroughly familiar with Tibetan history, then he could not have distinguished between what he needed and what he did not. It is surprising that he was able to decide, whereas previous scholars could not decide regarding this or that matter of Tibetan history. There were no much materials available in Tibet at the time, but he painstakingly searched for them. As opposed to previous Tibetan histories, in his 'White Annals', he has written about Tibetan history by using the history of other nations. This makes GC's work outstanding. So, it is not just written by him, it was already there in the histories of other nations. In the past, it was considered good to write from ones own viewpoint. But the best and most reliable is the information, which is already found in another nation's histories, because it is a valuable confirmation of the truth for the Tibetan history. Therefore, the 'White Annals' is good.

Then there are his translations of old texts, such as the *Dhammapada* [an old Buddhist text]. At the end of his translation, GC had written several verses, in which he claimed to be the reincarnation of the former Tibetan translators [*lotsawas*], who had been to India, had lived there for many years and then returned to Tibet [with all their Buddhist texts]. For me, I believe in him.

GC wrote 'Ludrup Gongyen'. What do you think about it?

In my opinion, as far as the 'Ludrup Gongyen' [Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts] is concerned, GC was basically a Nyingmapa [arguing from a viewpoint of the Nyingmapa tradition]. But I don't think that he was a sectarian minded Nyingmapa at all [one has to know that GC came from a Nyingmapa family, lived in Nyingmapa monasteries, when he was young but got his formal education mainly in Gelugpa monasteries: Ditsa, Labrang and Drepung]. In his 'Ludrup Gongyen' there may be many philosophical views, which stem from Nyingmapa philosophy. But GC mainly studied in the large monastic centers of the Gelugpas, like Labrang and Drepung. During those times [1920-34], the great scholars in those institutions did not agree with his many of his viewpoints. Rather than agreeing with him, they had tried to press him down. In 'Ludrup Gongyen' he had put forth, there were many well thought out arguments of his own. I think that they were arguments purposely written, in order to ask the other scholars to challenge his ideas if they can. This may be because GC wanted to know how good these scholars really are. He was not the only one to hold the views that he held. There were scholars in Amdo [Northeast-Tibet], as well as other places. No one can tell for sure, what *his* actual ideas and views were. I would rather support the idea, that, because GC basically was a Nyingma philosopher, in theory, he claimed the Nyingmapa's views. To 'ask' the other scholars to respond, was to show his rationality. There is evidence

for this. When he was living, no one could answer him [the text was actually written shortly before his death in 1951]. If the answers had been written, while he was still alive, I think that GC would still have had more to say. In the 'Ludrup Gongyen', there are many ideas, on which he differs from Tsongkhapa's views [the founder of the Gelugpa tradition]. He was probably objecting to Tsongkhapa's *views*. Yet, we cannot decide, whether he *liked* or *respected* Tsongkhapa or not. On my part, I cannot say that GC argued against Tsongkhapa, because he did not like him. If you ask me, whether he was following a certain religious tradition [Nyingma philosophy] or not, my answer is, he was. But it cannot be claimed that, what was said in his 'Ludrup Gongyen', is the same, as what GC had in his mind. Therefore, by writing the 'Ludrup Gongyen', it may not have been nice of GC, to express his ideas, the way he has done it. As far as I'm concerned, the viewpoints in GC's 'Ludrup Gongyen' are different from Tsongkhapa's. But that may also be, because of GC's *method* logical analysis [See interview: Ju Kesang]. I think that by answering the questions, GC raised in his text, it would rather help than harm the philosophical standpoint of Tsongkhapa.

Why will it not harm the philosophical view of Tsongkhapa?

I think if one wishes to know the real view of Tsongkhapa, then one has to understand the very subtle points that are not easily understood by others. GC tells us about those subtle points that others have not fathomed. In my case, I first thought that what is said in 'Ludrup Gongyen' was right. To really grasp and understand Tsongkhapa's views, one must know that there are pitfalls and critical points, too. An ordinary person cannot apprehend those critical points. By opening the doors to those critical points, in many ways, people would then be able to gain a better insight into the actual view. Those pitfalls and critical points that many people miss [when reading it] are discussed in GC's text.

GC lived from 1903 to 1951. What is your idea about the Tibetan society at that time?

In my view, even in terms of religion, Tibet was a society that was declining. Whether it is the sciences of learning or other fields, it was a time of decline. It was not a time, when these fields were making progress. On all accounts, it was a time, when the whole Tibetan society was on the decline.

Do you know anything about the reason behind GC's arrest?

I don't know the actual reason. Judging his writings, it doesn't look like GC had done any wrong against the Tibetan government, to arrest and imprison him. Of course, he was *outspoken*. His words were very sharp. Many could not lend their ears to his voice. Although they may have agreed that he was actually right, but they could not speak out, because they had fear [See above]. Therefore, I think, he was harmed, just because they disliked him. I don't think that he was arrested, because of a concern for the Tibetan people at all. How do I know this? There is a piece of writing, which GC had written in prison. In it he described that the Tibetan customs, manners and legal systems were in accord with the Dharma [Buddhism] and that, because the ancient Tibetan kings had established a system, which was in accordance with the Dharma, the Tibetan prisons could not be worse than the prisons in other countries. In comparison, the Tibetan prisons were very pleasant. If he hadn't been optimistic, he wouldn't have liked it there [I have never seen this text].

These days there is a great interest in GC. Do people exaggerate, when talking about GC?

So far, there is almost nothing like that. When we say GC is good, we are not saying it, just in view of the present time. We are saying it in view of the society at that time. From that perspective it is okay to say that. In Tibetan history there were many scholars, but only GC had become famous for his knowledge in spoken and written languages, religions, other sciences of learning, politics, customs and traditions of other countries and for his deep insights even into plants. He is renowned in other countries for his thorough analysis in all fields of learning from all angles [JT is referring to many Western people studying GC's life]. Even today, it is difficult to have someone like him. In view of this, I don't think it is too much to say that GC is a good person. I look at it this way. Generally, when someone is said to be a scholar by others, comparatively, there may be others more learned than that person. So, there cannot be a clear-cut decision, saying that such and such person is *the* scholar. Even though others may talk about someone being not good, but then it's not certain that this person lacked any good qualities. It's just a case of looking at that person only from his negative side, but he may have his positive side, too. From this vantage point, judging by his style of writing or his expressions of his own views, it is not the case that GC was a person, who fixed his mind on just one single issue. He looked at many different matters from many different angles. Other people's concern may cover just a single issue in their writings. Therefore, it is wrong to criticize GC by saying that he was mischievous. We cannot see a good and bad personality with our eyes. His thoughts and goals are not something we can see with our eyes. Also the ancient scholars and realized masters were not judged by people with their eyes. But if, just because someone didn't like somebody from one side and criticizes that person, then, everyone would have a negative side to him or her. It is just not right to criticize the person by focusing on his negative side only. He must be judged by whether he had the necessary knowledge and qualifications useful to the society at the time. From that vantage point, I think he didn't have any fault.

What do you personally think about him?

He was previously a monk, but he did not stay a monk, he disrobed [in fact, although GC left the monastery, he never officially disrobed]. At that time, the Tibetan customs were very strict and narrow. Our mentality was very narrow, too. In terms of our behaviors and conduct and all sorts of things, we were very, very narrow-minded. But GC had seen the wider world and its diversity. So, I think that, since most people in our country did not know about other countries and their customs and traditions, they just called GC 'a crazy person'. This can be understood if we think about it from a perspective of today. Suppose, somebody comes to Tibet and does things that are unacceptable or unpleasant to our Tibetan eyes, he would definitely be called 'a crazy person' [See interview: Ju Kesang]. However if there were many of them with the very same behavior, then they wouldn't be called 'crazy' anymore. GC had witnessed many different cultures and people. In my opinion, at that time, he must have thought that from his own viewpoint there was nothing wrong with him, but due to our ignorance about other people and cultures, the other Tibetans had called him 'a crazy person'. This can be inferred by looking at the present time.

You said that GC was harmed. Why was he harmed?

After he was imprisoned, he was not allowed to go anywhere and meet anybody. On his part, whatever he did, he did not do for his own sake, but for the welfare of others. But he did not have any rights; all his rights were taken [by the government]. He had very poor resources. For example, it is said that, when writing the 'White Annals', GC did not have any ink or paper. He could not see other people, nor could he read other books. Thus, initially, he had too many great ideas, but in the end, all those ideas and thoughts could not bear any of their fruit. Therefore, he might have been mentally disturbed. This is what I think.

Do you think that GC was important to Tibet?

He was important. He became a historical personality. Due to his brilliance, even when he was still very young, he had a unique biography. He was outstanding in all respects of his religious education, in terms of philosophical debate, his studies and memorization of texts etc. Then he knew many different scripts, languages and he had traveled to different places. He was not narrow-minded in his thinking, but he thought broadly from many different angles. He did not do any guesswork, but he actually witnessed many things by himself. In all respect, whether from his legacy, left in the form of the books, or even the stories that people started telling from words of mouth, there was none like him, during that period of time. At that time the Tibetan nation was declining very badly. A man like him was extremely rare at the time. In the history of Tibet if we look at the different periods, he was one of the most outstanding personalities of his time. Why is this so? It is, because he knew what to say about everything. Although there were others known to be scholars, but there was none, who had left any real traces. But GC has left his legacy and marks of his contribution.

Judging by that, GC was a historical personality of that time. There were other scholars, as well as good people. But if they knew *some* religious texts, they did not know the *others*. If they knew the *Sutras*, then they were ignorant about the *Tantra*. If they knew the *secular* sciences, then they did not know the *religious* teaching. In other words, there was no other person, who was as versatile as GC. If the other scholars knew the teachings, which we have in Tibetan translation from Sanskrit, they did not know Sanskrit. He knew the teachings, both in Tibetan and Sanskrit. Other people would know about *Buddhism*, but not *politics*. But for him, in terms of politics, he knew the old history, the political systems of the present day, and their future development; he knew the systems of other nations, but also what the situation of Tibet was like and what, accordingly, we should have done. All this he had known. Some people did not know the Indian language if they knew Tibetan. And even if they knew both of these languages, then they didn't know any English. Even if they knew the languages, they would not reach the place in person. Even if they reached the place, they could not write in English. Even if they could reach and write in English, they would have nothing to show in their own writings... So, looking from all these perspectives, this person [GC] was unique.

JU KESANG



Recorded on the 23rd of August 1999 in Xining, Qinghai Province.

Born 1960 in Machu, Northeastern Tibet. He is a famous Tibetan intellectual, writer and poet. Composed a poem in the honor of GC and edited several publications of rare books on Tibetan Buddhism. Presently working as translator in Golok Prefecture (Qinghai Province). See also the poem of Ju Kesang. Tibetan, in the film.

What is your name?

My name is Ju Kesang. I am 39 years old.

What inspired you to write this poem, entitled Gendun Choephel?

I heard the name GC towards the end of 1970s, in 1979 [See interview: Hortsang Jigme, Tsering Shakya, Pema Bhum]. But I have read only one or two of his works. First, I saw the 'White Annals' [GC's book on Tibetan history]. Then I read one or two of his poems. In the past, I considered GC merely a historian and poet. As time passed, I realized that GC, in that Tibetan social environment, was not merely a poet and historian. He was a man with exceptional thoughts. I don't know, whether my opinion is correct. Then I developed a deep respect for him. I started reading all his works, anything that came my way, even if it were only one stanza. I read both the long and short writings by him. I contemplated on everything I heard about him from people. But I must clarify that I did not go out of my way to do research on GC. His thoughts moved me so strongly that I wrote this poem [See: Poem of Ju Kesang].

Have you ever tried to imitate GC's style of writing?

GC's style is good. Generally, we write poems in the traditional Tibetan style. Apart from the traditional style, we have our colloquial language. The traditional style uses more of the classical language and less of the colloquial language. Our scholars of bygone days wrote many excellent works. GC could have written great poems in our traditional style. But he adopted a unique style. He used more of common people's words, more of the colloquial language. But it was not entirely in colloquial language. I thought over this. In our history, there have been some people, who wrote in the colloquial language. Among them, GC's achievement is substantial. He mixed classical and colloquial languages. This makes his writings understandable to the people of all the three provinces, namely U-Tsang [Central Tibet], Kham [East-Tibet] and Amdo [Northeast-Tibet]. This is a good style. This is the quality of his writings. I liked his style and imitated it in the past. Later, I did not write anything that was the same as GC's style. But some of my writings were slightly similar to those of GC's. Having read GC's works extensively, his style

has influenced my works. But I seldom imitate his style consciously. In the beginning, I wrote poems in the traditional style. Then, I wrote in the commoner's style. Later, I wrote in my own style, not in GC's style. When we write in our own style, we would not imitate GC's style. To sum up, I was influenced by GC's style. But his influence reduced as time passed.

Why did GC mix classical and colloquial languages?

As I see it, GC was an advanced person. He was advanced in everything he did. He knew a lot about both Tibet and the outside world. This is what I think. How do I wish that Tibet had more people like GC! In that period, there were few people like him. Later, I thought over this matter and realized that there were many external and internal factors, which made him what he was. The internal factor is that GC was a gifted person. His mind was much sharper than those of ours. He had a great mind. The internal factor was his mental ability. Then he was also curious for knowledge. He explored vigorously. He was industrious. On top of this, he did not confine himself to Tibet. He went to foreign countries and met many scholars, with whom he exchanged views. When he traveled out of Tibet, he was already an accomplished scholar of the Tibetan learning. Then he became exposed to the outside world, which helped to make him an advanced person. That's why he wrote what he thought. His writings reveal his mind.

The poets of bygone days wrote in the classical language for very good reasons. This style has its merits. This style has its unique quality. GC mastered this style. He knew all its merits. Then he wondered if our Tibetan poetry could be made even more valuable. He looked for the shortcomings of our poetry. While doing so, he contemplated the social trends. He decided that if the words in our scriptures were gradually changed into colloquialism, our writings would match the social trends. This is the condition for the development of our society. This thought came to his mind. Based on this, he decided that it would not do to use ancient letters and words in our poetry. Poetry should answer the social development. Our poetry should serve one target, which is the contemporary generation. Our poetry is not intended for the eyes of dead scholars. It is intended for the eyes of those, who are living in our present Tibetan society. It is them, who should get the messages of the poems they read. If they understand the poem, they will appreciate its artistic values. The poet has to communicate his thoughts to the people. He has to influence the people. If the poet uses only classical words and ignore colloquialism, then he will not be able to serve the contemporary generation. I feel GC thought this way about the social development.

Can you tell us more?

We have come out of our past rigid tradition. This thought of his was great. In the past, we were all confined, within our very rigid thoughts. GC's thought was liberated from this. He did not have rigid views. He did not hold the all-pervading rigid views. But he had to survive in that very rigid social environment. There was a contradiction between him and his social environment. His views could not fit within the social environment. But the social environment tried to force his views within its confines. On the one hand, the social environment was sucking him into its confines. The social environment refers to the old Tibetan society. On the other hand, his views, having become very broad, had escaped from these

barriers. But it did not completely escape. Since the old Tibetan society was so rigid, there was no way he could escape completely from it.

In what ways did the old rigid society hamper his thoughts?

Let me cite an example of the thoughts in GC's 'Ludrub Gongyen' [The Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts]. Our bygone scholars showed us one way, regarding these thoughts. Of course, I have not researched all their works. From the Buddhist point of view, this contention is right. According to this, everybody has to pass through this narrow path, following one bygone scholar after the other. It is not right to speak from *this* direction, when others speak from *that* direction. It would be considered wrong to speak from all directions. Now, I think GC believed that the ultimate aim of the 'Middle Way' was to come to this point. Most of our bygone scholars said that one should follow *only* this particular route to reach this point. GC believed that, as long as one mastered the thoughts, one could take *any* route to reach a certain point. GC was an accomplished scholar. His views were free from those kinds of barriers. Since his views were free from barriers, he did not insist that one should follow only this particular route. According to my opinion, GC's view on the 'Middle Way' was basically the same as those of the bygone scholars. He did not say anything special and unknown in Tibet. What he said in 'Ludrup Gongyen' was the same, as what the bygone scholars had said. But the *way* it was said was wrong. He put it in a way that was different from those of the past scholars. He put it from a different angle. That's why his views became too broad. Since the past tradition was very rigid, everybody had to say exactly what the other scholars before him or her had said. If one said something that was slightly different, people would oppose him or her. They would oppose by saying that 'what did not happen during the time-span of a thousand Buddhas, should not happen during the lifetime of one monk.' GC was not like that. He was highly learned and had a free mind. That's why he would not insist on following the tradition laid down by one individual.

You said that GC died to early. What did you mean?

At the time of his death, GC had many ideas and plans. But the Tibetan social environment of that time did not appreciate them. Many of his aims remained unfulfilled. Those aims remained unfulfilled. I will not name the individual ideas. But generally speaking, he believed that there should be cultural changes in Tibet, that Tibet should follow the advanced countries of the world, that we need not rigidly follow only the traditional systems, etc. He had such ideas and responsibilities. When he was alive, he propagated many of these ideas. But very few of his ideas made any impression, because of the social environment of that time. They did exert a certain influence. But the influence was not strong. In my opinion, he thought, 'Wishing well for Tibet, I contemplated a different future for us, our race, and our people. But then others, under the influence of the rigid social environment, do not appreciate it. Why is it that my plans do not materialize?' I wonder if he did not die while contemplating on such thoughts. This is the reason why I said in my poem that he died carrying many question marks. To sum up, many of his plans did not materialize. That is why I believe he died with a sense of regret.

Do you consider the Tibetan society, during the lifetime of GC, to be a turbulent one?

I think that there were many problems in the views and perceptions of the Tibetan society during the lifetime of GC. Tibetan conventions, ways of doing things, customs, and habits, prior to the time of GC, were calm like a static and frozen river. There was nothing in this. Everybody followed the social norm. There was no great contradiction. Although most people lived in this calm atmosphere for many years, it does not mean that there was absolutely *no* contradiction. But our society as a whole did not have such a great problem. However, in that period, the time of GC [1903-51], Tibet for the first time came face to face with foreigners and *their* different customs, *their* systems, *their* ways of talking, *their* norms, *their* cultural trends, *their* political and economic systems, and many other phenomena, which Tibet had never seen before. That was also the time, when many Tibetans ignored and opposed the foreign phenomena, and rigidly stuck to their own tradition. It was also the time, when only a few people imbibed the ways of foreigners. This includes both the political and the economic systems. This includes culture, too. It was like this from all sides. There were different views. There was no agreement between all sides. In our political affairs, there was influence from the British and other powers [China]. In our culture, there were influences from India, Britain and China. There were disagreements among the people. Therefore, our society was passing through a period of tension. People held conflicting views. Our views were changing from the old to the new. Damage was done to the old order. Having done that, we could not remain any longer in the old situation. At the same time, we were unable to accept the new order completely. It was the time when there was torsion between the old and new orders. This is what I mean by saying that our society was in a state of strife and complications.

In what ways do you think GC served the society of that time?

To sum it up in one sentence, GC brought us new ideas. He brought us new ideas, ideas that the Tibetan society had never had before. That's a great achievement. By bringing us new ideas, he did a great service to our society. To explain this, apart from him, there were others who brought new ideas [e.g. General Tsarong, 13th Dalai Lama, Geshe Sherab Gyatso etc.]. If they brought the new ideas and transplanted them directly on the Tibetan society, people would not accept them. The Tibetan society would drive them away. GC was a learned man. He was thoroughly conversant with the Tibetan tradition. If he had brought new ideas, blended them well with the old ones, and grafted the new onto the old, most of the people of that time would have probably accepted them. But as to the others, let me give you an example if someone came to Tibet after living in foreign countries for a long time, and told us all of a sudden that our Tibetan system was wrong, that it was backward, that we had to keep on moving forward, that we should give up *those* views and take up *these* views, etc., the Tibetan society would not have accepted this. Why, because this person had no understanding of the Tibetan society. He wasn't thoroughly familiar with the Tibetan tradition. Without this understanding, he would not be able to blend the old and the new. If he could not blend them, people would not be able to appreciate his initiatives. GC, on the other hand, brought new ideas, while being in a position to claim that, 'I know the tradition of Tibet better than you.' He could say, 'If you know about the 'Middle Way', I know it better than you. If you know the science of logic, I know it better than you. If you know poetry, I know it better than you.' If he said that other people had such and such ideas, the Tibetan society would accept them. To sum up, he brought new ideas to the

old Tibetan society. On top of that, he was able to blend the new ideas with the old traditional culture. That is why some people in the old Tibetan society accepted his ideas.

Here I would like to give you another example: In our old scriptures, there are many descriptions of the land, the earth, on which we live. But none of the scriptures say that the earth is round or spherical [See GC's texts in the Tibet Mirror]. Now if someone went to a foreign country and then told the Tibetans on his return that the earth on which we stand, is not flat or protuberant like this, but that it is round, he would find no subscribers to his ideas. The great *geshes* [scholars] and monks would not know that the earth is round. They would say that this man does not know what he is saying. They would argue that we would not be able to stand on a land of this shape, that our scriptures say that the earth is like this, that this man has not seen the scriptures, that he would not know, etc. But he could point out that Abhidharma [a Buddhist scholar] had said such and such things a long time back and that in the *Kalachakra* [a Buddhist text] it said such and such things. He was fully conversant with all these scriptures. He could say, 'I have read all these scriptures. I have learned all of these.' Even if he had to debate with a *geshe*, he could say, 'although you *geshe* know this, I know it better. My thorough research on this matter makes me believe that the earth on which we now stand is actually round.' If he explained his contention by blending it with the traditional wisdom, he would be able to drive home his point. Then they would not dare argue with him. They would have to accept his point of view. They would have to say that he was most probably right. Any other person would not be able to achieve this.

Do you think that GC is important to the present generation?

GC has beneficial influence on the present generation. Today, GC symbolizes courage to us. He had thoroughly mastered our culture and taken the best from other cultures. He had the courage to challenge the old and take the new. And he did not merely talk. He did not achieve much, then, but he showed the courage to do it. Our society needs a person like him presently and in future. A time will come in the distant future, when we fall in need of such a person. He was an example to our [Tibetan] nationality. He was the flag bearer of our nationality. As I see it, GC brought courage to our people, both today and in 'White Annals': if we study them, we and the next generation and the generation after that, might gain benefits. But as time passes, as history marches on, such benefits will wear off. What we must learn from him is his courage to challenge the old and accept the new and blend the two. If we were to take advantage of GC's achievement, we must imbibe his courage. He belongs to the whole of Tibet. He is someone who makes every Tibetan think. This is what I feel.

Why is it that GC is taken so seriously today?

The reason for so much interest is... There are different perspectives to that. There are many theories. Some people say that GC became famous because of *this*, while others say that he became famous because of *that*. As I see it, there were many intelligent Tibetans at that time. But very few were like him. That's why if the mainstream views of the Tibetan society was like this, his views were different. One reason why we like him so much is because he was different. I think that judging by the general Tibetan standard of the time, his thoughts were advanced. This is what inspires us to do research on him. He

reached the top with a one-pointed mind. I wrote this poem on him [See: Poem of Ju Kesang]. I did not say that he was a famous man. His thoughts on different aspects were more advanced, than those of other Tibetans. If we conducted a research on him today, it would prove valuable. In the Tibetan society after his time, there were people who held the same views as GC. But in the pre-GC Tibet [late 19th century], there wasn't anyone with his kind of views. During the time of GC, there were only a few people with his kind of views. Here if I sum it up, when one reflects on the Tibetan social environment of that time, his thoughts were advanced. That's why he became such a famous man.

Does the younger generation of Tibetans admire him?

Yes, the present generation of Tibetan youths admires him immensely. The reason is, as I stated earlier. GC had courage. They admire his courage. There are many other reasons for their admiration. His poems are good. His historical research tells the truth. Everything he said was honest. For these and numerous other reasons, the youth of today admire him. Most of the younger people admire him. But I can't say that 100 percent of the youth admire him. But most of them do admire him.

Which one is your favorite book or text?

I thought that his 'Tamgyud Sergyi Thangma', a journal of his travels in India, was good [See: GC in Horkhang]. Then his poems are excellent, both artistically and for the thoughts contained in them. Thirdly, his 'Ludrub Gongyen' is good. It is a unique work from the Buddhist point of view. As I stated earlier, he had said the same things, as the others before him had said. But he said it differently, using new logic. This added a new dimension to our thought process. It is a work that adds a new dimension to our thought process and encourages us to think that we could explain the old scriptures in different ways. The fourth is his historical research work ['The White Annals' and GC's historical articles in the 'Tibet Mirror']. His historical works show honesty. They are not like the works of earlier historians, who made pretension to knowledge and produced guesswork. Furthermore, GC managed to tell everything that we need to say. His historical works are based on credible sources. On top of that, they tell the truth. Time and facility permitting, I read all of GC's works, whether it is a full book or just one stanza. I have read many of his works, but have forgotten some.

What are for you the main points in GC's 'Ludrub Gongyen'?

This is what I think: Talking from the point of view of Nyingma and Gelug doctrines, he probably warmed to the Nyingma doctrines of the Middle Way better [GC's family background was Nyingma, whereas he was formally educated in Gelug monasteries]. I think this is probably, what he thought about the Old [Nyingma] and New [Gelug] doctrines. However, on the whole, he did not refute the Gelug doctrine completely or exclusively supported the Nyingma doctrine. On top of this, I realized this: He investigated the 'Middle Way' doctrine, which was propounded by Nagarjuna [an early Buddhist scholar]. Right from his first reflection to the last word, he had made an attempt to find out the real thoughts of Nagarjuna. As I see it, he came to the conclusion that something like this might be Nagarjuna's doctrine. If that is really the case, then his mind, as I stated earlier, had escaped from barriers. It was free from the barriers of tradition [either Nyingma or Gelug]. His thinking was free from the rigid doctrinal barriers. He

did not reflect like: 'We Tibetans say this. Indians say that. Nyingma followers say this. Gelug followers say that,' etc. Being very broad-minded, he thought that the 'Middle Way' was the ultimate basis of the Buddhist doctrine and that Nagarjuna had propounded the doctrine of 'Middle Way'. Therefore, he contemplated on what might have been the real thoughts of Nagarjuna. GC was liberated from sectarian and doctrinal partisanship. He was free from this. He searched for the facts and truth. He searched for the ultimate facts and truth. He wasn't thinking about anything else.

Do you think GC's 'Ludrup Gongyen' is against Buddhist teaching?

I have done no specific thinking or research on this. I have not done this. As I see it, his ultimate thought... the facts about this *samsara* [the 'illusionary' world we live in]... According to Tibetans, this entire *samsara* is divided into the permanent and impermanent. He investigated the ultimate truth about the permanent and impermanent. GC contemplated on this from the perspective of the discipline of logic. Nagarjuna said this. But to tell the truth, is this really the ultimate truth about the *samsara*? The search for the ultimate existing and bygone truth about the *samsara* is the aim not only of Buddhism. The search for the ultimate truth is the aim of different religions of the world, different doctrines, different logical disciplines, and great spiritual masters. He thought over this and contemplated, whether this or that was the ultimate truth about the *samsara*. This is what I think.

Why was GC jailed?

I have not done specific research on the life of GC. However, I feel that there must have been many different reasons, and we don't know all of them. One reason is that the new ideas and ideology that he propagated did not go down well with the Tibetan society of that time. The aristocracy and other high-up Tibetans of the past political system could not accept his views. That was one factor. Other than this, his biographers say a lot of things about political factors. Researchers have said a lot of things. But frankly, I have not done specific research on this. What they have written may or may not be true. I don't know. Among them, one reason was that he propagated new ideas and new thoughts, which had never been said or heard in the old Tibetan society. Therefore, he was not liked. His imprisonment must have something to do with this. This must be one reason. There must be other reasons as well...

What do you think about his drinking habit?

Tibetans explain this from two perspectives. One is a spiritual perspective. If one talks from the spiritual perspective, Tibetan Buddhism as a whole and Nyingma doctrine in particular, says that if a person reaches a certain stage of spiritual development if he reaches a high spiritual attainment, he becomes liberated from the hopes and concerns of this world [*samsara*]. More particularly, the *yogis* [the spiritually attained] will not bother about what the world says. When we reach a high spiritual stage, worldly approval will not please us, just as worldly disapproval will not disturb us. If someone says, 'You are wrong', he will say, 'It does not matter'. A yogi is free from the worldly net of approval and disapproval. From the general Buddhist, and particularly the Nyingma perspective, a person can reach such a stage. People say that he has reached such a stage. This is the Buddhist spiritual perspective. I neither approve, nor disapprove of this contention. This is our spiritual perspective. Now if I reflect on

this matter from the secular perspective... well, I don't know much about it. I suspect GC may have lost hope for the Tibetan society. He felt he had no hope of helping the Tibetan society. If one reflects on his social standing... There are many social strata... The potential that he brought to the society... His potential was... He had the potential to benefit the Tibetan society. He really had that potential. He thought that he would bring such an influence. But our Tibetan society had this very rigid thinking. We engaged in sectarianism and internal struggles... He saw many instances, where we did this to each other. He took a second look at the Tibetan society and thought, 'Now my plans will not materialize.' He lost hope. In one of his works, he said, 'the rare vase made of *bindruya* [lapis lazuli] was smashed against the rock. Now, they can do whatever they like.' He had high regards for himself. He could do a lot. He wanted to benefit the Tibetan society. But he realized that his efforts would be futile in the contemporary Tibetan society. He probably lost hope. This is what I think from the secular point of view, not from the spiritual point of view

Was GC the 'Crazy Saint' of his days in Tibet?

I think, I can say yes. It is not wrong to say that he was a 'Crazy Saint'. But the Tibetan tradition understands 'crazy' in two ways. Like the Chinese, we differentiate between healthy madness and unhealthy madness. The 'crazy' people of our normal life are indeed 'crazy'. They are called 'crazy' in a disparaging way. But in the Tibetan tradition, we also have people who are called 'crazy' by way of compliment. In the past, our Tibetan society had some people, who were called 'crazy' by way of compliment. In Lhasa, we had the 'Crazy Saint' of Central Tibet. In Tsang, we had the 'Crazy Saint' of Tsang. In Bhutan, there was the 'Crazy Saint' of Bhutan. They are the three historical Mad Men of Tibet. Who were those people? They had reached a high spiritual attainment from the religious or Buddhist point of view. Their views are different from the views of us worldly people. That's why we see them as 'crazy' and they see us as 'crazy'. We have a saying: 'Milarepa sees the samsara as 'crazy'. Samsara sees Milarepa as 'crazy'.' Milarepa had no concerns for food, clothes, etc. He even did not have the sense of worldly embarrassment. He walked about completely naked, even when his sister was around. We worldly people perceive him as 'crazy'. His views of the world were philosophical. He saw madness in our way of life. He advised us on what would be beneficial to us. We worldly people refer to such beings as 'crazy', not in a disparaging sense, but rather in the sense of praise. References like the 'crazy' Heruka of Tsang, the 'Crazy Saint' of Bhutan or the 'Crazy Saint' of Central Tibet are all complimentary terms. When we say, 'the three 'crazy' Men of Tibet', it has a good connotation. Before the liberation of Tibet, before 1958, there were a number of people in Yushu [a region in Northeast-Tibet], who were called 'crazy'. In this case, we should understand the word 'crazy' to mean that they were all *yogis*. But in the case of GC, it is difficult to say, whether he was called 'crazy' in the good sense and bad sense. But he could be called 'crazy'. From the philosophical point of view, there is no meaning in this. From my perspective if I put it briefly, GC was a Tibetan thinker and reformer of the mid 20th century.

GURUNG GYALSAY

***Recorded on the 24th of August 1999 near Jentsa in Northeastern Tibet.***

Born 1911 near Jentsa in Northeastern Tibet. A highly regarded Nyingma Lama. He was close to the parents of GC, especially his mother, who lived with him during GC's stay in India. He had received many letters of GC from India (describing British Rule, Mahatma Gandhi etc.), all of which got lost during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). He later worked for the Chinese administration in Qinghai Province. He died shortly after the interview in the year 2002. Tibetan, not in the film.

Please introduce yourself briefly, including your name and age?

[He doesn't understand our question] Today some of you comrades have come from Switzerland to ask me some questions about GC. I would like to tell you briefly about him. Terton Lama Sogyal Rinpoche, Thubten Choedor, Kathok Situ and others recognized me as the reincarnation of Ju Mipham Chogley Namgyal. I was born in Dragar Nakha, the place where I live presently. I am 89 years old. My horoscope sign is pig.

To tell you about GC: he was the reincarnation of Alak Dhodak. In our area, we call GC the reincarnation of Dhodak. We never call him GC. He was born near Rebkong in Yama Tashi Kyil [actually GC was born en route from Lhasa to Amdo]. He studied scriptures in YTK and later went to Labrang monastery. He studied scriptures at Labrang and defeated all his spiritual friends in philosophical debates. This earned him jealousy in Labrang. Then he went to Ditsa, where he lost weight and earned the nickname of *Ditsa gambo*, meaning the skinny man from Ditsa [GC was in Ditsa, before he went to Labrang]. Later he went to Lhasa [1927]. In Lhasa he studied scriptures [in Drepung monastery] for some years [1927-34] and then went to India. In India, there was a good ruler by the name of Mahatma Gandhi, who was fighting for the independence of his country. GC served Mahatma Gandhi by doing a lot of political work for the Indian independence [in fact, GC never met Gandhi]. While he was in India, we wrote to each other several times. He sent me several travel books on India, written both in English and Tibetan [there is no travel book in English]. He also sent me several other books. He had entrusted the care of his mother to me. Around that time [when he was in India], he came to Lhasa en route to his home village. But the prevailing turmoil in China prevented his homecoming [See the letter GC wrote back to his mother]. When he was about to come home from Lhasa, the Tibetan government arrested him [1946]. Several high ranking people and friends in Amdo [Northeast-Tibet], including Chen Hu and Bhen Hu [?], sent petitions to Ma Pufang [a Muslim warlord, who was in control of large areas within Amdo]. Ma Pufang wrote to Lhasa, stating that GC belonged to Amdo and must be allowed to return home. Lhasa replied by

saying that GC had been arrested, because he had been a communist party member. We sent another petition to Ma Pufang, stating that Lhasa's claim was untrue. We were working to get GC released, when the Red Army came to Amdo. This prevented us from continuing our efforts on his behalf. I wrote a letter to Lhasa, when Tibet's liberation was underway. According to government soldiers, GC died of poisoning. Alak Dhodak [GC] is the son of Gyalpo Tsang. The reincarnation of Gyalpo Rigzin Palden Tashi was my uncle. GC was the son of Gyalpo Tsang. This is how we are related. (...) During the Cultural Revolution [1966-76], I went to Xining [the capital of Qinghai province, formerly Northeast-Tibet]. During my absence, some people took away many of my documents, including GC's letters. This was a great loss to me.

Tell us the contents of those letters?

As I remember it, his letters said that India was under British rule, that Gandhi was leading the Indian struggle for independence, that the people of India did not want to live under British rule, that Gandhi urged his people not to use electric lamps, reasoning that electric lamps were bad for the eyes and that people had to pay for the electricity they used, etc. Instead, Gandhi suggested using the Indian oil lamps, which he said, gave better luminosity and did not harm the eyes. Gandhi, GC wrote, urged people not to travel by locomotive trains. People followed his advice and boycotted the British-made electric lamps and trains. Gandhi, he wrote, spun [wool] every day and earned his living from the sale of threads spun by himself. The people of India followed Gandhi in every way. He wrote at length on how the British were forced to give independence to India. He sent me a guidebook on the eight pilgrim sites in India, including the birthplace of the Buddha. The book gives many details of the life of the Buddha. These were the contents of his letters to me... [Thinks] We knew GC's mother as Ani Badho.

Did GC's mother tell you about her son's early life?

GC and I were related spiritually. We were also like-minded. That is, why his mother stayed at my home, while he was away in India. GC wrote to me saying, 'my mother is old. You should look after her. There is no one to look after my mother during my absence,' etc. Of course, there were like-minded people and fellow students, who were ready to look after his mother. But since GC and I had a close spiritual relationship, his mother stayed with me for two years. GC's mother told me that she was old and wanted GC to return home to meet her once before she died. I wrote to GC, and related his mother's wish. Accordingly, GC came to Lhasa on his way home. But he had this incident [arrest] in Lhasa, which I narrated earlier [it is not sure, though, whether GC had any plans to return home at the time, 1946].

It is said that, when GC was a child, he made a boat with an engine, made of old and broken watches. That boat could sail up and down in the water [See interview: Alak Yongtsin]. He was also fond of painting. He was a gifted person. Although he had no training in painting, he could paint portraits with uncanny resemblance to the models. In the past, I used to have some of his paintings. They are now no longer with me. Such was his precocity. Very few people can paint such portraits without training. In those days, there was no scientific development like today. But he was even then fond of technology and painting. He was fond of reading. And he retained everything he had read. It is believed that he had

achieved a spiritual attainment by which one never forgot anything. People say this from a spiritual point of view [meaning that GC was spiritually a highly developed person].

You must have heard of Geshe Sherab Gyatso from Dobhi. He studied scriptures in Lhasa and was considered a great religious scholar [in Drepung monastery. He was also GC's teacher in Drepung]. People say that Geshe Sherab Gyatso could not win against GC in philosophical debates. Geshe Sherab Gyatso lived in the city of Xining [Northeast-Tibet]. We lived together for a long time. I told Geshe Sherab Gyatso of the death of GC in Lhasa. Geshe la said, 'Alas, That's bad! That's bad! This is sadder than the news of the death of one thousand people.

Those who had traveled to India told me this story: When GC wrote this travel guide India; he sat on many trains and wrote down all the routes the train would take. For this, he was exempted from paying the train fare. They also said he was highly respected in India. These stories are most probably true. This was probably due to his association with Gandhi. I used to have some of the books that he had sent me. Now they are all gone.

Do you know, why GC was imprisoned in Lhasa?

This I told you earlier. We received a message from Lhasa that he had been imprisoned on the charge of being a communist party member. In reply to our letter, demanding his release, we got this reply from Lhasa: 'He is a communist party member. That is why the Tibetan government arrested him in Lhasa.'

What do you think of GC?

We call him Dhodak *Tulku* [reincarnation]. He was later named GC. Dhodak Tulku had been a greatly learned and high lama of Sichuan [actually the Tibetan region of Kham, which has been incorporated into the Chinese province of Sichuan]. My father, Gurong Tsang, got GC recognized as the reincarnation of Dhodak Tulku. GC was the son of Gyalpo Tsang. Gyalpo Tsang and we belonged to the same spiritual lineage [Nyingmapa, the old translation school]. As I see it, GC was an extremely precocious person. He was not a person, who would be partial to Gelugpa or Nyingma doctrine. He looked at the reality from the scientific point of view. He said a lot of great things:

*Those who cannot appreciate 'wondrous things'
Are simpletons, as the Dharma Kings and Lamas say.*

From these words it can be discerned that he was a great lover of scientific thinking. Another one:

*If the nomads want to eat meat,
And valley dwellers want to drink butter oil,
It is pointless to prevent them by coercion.
It is pointless to coerce them against their wish.*

This is extremely logical. Many people like his way of scientific thinking.

These days some Gelugpa followers dislike Nyingmapas. GC was not like this. He was non-sectarian and a scholar of all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism. He visited the monasteries of Tibet and catalogued all the scriptures that had been translated from the Indian language. This shows how much he persevered. He did a great service to Tibet. From my point of view, he was partial, neither to the old doctrine [Nyingma], nor to the new one [Gelugpa]. He investigated all the phenomena in this world. He was fond of scientific thinking.

What do you think was the cause of GC's death?

He had many like-minded friends. When he was in prison, many of them gave him *chang* [Tibetan beer] and *arak* [strong liquor]. He drank a lot. This is true. After his release from the prison, he went to Drepung. Lhubum *khangtsen* [college] of Drepung gave an assurance to the government that GC would confine himself within the premises of Drepung [actually Lhasa]. This is how he came to stay at Drepung [GC stayed in Lhasa]. While in Drepung, he did not drink that much. He died just before [actually after] the People's Liberation Army [PLA] came to Lhasa [1951].

The Tibetan government had arrested him on the charge of being a communist party member. They feared that if the PLA came to Lhasa, GC would seek vengeance against the Tibetan government. That's why he was poisoned. This is what I was told [GC was not poisoned, but there was this rumor at the time]. After his death, his body was taken to the cremation ground near Sera monastery. I got the information on who took his scalp and how unique one part of his scalp was [See interview: Akhu Lama Tsering]. I wanted to go to Lhasa at that time, but could not do so. It is said that Kham Gojo Lama saw the letter 'Om' in relief on the inside of GC's scalp. This letter had come to be there miraculously, without being carved by any human hand... [Thinks] Later, some people said that GC had been poisoned before the arrival of the communist party personnel.

Tell us more about GC?

The Tibetan government imprisoned and finished off a good son of Tibet. If there had been more people like GC, our Snow Land of Tibet would have become exceptionally great. But Tibet is like this. If an exceptional person like GC was born, he would be imprisoned, maltreated and killed. I have heard that, because GC was such a gifted and precocious person, the British and Swiss people do research on his life. That's how it is. GC and I were friends. That's why I felt anguished about his death. Well, we can do nothing about it now. This is a pre-liberation story [meaning that before 'liberation', things were worse]. A section of the Lhasa aristocracy was fond of GC, while others were not. That's why he was killed.

What do you think about GC's political and historical thinking?

I thought over this. In the pre-liberation period [before 1951], GC's intelligence and knowledge would not have been well received, even in Amdo. But today, his intelligence and knowledge would be extremely useful for the Tibetan nationality or otherwise. However, Tibet does not have the good *Karma* for such an exceptional human being. It is extremely rare that a learned person like GC is born in Tibet. But the Lhasa aristocracy jailed him. What wrong did he do to the Lhasa aristocracy? This is what happens in our

Tibet. As a people, Tibetans are hopeless. If GC were alive today, he would be of great help to the country and the government. His intelligence and knowledge would be very useful. But in the pre-liberation days, GC's intelligence was not appreciated. I think so nowadays. But now it is too late. I will narrate for you the words of GC:

If there were wants, it would be futile to suppress them.

If there were no wants, it would be futile to impose them'

This is a composition of GC. He wrote this. In these few words, he expressed a lot. Only two verses, but these verses encompass many things. You all should contemplate on these verses from a spiritual point of view or otherwise. From these two verses one can gauge what sort of brains he had.

ALAK YONGTSIN



Recorded on the 26th of August 1999 in Tharchoe Monastery, near Mangra in Northeastern Tibet.

Born 1907 near Mangra (Amdo). He studied at Labrang Monastery, where he became GC's friend in the early 1920's. He stayed in Labrang as a highly regarded tulku (reincarnation), until its closure in the early 1960's. He spent several years in the Chinese Gulag, released in the early 1980's. He returned to his birthplace in Northeastern Tibet and later became the spiritual teacher of a young reincarnation in Tharchoe Monastery. He died in 2004, aged 97. Tibetan, in the film.

Alak Yongtsin begins talking, without us asking a question:

My native place is called Heynan District these days. I moved to Labrang Tashi Kyil at the age of 17. In the beginning, I was called Shabdrung of Kokonor [tib.: Tsongnombo] at Labrang. Prior to that, when I was 8 years old [1915], I was recognized as the reincarnation of Sherab Gyatso Tsang. When I was young, I was called *Tulku* [reincarnation] of the Tutor of Shabdrung Karpo. So, I went to Lamo Dechen and stayed there for one year. Afterwards I secretly fled to Labrang monastery, where I was called Shabdrung of Kokonor. Then, after I formally joined Labrang, I started going to the debating sessions. When my classmates and myself were at the prayer session at the debating courtyard, some other monks were talking. While I kept listening to them, I heard them saying that *Pis Ta Samudra* had called a pillar as *adarsha*. Then, one of these monks turned to me and asked, 'Hey guy! You may have heard something like that from Ditsa Alak [the nickname of GC], haven't you?' Then I replied by saying, *Pis Ta Samudra* calling a pillar *adarsha*? *Pis Ta Samudra* is Sanskrit, meaning *Dhargye Gyatso*. I said that, 'An *adarsha* on a pillar means someone bald, whose forehead resembles a mirror.' So, I told them thus. Then, one monk looking at me from the midst of the assembly said this, 'Oh yes! Where are you from? 'I'm from Tsongnombo', I said. 'Why? When I was small, I had a teacher. He taught me some Sanskrit words like this. When I said this GC told me, 'you are good. We'll make friends. You should join the Thanye Dratsang. *Thanye* refers to the different linguistic studies, after which our monastic school was named. Then we had conversations with each other and became acquaintances. Then, when I asked about his birthplace, GC replied, 'my birthplace is Zhoepang, near Rebkong. My father was a Nyngma practitioner. He was a Tantric. My mother is still alive. She is a nun, now. As a child, when I was in Rebkong, I was called Alak Dhodrak [GC was the reincarnation of Alak Dhodrak, see interview: Akhu Lama Tsering]. Later I moved to Ditsa monastery and studied some philosophy there. I studied Sanskrit from Bido Jamyang Tsang. I certainly know it well. The fact that I know the *mantra* [short prayers] language, is because of my limited Sanskrit knowledge.'

Thus, we remained friend. GC mainly studied philosophy. Specifically, he had studied the texts about the 'Colors', the 'Advanced Studies in Colors', the 'Intermediate Level of Collected Topics', the 'Advanced Level of Collected Topics' and the 'Study of Logical Reasoning'. He completed these studies. So, for four years we knew each other very well. Since Ditsa Monastery was very small, GC thought of moving to a larger monastic institution. So, he joined Labrang and pursued his studies in philosophy. During that time, because he had stayed in Ditsa Monastery, instead of calling him GC, people called him Ditsa Alak [the monk from Ditsa]. He was famous as it was known, 'Ditsa Alak [GC] is a great Logician, a *'Rigpa Mawa'*. He was extraordinary, even while debating in the preliminary logic on the Collected Topics. Besides, he had hands for art and could make drawings of anything with ease. Also, he was very good at writing compositions. Moreover, it was known that he had assembled together pieces of machines from broken clocks and made a small mechanical boat that could go from the near side to the far side of a small pond that had formed after the earth had been dug out [for one of the temples in Labrang monastery]. GC once told me, 'If I ponder on it, I think I could make a mill that can run without the need for water.' So, he had created a small boat that ran on the water. But I have not seen that myself.

After completing his studies in Buddhist philosophy, he and Jamyang of Yugya had a debate on *Pramanavarttika* amidst the whole congregation of monks in the main Prayer Hall. At that time, Ditsa Alak [GC] posed as the defender [answerer], and they disputed for as long time. His rival was a very good scholar as well. Through this debate GC earned the title of 'The Learned Master of Logic'. Then he pursued the 'Perfection of Wisdom' studies, by joining the junior class. Alongside the study of philosophy, he also studied various other traditional subjects. Since he was a great scholar, he did not accept others easily. Because of that, it was said that Ditsa Alak was arrogant. Some said that he had no faith in the Three Jewels [Buddhism]. One when he talked with me, he had told me that he may have been an Indian in the previous life, because he was interested in learning Sanskrit since his childhood.

Around that time [1927] it was heard that Ditsa Alak [GC] was going somewhere else. The monks said various things such as, 'because Ditsa Alak has no faith in *Nechung Trinley Gyalpo*, the Dharma Protector did not allow him to reside in our monastery.' Again, some said that he was arrogant. And because *Nechung Trinley Gyalpo* [the protector deity] is riding a lion, he is hostile to arrogant people. Therefore, GC could no longer stay here. Then, he told me that he would not stay here any longer. That he was going to go to Lhasa and then from there to India. He told me that it was of no use for him to stay in this place. Later he left Labrang. While leaving here, he had put up a poster on his door [Alak Yongtsin starts reciting from memory]:

*Hey, while I am gone to another place
Some monks, babbling words from their mouth
May say, 'Somehow, Nechung Trinley Gyalpo
Did not let him stay, for he was arrogant.
If there is such a strict Dharma Protector,
How could he allow those people,
Who wandered places familiar or strange to them,*

*To do business in tea, beer and dried mutton
 And get themselves totally messed up?
 Like the banyan leaves, they fold up their lower garment,
 The worst of weapons, iron knives, and bricks of tea they hold,
 It would be right if these people were now expelled
 They have doubled in number since the last year.
 Lacking the pure faith, like the Friday planet,
 Some say that he was expelled to another place.
 Why are the cows, dzomos [female yaks], birds and insects,
 The impure sentient beings, not expelled?
 Nechung Gyalpo, the tusk bearer [elephant],
 Has no reason whatsoever to expel those, who,
 Disregarding the various hardships in hot and cold weathers,
 Study and contemplate the scriptures of the Buddha,
 In all possibilities and circumstances.
 The jokes about which hats, clothes and shoes are better?
 And those, about eating only simple food.
 Between the two, although we see a big difference,
 From up there, the Buddhas do not see any difference.
 Rather than expelling a proud one, who knows
 The 'Collected Topics' of Ratoe and Se across mountains and other places,
 Would it not be better if those arrogant ones,
 Who sell meat and chang [beer] from door to door
 Are expelled to other places instead?*

*Ha, ha! Am I right? Think yourselves.
 Examine thoroughly by asking the Akhu Geshes.
 Thus, this is spoken by one, who is a literary,
 The lion of logic, Sangha Dharma [GC].*

So, pasting these lines on his door GC left. Later he went to India. I never got any letter from India. But his classmates had received many letters. Although I know some of the contents of letters, I don't need to tell them now. At Labrang we were very close to each other. He had given me pictures drawn by himself. In one of these pictures, he had drawn a monk; whose hands were held this way, with his fingers this way, and a tree on this side. Now I have grown old. I am 92 years old.

*Even as the mind imputes only a mirage over there
 Water is seen to be obtained from it.
 How is it that from a mere imputation of the mind
 Leaves and flowers grow on trees?*

So, he wrote this at the bottom and offered it to me. Also, he offered me a picture of an old bald monk, who was looking into a mirror, which reflected his face. With this picture he wrote this verse reflecting our view on emptiness:

*Though measurable upon the nature of ones own mind
And devoid of any power of establishment
This meaningless perception of the sight
Do you feel contended with this manner?*

Thus this is how I can describe our friendship with each other. Otherwise, I do not have any big reasons to prove that

Did GC study English with the American missionary 'Sherab Tanphel' [engl. Griebenow]?

That I did not hear. I don't know. But other people said that GC went to an American, named Sherab Tanphel, outside of Labrang to learn some foreign language, reading and writing. But I have no clear idea about it. I had heard people talk about Ditsa Alak, going to a Russian [the missionary was originally from Russia] to learn languages. His name was Sherab Tanphel.

Tell us more about this famous debate in Labrang?

The debaters were called the Antagonist and Protagonist, who took turns to pose questions and give answers and vice versa. One stood up in the middle row and the other stood up next to the Gekoe's [ritual master] row. And the two of them debated. On that day, it was known that GC debated very intensely and this debate became very famous.

What was the atmosphere of this debate, what was it about?

There are four philosophical schools of tenets. Out of the four the 'Idealists' reject external objects. At that time, GC and his opponent debated on the 'Commentary of the Valid Cognition Text', the Pramanavarttika, in connection with the 'Idealists' position. The 'Idealists' say that there are no external objects. It was said, 'if there is a particle, then it must necessarily be a particle unit for the composition of external objects.' It was argued, 'Should that be the case, then, there aren't any particles, because there are no particle units for the composition of external objects.' To that GC replied, 'If 'X' is a particle and if it must necessarily be the particle unit for the composition of external objects. How can that be if there are no particles.' So, the whole monastery laughed at debates such as this one, in which the debaters argued about, whether infinitesimal particles do exist or not. Although the monks jeered at GC, later, when the same issue was readdressed back to his rival, the rival was not able to hold on to his position. The position that GC held was something very unconventional to the usual methodology of debate. 'If 'x' is a particle, then it must be a particle unit for the composition of external objects. But there is no particle. And if there is no particle, then, the eight different colors don't exist. Because in the very first place there is no particle.' When this argument was thrown at GC's rival, the three thousand monks of our monastery made jokes at him saying, 'Ho, ho, ho.' Later, when they switched turns and it was argued, 'Are there particles? If so, are there particle units that form the basic unit for external objects or not?' At that, despite

being such a good scholar, his rival was cornered and didn't have any answer to give. All the scholars at the time had claimed that GC had such a definitive good understanding of the subject matter [debating], and that his arguments were profound. In retrospect it seems that on that day, GC was unable to hold on to his own position. I was there in the gathering at the *Dunpai Rigda Debate*. My class was junior to his. We didn't have a say in this debate. Only the big Geshes [scholars] debated. However later, one of the great learned Geshes had mentioned that GC had won this debate.

Why did GC leave Labrang and go to Lhasa?

He didn't have any problem at Labrang. Not even one. I don't have any reason to say, as to why GC went to Lhasa, leaving Labrang. I knew him well at Labrang. He was a senior student and I was junior to him. I don't have any idea to relate about his problems with any of the officials or the disciplinarians of the monastery. At some point, when it was known that GC was not going to stay, but was going to go to Lhasa, some people were talking to each other saying that GC was being unable to restrain his mouth, therefore he could no longer stay here. On the one hand, he had connection with a Russian [actually the American missionary Griebenow, or, as the Tibetans called him, Sherab Tanphel]. On the other hand, he did not pay enough attention to studying philosophy, but was lost in the study of other secular subjects [making mechanical toys]. Moreover, because he lacked faith, he could not stay here. Such talks had spread in the monastery, and, in his own writing that GC had stuck on his door as he left, all his reasons were mentioned. When he was at Labrang, I had never heard of any wrongs done by him.

Last year, in one essay, another reason for his leaving was mentioned. But I don't know. It's not clear to me. Anyway, he left for Lhasa. Then I heard that he had gone to Khagang and was at Khagang Monastery. From there he had gone to Lhasa, where he became a student of Geshe Sherab Gyatso of Dobi. He stayed at Lhubum *khangtsen* and studied philosophy intensely. Under Geshe Sherab he studied the 'Perfection of Wisdom', the *Prajnaparamita*, and he particularly studied the 'Middle Way', the Madhyamika philosophy and Tsongkhapa's 'Essence of Eloquence'. GC was very brilliant. And Geshe Sherab was also a great scholar. They were very close to each other. The Geshe had said one day, 'Okay. Today I am going to explain the definitive and interpretive meanings of the scriptures and do some analysis on it. So, ask GC to come to my class.' But GC replied, 'although I could come, I know already what Geshe Sherab would explain to us. He will say this at such and such point, and after that he will say this. I already know what he has to say.' From the point of view of the Dharma [Buddhist teaching] that was a slightly wrong way of relying to this respected Lama [Geshe Sherab]. GC had not been faithful.

Then, since GC was a Nyingmapa in his previous life [GC was born into a Nyingma family], he had a special appeal for the philosophical view of the Nyingma tradition. While in Lhasa, he wrote a book on this view [the Nyingma positions]. Both Trijang Rinpoche and Ling Rinpoche [both teachers of the Dalai Lama] had told Geshe Sherab that GC had written such a book on Nyingma views, and asked him to make an argument against this religion [Nyingma tradition] and that they should write a refutation of GC's position [This discussion relates to the controversy, surrounding GC's philosophical essay, the 'Adornment for Nagarjuna's Thought'. See interview: Akhu Lama Tsering]

In 1958, I got to know Geshe Sherab. I went to a meeting in Xining and that autumn, we were all arrested. At that time, I had gone to see Geshe Sherab. He told me that it was not good that he was asked by both of the Dalai Lama's tutors to write a refutation against GC's book on the Nyingmapa view. He said that he had written a refutation and had left it in the hands of Alak Khonag at Trelzong Monastery. He asked me to get that refutation and read it for myself. He said, 'It's not good if a teacher has to refute his student.' So, Geshe Sherab had also made a refutation of GC's views. Now Geshe Sherab's refutation is published with the remark, 'The last pages have not been found.' Other than this, I have nothing else to say.

Please tell us something about the imprisonment of GC in Lhasa.

GC became a great scholar of philosophy in Lhasa. After that he went to India. After returning from India, although he had a great plan to make a film on the twelve deeds of the Buddha, he lacked the resources [nobody else could confirm this story]. I have also heard that GC made counterfeit Tibetan currency notes and dispersed them everywhere, and since they came into the hands of the Tibetan government, GC was arrested. I don't know, whether this is true or not. But this was the rumor. [See interview: Tashi Pelra] While in India GC had talked about making a film on the life of Buddha and having already completed a part of the film, it was said that due to shortage of resources, GC had printed counterfeit Tibetan notes. After the investigation, GC was found responsible for the fake notes, and so he was arrested. Thus I had heard. At that time [probably after 1946] it was said that the Indian government had appealed to the Tibetan government not to give him the death sentence [also this story could not be confirmed]. The Tibetans have a vulgar attitude. First, GC was an exemplary monk with clean moral conduct. Then, he was kept in the same prison cell with a Khampa girl, and because of her he had to disrobe. There were such talks, but I don't know if they are true or a lie. The reason for the Tibetan government's arrest of GC was said to have been the counterfeit notes. I don't know, whether there were any other reasons for his arrest. Here in our area [Northeast-Tibet], it was said that GC had duplicated the Tibetan national currency and therefore he was punished and imprisoned by the government. Whether these stories are true or not I don't know.

Also in Lhasa, GC won the first position in a debating contest [in Drepung monastery]. He and a great Geshe [scholar] were said to have staked their *chabri* in a debating contest. GC had said to his opponent, 'If I defeat you in this debate, you have to hand over your *chabri* to me. But if you defeat me, I will give you my *chabri*.' So, in the end GC won the great Geshe's *chabri*. A *chabri* is nothing so holy. It is a square container for fetching water that hangs from the waist, on the front side of a monk. However, it was a mistake that GC took the *chabri*. Because he took the *chabri* of a great scholar, it was inauspicious for him, such that in the later part of his life GC had to disrobe. So, I have heard. I don't really know. What I'm saying was just a rumor, but not something I learned from his own words. What I had told you earlier I know, due to our close friendship with each other. That's all I have to say. I don't know anything else. I have told you no lie. I have told you, what I actually heard.

What did you feel when you heard that GC had died after his release from prison?

Prior to his arrest, he had gone to India and had written all his works like the 'Guide Book of India, etc. People who have gone to India have said that if they had GC's guidebook with them, then they could consult it to find the directions to places. GC's guidebook is honored highly, even in the Noble Land of India. 'Oh! He was a unique personality.' I had thought, 'How bad! If he had lived a little longer, it would have been good.' That's all for now.

AMDO CHAMPA

***Recorded on the 13th of September 1999 in Lhasa.***

Born 1916 in Northeastern Tibet (Amdo). As one of the leading Tibetan 'modernist', Amdo Champa revolutionized Tibetan art in the late 1950's by painting photo-realistic portraits of his then patron, H. H. Dalai Lama, in a mural at the Norbulingka in Lhasa. His painting style was also influenced by the ideas of GC, who, already in the 1930's, had painted photo-realistic portraits of the nobility in Lhasa. They lived together for some time after GC's release from prison in 1949. In the mid-1980's he left Tibet to go to Dharamshala in India. For Tashi Tsering (See: Interview 'Tashi Tsering') he painted two portraits of GC from his memory (charcoal). He later returned to Tibet, where he became the head of the Thangka Painting School in Lhasa. He died there in the year 2002. Tibetan, in the film.

What is your name and how old are you?

My name is Amdo Champa. I am 85 years old. Till now I have been painting. Since the main thing you would like to know is about GC and me; at 28, when I came to Lhasa, GC was not here. He was in prison. One or two years later he was released. After his release we met and came to know each other well. GC often visited me, and we were both poor. It didn't matter who had anything, we used to share all we had and often eat at each other's place. We stayed like that for three years. And then he passed away at 47 [49]. That was in 1951, I guess. He was a great scholar. I don't have to elaborate on that.

When did you two become friends?

Only after his release from the prison we became friends [1949]. GC was a very popular man but I had never met him before. When he was released from the prison, I asked a friend of mine to invite him to my house. At that time I had prepared *momo* for us. When he first came to my house he was so skinny. He was wearing a brown chupa and a big army cap. At that time I had hung three of my paintings on the wall. One was of Lord Buddha, when he was a young prince. The second was the Chinese Emperor Khangshi. Khangshi had a long beard, and since I was so fond of the portrait, I had hung it up. On one side, I had hung the portrait of the 13th Dalai Lama, His Holiness Thubten Gyatso. All the three portraits had some compositions written beneath them, composed by Lobsang Dorje, secretary of Pabongka, a renowned Rinpoche. On the Buddha's portrait, 'Young Son of Szetsang, Accomplisher of all deeds, is the greatest of all Lords', was written. 'The earth is ruled with might, Emperor Khangshi is the mighty ruler', was written beneath Khangshi's portrait. And beneath the 13th Dalai Lama's portrait it said, 'Holder of the white lotus, the only savior of the Land of Snows, Thubten Gyatso is the guide of all sentient beings'. As soon as GC entered my room, he looked at the portraits and asked me, who had composed those verses. I told him that Pabongka Rinpoche's secretary wrote those. The he asked the name of the secretary and I

told him the name. GC liked the compositions. He said the compositions were really good and kept staring at them. Only then he sat down for the *momo*. So that was how we spent our first day together. From that day onwards, we used to visit each other often and became very close. We got along so well, since we shared the same ideology and had similar habits. Like me he was poor, and never needed much. He looked more like a beggar. I, too, never owned wealth and live the life of hands to mouth. Whatever we had today, we finished up for the day and for tomorrow it would be another day. Since we shared the same views and ideology, we got along so well. Our friendship improved with each passing day. Sometimes I used to feel that he might shift to my house, because his students were taught Tibetan philosophy at my house, too. Many of his students learnt the holy text from him. However, he used to talk more on general topics, rather than about the holy text. And he liked cracking jokes and talking idly with them. Generally, he was sort of a lazy man. Sometimes he hardly washed his face for 7-8 days and wouldn't even get up from his bed. He wouldn't wear his shoes sometimes. He would wrap himself with his blanket, which he had brought back from India. It was green in color. He wouldn't even wear a shirt underneath that blanket. He was like that in front of his students too. When he had to go for the toilet, he would wrap the green blanket around him and would walk and no one would remind him of his shoes, as all were familiar with his habit of not putting on his shoes.

Sometimes he would ask me to come for circambulation with him at the *Barkhor* [the market-street surrounding the Jokhang Temple]. At that time, he lived with a female from Chamdo, named Tseten Yudron [See interview: Tseten Yudron]. Sometimes he would ask her for money. Whenever we were to go for the circumambulation at Barkhor, he would ask her for some money. Only when he went for the circumambulation and to the market, would he get out from his bed and wear his shoes, *chupa* [Tibetan traditional dress] and the loose army hat. Sometimes, I had to persuade him to go for circumambulation with me. His wife Tseten Yudron normally had to help him in tying his *chupa*, else he couldn't wear it properly. Whenever he had to go out, he would beg money from his wife, as he didn't have a penny with him. That time we were using Tibetan currency. In our currency, ten *showor* is equivalent to one *sangkang* and 15 *showor* is one counting. Tseten Yudron would give him 10 *showor* after much searching. But he never had the habit of keeping a purse with him, so he would ask me for a purse to keep the money. Tseten Yudron would put the money in an empty matchbox and give it to him. While at the market, he never had the habit of looking sideways, nor talking to others, but would go straight to the place he had to go and do whatever he had to do. Before reaching the Barkhor, there was an old woman, who was selling *shapale* [fried *momo*]. He would buy three shapales and eat one there. He would also offer me one, but I would refuse, as I used to feel embarrassed, since people of Lhasa would never eat food on the street. Only beggars would do such things. Besides, a dignified person would never eat outside. He would eat one, and would stand up for giving the money to the woman. Since he had the money in the matchbox, which he had to look for in his big *chupa*, he would have a difficult time in looking for it. After not being able to locate it in his big *chupa*, he would tell me that he might have lost the money. Then the old woman would get worried and ask him, where he had put it. She had at times even helped him in looking for the money in his *chupa*. He sometimes loved idle and baseless talks. People would look at him and say that he must be a madman [See interviews: Thubten Wangpo, Ju

Kesang]. But their remarks had no impact on him, and he wouldn't care, instead he would compose a poem on the *shapale*, he was eating and people would laugh at him. I used to feel embarrassed. On reaching home, he would give one of the *shapale* to his wife Tseten Yudron and say it tasted good. So, this was how we carried on with our life.

Sometimes, I would ask him to go to the temple with me [the Jokhang Temple]. Often he would refuse going there, asking what there was in the temple to go so often. I would urge him that it was good to go there and sometimes I would even drag him with me. After much persuasion, he would sometimes agree to come with me, but only on the condition that we would not see many deities; that we would not pray for a long in front of the Gods; and that we would be back home soon. He would say that we should run through the Temple from one image to the other. He also said that it was not good to pray for too long a time in front of the Gods. So I had to agree with him, just to make him to come with me. Once inside the Jokhang Temple, he would not pray much, but would just glance at the Gods' faces. Only while visiting Jowo Rinpoche [the main shrine in the center of Jokhang], he would bow in front of it. Other than that, in other temples, he wouldn't give much notice to the images.

Another story about GC: there was a treasurer of Tolung Drag. The Tolung Drag was formerly a king of Tibet, but the main power rested in the hands of the treasurer. There were the cabinet members [Kashag] above the treasurer, but on important decisions, the ministers couldn't decide without the consent of the treasurer. So, the treasurer was one of the students of GC. Sometimes, the treasurer used to invite GC to his house. I once told GC that he should give respect to the treasurer, especially in front of others. I asked GC if he respected him. GC replied he had never respected anyone. I asked him, why he didn't. He said that it was just his habit and that he had never respected anybody. I told him that, although he had never respected anybody – but the treasurer being an important person – he should give respect to him. GC didn't say anything in reply. When GC returned from his visit, I asked him what the treasurer's reaction was and how he treated him. GC said, whenever he visited the treasurer, the man would get up from his seat to welcome him to sit on his seat instead. GC said he used to sit on it. I was surprised to hear that he would sit on the treasurer's seat, and I told him so. GC explained he considered everybody to be equal, irrespective of his or her status and position. Looking back at his words, it seemed that he didn't bother about the other people's status. He acted, as if *he* was the most learned person in Tibet [I wonder, whether Amdo Champa got the point, GC was trying to make].

One day, while he was teaching philosophy for some aristocrats, he said they considered him as knowledgeable, which he said he was. He said he had worked hard for his knowledge. Unlike his aristocratic students, he didn't let his mind roam around, he kept his mind concentrated and focused on things, and he would think a lot. He said if they compared themselves to him, they were not different from his cat, which had a very limited imagination and knowledge. In the morning, when you look into the cat's eye, the eyeballs were round. But at noon, its eyeballs were small, just like a point of a needle. He said the way we see things and the way the cat see things, are very different. When we look from here at a mountain, it does not matter, who is actually looking at the mountain. What we see is only a

mountain. We don't see two mountains. But if the cat could speak, it would probably say that there were two mountains, because a cat's eyeballs and our eyeballs have different shapes. Likewise, when we look at a pillar, all of us would agree that the pillar has a cuboid shape. Whether we ask one or a hundred persons, all would agree that a pillar has a cuboid shape. Nobody would say that it was round. We, the human beings, have the same sense of conceiving things. When we see a square, we all recognize it as a square. When we see a round figure, we all recognize it as round. That's our way of looking at things. The shape of our eyeballs makes all humans see things in the same way. Likewise, a common standard recognizes all the matters, irrespective of whether it is concrete or abstract, and everybody describes it the same way. Other than that, there was no reason, why things are called, what they were called by everybody.

Did GC tell you about his experiences inside the prison?

Yes, he did. He said the prison in Tibet was far better than the hotels in foreign countries. Here, even if the prisoner were told to leave the prison after the completion of his prison terms, he would rather request to be detained. A few days after their release, they would come back to stay in prison. GC said that he had a good life in the prison. Some aristocrats used to visit him in the prison and would bring food for him [See interviews: Horkhang Jampa Tendar, Tseten Yudron]. He used to share his food with the others in the prison. He had painted in the prison, too. He met that female, named Choedon in the prison. GC felt that life in the prison was good, except for its name. Every evening around dusk the prisoners would assemble on the terrace and say prayers, facing towards the His Holiness' Palace [Shol prison was right underneath the Potala Palace]. The prisoners could also gamble Mahjong [a Chinese game]. Sometimes the monks from the Namgyal monastery would come to gamble in the prison with the prisoners. To give an indication to the monks that there would be a gambling session, the prisoners would place a maroon robe on the terrace after their prayers. After seeing that robe, the monks would come for gambling.

Upon his imprisonment, GC was first locked up in the office [he is referring to the office of the Lhasa magistrate] instead of the prison [Shol prison]. At first he wasn't told the reason for his captivity. But GC felt that he was caught, because the British government might have sent secret letters [reports] to the Tibetan government, stating that he was a criminal. During his stay in India for 12 years, GC was doing researches on Tibetan history. He knew that the British government was keeping eye on him. They knew the details of all his activities. Even, when he returned from India through Moan Tawang to Lhasa [in 1946], the British spies were on his trail. So the British could have reported to the Kashag [the cabinet], blaming GC of espionage. And that was, what GC felt. But he claimed of not being a spy at all. However, he didn't have any proof of his innocence. He felt so scared that he might get his hands chopped off or get his eyes poked out. Fearing so, he said he had been saying Dolma [a female deity] prayers, while his captivity. Since he was locked in a house with a wooden floor [again Amdo Champa is referring to the office of the Lhasa magistrate that had a prison, too], he used to mark the number of his prayers on that floor, because he didn't own a rosary to count his prayers. Later, he noticed that almost the whole floor was covered with these marks. And then, one day, he was called by the superintendent, who told him that he would be shifted to the Shol prison [underneath the Potala, where GC spent most of his term]. He was

also informed that he would be given fifty lashes at that prison. But when at Shol prison, he was saved from the whipping by Surkhang [a minister] and the Rupon [military commander], because both had once been the pupils of GC. They bribed the person, who conducted the whipping. The person was told not to hit GC directly, instead flipping the whip on the ground, in order to bring out the sound only [this version was not confirmed by others, but all agree that GC was whipped].

He stayed almost three years in Shol prison. Only after his third year of imprisonment, some monks from his college in Drepung [Lhubum khangtsen] stood for his surety to get him released. GC had once been a monk in that monastery. Only then he was released. On the day of a prisoner's release, the officials had to read out the reasons of the prisoner's captivity or impeachment in front of all the other prisoners. During GC's release they said, he was a criminal, who had spied for the Russians. They also said he was sent by the Russians [communists?] to spy. The reason they stated for his release was that, since His Holiness the Dalai Lama had reached his 15th birthday, in order to ward off all the evils on that year, GC would be spared [Nobody else confirmed this story]. Saying so, he was released. The main allegation against GC was of being a spy. In fact, the British officers branded him as a spy, as he stayed 12 years in India, studying Tibet's history. Doing so, he knew that the areas lying around the river Ganges and Delhi had once been under Tibet [8th century]. Likewise, the British knew about GC, studying all the languages and letters of the places he came across in India. So they put him on trial in their court [GC was never put on trial in British India. Amdo Champa's explanation for GC's arrest sounds very confused here].

What about GC's involvement in this political party in Kalimpong?

He didn't tell me anything about it. He said he was not into such activity and wasn't in their group. He only said that while in India for 12 years, he had been leading a very poor life. He had been even without a penny sometimes. Feeling sorry for his difficult condition, some people had even suggested him to take up a teaching job, since some schools were willing to pay him handsomely. But he didn't take a heed to that offer, because if he had taken that profession he would not have been able to do his research on Tibet's history, he would have been busy teaching. While in India, he was called Mahapandita GC [See interview: Gurung Gyalsay]

Did GC tell you about the coming of the Red Chinese to Tibet?

I cannot tell you in the correct sequence, however, I will tell you, whatever I remember, picking from here and there. I remember him telling me that the stone pillar in front of the Potala Palace [the Shol pillar] was invaluable. He said that the pillar is very important for Tibet. Even if we happened to cover this pillar with gold from all the sides, still it would not be adequate to reimburse the gratitude we should feel for this pillar [the inscriptions on the pillar indicate that Tibet had once received a tribute from China, 8th century]. He opined that the Tibetans never really knew, how important the pillar was. Some people even used to hit stones at the pillar and made holes that spoilt the letters on it. These days a barbed fence surrounded the pillar. Earlier, some irresponsible youths used to throw stones at the pillar and made holes, thus many important letters got disfigured [GC mentions this problem in one of his essays on Tibetan history. Otherwise the pillar is very grateful to Tibet.

He once cited the example that Tibet was like a bowl of vegetable, placed on a square table. Four spoons were put in the bowl. Each person at the table was ready to pick up the spoon and eat the vegetables from the bowl. He assumed that in the case of Tibet someone would definitely pick up the spoon and eat the vegetables. He also presumed that the Chinese would be the ones. At that time the Chinese have not reached Tibet yet. The Tibetans had only heard about some fighting in China, and had never imagined the Chinese coming to Tibet. GC also knew that an American Journalist had met with Mao Tsetung. GC said Mao was very clever and a cunning man, who knew to feign and pretend to live like those simple poor people. Those days Mao used to clad himself with patched clothes and wore a torn straw hat. GC said, all this was Mao's concocted life, as soon as he had the control of the land; he would surely change his attitude, because the Chinese loved a luxurious life [Amdo Champa seems to be talking about the time just before the Chinese Revolution in 1949]. At the same time, the condition of the Tibetan government was weak, as the Dalai Lama was still very young and didn't know much. He was surrounded by elders and was completely fenced off [from life and politics]. Since he was only a child, he wouldn't know anything. Though there were many wise, intelligent and bright people, they wouldn't get any chance to rise up and gain power. Those in power would never let those bright persons to rise in power. As long as this situation didn't change, Tibet, as a nation wouldn't exist more than four, maybe five years, GC said.

TAPE 2

Why did GC drink so much after his release?

When GC was imprisoned on the British allegations Kapshopa was a minister in the Cabinet [Kashag]. GC always said that his arrest was all Kapshopa's doing. Only few, including Kapshopa, knew the real reason for his captivity. Other than them [the members of the Cabinet], very few knew of his captivity [See interview: Tashi Pelra, Lobsang Dekyi]. GC felt very sad and unhappy after his time in prison. He felt that he would die anyway. He felt that they would kill him anyhow. So he started drinking and smoking. Gradually he started cracking up mentally [See interview: Tseten Yudron].

Personally, I think that he was a very interesting man. He had a very strange personality, though. He was never overly self-conscious. He didn't care, what people would say about him. He was not afraid of being ashamed. He didn't give a damn of what the people's stature was. For instance, one day he was invited to a party, organized by the treasurer of the government [See above]. There, the aristocrats were seated according to their stature. Since the *Kalons* [ministers] were the highest among the aristocrats, they were seated at the top. GC dressed up for the occasion and took his wife, Tseten Yudron along with him, saying that there would be a feast, although she was very reluctant to go, since she was unused going to big parties. He convinced her, saying that, since he was invited he could take her along, too. There were so many people at the gathering. As they were going to their seats, an attendant stopped Tseten Yudron, saying, as she was only a commoner, she couldn't join GC at his seat among the aristocrats. At first, GC was ignorant of the fact that she was stopped. He went ahead to his seat, without looking back, thinking that Tseten Yudron was right behind him. He was seated among the Cabinet members. There were four

Cabinet members and several other dignitaries seated near him. After the show [dances], the lunch was served. The food was delicious and he called out for his wife to taste it. But he couldn't find her. Then he asked loudly, where she was, and when told that she was seated far behind, he demanded that she be brought immediately near him. The attendants had to bring her up near him. Those seated in front of GC were all important persons, but it seemed their presence didn't matter a bit to him. For him only the food and his Tseten Yudron mattered. He could only see his wife. He was ignorant of other's presence. That kind of nature is really strange. He was not bothered at all about those people's presence. Either he was a person without any feelings or a very sophisticated person. He didn't have any sort of self-consciousness. For him only Tseten Yudron mattered. It would be one thing if she had been beautiful, but on the contrary, she was an ugly girl. Asking her to be brought up in front of all the important persons was really strange and later, when I told others of his behavior, people really felt that his behavior was strange. Normally, when people are in front of important persons, they tend to be nervous and kind of shrink away. But GC didn't see them as important persons, let alone being nervous of them. Whenever he came in front of any important person, he would simply light up his cigarette and ignore them completely. But with the simple common people, he really opened up. He used to share his food, talk a lot and joke with them [See interview: Tseten Yudron].

What about the incidence, when GC was poking his cigarette in the face of Lord Buddha?

That was true. Between the time of his return to Tibet from India and before his imprisonment [1946], there was a lot of talk going on about his change of ideas [Other sources claim that this incident took place, after his release from prison, between 1949-51, see interview: Thubten Wangpo]. People used to say that GC was so popular among the educated for his hold on the Buddhist philosophy before he left for India. But then, his faith had been diluted. GC was at the time staying at Amdo Penpa's house. The house is no longer there anymore. Some *geshes* [scholars] from Drepung came to know of GC's whereabouts and four of them, Gyalrong Kyorpon, Tsekhang Lama, Minyak Kyorpon and one professor of astrology from the Lhasa Medical School, who was renowned for his knowledge, went to see GC to test his faith. That year, you have to know, the rain didn't fall and the country was facing a severe drought. All the reservoirs in Lhasa had dried up, and four to five monks prayed next to each reservoir for rain. As the four *geshes* from Drepung entered the house of Amdo Penpa, GC was coming down from the terrace. When he saw them coming, he kept looking at them, without saying a word, feeling they must have come for him. Then he went inside his room. When they came to his room, they noticed that there were very few things in the room. A carpet was laid on the floor. Other than that there was nothing, except for a copper idol of Lord Buddha and a book on top of a box of the Holy Scripture. GC at once sat near the box and didn't utter a word to them. He just ignored them. Meanwhile the *geshes* found a place to sit; some sat on the carpet and some on a chair. There was not a single word exchanged between them. GC lighted a cigarette and kept smoking. After a while, GC said the draught had really dried up the sky that year. The four monks agreed that the draught had really been very bad that year, and that they had never experienced such a draught before. He retorted with a cynical laugh that this draught was the sign of lack of cause and effect, because during the draught, there were 5 to 6 monks doing prayers at all the reservoirs in Lhasa, but still the rain wouldn't fall. The prayers should have caused the rain to fall, but there was no rain, therefore, it

was a sign of lack of cause and effect. When GC said that, Minyak Kyorpon expressed his disagreement and asked GC not to use the 'cause and effect concept' for the draught. While he was speaking, GC blew some smoke from his cigarette at the idol of Lord Buddha. As soon as he saw that, Minyak Kyorpon exclaimed that a cigarette is the dirtiest among the things we take, and the fact, that a learned person like GC blew the smoke in the face of Lord Buddha, was totally wrong. Again GC laughed at him and said, when we were in Drepung monastery; we had been in the same class [See interviews: Alak Yongtsin, Alak Chongsay]. Already then, you were a poser! Today, you still don't know anything. – You have to understand [Amdo Champa talks to us], that Minyak Kyorpon was very learned and had obtained the first position for his *Geshe Lharampa* [a kind of Buddhist doctorate] degree. Later he studied Tantra and here too, he had obtained the highest degree. Later he was the *Lama Umtse* [The Head Chanter] of Gyuto and would probably move on to become *Ganden Tripa* [The Head of the Gelugpa, selected for his vast knowledge] – GC told him that even after obtaining all these degrees and very good positions, he still was feeling that Minyak Kyorpon knew nothing. The smoke blown in Lord Buddha's face was his offering for the Lord. Sakya Pandita had once said that the best among offerings was the things one liked the most. Thus, GC said, he had offered the smoke to the Lord. He would even offer *chang* [beer] to the Lord. But that day, he didn't have any *chang*. Sometimes, when he bought *chang*, he used to put the statue of the Lord Buddha in the pot of *chang*. So, when he offered the smoke to the Lord, from his side, he meant to offer his best. From the Lord's side also, he would accept it in the best intentions, rather than consider the smoke as a dirty element [See interview: Golok Jigme] GC exclaimed to Minyak Kyorpon that his head was balding with age and still he didn't know anything and still he would dream of becoming the *Ganden Tripa*. GC said Minyak Kyorpon should feel ashamed of it.

GC passed away in August 1951. The dates were clearly stated in Horkhang's book [Horkhang Sonam Penbar]. GC suffered from oedema, and his whole body was swelled up. He visited the Medical Institute and started taking Tibetan medicines. That was the time, when the Chinese first came to Tibet [1950/51]. When he took those medicines, the swelling subsided. But the next day again his body swelled up. The medicines from the Medical Institute started losing effect. One day he said to me, the pain was unbearable and he wanted to have a divination done. He asked me if I knew somebody, who could it. When I said I knew someone, he asked me, who this person was. I said it was Tewa Kangyur Rinpoche. Then I asked GC if I should go to the Kangyur Rinpoche for the divination, to which he agreed, saying the Rinpoche was the best one in Lhasa for it. So I went there, and told the Rinpoche about GC's illness and asked the Rinpoche, whether GC would recover soon or whether there was any threat to his life. The Rinpoche said there was no use for the divination, as GC did not have any believe in him, and even if he did, GC wouldn't believe him. I told the Rinpoche that GC certainly believed in him, and also told him that GC purposely sent me to him. I requested him to see if there was any threat to GC's life and what prayers should be done for his recovery. Only after my explanations did he do the divination. According to his divination, the Rinpoche said, there wasn't any threat to his life. He said it would be helpful to recite the *Kyabdro* and to light some butter lamps at the Ramoche temple that night. I returned home and informed GC of the Rinpoche's advice. GC immediately called for Tseten Yudron and told her to melt the butter, brought by Horkhang Sonam Penbar, and to fill all the butter lamps at Ramoche temple that night. He

even asked for my rosary and recited the *Kyabdro* some fifty or sixty times, and then returned the rosary back to me. Even though I urged him to recite some more, he wouldn't heed my advice, saying, spirituality has the characteristic of limitation. He said, prayers should be limited, and if done more than necessary, it was not good. – That is one episode, I experienced with GC.

Again the next day, when I went to meet GC, his condition had worsened. His whole body had swelled up. He could not move by himself. When he wanted to sit on the porch in the sun, he had to be lifted by four people. We sat together on the porch in the sun and he was his usual self – good humored and jolly and there was no sense of pain. When we were alone outside, he asked if he would recover from his illness or not. I told him, he would definitely get well, saying it was only a minor ailment, nothing serious. When the water comes out, you will be all right. He laughed it off, saying he would never get well. I argued, there was no reason, why he wouldn't get well. His disease was just a water disease and when the water comes out, also the disease was gone. He disagreed. He said he was very fortunate to have this disease. Only fortunate people would get this ailment. It is not easy to get this water disease. You have to pray for it. I never prayed for it, and still I got it. Once the scholars at Ganden monastery [southeast of Lhasa], used to pray to die from a water disease. Since I got the disease, without praying for it even once, I am very fortunate. When asked, why the scholars used to pray for water disease, he reasoned that, since water had the characteristic of coolness, water was the symbol of purity. So, when you die, your body gradually loses its heat and begins to shine. He said, the people who died of water disease, would have a clear conscience. Their mind was very clear. There was no impurity. The mind would be concentrated. The mind would be steady and very clear. Whatever you pray for, when the mind was clear, would be fulfilled. When I agreed that the water disease was not easy to get, he laughed at me. I asked him if he was feeling much pain. The pain was there only seldom. Normally, there isn't much pain. He said he could sleep well at night. That was one day, but the next day GC told me that his ailment had grown worse. He inquired me if there was heaven. I was puzzled and asked him, why he was asking me, being a scholar himself. He insisted and asked me, what I think about heaven. I told him it must be there, since details about heaven were mentioned in all the Buddhist scriptures, as well as in history books. GC said all right if heaven really existed, then he would definitely go there. When I asked, whether he had the confidence that he would go there, he said yes, saying that only the wise go to heaven and not the fools. Since he was a wise man, he believed he would go there. Those were the last talks we had before his death. Now, when I recall what he said on his deathbed, I find truth in it. Unlike others, who insist on praying, GC never prayed, even through his last days – and I was with him most of the time. One of the last days he said he was feeling very sad. He said, he wasn't afraid of death as such, but felt a great sense of loss, when he thought that all his knowledge would wither away. He said, since he was very knowledgeable, his knowledge would fall apart after his death. His observations were very sound. I surmise the observations might be of a very learned person.

Where were you when he died?

I was in Lhasa. When he died, I wasn't at his house. When I went to his house, he was already dead. When he died it was like any commoner, otherwise, some high lama's die in a sitting position. Unlike commoners, many lamas die in different positions [See interview: Akhu Lama Tsering].

How did you learn about GC's death?

I went to his house the previous day, but left early. He had died on that very night. When I went to see him, he had died already. After his death, people from Lhubum Khangtsen [his former college in Drepung monastery] had come to his house. At that moment Horkhang was not there. He had already left for Chamdo. A simple funeral service was arranged by Lhubum Khangtsen and led by a monk named Jamyang. The service was not as grand, as suited to his stature as a renowned personality. His body was then destroyed like others [indicating that there was a sky burial. But in fact, GC was cremated], but his skull was taken by Namshar's personal assistant Sodor [?]. Sodor has passed away now, and GC's skull is no more there [See interview: Horkhang Jampa Tendar, Tseten Yudron, Akhu Lama Tsering].

Do you still have more to tell us?

That's almost it. These are only brief stories on GC. There are still lots more to tell, but most are regarding philosophy etc. What I told you just now was just a brief part of our daily activities. There are many tales of GC's travel to Burma and Sri Lanka, but that is too long to be told... [Amdo Champa would only know from GC's books and/or from hearsay].

Once he told me that we would like to go to Lhasa with me, disguised as beggars to beg for *Tsampa*. He was fond of imitating the beggars and poor people. He asked me, whether I could beg if we really went for begging, to which I replied that I couldn't. He said he knew from whom to borrow the begging bowl. He would also borrow those pointed hats and then wrap the head completely. He said we would have lots of fun while begging. He said if we went to the East of Lhasa, we would reach the house of the Secretary Sodor [See above] and said, we must beg from them. Sodor would certainly give us some *tsampa* [barley flour], but we would then plead for even more, but Sodor wouldn't give us more. So, we would still plead for more and then Sodor would scold us. He said that would be great fun! So he wanted us to go for begging. I asked him if he really meant it, and he said he was very sure of it. However, that idea didn't really work out, it vanished, either we didn't want to go or what ever...

Then one day again, he said we would go begging. We would take plastic bags that the beggars and the pilgrims from Kham would take to carry their *tsampa* and other small utensil. He said it would be of great fun to beg *tsampa* and prepare tea. But we couldn't do so. He liked the life style of the beggars and the poor people. He was not concerned and didn't appreciate the life style of the rich. He liked mingling with the poor and talking about them. He would never avoid and look down upon them. That was his nature. Basically he was a very well natured, trustworthy and straightforward person. But he wouldn't believe, whatever was told to him. He would say that we Tibetans do not know how to judge. Tibetans do not know, when to tell the truth and when to lie, whereas the foreigners do. If we ask a foreigner about his

livelihood, he would tell you the truth. When asked about certain facts, they would answer straight away. If we try to fool them, they would immediately know. Whatever we ask them, they would reply accordingly. Unlike the foreigners, we Tibetans weren't straightforward. When required to retaliate, we did not have the guts. So that was, what we lacked. He would always say such things. But he was a very sincere person. He would never cheat or fool anyone.

Was GC interested in women?

He was interested in prostitution, in couples, and the physical aspects of the female body. GC had written the book 'Tibetan Art Of Love Making'. The book was sort of a compilation of his own experiences. He was very fond of women, irrespective of their beauty and age. That was his nature. He would say that even a woman of seventy or eighty years would suffice for him. Sometimes, when he got drunk in the evening, he would insist for a woman to be brought. Even when told it was almost dawn and there would be no women around, except for the old beggars, who slept outside the Tsuglakhang [Jokhang Temple], he would ask for one and stressed his need. No one would bring any female, though he insisted. GC said that once during a Women's Conference [I wonder, where this was happening?], the agenda was on how to drive pleasure from sexual intercourse. The women discussed on this topic. All women expressed their ideas. Some said they enjoy, when men are handsome. Some said they enjoy, when a man takes time to ejaculate, while some said they enjoy, when the man ejaculates quickly. Some preferred young men, but for some, age didn't matter, as long as the penis was in good shape. So those women stated their views. And there was also a French lady at the conference. She said her husband was a handsome and nice man. They never used to have intercourse in the night, because they chose to have it in the afternoon, after their lunch. She said they used to sleep completely naked and indulge into foreplay before the intercourse. Then when the husband was fully excited and about to penetrate, she would push him back, refusing to let him penetrate. Again, they would repeat the foreplay and when he couldn't control himself anymore, she would let him penetrate. That was what she felt was the best way to enjoy sex. Everybody liked this idea and a resolution was passed, accepting it as the best way to enjoy an intercourse [this much to the growing legend around GC].

Many considered GC to have been a very learned man?

I have my own judgment. According to me I think he excelled in all the fields. He was exceptionally good in the Buddhist philosophy and the rituals of it. Besides, he was also good in all sorts of art. He was good at drawing. His portrait drawing was good, too. Even though he didn't have much practice. He used to tell me that if I was doing a portrait, I should first take a look at the man's expression and only then focus and start to paint the portrait. He said that by focusing on the first glimpse of a man's expression, it would bring out the best of the person to be portrait. He said one should focus on the man's expression, his fluffy hair, his thin face, or his fat body. He further told me that drawing of an old man is different from a young man. The colors used for each are different. For the old man, more of the red color should be used to give better appearance of his oldness. Whereas for the young man, more of the green color should be used to give him the touch of being young. When GC was at the Labrang monastery [1920's] his tutor was Alak Gungthang. Once GC had painted his tutor's portrait. He said, he couldn't draw the portrait by looking at

his tutor; instead he visualized the man in his mind after studying his features, and only then put it on the drawing paper. His portrait of Alak Gungthang was much appreciated by others, due to its likeliness [I never heard this story before, and with Amdo Champa being a painter himself, I'm wondering, whether he rather talks about himself, than GC].

HORKHANG JAMPA TENDAR

***Recorded on the 8th of September 1999 in Lhasa.***

Born in the late 1940's in Chamdo, Eastern Tibet (Kham), where his father, Horkhang Sonam Penbar (a close friend of GC's), was stationed as a commander of the Tibetan army. As small child he was an eyewitness of the attack of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) on Chamdo in 1950. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) he worked as teacher and translator in the Tibetan countryside. He later returned to Lhasa, where he worked together with his father on several cultural projects. Among them was the compilation of GC's collected works, which were published 1990 in Lhasa: 'dGe-'dun chos-'phel gyi gsung rtsom. 3 Vols.' Since the death of his father, he is now in charge of the family's archive and photos. He recently published a book with the biography and selected texts and articles of his father. He lives in Lhasa. Tibetan, not in the film.

Horkhang-la basically spoke without me (and Yangdon Dhondup) asking too many questions. We would throw in key words at times and he picked them up to continue his speech:

Today you have come here to interview me about GC. Since my father [Horkhang Sonam Penbar] and GC had a lot of interaction, you ask me if I know a little bit about GC. I will tell you whatever I know. My name is Bhu Jampa Tendar. My father was Horkhang Sonam Penbar. I have two sisters. I am the youngest son. My parents had only one son. My mother is the daughter of Tsangpa Nampu Shey. Her name is Dolma Yangzom. I have three children, one son and two daughters. The two daughters are married and live separately from us. I am retired now. The government gives me monthly pension. The children are employed and have no livelihood problem. I am happy.

I read religious scriptures at home. Before his death, my father asked me to make efforts to compile and publish his book [his biography]. This was his last wish or request to me. That's why I am making efforts to compile and publish his book. I have no other work to do now.

To tell you about GC: I met him only once. That was in 1951, when I was very young. I was born in 1945. My father first met GC in 1945 [it must have been 1946, because they met after GC had returned to Lhasa]. Geshe Chodrak introduced my father to GC [Geshe Chodrak knew GC from there time in Drepung monastery]. Geshe Chodrak was my father's teacher. He told my father that GC had come to Lhasa. 'You are interested in learning Tibetan. You can also learn some English from him. If you want to improve your literacy, you must invite GC to your home' He introduced my father to GC. Then my father invited GC home. My father and GC knew each other then. In the beginning they did not talk much. GC told my father about his wish to write a history book [The White Annals]. He asked my father to help with that. My father agreed. As time passed, they became closer and finally they became teacher and

student. They became life-long friends. My father did everything he could to help GC with his history book. They went together to Ramagang and studied the stone pillar, jotted down the pillar's text to serve as historical research material [the inscriptions date back to the 8th century]. Then they rode around the Tsangpo River – the new bridge did not exist then. Then GC started writing the 'White Annals'. My father told me that GC had thought up the title by himself. My father was then the Rupon, the captain of the Body Guards Regiment [of the Dalai Lama]. He had to live inside the Norbulingka premises, where he had been allotted a residence. He invited GC to live and work at his Norbulingkha residence, as it was a quiet place. GC agreed. My father had a servant at his residence in Norbulingkha. The servant served tea and did other chores for GC. GC started writing the history book at my father's residence in Norbulingkha. My father had to go frequently to Norbulingkha for his duty. There he often met GC and talked. One day they went up to Shol. There was another old stone pillar in Shol [with old inscriptions, dating back to the 8th century]. They spent a long time reading the text of the stone pillar. Many curious people came to look at them. GC told my father, 'Let's go now. Let's not stay here now. Now there will be obstacles to my project of writing the history'. He said this many times. 'In the past, when I went to *Toed* [?], my dreams and other indications showed that there would be obstacles to the project of my history book', GC told my father. They came back that evening and went to our place, he returned to his residence in Lhasa. The next day, the local government arrested GC. That morning Rakra Rinpoche [Horkhang Sonam Penbar's cousin from the Tethong family] sent a note to my father, informing him that GC had been arrested the previous night. Rakra Rinpoche wanted to know what could be done now. GC, he said, had been accused for forging Tibetan currency notes. GC was not a person, who would do such a bad thing. My father made efforts. He went to the magistrate Tashi Pelra [who arrested GC] to find out the facts. Tashi Pelra said this: 'This is the responsibility given to us by the Kashag' [the Tibetan Cabinet]. He said nothing about the detention and charges against GC. Then they came back. Tibet was then ruled by Taktra Rinpoche [the Regent]. The Kalons [ministers] were Rampa, Surkhang, Kapshopa and Phunkhang. We are related to the Surkhang family. Then Rakra and my father divided the tasks. They worked very hard to clear GC of the charges and get him released. Rakra approached Rampa. They must have been related. I am not sure of this. He approached Rampa and my father Surkhang. Phunkhang was also approached through someone else. The Kalons unanimously said that Rakra and my father should not get involved in this or this business would ultimately wipe out the Horkhang and Tethong families. My father said this to me. He has written it in the book also [the biography referred to earlier]. Then they became helpless. GC was detained on the upper floor of Nangtseshag [the office of the Lhasa magistrate at backside of the Jokhang Temple], in the room facing east. Rakra Rinpoche and my father bribed the guards and managed to send in whatever food GC wanted [See interview: Lobsang Dekyi, the sister of Rakra]. GC's favorite item was cigarettes. They sent him cigarettes. The history book remained incomplete. My father and GC communicated secretly by passing notes to each other. My father asked him what should be done about the history project. GC replied, 'I have completed three chapters already. But now the project has met with obstacles. I have reached the end of this project.' He asked my father to complete the book. My father used to say that GC would write on anything, including matchboxes [and cigarette wrappers]. Unlike us, he would not write on full pages. The facilities in the prison were not good. My father preserved all the notes that GC had written on scraps of paper. We still have some of

them. He wrote three letters to my father [See: letters from prison]. The letters talked about how the history book should be completed. The second point was a big request. He said that he had dreamed twice in prison that my father would complete his history book [The White Annals]. The first dream was auspicious, while the second was ordinary one [see: letters from prison]. As I reflect on his words in these letters today, I think this was GC's prophecy. All his notes were lost for some time [they were confiscated upon his arrest]. My father managed to collect and make them available to all [Horkhang published GC's collected works in three volumes in Lhasa, 1990].

To tell you what my father told me about the 'White Annals': There are many books on the history of Tibetan *religion*. But they are written in a flowery language and talk a lot about the spiritual doctrines and miracles. Ordinary readers would not understand them. Many historical facts are mixed up with spiritual phenomena. These books do not give clear *historical* facts. GC based his book on materials unearthed in the [Buddhist] caves of Dunhuang [in the northwest of China, today Xinjiang province]. GC's book is clear and factual. His made a great contribution to the posterity. My father said this to me. Now what happened to the 'White Annals'? GC was still in prison, when my father went to Chamdo [in East-Tibet]. My father then entrusted the work of wood-block carving, printing, etc to Geshe Chodrak. Geshe Chodrak completed this work. He was able to carve the wood blocks. Because of the obstacles, only three chapters [of this Tibetan history] were written [indicating that more was planned].

GC was my father's teacher and closest friend till the end of his life. My father made all efforts to fulfill the wish of GC [to publish the White Annals]. I will not talk much about this. I will switch over to the second point. I met GC only once. I remember it clearly. When Chamdo was being liberated, my father was there. I must have been about 7 years old. My memory of that time is not very clear. I vividly remember how Chamdo was liberated [by the Chinese in 1950], how we escaped. GC was still in prison, when Chamdo was being liberated [in fact GC had already been released in 1949]. Chamdo was liberated in 1950. We had gone to Chamdo in 1947. My father was the treasurer of the Chamdo army. He went there as Lhalu's staff [the Governor of Chamdo]. We spent about four years in Chamdo. I must have been one year, two years by the Tibetan system, when we went to Chamdo. I don't remember anything about this. We returned to Lhasa in the third moon of 1951. At that time, GC was in Lhasa. It seems my father invited GC for meals several times. He wanted to come up. He was not well then. Alcohol had ruined his health. One day my father invited GC. He replied that he would surely come up. My father told me this story. At that time, I was a small child and living at the Horkhang house in Lhasa. I went to the Tibetan school. The PLA [People's Liberation Army] had most probably reached Lhasa by then. When we first came to Lhasa from Chamdo, the PLA had not reached there. They had only reached Kongpo Gyamdha then. It was probably the time when they were signing the peace agreement [with the Tibetan government]. After the agreement, the PLA came to Lhasa. One day GC came. I did not know him. I was only a child then. A man, wrapped in a blanket, came to our house. He looked ill. I asked our servant, Tashi Paljor, who that man was. Being a son of an aristocrat, I had a servant then [laughs]. He said the man was Amdo GC. He was wearing yellow Indian shoes. The shoes were old. His trouser color was like that [points to his trousers]. He was wearing a shirt inside. On top of that he had a blue Indian blanket,

which he had wrapped around him like a monk's shawl. His hair was not cut; it was too long, reaching up to here. He had long hair. He did not look well at all. My father and he spent a long time talking on the upper floor of our house. They spent the whole day there. I was a little child then. We went to the room, where they were talking. We played, slept, looked around. Being a child, I did not take interest in their conversation. Around mid-day they took photographs. My father had a camera. He took a picture of GC. Then he took a photo of me with GC. My father treasured these photos until the time of the Cultural Revolution. There were vigorous campaigns during the Cultural Revolution. They asked my father about his relationship with GC and Geshe Chodrak. Our family was afraid and burnt the photos. Later, my father missed those photos. Those were the last photos taken of GC. I searched for the negatives, but could not find them. I regret their loss. Really.

We reached Lhasa in the third moon of 1951. GC passed away around 4 pm on the 14th day of the eighth moon in 1951. He died after his release from prison. He died in the agriculture office building, known as Gurushar. He had taken up residence there. It seems my father was with him, when he died [GC died alone, he was found dead in his room in the morning]. Before his death, he had told his wife, Tseten Yudron [See: interview with her], that the metal boxes containing his documents was his fortune. He had asked Yudron to give the box to my father, Horkhang Sonam Penbar. The box was brought to our home before his death. My father had the boxes till the Cultural Revolution. Before that GC had given the Tibetan government, whatever documents they asked for [his notes and documents were confiscated against GC's will]. The government retained them. The documents were lost during the Cultural Revolution. This is the story of that time [1950's]. This is the story of what I saw. I feel privileged to have met such a learned person. He was fond of me. He asked my father if I was his son. My father said, 'Yes, this is my son.' GC stroked my hair, calling me Sey Kuchok. This is all I remember. I don't remember anything else of their conversation, since I was young then.

While he was in prison, Rakra Rinpoche and my father sent in all the food that he liked. They bribed the prison guards. He sent three letters to my father. My father kept all those letters. They are still with me. He wrote very clearly in his letter that he had been falsely charged, that he had worked for the wellbeing of Tibet and that the future generation would see this [See: letters from prison]. GC talked about one auspicious dream and one ordinary dream concerning my father in these letters. My father did not ask what dreams they were. He hoped that my father would complete his history book. All the letters are here. You can read these letters later if you want. I don't have to tell you the details now. The letters clearly mention everything. Now, as I contemplate on his talk of the auspicious dream, I realize that the history text was carved on wood blocks and served as basis for all Tibetologists. Secondly, towards the end of his life, my father managed to collect all the documents that had been lost during the Cultural Revolution. More particularly, the government, and people like Lhakpa Phuntsok of the Department of Social Studies in Lhasa, now he is chairman, Dorje Tsering and others supported the work of my father, as a result of which my father was able to fulfill his wish. Three books have been published [in three volumes, 1990]. This probably must have something to do with the auspicious dream of GC. The ordinary dream refers to the fact that many documents were completely lost. I think GC prophesized the future.

Secondly, my father supported the history book project of GC, because he was himself interested in Tibetan culture right from a young age. Unlike other aristocrats, my father took immense interest in Tibetan studies right from a young age. My aunt and relatives told me that my father would memorize the Sakya Lekshey text early in the morning and that he was very keen on learning and read a lot of books on Tibetan political and religious history. These are works of great Tibetan scholars. But they are a bit too spiritually inclined and had the disadvantage not being able to tell the *factual* history of Tibet clearly [To this point, see GC's texts on Tibetan history]. GC was the first scholar who based his history of Tibetan kings on the Dunhuang documents. His book tells the old history of Tibet clearly. So my father supported it. My father wanted a history book, in which the facts were not obscured by religious overtones. That's why he supported GC's project.

Reflecting on my father's words and his works on GC's life [he had published a biography of GC as early as 1983], it seems that GC had been connected to Rapga Pangdatsang [talking about GC involvement in the Tibetan Revolutionary Party in Kalimpong, 1945]. The British interfered. He was falsely accused [See interview: Hugh Richardson]. The real reason was his strong democratic and revolutionary ideas. I think he was imprisoned because of this. But the charge against him was of forging Tibetan currency notes. This is what my father told me. GC had traveled to foreign countries [only to India] and read a lot of books. He was a progressive man who wanted Tibet to change. My father said that GC had progressive ideas, that he believed that Tibet must change and that the old social system [in Tibet] should not remain unchanged.

GC was a great scholar, who loved his motherland [geographical Tibet], his nationality [being a Tibetan] and its culture. That's why he saw that it would not be good for the old social system to remain unchanged. Whatever the case may be, GC's charge was that of forging Tibetan currency notes. But the real reason for his arrest was the suspicion that he in collaboration with Rapga Pangdatsang had formed a revolutionary organization. Hugh Richardson and others got him arrested. That's what my father said.

About GC's drinking and smoking problem, my father said this. His students, who wanted to learn from him, ruined GC. They gave him drinks. He was unhappy those days. They ruined a kind man [See interview: Tseten Yudron]. GC started drinking in prison. Before that he did not drink much [See interview: Golok Jigme]. Of course, he was fond of smoking. He smoked a lot, but did not drink all that much. After his release from prison, his students gave him drinks. He was a highly learned man and talked more after drinking. That's why they gave him drinks to make him talk more. What kind of method is this!?! They gave him drinks, and he uttered the words of wisdom. Otherwise, he did not speak much, it seems. This is how some students ruined his health. My father told me this. Although they claimed to be his students, they were not his true well-wishers. They visited him in prison to extract knowledge from him. They brought him drinks. GC seemed to speak out frankly, when he was drunk. This was a trick to extract knowledge of him. After that, he developed drinking problems [I personally doubt the rationale of this story. I believe that GC had a drinking problem on his own, for whatever reason]. Secondly, there were people who said that GC was mad, that he was a womanizer, that he smoked, that he had no scruples

and no faith in religion, etc. I heard some people say this. But my father strongly disagreed. My father said that GC on the outside appeared like this sort of person; but that at the bottom heart he had a lot of faith in the Buddha and that his faith was unswerving [See interviews: Tseten Yudron, Amdo Champa, Thubten Wangpo and Golok Jigme].

It seems the books written by Westerners on GC are not clear on the time of his death. My father told me clearly about this, because he was with GC at the time of his death. The Drungyig Chenmo [a monk official], my father and Lachung Apo worked together to organize the prayers after his death. He died in his residence at Gurushar, the house of the agriculture department. The Tibetan government had allotted this house to GC. He died after his release from prison. His wife, Tseten Yudron, was with him at the time of his death [she wasn't, see interview with her]. He died on the 14th day of the eighth moon in 1951. The time was around 4 pm Tibetan time. In those days, we followed the Tibetan standard time, not the present Beijing standard time. My father told me that he was perfectly sure of the time of GC's death. Some writers have got the details wrong. My father knows this, because he was fond of keeping journals in the past. My father had forgotten the date at one time. But later he consulted his journals and got the date right. He happily told me that he had got the right date. We came to Lhasa in the third moon of 1951. Since then, my father interacted with GC for some five months: the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and then GC died in the eighth moon.

The second reason, why I know a bit about GC is this. In the past I was only a small child. On top of that, I did not take much interest in these things. What really happened is this. From 1951 onwards I saw GC's books and learned a bit about him. From 1951 onwards I developed a deep respect for him through my father. This is because, ever since GC's death, my father had a wish to write his life story. But circumstances, and his busy schedule prevented him from fulfilling his wish. On the one hand, my father worked for the Tibetan local government. Secondly, he taught at the Tibet government employees' academy. He had to travel on behalf of the Tibetan local government. So he was busy every day. Secondly, the 1959 rebellion [against the Chinese invaders] broke out [leading to the escape of the Dalai Lama to India]. Then there was the democratic reform. That's why the changing situation prevented my father from fulfilling his wish. Then the Cultural Revolution came [1966-76]. All the documents, which GC had asked his wife to give to my father, saying that those were his fortune, were searched and lost. He had no material to write the life story then. My father was heart-broken and probably thought he would not be able to write the biography of GC. Because of this he would not write it. Then there was the liberalization [after the death of Mao in 1976. In Tibet the opening only began in the early 1980's]. The Gang of Four was smashed. The new Policy implementation took effect. The documents, which had been confiscated by the Bureau in the past, were returned to their owners. Although some of the documents were lost, there were still some to start on. My father now got new courage to fulfill his wish to write the life story of GC. Secondly, many research works on GC [beginning in the late 1970's] and Tibetology were published abroad. My father read them [Horkhang read and spoke English fluently]. He found that some of them did not tell the truth, others contained only praises and failed to portray GC's real life, while others claimed that he was deeply spiritual, but failed to show his other achievements clearly. That's why

my father thought that, since he had the materials, he must write the life story of GC. He had wanted to write the life story of GC since 1951. At that time [1980's], I worked in the government office. I was a translator in the Tibet Translation Bureau. My father and me lived as one family then. My father was employed in the Political Consultative Committee [an institution, founded in the 1980's by the Chinese government, to re-integrate the nobility and former dignitaries into their ruling system]. He worked at this committee. But during his free time, he wrote the life history of GC. He was very meticulous in writing. He consulted a lot of people and asked them, whether he got his facts right. Altogether, he wrote the manuscript 15 times. My contribution to this work was to copy his drafts in my handwriting. I could write fast. I copied what my father wrote. My father would read, what I had copied, he then made further corrections. Altogether, he corrected it 20 or 30 times. Finally, in 1983, it was published as a research work on GC. My father had some problem in writing it between 1981 and 1983. However, he received the support of the heads of the 'Tibetan Academy of Social Studies', Dorje Tsering and Lhakpa Phuntsok. They said research on GC was being done abroad, and that someone in Tibet should research GC's life, since it was his birthplace after all, and that Tibet was where the information originated, and that if Tibet did not produce clear information, GC's biography would be incomplete, etc. That's why the authorities entrusted my father with the work of writing GC's biography. They asked my father to take on this work. They approved of the project and supported my father's work. This is how his wish was fulfilled.

All the materials of GC were then collected. With the support of the 'Tibetan Academy of Social Studies' and the 'Publishing House', he was able to correct his manuscript several times. They took the responsibility for its publication. It is the efforts of my father's life. This is a gift to the people of Tibet and to posterity in general. As I copied my father's manuscript, I learned a lot about GC. What he did was not an easy thing. Thereafter, I started reading all of GC's works. But I am not a highly learned person, and therefore can't really understand the depth of his works. GC was not to be trifled with. He cared for his motherland, his people, their religion and culture. I feel sad that he was falsely charged and punished in the old society. If he had lived slightly longer and written slightly more, it would have been very useful. But many obstacles prevented this. Secondly, it is as they say: 'A precious vase of *bindruya*, was smashed on the rocks' [According to Rakra Rinpoche, this quote is actually of GC].

My father started writing the biography of GC in 1981. I had the good fortune of copying his manuscript several times. My father and I had been separated for almost 16 years, till 1981. I had spent 16 years working in Kham [East-Tibet, as part of a campaign to send young people to remote areas]. I came back to Lhasa in 1980. In 1965 I was sent to work in Kham. By 1980 I had worked with farmers and nomads in Kham for almost 16 years. Therefore, I did not get to spend much time with my parents. That was the time of the Cultural Revolution. *(Image 7: Horkhang's father and mother right after the Cultural Revolution, Lhasa late 1970's).*



Later, my father made efforts to secure me another job. This is how I managed to return to Lhasa. I copied my father's draft. My father made corrections and I copied them again. That left a deep impression in my mind. I read a few of GC's books. But his works are very deep and I am not well learned. That's why I could not understand very much. However, I did understand that he was a great scholar of Tibetan history and other disciplines. I understood that he was not an ordinary scholar. Secondly, I realized that he cared for his motherland, his country and people. Moreover, I felt sad that he had to suffer imprisonment and hardship in the old society. I wish he had not been jailed. I also wish he had been able to complete his history project [The White Annals]. But he had this obstacle [of being arrested and imprisoned]. It makes me sad. It really is as they say, 'A precious vase of *bindruya*, was smashed on the rocks'

I can't say much about the work of my father. I think it was a very important. I also think it was a very precious research work on what GC had left behind. There is a huge scope for research on this. Right now, researches on this subject [GC] are being done here in China. Also, extensive researches are conducted in foreign countries, on what GC had left behind. From this the researchers try to figure out, what his thoughts were. He was a patriot. He was a progressive. This is the conclusion of my father's first research. He said that GC definitely was a patriot with progressive ideas. If you ask me, what this is really all about, it is beneficial to the present society. If you ask me, why there should be more research in Tibetology, doing research on this is akin to valuing our own culture. Research on GC's works is worthwhile and valuable. I think it is very useful to do research in Tibetology.

To sum up, GC was a great Tibetan. Not only of Tibetology, he was an unparalleled scholar in every discipline of the 20th century. I feel fortunate that my father worked with him, and that I saw him myself. I respect him. I have immeasurable respect for GC. Honestly. This is a measure of what kind of person he was. When he was in prison, he gave the last part of the 'White Annals' to my father. There was one stanza there, which I will read out to you. This sums up everything.

The white rays of loyalty to my place and people

Exist inherently in the core of my heart.

To the ruler and people of my Snow Land

I will do whatever little service my ability permits.

This poetic composition clearly reflects what sort of person GC was. His achievement will never fade away. This is all I have to say.

Another thing, Geshe Chodrak [his father's teacher] has not plagiarized the Tibetan dictionary, as some foreigners have written. This was claimed by some people about Geshe Chodrak's dictionary. It was alluded that Geshe Chodrak plagiarized it from GC. This, my father said, was untrue. Geshe Chodrak and GC were friends. They must have discussed the contents of the dictionary. Naturally, they would have interacted. GC was a scholar. But the efforts were that of Geshe Chodrak himself. My father said that he saw this himself. Geshe Chodrak, he said, certainly did not plagiarize it from GC. There was this composition: 'The price of having eaten others' food for a long time.' This was actually written by GC.

GC composed this for Geshe Chodrak, my father said. But some people alluded to plagiarization [laughs]. My father had the wood blocks made for this dictionary. In the past, my father helped Geshe Chodrak in making these wood blocks. Before the before the Liberation [1951], my father was interested in these thing. He helped scholars a lot.

THUBTEN WANGPO

***Recorded on the 13th of September 1999 in Lhasa.***

Born 1931 in Lhasa. Met GC once in 1951 as a young intellectual. He was a teacher throughout his life. To his students he often quoted GC's writings. He is now retired, living in a residential area for Civil Servants behind the Potala Palace. Tibetan, in the film.

Please tell me your name and age?

My name is Thubten Wangpo. Normally people call me Thubwang. I am 68 years old.

Tell me about when you met GC for the first time.

I first met him in 1951. At that time I was young [20 years]. But during those times GC was known for his great scholarship and he was famous. Therefore, although I had thought that I could not ask him any questions, because at that time he was living like an insane person [See interviews: Amdo Champa, Tseten Yudron, Ju Kesang], but I had a strong desire to see him. So, I knew somebody who was close to me like a friend who used to go to GC to ask questions. One day, I pleaded him to take me with him and then we went together. I saw GC at that time. He was residing on the upper storey of what is now known as the *Gobeshang* in Lhasa. When I saw him, he had already started teaching... He had drunk whisky. It was early morning and he was wearing double blankets of Indian make. There was a tall porcelain cup in front of him. This, they later told me, was made in *Daknang* and was called a 'Dakkar', a Daknang porcelain cup. In it he was drinking his whisky already early in the morning. Many people were coming to ask him questions about the Dharma [about Buddhist philosophy and Buddha's teaching], etc. Some asked questions in English, others about history, poetry and so on... He was seated on a *kyongden* cushion. Whoever came, they had to sit in line. GC sat this way [TW shows us] and, one by one, the others asked their questions and he gave the answers. Then a next person posed question and he gave the answer. So, I something like that. Even at that time, his face had already swollen slightly [See interview: Amdo Champa]. If he didn't eat well, then his mind wasn't clear at all. So, it was like that. He was in that condition. That was the time, when I first saw him. After that I had thought that, because GC was such a knowledgeable person, I strongly wished to read his writings. In those times [1951], they weren't around to be seen. Once they were published, I read many of them and did research. But I never disclosed to anybody that I was researching on GC. Now, he has his own style of writing; then he has written about history. And in his accounts he mentions his pilgrimage to India, etc., and then his visit to Ceylon [Sri Lanka] and many of his translations of the Words of the Buddha, the Teacher. Having read them, I realized that in the past I had just heard about his scholarship, but had not known if it was real or not.

Except that I had thought that it was true I didn't know. But when I looked at his writings, he was incredibly knowledgeable.

I have been a schoolteacher my whole life. When I teach, I always tell the students that we must write our compositions like those of GC's. Why I say this is because, firstly, they are easily understandable. Then there is a depth in the contents and his poetic style. So if we could make our writings like that, then they would be counted as good compositions. Also, amongst his works there is one called 'Miscellaneous Writings' [in: Horkhang's three volume edition from Lhasa, 1990]. This contains GC's many different compositions written then and there on whatever he saw at the time of his writing. As I read them, some of them have always stuck to my memory. Even now I read them. I read his collected works over and over again. They are great masterpieces.

He passed away in the eighth month of 1951. But he has left a really great legacy for the Tibetan culture and tradition. Thus, at last, wishing to know about his early years, I started by asking about his life in Amdo [GC's home country in Northeast-Tibet, today Qinghai province] and the rest to people, who were familiar with him. These days I've asked them about his life in the monastery. Other than that, I had never been to GC to study Dharma, etc. I had that one opportunity to meet him. During that year, 1951, young people of 18, 19 or 20 years of age admired GC very much. Is it okay if I say just this much regarding his 'Collected Works' and my studies of them?

Please tell me why you went to see GC in 1951?

The reason why I went to GC was mainly because, at that time, he had become very famous. He had been imprisoned. He was extremely learned and a great artist, too. Even in prison he was known to have made many paintings. So, in those days he was very famous. Therefore, since I had heard about his fame, I grew a desire to meet him in person. Otherwise, as I was just a small child, I didn't have a great idea as such. Mainly because he was famous I had wanted to see him. He was renowned as a great scholar and a good artist. He was so famous. It's just because of that, but otherwise, I did not have any other ideas.

Did you know anything about why GC was imprisoned?

There are many different interpretations of it. According to some, it was related with India. According to others, it was because he made counterfeit currency notes. So, there are such interpretations. But being young at the time, I did not know what the real fact was. I did not know. These days, based on other books, there are many writings on this issue. By reading them I learn a bit about it. Otherwise, at that time, since I was very young, I would have been at a loss regarding such issue. I could have at best speculated that it may be this or it may be that. Other than that I had no idea.

Anyway, now you have learned from books about GC's imprisonment?

I think it may be like this. So far I have read Melvyn Goldstein's book. Have you heard of it? It is written by an American, named Goldstein [Goldstein wrote several books on Tibetan culture and history]. It mentions that, at that time, a party had been founded [TW is referring to the 'Tibetan Revolutionary

Party', founded in Kalimpong]. I don't really know for sure, but this may be true. But so far I've not done any research into it in detail. So, I don't understand much. In order to do a research, one must first do a lot of search for information, etc. But I couldn't really search here [in Lhasa]. I just think that, what Goldstein has written in his book, may be true, but I cannot say for sure that that is right. Goldstein has written in his book that Pangdatsang, Khunphela and GC were the main ones, who founded this political party. What was the name of the party? [Thinks] I've forgotten the name. They were said to have founded it. Later, the Tibetan government knew about it. So, in the book it is written this way. For me I just think that it may be the case, but I really don't know.

Have you heard anything about what GC did while he was in prison?

While he was in prison, the officials at the time had said that GC had great knowledge unlike any other prisoners. Later on he became friends with some of the top officials. But then GC drank so much whisky. The other day, I showed you a piece of writing. So, when GC said that he will not drink much whisky anymore, then the officials had told him that he should not drink whisky at all, as it was not good for him [See interview: Tashi Pelra]. But afterwards, GC continued to take whisky. Then, I had heard that he had composed a verse containing the syllable *mi* [Tib: meaning 'man', 'human being', people] in each line. I found this verse in that writing that I showed you, and it goes like this:

*To the leader of our people (mi),
I, Gendun Choephel, the lowest of the humans (mi),
Have already promised that I will not (mi) drink whisky
Amidst all people (mi) gathered here.*

In the old days, I had only heard about this poem, but it really is one of his writings. I had heard such things. And then, when he was in the prison at *Shol* [underneath the Potala palace], it was said that he had *dung chag* [shackles] around his feet. Despite wearing these shackles, I have heard that he used to make a lot of paintings. Other than that, I do not have any more details, as I did not pay much attention to the events, because I was very young. But now, I have great interest in studying them. In those days, being young, although I had no idea whatsoever, I had heard these things.

Could you please tell us something about GC's arrival in Lhasa?

There was a person named Gyaltsen. He was the one, whom I requested to take me to see GC. His name was Gyaltsen Champa. Why I am telling you this is, because he worked in our office in the Department of Social Sciences. Later he went to Dharamshala and did not return. So he was kind of considered fired from his job. He later died. So, now he is no more. He had told me that, initially GC stayed with him. I asked him, how he knew GC and he told me that, when GC first arrived in Lhasa from Amdo, he had rented a place at their house and stayed in a room somewhere below them [TW is wrong here. When GC came from Amdo he went straight to Drepung monastery. TW might be referring to the time, after GC had left Drepung in 1934]. When he stayed there, he had a companion. But Gyaltsen didn't remember, whether the other person was Amdo Champa or someone else [GC met Amdo Champa in 1949]. So, the two of them were there and he said that at that time GC drew a marvelous *thangka* of Gyalchen Phagpa.

It wasn't an ordinary *thangka* at all. It was later taken upstairs. That was before GC went to India [1934]. So, it must have been, when he first arrived from Amdo [GC arrived from Amdo in 1927]. So, in this way Gyaltsen knew GC. Since he had studied the Dharma [Buddhism] with GC [probably in Drepung between 19207-34]. Then, when Gyaltsen told me that he was going to see GC and that GC had stayed at their house before, I pleaded him to take me with him to see GC, too. So, I went to see him after his release from prison, but I had heard about him before that.

Have you heard about other people who knew about GC?

What is found in his writings and what I had heard from others is slightly different. According to what I have heard, those who came to see GC had said about him, 'Now GC has totally lost his faith in the Dharma. How sad!' So, GC make fun of them, by immersing the statue of Lord Buddha into a bowl full of *chang* or *arak* [Tibetan alcohol] and even blow the smoke from his cigarette into the face of the statue [See interview: Amdo Champa]. While doing that he was telling them, 'what's wrong with this? What I like most is smoking and drinking *chang*. And I offer to Buddha, what I like most. So, there is nothing wrong with it. Is there?' The others replied, 'Oh, now GC has totally fallen. He has lost his faith.' Later GC had said that it had been good to make fun of them. Otherwise if he hadn't done that sort of thing, those people [former classmates from Drepung] would have never let him alone. They would have come back to ask the same things. It was good that they went away. I had not heard or seen this myself, but I heard this story from others, who told me so. In Tibetan religious tradition there are many different philosophical views. Even within the 'Middle Way', the *Madhyamika* School, there are many different views. I also think that GC may have had his own philosophical view. So, I have heard these things I related to you now [See interview: Ju Kesang].

Tell us about which works of GC you have read?

I read mainly the 'White Annals' of GC [on Tibetan history]. I had a purpose for reading the 'White Annals'. I am a linguist. So, being a researcher in language, the 'White Annals' are interesting, because there are many expressions, whose development has been dealt with by GC. For example, there is the word *tsang*, like something is called *tsang*. So, what does *tsang* mean? It means the lands, which are near the river Yarlung Tsangpo [Bramaputra]. Because these lands are near Yarlung Tsangpo, they are called *tsang*. So, this is one meaning of *tsang*. And, in another case, *tsang* also refers to the upper region of a land. We talk in terms like 'He is in *tsang*, the upper region, and I'm in *mdo*, the lower region of the land.' So, many words are dealt with in terms of their origination. Such and such word originated in this way or that way.

Let's take the example of the *darchog*, flags. Tibetan houses have flags on top of them. Why are these flags erected? In the past, there were many small clans in Tibet. Amongst the nomads, there were small clans, who used flags. Also, when people traveled on horses, they took flags. So, it's explained that way. Initially they were hoisted on tents. Later on, when houses were built, they were put on these houses. So, you find things like this. Again, there is something called *ru*. What does *ru* mean? It means an army. The head of an army, *ru*, is called *Ru-pon*. The ones, who lead the soldiers, are called *Ru-den*. The weapons

that the soldiers carry are called *Ru-tson*. So, in GC's White Annals the origination and meaning and development of many words are dealt with very clearly. I had at first heard from others that there were many such explanations in GC's work. Immediately I looked into it, and I found him mentioning of where these words originated and how they developed. So, many of them! This is one book I read.

Then I also read his 'Miscellaneous Writings' [Horkhang's three volume edition of GC's work, Lhasa 1990], which contains many of his casual writings. For example, as I told you yesterday, in the old society of Tibet, we Tibetans didn't really make any progress and development. So, under such circumstance GC wrote: '*Everything old is seen as the culture of the gods.*' So, what he actually meant is that the old things were considered to be the god's works [good], and by saying so, people should be moved. Then, '*Everything new is seen as the devil's miracle.*' So if you do something new, people will look at it, as if doing the devil's work [bad]. People will make a lot of fuss about this. '*Wondrous things are looked at, as bad omens.*' So if something surprising and marvelous happens [something new], people will say that it's a bad omen. '*Such has been our custom until now.*' So, GC meant, that this was the culture of the Tibetans and that we had lived this way so far. Now, what we can learn from this [GC's 4 lines], in connection with the old society, is that GC was already a progressive thinker, who had been in pace with the time. By that time, he had already been to India for a long period of time and had become a progressive in his thinking, and thus he wrote these lines.

Could you repeat the poems you recited before?

Everything old is looked as divine culture.

Everything new is considered devil's miracle.

Wondrous things are looked at as bad omens,

Such has been our custom until now.

There is some significant meaning in them. For example if you make some changes, then people don't want it. They want the old things only. This was the kind of attitude in those days. GC's way of thinking was very modern at that time. So, that is the meaning of those poems.

When you read these poems, what idea did you get of the old society?

I think it's true. I think, at that time, it was like that, because Tibetans then... what should I say? ...for example... they didn't allow playing football. There was some superstition about it? It was said that people were kicking the head of Buddha Shakyamuni. Such things were said at the time. If you did a slight new thing, it didn't work. But as a society we need to make progress and development and cannot just remain old fashioned all the time. So, at that time, such new ideas have come to our society. Old and new things are not at all static things. They change and shift from one to the next. When the ideas reach a point of saturation, then they become old ideas. So, I find GC to be true. At that time, since we still were in the old society, even playing football, was considered to be very inauspicious. As GC says, '*Everything old is looked as divine culture*', which was not allowed to move the slightest degree, but rather left unchanged as it was. People would say, 'That's just too much'. So, in retrospect, I see that I had that

sort of ideas, too. I had thought that we couldn't just keep clinging on to the old things, that this was not right. So, mainly what GC has said is true:

Everything old is looked as divine culture.

Everything new is considered devil's miracle.

Wondrous things are looked at as bad omens,

Such has been our custom until now.

Even in regard to the Lhamo Opera, it is true. Tibetan opera originated a long time back. Historically it was founded by *Thangtong Gyalpo* [15th century] and since then it has come down to us. There are eight different Lhamo Operas being performed today. They are called the Eight Great Lhamo Operas of Tibet. The performances of these operas today are the same, as they were in the old society. No single change was made. Although there was an attempt to make changes, they were not really successful. There were times, when the songs were sung like normal songs, without our particular Tibetan style of opera singing. What I'm saying is that we can leave the opera songs, as they are traditionally sung, but we could make changes to the art of Lhamo, since today, there are new artistic techniques. For example, in the case of *Norsang*, there is a character called *Amchoe Hari Nagpo*. This character flies into the sky. But when it is performed, people don't really see him flying. Except that it is mentioned that *Amchoe Hari Nagpo* is flying, people only see him walking by, but they don't see him flying, really. So, I think if we can use new techniques available today, it would be all right to make him fly. We have electricity, and it is possible today to make a kind of new art form. So, for example, we could show this character actually flying during the performance. This is one thing. But another thing is that these days, only the older generation goes to see Lhamo, and most of the younger generation doesn't. This is, because the older people still understand the content of the opera quite a bit. For people like me, when we watch the characters, we can tell what comes next, because we have seen them so many times in the past. The story of the opera is still the same. Therefore, I think that if we do not do something about making changes in the presentation of the artistic form within the performances, then the Lhamo opera as such will not survive much longer. There is quite a danger that, once the people, who take an interest in such things die, the Lhamo opera will also go with them. So, there is truth in GC saying, *Everything old is looked as divine culture and Everything new is considered devil's miracle.* By tightly holding on to only the traditional ways, we are doing, what GC had said. His words are very profound. So, even with regard to something like the Lhamo Opera, his words are true. This is what I wanted to share with you mainly.

In which sense was GC important for Tibet?

From the point of view of knowledge, he was important. In the view of Tibetan studies etc. he was important. Because he was greatly learned, since he lived in India for so long, making all these great experiences. He knew Sanskrit very well. You have to understand, many of the Tibetan literary tradition has a deep connection with Sanskrit. For example the Tibetan letters were modeled on the Sanskrit writing, and GC explained that it was devised, based on the old Gupta script of India. Likewise, in Tibetan religious practice, we recite *mantras* [short prayers], which are still in Sanskrit. You know people recite mantras, don't you. So, many of these mantras are in Sanskrit. If you look at GC's writings, even at

that time he seems to have been greatly learned in Sanskrit. He is now regarded as a historically important and famous person. Other than that, with regard to our own Tibetan sciences [in Buddhist philosophy], he was also a great scholar in them. There are many qualifications like that. GC was such a unique person, who knew everything. He knew English, Sanskrit and at the same time all the changes and news of the modern world. Such a person is rare to find. As far as I am concerned, he was really great. But then again, human beings are like this and each one has his own view. Some practice Tibetan religion just by themselves. And then they said things like, 'Oh, GC had a perverted view of religion, when he blew the smoke of his cigarette in the face of the Buddha Shakyamuni statue.' There were those, who said, 'How dare he! That's very bad.' So, there are various opinions. From my point of view, this person [GC] was not an easy one. He was really a great scholar... And then there is this one other thing, which, although people won't like the idea these days, but our teachers say that there is such a thing as 'Unforgettable Retentive Memory Dharani'. We have heard that GC didn't have to go over a text again, once he had read it. There are cases of people achieving this ability. Since they have attained it... for example, it's said that Thupten Nyima has attained the capacity of 'Unforgettable Retentive Memory Dharani'. He is supposed to have claimed that he could retain all the books in memory, once he had read them. This is something that can only be explained by the Dharma [Buddhist teaching], but not otherwise, by something outside of the Buddhist realm. Others may say, that it was a lie and would question, how this was possible. Be that as it may, GC definitely had incredible wisdom. It is said that he learned so much English within... how many days... or just within a couple of months or so. So, there are such stories, which today would seem like fairy tale movies. Anyway, in my view, he was definitely a very knowledgeable person. Now, what do I mean by 'knowledgeable'? You should question the words of others, when they tell you that something is such and such. So, that why *Sakya Pandita* said in his 'Treasury of Eloquence':

'So long as a scholar is not debated or questioned

Until then, his depth cannot be fathomed.

Just as a drum, until it is not tested with a stick

Is no different from the others'

So, the depth of a scholar cannot be known, unless we question it and delve into their knowledge. If we just consider the outside appearance and take their sayings for face value, it is not good. Just as judging a drum, only by what we see from the outside, its design and color, and then saying that it is a good drum, will not really help. Rather we have to take the drumming stick and hit the drum to check the quality of its sound. If the drum bangs well, only then we should say it is a good drum. So, in the 'Treasury of Eloquence' *Sakya Pandita* says exactly that. Likewise, after hearing from others that GC was a great scholar, I also tested 'the drum' with a stick, by reading all of his works. So, I played the drum, and it sounded good with loud bangs. So, that's it.

In the old days, what did people think of GC then?

Despite being important then, they were not able to really use him. He couldn't put his potentiality to use. He was imprisoned for so many years. Because of that, he became unhappy and then took to alcohol. That is very sad. But for us today, he has left his works. Although he has gone, his writings are left with us

Tibetans and we know, how learned he was. In the past thousands of years and centuries, there have been so many *Lotsawas*, but none of these *Lotsawas*, during the later phase of the spread of the Dharma in Tibet [11th century], were like GC. *Lotsawas* are the 'translators', those Tibetans who translated the scriptures, the 'Words of the Buddha' [Kangyur] and the 'Exegetical Treatises' [Tangyur]. GC has said this:

*'After a lapse of eight hundred years, in the Noble Land
A belated Lotsawa in a human body
Who reads the excellent treatises in the originals
Now resides in Magadha [Central India].
How nice!'*

So, when he was in India [1934-46], it had already been eight hundred years, since the last *Lotsawas* were there, 'After a lapse of eight hundred years, in the Noble Land', the 'Noble Land' means India. So, GC is saying that he is a *Lotsawa* in human body, who has come belated to India and is now in Magadha, reading the Buddhist texts in Sanskrit. With this poem, he proclaimed himself as a *Lotsawa*, a translator. When I reflect on this, I think he was a real *Lotsawa*. The term *Lotsawa* doesn't really refer to those, who can communicate in other languages. But *Lotsawas* are those, who translate the sacred scriptures, the words of the Buddha and their exegesis. He was such a one. Therefore, that's how great GC was... Some say GC was really, really great. I have no idea, whether others regard him to be great or not. But as far as I'm concerned, he was great in all respects, whatsoever. For example, I am teacher. As a teacher, I find some of GC's works very useful. For example if I were to explain the word history, there is a verse by GC. If I just teach that verse, the students will immediately know what history means. It says, 'By turning the wheels of the three times'. It refers to the three times 'past', 'present' and 'future', going in cycles. Since the times go round and round, 'Things have happened in the past', means, things have occurred and they have gone by. Those happenings of the past, 'Written in the empty space with our mind', means, that the space is empty, according to Buddhist theory, and in this empty space all the past happenings are written with our mind. 'This is the marvelous magical history.' So, according to GC, history is a wonderful and marvelous thing. In the empty space, our mind writes about past happenings, and thus it becomes history. So if I teach my students what history is, there is no need to talk very much. The above verse of GC has explained history to them. And there are many such verses, which clearly show the meaning of words. In contrast to the GC's 'simplicity', there are some people, who try to show off their knowledge, by intentionally using bombastic words in their writings. They try to use difficult words in their compositions, as if to indicate that they were scholars. In the past, people have done that often. But all of GC's compositions are very easy to understand. There are no special rhetorics of poetry, they are intelligible to everybody and they are beautiful *and* profound. Hence, I admire and appreciate GC very much for his knowledge and wisdom in his writings. There are many people thinking like I do. Only now, Tibetan scholars are slowly realizing GC's scholarly qualifications. In the Tibetan tradition, there are three criteria for a great scholar: teaching, argumentation and writing. The first is, being able to explain the subject matter and teach well. The second is, being able to face challenges and argue well. And the

third is, being able to compose well. His writings qualify for all three of these criteria. Hence, this is the main reason, why I say he was such a great scholar.

His problem of alcoholism? Was it because he was unhappy?

I think he drank, because he was unhappy. He was imprisoned. He was such a great scholar. His knowledge was too great, and the society was too stupid, then. So, I think, he took to alcoholism, while he was in prison, because he was dissatisfied with the situation [in Tibet]. Other than this, I have nothing more to say... you have to understand, at that time, Tibet was an orthodox society. There were a lot of problems for him. He was imprisoned, and he had no prior experience of it. He was a human being. So like any ordinary human being, he was unhappy and then drank alcohol...

I didn't go to GC or had talks with him. Except for that one single meeting, I didn't even have a conversation with him. Really, I couldn't even listen to his lectures. He was healthy at the time and was about 47, not very old. If I had studied under him, at that time, it would have been very good for me. I could have learned a lot, for example, poetry or any other subject from him. The opportunity was there, but I failed. Hence, I only had this one audience with him and nothing else. But I am telling you all these things about him, as I have heard them from others. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to tell them to you. Unless one really knows about the things, it is not good to talk about them. However we humans often like to talk, without evidence or reason. There are people like Rakra Rinpoche [who wrote a Tibetan biography of GC in 1985], who had been with GC, as his student, and knew him very well...

When did GC die?

I don't know the time and all this. I had heard about his imprisonment, and later that after his release, he stayed on the upper storey of Gobeshang [?], where I went to see him. But I don't much about when he died. I learned about the time of his death from a book. It was written that he died on a certain date in August 1951. The book was written by someone from Amdo [actually Gojo Lachung Apo], who had been with GC at the time. I don't think this person is alive now. He may be dead by now [TW is referring to Lachung Apo]. He has written a short biography of him. I have also heard that Rakra Rinpoche has written a biography of GC, too, but I have never seen it. I would like to see it very much. If possible, I would like to see a more detailed biography of GC. I haven't seen one, so far. Then Horkhang Sonam Penbar has written one, but that's not much [an article in 1983]. If only someone, who had been acquainted with GC could write a more detailed biography! My wish is that Rakra Rinpoche would write a lengthy biography of GC, as he is a good scholar himself... So I don't really know about what happened during his last days. I only know it from others and from books.

Anything else you would like to say?

I don't have much more to say. These days, some people [TW is also referring to people like us] go to young scholars or officials to ask about GC. And when they don't get any information from them, they are told, 'Our teacher has seen GC.' Thus, many come to my home to interview me. However, that's the detailed story. I have told you in the greatest detail possible. Otherwise, when other people come to ask, I

usually only tell them those things, which I have read in books and nothing else. Then, when it comes to dealing with his knowledge and qualifications, I would refer to his own compositions and say something related to them. Other than that, I don't say much.

What I think about most, in relation to GC, is that if I could have been *under his care*, I could have studied scriptures from him, but that, I could not do. I have not even spoken a word with him. But, when I reflect on my one meeting with him, then I feel very delighted, even now, that I had the opportunity to meet with such a great scholar! When I think about him, I feel right away that he was a great scholar. Exemplary! Looking at all the stories about him, since he was in Amdo, he was certainly not an easy person. For example, Geshe Sherab Gyatso was GC's teacher [in Drepung monastery, 1927-34]. We know that right from the beginning GC had been a very intelligent boy. In the works of Geshe Sherab Gyatso he mentions GC. He scoffs a lot at GC. This is, because GC didn't take anything what his teacher said for granted. He argued with Geshe Sherab, confronting him with different viewpoints. And so, Geshe Sherab didn't like him and called GC 'a crazy person'. So, Geshe Sherab Gyatso called GC a 'crazy person'.

ALAK CHONGSAY



Recorded on the 14th of September 1999 in Drepung monastery, Lhasa.

Born 1920 in Northeastern Tibet. He met GC in Drepung (in Gomang college), when he was still a boy. He lived as a monk in Drepung Monastery, until its closure in the early 1960's. He was later forced to marry during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). He spent several years in Chinese prison. He returned to Drepung as a monk in the early 1980's, where we met him in good health in 1999. We have no information, whether he is still alive. Tibetan, not in the film.

Please tell us your name, age and about your arrival in Drepung.

I am now 80 years old. I came to Drepung when I was 9. By western calendar it was probably 1929 or so, when I reached Drepung. About six years later GC arrived in Drepung from his native land [from labrang monastery in Northeast-Tibet]. At that time I had been in Drepung for about 6 years already. So, GC joined this monastery and did his studies and stayed here. But at that time he didn't seem to be pursuing Buddhist studies that much, because he was already a great scholar even at that time, when he had come from his native land. What he did was that he seemed to be working hard on drawing pictures and having fun drawing dogs, cats, rats, or beautiful flowers. We had no conversation with each other. He was senior and we didn't know each other. I wasn't GC's student. I saw him in the room of Geshe Choedak who was his classmate and whom he used visit. Then, five years later there was an inter-class debate contest between GC's and the next junior class. In the junior class there was a reincarnate lama named Kirti Lama, a Mongolian with yellow hair. So, in that year and the next one, for two consecutive years, Kirti Lama's class was defeated in this debate. GC's class won. So, Kirti Lama had said that they had lost in the contest for two consecutive years, and they had only one more year left to debate with them. He thought that if they won the next year, that's it, otherwise they had no hope of ever winning over GC's class. So, the next year the topics for the debate were the 'Buddhanature' and the 'Definitive and Interpretable Meanings of Buddha's Teachings'. These texts are two separate chapters in our studies. So, for one year Kirti Lama really studied very hard and then the next year they debated. It happened right over there [he points out of the window in direction of the debating courtyard]. So, one day they debated and that day GC's class was the ones to answer the questions, and Kirti Lama challenged by posing questions. On that day, everybody was amazed, 'today GC's class had difficult time answering the questions from Kirti's junior class. So, the debate was very hot on that day.

The next day, it was the turn of GC's class to return the challenge and pose the questions. But everybody was so astonished that they doubted if GC's class would really be able to challenge back. From the junior

class, Kirti Lama was the best one amongst all those monks. And GC was supposedly the best one amongst the senior class. So, that was a day! On that day, both the classes met themselves separately to prepare for the next day's debate. They invited two teachers, each to assist in the preparation. So, the teachers discussed about what kind of mistakes they had made and what rights they had done. The teachers, who were helping GC's class pointed out the mistakes that were made and taught them how to give challenge the next day. There was such a tradition of teacher's assisting the students in preparing the questions. So, while they were gathered and the teachers were helping to prepare the questions to be posed to the other class the next day, it was said that after a while GC had said that he had headache, and left the meeting. So, since GC had left the two monks from his class, Woeser Choedak and Gendun Choedar, they were worried and expressed their concern. They had said that GC was the best student in their class, but he had left the meeting, without listening to what the teachers were instructing them. They were worried how they would perform the next day. 'Today we had a very hard time. Kirti Lama really gave us a hard time. So, unless GC does something and works hard tomorrow, we will be at a loss', they complained. GC was very learned and brilliant and he could just take, what the teachers were teaching. But he thought it would be better for him to think on his own and prepare. So, unless he told them that he had headache, what else he could have done? Because it would have been against the rule of the class to say that he was not going to stay during the teacher's advice, and it would not have been a good gesture just to leave without any excuse.

So, feeling totally concerned for their class, Woeser Choedak and Gendun Choedar both got up from the meeting and went to check in his room. They went to call him back to meeting with the teachers. When they went there, they saw that his room was lit with a lamp. As they knocked on his door he had immediately put off the lamp. Although they called on him and asked him join the meeting, he did not give any response at all. For a while they remained at the door and when they called on him again, they each had mentioned their names, 'I'm Gendun Choedar and I'm Woeser Choedak, and pledged GC to open the door, at which he lit the lamp and opened the door for them. As they looked into his room, they had found that he didn't have a headache at all. Though they had originally feared that he was lying down and sleeping, but he wasn't. He was actually amid so many different scriptures scattered all over the place, which he had been reading. So, they found out that GC was actually studying the texts. This relieved them, as they thought, 'ah, he is studying.' Then he told them to go back and tell the class that he was sick. But he told them that they should not say he had gone to his place to study. He told them, 'you should keep in mind, what the teachers are teaching you. I shall study these texts the best as I can, and give thoughts to them. So, we should contemplate on how we could best challenge them back tomorrow.' So, then they left.

That night they had contemplated, what the teachers had taught and instructed and the next day they met with GC, as he had come to the place, where they had the meeting around nine in the morning. The debate took place only around one or two in the afternoon, though. So, armed with the teachers' instructions, coupled with GC's own ideas and understanding, that day, they gave back the challenge. At around three or four in the afternoon, GC emerged victorious. The other party was totally defeated.

Having defeated his opponent [Kirti Lama], as we kept watching, GC had a rather harsh way of talking to him. He didn't talk sweetly at all. So, after a while GC said, 'Now, you yellow headed Mongolian, speak out!' We witnessed that. Although Kirti was a reincarnate Lama, GC had said, 'Now, you yellow headed Mongolian, is this all, is this your true color? After having worked hard in preparation for a whole year?' So, we have seen him saying all this. GC was such a great scholar. And that was something unique, a natural quality in him, which is not found in other people. That's one thing. That's the story about his winning over the Mongolian. The Mongolian was called Kirti Lama. I had really seen GC saying, 'you, yellow headed Mongolian, is this all that you can do, after working so hard for a whole year? Don't you have anything better than that?!'

Then the senior class of GC completed the 'Perfect Wisdom' studies and the next year they moved on to the first year of 'Madhyamika' studies. After that, when he was in the second year of the 'Madhyamika class' he had come for the 'First Year Madhyamika Debate Contest'. This is a contest, in which monks from Drepung Gomang go to Drepung Loseling [two different colleges within the same monastery], to face challenges from each other. So, GC was the one to answer the questions, as usual, from the Loseling side. From Loseling monastery, GC's best rival, his challenger, was Minyak Kyorpon, who was an incredibly learned person, really a great scholar, and such a great person! So many people were challenging GC, but the best among them was Minyak Kyorpon, who looked very gorgeous, who had great wisdom and knowledge, really a great man. So, the two of them had a hot debate. And after debating for quite a long time, Minyak Kyorpon lost and GC won the contest. It was shocking. Everybody talked that even Minyak Kyorpon could not challenge GC. Such was the case. That was also something I witnessed. I was little at the time. So, that's the legacy of GC. [On the debate with Minyak Kyorpon, also see: Alak Yongtsin, Amdo Champa and Akhu Lama Tsering]

Next, there is something that I've heard. I've heard that GC had a unique quality, which is beyond our thinking and it is this. Once GC has seen something, whether it was reading a text or something else, he never forgot it, and whenever needed, he could readily quote the texts. I am deeply astonished by that. Because it's like having attained the 'Unforgettable Retentive Memory Dharani'. This is not something that happens to anybody just like that. For us normal monks [here we have to understand that Alak Chongsay himself is a very learned scholar], we tend to forget the things that we learned with so much effort within a short period of time, like within, lets say, 3 or 4 years of time. But it was said that GC never forgot anything at all. This is something I had heard from others, but it wasn't my own experience or something I had heard from him personally through conversations. So, that's one thing.

After finishing the first year of 'Madhyamika studies', he then left Drepung monastery and went to some unknown place. He left Drepung monastery. I think he left for other countries, like India or may be even England, or something like that. He also wrote the 'White Annals' [book on Tibetan history], while in England or India. Then, after returning to Lhasa, according to what others had said, he didn't have a good attitude towards Buddhism. Whether he had a good or bad view of Buddhism is something I couldn't judge myself. I didn't know. In my opinion if we look at the 'White Annals', which is a short history, he

must have planned to write a good book. Because we can see this book only covers the historical period, until Songtsen Gampo [8th century] and no more. He seems to have had a great plan in his mind to write a great deal of history following this period. But after his return, due to some problem with the regional Tibetan government officials, he was imprisoned and isolated from others. So, even this short book could not really be continued and finished. Such a thing had happened.

It was not without any reason that people criticized him for smoking and drinking alcohol, because a monk doesn't do these things. He also was unrestrained in his speech and said, whatever he wanted. So, he did things like that. Other people told all these things, but I had never been to him. Then, according to my teacher, he used to live at a blacksmith's house, which was now known as *Ngulgyen Khang*. But mainly he stayed at Horkhang's place [a young aristocrat, who help GC with his 'White Annals']. GC was the teacher of Horkhang Sonam Penbar, to whom he had taught all the subjects of learning.

Then, another thing that was said about GC is the following. He smoked and while smoking – people talked about him as being a pervert – he touched his own statue of the Buddha Shakyamuni with the cigarette, he was smoking. He was purposely putting the cigarette on it in front of all these people. Just as they saw him doing it, they left. 'Alas. GC is putting his cigarette on Buddha Shakyamuni. This is evil!' To this, GC was said to have replied, 'what? Hasn't Lord Maitreya said that to him, even the bad things appear to be good?' That may be true, but GC spoke very strange things also. However, I had not seen him doing it and speaking that way. When I saw him, I had found him a little pale. And he had twinkling eyes. He didn't look so handsome at the time [this must have been after GC's release from prison, 1949-51]. I had seen him something like this. Other than these I have not much to say. [To this 'Buddha-story', also see: Amdo Champa, Thupten Wangpo and Golok Jigme]

Do you have any other stories about GC from the times, when he was living in Drepung?

Outside the monastery, people might have been backbiting at him a little bit, saying that he was bad. Considering his knowledge and wisdom, he was an incredibly great scholar. Everyone would agree on this. But later on, as I mentioned earlier, he smoked and drank *chang* [beer] and whisky, did things without restraint. Because of that, people might have started disliking him a little bit. Otherwise, when he was still in Drepung monastery, people didn't really adore him so much, like bowing our heads. But the aristocrats had done that, because he was learned in the sciences.

Do you recall, when GC left Drepung monastery?

I told you earlier about the former 'Madhyamika class'. By western calendar it must have been somewhere in the 1930's, I am not exactly sure which year in the 30's. He lived in Drepung monastery for seven years, that's sure. At about the eighth year, he was lost [1934]. We didn't know his whereabouts then. That's it.

When you were in Drepung, how many monks there?

It would be too much to tell you about the long history of Drepung. However, in those days, Drepung was said to have about 7'700 monks. There were four main monasteries [colleges] within Drepung itself. Out of that, our monastery, Gomang, was said to have 3'300 monks. These monks were in sixteen different classes, including the junior most students. From amongst these sixteen classes, only four used to have inter-class debate contests, like the one I related to you earlier. Not all the classes had to do such contests. These four classes challenged back and forth for three years. So, only four contested mutually from amongst the sixteen classes.

Have you read the White Annals, GC's book on Tibetan history?

I have read it once before. But now, I've forgotten everything. I have never really been that enthusiastic about it. Then I had heard that, together with Dawa Sangpo, GC had made some sort of criticism about the philosophical view of Lord Nagarjuna. What I am telling you here, were not my own observations; I have never seen GC and Dawa Sangpo. I just heard so... [Thinks] However, what really catches me about GC, is, that he was said to be never forgetting the things that he had read once. I think that's amazing. That's what I think, and I have nothing else.

Concerning GC, do you think he was important during his lifetime?

So, it's similar to what I was telling you before. I only think that he was a great scholar. Given his scholarly qualifications, I don't think he had the quality of humility. Anyway, he was unrestrained in his conduct and behavior. Except for that, I have no opinion about him. Moreover, I accept that he was really a great scholar. And I think he was an incredibly great being. Because, as for people like me, unless we strove very hard by going over what we have read in the books over and over again, we cannot retain it in our memory. We would just forget everything a little later. GC didn't need to do that. I think that is something incredible. Otherwise, with regard to his views and perspectives, I don't have any opinion against him.

What did you think about GC's debating skills?

Yes, yes. Everybody was surprised at the time. Everybody was totally amazed. So, we were astonished by his scholarly knowledge. But being a scholar, one also needs to contemplate the teachings of Buddhism, after all, and build up a little sense of humility as well. That, in the end, GC didn't seem to possess. And nobody believed him to have this quality. He seemed very unrestrained in his conduct. But I can't put any judgment on why that was so.

Today, how do you view GC?

You know, as I told you before. It's the same. I find him to be a great scholar. By going through his writings, I really find him to be a great scholar. But I don't see him to be a tamed person. So, from his writings on the various subjects and the 'White Annals', we can see that he was really an incredible scholar. And, especially from what I have heard, he had attained the 'Unforgettable Retentive Memory Dharani', which gives him the ability to recount, whatever he had read only once before. On account of

that attribute, oh! That man was really great. So, I find him to be an incredible person. Then, I had heard from people that he was smoking, drinking whisky and he even used to sleep with women. When I look at him from this perspective, I consider him not to be a tamed person. That's all I think about him, but I don't judge him to be a good or a bad person.

TSETEN YUDRON



Recorded on the 15th of September 1999 in Lhasa.

Born 1922 in Chamdo, Kham (East-Tibet). She probably met GC after his release from prison in 1949. She herself claims to have met and married GC in Chamdo in 1946, but nobody else could confirm that GC had ever traveled through Chamdo. In Lhasa she stayed with GC from 1949 until his death in 1951. Horkhang Jampa Tendar (the son of GC's friend Horkhang Sonam Penbar, who published the first edition of GC's 'Political History of Tibet'), confirmed that she had actually been very close to GC and that she had a daughter from GC. She still lives in Lhasa in a residential area for high-up Communist Party members. Tibetan, in the film.

What is your name and what do you know about GC?

I am 78 years old and about to reach 79. My name is Tseten Yudron. We met, when GC came to Chamdo [East-Tibet]. Since he was in Chamdo only for about 2 months, I do not remember much of him, while he was there [this part of her story is disputed. There are no other witnesses, who confirm that GC was ever in Chamdo].

From Lhasa he had left for India [1934] and after his return [1946] he told me that, because of conspiracy between the British government [in India] and the Tibetan Cabinet [the *Kashag*] he was captured on reaching Tibet. He was seized from Wangdu Penpa's House and imprisoned for three years [See interview: Tashi Pelra]. He was acquainted with many aristocrats. Many of them were shrewd and were only after his knowledge. Some of them were apprehensive and pretended to learn from him. Some were really studying under him. The son of Horkhang, whose name was Sonam Penbar, was truly a very nice man. Everyone knows that. But he had died. Actually both GC and Sonam Penbar were imprisoned, but many did not know of Sonam Penbar being captured. GC told me not to tell anyone [this part of her story can not be true. Horkhang was only arrested much later, during the Cultural Revolution]. Since the ministers suspected GC, even after his release from prison, on the advice of Trijang Rinpoche, he was kept at Kapshopa's place [Kapshopa was a minister in the *Kashag* and partly responsible for GC's arrest. GC and Kapshopa used to be friends]. One night at around midnight, Kapshopa's son offered some drinks to GC. GC refused the offer at first. I think they were speaking in English. He said he wasn't feeling well, thus couldn't take any Brandy, except locally prepared liquor [*arak*]. Kapshopa said that the Brandy was either from – I don't remember correctly – Germany or Burma. Later, GC drank it with his eyes closed, saying now it wouldn't matter and he needn't have to be concerned. They had been speaking in English, not Tibetan. After he drank it, GC vomited. I raised the pot to his mouth and collected the vomit. The vomit was of black color like that of Tibetan liquor. His tongue had turned black, too. Then I placed a

bowl under his mouth and let him vomit in it. The discharge was of the same color as before and looked like Tibetan liquor. Kapshopa's son was there [this story rather reflects Tseten Yudron's anger at Kapshopa, for being responsible for GC's arrest and bad treatment in prison, than the truth. I could not confirm this story].

GC took ill after that. He had changed completely, when he was released from prison [this indicates that she must have now him before prison, 1946]. Prior to his detention, he appeared like a Chinese. When we first met each other, he was dressed in a Chinese robe and looked very normal [we never found out, when exactly she actually met him]. On his release from prison, he was unlike before. He seemed weak and sloppy. At first, he stayed at Kapshopa's house [some claim that he stayed in Drepung first]. Kapshopa asked GC to converse with his son in English. Kapshopa said that GC's English was much better and he could write English very fluently. Really he would write very fluently in English. He would write without even batting an eyelid. He would write with such ease. I am an illiterate and know nothing. Then later he took ill and was not well. After the Cultural Revolution began, Kapshopa's son was seized with a fit. He later committed suicide by hanging himself. Though they [Kapshopa and other aristocrats] came to see GC for tutorials on literary knowledge, in reality they came with bad intentions and have afflicted GC.

How old were you when you first met GC?

I was 19 when we met. Around the end of 19 I was pregnant and at 20 I gave birth to a girl [this means that they must have met around 1940, since she was born around 1921. It seems highly unlikely that GC went to Chamdo from India at that time, though. The question of GC's daughter and his meeting with Tseten Yudron certainly needs further research].

Tell us again about your search for GC, after you reached Lhasa?

When I was looking for him [after his release from prison in 1946], he was at Wangdu Khangsur's house, but I didn't know until I asked Amdo Lobsang's wife. Amdo Lobsang's wife was also from Chamdo. They had a shop and I used to go there daily. I asked them if they knew GC, who had once come to Chamdo. She told me that GC was living at Wangdu Khangsur's house and her husband and GC were friends. So gradually I met him. I borrowed a photo of GC from Kapshopa's son. GC was wearing long hair in that snap. That was, while he was in prison. Now I remember that Kapshopa's son was an aristocrat and he had gone with His Holiness to India as an interpreter. I used to get scared of him that time.

Tell us everything you remember about GC, after his release from the prison?

When I reached Lhasa, he had already been released from prison and was putting up at Wangdu Khangsur's house. I was told that he had rented the house of Sera Jey's Treasurer [from Sera monastery]. At that time, many dignitaries and aristocrats were admiring his knowledge. He was poor. He didn't have any material things. Trijang Rinpoche [one of the tutors of the Dalai Lama] had asked him to be shifted from Wangdu Khangsur's house to Kapshopa's. Construction was going on at the place called *Gurushar*, which was meant to become the office of the Agricultural Department. Until the constructions were over, GC was kept at Kapshopa's place. And he got sick there, after consuming Brandy, offered by Kapshopa's

son. I think he stayed at Kapshopa's place for about a year, until the constructions were over at *Gurushar* [on the Barkhor, surrounding the Jokhang Temple]. Then he was shifted to Gurushar. Trijang Rinpoche and Kapshopa used to come there often. After GC's release, he came to see him often. He addressed GC as a teacher and prostrated before him. GC said he was nothing, and told him not to prostrate. GC told him in his face that he was deceitful and because of him he had been imprisoned. Deep down inside they did not like each other. When we shifted to Gurushar we didn't have anything. At that time, we had kept our daughter with others, because we were so poor. There was no one else, who served him. Many sons of the aristocrats used to come to learn English from him. There was also a Lama from Nyarong, who was studying Tibetan Grammar from GC [she is referring to Dawa Sangpo, whom GC dictated his controversial essay on Buddhism, called 'The Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thought'].

GC used to drink a lot of alcohol. Right from the morning he would start drinking. Horkhang Sonam Penbar had asked him not to drink but GC told him that he would not live without drinking. So he kept on with his drinking habit. When the aristocrats told him not to drink he was furious like a madman and blamed them for his drinking habit. He used to abuse Kapshopa of being a scorpion. GC would read a lot of English books and Tibetan Grammar books. Thus the sons of the aristocrats came to him to study. When GC died, this Lama from Nyarong was there. I was told that he was no more alive. Tashi Pelra [the Lhasa magistrate] was the main person responsible for GC's imprisonment [Tashi Pelra was only the arresting officer]. While GC was in India, there was a man called Rabga Pangdatsang, whose wife had given GC a gold ring as a present for me, his wife. But Tashi Pelra took the ring. GC had kept the ring in a cup. Since Tashi Pelra was so fond of wealth, he had taken it from the cup [See interview: Tashi Pelra]. That ring was brought for me from India, given by Rapga's wife. Rapga had been expelled from Tibet.

GC died at the age of 49. Since his illness, he had been taking alcohol in his bed. He liked steamed Momo and always asked me to prepare momo for him. But he would eat only 2-3 momos if fried. He was a light eater. He rather liked to booze and behave like a madman. A healthy man was made deranged by the Tibetan Government. GC told me that the Ministers Lhukhangwa, Surkhang Sawang Chenmo, Kapshopa, Kundeling and Trijang Rinpoche [who was not a minister], were the main culprits for his captivity. Prime Minister Lhukhangwa was old and the most cunning one. I had never seen him. Lhukhangwa had asked GC to accompany the Dalai Lama to India as an interpreter GC said that they had told him that they would look after our child and me during his absence. Since the Chinese were coming to Tibet, the Dalai Lama was planning to leave for India [1950/51]. GC refused to accompany the Dalai Lama as an interpreter, saying that they should take Kapshopa's son as he speaks good English. They demanded GC to leave with the Dalai Lama for India, but he didn't go. I don't remember much of those events [this story is not confirmed by anyone else].

GC didn't have any possessions with him, except for a trunk full of books. The trunk was so good and I gave it to Horkhang Sonam Penbar, after GC's demise. There was another trunk, which was taken by Surkhang's housekeeper. I believe both he [Horkhang] and Surkhang had died. I don't know what might have been in that trunk. There must have been some important stuff. Kundeling borrowed an English

book. I was told that the book would cost more than a few thousand [no currency indicated]. Another book was borrowed by Wangchen Gelek, which too would cost a lot. GC said that they hadn't returned the books, which he had worked so hard to collect. Actually all these things were known by Amdo Champa, who is a painter [See interview: Amdo Champa]. But then, he is a liar, a two headed person. Amdo Champa is a liar, because he had once painted a portrait of the Dalai Lama, with Mao Tse Tung on it, too. GC said that it was him, who had guided Amdo Champa to paint that portrait. Later, when the portrait became so popular, Amdo Champa had said that he had done it and had never mentioned of GC actually giving him the idea. So, GC told me that Amdo Champa was a liar, a cheater. There was also a Mongolian monk at Horkhang's old house [Geshe Choedak]. It seemed that GC had lent many of his books to him, since he, too, could read English. But that Geshe copied GC's compositions and published them, saying he had composed them [she is referring to a Tibetan dictionary, which was edited by Geshe Choedak]. There were such liars in this society. I must tell Amdo Champa about his lies, wherever he is.

Why did GC drink and smoke so heavily after his release from prison?

He had indulged in drinking and smoking because of his imprisonment. There was a man from Nepal, who used to give money to GC. I don't know, whether he was lending or giving the money. GC used to bring five hundred rupees from that man. That time we had Tibetan currency. He used to buy drinks [probably *chang* and *arak*] with that money. He told me that he never drank before his imprisonment [This information is wrong. See interview: Golok Jigme]. He had traveled abroad and later they had branded him as spy. GC told me that he has had a foreign woman. He said he had never taken liquor before, except a little, when he was with that woman. He had started drinking after his imprisonment. He used to say that there was no use to live and he wouldn't stay on this Earth too long, and that it was better to leave. Saying so, he would drink alcohol, but he wouldn't drink too much, and he would never get drunk [I'm wondering, whether she means, 'he never got loud or aggressive?']. The drinks were locally prepared liquor [*chang* and *arak*].

Many people used to visit GC, what do they bring for him?

Many aristocrats came to GC to study under him. The son-in-law of the Prime Minister Lhukhangwa, who was known as a drunken fellow once gave a *chupa* to GC [Tibetan dress]. GC refused to take it and told him to take it back, but it was left back in our kitchen. When he was offered something, he wouldn't take it. It's strange that he didn't like material things. Otherwise, they would never bring money. Except for the person from Nepal, who wore a white hat, GC never took money. They were friends. Except for him, he had no source for money nor had he any wealth. He had only two trunks to keep his books. I gave the larger trunk to Horkhang Sonam Penbar, because he was a nice man. I was sent to his estate to collect grains, since we were very poor. Even though Horkhang was rich [influential] and had done nothing, still he was imprisoned [This is not true. But Horkhang and his friend Rakra Rinpoche were advised not to help GC, otherwise they would be in trouble].

About GC, now I just realized that his imprisonment was because they were jealous of his knowledge. GC told me that he had been to India only to do research on the Tibetan History and nothing else. When I

asked him, how he moved about, when he was abroad, he told me that sometimes, he had traveled riding elephants. He had been to many places in India. Others told me that he could speak five languages, but I am not sure about it, since I am an illiterate.

He died with 49, maybe in 1954, when the Chinese came to Tibet [actually 1951]. When they came, GC said that he wanted to see them from the rooftop. But he couldn't see them properly from there. GC asked our neighbor – one Mongolian Geshe [scholar] – to allow him to look from his top floor window towards the Barkhor. After seeing the marching forces, he said, 'Now the Liberating Force has come'. GC couldn't walk then, due to his ailment from oedema. It wasn't even possible to carry him, but still he continued drinking alcohol and said he would drink till his death. There was no one to bother him during his illness, and he continued with his lessons for the son's of the aristocrats. When they came, I stayed outside [See interview: Amdo Champa, Horkhang Jampa Tendar].

What would GC do when he was at home?

He was teaching both English and Tibetan from dusk till dawn. At the same time, he was somewhat drunk by the evening. He would say that those cabinet members made him insane, and that Zasa Ngawang Gyaltzen and other aristocrats, interrogating him for whom he was spying, whipped him. GC said that he couldn't remember, how he was whipped, but it was not as painful as it should be. The whip seemed to be just touching him. When Ganden Tripa [a high dignitary from Ganden monastery] knew that GC was being whipped, he knelt in front of the ministers and pledged that it would be better if they whip him instead of GC. He told them not to whip GC, but him. Then they stopped the whipping [whereas the whipping actually happened, I could not confirm the Ganden Tripa incident]. GC was doing nothing except his tutorials. Sometimes he would sing strange songs, all by himself and would be lost with it. Otherwise he wouldn't be talking much, but either reading or writing or teaching his pupils. Sometimes, even during the night, he would get up and write something in English, and later doze off again. And in the morning, he would be in the same state. He was good in English, as he had been to many places. He had nothing except his knowledge of Tibetan and English. GC was always writing, both in English and Tibetan. He never liked talking idly. In his trunks he had more English books than Tibetan. There was no money in those trunks, only books.

When GC was writing in his house, what were you doing?

I was either preparing food or was with our neighbors... and washing our clothes also. When someone came, I would pour tea for them and alcohol for GC and then leave the house. I didn't stay inside, since I did not understand a single bit, as I am an illiterate. They would be either learning English or Tibetan or poetry or just talking, but I couldn't understand a bit. They would put something like dark flour in a container and start writing. Unlike us, he never had bothered about food or some other works, besides his teaching and writing.

Was he good to you?

He was good to me. However, we hadn't been together for so long. He had stayed only two months in Chamdo [See above]. Then he was imprisoned for 3 years. After his release from the prison, we had been together for only two years and then he already expired. So, we didn't have much time together. If he hadn't been drinking, he would have lived longer. Since he had been drinking, he was more like a lunatic. It would have been very good if he had not been drinking so much, but only teaching English and poetry to others. Many aristocrats had come to learn from him. But important aristocrats like Trijang Rinpoche and Surkhang wouldn't come. Some Lamas had also studied under him, like the Nyarong Tulku [Dawa Sangpo] and few others, who studied Tibetan Grammar.

We were very poor and had nothing. No traders visited him. Some people from Amdo [Northeast-Tibet, his home country] would come. When they came to see GC, they would speak in Amdo dialect, which I did not understand. Now, they may not be alive anymore. I remember Amdo Lobsang [See interview: Lobsang Samten] and Amdo Tsondru. When GC died, his body was taken to Sera monastery. That procession was organized by the Drepung Lhubum *Khangtsen* [his former college, when he was in Drepung]. They did the prayers, usually performed for the Lamas. The procession went around Barkhor lead by people carrying incense. Trumpets were blown at the same time [this part of the story is not confirmed]. I needn't have done anything. They arranged everything. Then on the 49th day after his demise, when I had to arrange a major prayer ceremony for him, I was told to vacate the house. So I couldn't have the prayers done for GC. But the prayers on the 49th day after the death, is a very important custom. I approached Horkhang to request to the Cabinet, to let me keep the house, as the prayers for the 49th day were not done yet. They told me that if I could perform the works as good as GC, then they would allow me to keep the house. They were being so contemptuous and I had nothing to say. But Horkhang was a nice man, and he was especially good to me.

How did some of GC's visitors treat you?

They didn't have any respect for me, since I am an illiterate and also woman from Kham [East-Tibet]. They never liked me and treated me badly. After their departure, GC used to tell me to let them have their ways, and we would have ours. Some had even told GC that I was an illiterate and he should leave me and take the daughter of an aristocrat and move there. But he told them that he neither wanted the girl, did he want to stay there. GC had told them that he wouldn't live long and he would go back, but didn't tell them, where he would be going.

You [she is referring to us] wouldn't know anything about them [the aristocrats], because you are so young. That time, the aristocrats were so arrogant and lived lavishly. They would look at us, as if we were insects. They only knew how to be pompous. They were not so knowledgeable and in fact, they knew nothing. Still, we had to bow down at them each time they came. When they came for the lessons, they looked down upon me, so I didn't stay inside [See interview: Amdo Champa]. For some, I didn't even pour tea. I would leave the house at once, instead of telling them to come and sit, thinking that they would look down on me. Because I too have feelings! GC told me often not to stick out my tongue [a Tibetan

way of showing respect] in front of them. But Horkhang [although being an aristocrat] was a nice man. He would ask me to sit down etc. He was good to me, always.

Otherwise, the other aristocrats were just like a piece of shit. They had been destroyed and they should be. If I had said such things in the past [before the Chinese invaded], I would have been crushed. Now, when I say such things, I lose nothing, on the contrary, it gives me satisfaction. What else can I do? I am angry... because my daughter and me couldn't stay with GC, out of fear of being sent to the prison with him. Some advised him not to tell anybody that he had a wife and a daughter. For that reason he always had to be cautious, else we too would suffer in the prison with him. Was that good? He said he had seen the worst in the prison.

GC was kept in the basement of the Nangtseshag prison [at backside of Jokhang Temple]. They would take him down to his cell with a ladder, and after putting him in the basement, they would take away the ladder. There was one prison mate, called Sernyag Rinpoche. They were kept in adjacent cells. They had made a hole through the walls and used to pass letters to each other. GC never cared, what might happen to him. He was released soon after.

He never had much happiness in his life. When he was in India, he was busy fulfilling his quest for knowledge. He led a miserable life. And I too, had led a miserable life. Now the condition has greatly improved. It's all by the grace of Communist China. GC always used to tell me, not to stretch out my tongue in front of the officials. I will never forget that. Many high officials came to learn from him. GC disliked Kapshopa. He would tell Kapshopa that his act of prostration and showing respect to him was a farce and would continue that it was bad to pretend otherwise. He would say that it was useless to prostrate in front of him, since they were responsible for his imprisonment. GC was a very straightforward person. He would point out things without fear and hesitation.

But after his release, he stayed in the house of Kapshopa for some time. According to GC, he was kept there to keep an eye on him, on the order of Trijang Rinpoche [Trijang's involvement is not confirmed by anybody else]. He said that they wanted to check, whom he was meeting and whom he was contacting. During that time, the government had ordered to give GC 50 silver coins and 50 sacks of grains, but he never got them [See interview: Lobsang Samten]. GC said that they would never give it to him, and even if they did so, he said, he would never take it. Though people believe that late Trijang Rinpoche was a high lama, in reality he was a farce.

Did GC ever tell you why he was imprisoned?

GC said that due to his connection with the foreign countries and having traveled widely, he was later accused of being a spy and was imprisoned. He said they had also accused him of printing fake notes of the Tibetan currency, which he had never done. He said they had lied, because he never knew how to print such money. Having blamed him as an international spy, and also of printing fake notes, he was imprisoned [See interviews: Tashi Pelra, Amdo Champa].

Do you know anything about GC being part of a spy group?

No, I do not know. It was the accusation made by the Cabinets, to accuse GC of being an international spy. They had just accused him, without any proof and jailed him, because they needed some reason for his imprisonment. GC said they made that accusation only to jail him. The accusation had been widely known in Lhasa. GC would only say that it was very bad, and that he wouldn't live much longer, since the aristocrats had accused him and had labeled him a bad person. He said he was blamed of things, he had never done. Otherwise he only talked about his Tibetan History [The White Annals] and his lessons, and not about his daily life.

After GC's demise, did you face any problems?

I used to go to the villages to collect grains. I had also worked for Horkhang for two years. For a year I took my daughter with me, but the next year I left her with somebody. Likewise, I had been running errands, like washing clothes for others. I didn't have any specific work. Then in 1954, I was involved in the Cultural Revolution. That was in January 1954 [the CR actually began 12 years later. She must be talking about something else or she is confusing the year]. I remember it very clearly. So my life went on like that even to these days. I didn't carry my daughter with me, but I went to her, as they wouldn't allow me to work with a small child hanging around. Life had been very difficult for her, too. We didn't have any money with us. Even though I had my own father in Kham, my mother was only my stepmother. Life was difficult, which was, why I was compelled to come here. Then, when I got involved in the Cultural Revolution [, my daughter was sent to school, with the money provided by the government and some from my salary. Then my daughter was sent to China and our life got better. I do not want to talk on the pre-independent society anymore [Tibet, before 1951]. If you had seen me that time, you would say that GC's poor wife was living in such a bad state. Right now I am happy, living in this house.

Where were you, when GC was dying?

I didn't go to that house, when he was dying. It was on a Friday, around dusk. He was suffering from oedema. He was saying that he was taking all this medicine and still it would not help. After his death, I wasn't allowed to stay in that house. I went to take refuge in Amdo Lobsang's and his wife's place at Banagshol. But they had already left for business. So I had been taking refuge elsewhere, to whomever I knew or worked for.

How did people come to know of his death?

It was like this... Nyarong Lama [Dawa Sangpo] heard of his death. He knew many monks from Drepung monastery. The monks from Lhubum Khangtsen [GC's former college] came and arranged for the funeral procession. They told me not to come. I stayed in the house of my Mongolian neighbor, whose wife was also a *khampa* woman [from East-Tibet]. There was nothing in our house. There was nothing to sell. There were these two trunks filled with books. There was also something he brought from India, but someone stole it. I was known as the wife of the great GC, but in reality I had nothing. I worked petty jobs collecting grains and carrying them to the prisons: I stayed like that for a long time.

The Chinese came to Tibet in 1951. What was your impression of that time?

GC and myself were staying together then. Earlier we were staying at Kapshopa's house. When we were there, we couldn't move freely. Later, we shifted to the house at Gurushar. Our neighbor was a Mongolian Geshe [scholar]. People just called him Geshe, though I don't know, whether he actually was one or not. He made rosaries and carved Tibetan letters on stones [most often the *mantra*, 'Om Mani Padme Hum']. We were still at Gurushar, when the Chinese first came to Tibet. The Mongolian Geshe used to help GC to move up to the window [due to his illness, GC could not walk anymore]. Looking out of the window, GC said that the Liberating forces have come. He would say that now they are here, now they are here... [See interview: Golok Jigme]

Did he think it was good?

It seems he thought that it was good. He said the Liberating forces have come. [See interview: Golok Jigme, who indicates that GC sarcastically commented on the arrival of the Chinese troops]. When the forces first came to Tibet, there was an incidence. There was a person called Baba Namgyal [a former monk from Drepung, working with the Chinese]. He brought a Chinese doctor with him. GC asked the Chinese doctor to cure him. They communicated in English. They didn't talk in Chinese. The doctor asked of the disease, and GC told him all his problems. Later Baba Namgyal came back and told GC that the doctor had asked him to take a picture. He also said that the doctor wanted GC to do many things for him, and also wanted to assure that he gets well.

Anything more?

Now I can't remember much. GC always said that, even if the Chinese came to Tibet, they wouldn't eat people. He said, the Chinese would neither kill, nor hurt the Tibetans. He would say this many times. He said the same to Horkhang. But Nyarong Lama [Dawa Sangpo] didn't trust the Chinese, telling GC the Chinese would destroy him. GC told him not to worry, saying nothing bad would happen that if he kept religion his own business, then nothing would happen. Nyarong Lama was a high lama from a monastery in Nyarong. Now he is no more. He was a good man. He was very good to GC. GC taught him poetry, grammar and languages. He was not teaching him English, though. English was taught only to the sons of the aristocrats and high officials, irrespective of their capabilities. He would say that it was useless for them to study English.

ALAK TSAYUL



Recorded on the 9th of March 2000 in Dharamshala, India.

Born 1938 near Labrang in Northeastern Tibet. His teacher Deshek Tsang had been a classmate of GC in the 1920's. He studied as a monk in Labrang Monastery until it was closed down in the early 1960's. Spent some years in the Chinese gulag. Later fled to Dharamshala in India, where he published a history of the Labrang area (since the communist invasion). He became a minister (Kalon) in the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamshala. He died in 2002. Tibetan, not in the film.

What's your name and how old are you?

My name is Alak Tsayul and I am 62 years old.

Tell us a bit about GC?

I spent many years in Labrang as a young boy [1940's/1950's]. But I never met GC [who left Labrang in 1927]. When I joined Labrang to study there, GC wasn't there anymore. He was said to have gone to Lhasa. I had a teacher, who taught me dialectics and other disciplines. Teacher Deshek Tsang said that he and GC had been in the same class.

Tell us about the time when Gendun GC was there?

My teacher, Deshek Tsang, would occasionally tell me about GC. I don't remember much nowadays. He told me that he and GC had been in the same class. He would tell me about how they debated. He would tell me about the precocity and diligence of GC. He said GC was hugely interested in electricity, ships, in modern science and technology. This is what my teacher, Deshek Tsang, told me. Now I don't remember very clearly.

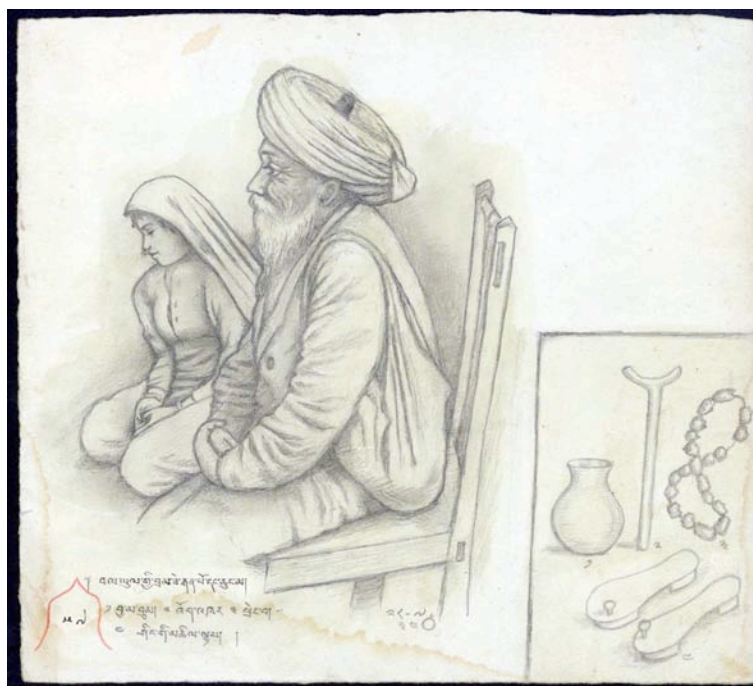
In the case of Labrang Tashikyil, there used to be a lot of monks during prayer meetings. In summer, we had two days of holiday after every fortnight. During one of these days, GC invited his classmates to play. There was a large lake, known as Gyanak Patsang-gi-Tsokyil, in front of Labrang. A large body of water formed there during the rainy season in summer. He invited his classmates to accompany him to the shore of that lake, saying he would like to play there. It turned out that he had a small box with a small mechanical device in it. He put a small amount of oil in it and lit it. The box sailed straight from south to north, and vice versa. He made such a ship, my teacher said. Everybody was filled with wonder and amazement. [See interview: Alak Yongtsin] GC said he didn't have money. Otherwise, it was the same technology, which made big ships sail on the sea. 'This is the principle on which big ships sail on the sea.

I know this technology. But I don't have money. If I had a lot of money, (you have to understand that there was a big river, called Sangchu, near the monastery), I knew the technology to lift the water from that lake even up to the top of the hill behind the monastery.' I remember my teacher having narrated this story to me.

Did you hear other stories from your teacher?

Another thing he told me is this: After going to Lhasa and studying there for some years, GC left for India. One day, his class received a small box, which GC had sent from India. Teacher Deshek Tsang showed me this box. There were people like Geshe Aku Tsonдру and Alak Tsenag in his class [former friends of GC in Labrang]. The inscription on the parcel said, 'to Aku Tsonдру to present this to my classmates.' It was a wooden box with iron bands and nails. There was a place called Lang-gya in the Labrang region'. A businessman from that area, known as Jigme of Langya [near Rebkong], brought it from India. I think the year was 1953 or 1954. Jigme of Langya came and gave this box to the geshe [scholars]. During a holiday, the whole class was invited to look at the box. My teacher took me to witness the gift. 'Let's go today. There is a spectacle, which we must watch,' my teacher said. I went there. All the spectators were senior monks.

They had gathered in Aku Tsonдру's room. The box was opened. It was filled with paintings. (Image 8: One of GC's many paintings from India. But only 28 of his watercolors survived). There were different paintings, of which one that I remember was of the stupa in Bodhgaya. It seems he had gone to Sri Lanka as well. There were paintings of the monasteries and statues in Sri Lanka. First, I thought they were photos. 'These must be photos,' I commented. The seniors said these were paintings, not photos. On careful examinations, I realized they were



indeed paintings. But they looked like color photographs. The papers were thick. There were both big and small paintings. There were maps of major pilgrim centers in India. Then there were paintings of the flowers, trees, and other plants that grow in India, but not in Tibet. Another painting, as I remember, was of the palace on the Red Hill built by King Songtsen Gampo. The present Potala must have been the royal palace during the reign of Songtsen Gampo. The painting depicts two palaces, called the Father's Palace and the Mother's Palace. An overhanging bridge spanned the two palaces. There were people walking on this bridge. The palaces were surrounded by a parapet in the pattern of the Great Wall of China. Soldiers were on sentry on the parapet. They were in Tibetan dress and clutched bow-and-arrows and spears. Then there was a painting of Tso Pema. This also looked like a photograph. There were paintings of the Vulture

Hill, Rajghar, etc. [Buddhist pilgrim sites in India]. There were painting of spectacular landscapes and about 200 fruit trees. There was a Tibetan inscription near each tree, which says this must be the so and so tree, as described in Vinaya; this is the tree referred to as so and so in Tibetan [See interview: Akhu Lama Tsering]. The former classmates of GC commented, 'GC is a meticulous researcher in these fields. This must be true. For example, Neldro tree must look like this. We haven't seen it, having not gone to India.' I remember this [28 of these paintings were presented during a congress on Gendun Choephel at Latse Library in New York, 2003. One was numbered '272', indicating that GC had painted at least 272 of such paintings].

What happened to the box later?

I don't know. I guess the Chinese took it. I say this because in 1958 my teacher Deshek Tsang and Geshe Tsondru were arrested by the Chinese for no reason [this is the time preceding and following the uprising of the Tibetans against the Chinese in Lhasa]. We were all arrested at that time. Most of the lamas and monks of Labrang were arrested. Earlier, it had been thought that one person should take care of this box. The care of the box was entrusted to Geshe Tsondru, who kept it in his room. Now if the Chinese arrested one person, his possessions would be confiscated in the name of nationalization. That's why I suspect the Chinese took this box. If you ask me, how I know that the Chinese took it, in 1965 I was released from prison and sent to Tzo area for 'thought reform', which involved abandoning the 'old religious and superstitious thought' and learning the thoughts of Marx and Lenin. There was a class for this education. One of my classmates was Tenpa Gyatso, former teacher of the Northwestern Nationalities University in Lanzhou [the capital of Gansu province. Today, Labrang monastery belongs to Gansu]. There I saw the painting of the Songtsen Gampo's palace on the Red Hill. I asked him where had he got it from. 'Isn't this the painting of GC?' He replied in the affirmative. I asked, 'How did you get it? I saw this painting several years ago.' He said, 'this must be true. I used to clean the offices of Gannan Prefectural People's Government and Prefectural Committee. One day I was asked to burn the garbage of the United Front office. I saw this painting in the garbage and salvaged it. I knew immediately that this was a precious painting. I hid it from the cadres. There was only this painting there. This is how this painting came into my possession.' From this I can surmise that the Chinese took the box. The PSB [Public Security Bureau], the United Front and the Religious Bureau had dealt directly with our monastery. It seems the box was taken to the United Front office. They probably thought the paintings were worthless and thus dumped them in the garbage bin. This was the only painting in the garbage bin. The painting had been with teacher Tenpa Gyatso. From this I can surmise that the Chinese took the paintings.

Did the monks in Labrang dislike GC?

I didn't hear anything to this effect from his classmates and my teacher. But other monks said that after going to India, GC disrobed and lost faith in Buddhism. Some said that he had become a staunch communist. My teacher Deshek Tsang told me this: 'People say all kinds of things about GC. I have not met him for many years after his departure to Lhasa and then to India. But as I see it, I find it difficult to believe that GC has lost faith in Buddhism and espoused communism. I think he is not that kind of person. He is highly learned in Buddhism. He studied in Labrang and then in Lhasa. He has studied

Buddhist philosophy very thoroughly. He is highly learned in Buddhism. Such a person cannot lose faith in Buddhism. I don't believe that he has lost faith in Buddhism.'

The other thing I heard is that the Tibetan government arrested him on his return to Lhasa. He later died in prison. This is what my teacher told me. I heard many different stories. I wasn't in Lhasa then. I wouldn't know the truth. There were many stories. Some said that after his arrival in India, he joined the Russian or some other communist party [probably referring to GC's friend Rahul Sankrityayan, who was a communist party member in India]. Then he returned to Tibet with the intention of toppling the Tibetan government. That's why he was arrested. This is what some people told me. Others said he was arrested, because he had forged Tibetan currency notes. The charge of having forged currency notes is baseless. He was not the kind of person who would do such a thing. My teacher said that this charge was baseless. My teacher did not even believe that he had become a communist or had hatched a plan to topple the Tibetan government. My teacher said GC was interested in researching the Tibetan culture. He was interested in going to different places on pilgrimage in order to do research. He was not interested in politics and wouldn't have intended to topple the Tibetan government. My teacher said this [the question, whether GC was actually interested in politics (or not), goes on to the present day. Many Tibetans prefer to see him as a 'cultural' and 'spiritual' figure, rather than being 'political', too].

Could you tell us a brief story about Labrang when GC was there?

The communists hadn't come to Labrang when GC was there [1920-27]. That was probably during the time of Ma Pufang [a Muslim warlord, fighting the local Chinese troops and the Tibetans for control over the region in Northeast-Tibet]. He waged many wars against Labrang in order to seize lands. The people of Labrang rebelled against him many times. I think GC wasn't at Labrang in that period. But GC was then probably already in Lhasa. Even if he had been there, he wouldn't have participated in the fight against Ma Pufang. According to the monastery rule, promising students were not allowed to participate in the fights. They didn't have to fight. Laymen participated in the fights. The secretary of Jamyang Zhepa [abbot of Labrang] and some other leaders had to fight. The remaining monks were not allowed to fight. Even if he had been there, he would have left for Lhasa within one or two years. I heard nothing about GC's participation in the fights [between 1920 and 1927, Labrang was raided several times].

Why did Ma Pufang wage wars against Labrang?

It was probably like this. Ma Pufang came to Labrang to conquer lands. This is the story, told in the past. There is an area called Shongpha, known as Yazi in the past. The Chinese dynasty, before the Nationalists was Man-Qing [the Manchus, called Qing dynasty]. The last Man-Qing emperor is said to have written a letter to Ma Pufang, stating that Labrang was part of Yazi and, thus, of China. But, in reality, Labrang never paid taxes to Yazi. Yazi soldiers were never stationed in Labrang. Sometimes, Yazi leaders came to Labrang. They would go home happily, when money and other gifts were given to them. And then they wouldn't come the following year. That used to be the case in that period. Then Ma Pufang captured Yazi. He captured the whole of Qinghai [Northeast-Tibet]; today Labrang is part of Gansu province]. By virtue of this, he claimed the territory of Labrang. He wanted to impose taxes on Labrang. Labrang sold

weapons. It produced wool, leather, hides and other animal products. Therefore, Ma Pufang thought he would amass wealth from Labrang. So he waged wars and demanded taxes. The people of Labrang said they had never paid taxes to others in the past, that there was no tradition of paying taxes to the Chinese, that they had never paid taxes to them for generations, and that they paid taxes only to Jamyang Zhepa [meaning the monastery of Labrang] and his patron. The patron was of Mongolian origin. He used to be known as 'Gyalpoi Bang' or 'Gyalpoi Chinang' in Labrang [Apo Alo]. He was known as the leader of Labrang. The people said that if at all they should pay any taxes, it should be to him and not to any Chinese. They refused to pay taxes, which is why Ma Pufang waged wars [this clearly indicates a certain kind of Tibetan nationalism in Northeast-Tibet].

Tell me more about the fights.

The story I heard was like this: The Tibetans were very poorly armed. They had a handful of obsolete guns. The Tibetans fought mainly with swords and spears. They also had horses. Many people fought on the horseback. Ma Pufang's soldiers had sophisticated weapons by the standard of that time. They had lots of guns and ammunition. Many battles were fought, with high casualties on both sides. Several battles were fought. The battles were fought in many areas, including Gyangya and Sangkhok [just a few kilometers outside of Labrang]. There is a place called Amchok, which is my birthplace. The vanguard fighters were from there. That's why the soldiers of Man-Qing [Chinese] came and burned down Amchok Monastery. It was burned down so completely that there was not even a finger-sized wood left. The buildings, statues, golden tombs, woodblocks, etc. were all burned down. In terms of weaponry, the two sides matched very unevenly [from 1920 to 1950 was a period of huge turmoil, often the Tibetans would side with the Chinese troops to fight Ma Pufang].

Tell us about Labrang.

To tell you briefly about Labrang, Kunkyen Jamyang Zhepa established it. He was a highly accomplished scholar in 1630-1640. Before 1958, there were some 6,000 monks [probably 3-4'000] and six colleges in it. Of them, *Thoesamling* was the dialectical college. This college was for the study of the 'Five Major Disciplines' with specialization in dialectics [debating]. Then there were *Gyutoe* and *Gyume* colleges. There were *Key-dor* college, *Kalachakra* college and the Medical college. Altogether, there were six colleges. The other colleges specialized in the study and practice of tantra. The Medical college specialized in the science of healing. In the history of Labrang, many graduates of Labrang worked as doctors in the area. The first patron was a Mongolian king, called Chinang. He sponsored the construction of the monastery. Thereafter, there were eight groups of patrons, as I mentioned earlier. This included nomads. Most of them were nomads. There were some valley dwellers as well. *Ngulra*, *Kyogo*, *Zoge Nyima*, *Khotse*, *Gen-gya* and *Sangkhok* were all nomadic groups. *Amchok*, *Bora* and *Tsaye* were valley dwellers. Thus there were many nomads and valley dwellers. Before 1958, Labrang had a very good tradition of Buddhist teaching and practice. The 14th Dalai Lama came there in 1955 [en route to China]. The 10th Panchen Lama came there many times. He came there twice before 1958. Then in 1958 and during the Cultural Revolution, the monastery suffered lots of destruction. Beginning in the 1980's, the monastery was rebuilt. Now, it is said to be in a very good shape. It is now reputed to be the best

monastery in Amdo [Northeast-Tibet] for the learning and practice of Buddhism. It is said that monasteries in other areas benefit greatly by inviting teachers from Labrang. In the past, there were many highly learned scholars in Labrang. Even now there are many good scholars among the young monks. For example, Hortsang Jigme [See interview: Hortsang Jigme], who is now in Dharamshala [India], studied in Labrang for some years. There are many monks from Labrang monastery in the Gomang college in South India [formerly part of Drepung monastery in Lhasa]. This is the present story of Labrang monastery.

Tell us about GC and the American missionary Griebenow, named Sherab Tanphel.

I don't know much about this. I am not sure if they met each other before GC left for Lhasa. I don't know this very well. I guess GC left Lhasa before that. Sherab Tanphel stayed in Labrang area from 1921 to 1949. *(Image 9: One of the many photographs of the American missionary. Nomads near Labrang Monastery, late 1920's).* I saw him. He



could write and speak Tibetan. I don't know what kind of relationship he had with GC. I guess perhaps GC met him briefly before his departure to Lhasa. I have no knowledge of any meeting between the two of them [See interview: Yudrung Gya, Alak Yongtsin, Hortsang Jigme].

Did GC learn English from Sherab Tanphel?

Yes, I heard something to this effect. I heard that when GC first came to Labrang, he learned English from Sherab Tanphel. He, in turn, taught Tibetan to Sherab Tanphel. There was a story to this effect. But I do not know this very well. I think GC was then already in Lhasa. Perhaps, they met for a short time. I heard something like this in the past.

Which books of GC did you read?

I have read his geographical book, entitled *Ser-gyi Thangma* [GC travel account from India, see Horkhang]. It is about his travels to India and Sri Lanka. Then I have read his short writings. I have read his lyrics, written in prison. I have also read his lyrics sent to Labrang and those written in Lhasa. In *Ser-gyi Thangma*, he has written about India and Sri Lanka. There is the history of Sri Lanka in that book. He has written in detail about this pilgrim area, about the succession of rulers there, about the rise and fall of Buddhism there, about what religions prevailed there at what times, etc. This is a great book of immense historical value. But I can't single out a particular work. All his works are written in beautiful prose and are very profound. This is it. I can't say this or that work is the best. His writing style is unique.

How important do you think is GC to the Tibetan society?

He was a great man in the history of Tibet. He suffered a lot. He didn't get the opportunity to really work after his return to Tibet. If he had become a teacher in a school, he would have produced many learned students. He was a brilliant writer. I think that if he had the opportunity to write more, he would have produced precious works. At that time, I don't know, whether it was because of political complications or some other reasons, it was said that some people [the British Secret Service] in India wrote to the Tibetan government at that time to say that GC had set up an organization to topple the government. I am not sure what really happened. He suffered a lot. He spent time in jail. Later, he did not live long. It is said that he wasn't old, when he died [49]. His death is a great loss to the people of Tibet. If he had not died and if he had been allowed to work, as he desired, he would have contributed immensely to the Tibetan learning. Apart from this, he was highly regarded politically. He would have contributed a lot in political terms also. But that was not to be so. This was a great loss, I feel.

Have you read his historical opus, the White Annals?

Yes, I have read the White Annals. It was beautifully written. But he could not complete this book. I don't know what prevented him from completing this work. The White Annals contains accounts of Tibet's ancient *dharma* [religious] kings [GC's book tries to focus on their political achievements, though]. I wish he had completed it and written about the later period in Tibetan history. But the later part was not written. The earlier part was written in brief [7th to 9th century].

Do you know anything else about GC?

One thing I forgot to tell you is this. GC was a contemporary of the 5th Jamyang Zhepa [abbot of Labrang]. Some people say this about Jamyang Zhepa: In some works, it is stated that GC and Jamyang Zhepa did not get on well with each other. But this is untrue. In reality, GC and the 5th Jamyang Zhepa had a good relationship. What indicates this is that, when Jamyang Zhepa went to Lhasa and studied there for some years, GC was also there. They seem to have met each other at Narthang [See the account of Phani Mukherjee], which in the past was a printing press for the *Tangyur* and *Tengyur* [the two major works of Buddhism]. In one of his compositions, GC has written this:

'At the great Narthang Monastery

I met the All-knowing King [Jamyang Zhepa]

He spoke happily to me at length

He did not look down on me

He is a humble person

He spoke to me happily.

Hortsang Jigme quotes this in his book. When I was in Tibet, I heard this: GC and Jamyang Zhepa met at Narthang [Central Tibet]. Of course, I did not hear about the aforesaid composition at that time. When they met at Narthang, Jamyang Zhepa said this, 'It is good that we have met today. Now I am about to complete my education in Lhasa. After that I will go back to Labrang. On my return I will open a school in the monastery. In the past, there wasn't any school in the monastery. Of course, people could receive

education in the monastery or you can call it a school. But there was no modern school in the monastery. That is why I want to open a school to teach Chinese, Tibetan, other languages and mathematics. Since you were formerly a monk of Labrang, it will be good if you can come there and teach. If our school comes out well, we will educate many learned young Tibetans.' [See account of Phani Mukherjee]. GC supported him and agreed to go there. I had not heard this story in the past. However, he could not go. GC died in 1951 or 1952. Kukhyen Jamyang Zhepa had already died in 1947. A short time after his arrival there, the school was opened. That was indeed a good school. He died not long after the school was opened. I heard this story in the past. Judging by this story, it is obvious that there is no basis to the claim that they did not enjoy good relationship. It is written clearly there, 'they talked happily at length.'

Why do you think GC had to leave Labrang?

He left to study. Some people say that he had to leave because many people in Labrang disliked him, or were jealous of him. This does not seem to be the case [See interview: Alak Yongtsin]. The main reason is that he was precocious. That is, why he thought he should pursue in his learning in the wider world, in a bigger monastery. He left Labrang after a few years. In Labrang he was the best student in his class. That's why he thought that he should instead go to Lhasa and study in a big monastery [Drepung]. He left because of this. He was not kicked out of Labrang.

LHAKPA PHUTI [excerpts from a longer interview]



Conducted in Darjeeling on the 16th of April 2000.

Born 1926 in Dali, near Darjeeling (India). She is the granddaughter of Dolma Yangzom, in whose honor GC had written a poem (See: 'Poem for Dolma Yangzom'). She briefly met GC in the late 1930's in her home in Dali, when she was still a child. She remembers him painting the family altar. Presently lives in Darjeeling. English, not in the film.

Your name and age?

My name is Lhakpa Phuti; I'm 75 years old [laughs]. I'm married, I have four children, one son and three daughters, and all are married now and settled in their own place.

Let's talk about Gendun Choephel?

I will tell you... I was adopted by my grandparents. We were staying near Central Hotel. Now is just a playing ground, all the houses are in ruins. So, GC used to come and visit our place. And my grandmother's... grandmother actually married a Tibetan from Amdo [Northeast-Tibet]. From there they got the relation with GC and his disciple used to stay in our house. GC used to stay in Bhutia Busti [the Tibetan quarter in Darjeeling] and used to visit our home every day. He studied English every day with my grandfather. GC was very clever, very intelligent. He used to discuss many things, but being a small child at the time [about 11 years old], I didn't know what they were talking about. But you could make out how clever he was. He used to tease me. He often said, 'I will get married to this girl' [laughs]. I used to get very angry with him [laughs]. An old man wants to get married with me! Then I remember that he used to go to Kullu valley [today in Himachal Pradesh] to Dr. George Roerich, a Russian painter [George's father, Nicholas Roerich was the painter]. GC stayed there. After that, we don't get in contact, but we used to get news about his whereabouts, like Lhasa... but I don't know about the Kalimpong connection... when he went to Lhasa, we used to get news, that he was imprisoned in Lhasa, that he got married. They were forced to marry. GC was also forced to drink alcohol, he became alcoholic... and after that, we didn't hear about him anymore...

Tell me more about GC, how did he look?

How can I explain, how he looked? That he was dressed, like in the picture you gave me? A Sikkimese dress, a very simple bold head, with spectacles, with a golden rim, small ones, a light yellow shirt, a brown *chuba* [Tibetan dress], a Sikkimese *chuba*... He used to dress like this, very simple, with both hands in his back and he used to walk like that... and he used to sit like, what you call, like a Rinpoche, all

this in the chair. But not exactly like a monk, but he was like a big shot, as if he was going to say something, teach people... he had that... a very knowledgeable man. Not just talking like this, only sensible talk, he used to sit like this. He wouldn't give any advice to us, like, this is wrong, this is right, I never heard him saying things like that. Very reserved, very... how to say, knowledgeable, and he studied people. But he used to write a lot. When he used to visit Dr. Roerich in Kullu valley, he was writing some... he was translating some literature, something like this... [She might be referring to GC's collaboration with Roerich in writing 'The Blue Annals']. But being so young, I couldn't really understand, what was politics, what religion and all this... and mostly GC used to talk in Amdo dialect, we could not follow him. Only when he spoke with my grandparents, he spoke in the Lhasa dialect, only then we could follow. Otherwise in this Amdo dialect, he was difficult to understand. I'm trying to go back and remember, trying to go back...

What was his relationship with you mother?

Like friends, just ordinary friends. Actually, he was very close to my grandmother [Dolma Yangzom], being Khampas and Amdos under one roof; we got very mixed languages, Kham and Amdo dialect, all mixed up. So we could not speak a perfect Tibetan. On top of that, we lived in Darjeeling and mainly spoke Nepali, a very common language... Nepali, Tibetan, Kham and Amdo, all mixed up. Sometimes, when I talk to Tibetans in Tibetan, they say, 'you get a mixed up language; sometimes you speak like an Amdo, sometimes like a Khampa [laughs].

Now, what about the relationship of your grandmother and GC?

Mostly they used to talk about religion. My grandmother used to take advice from GC. And GC himself was not very religious, just... they used to talk about the country, about their motherland [Amdo]. He knew all about what was going to happen to the country, I think, so that's why he was trying to explain to people that this [?] is going to happen. But nobody did believe him; nobody took it seriously. When he went back to Tibet, he was arrested. He did lots of things for Tibet and you also know *geshe* Samten Norbu... [Who was the first to translate GC's 'White Annals' in to Tibetan in 1978].

What did GC think about Tibet?

[Thinks] ... a person like him, very difficult to understand. I think he worked mostly for his country. And so, many Tibetans were against him. Later I heard rumors that most of them [Tibetans?] were killed, after the Chinese reigned in Tibet... but he was in India... he was arrested, imprisoned in Lhasa, all these rumors went around sometimes... he was said to have been forced to marry a Chinese lady, he was made to drink alcohol, became alcoholic... he did not eat any food, and drinks, like that

What did he do in your home?

He painted our altar [the Buddhist shrine is still in their home, but GC's paintings can hardly be seen anymore]. He painted flowers, birds, all this, but he was very... what you call, not lazy, but he used to paint, while sleeping, he was lying on the bed, a comfortable way of painting [laughs]... GC used to paint lying on the bed, like this [laughs]... and we used to say, after all human being, oh, this Lama [GC] is a

very lazy type of painter. He wanted all the comfort to paint our picture [laughs]... but he did all these paintings. The paintings were of flowers of his own country. So, I remember him, we didn't see this type of flowers, but how can he paint all these funny flowers? But later, when I went to teagarden, I saw the same type of flowers, I said, he must be very clever. Maybe in his hometown, the flowers grew like this? That's why he painted all these beautiful flowers. I still remember this. He never painted a Buddha or a Dolma [Tara, a female Goddess] or Guru Rinpoche [the founder of the Nyingmapa tradition]. He never painted like this. Only flowers, mostly flowers, and no fruit and sceneries...

While he was painting, were you there?

I was used to go running around the house, and he used to paint, we were not allowed to watch, like, disturbing him. He used to paint with all these brushes and his disciple [?] used to, what you call, worship him like a god. GC's disciple... I think, must be some holy man, because the way they worship him, I was wondering about this man, why are people worshipping him, why is his name so famous? But he doesn't look like this... just like a simple man, but all the Amdos, they just. You used to mention his name [I have no idea anymore, who she is referring to], they said, 'oh, he is a great man'. In which way, I didn't understand...

What did GC and your grandmother do together?

They used to sit in the room, where the altar was. They used to lock the room. I don't know what they did, because we were not allowed to go in. My grandmother was very strict. She not even allowed the people to hear... when they read the holy books, we are made to sit around and listen to the prayers, otherwise, when there were other people, they spoke secret prayers and they closed the altar room, and they sit and... I don't know what they did? They take a book and they sit... in Hindi they said Guru Dackchina [?]... Maybe GC has given some prayers through this, you must do this or that... but all my grandmother used to do, even my grandfather, they used to worship him. But me being still a kid, he used to tease me. I didn't like his teasing. I used to run away, I was the only kid here. That time the others weren't born.

How do you look at GC now?

Nowadays I think he was great man, a noble man, he wanted... he was a person... you can't say he was a holy man or he was a politician, but he was big noble man. Very knowledgeable, he had a big knowledge, but no one can really explain. Maybe a few people can recognize him as a great man; I guess he is a great man! If he had support or if he had that... people. But I don't understand, why did he not complete his mission? That I couldn't understand, nowadays I think... sometimes, I can't go to sleep, I think about this, why didn't he complete his mission?

What was this mission?

That, I don't understand, whether you call it a politician or a great poet or artist... he had all that knowledge... very difficult to understand this GC.

GOLOK JIGME



Recorded on the 2nd of May 2000 in Swayambunath, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Born 1918 in Sertal, Golok (Amdo), near the Amnye Machen Range. I have almost no biographical information, except that he was traveling through India with GC in the early 1940's. He was an ordained monk of the Nyingmapa tradition. He fled from Tibet in the early 1960's to Nepal, where he lived in a small room in Swayambunath, near Kathmandu. He died shortly after the interview in the year 2000. Tibetan, in the film.

What is your name and how old are you?

I am 83 years old. I'm from Golok in Amdo [Northeast-Tibet]. I am from Sertal, Golok. Tarthang Rinpoche and I are from the same monastery. I am from Sera monastery. My first name was Jigme Phuntsok. A lama called Sogyal Tulku gave me this name. Our monastery had 1,500 monks. The head lama was Sogyal Tulku. We received empowerments and teachings from him. At that time, I could not have been more than four or five years old. Whatever the people of Golok offered him [Sogyal Rinpoche] – dris, zomos [female yaks], goats, sheep – would not die under the butcher's knife. His own dris, dzomos, goats and sheep were on his parents' estate. I had to go there to fetch milk and yogurt.

From a young age, I went to Lhasa on pilgrimage. First, I reached Reting. Then, I reached Lhasa. I went to all the holy places, such as the monasteries of Sera, Drepung, Ganden, Sakya, Lhodrak, etc. When I was small, I saw a photo of Bodhgaya [where Buddha attained enlightenment, place in Central India]. At that time, I promised myself that I would visit that holy site. Later, I came to India on pilgrimage. At that time, I did not know any English or any other language. First, I reached Kalimpong. I met some Khampas [people from East-Tibet] in Kalimpong. I told them that I was on my way to Bodhgaya. They said that in Darjeeling, there was a person called Amdo Gendun Choephel [GC], who knew all the languages. He was scheduled to go to Bodhgaya and if I met him, he would take me there with him. He probably knew all the language well, they said. Then I went to Siliguri [south of Kalimpong]. At the time, there were Tibetan restaurants in Siliguri. There were Nepalese, Indian and British restaurants, too. I stayed there. One day, I went to a teashop, owned by Tawo Nyima and his wife. I asked them about GC. They told me he was in Darjeeling. They said, 'He looks like a good monk. He is probably a tantric practitioner. He is from Amdo. This is all we know. We have no idea which spiritual lineage he belongs to. He is writing a guide book on Indian pilgrim sites.' I spent one day there. GC came there all of a sudden. He was wearing a Muslim dress. His face was dark.

I asked him where he was from. He said he was from Amdo. I told him I was from Golok. He said, 'Oh, we are from the same region. He asked me, where I was headed forth. I said I wanted to go to Bodhgaya, but that I did not know the Indian language. He asked me, where I had learned about Bodhgaya. I said I did not know anything about it. I had seen a picture and was filled with devotion for this holy site. I was told that this was the place where Lord Buddha had turned the Wheel of Dharma [teaching Buddhism]. I told him that I wanted to go to that place. He said, 'Okay, I am also going there. Let's go together. I am writing a guide book to open the doors of pilgrimage sites to Tibetans.' He said, 'Let's go together. I know the language. I am familiar with all these things. I have been there several times in the past. The place has become run down a lot [Bodhgaya had not been renovated by then]. But we will recognize it.' Then we walked through a Muslim area and reached the railway station of Siliguri. The British law was strict. So the roads were very safe. In Siliguri, we sat on a train at night. At daybreak, we found ourselves in Calcutta. He said, 'Now we have to go to Patliputra [Patna]. We have to change trains in Patliputra. Then, we can go to Bodhgaya from there.' He said that from Patna we could make a detour to the main Cathedral, the Odenpuri Temple [in Bodhgaya] and The Vulture Peak [both places of Buddhist pilgrimage]. I said that I did not mind taking any route. It was dark then. He went to check if we could obtain a pass to board the train. A British officer gave us each a pass. There were policeman guarding the train door. They asked us where we were going. We said we were going on pilgrimage. They said it was fine for us to sit on the train. The government would give us food, we were told. They gave us a train pass. GC said, 'Now, our purpose is fulfilled. Now we will not have to pay the train fare. We will probably get some food also. The train had a place for poor people. We were not allowed to sit on the chairs. We had to sit on the floor. We reached Calcutta around mid-night.

We got food on the train. There was mutton, rice, and whatever we wanted. There was tea, also. There was water. We got whatever we wanted to eat and drink. We were not allowed to sit in the second or third class compartments. After eating, we went back to the place for the poor. Then we reached Patliputra [Patna], we changed trains and reached Sompur the next morning. Then we reached the Ganga River [Ganges]. At the Ganga, we sat on the sand [probably near Varanasi]. 'It is really fun sitting here,' we said and sat on the sand. Then we bought some food. He said, 'Should we now make a fire?' There were many Indian corpses in the sand. The flesh had dried up on some of the corpses and the scalps were showing [along the Ganges, being a holy river for the Hindus, where many burning places. The corpses may have drifted ashore]. He said, 'I wonder whether these are the scalps of poor Indians or of Muslims. I wonder if we should go around and take some nice scalps.' I told him to forget it. He said the scalps were useful. If the scalps and shin bones belonged to Indian Acharyas [Indian teachers], they would be good, he said. He said that a segmented scalp with spiritual signs was the scalp of *dharma*. A three-segmented scalp was the scalp of wealth. Saying that scalps with patterns on them were good, he proposed that we two went about to look for a scalp. I wasn't happy with this. I asked myself, what would I do with a dry scalp. I hated corpses. Then we dug up corpses with sticks. Some corpses had worms and were stinking badly. Some corpses were completely dry. But they had decomposed after drying up. Some heads were completely white. The scalps looked good. He said, 'Let us take this. Whether it is a one-segmented scalp, or a three-segmented scalp, whether in our Nyingma system [referring to the different traditions in Tibetan

Buddhism] or in any other system, the three-segmented scalp is considered to be very good.' We plucked one scalp. There were worms on it. It stank horribly. It had to be cleaned. We searched for an empty earth-pot. We put the scalp in the pot, put water in it and boiled the scalp. The scalp became clean. The worms had probably died. He said, 'Now, we may probably need a shin bone.' 'Forget it, GC. We do not need any shinbone,' I said. Then he went to the market and bought a saw. He sawed the scalp. It started looking good. He said that the shinbone of a boy or a girl of sixteen, who had died in a fight, would be very good. Such shinbones, he said, had the power to subdue ghosts and spirits. The one-segmented and the three-segmented scalps, he said, were good, too. These, he said, would bring wealth and prosperity. To the monk, they would bring long life. Human fortune and luck, he said, were written on the scalps [nobody else confirmed this story. It clearly indicates that Golok Jigme saw GC, among other things, as a tantric practitioner].

Later, we planned to go to Nalanda [formerly a Buddhist University, which had been completely destroyed]. We went there on a small vehicle. Then we came across a small train. We were told it was bound for Bodhgaya. We first reached the site of the main Cathedral, the Odenpuri temple. He said that Shantarakshita, Padmasambhava and King Trisong Detsen modeled the Samye Temple [the oldest monastery in Tibet, southeast of Lhasa] after this Cathedral. The hilly range stretching from Bodhgaya to Nalanda was called *Khog*, he said. However, this was also called *Arya Hari*. There are many stories of this being the meeting place of Marpa, he said. This was where Marpa, the Translator [tib: *lotsawa*], had a meeting, he said. This was where Naropa had lived, he said. Lama Tilopa had given tantric teachings here, he said. This was, where Tilopa, Naropa and Marpa [three of the Tibetan Saints, who brought the Buddhist scriptures to Tibet] had met, he said. There were the footprints of Marpa, the Translator, in that holy area.

Then we reached Nalanda. The monastery had been completely destroyed. It was here that all the Tibetan scholars had translated Buddhism into Tibetan, he said. There had never been a monastery, as big as that of Nalanda, both in the east and west of India. We circumambulated Nalanda and then went to the Vulture Peak. Lord Buddha had taught the 'Transcendental Wisdom' on the Vulture Peak. We visited the palace of Buddha Amitabha and King Ajatshatru. Then, we sat on a free government vehicle [at the time, India was still under British rule] and reached Bodhgaya. There was a sandal wood tree there. We visited it and spent a night there. The next morning, we walked to Neraj, where Lord Buddha had done penance for six years, he said.

That is Bodhgaya, he said. The stupa was clearly visible from there. There were the 'Eighteen Great Cremation Grounds'. There was a rock with many patterns. He said it was the cremation ground of one of the Buddhas. I wonder if the Muslims had destroyed it. All the rocks were scattered. He said it was like the heart of Lord Buddha. He said it was where Buddha had turned the wheel of dharma. It had become run down. There were serpents sliding through rocks and thorn bushes. Circumambulation was extremely difficult. He said, 'I must write a guidebook on this. The people of the snowland of Tibet have not seen

this. They have not touched this.' [Many of the Buddhist pilgrimage sites were completely run down a the time. GC himself complains about this in his 'Travel Guide to the Holy Places in India'].

GC knew the classical Indian language. He knew Sanskrit. He knew Pali. He said he could read about history, because he knew all these languages. If one knew these languages, one could really learn history, he said. He said, 'at present, there are many languages in India. I must learn all of them. Burma and Ceylon [Sri Lanka] are Buddhist countries. We two must go there on pilgrimage. The teachings of Lord Buddha exist in these countries only in the Pali language. I have to learn Pali.' He continued, 'we can't renovate Bodhgaya. We are both too poor. Bodhgaya is the place, where Lord Buddha turned the wheel of dharma. This is where he turned the Wheel of Dharma on the truth of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path to the cessation of suffering.' But Bodhgaya was in a state of disrepair. There were only scattered rocks and sands left.

GC said, 'If we continue from here, we will eventually reach Varanasi and the holy place called Sarnath [north of Varanasi]. Varanasi is a big city and Sarnath is, where Lord Buddha turned the Wheel of Dharma for the first time [...where Buddha gave his first teachings]. *Nath* means a holy place.' We stayed there for many days. There were rock pillars even in family homes. There were inscriptions on the long rock pillars where the cattle were tethered. He said, 'these rock pillars originally came from the main Cathedral in Bodhgaya. All the history is inscribed there.' He noted down the inscriptions from all the pillars.

What happened to you during all these journeys?

We saw ordinary people. We saw the legal system of India. I did not understand anything. We did not really understand political matters. We two were just pilgrims. Finally, we even reached Bombay. Then we reached Ceylon [indicating that they were traveling together in the early 1940's]. There were thousands of monks in Sri Lanka. Then we reached New Delhi on our way back. Then we reached Pathankot [to the north of Delhi].

When we traveled, we got government food everywhere. We came upon many wedding parties. We got food from wedding parties. We got food from the families, where there had been deaths. Sometimes, we even went begging for food. We were given rice. The sight of the scalps horrified them [See above]. The people told us not to bring the scalps indoor. We got a lot of rice, so much that we would not be able to eat all the rice. So we sold the rice at a low price. With the money from these sales, we bought mutton.

In India there were forests... snow mountains... Padmasambhava's meditation caves... Then he went back to Darjeeling [where they started their pilgrimage through India]. I went back to Tibet from there on pilgrimage. I told him that I wanted to go to Sakya, Tashilhunpo [monastery], Lhodrak, Gyantse, etc. for pilgrimage and wouldn't stay in India in summer.

How many days did you stay in Sarnath when you were there?

We must have stayed there for about seven days. It was very rural. There was nothing much there. All the holy monuments had fallen into a state of disrepair. There was nothing to which one could point. There were no government offices there [today, Sarnath and Bodhgaya are among the main tourist attractions of India]. We often begged for food. Some people gave us food. Some people gave us rice and milk. Some gave us *dal* [lentils]. When we reached Varanasi, it was a big city. There were countless shops. There were trains. GC said that, although the Ganges River [flowing through Varanasi] was considered holy, people still washed their asses and other dirty thing in that river. He asked, 'What is the meaning of this?'

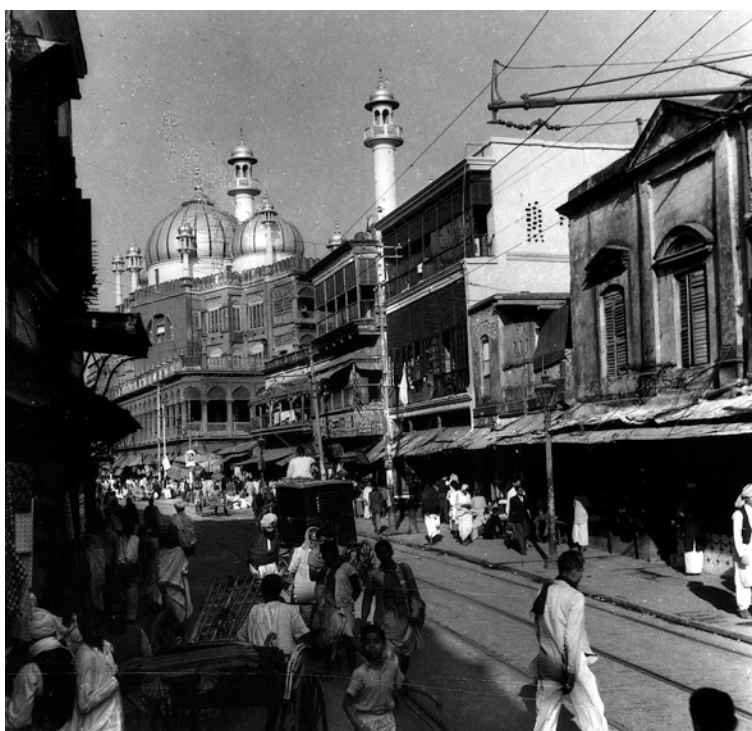
In Calcutta, where did you stay.

Where did you work?

In Calcutta, there were many restaurants and hotels owned by the old Chinese [interestingly a large part of the Chinatown in Calcutta goes back to the time, when the Chinese soldiers were expelled from Tibet and Lhasa in 1911/12 and stayed back in Calcutta].

(Image 10: The mosk on Rabindranath Sarani, near the old Chinatown, 1940's).

We stayed in these hotels. We spent the days watching the circus. There were elephant shows. GC was very fond of these shows. Sometimes he would run to the brothels. We probably



stayed for a month in Calcutta. We got free food from the government office. We stayed at the house of a Chinese, named Robert. His Chinese was fluent. He also spoke English and Hindi. When GC talked about big things, the Chinese started respecting him. Then, they even gave us free food. During the day, we would roam around outside. When we returned in the evening, we got momos, noodle soup; they gave us whatever they had. Then we took a train and went to Siliguri [few kilometers south of Kalimpong and Darjeeling]. Then I told him that I wanted to return to Tibet. I told him that I would go back there on pilgrimage to the holy places. He said, 'Oh, that's good.'

TAPE 2

You two stayed in China Town. Did anything strange happen there?

GC was a worker there. He wasn't as poor as before [during their pilgrimage through India and Ceylon]. Actually, he was rich. He got a British job [for some time GC worked in the Mahabodhi Society]. The place was clean. It wasn't dirty. It was very clean. He said, 'I wish our Tibet were kept as clean as this.'

Those guesthouses were clean, like in foreign countries. Nowadays, Japan and Korea are very clean. Aren't they? It was like this these days. My goodness! It was clean, really clean. During the British period, in the past, India was extremely clean. There wasn't a single thief or robber. These days, there are many complaints of robbery everywhere. Aren't there? But in those days, there were many Britons. The Britons were clean. They knew how to do things. There were no thieves or robbers. But the army and the police were Indians. Since the British ruled the place, law and order was strictly enforced. Among the ordinary government workers, there were natives of Bangladesh and Punjab. They did not make the arrests, though. Sometimes, they gave us angry looks. Otherwise, there were no problems. At that time, there was no religious divide between the Hindus and the Muslims and there wasn't a single beggar. GC really enjoyed his stay here. Calcutta is better than Delhi. One is so surprised, when a place is enjoyable, isn't it? But we were sad, too, because we missed our Tibet. In India there were fans. There was electric lighting. The water was plentiful, not like now, when it is so scarce. There were no power-cuts like today.

What problems did you face on the train? What were your feelings?

GC would write a composition in every railway station. When we waited for the train, he would compose something on the people he saw at the railway station. When we got on the train, he would write that such and such man was shaped like this, such and such was shaped like this, such and such house was shaped like this, and the courthouse was shaped like this. Within no time, he would compose two pages. Whether he was on the train, or in a restaurant, or whether he saw a wayside coolie, he would write a composition on everyone, on the person's style, on the person's qualities and drawbacks. Now, he would write a composition on each person. Whether he got a good room or a bad one, he would write a composition on it. His writings looked endless. GC must have written about 28,000 compositions.

How many months did you two spent on pilgrimage in India?

Altogether, we spent the whole winter traveling. We left in October, so, October, November, December, January... it was five months or so. Wasn't it?

Did you talk to people, when traveling?

Yes, GC kept on speaking. He spoke in English. But he spoke in Hindi as well. I asked him, what the people were saying. He said, they were talking about the beautiful land, about their problems, about the death of parents, about the enormous difficulties they had faced, etc. Some people talked about their happiness, after taking brides. They talked a lot. Those Indians were intelligent talkers. They talked a lot about worldly matters.

Were you surprised when you first came from Tibet and saw many trains and railway stations?

We were surprised, when we first saw trains. They looked like running worms... they looked like running houses. When I was in Kalimpong the first time, I asked how the trains looked like. They were running houses, I was told. I asked, how do these houses run? 'I don't know. The houses run on wheels,' I was told. When we saw the trains in Siliguri, we saw those wheels turning. But I did not know that fire was essential for this. There were metal tracks, wherever the trains ran. We wondered how they were made.

When I asked GC, he said that the trains moved with the help of the power of coal. He said it was called a fire engine. 'You know, the fire engine, the airplane, etc. found first mention in the teachings of Lord Buddha,' he said. He said, they were mentioned in the Kalachakra scriptures. He said, 'Things like trains, airplanes and cars were already mentioned in the teachings of Lord Buddha. Then, generations later, the British were able to make them, because they were more intelligent than us.' When we were sitting on the trains, we felt, as if the train was not moving, but that the ground was moving. We were puzzled.

What surprising feelings did GC have?

He wasn't surprised. I was the one to be surprised. I asked GC what would happen if one were to jump out of the window? He said one would die. He asked me, why I wanted to jump. If I really wanted to jump, that meant I would die, he said, and asked me for my opinion. I said, 'How strange! If one were to jump from a yak or a horse, one would not die.' He laughed, 'If you jump, you will split into nine pieces and die. Ha! Ha!' He said, 'Your brains will be smashed.'

Later, he went to Darjeeling. He said, 'Come with me to Darjeeling if you are disturbed. We will then go to Burma and Ceylon [Sri Lanka]. These are holy lands.' He explained to me that he must go to these places for his book on the Indian pilgrim sites [GC's 'Travel Guide']. He said, 'If you want to go there, come in September.' I said, 'GC, perhaps I will spend my time prostrating to Lord Buddha's statue in the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa. I am not very sure yet.' He asked me if I planned to return to my home village in Amdo? I said, 'Right now, I will not return to my home village.' He said, 'don't go to your home village. When we later become old and grow white hair, our villages will vanish without a trace. Why this is so? There will be a war.' He talked about Padmasambhava's [a famous Tibetan saint] prediction about the end of Reting Rinpoche [the Regent of Tibet]. Padmasambhava, GC said, had predicted everything, including the tragedy of Reting, and the end of Tibetan Buddhism, etc. I replied that this would never happen. But it did happen later. Didn't it? Dujom Rinpoche [a renowned teacher of the Nyingma tradition] said, 'GC was right. Such things will happen.'

Did GC talk about Tibetan politics?

Yes, he did. He said it was like the rising of the sun, 'Sometime in the future, it will become dark. We two are lucky right now. Buddhism flourishes in Tibet [Central Tibet]. It flourishes in Kham [East-Tibet]. It flourishes in Amdo [Northeast-Tibet]. Buddhism has suffered setback in India. But I think it will revive later in India. Whether it will flourish widely or not, I cannot say. But flourish, it definitely will. As for Tibet, when we grow white hair, the monasteries of Sera, Drepung, and Ganden, and whatever political system we have, will vanish and darkness will prevail.' He said that there would be a war. I asked from where the war would come. It will come from the east and defeat us, he said. 'When I read the predictions of Padmasambhava, I think Tibet will not survive well,' he said.

Did he then say that certain political actions were not good?

He did. He landed in jail because of this. He suggested that the end of Tibet could be prevented if Tibet established friendly relations with the British. For this, he was accused of being a British agent and jailed

[GJ is wrong here. GC was accused of being a Chinese spy]. Later, he went to Burma and Sri Lanka. One winter, the two of us even went to Nepal. I don't know, whether he was in Darjeeling in summer. But later, when I went to Darjeeling, I saw him there. He was staying at the home of Minyak Ama [?]. He had done some mural paintings there. He was an extremely good painter. He had painted Tibetan deities. He knew mathematics, too. There was nothing that GC did not know. Then, from there we two went to Siliguri. Then we went to Calcutta. Then to Burma. Then to Thailand [GC's traveling to Burma and Thailand is not confirmed. Although there are many similar accounts, there is still no hard proof]. In Thailand, there were statues of Lord Buddha and many monks as well. We probably spent two months in Burma and Thailand. He copied all the old documents in his diary. He was writing on the life of Lord Buddha. He wrote many works on the life of Lord Buddha in that country [Burma and Thailand?]. I stayed back and went on pilgrimage to the Golden Stupa [in Rangoon?]. While I stayed back, he went to the restaurants and libraries to learn the history of that country, and to learn more about the life of Lord Buddha. The food was given to us by the British government [Burma was a British colony at that time, 1940's]. That was useful. If we went begging with the monks in that country, we would be given clothing and whatever else we needed [In the Theravada tradition of Burma, Thailand and also Ceylon, the 'begging' is part of the monks' daily routine]. When spiritual teachings were given to the monks, we got to eat together with them. He did not wear our *chubas* [Tibetan dress]. He wore a short, ugly shirt. The Burmese are very well mannered. They would wait until the monks had finished eating. He said, 'such a well-mannered country! It must be due to Lord Buddha's blessings. Who, in Tibet, would wait like this?'

The Burmese women looked a bit like the Bhutanese. They wore aprons like the Tibetan women. GC, too, looked a bit like a Bhutanese. We traveled in Thailand and Ceylon. We did not get to go to Japan and Korea, though. We spent one whole winter in the aforesaid countries [Burma, Thailand and Ceylon]. Then we returned to India and later went to Nepal. We stayed in Nepal for about one month. It was a very poor country. There were no trains. Oh, that country was poor. But the water was good. GC said, 'Here the water is good, but food is scarce. Tibet has water, too, but people are dirty.'

Tell us more about GC's thoughts?

He predicted that Tibet would be destroyed. He was sad. Sometimes, he shed tears. He said, 'All the monks will be scattered. The Tibetan religion will vanish and darkness will descend. If we two live long enough, until we grow white hair, we will see and experience this. We will not be able to go to our home villages. It is not good to go there now.'

He had a relationship with a Tibetan, called Sandutsang [one of the big Tibetan merchants and wool traders in Kalimpong]. GC was a Nyingma follower. He had a relationship with Kapshopa, too [See interview: Tseten Yudron]. But his closest relationships were with Rakra Rinpoche and [Horkhang] Sonam Penbar [the one who supported GC in his historical research in Lhasa. See interview: Horkhang Jampa Tendar]. They helped GC during his time in prison. Kapshopa was the person who harmed GC. Kapshopa sent him to prison. He was in the Tibetan government prison in Lhasa. He was beaten with sticks. Kapshopa lured him back to Lhasa [this story is not confirmed]. At that time, the British said that a

scholar of his stature was precious for Tibet [only much later GC's position as a great scholar was confirmed]. However, the communists were strong in China. Accusing him being a Chinese and British spy, Kapshopa sent him to prison. He spent one year and five or six months in prison [actually almost three years, from 1946-49]. Rakra Rinpoche and Horkhang Sonam Penbar regularly sent food to him in prison [through their servants. See interview: Lobsang Dekyi]. After his release from prison, I went to see him [1949]. He had long hair, then. His face was dark and he looked weak. He had a woman from Chamdo as his wife [Tseten Yudron, see interview with her]. She was a dark woman. He had a daughter, too. I heard that the girl is still alive. If they had taken care of that girl, she would be big now [When in Lhasa in 1999, we met the daughter of GC. Horkhang Jampa Tendar confirmed her being the daughter of GC to us. He knew from his father Horkhang Sonam Penbar].

What happened in Kalimpong?

The Tibetan government had many trading facilities in Kalimpong [mainly wool trade]. Kalimpong was a highly developed place. It was a good place and food was plentiful. The British law prevailed there. It was very clean. Among the Tibetans, there were many, who owned multi-story buildings. As a matter of fact, there were people like Pangdatsang, Sandhutsang, etc. They traded in thousands of *dres* of merchandise [mainly wool]. Probably, GC was connected to Pangdatsang. They imported bales of incense and meat and traded with rice and wool in Kalimpong. I never faced any livelihood problem there. Kalimpong is a good place. But Darjeeling is even better. Darjeeling is not dirty. Kalimpong is slightly dirtier. Darjeeling is for people, who like to enjoy life.

Can you tell us about the arrest of GC?

After his release, he just roamed around. I went to meet him. He was very weak. He said he had gone to jail as a fruit of his *karma* in previous lives. 'It is my *karma*. Sometimes one goes to jail, even for working for the common benefit of the people.' He started drinking alcohol. He did not live long. From the point of view of learning, many *geshes* [scholars] of Drepung and Sera monasteries came to debate with him [See interviews: Amdo Champa, Alak Chongsay, Alak Yongtsin]. He was able to reply to all their questions. These *geshes* were surprised and said, he was a great scholar, who had realized Emptiness [achieved enlightenment]. They were envious of him. I also heard that GC had two wives in Amdo. It seems the wives had no one to look after them [Not confirmed, but seems highly unlikely]. His wife in Lhasa is now about 75 years old. Have you seen his wife? Her name is Tseten Yudron [See interview with her].

What happened during his imprisonment and after his release?

He wrote a lot in prison. He could not complete that book, which he started in the prison. It was called the White Annals and that book surprised the aristocrats. No one had written such a historical book before. When one reads that book, one realizes that he knew all the languages of the world. He knew the Bonpo language. He knew Chinese. He knew the Muslim language. He knew Hindi. He knew English. In short, he knew 18 or 19 written languages. When I met him, he said that he was now out of prison. I came from Lhodrak, with the only purpose of meeting him. I don't know, whose house it was. He was living in a

small house. Somebody brought him food. I asked, 'GC, how are you?' He replied, 'I suffered a lot of hardship in prison. But I can do nothing about it. I don't mind suffering in this life. But it will be extremely hard if I have to suffer in the next life, too.' Before his death, he asked one monk to read Mipham's 'Prayer of Interdependent Origination'. 'Read me Lobsang Dakpa's 'Homage to Interdependent Origination,' he requested. So, the 'Homage to Interdependent Origination' was recited. At that time, I was at his place. Someone even read the Gelugpa's version of the 'Homage to Interdependent Origination'. 'Now I am satisfied,' he said. He said there would be no need for me to come to see him the next day. This was his last wish that night. He died a day or two later [August 1951]. I did not go to see him. Horkhang Sonam Penbar took care of the cremation work. His body was taken to the Sera cremation ground. Rakra Tethong Rinpoche took care of him all the time [Rakra Tethong was already in India since 1947]. As soon as he died, I went back to Lhodrak. I was very sad. Later, when people started looking for GC's works or photos, it was already too late. People's faith in him increased only after his death. The aristocrats now thought that he must have been a real incarnation of the Buddha. When people started saying that such a highly learned scholar had been born in Amdo [Northeast-Tibet], it was too late!

Had the Chinese communist army already reached Lhasa by then?

I heard that some Chinese soldiers had come to Lhasa at that time [1951]. In those days, people in Lhasa still had heard good things being spoken about the Chinese soldiers. 'Silver Da Yuan falls like rain. The Chinese communists are kind parents' [referring to the fact that the Chinese soldiers would pay everything with silver].

What was GC comment on the arrival of the Chinese army?

He said nothing at that time. But he had spoken earlier. He had said, 'Tibet will be destroyed at the hands of the army from the East. He had said, 'Now, this is it. Now this is it.' I told him that I had heard of the Chinese communist soldiers having reached Kham [East-Tibet]. I asked him what he thought of this, whether this was good or bad. He said, 'It is good. Now, this is it. Now, this is it. Now, it is coming, where it should.' [In Tibetan language GC's words have an ironic meaning, something like: 'Now, we are in deep shit'].

Why did GC drink?

It was probably his manifestation for the welfare of sentient beings. He was probably an emanation of the Buddha. Some of them take wives. Some of them drink. Some of them even eat fish. The world is evil. The Indian *siddhas* [holy men] fished. Some of them slept with prostitutes. Some of them drank. He started drinking already in Darjeeling [where they met for the first time in the early 1940's].

Tell me more about his drinking?

GC used to say: '*Chang* [Tibetan beer] is sweet. It is wisdom ambrosia. The Gelugpa tradition has made it a sin to drink [here GJ is referring to GC's family background as a Nyingmapa]. Actually, *chang* is the offering to the Jewel [Buddha]. It shows the qualities of the Savior. Living on meat and *chang*, is like the 'Wheel of Offering Heaps' [praising Buddha?]. Living with women, is the physical *mahamudra*

[fulfillment]. Interesting talks are the purpose of speech. I know this. I am a monk, who knows these things. A monk is not a person, who has given up women and drinks. The monk is a person who drinks, gambles at *Shol* [red-light district of Lhasa], who has taken no vows to practice or give up anything. Living with women is also a spiritual practice.'

GC wrote 'The Tibetan Book of Love'. Did he tell you about that book?

He wrote it in Darjeeling. In it, he would say that Indian women were like this; Punjabi women were like that etc. He could talk a lot about this. He wrote this book, both as a joke and as a serious matter. This book is perhaps bad. Perhaps, it is good. The Gelugpa followers would not accept GC's 'Book of Love'. 'A monk, who sleeps with a prostitute, is completely useless,' they would say.

Did you see him with women in India and Tibet? With the prostitutes...

He was always running about. He would say, 'I will go to the prostitutes.' He talked about rows upon rows of prostitutes in the brothels. Once, when he saw a house in Calcutta, he said to me, 'Oh, this is a brothel. You wait here. I will go in.' When he came back, he would talk about having slept with four or even five women at a stretch. He enjoyed life. He was fond of *chang*. He was fond of women. He was fond of everything. At that time, he was writing 'The Book of Love'. The ultimate practice [of Tibetan Buddhism] is in 'The Book of Love' [GJ is referring to Tantrism. To many Tibetans, especially monks, GC's 'Book of Love' is much less a 'lover's handbook', than a deeply spiritual text on Tibetan Buddhism]

How did you come to know GC?

I did not know him in Tibet. We became friends in India. We became spiritual friends in India. He would tell me many stories of the monasteries in Tibet. When we were in India, I thought of him as a *lama* [an ordained and learned monk]. I thought of him as a scholar. He really was a scholar. He was indeed intelligent. He did not look like a lama, though. He slept with prostitutes. I learnt some mathematics from him. I learned some spelling from him. He was well versed in Sanskrit, too. He could paint *thangkas* [religious paintings]. He even knew the art of healing. He didn't work as pharmacist; still he could examine your pulse. But he did not have medicine to give you. He enjoyed life. In Tibet, people acknowledged him as a learned man. But they would say he was ruined [at the end of his life]. They said he was learned on an intellectual level, but that he had not internalized, what he knew [See interview: Alak Yongtsin, Alak Chongsay].

NAMGANG TSOMO



Recorded on the 22nd of June 2002 in Lhasa, Tibet.

Born 1930 in Gojo (Tibet). Came to Lhasa in 1944, where she met GC through her uncle Gojo Lachung Apo. GC and her uncle were spiritual friends. She is in possession of a painting of GC, depicting Milarepa, which was given to her by her uncle (in the late 1940's). She was hiding the painting during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). She still lives in Lhasa near the Ramoche Temple. Tibetan, not in the film.

Your personal details, like name, age, etc?

I am 73 years old. I was born in Gojo. I came to Lhasa at the age of 15. I came to know GC through my uncle [called Gojo Lachung Apo], who was a spiritual friend of GC [Lachung Apo wrote the first biography of GC, published 1972 in India]. GC used to come to our home in Lhasa very often. They talked about spiritual matters, which was beyond my comprehension. So, I just served them tea and withdrew to the other room. I did not understand what they were discussing, as I did not take interest in spirituality. I saved these pictures during the Cultural Revolution [1966-76]. Although I did not understand the spiritual aspect of these pictures, the pictures depicting Milarepa and others, I saved them because I liked GC. This liking developed due to my meetings with him. I saved some pictures, the one featuring Milarepa and several others. I had no other reasons for saving these images [only the one of Milarepa survived].

How did you get hold of these pictures?

My uncle had these pictures. GC had given them to my uncle, who hung them here. But uncle left for India [into exile], leaving the pictures behind. That is how they came into my possession. Knowing them to be the works of GC, I preserved them.

Can you recollect the time when GC came here?

He did not come here during my childhood. It was probably on his return from India that he and my uncle came to know each other [actually they met in India in 1942]. I did not associate much with him. He used to come here to see my uncle. He used to drink. He was then an elderly man. My uncle also drank. They used to drink together. It never occurred to me to listen to their discussions. They never prayed or engaged in spiritual rituals. Then I did not know that they were highly learned people. This is because I was very young at the time [16 years old]. GC was quite an elderly man [43+]. He was kind of stubby with a roundish face. He must have looked different, when younger. He had a roundish face at that time. He drank. He would come to drink and then leave. I did not notice anything unusual. I was unable

appreciate GC's and my uncle's values. I had no spiritual knowledge. I was uneducated. I just managed to preserve the pictures [referring to the Milarepa painting, hanging on her wall]. Other than that, I was unable understand anything. Now in retrospect, I realize that they were good people. But at that time, I was unable to appreciate this. I am like that even now, ignorant and uneducated...

Did you see them pray together?

They did not pray. My uncle's wife told me this. Uncle would spend time, either lying down or sitting upright. But he did not actually pray. If his wife complained, he would say that she did not know what he was doing. GC and my uncle were real practitioners [indicating that they were *tantrics*]. I think real practitioners do not have to pray with their mouth. To us, it would seem as if my uncle was just sitting and doing nothing. But in reality he was a spiritually a highly realized person.

Yesterday, you said there was a woman with GC?

Yes, there was a woman. But they were not well off. They did not have any business enterprise or any other stable source of livelihood. She hawked tea containers, salt containers, soda water containers, etc. This was her source of livelihood. I think GC and her lived a poor life then. I don't know her name. I did not take much interest. In those days, people did not come to interview me like you do. All I can say is that she was a khampa. She was his wife. She did some business. But he was like a yogi [a *tantric* practitioner]; who did not do business or any thing for livelihood.

What happened, when GC died?

My uncle went to his place at the time of his death. I did not go there. I would not know what to do and how to help. I don't even know where he died. My uncle went there. He was interested in these things.

Did your uncle tell you about what rituals were performed?

My uncle was a man of few words. Even if he were praying, it would not be possible to tell that he was praying. With high lamas, he would talk about spiritual matters. But normally, you would not find him praying or attending prayer meetings. High lamas considered him a precious being, a highly learned being. My uncle became popular in India. Over here in Lhasa, people did not notice him much, just as GC was not noticed. In India people came to know about my uncle through his writings. Then they realized that he was a learned man. He lived at Sonada, near Darjeeling. One day, a westerner came looking for my uncle Sherab Gyatso. He was already dead by then. There is a book by my uncle in Dharamshala [his biography of GC], a small book by Sherab Gyatso, which introduces GC's birthplace as well.

How did you get this painting and how did you preserve it?

This painting [of Milarepa] was given to my uncle by GC. Uncle brought it here, saying GC had painted a *thangka* of Milarepa. He left this *thangka* behind. He had taken all the scriptures and other personal effects, but left this *thangka* here. So, I kept it. GC painted it. They are beautiful, these over here.

Why did GC give the Milarepa to your uncle?

He painted all kinds of *thangka*. Milarepa was one of them. I preserved it because GC, whom I liked, painted it. (Image 11: *Milarepa in his meditating cave, 1940's*). My uncle treated this *thangka* as precious. I preserved it because of my emotional attachment to my uncle and GC. I did not keep it for any spiritual reason. I kept it because my uncle treated it very precious. Probably, I was fated to preserve this. I know nothing about the meaning of this *thangka*. All I know is that it was indeed painted by GC. I would show it to photographers and any one else interested in it. I did not ask its meaning. These days, it is essential to understand everything. My uncle and GC were very close. GC had a red, roundish face. He was not tall. This is a photo of him during his younger days [she refers to a photo on the wall]. His face is not roundish



here. When I met him, he was not this young. His face was round. It was red, which I suppose was due to his drinking. He looked a bit like a Mongol. I heard that he died in Lhasa, but I do not even know, where in Lhasa he died. I did not know that he was worthy of reverence and faith. So, people here did not know how high he was. My uncle, of course, knew this.

You were a child, when GC came here. How did he treat you?

He did not talk to us. He and uncle went inside the room and talked. He did not talk to us. They drank tea and alcohol together. They also ate together. I was here, even before GC started visiting. But I did not take much interest. Many lamas came to meet my uncle. My uncle was treated with great reverence. When Dujom Rinpoche [a famous lama from the Nyingmapa tradition] gave the 'Jewel Treasury Initiation', he would seat my uncle here. He would then speak a few words from the scriptures and the two would laugh together. This happened at Samye [a monastery to the southeast of Lhasa]. We did not know their values. It was because we had no spiritual learning. We ruined our lifes...

HORTSANG JIGME

**Recorded on the 6th of October 2002 in Dharamshala, India.**

Born 1964 in Hortsang, near Labrang (Northeastern Tibet). Studied several years as a monk in Labrang Monastery. Fled to Dharamshala (India) in 1985. Worked as a scholar for the Norbulingka Institute in Lower Dharamshala. He is the author of a controversial biography of GC (in Tibetan). Member of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile. He presently lives and works in the USA. Tibetan, in the film.

Name, age, etc?

I was born in 1964. I was born in Hortsang, Amdo [Northeast-Tibet]. Hortsang is about 30 km from Labrang.

Your personal relationship with GC?

It was around 1981 when I first became interested in GC. I have written about this in my book, *Drang-dhen Kyi Lhue-pai Longmowa* [A Pauper, Who Was Let Down By Truth]. One day, Jamyang Gyatso, a monk from my village came with a layperson. I was then staying under a monk, whom we just called Aku. Aku was a librarian of Labrang monastery. The library had over 70,000 titles. The layperson wanted to borrow a book, entitled *Ludrup Gongyen* [Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts]. Aku said he was not sure if the library stocked this book. He told Jamyang to go to a *geshe* [scholar] and ask if the library had this book. If the book were available in the library, he would loan it. Aku's name was Thewu Tsondru. When Jamyang left, I asked Aku what sort of book this *Ludrup Gongyen* was ['The Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts' is a philosophical essay, GC wrote shortly before his death, stirring quite a controversy]. Aku said GC wrote it, under divine inspiration. He referred to GC by his nickname *Ditsa Kampo*, the skinny man from Ditsa monastery, and used the words 'divine inspiration' with a touch of sarcasm. On questioning him further, Aku said, 'Ditsa Kampo slept by day and studied by night, and then pretended he had acquired his learning without efforts.' GC, he said, was a strange and mischievous person. That was the first time I heard the name GC. It was in 1981, I think. A couple of days later, I went to Jamyang Gyatso's house. It transpired that Jamyang had taken the layman to Geshe Rebkong Palden, a well-known scholar, a truly gifted man. When Jamyang asked for *Ludrup Gongyen*, the *geshe* scolded him severely. The *geshe* said a person asking for *Ludrup Gongyen*, must surely be from Rebkong. 'You should not host such a guest in the monastery. This is not good.' With these words, the *geshe* sent him away. When I heard this story, I had the impression that GC and his work, the *Ludrup Gongyen*, must be very bad.

Then, one day, when I went to the debating hall, I met one of my classmates. He was from Ngura in Amdo. His name was Kunchok Tsenpel. He was our class monitor. He was reciting verses like '*Lagpa khab-la Trey-pai yoe-dham nyam. Nyongwa ngon-sum lag-pai yoe-dham nyam.*' [Was the hand really pierced by the needle? Does the hand have the experience of getting pierced?)] The lines struck me as very lyrical. I asked him where these lines came from. He said they were from one of GC's compositions. I asked who this GC was. He said GC was *Ditsa Kampo's* real name. It now dawned on me that GC and *Ditsa Kampo* were one and the same person. I was still under the impression that GC or *Ditsa Kampo* wasn't a good person, and that his work, the *Ludrup Gongyen*, wasn't a good thing at all. I wrote in my book that simple or ordinary people develop prejudices from hearsay, just as I came to dislike GC from what I heard about him from other people.

Then, one day, I visited my scriptural teacher, Aku Palden. His nickname was Palden Gema. I have written about this in my book. One day, when I went to him to receive scriptural lessons, I saw an old copy of *Ludrup Gongyen*. It was perhaps printed in the 1950s. It was a mimeographed copy, like the ones that were printed in China at that time. It was printed in blue ink. The book was placed on a shelf. Of course, it was placed separately from the scriptural texts. I wondered what a learned man like Aku Palden was doing with the *Ludrup Gongyen*. I wanted to read that book, too. Although he had not put the book with the other scriptural texts, it was obvious that he held it in some esteem. It was placed on a high shelf, indicating his respect for it. These, then, are the stories of my early brushes with GC.

Later, I joined the Buddhist Institute in Gansu. I studied there for four-and-a-half years. I studied poetry there. The schoolmates talked highly about GC's poems. I naturally developed an interest in his works. I was to discover that his works were indeed outstanding. But at that time, I could not bring myself to like him. Then, one day, I went to attend a scriptural class. My teacher was a *geshe* from Labrang monastery. His name is Aku Jamyang Gyatso. He is now one of the top scholars of Labrang monastery. I was one of his first students. In the course of the lesson, he remarked that GC was a man of unparalleled genius. He said, 'Once Yigja Jamyang and GC had a debate on the subject of *Namrig*.' GC used the logic of molecular science and amazed the *geshes* in the audience [See interview: Alak Yongtsin]. At that time, there were 800 highly learned *geshes* at Labrang. GC's sharp mind amazed all of those learned *geshes*. Yigja Jamyang asked him if the Vedantic [Hindu] school of Samakhaya was right in its contention that wood was cool by nature. GC replied in the affirmative and backed it with such intelligent arguments that the other *geshes* failed to defeat him. So cogent were his arguments that the *geshes* suspected that he was a vedantic follower [Hindu] rather than Buddhist. My teacher was full of praise for GC's sharp mind. At the same time, he added that GC's conduct and ideology towards the later part of his life had not been too great [referring to GC's drinking habit and his contact to women]. Therefore, we should not allow ourselves to be carried away by him.

The first change in my view of GC took place at that time [early 1980's]. I now told myself that, although GC's conduct and ideology in the later part of his life had not been worthy of emulation, he had certainly been a man of unparalleled mind. Then I saw a collection of GC's writings, published from the Sichuan

Province. It was a compilation of some of GC's works. Then Horkhang Sonam Penbar [GC's former friend] of Lhasa published several brief biographies of GC in *Bodjong Shibjug* [Tibet Research Institute] and *Drang-char* [Gentle Rain]. I read all of these. When I read them, I was astounded. They contained new thoughts, from which I learned a lot. Before graduating from the Buddhist Institute in Gansu Province [formerly Northeast-Tibet], I got hold of GC's *Art of Love*. When I read it, I was surprised by his skilful use of words. At the same time, I wondered, why would such a great scholar, as GC, write such an obscene book. This is the chronology of my encounters with GC.

GC is very popular in the Tibetan universities and secular community now. He is popular in Golok [a nomad area in Northeast-Tibet], Kham [East-Tibet], and especially among Nyingma followers. The Nyingma [Old Translation school] followers in Rebkong speak very highly of him [See interview: Akhu Lama Tsering]. But the Gelug followers, such as the monasteries of Rebkong, Labrang, etc. do not have much esteem for him [GC himself came from a family with a strong Nyingma background, but he got his formal education in Gelug monasteries, like Labrang and Drepung]

This, then, is the story of how my early encounters with GC, the story of how I misunderstood him in the beginning, and how I changed my view after reading his works, and hearing what my teacher, a learned geshe, thought of him. That is why I bought the three volumes of GC's works [edited by Horkhang Sonam Penbar] from Lhasa and brought them all the way to India, when I escaped in 1992. I brought the books because I had very high regard for him. So, this is my opinion of him.

Now, to answer your question about why I wrote the book on GC, I must say that all kinds of thoughts came into my mind. In September 1995, I traveled to Mysore in the South India. Before leaving, I saw Rakra Rinpoche's biography of GC [a former monk from Drepung and friend of GC's in the 1940's]. I got hold of a copy and read it on the train. Since it was a long journey to Bangalore I managed to finish the book. As I always say, Rakra Rinpoche's book is not valuable from a researcher's perspective. He got the many dates wrong, and some of the narratives were at divergence with the information Kirti Rinpoche gathered from his interviews [e.g. with the arresting officer Tashi Pelra. See interview with him]. Rakra's book is not very useful to serious researchers. But if you read it just for pleasure, it is interesting. Rakra Rinpoche is a poet, which means he writes beautifully. And there are some interesting anecdotes in the book. Some narratives are so poignant that I shed tears. Then I wrote a poem, entitled *Dedication to GC*. I wrote the poem on the train. The poem is included as an appendix to my book, *Drang-dhen Kyi Lhue-pai Longmowa* [A Pauper, Who Was Let Down By Truth].

Later, I read Kirti Rinpoche's book. In January 1996, I went to Bodhgaya, where I re-read the two volumes of GC's book, *The Golden Field of Stories: Travels in Pursuit of Learning*. Having lived in India and seen the country, I was filled with renewed admiration for his work. I felt that I should write about GC. I do not refer to my book as a biography of GC. Instead, I have called it a research on GC's life. My book is not a chronology of what GC did, where he went, etc. There are some events in GC's life that are significant, but unknown. I thought I should do a research on these events and tell them to the people.

That was one of the aims of my book. The other reason for writing the book was this: The Tibetan people have an inclination to be carried away by hype. If one person says GC was great, the whole community seems to echo him, valorizing him to the point of being unimaginably great, one who has no equal, etc. This is rather exasperating, surfeiting. That is, why I wrote my book as a final discussion on GC. I hoped after mine, there would be no more books on GC.

Your next question was, what happened after I wrote this book. From Labrang monastery, GC went to Drepung monastery [in Lhasa], where he spent about seven years [1927-34]. While in Lhasa, he mixed mainly with the aristocracy [often painting portraits for them]. He taught paintings to the children of aristocrats. He had a sharp mind and was very creative. He was not a snob, who mixed only with the upper class people and looked down on the poor people. He talked and mixed easily with people of all classes. He also did a research on the plebeian class of Tibet.

Riga Lobsang Tenzin's book states that when GC was in Kalimpong [in India], Trijang Rinpoche and the minister Kapshopa invited him back to Lhasa. Then, all of a sudden, he was arrested. One thing that we don't know for certain even today, is, why GC was arrested and what his crime was.

Professor Heather Stoddard from France, Rakra Rinpoche, Kirti Rinpoche, Horkhang Sonam Penbar, Dorje Gyal, and I have written about GC. Similarly, many articles have been written about him in Tibet. My own book is based on 67 source materials. And many materials continue to be published on the subject. But no one seems to know exactly, why GC was arrested. This is one thing. He was later released and died in 1951. What was his crime? Was he guilty or innocent?

Some powerful officials of the Tibetan government had GC arrested and, thus, ruined his life. Now if he was innocent, the Tibetan community should apologize to him. We should say that it was a mistake to imprison him. But no one has done this so far. I wanted to probe the reason for his imprisonment. I gained lots of important insights, those that had not been known publicly till my book was published. And, I am a straightforward man, who does not mince words. Therefore, my writings and books seem to offend many people. This book is no exception. This book offended a lot of people. This book was published in February 1999. Not long after, I received about six threatening calls within half an hour. I was told that I wrote and talked too much. Didn't I know that too much talking and writing would imperil my life? Wouldn't it be better for me to shut up? I received such threatening calls. I received seven such calls in half an hour. Obscene drawings and threatening notes were slipped under the door of my shop. I received a lot of threats. I suffered a lot. I didn't know what to do. At times, I thought that I should just migrate to a foreign country, away from the Tibetan community. I was very disheartened.

In March last year, I received a letter from the Minyak Khangtsen of Drepung Loseling College. Minyak Kyorpon was one of those monks, who harassed GC in the later part of his life [See interview: Alak Chongsay, Amdo Champa]. Minyak Kyorpon was the top scholar of Drepung at that time [Between 1927-34]. He was very famous. One evening, he and GC had a debate. Although Minyak Kyorpon was

one of the best scholars among the Three Monastic Seats [Drepung, Sera and Ganden monasteries], he failed to defeat GC in the debate. Because of this, he nursed a grudge against GC and harassed him with the help of some of his fellow monk friends. He taunted GC in the marketplace of Lhasa. He went to GC's house to harass him [See interview: Amdo Champa]. He made life very difficult for GC.

There is only one sentence in my book, which says that despite his life-long study of Buddhism, it is possible that Minyak Kyorpon contributed to the death of GC. This single sentence was enough for a lama and some monks of the Minyak Khangtsen to accuse me of having discredited a highly realized lama of theirs. They said that they would make my life miserable if I did not watch my mouth. A relative of my mother-in-law, who lives in Bylakuppe [one of the Tibetan settlements in India], is friendly with Wooser Rinpoche. Wooser Rinpoche told my relative to warn me of impending danger to my life if I did not exercise caution. Therefore, I left suddenly for the United States in March last year [1999]. I spent six months there. Of course, I needed to use the Library of Congress for my research on the history of Domed [Amdo or Northeast-Tibet]. This was, no doubt, one reason for my visit to the States. But the main reason was the threat on my life. I kind of escaped to the United States.

Even today, I face a lot of difficulties. For example, some people from Lhasa, now living in Dharamshala, most of them new refugees [often called: newcomers], but also some officials, working at the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and at Norbulingkha, claim that I discredit the people of U-Tsang [Central Tibet], particularly of Lhasa and the former aristocrats. Recently, *Gu-chu-sum* [a political organization in Dharamshala] distributed some awful posters against me; some posters were even stuck on the walls. Books were also published against me. Lots of bad things are said against me. In Dharamshala, people frequently organize scholars' meetings on Tibetan religion, culture, and other cultures, etc. I have not been invited to a single conference. I don't mean to say that I am a great scholar and that I am not given due recognition, etc. I am not saying this. But I have done research on Tibetan culture for about two decades, and I am also an elected Member of Parliament from the *Domed* constituency [Northeast-Tibet].

I am not a politician. I say so to the people and fellow parliamentarians from the *Domed* constituency. I say all kinds of things; I do not mince my words. Why? Because I am not a politician. I am an academician, an intellectual, and I do not have to be expedient about what I say. I do not want to pretend that something is good when it isn't. Therefore, people do not give me any opportunity. When I write a book like this, I anger some people in power. They in turn create rumors to the effect that I am against the people of U-Tsang, against the aristocrats in general and against the people of Lhasa. My book on GC is one reason, why they say such things. The latter part of GC's life is indivisible from the Lhasa aristocracy. So, when I write about this, I have to do some kind of dissection in order to arrive at the truth. When I do this, it angers some people. As a result, I land up in problems.

You once mentioned Shakabpa's book on Tibetan history to us?

As I have pointed out very clearly in my book, I do not claim that the entire book [of Shakabpa], both volume I and II, were written by GC. I said that the basic text of this book, a small portion of the book,

might have been GC's work. I cite five reasons in support of my argument. I do not remember all the five points right now. But the main reason is this: In Kirti Rinpoche's book, one of the interviewees said that when GC was arrested, there was a bag full of writings [See interview: Tashi Pelra]. The writings were taken to the *Kashag* [Cabinet]. A few days later, some of the materials were displayed on a table. There was one particular manuscript, entitled *Zamling Sheja Nyoepei Dheb* [A Book of World Knowledge]. The 'Political History of Tibet' [of GC] was part of this manuscript. Kalon Kapshopa took the 'Political History of Tibet'. This finds mention in Kirti Rinpoche's book. Since Kapshopa took that manuscript, people expected to see the publication of a book, entitled the 'Political History of Tibet', in the name of Kapshopa. But the book never came out. And, Kapshopa died. The aristocrats were then very powerful. Kapshopa was a *Kalon* [Minister] at that time. Shakabpa was a *Tsipon*. *Tsipon* is like a Home Minister. As Shakabpa was interested in political matters, it seems that the manuscript was passed on to him. This is one basis for my claim.

The second is this: In the preface of his book, Shakabpa writes that one day in 1931 his uncle *Kalon* [Minister] Trimon Norbu came to him and gave him a bunch of important documents with a greeting scarf. 'Trimon said that, since I was interested in history and also learned, it would be helpful if I wrote a history of Tibet at a time like that, when there was peace and stability in Tibet. At that time, I did not take particular interest in Trimon's bidding. That is why I have not written the book till now.' This is what Shakabpa writes in the preface of his book. Shakabpa went on to say that in 1946 he and his family had gone on a pilgrimage to India. In Bombay, he had witnessed huge demonstrations for India's independence. The Indians were demonstrating for independence from British rule. That inspired him to act on Kalon Trimon's bidding and write a political history of Tibet, while there was peace and stability in Tibet. Now 1946 was the year of GC's arrest. Curiously, it was the same year when Shakabpa was inspired to write his book. Kalon Trimon had asked him to write the book in 1931. For about 15 years – i.e. from 1932 to 1946 – Shakabpa could not be bothered to write this book. But then, suddenly his interest was aroused in 1946, when GC was arrested. Why? That is a question mark. This is the main basis for my contention.

By 1946 and 1947 the Chinese invasion of Kham and Amdo was well underway [the actual invasion began several years later, in 1950, but China was already in control of large parts of Kham and Amdo by then]. Surely, the Central Government of Tibet could not have been aware of this. But Shakabpa, as a very important member of the Tibetan government, could not have been ignorant of the fact that China was then embarked on the invasion of Kham and Amdo. By 1949 the People's Republic of China had already been established. It was a very critical period for Tibet, not a time of peace and stability. It was not the best time to inspire someone to write a political history of Tibet. If the Indian independence movement had indeed inspired him to protect the interests of Tibet, he should have cut short his tour of India and rushed back to Tibet. He should have told himself, 'Yes, the Indians are fighting for their independence. We Tibetans of the three provinces [Central-, Northeast- and East-Tibet; U-Tang, Amdo and Kham] – all those, who recite the *mani* mantra and eat tsampa, people of the same blood and flesh – should unite and work together. Otherwise, Tibet will fall prey to the Communist China.' He should have

appreciated the need for military preparedness to resist the Chinese army. To go to India and write a history book at such a time was the most illogical thing to do. That he purported to have done just that is not convincing to me.

Let's look at it from the point of following analogy: the same analogy appears in my book. If a robber came to your home with a gun and a knife, and you would fight him with whatever weapons you could lay your hands on. It would not make any sense at all to sit inside and start writing a book to prove that the house and articles inside it had belonged to you from the time of your forbearers. In the same way, Shakabpa's claim makes no sense. I think what really happened is that he was able to get a lot of material without any efforts. He saw that GC had died in 1951, leaving behind all these writings. And, as an important official of the Tibetan government, he had access to the government archives. He thought that it would be a simple matter to publish a book. All he had to do was to flesh up the manuscript with the materials from the government archives. This is probably what he did.

Still another basis is this. Referring to the inscriptions on the stone pillars in front of the Jokhang and other places, Shakabpa writes that the words used in them are difficult to understand. He talks about the need to rewrite the text in simple language. Making exactly the same observation about ancient documents, as GC did in his 'White Annals'. GC had rewritten these documents in the contemporary Tibetan language, just as Shakabpa has done with the stone pillar inscriptions in his 'Political History of Tibet'. This is another reason. Again, in the preface to the 'Political History of Tibet', Shakabpa maintains that Tibet has a plethora of religious history books, but not a single political history book. That is, why it is so important to write a political history, one that does not deal much with the religious history. GC says the same thing in the preface to the 'White Annals'. He writes that Tibet has a surfeit of religious history books and not a single book on the political history. Therefore, it is important to write a book of political history. From this again, we can infer that GC's manuscript may probably have been the basic material of Shakabpa's book. This is what I claim.

Was GC a reincarnation of a famous lama?

Many biographers of GC claim that he was a reincarnated lama. Many biographers make efforts to push this view. Nyingma followers maintain that he was a reincarnated lama of the Nyingma tradition. Then, many people believe that he was a man of unmatched precocity. Some claim that the 20th Century Tibet had not produced a scholar who could match the learning of GC. I do not subscribe to any of these views. There is no way I can judge, whether GC was a reincarnated lama or not. Anyway, this is not important. The world has produced many great men, both reincarnated lamas and ordinary mortals. This is not important. I can't accept the suggestion that the 20th Century Tibet had not produced anyone who could match GC's precocity. I think there are many *geshes* [monks scholars] of extraordinary learning in the Three Monastic Seats. Isn't this so? I can't accept the suggestion that GC's precocity had no parallel in the world in the 20th Century. Similarly, I can't accept the suggestion that Tibet has not produced any one as genius as GC.

But why do I still consider GC to be great? Every society or every country has traditional and religious taboos. These taboos prevent learned people from expressing their personal philosophies and ideologies. This means that their philosophies are going to die with them. GC's merit is that he did not allow himself to be intimidated by these taboos. He had the courage to express his thoughts. This is his special quality. This is what I think. The most pertinent example of this is his book, the 'Art of Love'. In the 'Art of Love', GC says this about worldly people: 'People say one thing, while craving in their hearts for another thing.' He says that everyone craves for carnal pleasure, although they will feign otherwise. This, he says, is the nature of worldly beings. If we come to think of it, there is nothing vulgar or obscene about GC's the 'Art of Love'. At the same time, given the Tibetan society, as it was during his time, it takes a lot of courage to publish a book like that. This is not something that everyone can do. I think the 'Art of Love' reflects his courage and his self-confidence, which are his most precious qualities. During the lifetime of GC, in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, the Three Monastic Seats [Drepung, Ganden, Sera] and their abbots were very powerful. Major meetings of the Tibetan government were dominated to 60 percent by religious elements [monk officials]. Religious influence was very strong and rigid at the time. Given that environment, GC knew that his 'Art of Love' would not be well received. He knew people would speak against him, put pressure on him, humiliate him, and disgrace him. Yet, he refused to be intimidated. He went ahead with the publication of the 'Art of Love'. This shows his self-confidence. Now, self-confidence should not be mistaken to mean pride. Some people take the word self-confidence to mean pride. If we say that someone is very confident, they think that this person is proud. Self-confidence is the inner courage of a man. The 'Art of Love', I think, is the manifestation of GC's courage.

When GC was at Labrang Monastery, he was one of the most precocious men. I do not want to say that he was the most precocious man. He was one of the most precocious men. But he was very ill mannered. When he debated with the highly learned *geshes*, he stretched his legs in front, and said that he would not fold them to sit in the meditation posture, unless they managed to beat him on at least one point. In this way, he showed disrespect to these highly learned *geshes*; he did not observe the decorum required towards those venerable people [See interviews: Alak Yongtsin, Alak Chongsay]. I would say that either his manner was bad or his attitude stubborn. Many of his biographers maintain that Labrang monastery put a lot of pressure on him; persecuted him very severely. This is not true. Of course, people did bitch about him for his refusal to observe the decorum due to the venerable *geshes*. But it is not true that Labrang monastery put pressure on him and kicked him out.

Another characteristic of GC is this. Once, an American missionary came to Labrang [Griebenow stayed in Labrang in the 1920's to 1940's]. His Tibetan name was *Sherab Tanphel*. He had rented a house at Rigya Thang in Labrang. GC started visiting him, and became his friend. He used to ask the missionary to tell him about the United States and Europe. At that time [1920-27], there were about 4,500 monks in Labrang monastery. Among them, GC was unique. He had a different way of thinking. This is quite clear. Normally if a monk were a ritual performer, he would be interested only in learning rituals if someone was studying to be a *geshe*, he would learn only Buddhist philosophy and nothing beyond that. It wasn't usual for the monks to take interest in the outside world. From this point of view, GC was really different.

Then he went to Lhasa [in 1927]. From there he went to... in his book, 'The Golden Field of Stories: Travels in Pursuit of Learning', he states that for a very long time he had had a wish to visit India. After seven years in Drepung monastery [1927-34], GC met Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan [See interview: Jaya Sankrityayan]. Rahul Sankrityayan asked him if he wanted to visit India. Since this was GC's long-time wish, he decided to go with him to India [first time in 1934].

So, as GC matured intellectually in Amdo, he went to Lhasa. At that time, it was a tradition for monks and *geshes* to travel to Lhasa to study Buddhist philosophy. But GC's idea was different. GC was interested in secular matters as well; he wanted to learn about the whole world. Other people went to a Monastic seat in Lhasa, searched for a good teacher, and studied the scriptures. Later, they gave initiations, became good scholars of philosophy, meditated, or did things like that. That is all they did. GC was a good painter and he took interest in every field of learning.

Which qualities of GC do you admire?

Now, another admirable quality of GC was this. When he traveled to different parts of India, he seemed to have walked most of the time [mostly he was on trains]. He spent about 13 years in India. According to my research, he spent about 13 years in India [1934-46]. During his stay in India, he wrote the 'Travel Guide to India'. He writes that whenever he rode a bus or train, he bought the cheapest ticket. His guidebook, he says, tells about the cheapest means of traveling [See interview: Golok Jigme]. It seems he walked quite a lot. Now what I find admirable about this is that at that time, there were not many Tibetans in India. He did not have money to stay in Five Star hotels or to eat good food. For 13 years – and 13 years is a long time in a man's life – he walked so much. He had gone to many places, like Kangra, Pathankot, Mandi, Rewalsar, Lahul-Spiti, etc., mostly by walking. This shows that he possessed a very special quality, something that most of us do not.

Still another quality, there was this Principal of the Tibetan Medical Institute [in Dharamshala, India]. His name was Dorje Gyalpo. He later migrated to the United States as part of the US Resettlement Program. He is now in the States. He used to tell me that there was no other genius like GC. I told him that this was not true. GC, I said, definitely had many qualities that were different from others. Like if he were waiting at the bus stand in Dharamshala, he would use the time to learn something. What kind of clothes Indian women are wearing? What kind of clothes the old women are wearing? What kind of clothes the young women are wearing? Why do they wear such clothes? Are their clothes similar to the clothes of Arab women, Spanish women, South American women, Chinese women, etc? He had a lot of curiosity. If he saw a tree, he would observe it and say, 'Well, in *vinaya* [a Buddhist text] this tree is described as so and so, but in reality it is different.' Wherever he goes, whatever he does, he is making conscious efforts to learn. We, on the other hand, are not like that. We think that learning comes only from books. GC said something. When we say grace before meals, there is a line, which goes like this: 'Enchanted by the food of a hundred flavors'. GC said that this is a reference to the Indian food, known as *Thali*, which consists of seven or eight varieties, like dal [lentils], yogurt, chilly sauce, etc. – each in a little bowl. We have

eaten *Thali* in Indian restaurants on many occasions. But it has never occurred to us to question what this really is.

Another example, GC writes that the Indians use cow dung and mud to plaster their stoves. This, he says, is because cow dung repels bugs. Secondly, the Hindus consider cow dung very clean. He says that the Hindus use cow dung for hygiene and to repel bugs. In Tibet, the yogis in retreat use something called 'bajung' to rinse their mouth. It was not until I read GC's *Golden Field of Stories* [See texts of GC in Horkhang] that I realized 'bajung' was actually cow dung. I sat in retreat once. The scripture said that we should rinse our mouth with 'bajung'. And, I did rinse my mouth with the substance known as 'bajung'; little knowing that it actually was cow dung. To sum up, GC was able to observe and learn a lot from the Indian society and from whomever he came into contact with. This is a very special quality. In India, GC became a friend of Babu Tharchin. Later, they fell out with each other. Babu Tharchin suspected that GC was a Russian agent. There are stories of Babu Tharchin having informed the British Indian government that GC was a Russian agent. Therefore, they fell out with each other [Nobody else confirmed this story. But fact is that Tharchin was an informer of the British Secret Service during WW II].

Did GC have many friends?

When you look at the life of GC, you will discover that he had never had a life-long friend, a bosom friend. Why? On the one hand, most of the worldly beings are fond of rich people. They try to ingratiate themselves with rich people, even if the rich people look down upon them. If someone is not rich or powerful, people will not make efforts to make friends with him. This is a human nature. GC was a pauper. He had no material riches. This is probably one reason why he did not have many friends. But this can't be the whole explanation. There are many people who, despite being poor, have loyal friends, ones who will stand by them through thick and thin. Even I have such loyal friends. But GC did not have such friends. When GC was lying on his deathbed, no one visited him to offer even a cup of hot tea [this information is only partly true. See interviews: Golok Jigme, Tseten Yudron, and Lobsang Samten]. I suspect that perhaps he had an eccentric temperament, which did not help to endear him to people. Probably, he had an eccentric temperament. If we look at it from a wider perspective, we think that he had an eccentric temperament. He lived at the time when our Tibetan society, in the 20th century, was very conservative. He spurned all the taboos, religious or otherwise. He was a towering figure, who rose above all the social restrictions and taboos. Such a person was sure to have strange temperaments. Think of that famous Russian thinker. I forget his name now. He was a famous writer. As son of a wealthy family, he possessed lots of money, mansions, huge estates, factories, etc. When his parents died, he gave away the lands, mansions, the factory and everything else to the needy. He started begging for living. One day, people saw a dead body on the railway station, a man with a bushy beard. He turned out to be the great thinker [?]. Great writers, painters, poets seem to have some unique genes.

What about the influence of the Indian communist Rahul Sankrityayan on GC?

Kirti Rinpoche's book talks about this. The book discusses whether or not GC was influenced by communist ideology. The book says George Roerich [GC worked for GR in the early 1940's] was a

communist and so was Rahul Sankrityayan [See interview: Jaya Sankrityayan, Tashi Tsering, Tsering Shakya]. Since GC interacted with both of them, it is certain that he was influenced by some of their communist ideologies. Horkhang Sonam Penbar from Tibet maintains that GC studied the communist theory extensively [GC was certainly aware of it]. Some people claim that GC admired Mao's ideology and took keen interest in it. This is what people say. I follow people only if I see any credibility, not otherwise. I can't say that GC was a communist. Heather Stoddard has written a book on GC. It is unfortunately only in French. Melvyn Goldstein's book, *The Demise of the Lamaist State*, maintains that GC, Rabga Pangdatsang, Changlochen, and others formed the 'Tibet Improvement Party' [in another translation: Tibet Revolutionary Party]. The organization had an emblem and a bilingual membership form in both Chinese and Tibetan. The pattern of the emblem looks like a sickle and a hammer. This pattern makes me suspect that it was probably a communist organization. But one thing is still not certain. And this is important. Goldstein does not show any document that bears GC's signature. The same is true of Heather Stoddard's book. Therefore, we can't say with certainty that GC was an inscribed member of that organization. I think perhaps GC, as an intelligent and highly literate person, may only have helped them in drafting their documents. GC was a poor man. He needed money to travel and visit brothels from time to time. They probably gave him money and used his service. There is no clear evidence to show that he was a member of their organization. As long as we do not see a document bearing GC's signature, we can't say that he was a member of that organization [HJ's information is true, but we don't have signatures of the other members, either. But the Tibetan Improvement Party still existed].

Another point, GC had written some verses. In my book, I have reproduced the verses, with my own analysis of them. The verses describe the American presidential system, as well as the political systems of Japan, Nepal, Tibet, Britain, Germany, etc. He has written one stanza to describe each system. When one looks that this writing, one feels that he took considerable interest in the different political systems of world: the communist system, the democratic system, monarchy, etc. The concluding stanza is on Tibet. It is terribly unflattering for Tibet. It says that the Tibetan value system gives a lot of credit to secrecy; if a person is able to keep secrets, he is considered wise; secrecy is seen as a sign of profundity. Our value system, according to this stanza, deifies the old and demonizes the new [See interview: Thubten Wangpo]. This, he writes, has been the Tibetan convention so far. When I look at this, I suspect that he subscribed to communism to some extent. But then, even His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as I see him, has some admiration for communism. I think communism does provide some useful methods. Unfortunately, the Communists, starting from those in Germany, have used violence. That is why it lost its appeal. Communism *per se* provides useful methods. It is fair to say that GC was in favor of ending the upper class privileges, just as he wished to see the emancipation of the downtrodden. He wanted the downtrodden to enjoy ownership of the lands they tilled, and freedom from generations of servitude. Having said this, I must admit that I do not have evidence to suggest that GC was a communist. Therefore, I cannot make an unequivocal judgment on this.

What about GC's arrest?

Now there is one question, an important one, to which we do not have an authoritative answer. Who actually engineered the arrest of GC? Rakra Rinpoche says that his family was very close to GC, that they were GC's patrons, etc. Horkhang Sonam Penbar says the same thing. In a number of issues of *Bod-kyi Rig-ney Lo-gyud Gyu-cha Dham-drik*, many former aristocrats have written articles to claim that they had nothing to do with GC's arrest. Who then was responsible for GC's imprisonment? And what was his crime? It is very important for us to probe this. This tape will probably be made public later. Therefore, I don't want to name names. However if you want to know this more clearly, you may read my book. I have mentioned it fairly clearly in my book.

In Riga Lobsang Tenzin's book, it is mentioned that, when GC was in India, he received a letter from the Minister Kapshopa and Trijang Rinpoche [a highly regarded scholar and teacher of the Dalai Lama], asking him to return to Tibet, with a promise of a job [nobody else confirmed this story]. GC had written the 'Tibetan Art of Love' before returning to Lhasa. GC wrote to Kapshopa and his son to say that he had written this book and was enclosing a complimentary copy for them. This shows they were close friends. On reaching Lhasa [1946], GC presented himself at Kapshopa's door. Kapshopa said, 'I see! So you are GC! You look like a chilly vendor from Tsona.' Kapshopa pretended not to recognize him. He treated GC with extreme disdain. Now this incident is important.

GC was also a very good friend of Trijang Rinpoche. The Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Varanasi had published GC's *Golden Field of Stories* [See: text of GC 'Travelogue Tibet']. It had a 29-page foreword by Samdong Rinpoche. The foreword quoted Trijang Rinpoche as having said, 'One day GC came to me and told me about the historical records he had come across in India, and also about having seen and painted the flowers and medicinal herbs that find mention in our old scriptural texts. He loaned the notebooks to me. A few days later, one fine morning, he came back in a hurry and asked for the notebooks. He took the notebooks and went away. A couple of days later, I heard the news of his arrest. I should not have returned his notebooks.' The foreword notes the sense of loss that Trijang Rinpoche had felt about the imprisonment of GC. Trijang Rinpoche is quoted as having stated that the notebooks were lost, when GC was imprisoned.

There is a compilation of letters by Geshe Sherab Gyatso [GC's teacher from Drepung, 1927-34]. In the compilation, there are many letters that he had written to Ling Rinpoche and Trijang Rinpoche [both tutors of the Dalai Lama]. A critical reading of these letters gives insight into many issues. What we can't understand is this: At that time, Trijang Rinpoche was a tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He was a very high lama. Samdong Rinpoche's foreword, in which he quoted Trijang Rinpoche, makes it clear that he was a friend of GC. All the *Kalons* [Ministers] of that time, including Kapshopa, Surkhang, and Yuthog, were students of Trijang Rinpoche. What I fail to understand is that the *Kalons*, including Shakabpa, were all students of Trijang Rinpoche at that time. If it were some other country, a country with the rule of law, then legal cases would be decided according to the due process of law. Rule of law did not really exist in Tibet at that time. If there was a rule of law, one could say, 'You are charged of

violating clause such and such of Article, say 56, or something like that. In Tibet people were arrested or released on the whim of the powers that be. Therefore if Trijang Rinpoche had said something like, 'Why did you arrest this scholar, this poor man? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Why don't you release this man', etc., GC would surely have been released. The words of Trijang Rinpoche, as quoted by Samdong Rinpoche, suggest that he considered GC's arrest an unfortunate event. The question is if Trijang Rinpoche indeed had such a high regard for GC, why didn't he intervene on behalf of him? Why did GC spend over three years in jail? This is a complex issue. Isn't it? The thing to consider here is GC's *Ludrup Gongyen* [Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts], which was critical of Tsongkhapa's teaching [the founder of the Gelug tradition, to which both Trijang and Ling Rinpoche belonged.]. And, our government was run by the Gelug followers [most if not all of the nobility at the time were followers of the Gelug tradition]. You can in fact call it a Gelug government. Some powerful lamas and monks of the Gelug School, those with strong sectarian prejudice, may have engineered the arrest of GC. Of course, this is merely a conjecture. We do not yet know the truth. If the researchers were able to find an answer to this, it would be an important contribution to the biography of GC [See article of Donald S. Lopez Jr. in 'Tricycle', Spring 1995]. To me, this issue is very important. In prison, GC wrote a *Gur* [song], using both archaic and modern words. In my book, I have explained the song from two angles, a literal one and figurative one. This song, as I see it, provides a clue to his suffering in the prison and the treatment he received at the hands of some aristocrats. This, I think, is important.

What was the reason for his death? His drinking habit?

Throughout Tibet, people talk about his drinking problem. When I was young, I heard a story in my village, which I have written in my book. People in my village said that GC had been given some sort of poison in the prison. It was not a very strong poison, so it seems. However, that poison had the effect of inducing addiction to alcohol. If he did not drink, his limbs and body trembled. Even Rakra Rinpoche's book states that GC could not support his body unless he drank. The two stories seem to support each other. Some people maintain alcohol neutralizes the effect of this poison. Whether this is true or not, I do not know. Nevertheless, it is a point to consider [I strongly doubt this story. GC was already into drinking, when in India. See interview: Golok Jigme]

Some people claim that he died of drinking. But as I see it... Now there are two versions about GC's time in prison. Ngawangthondup Narkyid and some other scions of former aristocrats maintain that his imprisonment was nominal. In reality, he was given all the freedom; he was allowed to drink or do whatever he fancied. This is one version. The second version maintains that he suffered a lot in prison, that he was placed under very tight restrictions, etc. I cannot say which one is true. When I read accounts of GC's physical condition, his hair, face, etc. upon his release, I do not get a picture of a man who had enjoyed freedom and good life in prison [See interviews: Golok Jigme, Amdo Champa, Tseten Yudron]. Just imagine, when GC was a free man, no one gave him so much money to drink. Who, then, gave him all the money to drink so profusely in captivity? Rakra did not give him money? Rakra was his friend. He did not give him the money. Then, who gave him the money? The prison guards? Who else? [See interview: Tashi Pelra] No one has so far written an authoritative account of this. From where did he get

so much to drink in the prison? Where did the money come from? This is the biggest question mark. To sum up, whether he was given poison or lots of drinks in the prison, it seems to me that, when he was released from the prison, he did not look like a man who would live long. 80 or 90 percent of life had ebbed out of his body. This is what I think. I do not believe that alcohol alone killed him.

What was GC's influence on Tibet during his lifetime?

As I see it, GC did not have much influence during his lifetime. Now, this is the way of the world. When a great man is alive, he does not find enough support, financial or otherwise. It is only when he is gone that people will talk about his greatness. This is the way of life everywhere in the world [See interview: Golok Jigme]. What we can see is that GC did not have much influence during his lifetime. At the same time, it must be said that he had *some* influence. He wrote the 'White Annals' [on old Tibetan history]. The mainstream Tibetan history says that Songtsen Gampo lived up to 82. In his 'White Annals' GC said the King already died at the age of 34, basing his claim on the Dunhuang materials and Chinese historical records. GC's book sparked off a great deal of debates among the historians. This is GC's influence on the history of Tibet. Then GC wrote the *Ludrup Gongyen* [Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts]. The appearance of Tsongkhapa [in the 16th century] on our planet meant that the [newly founded] Gelug order spread so extensively that it was said its doctrine predominated the sky and earth alike. From Ngari [West] to Gyarong in Amdo [East], the Gelug became the predominant doctrine in Tibet [with the support of the Mongol Emperors]. There were so many Gelug lamas and *geshes*. In the midst of this, GC spoke critically of Tsongkhapa. Here I must make one thing clear. I do not mean to say that GC's writing against Tsongkhapa is a masterpiece of unsurpassed quality. I am not saying this. But given the predominance of the Gelug doctrine at that time [the 1940's], when it was said to dominate both the sky and earth, we can imagine how violently he must have rocked the social boat, by writing against the very proponent of this doctrine! Imagine what a debate it must have sparked off! In short, he managed to shock and shake the Tibetan society at that time [and this at a time, when the Tibetan society was already facing a severe political threat from China].

And then GC wrote the 'Art of Love'. As I have written in my book, we Tibetans may make love with our wives or girl friends five, six, seven, or even eight times in a single night. But we will swear to our friends the next morning that we have not made love at all. We tend to feign disinterest in carnal affairs. This is considered a proper decorum in our society. Against such a convention, GC unabashedly tells us the thrills of sexual relationship without mincing his words. This naturally shocks narrow-minded people. When I say that GC did not have much influence during his lifetime, I mean he did not have many followers. But he did manage to shock and shake the Tibetan society. Today, people make a lot of GC. So much so that if you speak against him in say the Lhasa University, people will get very angry. In the exile community also, the educated and uneducated alike know about GC. This is due to the hype created by some former aristocrats, like Rakra Rinpoche and Horkhang Sonam Penbar [who were among the first in Tibet and in Exile to write about GC]. GC's fame in the exile community stems from the advertisement made by these former aristocrats. It is not that people have read his works and, thus, developed respect for him. Thus it is understandable that people make so much of him nowadays. Every ethnic group needs a

'standard bearer', to use the Chinese word. As I see it, GC has become a 'standard bearer' of the Tibetan people in the 20th Century. Whether he was good or bad, whether he was an extraordinary person or not, the Tibetan people need a 'standard bearer', a role model. This is probably the reason, why people make so much of him.

What is GC's influence on Tibetan identity today?

You said before that the young people of Amdo regard GC as having had a significant influence on the Tibetan language. I do not think GC played an important role vis-à-vis the Tibetan language. I say this because he had not written anything on the Tibetan language. In his 'Golden Field of Stories', he spoke about the importance of preserving the Tibetan scriptural language. He said that if people spoke their regional dialects and ignored the scriptural language, a time would come, when we might not understand the Kagyur, Tengyur and other scholarly works anymore. He spoke very strongly about this. However, he had not written any treatise on the Tibetan language. Therefore, I do not consider him important for the Tibetan language. This is one thing [See interview: Pema Bhum].

Now if I were asked why GC is important, I would say that he shook the young people out of Tibet's traditional parochial smugness and opened the window on the outside world. This, I think, is his most important contribution. His 'Art of Love', 'Golden Field of Stories', etc. are examples of this. Of course, many Tibetans before him had traveled outside the country. But no one before him had written a travel book. Traveling to India and Ceylon, he wrote in detail about the trees, flowers, pilgrim sites, places, their respective customs, etc. With this, he started a new genre of literary tradition in Tibet. He exposed the Tibetans to outside cultures, opened the door for imbibing the useful aspects of other cultures. This, I think, is his most important contribution.

Once I gave a concluding remark on GC. There is a young man from Lhasa, named Tseten Wangchuk. Interviewing me for his program of Voice of Asia (VoA), he asked me to sum up the life of GC in 40 seconds. My answer took ten seconds. I said GC was a man drunken with lofty intellectual ideas. This is what I said. That is the reason, why he could not get along with other people. Being intellectually drunk, he tried to tell people what he thought were great ideas, managing only to alienate them. So, I would like to repeat here that GC was drunken with lofty intellectual ideas.

Tell us more about his influence on the Tibetan identity?

There are five characteristics that combine to make up a national identity. Language is only one of them. Language alone does not make up a national identity. These days many foreign Tibetologists speak Tibetan very fluently. So language alone does not represent Tibetan identity. If you ask me what his contributions to the Tibetan identity are, I don't feel confident in giving you a definitive answer. Many of his works were lost. The 'White Annals' is among those that survived. It threw new light on many aspects of Tibetan history. This is not to say that Tibetans did not have historical records before the 'White Annals'. Tibetans did have historical records before his book. He produced new facts and made history easier to understand. He came up with certain facts that had not been known before him. But it was not

altogether a new literary genre for Tibetans. I think his best works are the 'Golden Field of Stories' and the 'Art of Love'. Some time back, I met one of my friends. He told me that Lelong Shape Dorje, a scholar in Lhasa, had written something that was rather like the 'Art of Love'. Lelong's book, he said, dealt with the tantric tradition of consorting. This must be true. He said that Lelong Shape Dorje was the first Tibetan to write about the art of consorting. I have not seen his work; but my friend must be right. And Ju Mipham had also written about the art of consorting [GC himself is referring to Ju Mipham in the foreword to his 'Art of Love']. The *'Art of Love'* is a path breaking work. This is GC's contribution. However, I do not see any contribution from GC toward Tibetan national identity.

Why did it take 30 years or so for people to notice GC?

Very easy to explain. GC died in 1951. And in 1949 the Chinese had started marching into Tibet, into the Kham and Amdo regions [actually 1950]. From 1949 to 1959 Tibet had no time to think about religious or cultural works. Tibet did not even have space to breathe. Tibet was confronted with a political crisis. The Chinese army was marching in, killing and arresting people, destroying monasteries and temples, destroying religion, beating up people, etc. At such a time, no one had time to think about the importance of GC. In those ten years, Tibet did not even have a breathing space. We must keep this mind.

Then from 1959 to 1980, not a single word relating to Tibetan religion and culture could be heard. In my book on modern Tibetan literature, I called the Tibet of that time a 'dark society'. The thoughts of Mao were all one could study in school. Quite a few people were jailed for six or seven years merely for reciting the mantra 'Om Mani Padme Hum'. Many Tibetans had to spend 10 to 15 years in jail for possessing books on Tibetan grammar and language. They were charged with possessing books on witchcraft. Tibetans did not hear a single word about their own culture and religion, let alone about GC.

In 1976, Chairman Mao, Premier Zhou Enlai and General Zhu De died. Soon after, there was an opportunity to hear traditional songs on the radio. When the traditional songs were broadcast for the first time, old people burst into tears. They had not heard their traditional songs from 1959 to 1976, 1977, 1978. When they heard the songs from which they had been separated for over two decades, for nearly three decades, they were so moved that they burst into tears. Therefore, there was absolutely no opportunity to discuss GC. In 1978, the 13th Chinese National People's Congress was convened. Following this, there was a measure of liberalization for Tibetan religious and cultural activities. Now, there was an opportunity for children to study their language again. For the first time after the Chinese occupation, a book was published in the Tibetan language. It was entitled, *Bod-kyi Tsomrig Gyutsal* [Tibetan Literature]. Then in 1982, a Tibetan literary journal, known as *Drangchar* [Gentle Rain] was published in Qinghai. In Lhasa, the journal, entitled '*Bod-jong Shibjug*' [Tibet Review] began publishing, in which Horkhang Sonam Penbar wrote about GC [a short biography]. The journal reproduced some of GC's poems and his letters to Labrang Monastery. That is how GC came into prominence, with the advent of modern Tibetan literature.

Why this interest of Western scholars?

I see a very definite trend among Western scholars. They seem to take special interest in mavericks. They heard that GC had written the 'Art of Love', that he had written against Tsongkhapa [in his *Ludrup Gongyen*], and so on and so forth. This aroused their curiosity. They wanted to know how he managed to write such things in the Tibetan society of that time. They started probing. This, I think, is how GC became well known among Western Tibetologists. Take the case of Western media, a great discovery or invention, either by an individual or by a company, does not receive much coverage. On the other hand, Oedipal rape, fratricide, robbery, theft, and all kinds of such incidents get huge publicity, front-page headlines. This seems to be the trend in the American and European societies. Therefore, when the Westerners heard of GC's maverick activities, they immediately became fascinated. I think this is how he became famous in the West.

As for GC's fame in the Tibetan exile community... Well, someone like Rakra Rinpoche is a well-known scholar in the exile community. He talked a lot about GC. And then, there is Ngawangdhondup Narkyid [both contemporaries of GC]. He is not a specialized scholar, but he is well educated and comes from an aristocratic background. He wrote articles about GC, claiming to be GC's last student, GC said such and such things to me, he did such and such thing, so on and so forth. He wrote a spate of articles on GC and publicized him. When we look at the exile community, we discover that the monastic seats have produced many scholars of the Tantra and Sutra, scholars of the Five Major Disciplines. But the lay community in exile has not produced specialist scholars in any aspect of our culture. Therefore, when an older man with a scholarly tag says something, it captures the imagination of people. This is how, as I see it, GC became well known in the exile community.

Tell us more about GC's 'Art of Love'?

I have already spoken two or three times about GC's 'Art of Love', when I discussed the new concepts he had introduced to the Tibetan society. His 'Kamasutra' [Art of Love] is the kind of text that does not sit well with the Tibetan people's psyche. Actually, his 'Art of Love' is a translation of the Kamasutra with some additions [other scholars regard GC's 'Art of Love' not as a translation, but as independent text, inspired by the Indian Kamasutra]. The additions GC made were his own sexual experiences. Naturally, this book shocked the Tibetan society. GC talks about his sexual experiences with Asali, Ganga Devi, etc. in Calcutta, with Jangdrok Gegey in Lhasa prison, with a girl from Chamdo, and so on and so forth. Of course, I have not seen these girls. However, I wonder if he ever met a beautiful girl, let alone an intelligent one. The girls he met were probably very unattractive, just prostitutes or other riffraff. Why so? In my book, there is the chapter, 'Sour Chapter in GC's Life'. In that chapter, I said that perhaps GC had attained the realization of what is called 'Pure Perception' in Buddhism. A person who has realized 'Pure Perception' sees good or evil, dirty or clean with even-mindedness. Whether a girl is beautiful or not, the private part must be pretty much the same. It is possible that, having realized the 'Pure Perception', he sees no difference between the girls. The other reason is found in his own book. He says that he can't resist the attraction of women. Yes, it is possible that he had very strong sexual desires, and

that might have compelled him to go for any girl he got [See interviews: Amdo Champa, Golok Jigme, Ju Kesang].

What went wrong in Tibet since the Younghusband expedition in 1903/04?

As you said, the saddest episode in the history of Tibet took place in the 20th Century. In that century, the British established trade agents in Gyantse and Lhasa [by force]. They resided at Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse [Central Tibet]. General Younghusband led a military expedition into Tibet. The Tibetans resisted the British at Gyantse Fort, losing many lives. Towards the end of the 19th Century, the Tibetans, or the Tibetan government became a spent force. Even Bhutan attacked us, bullied us. History shows that Bhutan attacked us twice or three times. The Nepalese traders in Lhasa raped Tibetan girls. And when the traders were beaten, Nepal attacked the Tibetan areas of Kyirong, Shigatse, etc., and robbed livestock from the local Tibetans. Tibet was powerless to resist even puny forces. During the time of the 13th Dalai Lama, Tibet suffered many tragic fates. The Dalai Lama had to escape to China [after the invasion of the British]. En route, he stayed in Amdo for quite a while. I think it is of utmost importance for human beings to step outside and see the world. If we cocoon ourselves in our country, we develop a false sense of cultural superiority, making us insular. As I said earlier, it is mentioned in the 'Political History of Tibet' [by Shakabpa] that at one point of time, over 60 percent of the Tibetan government's activities were geared solely towards supporting religious institutions, and that the government did not invest enough resources on political affairs.

All religions in this world have the same prejudice. Every people believe that their own religion is the best in the world. People tend to think that if another religion comes into their country, it will have an adverse impact on their own religion, and so on and so forth. Every religion in the world has this sort of prejudice. We are now in the 21st century. People say that the world has progressed immensely and has become very open, etc. But when His Holiness the Dalai Lama visits Europe or America, many people can't bring themselves to welcome him. They like him very much as a person. They know that he is a good human being. At the same time, they say that the Dalai Lama's frequent visits and talks and spiritual teaching in their countries have had the effect of converting a large number of Catholics to Buddhism. 'Therefore, the Dalai Lama should not come to our too often.' Many conservative Christians say this.

The same sort of thing happened in Tibet. During the time of the 13th Dalai Lama, the British opened an English school...was that in Shigatse? The Tibetans reacted by saying that we should not allow them to open school. They said, 'If these European people are allowed to open schools here, they will ruin our Buddhist religion. The schools will harm our religion.' [See interview: Thubten Wangpo] Therefore, they destroyed the English schools. Again, when the 14th Dalai Lama was young, he opened an English school in Lhasa. There was a documentary on this on the cable TV the other day. Once again, some lamas and [scholars] of the Three Monastic Seats [Ganden, Drepung and Sera monasteries in Lhasa] disapproved of it. They said it was not good. 'On the pretext of opening schools, many Europeans will come here and harm our religion.' They incited the *dob-dobs* [monk police] of the Monastic Seats to attack the school. Ultimately, the school had to be closed.

We [Tibetans] had not seen the outside world and were unaware of what was happening in the world around us. This was the primary reason for the failure of the 13th Dalai Lama's plans for reform. Buddhism teaches us to renounce craving for good houses, wealth, etc. A good practitioner of Buddhism is one who renounces material and sensual cravings. He who accumulates material or worldly things is considered a poor practitioner. This teaching, I think, had had a great deal of influence on our attitude to the development of the country. This is one thing. On the other hand, some aristocrats became patrons of the monastic seats. They visited their respective beneficiary monasteries on occasions such as the Shoton Festival. The monasteries, in turn, welcomed their beneficiaries, 'Oh, our patrons have come,' and so on and so forth. In this way, the aristocrats established benefactor-beneficiary relations with the monastic Seats. In other words, the aristocrats built their respective power bases also within the Monastic Seats. Now, when the power of any aristocrat was threatened, he would go the lamas of his beneficiary monastery and say things like, 'Now, bad things are happening. This might gradually have an adverse effect on your monastery, too.' The monastery would then rise in support of their patron. During the time of power struggle between Reting and Taktra [The two Regents between the 13th Dalai Lama and the 14th], Sera monastery rose behind Reting and Drepung monastery behind Taktra [See interview: Abu Thinley]. This created a lot of problems [the uprising of the Sera monks in support of Reting Rinpoche led to a short but violent civil war in Lhasa, 1947]. It is thus clear that the monasteries were behind the aristocracy.

The proposed reforms in Tibet, the plans of the 13th Dalai Lama, and the reform committee established by the 14th Dalai Lama during his young age, met with many obstacles. Why? If the reforms went through, the commoners would have been empowered. This would have weakened the traditional power base of the aristocracy. The commoners would then refuse to serve the aristocracy. Even if the aristocracy claimed all the lands for themselves, without the labor of the commoners [corvee], it would not have been possible for them to put the land to use. To sum up, there was a strong alliance between the religious and political institutions [the Tibetan government was run by monk and lay officials]. When the political powers faced problems, they sought the support of religious institutions. And, when the religious institutions faced problems, they sought the support of political powers. This alliance was responsible for the failure of the 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas' reform plans.

You asked about the time of the 13th Dalai Lama. The 13th Dalai Lama's close attendants, such as [His secretary] Chensel Kunphela, were from ordinary backgrounds. Kunphela was from a commoner family in Tsang. When this boy from Tsang was brought to Norbulingkha [The summer palace of the Dalai Lama], he did not feel at home in the new environment. He escaped from the Norbulingkha. The Dalai Lama sent his servants to bring him back. When the servants chased him, the boy jumped into Kyichu River in Lhasa. On being told this story, the 13th Dalai Lama lightened the boy's duties and gave him education and special privileges. That is how the boy came to be known as *Chensel* [favorite]. Someone who is given special prerogatives is called *Chensel*. This is how *Chensel* Kunphela rose through the ranks. He was not from a noble family. The Dalai Lama picked him from the commoners, because he saw intellectual promises and bravery in the boy. Naturally, the big families did not accept him. This is the

reason why there were different factions during the time of the 13th Dalai Lama. And, when the 13th Dalai Lama passed away, the power struggle among the factions came to the fore. As the struggle dragged on, Lungshar had his eyes gouged out [in 1934] and Chensel Kunphela was banished to Kongpo [from where he fled to Kalimpong with the Duke of Changlochen. There they later founded the Tibetan Revolutionary Party together with Rapga Pangdatsang]. This is how the 13th Dalai Lama's plans came to naught. To sum up, vested interests of power politics was at the root of all the obstacles at the time.

You were right about the influence of GC. As I said earlier, his biggest influence on the Tibetan society was to open it up to the outside world and pave the way for imbibing the positive aspects of the outside world. If he had lived longer and written a book, urging the people to travel out of the country and to rise up against exploitation, it would have struck a deep chord with the people. As a skilful penman, his writings would have had the power to goad people to action. If his writings goaded the masses, it might have threatened the vested interests of the politicians. It is possible that GC was killed because of this concern. I am not suggesting that he was killed. I am only saying that this is a possibility.

TASHI TSERING



Recorded on the 9th of October 2002 in Dharamshala, India.

Born 1956 in Tibet. Fled with his family to India after the Tibetan uprising in 1959. Worked as researcher for the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA), being part of Kirti Rinpoche's oral history project in the late 1970's (doing on GC's life). He was a co-founder (and director) of the Amnye Machen Institute (AMI) in Dharamshala (India). He is regarded as one of the foremost Tibetan scholars in exile. Author and editor of numerous papers, articles and publications on Tibetan culture for both LTWA and AMI. Tibetan, in the film.

Your name and age?

My name is Tashi Tsering. I am now 46 years old.

Your relationship with GC? How did you first hear about him?

In 1970 or 1971, when I was a student at the Central School for Tibetans in Dalhousie, Riga Lobsang Tenzin came from Varanasi [researching for his book on GC]. At that time, our performing arts teacher was Kungo Chechak. He had been a student of GC. Riga Lobsang Tenzin had come to interview Kungo Chechak on GC. This is how I first heard his name. Before that, we, as school children, would not have heard of GC. Riga had come from Varanasi and was asking a lot of questions about GC. I wondered then, who this GC was. I was told that he had been a very famous man, a man with a very sharp mind, and a man with the knowledge of science. Science was then a very big deal. I was told that he spoke English and Sanskrit, that his poems were extremely beautiful. Our teacher, Chechak, was a good poet. He had a beautiful handwriting as well. Kungo Chechak, I was told, had studied the entire text of the poem, *Jalen-mai Doegar*, with GC. That is why Riga Lobsang Tenzin came to interview Kungo Chechak. That was the first time I heard GC's name, along with a very sketchy story of his life.

Then towards the end of 1972, in the beginning of 1973, I came to Dharamshala and joined the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. At that time, Khestun Sangpo, a scholar of the Nyingma school, was compiling the biographies of all the *lamas* [learned monks] born in Tibet before 1959, *lamas* from all the Eight Major Lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, *lamas* of Kagyu, Sakya, Nyingma and Gelug traditions. My first job at the library was to edit and copy the draft in the long hand, proofread and then take the manuscript to the printers in Delhi. That was my very first job at the library. Before the publication of Riga Lobsang Tenzin's book [on GC], there was a man in Darjeeling, a friend of GC. GC had received *Dzogchen* [The Great Perfection] and other Nyingma teachings from him. He, in turn, asked GC about India, Sri Lanka, etc. He discussed all kinds of Buddhist scriptures with GC. His name was Gojo Apo

Lachung [See interview: Namgang Tsomo]. He was to be the first person to write on GC's life. Before him, no one, either in Tibet or India, had written about GC. Khetsun Sangpo wanted to include a biography of GC in the section on Nyingma lamas. He requested Gojo Apo to write about GC, since they had known each other. Gojo Apo sent his writing to us. I was asked to type and edit this material. That was how I came to know more about GC. I had first heard of GC at school. Then I read Gojo Apo's piece. Those were my early encounters with GC. Otherwise, we, having grown up in India, would not have known about him. These incidents aroused in me some interest in GC.

After having helped Khetsun Sangpo in putting together his book, from 1976 to 1979 we were sent on a field trip to Kalimpong, Darjeeling and Gangtok to collect oral histories of Tibet. When I came back to the library in 1977 to report the progress of our work, I discovered that Kirti Rinpoche [originally from Northeast-Tibet] had come from Varanasi and joined the Library as its new staff. I was told that Kirti Rinpoche would visit Kalimpong, Gangtok and Darjeeling in 1978 to collect oral histories. I was asked to help him. That was the instruction from the director of the Library. Secondly, I was told that Kirti Rinpoche's efforts would be focused mainly on the life of GC. I was told to produce a research plan for his project.

Kirti Rinpoche took the primary responsibility of interviewing and audio-recording the oral histories in Kalimpong and Darjeeling. In Gangtok, I did some work and arranged all the interviewees [See interview: Tashi Pelra. This is one of the interviews done by Kirti Rinpoche]. Finally, Kirti Rinpoche returned to the Library with all his research materials from Kalimpong and Darjeeling. This included audiotapes of interviews, documents, books, and particularly, copies of all the back issues of Tharchin Babu's *Melong* [Tibet Mirror, in which GC wrote his articles]. I returned to the Library in 1979. In 1980 I was appointed the head of the Library's Tibetan-language publications. The Library instructed me to edit Kirti Rinpoche's manuscript. We transcribed the stories of six or seven friends and acquaintances of GC. Then, I proofread the copy and took it to Delhi for printing. It was finally published in 1983. This is how I got to read the book closely. And this is how I came to read GC's biographies; the first one was by Apo Lachung and the second by Kirti Rinpoche. I did not, of my own accord, do special research on GC.

Kirti Rinpoche's book was published in 1983. I had been appointed the head of Tibetan-language publications before that. The first book I published in that capacity was Rakra Rinpoche's biography of GC [Rakra was GC's student and friend, before GC's arrest in 1946]. I had to edit this manuscript. I forgot to tell you about Rakra's book. Rakra Rinpoche's book was edited in 1980 and published in 1981 or thereabout. Then in 1983, Kirti Rinpoche's book was published. To sum up, I read Apo Lachung's manuscript in 1972, Rakra Rinpoche's manuscript in 1980 and Kirti Rinpoche's book in 1983. I was involved in the publication of all those biographies. As I stated earlier, I did not, of my own accord, do any research on GC. These are the stories of my encounters with GC, how I became interested in him.

Now, let me talk briefly about the exile Tibetans' attitude to GC in the late 1970s. Since GC had written the *Ludrup Gongyen* [Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts], the Nyingma followers thought that they had

pulled a kind of *tour de force* against the Gelug School. A section of Gelug followers maintained that it was not GC's work, but that it was actually the work of Nyarong Dawa Sangpo [to whom GC had dictated the text]. The Gelugpas said they would not accept *Ludrup Gongyen* as the work of GC. Such were the feelings in the 1970s.

When everyone started taking interest in GC in the 1970s, he became a kind of fashion. More and more people started claiming, 'I was also GC's student. I was also GC's friend.' It reached such a point that some people even laid claim to having met GC in real life. 'Oh, my father was a friend of GC', etc. It was as if your own fame and standing would increase by the degree of your closeness to or intimacy with GC. I noticed this kind of trend in the early years of my work in Dharamshala, in the 1970s.

Your reaction to that?

Now, three exile Tibetans had written GC's biographies. Two were full-size books. Rakra Rinpoche's was a full-size book. Kirti Rinpoche interviewed the people who had met GC. The interviews were transcribed from the tapes. He then wrote a long preface based on his analysis. The first write-up, as I stated earlier, was that of Gojo Apo Lachung. GC then became a fashion in the Tibetan society. Meanwhile, Heather Stoddard, a western lady [and Tibetologist], was doing a research on GC. Her research took nearly 15 years. The research was for her Ph.D. paper [this research was conducted in collaboration with Heather Stoddard's husband Samten Karmay, who originally came from Northeast-Tibet]. In the exile Tibetan community, GC became a real fashion. He did this. He did that. He designed wooden boats that sailed for many minutes. He was a precocious man. He was a great scientist.' All kinds of stories – real and imaginary – were exchanged. On the other side of the world, Heather Stoddard, a western lady, wrote her Ph.D. thesis on GC, after 15 years of research. Heather completed her Ph.D. in 1983 or 1984. Since everyone was jumping on the GC bandwagon, I had felt no particular desire to add myself to it. However, it fell on me, as part of my duty at the Library, to edit, proofread, typeset, design, and print the works of Gojo Apo Lachung, Rakra Rinpoche and Kirti Rinpoche.

Now, when you read Gojo Apo's work, you get the impression that it is informed by his zeal to promote the cause of the Nyingma School. GC had by then already become a celebrity, which means, everyone was at pains to identify himself with GC. The people from Northeast-Tibet [Amdo] were filled with a sense of pride. Whether they went so far to say this or not, they definitely felt that they had produced the most learned, most competent, and most precocious man of the century. Gojo Apo's efforts were geared toward claiming that GC had been a pure Nyingma follower. Rakra Rinpoche [being a Gelug scholar] tried to point out that GC was not really the author of the *Ludrup Gongyen*, and that only a couple of stanzas in the book were actually his.

Kirti Rinpoche had interviewed many of GC's friends and acquaintances. But they were not scholars. Their interaction with GC did not go further than eating and drinking with him. Some of them had become his acquaintance on discovering that he had come from a village near theirs, others because they felt a kind of affinity for another Amdo kinsman [we have to understand here that there is a strong

regionalism in the Tibetan community], living in Lhasa. Their stories of him were told from the point of view of their own intellectual level: what impression they had had of him, how much of him they had seen, what they had talked with him, and other such mundane things. They did not have much to say about GC's learning, wisdom, vision, work, etc. More insightful than these interviews... apart from Heather Stoddard's book was Kirti Rinpoche's. It was the first book in Tibetan to reproduce reports on and writings by GC from the *Melong* [Tibet Mirror]. Therefore if one reads Kirti Rinpoche's own findings, one would learn a lot of new things about GC.

Before commenting on GC's many articles in the *Melong*, I would like to make one important observation. For about eight centuries, we Tibetans had remained isolated from the outside world. During that time, the world had undergone tremendous material and spiritual developments, both in India and in the West. GC yearned to inform the Tibetans of his discoveries in the outside world. His writings in the *Melong* were an attempt in this direction. He said things like this: *'Hey, the world is not flat; it is round. This is what people outside say. Our Umed script evolved from U-chen. We can infer this from the fact that the scripts on the ancient Indian stone pillars look like this and that. That Thonmi Sambhota [7th century] fashioned the Tibetan script after such and such script. That if anyone is able to read the Tibetan script, he can almost read the inscriptions on Ashoka's rock edicts.'* When one reads his articles in the *Melong*, one gets the impression that he yearned to open our eyes to these facts.

How did GC get involved with Melong?

That is one thing. Some people wonder, why it was only the *Melong* that published GC's writings, what was GC's relationship with *Melong*, why only the *Melong*, etc. The answer is: At that time there was only one Tibetan-language newspaper, both in Tibet and India. The second reason is: All the intellectuals or those interested in intellectual pursuits, from Mongolia, China, Tibet, either from U-Tsang, Kham, or Amdo, from Bhutan, from Sikkim, from Kinnaur, or wherever – flocked to Tharchin Babu [a Christian missionary of Tibetan origin] as soon as they reached Kalimpong. Whenever an intellectual came to Kalimpong, Tharchin Babu would take the initiative to meet them. He was supposed to be a practicing Christian. Nevertheless, he took a keen interest in Tibetan culture. Of course, he may not have taken interest in the vast scriptures of *Tantra* and *Sutra*, but he was very fond of popular cultures, such as operas, moral fables etc. And, whenever learned people landed up in Kalimpong, they went to him, just as he sought them out.

More particularly, scholars like the Frenchman Jacques Bacot etc. came frequently to see Tharchin Babu for help in deciphering the Dunhuang manuscripts and other archaic Tibetan texts. He was able to translate them to some extent. But if anyone wanted very detailed and authoritative translation, he found himself unequal to the task. In such cases, Tharchin referred the researchers to GC. 'Well, I am unable to understand this document. But there is an Amdo *geshe* [learned monk], who is a brilliant scholar and good painter. You go to him.' And, during the initial period of his stay in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, GC was dogged by acute financial problem. At that time, Tharchin Babu provided him lodging and other helps. It would seem that it was probably Tharchin Babu, who introduced GC to the Russian George

Roerich [GC helped Roerich with his work on Buddhist history, the 'Blue Annals'] and other scholars in India.

From 1934, the year of GC's first arrival in India, to 1946, the year of his return to Tibet, *Melong* was the only journal in which he could regularly publish his writings. At that time, there were no other journals in the Tibetan language. This is one reason. Another reason for his involvement is: Around the time of the Second World War, *Melong* contained a lot of news about the War. It was then a very exciting paper. Tibetan aristocrats, abbots, lamas, and rich merchants were avid readers of this paper. It was then the most exciting paper for Tibetan readers. Therefore, it was only natural that GC would write for this paper.

GC was the first Tibetan to relate his part of history to the Tibetan people?

He wasn't the first one. The Chinese Tang Annals were translated into Tibetan in the 1270s. That was a good thing. I will tell you something more. I will tell you my personal opinion on why GC became important, why he became famous and why the Tibetans feel so strongly about him. In my opinion if Tibet had not lost independence, as it did in 1959, Tibetans would not have felt so strongly about him. Then, they would not have seen his death at the young age of 49 as a great loss. If Tibet had not lost her independence, people would be saying things like, 'what a great loss! He was scarcely 50 when died,' etc. The reason is this. When we lost our country in 1959, our first task was to prove that Tibet had been an independent country. And, GC had written a book, the kind of which no Tibetan had ever written earlier. His 'White Annals' [a political history of Tibet] showed that Tibet and China were two distinct entities. It tells us about how China had at times attacked Tibet, and how at other times Tibet had waged wars on China, seizing even the Chinese capital. GC wrote about how Tibet had harassed the Chinese empire, about the might of Tibet in this period [7th to 9th century], about the defeat suffered by the Tang army at the hand of Tibetans in all the battles fought in Liao, Xingjiang, etc. And his book was completely different from the one followed by mainstream Tibetan scholars. He sourced his facts to the Dunhuang documents. Earlier Tibetan historians, such as *Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa*, had used the stone pillar inscriptions as well as old documents in Samye and Jokhang, but no one had used the Dunhuang documents. GC was the first person to use these documents. This is one thing.

Secondly, GC had worked for a long time with Rahul Sankrityayan of India and George Roerich of Russia. From them, he had learned the research methodology of contemporary foreign historians; he had learned how they used other sources and analyzed them, how they made their own inferences, etc. More particularly, when he worked with Roerich on the 'Blue Annals', that book was translated most faithfully, the sources were very detailed and complete, so GC was able to learn a lot. Therefore, his approach was very different from that of the mainstream Tibetan historians. His book was very lucid; it had all the qualities of foreign research methodology. After 1959, we needed just that kind of history to prove our independence. So we said, 'what a pity that he is no more. Wish he were alive today.' But not only his book on Tibetan history, his other writings were also outstanding. Moreover, we must understand GC's personality. He was not someone who was happy to rely solely on scriptures. Tibetans, as a rule, rely solely on scriptures or the speeches of high lamas in their arguments. My root lama said this. Tsongkhapa

said that. Guru Rinpoche said this. His Holiness the Dalai Lama said that. Finish. End of discussion. GC was conscious of the fact that the past system of education or debate relied too much on scriptures and speeches of high lamas. His own works were a departure from this scripture-oriented system of arriving at the truth.

In our debates, be they on *Tsema Namdren* [Pramanavartika, the Study of Logic], *Druptha* [Philosophical Tenets], or *Uma* [Madhyamika, the 'Middle Way'], we refuted the contentions of non-Buddhist religions. But the contentions we quoted were in currency from the 10th to 12th centuries. We had no idea how much the philosophies of other religions had changed since then. There was no one to tell us of this.

GC was the first Tibetan translator [*lotsawa*] to visit India after an interval of about eight centuries. He told the Tibetans: Listen my countrymen, the followers of other religions say so and so nowadays. The contentions that we presume to be theirs and have been refuting in our debates, no longer hold true. The followers of other religions no longer say such things. Their philosophies have changed now. Over the past eight centuries, they have developed in such and such ways. They advocate such and such ideas nowadays. And, they explain their points in such and such ways. Therefore, we have to prepare our arguments accordingly. In this way, he brought new ideas to Tibetans. The second message he brought to Tibetans was about the advent of science in the outside world. He did not use the word science. He called it *rigsar*, New Knowledge.

First, the Tibetans did not take much interest in what he had to say. Secondly, he faced acute financial problems during his stay in India. Thirdly, he did not get much encouragement. Therefore, he said at the end of his life, 'I could have written a very good book on *rigsar*. But now it seems pointless.' [See 'GC in Tibet Mirror' and 'GC in Horkhang']

Another thing is this: GC was a witness to the flowering of western interest in the concept of *Shangri-La* [a mystical place somewhere in the Himalayas. The name *Shangri-La* comes from James Hilton's book, 'Lost Horizon']. During his time in India, the westerners were saying things like *Shangri-La* existed in such and such places. Some of them, feigning divine inspiration, painted pictures of what they claimed were the realm of *Shangri-La*. He also witnessed the advent of western and theosophists' interest in Hindu and Buddhist religions. He saw how Madam Blavatzky and other theosophists started taking interest in Buddhism. This is one thing. Secondly, as I see it, GC was a very fervent nationalist. This comes through his works. For eight centuries we had wrapped our scriptures in fine clothes and reverentially preserved them in old monasteries. We never bothered to read them to find out what was written in them. We never bothered to find out who wrote them. When GC and Rahul Sankrityayan [See interviews: Jaya Sankrityayan, Tsering Shakya] visited the old monasteries, including the Sakya, Ngor, and Reting, they came across scriptures that were inconceivably old, scriptures about which no one had heard of for centuries, scriptures from which the Tibetan scholars had not quoted for centuries. They found a wealth of Sanskrit scriptures, which no longer existed even in India [the aim of Rahul's expedition was exactly to find these texts that had been destroyed in India]. When GC read those scriptures, he was awestruck by

the phenomenal efforts Tibetan translators [*lotsawas*] some 800 or 1,000 years before had put in finding out the best doctrines and philosophies of India during their time [these Tibetan translators brought an abundance of Buddhist text to Tibet, many written on palm-leaves]. He was awestruck by the immensity of efforts they had put in translating and crosschecking the translations of these scriptures. He was beside himself with admiration for those translators. They won his heart completely. Similarly, when he read the Tang Annals [during the time of the Tibetan Kings, 7th to 9th century], the Dunhuang documents, and the stone pillar inscriptions, he felt a sense of pride for Tibet's past political grandeur. His reading of old scriptures gave him an insight into Tibet's past cultural and scholastic achievements. Yet, the contemporary situation in Tibet, both politically and economically – that was the time of the regent's rule in Tibet [between the 13th and 14th Dalai Lama, 1934-49] – was hopeless. This saddened him.

On the one hand, he saw neighboring countries like India, Sri Lanka [then still Ceylon], and Burma struggling for independence from British rule. He stayed in Sri Lanka for one year and some months [early 1940's]. During that time, he saw political demonstrations against British rule. He also saw demonstrations and Gandhi's fasts in India. On the other hand, Tibet was unable to join even the League of Nations. We could not decide whether to join it or not. We were neither able to join the United Nations, nor could we make up our mind as to whether to join the United Nations or not. So out of touch with reality were we that during the Second World War, we said we were doing ritual prayers for the Allies!

His reading of Tibet's old scriptures made GC proud of the enormity of efforts put in by Tibet's past scholars and translators and the resources that Tibet's rulers and lay patrons had invested on their projects [the period between the 7th and 9th century]. Again, his reading of the Dunhuang documents, the Tang Annals, and the inscriptions on the stone-pillars in Tibet made him aware of Tibet's past political grandeur. Yet, when he observed Tibet's contemporary situation, when he observed Tibet's contemporary political situation and attitude of the government, when he observed how Tibetans ran their domestic and foreign affairs, he was bitterly disillusioned. We were slumbering, when the neighboring countries were fighting for independence! This, I think, disappointed him to the core.

Now, some people attribute his death to his bitterness and imprisonment. Others maintain that he died because of his bitterness against the Regent Taktra's government and the *Kashag* [Tibetan Cabinet]. I subscribe to neither of these claims. As I see it, GC felt that he was born in the wrong period. He felt that if he had been born in the right period, people would have been able to understand the new thoughts, new ideas, new learning, new experiences that he was bringing [e.g. through his articles in the 'Tibet Mirror']. But he was born in the wrong period. Therefore, his efforts to enlighten the Tibetan people proved futile. It was like the Tibetan saying, 'The donkey will shake its ear irrespective of whether you put gold or sand in it.' He found himself helpless. It is not as if he could wield a stick over their heads and force them to listen to him. If he had been born earlier or later, he would have been able to do some service to Tibet. In short, he wished that he had been born later. He was disappointed that he had been born in the wrong

period. But I do not believe that he died, because he was angry and disappointed with the Tibetan government's inability to appreciate his advice, his thoughts, his experiences, etc.

As I said earlier, for eight centuries Tibetan translators had not traveled to India to find out and write about the new doctrines, new social systems, new literary traditions, new cultures, etc. These Tibetan pilgrims, who went to India and Nepal, were able to identify a handful of Buddhist sites. But they did not really know, where most of the sites were. One significant event during GC's time in India was the following. It was the time when *Dhammapala* [the founder of the 'Mahabodhi Society'] and some Burmese monks were campaigning to take back the control from the Hindus over the Buddha's enlightenment site in Bodhgaya, Nalanda University, and other Buddhist monuments [GC himself complained in his 'Travel Guide' that some Hindu priests were performing blood-sacrifices in the holy place of Bodhgaya]. It was the time when the Buddhists were joining forces to form the 'Mahabodhi Society'. Secondly, with the help of Indian books and biographies of bygone Tibetan translators, including *Chag Choegyal*, he visited and identified each and every Buddhist pilgrim site in India. He put his research into writing in the form of his 'Travel Guide to India'.

Another thing, since the traffic of Tibetan translators and Indian scholars across the border had ceased for eight centuries, joint translation ventures of Tibetan translators and Indian scholars had also ceased. Therefore, the Tibetans were no longer able to identify and explain many of their own rituals, mural depictions, thangka depictions, woodcarving patterns, ritual objects, medicinal and fire-offering rituals, etc., many of which had come from India and some of which were part of Hindu tradition. Now after an interval of eight centuries, GC did research on this and explained, say, how the *Champak* flower actually looked like and how it was described in the Tibetan scriptures; how it was actually different from what the Tibetans said of it, and so on and so forth. As stated earlier, after a gap of eight centuries, he reanimated Tibet's relations with India and brought new outlooks.

In his travel book, he drew maps also... there were many older travel books in Tibet. But his book was different in the sense that it graphically described the mountains, plains, rivers, etc. More importantly, as the British had by then built the railway in India, he explained how to travel by train or bus, what were the new local names for the places and their corresponding older names in the scriptures, etc. If a Tibetan traveler asked for a place, using the old scriptural name, the local Indians would not know what he was talking about, and thus would not be able to help him [See interview: Pema Bhum]. He told us which were real Buddhist sites, and which were not, so that the Tibetans would not by mistake travel to non-Buddhist sites. He made a passing reference to the founding of the 'Mahabodhi Society' and its significance. At that time, many Buddhists were being converted to Christianity and other religions. One gets the impression that he probably wished Buddhism to become strong.

In his *Tamgyud Sergyi Than-ma* ['The Golden Field of Stories', see 'GC in Horkhang'], he tells us the contemporary Indian nomenclatures for ritual flowers and herbs named in Tibetan scriptures. He describes their shapes, colors, sizes, scents, and the season in which each of them grows. In other words,

he was informing us of the new developments and changes in India. Tibetans had, of course, visited places like Calcutta, but only for trading; visits for the exchange of cultural and religious ideas had ceased for centuries. Therefore, he worked to revive that tradition [See also GC's paintings].

Again, as a byline to his translation of the *Dhammapada*, GC writes, 'I, a translator [*lotsawa*] after an interval of eight centuries, live in Magadha in India.' He paid glowing tributes to some of the translation works that had been undertaken eight centuries before. He marveled at the beauty of Tibetan words those former translators had coined. 'How on earth could they have conceived of such beautiful words, such telling words?' He said the translations were utterly faithful to the original Sanskrit texts, both literally and contextually. He gave the example of a Sanskrit word, *Bhagwan*. In the Buddhist context, they had translated the word as *Chom-dhen Dhey*, the Vanquisher of the Four Demons, or Possessor of All Wisdom, or One Who Has Superseded the Good Ones. In the Hindu context they had translated it as *Legdhen*, The Good Ones. How on earth, he marveled, did such telling words occur to them in their translation! In his admiration for the translators of the centuries before, he himself strove to be most meticulous in his own translation. After translating the *Dhammapada*, he enthused that he, a translator that came after an interval of eight centuries, was living in Magadha. He writes this at the end of his translation. In other words, he revived the tradition of Indian-Tibetan collaboration in translating old Indian texts. This is what I think. Concerning the secular culture, he translated the *Jalenmai Doegar* and other texts in Tibetan.

He also made efforts to translate texts that were non-Buddhist. Tibet then did not have the tradition of translating non-Buddhist texts. GC felt that the Tibetans should have access to these texts, they should learn about them. Unless the Tibetans were familiar with these texts, they would not be able to refute the contentions of non-Buddhist religions. Therefore, he translated the *Bhagti Yoga* section from the *Bhagavat Gita*. If the Tibetan Buddhists wanted to know Hindu philosophies, it is important that they read Hindu texts. But there were no Hindu texts available in Tibetan. So, his translation was very useful. Now our spiritual teachers and *geshes* [learned monks] teach us, what a great fortune it is to be born a human being, especially one who gets to hear the Buddhist teaching. But without reading, say, the Bible, how can we say that it is less fortunate to be a Christian? Similarly, without studying the Koran, how can we say that it is less fortunate to be a Muslim? Without studying the doctrines and philosophies of other religions, such as Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, etc, there is no way we can say that it is more fortunate to be a Buddhist. I think GC's object of translating the *Bhagti Yoga* section from the *Bhagavat Gita* was to give us access to the doctrines or philosophies of another religion. How can we refute the contentions of other religions if we do not know their strength and weakness [See interview: Alak Yongsin]? We tend to make up our mind about other religions and refute them without bothering to learn what they are really about. I think GC's articles in *Melong* [Tibet Mirror] or his translations or all his writings were aimed at opening the eyes of the Tibetans, opening new vistas for us.

As I said earlier, GC did not consider scriptures as the only important thing. For him, reason was very important. Of course, I have not done specific research on GC's thoughts, actions, writings, etc. However,

one of the few things that I came to learn about him is that he was a very good painter... He was from Rebkong. The area of Rebkong has a very old tradition of *thangka* [religious paintings] painting, sculpturing, etc. This tradition had come from U-Tsang [Central-Tibet]. GC was a good *thangka* painter right from childhood, even before he came to Lhasa. When he faced financial difficulties during his early time in Darjeeling and Kalimpong [both in India], he sold paintings for a living. He had written to Rahul Sankrityayan [See: 'Letters of GC'] about his acute financial difficulties, wondering if he might be able to sell some paintings. As I said earlier, GC was a realist. Even in paintings, he did not believe in unrealistic depictions. He used common sense in all his works. This painting, for example, is a typical indication of his inclination for common sense. (Image 12: GC's painting of the Eight Auspicious Signs, mid-1940's). In the mainstream Tibetan painting, the two golden fish are shown coiled around the Wheel of Dharma, which actually is against common sense. If the fish really coiled round the Wheel of Dharma, they would die, because the fish must live in water, they would die outside the water. As an advocate of common sense, GC placed the Eight Auspicious Symbols on a tree, which is portrayed as growing from a lake. The two fish are shown jumping out of the water. They are alive in the water. As you can see, even in his paintings he did not deviate from common sense. Secondly, he visited the Sakya, Ngor and other monasteries with Kanwal Krishna, an Indian painter [See 'Kanwal Krishna on GC']. It is quite apparent that GC observed the Indian painter's style of using colors, tones, borders, etc. We can also say decisively that he visited the Indian art museums in Calcutta, Delhi, etc. and learned foreign aesthetic styles. In his paintings and everything else, he tried his best to stick as closely to realism as possible.



The Tibetan society has an inclination to accept or reject ideas on the basis of the social stature of the person, articulating them, not on the merits or demerits of the ideas as such. If a high lama or an important person says something, people will accept it without questioning. In other words, what you say matters less, than who you are. This holds as true today, as it did in the past. As this was true in the past, one can read a note of dismay in GC's words. He felt that he had new things to say, but that people would not listen to him. This comes through the following verses:

*Unimpressive as my social stature and appearance are
Even if I say these things
To the people of the Snowland [Tibet]
It is certain that no one will listen.*

Each verse in this stanza begins with the letter *kha*. In effect, it showed that he was kind of tired of the people of Tibet. He was saying, 'Well, I have something new to tell them. But what's the point. They will not listen anyway.'

The revolution in China, the invasion, how would you place GC in this whole atmosphere?

I think it is very tough to do that. Because it is very isolated. He stayed in Drepung and then he was gone. He was just an ordinary monk in Drepung. Now, some people ask whether GC was a progressive element, whether he was a modernist. People say things like this: Rabga Pangdatsang, Changlochen and Kunphela had gone to Kalimpong, when they had been banished from Lhasa in 1934. Some people say that GC interacted with them, which meant he was a member of their Tibet Improvement Party [also: Tibet Revolutionary Party], established to bring democracy, or communism, or whatever to Tibet. People ask me how GC met them. Now I do not have a definite answer to this. But what happened, I think, is like this: As I stated earlier, all kinds of people – aristocrats, lamas, scholars, etc. – flocked to Tharchin's [the editor of the 'Tiber Mirror'] house. That is how they met GC, not because they were like-minded people and made conscious efforts to meet there. This is my opinion. GC was a scholar, a very learned man, a man who had read the old Tibetan scriptures as well as the Tang Annals, the Dunhuang documents, etc. He had seen the situation in India, Burma, and Sri Lanka. His learning, experience, and outlook were way beyond the comprehension of people like Changlochen, Kunphela, and Rabga [Pangdatsang].

Moreover, GC came to India to enrich his knowledge: to read more, see more and receive more teachings, to add to what he had learned in Tibet. He had not been banished from Tibet, he had not escaped from Tibet. What's more, he at that time had no resentment against the people in power in Tibet [See interview: Tsering Shakya]. On the other hand, Changlochen, Rabga and Kunphela nursed grudges against the ruling group in Lhasa. The ruling group in Lhasa at that time was their enemy. We can't take for granted that they had noble motivations. Did they really want to see improvement in Tibet? Did they really want to see the introduction of democracy, or communism in Tibet? Or did they only want to settle scores with the ruling group in Lhasa. This is a question mark. I doubt if they were indeed close to GC. I doubt if they had ever met GC to plan any movement in Tibet.

During the Second World War, there were political struggles in Spain. At that time, many intellectual and writers were honeymooning with the communist ideology. The governments in the United States and Britain were trying to counter this growing trend. The governments were persecuting and witch-hunting the writers, artists, painters, film actors, etc., who were sympathetic to the cause of communism. The British Indian government also followed that policy. Now, GC was very close to Rahul Sankrityayan, a famous leftist at that time. On the one hand, he was famous in places like Varanasi and Bodhgaya for his scholarship, for his knowledge of Buddhism and for his having visited Tibet [1929, 1934, 1936 and 1938]. On the other hand, he had visited China, Russia and other communist countries, and joined communist parties there, had participated in communist meetings and campaigns. He was famous, both for his scholarship and for his espousal of the communist cause [in India]. He was famous for these two things. Moreover, he was a large man, a masculine man. He was famous in India for his scholarship and for his communist leaning. He enjoyed both fame and notoriety. Whenever he traveled outside Varanasi, the media besieged him. The [British-Indian] media took constant interest in him. Sometimes, when Rahul Sankrityayan was on a railway station, where people had come to see him off, he would do some very outrageous things, like loudly ordering beef for dinner [Hindus are not allowed to eat beef]. Why did

he do that? He wanted to shock the media people, the Brahmins and other cast Hindus within the earshot. It is probable that he did not actually eat beef. But he made a point of publicly ordering beef for dinner. This, then, was the personality with whom GC had very close association [They met in Lhasa 1934 and traveled through Tibet during several months]. GC assisted him a lot. It seems Rahul also assisted GC in some ways. This is one thing.

Secondly, the Roerich's, both the father [Nicholas] and his son [George], were watched constantly by the British and US governments. (Image 13: Nicholas (l.) and George Roerich in Kullu, 1940's). GC assisted George Roerich a lot. They were together in Naggar in the Kullu valley [in Northern India] during the Second World War [early 1940's]. And, GC was close to Rahul, a well-known leftist. Since GC had relations with such personalities, the British were worried that he would spread communism in Tibet. Therefore, they persuaded the Tibetan government, the Kashag, to arrest GC. I do not think that the arrest and persecution of GC was a voluntary decision of the Tibetan government. I don't think the ruling people in Tibet arrested him due to envy, competitiveness, or any particular enmity with GC. His arrest, I am convinced, was at the persuasion of the British government [See interview: Hugh Richardson].



Why did the British want GC arrested? First of all, he was very learned. He had published a travel book. He had written history books. He had published his translation of the *Dhammapada*. He had seen the independence movements in Sri Lanka and India. He was an intellectual. All of these did not go unnoticed by the British secret service. The British became very suspicious of him. They were sure that he would try to spread communism in Tibet. Therefore, they instigated the Tibetan government against him. This is what I think happened.

Changlochen and Kunphela later returned to Tibet. They weren't arrested. It was only GC, who got arrested. When Changlochen and Kunphela returned to Tibet, the British had already left India. If my memory serves me right, Changlochen and Kunphela returned to Tibet after the Chinese began their invasion of Tibet. By then, the Tibetan government was powerless. This is what happened, I think. These, then, are my casual answers to your questions. My answers are not the result of many years of research or anything like that.

Where does GC stand in the line of Tibetan intellectuals?

Some people ask me questions like this: Looking at GC's surviving works, where would I compare him with Tibet's past scholars and yogis. It is difficult to give a definitive answer to this question. The significance of any person depends both on the time and place during his lifetime. Well, looking at his surviving works, I would place his intellectual prowess alongside that of *Kunkhen Longchenpa Ramjampa*, *Kunkhen Jigme Lingpa*, and *Ju Mipham*. If I were asked to give him a rank on the altar, I would place him side by side with these scholars. Why? They were the foremost propounders of the *Dzogchen*, the 'Great Perfection' and *Nyingthig*, the 'Heart Drop' traditions [both very important teachings for Nyingma followers]. In this, they had no parallels among the early Buddhist masters.

Kunkhen Jigme Lingpa made a lot of contributions to the knowledge of Tibetan history. He compiled *Songtsen Bangso kyi Karchak* [Catalogues of the Tombs of Songtsen Gampo], etc. He used to quiz his Bhutanese disciples, who had been to Cooch Behar, Kalimpong, Darjeeling, etc. about the new developments in those areas. He asked them how the British East India Company's first ships had landed in India, about the British lifestyle, about their administrative system, about their material possessions, etc. Based on the information he had gleaned from his Bhutanese disciples, he wrote about the British in India. This, to some extent, is similar to GC's 'Travel Guide to India' and his interests in India and notes he had made of his observation in India.

As for *Ju Mipham*, his knowledge of doctrines and philosophies is as vast and profound as that of GC. *Ju Mipham* had written the 'Art of Love' before GC. GC once jocularly remarked [in the foreword to his book], the 'Art of Love' by a celibate monk like Ju Mipham, can't compare favorably with the one written by me, one who had had real-life experiences in sexual exploits.' In short, I see a lot of similarities in their works. Now this is my spontaneous answer to the question, which came unexpectedly. I was not answering systematically or making a detailed comparison and research.

From the Younghusband to the Chinese invasion [1904-51]. What went wrong?

Our door was closed. That was the thing. The British and Chinese both wanted us to close our doors, so that they would have a buffer zone between them. GC was born in 1903. In 1903 and 1904 Tibet had the Younghusband expedition, the British invasion. Even before that, in the 18th century, the British and the Manchu government [the Qing dynasty in China] were engaged in a race for the sphere of influence in Tibet. Finally, a year after GC's birth, we had the British invasion. Later, when GC was in India [1934-46], Tibet was divided into the territories to the east and west of Drichu River; *Chungpo Sertsu Bola* became the border between Upper Xining and Tibet. There were numerous other developments. Finally, the 13th Dalai Lama died in 1933. In short, both the British and China were eyeing Tibet. The British wanted to prevent the Chinese from gaining a foothold in Tibet; they wanted to stop the Chinese on the eastern side of the Drichu River. The Chinese, on the other hand, wanted to stop the British from advancing further north from Sikkim and Ladakh. They wanted to prevent the British from extending their influence in Tibet. If we established relations with the British, the Chinese would make noises; and if we established relations with China, the British would make noises. In this process, Tibet was isolated

from the rest of the world. When the Industrial Revolution was changing the world, Tibet remained impervious to it. We could not go out. Both the British and China did not want us to reach out to the bigger world. We were prevented from looking outward by both of these powers. Sometimes, we had to consult the British, other times the Chinese. In this process, we found ourselves bypassed by the developments in the world. This, then, was the time when GC was writing [1930's/40's]. It was the time, when he was gaining new experiences in Sri Lanka, India, etc. When the great wars were being fought, we continued to remain insular. We never tried to observe what was happening in the outside world. Even if GC had returned to Tibet and told us of all that he had seen and experienced, he would find no eager ears. The general situation in Tibet at that time was not conducive to the reception of new ideas.

Secondly, the 13th Dalai Lama's Last Testament in 1932 predicted that Communism would spread from every direction. He asked us to learn from the tragic development in *Dha Kurel* [Mongolia], our neighbor. He predicted that communism would come to Tibet as well. He warned us that communism would ban the recognition of reincarnated lamas, that it would destroy monasteries, that big families would meet tragic fates, and that each day or night would stretch an eternity of misery. He advised us to remain vigilant against the scourge of communism. Because of this advice, there was a general atmosphere of fear against the spread of communism. And, the British incitement only added fuel to this fear. It was thus that GC had no chance of exonerating himself. We were fearful that communism would spread in Tibet, that it would exterminate our spiritual figures, that it would destroy monasteries, and so on and so forth. Now, in the midst of this great fear, when the British informed us that GC was a communist, his fate was sure to be sealed. This is what happened.

As I said earlier, he felt that he was born in the wrong period. He felt sorry for the Tibetans. He felt like this: 'Poor souls, I can't blame them. It is not their fault. It is just that I am living in the wrong period. What can I do now?'

JAYA SANKRITYAYAN



Recorded on the 23rd of November 2002. Jaya is the daughter of the late Rahul Sankrityayan.
 Born 1953 in Mussourie (India). Schooling in Darjeeling, Loreto Convent and Mount Hermon School. B.A. Hons degree in English from North Bengal University, studying for it at Loreto College, Darjeeling. She studied English literature at the University of New Delhi. Together with her brother she collected her father's writings and photographs. Presently living near New Delhi (India). English, not in the film.

How did GC and your father connect?

I think, the fact that they were very intelligent people of their times. They adjusted to their environments, which could have, you know, made them very comfortable for the rest of their lives. And yet, when points came that made them question humanity or justice or the situation of the people, they reacted in the same way by just going out and changing their life, trying to make a change, with what was going on around them. And, the very fact that they didn't think, materially I will be at a loss, they were also very adventurous people, because, you see, the span of the areas they covered, with practically no back up, which is what we look for now. And you ask yourself, what are these people? They don't have money, they are not establishment people, and they don't have supporters, who will just take them out of any situation, when things get bad. And yet, they set out, because there is an idea in their head that things need to change, that things need to be found. When Rahulji [an honorable term for Rahul] went to Tibet for the [ancient Buddhist] manuscripts, that he knew were there, that had been taken there by earlier scholars [the Indian translators, who were invited to come to Tibet between the 7th and the 11th century]. And also I think, the fact that they both were after knowledge. Rahulji used to say, knowledge is an abundant sea, you are always a student. You never master knowledge. He never thought of himself as an authority of something. And yet, they both had this idea that knowledge should not be exclusive. Rahulji himself came from a brahmanical background, the Brahmins being the custodians of spiritual knowledge [in Hinduism]. He thought knowledge is for everybody. Everybody can profit from it. And GC himself also, he could have stayed in the monastery [in Tibet] as a high lama, and not even look at the condition of the people around him. And yet, he looked at them and he realized, there is a lack of knowledge among the authorities [in Tibet]...

Why was your father looking for the manuscripts, what did they mean for Tibet, what for India?

When he started out, it was not Tibet, nor what the manuscripts meant to Tibetans, that was his main concern. He had studied Sanskrit in the traditional way, yet with his rationalism, with his questioning mind, he could see that some things need to be clarified [in the old scriptures]. And he was attracted to the

Buddhist philosophy, too. He became a Buddhist monk; he studied the Pali Tripitakas very thoroughly. He mastered them and got a degree from Sri Lanka. Which is where Buddhism, as a philosophy, was preserved. In India there was no trace of it left anymore. And in his peregrinations all over India, he came across historical facts that have been distorted by time. Images, statues that were worshipped as gods, when he studied in Sri Lanka, he realized that they were originally Buddhist images. So, what is it, that, you know, in the higher regions of the Himalayas, in the middle of India and all along the Gangetic plane, there are these widespread images, which meant that the religion [Buddhism] itself, the philosophy itself, was widespread, and suddenly there is no trace of it [Buddhism, being extinguished in India]. So, this whole curiosity about it... and then Rahul also was attracted to Buddha's message of humanity, Buddha's message of rationalism, Buddha's message of man being able to change his own destiny, and not relying on rituals and holy baths and things like that [as in Hinduism]. To be able to change things and make things better for himself. So, I mean he got into his interest in Buddhism in many different ways. I mean he was already a socially conscious person... and, when he found that this message is more apt for the people, for himself, first of all, and it [Buddhist philosophy] is concerned about the common people, and it's not just for the patrons and the kings, but it's a religion that benefits everybody. A philosophy, it was not a religion for him, because slowly, I think, he realized that he was not a very religious person himself in the sense that religion means rituals and following certain tenets. But I think, you know, as these ideas came to his mind – and he found answers to this in the Buddhist philosophy – he was attracted. And then, I mean, he studied philosophy very deeply. Some points in Buddhist philosophy that negated the type of origins of man that the Hindus preached, that Hindu philosophy preached. There were questionmarks, and very learned scholars debated these points earlier, but those original works were not there [in India] anymore. Not there means, there were comments, they said that so and so said this, Dharmakirti said this... you know, these kind of comments are there. There were commentaries on those [old] texts, but the [original] texts themselves were missing.

Why were they missing in India?

At that time, I mean in the late 7th century, there were very big centers of learning in India, you must have heard of Takshila, you've heard of Nalanda, you've heard of Vikramshila. Nalanda and Vikramshila were very, very rich universities. And people from all over Asia, from China, from Southeast Asia, from Sri Lanka and all over India, from Afghanistan... people came, their scholars came there, their artists came there to study. And this whole traditional [Buddhist] discipline was being taught. But it was not codified yet as one type of knowledge, people were debating; the system of learning was not just teaching, but also debating points. And there were very rich libraries there, where many books were kept, books, well, actually palm leaf manuscripts. And the scholars themselves, Vikramshila was headed by Sakesh Shibhadhra, who was from Kashmir, a very knowledgeable and very learned man, who was passing on his whole ideas to people through books and through teaching. These libraries were there, and then, there was this attack on Nalanda, the library was supposed to have burned for something like five months, which shows how many books must have been stacked in those rooms. And some of the Pandits [scholars], who were there, decided that the most precious to them was to try and save the texts. So they went away, they had other people in Nepal, students in Nepal, disciples, who welcomed them to their own

areas and whatever the Pandits could save, they took with them, and also, over the years, I mean with the give and take between China, India and Tibet, people coming and going, students from there, disciples or what we could call them; they took away, what they thought most precious, the copies of the books, and took them to their own monasteries and kept them there. So these things [books] were already there in Tibet. And then, this whole tradition of translation started. Tibetan is supposed to have derived from the Indian script and Sanskrit. So the translations were exact. So, even if the real book, the original book [palm leaf manuscript] was missing, the translations were so exact, because the scholar [the Buddhist teachers from India] would say what he wanted to say, and there was a Tibetan *lotsawa* [translator], who translated the words into Tibetan, and the Tibetan scribe, who inscribed it on paper. So, the process of this transfer of language was so exact that you could reconstruct from the Tibetan, the original Sanskrit text that was lost.

Tell me again, who was responsible for the destruction of those original Buddhist manuscripts?

Well, the Indu-Gangetic plane has been a very rich area, because, I mean, India itself has suffered many aggressions and Bakhtiar Khalji [Bakhtiar Khilji] is supposed to have been the person, who destroyed those manuscripts [in the university of Nalanda in 1193]. But there is also this feeling that people [Hindus], who were jealous of the standing of those universities, of the type of teaching that would challenge the given, the way knowledge was and had been, the Hindu philosophy one would say. They themselves facilitated this process of annihilation and destruction [of Buddhism in India]. So, although it was an outside aggressor, who was blamed for the destruction, there were situations in India itself that made them encourage the [Buddhist] monasteries being destroyed. The very fact that, in an orthodox area, people from all over the world were coming with their different attire, different faces, different languages, and then living together and talking about things that would, in the long run, effect society around them. One cannot go back into the pages of history and see exactly who did what. Blame-giving is done in hindsight, you know, but the people there... if we look around us today, we see that we can blame outside forces, we can blame anybody, but if our country is troubled if our country is in danger, we ourselves are responsible, by not questioning the things that can ruin it.

Let's go back to your father and GC. Can you tell me how they met?

Rahulji had gone to Tibet for the first time in 1929, and he planned to stay for three months there and study the Tibetan language very deeply. But because he didn't have any financial backing, and also maybe, because he was not successful in reaching all those places that he wanted to reach [the monasteries, where he expected the ancient manuscripts to be stored], he decided to go back again to Sri Lanka. And then again in 1932, non 1934, sorry, he went to Tibet again, and this time he was better known there, because, during the first journey, he'd made many friends among the business community, the traders from Nepal, and of course, for the first journey he went in disguise. Disguised as a Lahuli [Tibetan people in the north of India], a poor man, who was an assistant to a Lama, and when he went to Lhasa, first he met the proper authorities and told them, I am not here as an Indian spy, an Indian spying for the British, but to study and to learn more about Buddhism. And then he was given permission, he wrote also to the 13th Dalai Lama, he was supposed to have composed a poem in His honor and had it

presented to Him, and so he was given permission to stay. So, by the time he went in 1934, he already had this network of friends, also among the people of the nobility, who welcomed him. And then he was moving around from one monastery to the other, looking for these manuscripts. He had not mastered Tibetan thoroughly yet, I mean, he was not fluent in it like a Tibetan would be... and also, Tibet was a very difficult country to travel in. So, he thought that if he had friends, or some companion with him – it was also dangerous to travel on the passes alone – so, at least three or four people should be together, before they attempt those journeys to the north of Lhasa, to the older monasteries of Reting, and other monasteries there. So he was looking for a congenial companion, and he had a friend in Drepung, Geshe Sherab Gyatso [the teacher of GC in Drepung], who was a Mongol monk. So Rahulji went to visit him and Geshe Sherab was... he introduced him to GC. He had already studied in Drepung for some time [since 1927], he was from Amdo, where he was a reincarnate Lama, but he had traveled to Lhasa in search of wider knowledge, and he was also an accomplished painter, and, I mean, GC was not exactly attached to Drepung. He had already finished his studies there and he was looking around, he was working for some nobleman, making the portraits and all, that is how he was running his living. His knowledge... of course, nobody denied that he was an authority on Tibetan history. And he had studied in the traditional way. So, Buddhist dialectics was part of his knowledge already. So, I think, also the personality of the man must have attracted Rahulji. And speaking to them, and having Geshe Sherab as their common friend, the closeness came in. And when Rahulji invited GC to accompany him, along with a photographer from Lhasa, a Nepali, who had a shop in Lhasa. His name was Natila, so the three of them made a group and decided to go to the north of Lhasa, looking at those manuscripts that were in those monasteries. And I think this would have... I mean, it was almost like a trial journey... because Rahulji has written many times that it actually was preferable to travel alone, rather than having a companion, who sort of ruins the journey for you, ruins the quest for you. And yet, about GC he has written that, you know, to have a friend like him was great, and they had accomplished so much together, and it had always been his wish that he could have stayed with GC longer, and that the two of them could have worked together longer. But the situation in India... you know, Rahulji was involved in other things besides just scholarly pursuits, and GC, when he visited India, was again a foreigner. So, Rahulji could not continue the association [with GC] in India, although they corresponded [for a while, but mainly GC writing letters and postcards to Rahul], and they traveled over much of India together. They visited the Buddhist pilgrim sites, and Rahulji put him in touch with some of his own friends who could help GC. But soon after they came to India, Rahulji was again involved in the political movement [the peasant's union] and his freedom struggle, and it would have been dangerous for GC to be associated with Rahulji. So, after introducing GC to India, and sort of making him comfortable among his own friends, and sort of introducing, you know, the code of the road to him, basically, you can travel from here to here on train, this is how you spend your nights, and this is where you can look for companionship or help. You know, for somebody from Tibet, suddenly being confronted with this very developed country [India of the 1930's/40's], one would say, with roads, and railways, and buses, and hospitals, medication and all that. I think it would have been almost a shock for GC to suddenly find himself in India, the first time he came [in 1934]. And then GC became comfortable, because Rahulji had good friends in many parts of the country, in Calcutta, Patna, Nepal also, of course, and once GC became comfortable he found that he

could also travel. And in fact, having nothing, having no expensive things around him, like baggage and other things, he was freer. And there was less danger of getting into trouble if you travel with the common people, than, as a foreigner in India, trying to find his way.

What was happening in India at the time and how was your father connected to that?

In the 1930's, the struggle for freedom, for independence, was nearing its end; of course, we 'd say that in hindsight, because, when the people who're fighting for their rights against the British, I mean for independence against the British, they could not have forecasted that on the 15th of August 1947 India would be free. But the struggle had been on, and it was sort of, you know... Gandhiji [Mahatma Gandhi] was very active and the people were sort of grouping around him. There was also Subashji [Subash Chandra Bose], who was active with the more militant type of independent struggle. And Rahulji, because he was now based in Bihar, although he was born in Uttar Pradesh, he was based in Bihar, and he had already been active in the Quit-India-Movement and also the Kisan Sabha, which was in the 1920's, he'd already been to jail for that. And then... even today, Bihar is a problem state, but the problems are not of now, the problems have always been there. Land reforms have not taken place, the people who till the land, very fertile land, still have no rights. And at that time, it was even worse, because the landlords were... Bihar at that time had its own government, a state government under the British, and Rahulji, with his knowledge of what was happening on the ground knew – and also with his study of history he could forecast – that this sort of association would be ruinous for Bihar, that the politics of the country was also controlled by those, who controlled the wealth... I mean, it just leads to more exploitation, and the people would never be given their rights. Rahulji was also a sincere reader of a magazine called Saraswati [See: 'Mukherjee on GC'], and all other journals that came out at that time. While Rahul was in jail, I think in the 1920's, he'd written a book, which was his idea of what the 20th century would be like, with more than amenities, and this was all an imaginative work, he had not read an utopia, and he had not, at that time, read Karl Marx, he had vaguely heard about the Russian Revolution, and from that he felt that this is the type of control of their own destinies, over their wealth, that the people of India, the people of Bihar needed. So, he was already active in these fields and, you know, being who he was, I mean if there was a flood, it was he who organized the relief and went out, I mean, he got people together to work. I mean there were other volunteers, there were many people doing it. But somehow for him – as a monk, and before that as a [Hindu] Saddhu, who was supposed to renounce the world – to be so active in the problems of the people, that shows us that he was not satisfied with just the ideology, not just satisfied with the philosophy. If he felt that he could make a difference, then he'd go out there and do it.

Back to the relationship of Rahul with GC. How come they did this other expedition in 1938?

I have not been able to find... I mean, there were a lot of correspondences between Rahulji and GC, 18 of the letters that we had in our house were given to people, who came from Dharamshala and are preserved there [See: 'Letters of GC']. But since, at that time, Rahulji did not have a place of his own, much of the correspondence must have got lost, his papers, his belongings, you know, given and kept with his friends when he moved on... and sometimes, he didn't come back for them or they just got lost. So, we don't really know exactly how the whole thing was... but obviously he was very much in touch with GC, while

he was in India, and GC had also been to Patna, and worked at the Bihar Research Society. And while in jail, Rahulji had got letters from him, so, he knew where GC was, although, directly, he didn't try to contact him, because of posing a threat to him. I mean, GC might either have been jailed or sent out of India. But when he was making plans for the 1938 expedition [to Tibet], of which Phani Mukherjee and Kanwal Krishna were also a part [See: Mukherjee on GC' and Krishna on GC'], I found an entry in the diary [of Rahul], saying that this is how we have to go about this expedition, you know, we will have to go there and have a photographer with us, because the manuscripts they examined in the monasteries on the earlier expeditions [in 1934], they were not allowed to photograph them, and, obviously, they were not for sale. And some of them, they could only look at, some of them Rahulji was able to copy with his own hand and gave it... they were published during his lifetime. Some of them he translated into Hindi, because Hindi, then, was the spoken language. And Rahul felt that the knowledge that was only in Pali and Sanskrit should be available in Hindi, too. So, he was also a very strong advocate for Hindi as a national language, as the language of India. So he wanted to enrich it. In all these ways he was working on it. But GC was part of the 1938 expedition, because Rahulji had made another journey without GC in 1936 [GC was in Kalimpong]. In which he had also found a lot of manuscripts that he wanted to photograph now [in the 1938 expedition]. And having seen the contribution that Geshe made [in the 1934 expedition], and being in touch with him, and GC still being in India at the time... Summer was the time that Rahulji chose to travel into the colder regions like Tibet, because then, India was unbearably hot, especially the climate in the plains... that is how they must have got together. And then they were in Tibet... and the 1938 expedition is a journey that is well documented, not by Rahulji, but by Phani Mukherjee [See: 'Mukherjee on GC'] and perhaps also by Kanwal Krishna himself [See: 'Krishna on GC']. And GC, too, had started this habit of keeping notes in his diary [See: 'Travelogue Tibet']. Rahulji had been, I mean, I found his oldest diaries, dating back to 1926, in which he was learning a new script, the Brahmin script, so the first diary was in that script. I couldn't read it, because I didn't know the script. It was not a collection of his most personal ideas; it was more [scientific] notes on the journey. Rahulji, like GC, used the diaries as a basis for the main writing. Their writings on their travels, or on political ideas, everything, I mean, that was, they just jotted down these ideas and then worked on them.

Who was Mukherjee, and where did he come from?

Phani Mukherjee was a Bengali. But he had been brought up in Uttar Pradesh. Rahulji had asked one of his friends, who was at that time in the Uttar Pradesh education department, to recommend a good photographer, who could accompany him on the journey [in 1938]. He had already on the earlier two expeditions tried out with the photographers, who were in Lhasa. With Natila, like I said, when he went to the north of Tibet. And then they'd found another one, Lakshmi Ratna, who was supposed to accompany them towards Sakya, which is where the main storehouse of all the manuscripts was. By the second journey, that's 1934 [already with GC], Rahulji had found that most of the manuscripts were located around Sakya, and associated monasteries of Ngor and Zhalu [in the southwest of Lhasa]. So, those were the areas, where he was going to take his 1938 expedition. The Bihar Research Society was funding it – his main friend and supporter, K.P. Jayaswal had already died in 1937 – and it was because of K.P. Jayaswal that Rahulji's travels and his research into Tibet had been sort of recognized by the authorities.

The Bihar Research Society was a society established for a close study of Indian culture and the governor of Bihar was one of the patrons. To be recognized by these people meant something, especially, when you know that Rahulji's other activities were anti-government... while K.P. Jayaswal was there, they had given him some sort of financial support. The 1938 expedition was the one that was going to be totally funded by the Bihar Research Society, with the grand amount of 6000 Rupees that would cover the expedition costs. So, when Rahulji asked his friends for a photographer, Phani Mukherjee's name came up. He had been trained, I think in Calcutta, studied art in Calcutta, he was also a painter, as we can see from some examples of his painting that are attached to the articles [in the Saraswati Journal. See: 'Mukherjee on GC']. But he was mainly a photographer. To have a photographer on the expedition, and to carry the photographic materials... Rahulji, in 1934 and 1936 had tried to photograph the manuscripts himself, but he was not very happy with his touch and method, because, until the photographs, the negatives, were developed – and we are talking about glass negatives, not the comfortable roll of film, that just slips into your pocket, but chemicals and things that had to be transported there – they didn't know the results, and if something had to be redone.

What was the main job of Mukherjee?

The main job of Mukherjee – which is what Rahulji tried to enforce, and for which he had problems – was to photograph the manuscripts and the images and murals on the walls. Like in Ngor, there were murals, as Rahulji himself says [in his diaries], that was earlier examples of the art in Tibet with Indian influence. The murals on the wall were like the ones in Ajanta [early Buddhist caves in India]. But as the changes in the artform of Tibet came, as art became part of the monastic teaching, of the life in the monastery, naturally, other influences like the Chinese and their own [Tibetan] imagery came. So it became a *Tibetan* artform, not just something that was taken from India. So examples of this process of transformation were there on the walls, and in the earlier paintings [*thangkas*]. But although they were shown many of these *thangkas*, they were not allowed to take any of them [to India], and they couldn't buy them, because many of them were not for sale in any way. Also, they didn't have enough money. But Rahulji's feeling was, that if we can understand how this art transformed, we could understand our own paintings in Ajanta, and our own imagery in the icons and in statues that you saw all over India. This whole idea of culture being one, not divided up into north or south, cultures being influenced from each other, to study this... I mean this whole process... it's not just knowledge as it was, but how knowledge came about, how it changed, the development of it, that was Rahulji's main interest.

And Kanwal Krishna, what did he do?

Kanwal Krishna was also an art student; he was sitting, I think, for his final exams in Calcutta Art College, so he joined the expedition one month later. Rahulji said, that, because a person with a good hand in art would be useful to make copies of the paintings [*thangkas*] that they couldn't bring back. Rahulji agreed, I mean Krishna was not totally part of the expedition in the sense that he was not bound to work only for them – but Rahulji said, that if you can meet some of your own expenses, because they were, you know, traveling in a group, and arrangements could only be made to stay in a group, then he could be part of it. So Kanwal Krishna was sort of bearing his own costs of travel, but giving them

companionship and taking their help, I mean, basically they were [in Tibet] as a group. But financially Rahulji was not responsible for Kanwal Krishna, he was not paying him any costs, he was not responsible for getting him the material, but Krishna was a part of the expedition, because his inputs would be useful.

And what did he mainly do, Kanwal Krishna?

Kanwal Krishna... see, Rahulji has written very briefly about the 1938 expedition, because he felt that it was not as productive, as it should have been. You know, with the financial backing, and with the equipment and all... because in his earlier journeys, these were these things that had, you know, stopped him from coming back [to India] with much more than he got. I mean he saw paintings, he saw manuscripts, but he couldn't take any copies of them, because he did not have... you know... he himself says that I am just an amateur photographer. I think in the 1934 journey [with GC], somebody had sent him a camera to Gyantse. That was the camera that he and GC went to Gyantse for from Lhasa, picked it up and then they went to Sakya and Ngor. Rahulji was trying to take photographs, you know, good quality photograph, but he said it was a hit and run, better I didn't trust the results that I myself would get. So it was better to have a real professional. GC, of course, was a very good painter. And having started in the traditional Tibetan way, he could interpret the imagery [of the *thangkas*]. He could interpret, I mean, you know, GC's input was on another level. Rahulji and GC, I think, were able to... because, you know, somehow their concerns were the same... that these texts in the monastery were there, but were not read any longer. I mean Sanskrit was no longer taught in Tibet, there were no longer Gurus of that tradition in Tibet, Tibetans had their own philosophies and treatises now, which they studied. So these books were just actually stacked up in forgotten chambers of the monasteries and one fine day they just, probably just burned down, or some of them were being distributed as, you know, medicine and things. To sort of rescue them from the confinement, that they weren't open to the world, that is, what Rahulji's concern was, and this is the concern that had transmitted to GC. I think GC also talks about the way in which these manuscripts were stacked. They actually went into chambers that had been locked up for... for possibly hundreds of years, because, you know, because, once that part of knowledge, or somebody to teach that knowledge, was gone... those chambers were locked up because, of course, they were regarded as very precious. Having come, and, you know, knowledge in our traditions is precious, because it is so hard to acquire. So, as emblems or symbols of knowledge, they were revered, but their actual use was not, you know, on a daily basis anymore.

Where do you see the day-to-day collaboration of GC and your father?

Well, in Sakya, the Sakya region [See: 'Rahul on GC'], when they go to Ngor... Ngor was one of the main... there were lots of manuscripts and material that, you know, was of importance to them. But there was a big problem, because they were dependent, I mean, they were dependent on the local resources, for food and for fuel, and for other things like that. I mean they paid for it, but then, you know, they could not cart things over the passes and make their stay, you know, tinned food and all that, and make their stay comfortable. So on a daily basis their interaction with the people was also important to Rahulji. And GC being a scholar himself, and being a pleasing personality, was able to make an impact on people, who in the beginning were not very helpful. So, like when they go to Ngor, in 1934, they were not able, in the

beginning, to find a good place to stay. They stayed in a deserted house, which had no doors or windows, which meant that one of them would have to stay with the belongings, while the other went around looking for the manuscripts. So, GC was able to meet somebody, whom he knew earlier, I think, or whom he managed to make friends with a bit. And that person gave them accommodation in his own room. So that, you know, they could be real sure that nobody would run off with their few belongings. And then they could do the work that they wanted. So, in these daily interactions, Rahulji, of course, was regarded as a Gyagar Lama, the Lama from India, because he was also very learned. But in the daily interactions, also with the people, GC was an immense help.

And what was their a professional collaboration regarding the ancient manuscripts?

See, Rahulji, at that time, was struggling to get the manuscripts published [in India, as 'proof' of the ancient cultural heritage of his country]. And, I mean, it was for him more a labor of love. In some of the books we find, that, you know, there are some line drawings, in fact that's how I heard of GC, I think I was looking through old papers in a library in Darjeeling, and I came across some, you know, it looked like tracing paper to me, with line drawings in black, in the Tibetan tradition. And then not just one or two of them, my mother was also tracing out images from books for another articles that she was reading, but these were not the same, these were different. These were like they were made on that paper, not traced out from images. So I asked her, where did you find these, who has done them? And then she said Rahulji had a Tibetan friend, who made these [drawings] for him. So, you know, the books that Rahulji published had published during his time [the late 1930's, early 1940's]. Of course that was a great struggle, because these texts were not stories and novels that had already a publisher or buyer. But books on, you know, philosophy. Translations from the Pali and the Sanskrit of Tibetan treatises, they were very difficult to publish. But whatever money he got from the publishers, maybe 200, 300 Rupees, this will finance me for three months, or two months, you know. So, whatever Rahulji earned in this way – he didn't have a regular paying job – whatever he had, basically, was put into these journeys... and I don't think, you know, he was able to sort of market himself very well, as this adventurous scholar, who would come back with lots of documents and lots of books, that'll then surprise the entire world. Because then he might have phoned publishers. But...

Where do you see the influence of your father on GC?

Rahulji has met a lot of people, you know, it's their inner sensitivity, I think GC himself, inside, I mean the very fact that, you know, he left Amdo, and traveled over the harsh passes to Lhasa... for something that he was not assured of, I mean, he was not sponsored to come to Lhasa, nobody looked for him and brought him there. He decided to go there. So the very fact that, you know, he was restless in the circumstances in which he found himself... and like Rahul, he was looking for answers, he was looking for ideas, basically, not just as ideas, but to change things around him, all this... something inside him that sort of made him restless. And I think with Rahulji he found an echoing mind. The same things that troubled him, were, what made Rahulji active in the politics of his country, in the social movements of his country. So, you know, these similarities between them, which, I mean, they couldn't have sat down and analyzed that, you know, this is what it is, but talking to each other, and over the times that they traveled

together. And then, Rahulji expected GC's knowledge of the works that GC had studied [in the monasteries], that he himself, Rahulji himself, had not studied, because the treatises were not there. But Dharmakirti and the Pramanavartika were available in Tibetan translations and was part of the monastic course to study it... and GC had studied it. So, this knowledge Rahulji also respected. I mean, he respected GC as a person. And as a very good companion also [See: 'Rahul on GC'].

What kind of things, in your opinion, did Rahul and GC discuss together?

I think they were communicating all the time, I mean, that is the interesting part, like you know, what are these people, you know, they are so different, they come from so different cultures. Culturally they are very different, you know, Rahulji from India, born in a very orthodox Brahmin family, and then, you know, slowly as his journeys take place, there is more and more depth in his character, and more and more developments in his ideas come in. GC with his Tibetan background, totally different, but yet, the ideas that they share, are so... because, I'm sure, I mean, Rahulji would, reading about him is a different thing, but probably being with him was another cup of tea. You know, he could be very impatient with people, who did not do what he said. He himself was a very genial man, but when he was committed to something, he felt that others should be as committed to it if they pretend to work on it. So that was the problem with the 1938 journey, not everybody had the same commitment to the reason for the journey. But with GC, I think, he was communicating all the time, and as they talked... on the 1934 journey, they are on this high pass on the way to Sakya, and Rahulji is looking at the stars, the clear sky, and looking for the pole star and he mentions some of the stars that he saw, and he said this would be the ideal place to sit and really study astronomy. And yet, I don't have time now, because I am here for another purpose. But I am sure, since GC was the other companion; he would, you know, when he looked up at the sky, he must have pointed out the stars, and said this is this particular planet or star. And you see that, I mean, I'll just put it in another way, Rahulji, as person, has left his impression with everybody, who met him. I as a child, and as his daughter, would be partial to that, of course. But I found, that, after he died and when I traveled around and I meet people, who had been with him for maybe an hour, or a day, or a week, or a month, had such vivid memories of meeting him, about what they talked about... so, since GC and he traveled together, they often were the only two people on the road, they were the only two people in the same room... they must have communicated everything – ideas, you know. About, this is how the world is, and this is what is happening, about the Russian Revolution, definitely, because that was very much on Rahulji's mind, and having traveled to Russia, he would have told GC, this is what I saw there... So, you know, it's like two good friends, two people, who become good friends and talk about everything that they see around them. And since they were scholars that would also be one thing that was a commonality...

Do you think they discussed politics?

Definitely, because in Rahulji's work, you see politics behind it all, you know, politics how people should be governed, what are their rights, you know, how is it that people get exploited. I mean this is what Rahulji made his lifestudy, so, definitely he would have talked to GC. And then, Rahulji had already written about his first stay in Tibet, in 1929, a quarter years in Tibet, and that book is full of references to

what he saw [in Tibet], because he had a room in Lhasa, in the main bazaar [probably the Barkhor], and he described, you know, the type of people he saw around, the shops, what was happening, the incidents of the day, you know, all those things are in the book. And he also makes comments about how the people are being misgoverned [See: 'Rahul on GC']. Everything that was happening around him... it's like sitting in the middle of a busy bazaar and making comments on whatever is happening... with his own ideas from being an Indian and from being a political activist in India, a social activist. When Rahulji writes, even just one paragraph, all those facets of his personality are visible, he is not writing a beautiful sentence just as literature, he is not writing a beautiful story, he is writing to change, or to inspire, or to inform people. He said that he became a writer mainly, because he wanted other people to know his ideas. So you can call that a kind of propaganda, or whatever, but Rahulji said, 'If that is propaganda, that is what it is, that is why I wrote it'. But this impulse to write, the whole idea of putting down his ideas in words, on paper, was, because he wanted to tell people about his ideas.

Now would you remember some of his comments he made on Tibet?

Oh, not all of them are very, very, ah... one thing he did say about the people of Tibet that, you know, there is no guile in them... I mean, he is talking about the common people, and there is one incident, where GC loses his hat in the river, and the Tibetan horseman, who goes to retrieve the hat, hides it under his *chuba* [Tibetan dress], and tells GC that he didn't find the hat, not realizing that the bulge under his clothes was visible. And naturally, when they removed the outer garment, they found the hat that was concealed there. So, Rahulji's comment on this is, that they [the Tibetans] try to be clever and very sly, but they don't have the guile in them to carry that whole thing. There is no malice in them, like, you know, in certain cultures, you find that people are manipulative. You know, to get their own way, and there's something very... I mean, he wanted... the Tibetan people in his eyes, were innocent of this type of guile [strangely, it never came to Rahul's mind, that the Tibetan could have been joking].

Did Rahul talk about the necessity of change in Tibet?

Yes, definitely. He talks about it, when he talks about agriculture. He talks about it, when he sees the wealth in the monasteries, and the poor lives of the people, who contribute to, you know... the monasteries were actually the landowners, besides the nobility, so, the people around it get, you know... they tilled the land, they looked after the livestock, but they had no right on the wealth and what they generated from that. So, in one comment he says that the reason, why there's no development of agriculture [in Tibet], is, because the people, who are actually practicing agriculture, don't have a stake in it. He talks about villages that are ruined, there are just, you know, stones standing, where walls had been, because it's no longer profitable to work those lands. And yet, there's no, there was, at that time, no idea of thinking about what to do, you know, to improve the agriculture in Tibet. Some of the areas he talks about, around the rivers, he says if you dug... if some canals were made, this land could be very fertile. The soil itself is very fertile, but because of the shortage of water, agriculture can't be done in those areas, except... and Tibet had a very low rainfall, so they couldn't even depend on that. So you know, he has comments on... and yet he talks about a place, which is at 15,000 feet, where he finds a special type of grain growing [barley]. So, you know, he had his, I mean, he came from a rural agricultural background,

so the seasons of the earth must have had some impression on him, although he did not live as a farmer or an agriculturalist ever. But the people around him, his own family, were agriculturalists. So the sensitivity to the seasons, to the land, was very much in him. And in his comments about his own birthplace [in Uttar Pradesh], he talks about the struggle of the people, you know, in beating of the heat, of the sun, of the rain [during monsoon], working their fields, and yet, you know, because of poverty, because of exploitation, they cannot keep what they have earned with such difficulty. So, you know, his sensitivity was there and he saw this commonality [between Tibet and India]. In some of the comments that he made [on India] if somebody came out with them today, his books would be burned. Comments on the caste system, comments on the division that religion creates between the people, comments on exploitation by industrialists, by landowners... He calls them the parasites that live of other people's labor. He's outspoken about these, I mean, some books he wrote because... I mean, he was a man before his time, but he was very much a man of his time, too. And I think, having this area to work in, like Bihar, working among the peasants, working among other people, who were as dissatisfied with the situation as he himself was. I mean, exchanging ideas, being able to do little things that made a difference, I think this enriched his ideas.... and GC, too, was inspired, he moved around in India, he stayed with magistrates, who were Rahulji's friends, he stayed with peasants, who were Rahulji's friends, and, you know, seeing the situation in India... Rahulji himself has written about people, who had influenced his thinking, ordinary people, his teachers, an uncle, who was a scholar of Sanskrit, you know, people, who sort of put a germ into his head that developed into ideas. So, that is the most interesting part, you know, because they acknowledge, Rahul acknowledges [one chapter of this book, 'To Whom I'm Grateful', is dedicated to Gendun Choephel].

LOBSANG DEKYI TETHONG



Recorded on the 15th of January 2003 in Sewanee, Tennessee (USA). The interview was conducted by Jamyang Norbu, the son of Lobsang Dekyi.

Born 1919 in Lhasa (Tibet). She partly grew up in Northeastern Tibet (Amdo), where her father was stationed as commander of an outpost of the Tibetan army. She met GC in Lhasa in the mid-1940 through her brothers Tomjor Tethong and Rakra Rinpoche. She had the family's servants bring food to GC, while he was in prison (1946-49). In 1946 she painted a green Tara for GC. The last years of her live she lived with her daughter in Toronto (Canada). In 2005 she passed away in her son's (Jamyang Norbu) home in Tennessee (USA). Tibetan, not in the film.

Can you tell me your name and age?

My name is Lobsang Dekyi. I am 84. Well, I am now approaching 85.

Tell us about Gendun Choephel?

I had heard a lot of good things about GC. I did not take much notice about his appearance. There was nothing striking about his appearance. He was dressed poorly. His head was not clean. It was close cropped. His dress was dark blue. It was faded. The material of his dress was like raw silk, called *Shuja Dru* in Tibetan. He looked graceful, though. I saw him only from a distance. I did not go near or talk to him. He looked graceful. And, Uncle [actually her brother, Topjor Tethong] had told me a lot of good things about him, about his immense scriptural learning, etc. So, I had already formed an opinion of him. Topjor la had talked about GC's background. GC's father was apparently a big *ngagpa* [tantric practitioner], a big *ngagpa* lama. He was from Rongpo in Rebkong, Amdo [Northeast-Tibet]. Many *ngagpas* lived there. He was a *ngagpa*. As to GC, he became a monk in Drepung Gomang [in Lhasa]. I think his father was not pleased with that. I think his father wanted to perpetuate his lineage [Nyingma tradition]. And, he was probably the only son. He first joined a Gelugpa monastery. I am not sure which one it was [Labrang monastery].

Did he meet Pabongka while he was in Drepung?

Gendun Choephel was an impoverished monk. Sometimes, when he was desperately in want, he went to the retreat center of Pabongka. From Drepung, you go like this to Sera [she gives directions with her hands]. And from Sera, Pabongka's retreat center is very close. When Gendun Choephel met Pabongka, the latter treated him very kindly. Pabongka would stroke his back and express sympathy for his poverty. Gendun Choephel probably had lice on his body. That is why Pabongka stroked him. Pabongka gave him money. Also, Trijang Rinpoche frequently praised Gendun Choephel's scriptural learning. Uncle [Topjor]

frequently met Trijang Rinpoche. He was my late father's lama. Trijang Rinpoche had told my father that GC led a very destitute life, that he used to give him some money and that only recently he had given him some money, etc. GC had said the same thing.

Tell us about Gendun Choephel's arrest?

So, uncle [Topjor Tethong] had gone away. Rakra Rinpoche was in the monastery, in Drepung [1946]. At that time, I was alone at home. The others [from Tethong family] had gone to school in India. One day, when I was alone, someone told me with great anxiety, I don't remember who it was, that Gendun Choephel had been arrested. There were lots of people in our household. I sent someone, Dhondup or Dawa Tsering [servant of the Tethong family], to find out if this was true. Someone went. I don't remember who it was. It is such a long time back. This guy came back and said that the news was true, and that GC was held on the upper floor of Nangtsheshag [the office of the Lhasa magistrate, behind the Jokhang Temple]. Then, I expressed regret. GC's house was sealed.

I said he did not have enough clothes. I asked the servants to cook food: momo or thukpa. I sent the food with a flask full of hot tea. And also a cup with a handle. The cup must have been as big as this. The cup had a lid to keep the tea warm. As it turned out, they allowed the servant to give him food. I had new cotton-stuffed quilts from India. I put a cover on one and sent it [to the prison]. I made sure everything was very clean, since we [the Tethong family] respected GC as our lama. I revered him.

I did not get any letter [of GC] on the first day. When I sent the food on the second day, on the cigarette wrapper... I had sent him a packet of cigarettes also... on that wrapper, he had scribbled verses, spiritual verses. They were very lyrical. I read it once only. So, I don't remember it. A few days later, when I sent him food again, he sent me a verse, commenting on the plight of the other inmates. It said that the inmates' plight was very sad, that, when he threw down a long cigarette butt, the inmates would scramble for it. He expressed pity on the plight of the inmates. There was a verandah outside Gendun Choephel's room. When he looked out of the verandah, he could see the prisoners on the lower floor scrambling for his discarded cigarette butt. There was a very moving verse to this effect. I received these two letters, and then the third one, a short one. A few days later, as I continued sending him food... I sent him a variety of food, sometimes momos, and sometimes some other food. Quite a while later, there was a brief note in English on a cigarette wrapper or a matchbox. It said, 'Need not send.' Then, I realized that things were becoming rough for GC. It was apparent that they had stopped allowing outsiders to send food to prison. At that time uncle [Topjor Tethong] was there.

One day, when I visited Kapshopa's house [Kapshopa was one of the ministers, responsible for GC's arrest. See interview: Tashi Pelra], his wife invited me into her room. She was very polite and nice, 'Welcome' etc. She asked me for the whereabouts of Topjor la. I said he was away. She said, 'Oh, I see.' A short while later, Kapshopa came in. He was being very nice, too. He insisted that I sat on the high seat in his room. The aristocratic homes had these special high mats. I sat on it. He asked me about uncle [Topjor]. I said uncle had gone to Nangtsha. As I was about to leave, after having said what Topjor had

gone there for, he said, 'Whatever the case may be, *sekushok's* [honorific term for a young man, meaning Topjor Tethong here] late father was a worthy man. *Shekushok* should see to it that he does not make the saying true, 'The Father is like a sandal tree ['good'] and the son like a juniper tree ['bad']'. I said, 'Yes, yes', and left. [In fact Kabshopa was threatening her not to support GC anymore]

Our late *nyerpa* [inventory keeper in large households] had gone to Yangpachen to meet Topjor, who was arriving there en route to Lhasa. Uncle was hastening back on receiving our letter about GC's arrest. Kapshopa became suspicious of uncle because of this. Our *nyerpa* died some time after we stopped receiving notes from GC. Because we didn't receive any notes anymore, I went to Kapshopa. Kapshopa was a *shapé* [minister] at that time.

GC was whipped in prison. He was charged of being in cohort with the Guomindang [the nationalist government of China]. Charged of having disseminated Pomdha's [Rapga Pangdatsang] documents. Since he had many acquaintances in Tibet, it was suspected that he had disseminated Pomdha's documents to them. This was the charge. I heard of Tashi Pelra [the arresting Lhasa magistrate. See interview: Tashi Pelra] having said something to this effect. Of course, what I heard is not a first hand account. People like Shakabpa, Trimon and Trungyig Chenmo [monk officials] went to seal GC's house. That is why I suspect that Shakabpa was responsible [for GC's arrest and confiscating his documents]. So, I am angry with him. I do not believe that GC had done anything wrong. I can't believe that he had worked with the Guomindang. He was too much of a patriot to do this. Moreover, he was highly learned in Buddhism, although he did not wear the monk's robes. He had a lot of faith in the Buddha.

What about the notes on the cigarette wrappers?

I told Topjor to preserve the letters. He sent them away in great haste. What a great loss! They were very lyrical. But it is a very long story [the wrappers were destroyed out of fear to involve the Tethong family in the 'GC-problem'].

After GC's release in 1949, you said he once visited you?

Yes, he visited us one day. We were all home that day. Uncle Topjor rushed down the stairs, saying that GC was coming. He met GC halfway down the stairs. GC was staggering. He must have been drunk. Uncle hugged him and took him to his room. I did not go in. Then GC gave me a scarf.

Then what?

Topjor and GC used to meet leisurely. Uncle had to go to office for a short while every day. I don't remember what post he had at that time. He returned from office at around 2 in the afternoon, at teatime. Then they would sit together and drink *chang* [beer] and eat 'American army rations'. Those days, many American soldiers used to come to Calcutta for holidays. The war in Burma had ended. There were many soldiers in Calcutta. We saw them. The soldiers sold huge quantities of leftovers bedclothes, jackets, mattresses, socks, foodstuffs, etc. The Marwari traders in Kalimpong [in India, where parts of the Tethong family were going to school] bought a lot of these. Sri Ram Nandu Ram used to sell them to

Tibetan traders, who sold them in Tibet [in the markets in Lhasa]. Many Tibetans wore US army jackets in those days, the khaki jackets of the US army. The food was very good. I remember eating it myself.

Why did GC drink?

GC was unable to fulfill his wish. He was falsely accused and whipped. He was unable to fulfill his wish. He translated the *Dhammapada* into the Tibetan language, which had remained untranslated till then. He came to Tibet with great ambitions. But he could not fulfill them. He visited all parts of India. To help the Tibetans, he visited all the [Buddhist] pilgrim sites of India and wrote the travel guide. You know, Tibetan did go to India on pilgrimage. He had brought his translation of the *Dhammapada* to Tibet, which had thus far remained untranslated. He had visited every single pilgrim site in India and wrote the most authoritative book on these pilgrim sites [The Guide To India]. He named all the Great Yogis and masters of different lineages, who had been associated with those pilgrim sites. He pointed out the inaccuracies in the oral tradition, regarding the sites, saying it would be a pity if the people [Tibetan pilgrims] were misguided by these inaccuracies. In this way, he pointed out the right path to the Tibetans. And, what did he get in return? Envious people framed him. I wonder, who was responsible for this. The thinking of some of our people is very warped. That so many people respected a poor guy from Amdo [GC] must have aroused their envy. Many aristocratic children received teaching from him. I think many children of other well-to-do families also received teaching from him [See interview: Amdo Champa, Tseten Yudron]

What about your younger brother Rakra Rinpoche?

(Image 14: Lobsang Dekyi with her brother Rakra Rinpoche and her son Jamyang Norbu, Lhasa 1951). Rakra Rinpoche had come of age. He had reached the age where he could study scriptures on his own. When Topjor [senior to Rakra] first met GC, Rinpoche was merely a student [in Drepung Monastery]. Later Rakra Rinpoche



had a lot of contacts with GC [mainly in 1946, before GC's arrest]. When I visited Tibet from India, I saw that Rinpoche and Horkhang Sonam Penbar were meeting with GC very frequently. Horkhang was a frequent visitor; he came many times to our home [Horkhang was related to the Tethong family. He helped GC to compile his notes on Tibetan history. Shortly after GC's death in 1951, Horkhang managed to publish 'The White Annals'].

At that time GC had asked you, through Rakra Rinpoche, to paint something?

Yes, he asked me to paint a picture of *Tara* [a Buddhist deity]. Although I had seen the pictures of *Tara*, I had not received much spiritual teaching. So, I said I could not paint it. My painting would not be authoritative, I said. But I was told that GC insisted that I paint it. He thought that women had special talents. Then I painted something. I painted it on a writing paper. I gave it to Rakra Rinpoche. Then, GC came to see me one day. He brought me a scarf and some Chinese coins. The coins must have been from Sichuan. They were in circulation in Kham those days [East-Tibet]. I felt very embarrassed. My painting was not good to deserve this. I just copied it from another painting. How else could I paint it? I liked to paint normal things, like flowers, to put on the table, but never deities. I was afraid that if I did not paint it according to the scriptural standards, it would amount to an act of sacrilege. I painted it on a writing pad. The face must have been about this big, maybe slightly smaller. It was a Green or White Tara. I have forgotten now. I used the normal crayons, the kind that one used in school.

Did GC like the painting?

Yes. That's why he gave me the congratulatory white scarf. I was embarrassed. I didn't want to take undeserved credit.

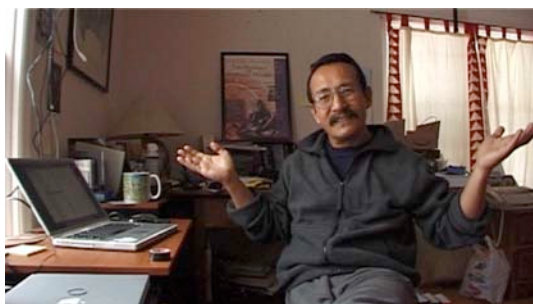
You met GC again before going to India?

For some years I did not hear of him [while he was in prison, roughly 1946-49/50]. Uncle [Topjor Tethong] was then in India. It seems GC drank more and more as time went by. On my last trip to Tibet, I frequented our house [the Tethong House in the south of Lhasa] to see my other brother. One day my brother showed me GC. At that time, I heard that GC was drinking a lot. I saw him that time. He was sitting under a tree, in a small garden, near Tengyeling. It was a fairly good place. He was sitting on a mat. I did not see his face, though. The person sitting with him, I was told, was his wife. I could see two figures from a distance. The distance was, like from here to there. In terms of paces, it was... [Thinks], the garden was near. It was near the Tethong House...The Chinese came to Chamdo a few months after I reached Tibet [1950]. My brother tried to dissuade GC from drinking. He respected GC. I was told that GC's wife was from Kham [See interview: Tseten Yudron], although I did not get to see her face. GC's death was a great loss, of course.

Just explain this?

I saw his death as a great loss. He worked so hard, studied so hard. His works survive to this day. I think Tibet's tragedy is the consequence of our bad *karma*, the bad *karma* of failing to feel grateful to him. I think like this, from a spiritual point of view. He was discredited despite his good works. What a pity! Even from the secular point of view also, the Tibetans were cruel to him. And, from the spiritual point of view, it was a bad *karma*. His legacy survives even now. His guidebook for pilgrims is so good. It is totally different from what other Tibetan scholars have written. He had written an homage to the Buddha, which is so beautiful. It consists of only four verses. I have it. I think Tharchin Babu [The editor of 'Tibet Mirror'] published his guidebook.

JAMYANG NORBU



Recorded on the 16th of January 2003 in Sewanee, Tennessee, USA.

Born 1951 in Lhasa (Tibet). Educated in missionary schools in Darjeeling. He has worked for the Tibetan government-in-exile in various posts since 1967. He was briefly a member of the Tibetan Resistance Force in Mustang. As author of countless articles and books, he commented on Tibetan and Chinese affairs, among them his political essay 'Illusion and Reality' (1989). As political dissident (within his own community), he dared to criticize the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile for giving up the idea of independence (tib: 'rangzen'). His acclaimed book 'The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes', established his position as the most important Tibetan writer-in-exile. Co-founder of the Amnye Machen Institute in Dharamshala (India). English, in the film.

Your name and your age, please.

Ok, my name is Jamyang Norbu and I am 52 right now.

Can you tell me when you heard the first time of GC?

Well, probably the first time I heard about GC was from either my mother [See interview: Lobsang Dekyi] and from my uncle, Tomjor Tethong, both of whom knew him, and knew him with a lot of affection, and knew him well. And of course, they would discuss him always, and one of the major discussions in the Tethong family, was the question of modernizing Tibet. And creating a Tibet that could be viable, you know, in the circumstances that we lived in, in India in exile. And always the reference was to GC. You know, GC said this, about creating a newspaper or a magazine, GC said this about parliament, and GC said this about the Indian congress party. So, you know, I am not too sure, but, I mean, later, when I began to understand what he was all about, I definitely remembered most of the stories that came from my uncle Tomjor and, of course, from my mother also. When I was living in Dharamshala in the 1960's, GC meant something. I was working in the Tibetan government, and I had sort of matured slightly, politically, at that time then. The name of GC began to take on some more meaning in the context of the situation in which I was working. Because there was a person [GC] who had already faced many of the problems that younger Tibetans were facing in the exile society. The whole problem of trying to modernize and change, to reform, a very, very, very conservative society. We faced in many ways equally the same problems as GC did. And, of course, with about the same results, you know, which is even right now not very much.

You mentioned your uncle Tomjor. What was his role in Tibet at the time when he met GC?

Tomjor Tethong was one of the few, I think, young Tibetans in Tibet, and even later, who was not only a modernist, but who was a modernist with wide and deep reading. Because there are a lot of people in the

Tibetan world, who will consider themselves revolutionary and modernist, in genuine, and in sincere, but who really didn't have that much reference to modernizing their country. And their references are limited, in some ways, like the people who wanted to modernize Tibet, just became the tools of the Guomindang, the Chinese Nationalist Party and were inspired by Chiang Kai Shek and his ideas of revolution, rather pathetic ideas. My uncle was... he was not very high in government ranks, he was a very young person, he was a junior official, at one point... he was not as dynamic as his father was; he father, who later became a Minister and died very young. And he was the Governor General of Eastern Tibet [Kham province]. Actually the family name rested on what Tomjor's father had accomplished. Now, Tomjor himself wasn't very much of a man of action, even in politics, but he was incredibly sensitive and very, very, very intelligent, and well read. I mean, he was probably one of the best-read persons on China [among the nobility in Lhasa]. I definitely remembered his knowledge of Chinese history, and it equaled if not surpassed that of many, even Chinese scholars. He had read all the classics, you know, all the Confucian classics, and all the histories, he had many, many books, he had huge libraries of the Tang chronicles, the Tang Qilu, the Ming Qilu and the Tang histories, and he would always talk about it. His English was, he read English very easily; he didn't like to speak it, because he was worried about his command of spoken English, but he was very good, when he was reading. And I remember, always when he read the Reader's Digest, the first thing he'd do – there is a vocabulary test in Reader's Digest – and he always tried to go there and tried to score. And I would beat him. Because, of course, I was raised in English [in missionary schools in Darjeeling]. He was always upset about that, but he had a very good command of English. And he read very seriously. Although he did read novels, too. So he was someone who was, for me, very inspiring, because I came to Dharamshala to work for the Tibetan government in the 1960's as a young man. And it was an intellectual desert, that place. You know, aside from Buddhism and a few hippies, who really were intellectual, there wasn't much, we were not at all challenged; there was no one to talk to. So at least, there was my uncle. And he really, I must say now, I must admit, that in many ways, he formed my political ideas, and sort of guided me into relinquishing extreme ideas... ideas that, at the time, in the 1960's, were very fashionable. Not only in India, you know, but also in the West, like juvenile and infantile Marxism. But my uncle was completely against this sort of fashionable Marxism and Maoism, he did detest Mao Zedong. And there were only a few people I actually knew at the time, who did. Everyone, even if they didn't like the Chinese or Mao Zedong, they had to make some excuse, otherwise you were not politically correct. So my uncle was, in that sense, he was very, very influential. And I was very lucky to find someone like him. Of course, he had his eccentricities and his weaknesses [he was a heavy drinker], but I really think his intellectual virtues overcame them completely.

The Tethong House in Lhasa [1930's/40's] was a place, where young intellectuals met, like GC...

Well, I was not there at the time, as I wasn't even born, when they were doing it, but I heard a lot and my uncle would tell me a lot. My mother would also tell me, sometimes complaining about their behavior, but often, I heard it from many different sources, from my uncle Rakra, who was much younger [than Tomjor] and who only later fitted in their intellectual society. And it seems that actually, one of the reasons why they gathered at my uncle's place, was not only because he was an intellectual like the rest of these people who gathered, it was a kind of a small salon. But at the same time, because he was a very

accommodating person, he was very, very tolerant and gentle, and willing to accept a lot of different ideas and opinions, even if he disagreed with it. So I am sure they must have found him very amenable. And at the same time, you must remember that, young as he was, he was the head of the [Tethong] household. So basically, you know, he could invite any friends there, and nobody... they had another uncle who, maybe, objected now and then, but Tomjor was the head of the household. Their father had died quite early, so he could provide the hospitality. At the same time, I think, around that time, there were very few, let's say, libraries in Tibet, and my uncle had probably one of the best collections of Chinese texts. I knew he had all the novels, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and all those. I even heard that the servant of the Dalai Lama's older brother, would come to borrow books from him, so he had a very good and extensive library of Chinese, not only historical texts, but novels and things. I think all these many factors sort of combined to make his home amenable to becoming a kind of a small salon for the Lhasa intellectuals.

GC was an intellectual writer with an open mind for politics, your uncle was well read, others were even communists. What were they up to?

I think, maybe, I think, they met for different reasons, also. I think my uncle was particularly close to GC, because they shared the love of history, and love of, let's say stories. And this was very strong, my uncle... for him history wasn't just, something, an academic discipline; it was a kind of exploration through anecdotes and stories into the Tibetan past. And I think more than just politics, they talked about the Tibetan past. That was the time when, the world began to know about the documents that were found in the caves of Dunhuang and in Central Asia, in Khotan, about early Tibetan history. And GC had managed to see some of these documents in Kalimpong. My uncle knew about them, reading these translations in English. So, I remember clearly my uncle telling me how fascinated they were by this very new window into the Tibetan past. And both of them were hugely fond of stories. My uncle was probably one of the champions as a ghost-story teller. That's what... he was not only an intellectual in the snobbish sense, he was a very good storyteller, too. And this is a pity, nobody collected his stories, he told amazing stories if he taught, gave you a history lesson, even though he talked about European history if he talked, let's say, even about Turkey, about Kemal Ataturk, he did not just tell you bare sort of history, but he'd sometimes find strange anecdotes that he picked up. You wonder where, this was not in the history books, but, you know, somehow, he, because he was a person who loved reading, not just history books, but out of the way books – he read medical texts, he subscribed to medical journals, you know, Western medical journals, he read all sorts of things. And he had this amazing... so, I think GC and him, I think their association was intellectual; they were eclectic in their sort of thinking. While people like Phuntsog Wangyal [one of the first Tibetan communists. He also met at the Tethong house] and maybe some others, focused more, you know like Rapga Pangdatsang and... politically, and I'm sure their sort of thinking and sympathies overlapped. But there was some difference, because they were not, they were not entirely political creatures, because my uncle Tomjor and GC both were to some extent spiritually inclined. They were not people, who were denying their own culture, they wanted reform, but at the same time they were people, who saw the strength of Tibetan Buddhism, and they were in many ways in love with it. And their resentment was the fact that the Tibetan Buddhist institutions, the whole church, was

stagnant, and that it was not in many ways producing the quality of people that it did have produced in the past [JN is referring to the period of the Tibetan Empire, 7th to 9th century]

Tell me about the 'Tibet Mirror'? How does the 'Mirror fit into Tomjor's and GC's life??

I think the newspaper, the Tibet Mirror, published from Kalimpong by the reverend Tharchin [Babu], played a very important role, because it was an access to the outside world, first thing, for people living inside Tibet. And Tharchin himself had stayed in Lhasa and taught English. And I think there was another Tibetan, indianized Tibetan, who had come to Lhasa and taught Tibetans, so my uncle knew Tharchin right from the early days. My grandfather knew Tharchin, the Minister and the Governor General, and that in fact, he even supported Tharchin's venture, and put in a good word for him with the 13th Dalai Lama. And, actually, our family subscribed the 'Melong' [Tibet Mirror] right from my grandfather's time [1920's/30's]. In fact, they sent first complementary copies and things, so, Tharchin was also close, till much later times, with the family. In fact, when my grandfather died, at that time he was going back to become... he was a Minister in the Cabinet. And Tharchin wrote this really long obituary; we still have a copy of it, in which he talks about the great accomplishments in Eastern Tibet. Because [my grandfather] fought for many years, I think for over twenty years, he was [stationed] in Eastern Tibet, and fought against the Chinese, and fought successfully. So the [Tethong] family had this long connection with this newspaper, which... and also other newspapers and publications that Tharchin bought up. My mother, and my uncle also, talked about a book of fairy stories that Tharchin had published once and there was a Christian story at the end, but on the whole, it was basically Grimm's fairy tales and things like this. And how they had enjoyed when they were children, so, it was not only the newspaper, but associated publications with the newspaper, which had given much pleasure to my uncle and my mother, when they were children. Because Tharchin was older, and they enjoyed the newspaper, and it gave them a lot of information. Especially during the war. The Second World War, yeah.

Another source of information for Tibetans at the time was the radio. And from Muslim newspapers. Arab, you know, Urdu papers. Because the Muslim community [in Lhasa] would get subscribed to these papers, which would come a bit late to Lhasa, but then these people would talk to my uncle, about what was happening, on which front. And they would also listen to all India radio, or whatever radio there was at the time, to BBC, and then they would report to my uncle and others about... especially during the war, it was important, a lot of Tibetans were keeping track. It was like a little hobby of who was winning what, you know, and what was happening on the Russian front and in North Africa. So there always... there was a lot of talk about the war. I remember that not only my uncle, but even Lamas like Ling Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama's senior tutor, were fascinated with the war. They were all, you know, people think of Tibet as cut-off and, you know, in some ways isolated from the rest of the world, but everyone [from the educated elite] knew, not only who Hitler was, but also who Goehring and Goebbels and all these people were. And Mussolini, of course.

Who was Tharchin, how did he end up in Kalimpong and start this newspaper?

Well, Tharchin was basically, ethnically, a Tibetan who was born in a part of Northern India [Lahul Spiti], which is on the Indian side of the border, in the state which is now called Himachal Pradesh. And from very young, he had been taken in by missionaries from the, I think, the Moravian sect. And they had trained and educated him. And in fact, he was a pastor, and he had a flock in Kalimpong. But in many ways, his new fate, his Christian fate, never deterred him from his love and his fascination with his own kind, and with his own country. And this is one thing that all Tibetans are very touched with, you know, whether he was Christian or not, he was always determined to do something for his people.

And, you know, although he had a printing press, which was essential to publish bibles and tracts in Tibetan, he published not only the Tibetan newspaper, but he also published Buddhist texts. So, you had someone, who was Christian in the true sense of the word. So, he was very close to many Tibetans, many people in the Himalayan regions, with the royalty in Bhutan and Sikkim, and he was even close to the 13th Dalai Lama, who felt this great friendship for him [See also: Tsering Shakya, Tashi Tsering].

How do you see the newspaper in the Kalimpong context? What was the aim of the newspaper?

No, essentially, it might have been... it might have been a Moravian project, not entirely Tharchin's. Because the Moravians, also in Lahul, in Himachal Pradesh, they earlier published a newspaper of their own, called... the 'Lahul Akhbar', I think, and then, I think in Ladakh, they also published a newspaper, you know, basically a cyclo-stanced kind of a newsletter, called a the 'Ladakh Akhbar'. So it was a Moravian venture right from the beginning, to try to publish some kind of periodical that people reading Tibetan would read – and in which they could spread the Christian word. But with Tharchin, of course, in the earlier editions, there was a great deal of evangelical spirit, you can see that. But after a while... and also the quality of Tibetan wasn't very high from what I understand, you know, my friends have told me. But over the period of time, when Tibetan aristocrats, who came over to Kalimpong, some emigrates, you know, people with political trouble [in Lhasa] stayed in Kalimpong. They were well educated like Changlochen, Khunpela, they came over, and also GC came over, many of these people didn't have much money, and so they worked for Tharchin on the newspaper. And then the quality of the newspaper went up, because Tharchin had genuinely... sort of well-read Tibetan intellectuals writing for the paper. And then the paper changed over to a more... a less, let's say, evangelical, to a more, let's say, reporting kind of regular newspaper. So, well, of course one can't really understand, in a sense completely, why they started it, but I'm sure there was an element in Tharchin, that right from the beginning, in spite of whatever evangelical messages he was sending to us, a desire to help his country [See interview: Tsering Shakya]. There was a desire to see... you know, and also there was a competitive spirit. Tharchin talks about it in some of his writings, and interviews, that some Nepali printers... they told him it was pointless to bring out anything in Tibetan, because there was no-one who could read it. And he said, of course, Tibetan was a dynamic language, and Tharchin said, I think in one interview in the Tibetan review [a magazine of the Tibetan exile community], he said that not only did the newspaper succeed, but even the Nepali printer, who had initially told him that it was useless to bring out anything in Tibetan, even began to carry Tibetan fonts and also began to print Tibetan texts. Even in Darjeeling, we had lot of old copies, you know. We

used to get that all the time. Because my father was the editor of the Tibetan Freedom Press before. And he was very close to Tharchin also, so we used to get a whole lot of material from him.

Can you describe a bit of what kind of people met in Kalimpong, what was going on?

Kalimpong was very unique, because I doubt if there are that many places in the world that have that same quality [See interview: Tsering Shakya]. Because it was between four, five nations, there was Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and British India. So five countries. And within it, you had a whole lot of different people, because it was one of the... it was the gateway to Tibet, you know, to put it metaphorically. You not only had missionaries of many denominations, who were settled there, who were trying to gain access to Tibet. You had Tibetologists, people like Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, you had Marco Pallas, you had the Russian Tibetologists, George Roerich, and a number of other scholars. And even Buddhist scholars, who stayed in Kalimpong. And beside that... then, of course, you had the nut cases, you had a whole lot of eccentrics, who believed that they had been summoned by the Gurus of Tibet blablabla, and they wanted to go there to stay there. Then you had a lot of retired government servants from the British civil service, people like... I forget... McDonald, who ran the Himalayan Hotel later. And then you had... and this was a strange thing in Kalimpong, you had a number of families of great political importance that had been exiled by the British... Kalimpong was not only between, in a sense, a crossroad for all these countries, it was also in the boondocks, it was way out of any important, you know, Indian center like Delhi or anything. So they had exiled like... the Burmese Royal Family, after the British had conquered Burma. The Royal Family was... you know, there were all these people, and then there was of course, the royalty from Burma, and the last survivor was this prince, I think Tibo was his name, I think the husband to one of the last Burmese princesses. And they lived on very small pensions that the British, and later on the government of India, kept up. You had the royal family, I think in Darjeeling or sometimes Kalimpong, from one of the Afghan Emirs that the British had kicked out many years ago, probably in the previous century. And they also lived in Kalimpong and Darjeeling. So, it was an interesting place. Then you had a lot of white Russian expatriates, which sort of... somehow ended up there. You had Chinese, who had earlier been kicked out of Tibet in 1912. And later in 1918, when the Tibetans, again, defeated the Chinese in Eastern Tibet. So you had this community of Chinese who made shoes, and, you know, ran small restaurants. Then you had Europeans, you had Jews, Armenians, people who... the sort of middle management for the British Empire, who were managers of hotels and this and that. And the, of course, the Europeans themselves, you know, British officials, tea planters and retired personnel. And, you know, you name it; you had all sorts of people out in that place... so it made it very interesting. Besides that, I think, the other population besides the Tibetans, who were there, essentially you had the Lepchas or the original people of Kalimpong and Sikkim. And then you had the Nepalese, who were imported by the British to work in the tea gardens, work as laborers. They also had a foothold in the community. Then you had Indian business people from the Marwari community, all the way from Rajasthan, who came up there to do business and lend money. Very astute business people. And then you had, of course, the Bengalis who were in the civil service of the British, sort of clerical work, and then you had a lot of Indian royalty, Maharajas, Nawabs, who built summerhouses in Darjeeling and Kalimpong to escape the Indian heat. You even had some great Indian poets and intellectual people, like Rabindranath Tagore, who built a

house at Kalimpong. His son used to live there, when I was there. And you even had great Indian scientists like... what is his name now, I forget, one of the first people who made discoveries on radio, a contemporary with... Bose, Subash Chandra Bose. Also one of the first persons to come out, and who actually proofed experimentally that plants are sentient, that they can feel, they can feel not only heat, but they have certain emotional responses to stimuli. So you had a whole lot of interesting people. And, of course, Sarat Chandra Das, the great Tibetan scholar, British spy and explorer. You know, it was... it was a very, very civilized place to live in, not only in the sense of people, but also in the sense of facilities and economy. At the time Kalimpong

was prosperous, because of the wool trade with Tibet. *(Image 15: A typical godown of a Marwari wool trader in Kalimpong, 1940's).*

Darjeeling was prosperous, because of the tea business. Although the British had left those areas, when I was young, these industries still continued. So, you had a lot of British tea planters there, and there was money. And there was also facilities, you had



very good bookshops, you had everything that you would have in an English seaside town... the grocers and the general stores catered every kind of English delicacy, and cheese, and sweets, and whatever you wanted in those days. So, you know, we were not lacking for anything, we had good movie halls, the latest records that were printed in the West, you got them, books, you could subscribe to any magazine you wanted from that place, so, it was in many ways a magical place for people to live in...

Can you also comment on the Tibetan community in Kalimpong?

See, the thing was... the Tibetan diaspora, which everyone knows about now, in those days, was very, very small. Essentially people who left Tibet at the time did so, because they had to. The Tibetans in Darjeeling and Kalimpong at the time, they were people, who were either students of monasteries, whose accounts had somehow gone wrong, and they had fled their monastery, because of shame and embarrassment, or they could be, you know, prosecuted. Or, you know, certain Lamas who had given up their vows and didn't want to go back to Tibetan society. Or criminals, some deserters from armies, from the Tibetan army, I knew a few were there, and they lived in British India. Nobody, of course, there was no question of extradition, or anything, once they left, they left. And then, of course, you had aristocrats and people who were connected with Tibetan politics. And whose political fortunes had gone sour. Like the Duke of Changlochen, who had been... who was exiled here. Who had spoken up against the Regent earlier in a Tibetan parliamentary meeting. Spoken up rather sharply, and he had to leave, I mean, he was exiled. You know, not exiled out to Kalimpong, you know, exiled to some remote part of Tibet, and from there people had left [to Kalimpong]... and also the Dalai Lama's favorite, one of the most powerful

people in Tibet called Chensel Khunpela, he had been exiled after the 13th Dalai Lama had died [in 1933], and investigations found out that, actually, that that state oracle had given the wrong medicine to the Dalai Lama, which had made this... he had actually suffered from fever and cold, and that situation was... so, the person who was supposed to be looking after him, Khunpela, had been exiled by the Assembly. And he had escaped from his place of exile in southern Tibet to Kalimpong. So people like him, these people were living there in Kalimpong. And then there was of course the Khampa revolutionary, Rapga Pangdatsang; it was the Pangdatsang brothers who had revolted in eastern Tibet against the [Tibetan] Governor General [who came from Lhasa]. So many of them couldn't go back to their place of birth. Like, Markham [in East-Tibet] was under Tibetan government at the time. So Rapga had also settled in Kalimpong. So there were all these sorts of Tibetans from various backgrounds, living there, so my uncle was there primarily, because he was part of the Tibetan trade mission in Kalimpong. So he wasn't there in exile. But, of course, he wanted to be there also; he liked the place.

Baba Phuntsog Wangyal, the communist. What was his role in the Kalimpong scene?

Phuntsog Wangyal's role I don't think... in Kalimpong, he was not there for any great length of time, so, you know, I'm sure that he didn't really play that much of a role. And he came from a very different background. In Kalimpong, there was a lot of, it was very, it was very convivial in some ways, it was more, sort of traditional, and even in the British sense, or in the Tibetan sense of setup. While Phuntsog Wangyal's background was more communist, genuinely, you know, they came from a Chinese communist setup. *(Image 16: Baba Phuntsog Wangyal (l.) with Rev. Babu Tharchin in Kalimpong, 1940's).* So although there was a, of course there was always a place for people in that community, he was not someone who'd really go partying into the club or, you know, be comfortable with all the different people out there. They were more revolutionary, in a purer, technical sense of the word.



How does GC fit in? What do you know about the connection of these people?

GC, actually, in Kalimpong he fitted in primarily in the beginning, because of his intellectual background. Because he was someone, whose Tibetan was so good. He was utilized by the kind of Tibetan studies people, the Tibetologists who were out there. And immediately, I think his connection with the famous George Roerich is quite apparent. Then also, with Indian intellectuals, like Rahul Sankrityayan, who was very interested in Tibet. So, I think, it centrally started off less as a political sort of connection, than an intellectual one. And also GC himself had come to India primarily, in some ways, to visit pilgrimage sites, the Buddhist pilgrimage sites. And I think, essentially, that his first main task was to visit all the many different places, the Buddhist sites, and write the pilgrim guide, the famous pilgrim guide to these places. So, I think that was essentially what he did, and later on, I think, towards the end of his sojourn in India, he stayed more in Kalimpong, and then, that was when his connection with Rapga Pangdatsang and the people from the Tibet Reform Party, or whatever they called themselves, the Tibet Improvement

Party, you know, started. Initially, I don't think GC was connected with all this, he was more of a real pilgrim, going around India, making notes about all the various places he did visit.

What do you know about the Improvement Party? Their aims? What were they up to?

Well, one thing... I'm sure they were all well meaning, but I think, right from the beginning, there was something particularly amateur about the ways they set themselves up. They had this... even the insignia that they used, right from the beginning, carried the hammer... not the hammer, but the sickle, but it had the sickle, and when they tried to disguise their name as Tibet Improvement Party, their revolutionary aspect came through right from the sickle. And I'm sure the British CID at that time was very interested. Because they kept tabs, they were really interested in any kind of communist influence, coming into India from the north, from Turkestan and from Tibet. And essentially they were, the British at that time, were really paranoid about Russian influence coming into India. And so, especially with the coming turn [the Independence of India?], many Indian intellectuals had already been sucked into the whole communist revolution, and... like the great Indian communist leader, I forget his name, it's something Roy... so, the CID always kept a good look out for these people. And, I think, although the Tibet Improvement Party was not communist, it was nationalist in the sense of the Guomindang, they took their inspiration from Chiang Kai Shek's few statements of this. And, nevertheless, it was... the CID always kept a good tab on it, that's one thing I know for sure they did. But, it didn't reach out; it was not that impressive, I think. Also, to some extent, there was... there were certain problems with the people involved in it. Rapga was a genuine intellectual, but he was very arrogant, and there was a kind of... you know, he really saw Lhasa, sometimes, in just black and white. He saw the entire sort of central Tibetan system as completely wrong. So it didn't endear to him to many aristocrats. While Changlochen, although he was very intelligent, was also in some ways... these were people with resentments, so they didn't really have that great entrée into Tibetan society [See interviews: Tsering Shakya, Tashi Tsering]. And that was their problem, it was limited to two or three people, it never really got to be anything more. So that was one of the reasons, I think, why they had to try to tell GC, when he went back to Tibet [in 1946], to contact more people. And I don't know exactly, whether there were letters or not, letters to other people in Tibet, to try to get them interested in their idea of revolution.

Did you know that GC designed the logo? It was a sickle, a loom, and Tibetan mountains...

Yeah... and... that again, the thing is that also the design of the badge, the badge's outline, is taken from my school's badge, the St. Josef's College, it is the same, with the badge and the banner, you know, the ribbon at the bottom, it's exactly copied from there. So, it is a weird kind of hodge-podge, you know, and I'm not sort of patronizing these people, because they were operating to some extent... but they really knew very little... to some extent, they were beginners, you know, as far as revolutions went. And I don't think they had that much material to work on, except from what Chiang Kai Shek had written, you know, you didn't have, actually, Marxist tracks translated into Tibetan at the time. So, well, what they did, they got themselves into, you know, a few lines of Tibetan history. So, they did *something*...

GC traveled in India from 1934-46. What impressions did India leave on him?

I think, the first thing that would strike any Tibetan, coming out to India, is the fact that it was industrialized at the time. They have never seen those train stations... and the trains in India, even now, for someone going from the West to India, and going to a train station, is quite awe inspiring. To see that many people trying to get seats on that many trains, and to see, how in the world do they organize it. And for a Tibetan, who came from, let's say, a place where you barely had two or three people in every square mile of the country, you know, it must have blown their mind. And then, electricity. I mean, we came from a country... in Lhasa, they might have had a small generating sort of a system, but in basically most houses in Tibet, you never had electricity. And to come to a country, where, you know, we took it for granted that you could just click on a switch and you had electricity. And there were many, many things, I think, initially were more than politics... I think... the technology; of course, limited in the way we look at it now, would impress people, the printing presses, and everything else at the time. But I'm sure that, even more than the politics and the revolution and nationalism, what would have really impressed him... just traveling throughout India on the train. You know, the noise, and the chaos, and the confusion, and just seeing the size of the country of India, and the magnitude of its population. I think, this would have really, really impressed him. And once again, for GC, who was a practicing Buddhist, just getting to Bodhgaya, and a lot of these... I think, initially, there wouldn't have been any political overtone. He had to get over these things, you know, of being inspired by going to Bodhgaya, and Sarnath, and seeing for the first time... and of course, Tibetan faith in their religion is very deep running. It's not like a Christian, to some extent, a modern Christian going to Rome. You go there, and you see the Pope, and you are thrilled. But... I don't know, but I think, for a Tibetan, when they talk of seeing, of going to Bodhgaya, there is, it's very deep, because there's something that people have aspired to for so long, and most of the people never get there... So, I'm sure GC, especially as an intellectual, to actually see the places that he had read about in texts, and to see where certain texts had made mistakes, and to correct it... and that's what he did with this pilgrim guide. He mentions where earlier scholars had made mistakes, describing this place to be where the Buddha meditated, where actually it was not, the real place was few miles beyond, there was a place which in the earlier Sutras, you know, there was a better description, blablabla... And he did a lot of this sort of Buddhist intellectual work in his guidebook. So I think he had to get over all this first. And then, of course, eventually, he began to see the whole colonial kind of problems... of British colonialism in India. But also, we mustn't exaggerate it now; we mustn't look at it from an Indian nationalist point of view. British presence in India and most other places was minimal... it's not like the Chinese in Tibet, now you can see them all the time. In a lot of places, you never see a British. You might see one collector, or the district magistrate. And that's it. The police are Indians. The troops are Indians. Well, the officers, some of the officers may be British, you know. So, but you would have gotten around it, because of the association, he later made with Rahul Sankrityayan, who was not only a nationalist, but, you know, a communist. And a radical. So I'm sure that [the political interest] would have come... but I'm sure that would have come slowly, I don't think... you see, one of the problems of appreciating GC is, especially in modern times, by modern Tibetans, right in the beginning they think, revolutionaries are all born, right from the beginning, he is out there with his flag. It's not! These are human beings, going through life, maturing and learning, and absorbing, and it takes time for people to change from a traditional way to... to

becoming, what GC was later. So, I'm sure, eventually, GC began to see it. You can see it in all... I haven't read at all much, except from what my friend Tashi [Tsering] showed me. GC was a traditional person, coming into a modern world, and seeing the need for change. But at the same time, he is not someone, who himself had changed entirely. He was still a traditional Tibetan monk. Not a monk anymore, but a religious person.

How would GC have felt, when he saw this huge library in Calcutta, the National Library?

Now, I think, he would have been really impressed by the libraries in Calcutta. But at the same time, you mustn't forget, that it is one thing Tibet had also, libraries. Not only just the concept of libraries, but rather big libraries, you know. In the monasteries, in Drepung, there were all these big, big libraries. So, I think that he would have loved to go to the library in Calcutta and especially at, I think, the museum at Patna also, but libraries... that was part of the Tibetan world. I'm sure he would have been impressed, but it wouldn't have been a new thing to him. He had at the same time... like, one I remember, I remember reading his verses, that were published in the Mahabodhi Society Journal, in English, and when you read them, you see how... there's always this traditional thing. One is about Milarepa, one about his own journey from Amdo coming down [to Lhasa], and it is very Tibetan, although it is written in English, the references are not only religious, but to a specific Tibetan kind of scene, of a pilgrim coming from Amdo to Lhasa. And then, GC and his ideas about Milarepa, and Milarepa's meditations, and this and that... so, I think he was, of course... the great thing about GC was, that although he was a traditional person, raised and educated in a traditional milieu, he rose above it, to see the need for change, to see... to realize that, especially after he had come out to India, to see that the world was a bigger place. And that Tibetans not only needed to learn, but they needed to change, in order to be part of this world. And that this change was not just threatening, that it was interesting, that it would benefit everyone. So, I mean, and that's why he is interesting if he was right from the beginning, you know, a little Marxist revolutionary, he would not be interesting.

How do you see GC? Was he a go-between between Tibet and the modern world?

See, I think, he represents essentially, and this is what I really feel, he represents a kind of a true Tibetan. A Tibetan, like in the days of the Tibetan Empire [7th to 9th century]. A dynamic Tibetan. Because Tibetans in those days were intellectually curious. They were like the Japanese in the Meiji Era. What is new, what is interesting, and when they... also they had this intellectual honesty with themselves, to see their own limitations, and realized, they had to take some things from the outside. And Buddhism [at the time of the Tibetan Empire and later during the 11th century] didn't come to Tibet through missionary work. Tibetans reached out to India, they sent people, they went by themselves, they begged and they bribed Indian scholars and Indian gurus to come to Tibet to teach the Dharma. And this, I mean, the Dharma was a new thing, and there was already a pre-existing religion in Tibet [Bon] that was fiercely against Buddhism. So it must have required a lot of soul-searching for Tibetans, to give up our old religion and take something new. But they were courageous people, they saw this, in some ways, the intellectual superiority of Buddhism. And they were just fascinated by it. And they had that capacity to go out, to reach out and to make that change. And I think I'd put GC in that, you know, category... and

therefore, the Tibetans at that time, who were in Tibet, the conservatives, for me, you know, are part of something that was dying, of old stagnancy, you know, what people in the West now find fascinating, you know, the mysterious Tibet this and that, for me it's stagnant Tibet. For me the exiting Tibetans are the Tibetans of the Empire. And people like GC, who were part of that, who were curious about the world, who were willing to make changes, who were willing, even to get in trouble with their own system, you know, to bring about that change, who were willing to take that physical risk to go outside their country. Because it was not easy for a Tibetan to travel to India. He was putting his life at risk. You are coming down from an altitude of, you know, fifteen-sixteen thousand feet above sea level, you are going down into tropical areas, where there are a lot of diseases that you have no immunity to. And Tibetans knew, there is a whole lot of texts that tell you, how many people died, scholars died, in the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth century, the tenth century, going to India, many people died, just of diseases. So after a while they were just so scared of going just further down to India, that they stopped around Kathmandu [in Nepal], and from there tried to communicate with the Indian scholars, so... I think especially for GC, who was a rather frail person, to take that plunge, and go out all the way to India, the Indian heat and with malarial conditions, this and that... it took quite a lot of courage, I think, and intellectual strength to do that. And I think we lost it for a long time. Even now, to be quite honest, you don't find many Tibetans with, you know, even one hundredth of that kind of intellectual... you know, real courage to seek and to learn something.

GC came from the fringes of cultural Tibet, growing up in a community, where you had Chinese, Muslim and Tibetan influence. Did his Amdo background help to shape him?

You know, one of the things, I think, of Tibetans being Tibetans from Amdo, having this drive in them to learn something and to accomplish something intellectually, comes from I think various reasons. I can't be sure, because I have never been to Amdo myself, but listening to people, and reading accounts of that place... I think the proximity with China gives them in some ways an access to another culture, and I think that's important [See interview: Tsering Shakya, Heather Stoddard]. A lot of Amdos would speak the Xining dialect [the local Chinese dialect, spoken around Xining, the capital of Qinghai province]. Many of them... it's their dialect, and they read and speak Chinese. So, whether they like it or not, sometimes, because they are a minority in certain villages... and that immediately... when you are operating in two cultures, and in two languages, you know, the idea of learning becomes much more dynamic. And I know, actually, sometimes deliberately the Tibetans try to learn Chinese in order to compete. In order to, in some ways... because you had to go to courts, you might lose your land if you didn't have someone, who was savvy in Chinese. Because a lot of the court documents were required in Chinese at that time. And I remember someone from Amdo, Lhamo Tsering [later a guerilla fighter against the Chinese], telling me that he was sent to a Chinese school, specifically, because they had to keep up court cases. And he was sent, because the monasteries of Labrang, Zorge and Kumbum required someone, who knew Chinese because of the court cases. So, there was that. Then there's another thing, I think it is the distance. These people came all the way from Amdo to Lhasa to learn. And, after they've accomplished... it is a very long and difficult journey. Immediately you crossed that first intellectual hurdle, you know, the hurdle of, let's say, stagnancy, you know it can be done, you have come all the way

from your village to the great university in Drepung [monastery]. And this is also something they share with Khampas [from East-Tibet]. That's why, to some extent, a lot of the great *geshes*, even in Lhasa, the great intellectuals... the sort of Gelugpa intellectual minds, come from eastern Tibet, from Kham. Because they come all that distance, so they commit themselves to learning. So, I think, GC had, you know, there were all these factors that came from there. And also, they said, there might have been missionaries up there, Griebenow and company [in Labrang. See interviews: Hortsang Jigme, Yudrung Gya] were in Amdo at the time, and might have taught GC some English, but I am not sure on that. But I'm sure; there were these two main factors. And, of course, ideally, Buddhism is also, in a sense, an inquiring religion. So it is not doctrinal in its best forms, so that spirit, I think, the best of the Buddhist spirit in many ways inspired GC to learn, to seek and to keep on moving. And then of course, getting away from Ma Pufang [a Muslim warlord, who attacked Labrang several times, during GC's stay there. See interview: Alak Tsayul]. He was cutting off heads up there, oh god... I don't think the Muslim thing aroused that much curiosity, because they were not... there wasn't that much of an intellectual... by that time they were pretty sort of brutal and, you know, all the looting and fighting. I think the whole Muslim community at that time... it was going down. There... all the civil wars in Xinjiang itself, which, you know, all of the Xining Muslims were involved in.

TAPE 2

Can you give me some background on the troubles in Amdo, when GC was there [1920's]?

Well, I think, the 1920's, when GC was in Amdo, was a period of great turmoil... in Amdo. I think the Gologs [a nomad tribe], had revolted a few times against Ma Pufang, and also in Central Asia itself, a great deal of the uprisings in Xinjiang and in East... in Chinese Turkestan, was also to a great extent involved in the leadership struggles from the Muslim community in Amdo, and Xining. And then the Tibetan government, that was slightly later, but it was beginning, when the Tibetans... when Amdo was revolting against Ma Pufang.

There were clashes between Tibetan government troops and Muslim troops. *(Image 17: Tibetan militia in Labrang, Northeastern-Tibet 1920's)*. So it was a huge period of turmoil and the missionary's accounts of those period, also leave us as to no doubt that it was, not only a period of turmoil, but of great upheaval, suffering, violence in those areas. So, it was not really



a time for, I think, for GC in a sense, for intellectual contemplation and studies in Amdo. It could be one of the reasons, I don't know, like they say, that pushed him on to Central Tibet [Lhasa], where... whatever

its limitations were, you know, it was far more peaceful. And it was a state that would at least run on the principle of traditional law. While Xining, Amdo, and even eastern Tibet, Kham, was very lawless, and a no-man's land in some ways.

What happened in these years, in the 1920's and 30's? Why this turmoil?

Well, it's fairly easy to give you a reason for that. After the fall of the Manchu Dynasty in 1911 and the revolutions that took place, China became totally instable for the next few decades. There was no strong central leadership from Beijing, and the Guomindang could never really, in some ways, extend its full kind of control over the whole of the Xining area, Qinghai [province] and Amdo, especially because the warlord there, Ma Pufang and his father, were extremely competent and militarily capable people. So they managed to hold their sort of independence. So this weakness in the Chinese central government, created a great deal of, let's say, restlessness in the Chinese frontier provinces, like Qinghai [formerly Northeast-Tibet, Amdo], and also Sichuan and Yunnan provinces [today, East-Tibet, is part of Sichuan and Yunnan province]. In Sichuan there were warlords, too. Their warlord was also semi-independent at that time. And especially after, let's say, the fall of the Manchu Dynasty, there was an idea that was going out throughout China, which was initially propounded by the Guomindang and by Dr. Sun Yat Sen... [This idea] which later changed into the whole question of all the minorities, the Mongols, Tibetans becoming a part of China. But there was, prior to the formulation of this idea that the Mongols and the Tibetans, you know, and the Muslims, constituted a part of China. But there were earlier, more liberal ideas... that, actually, these people were as much subjugated by the Manchu's. And they required independence; they required that these people had the right to seek their own political direction. Within the Chinese sort of intellectual community, earlier on, there were certain ideas of this kind, floating around. So, these ideas may not have been expressed that intellectually, but to some extent, they influenced a lot of people in the [Chinese] frontier regions. Especially after the fall of the Manchu Dynasty, it was obvious that China... well, the ties of many of these people, the Mongols, the Tibetans, to China was essentially through the Manchu Dynasty, which wasn't really Chinese. So once the Manchus went, the Tibetans had no ties to some strange, you know, Chinese warlord, somewhere in the distance. That old traditional Buddhist tie, this essentially religious tie had been... and the racial tie, because of the Mongol nature of the Manchu people, had been broken. So there were many factors. It was not only just that China was weak, but that a genuine... because the Manchus, whatever their position in China may have been, they did have an ancillary relationship to the Mongol and the Tibetan people. We did regard them with a great deal of respect that we would not give to some other Chinese leaders. So, all these many factors contributed to these frontier regions of China, becoming totally destabilized. And in such circumstances, even native rulers in these areas, in eastern Tibet and other places, seeking independence. That was also the time when in Central Asia, when the Turks from Turkestan began to revolt, and later on began to seek a republic of their own. So, all throughout these areas... and also, maybe, I think, also after the First World War. Woodrow Wilson's declaration, you know, influenced a lot of people out in Asia... it influenced the Chinese students themselves... that the Chinese people had a right to equal status with Western countries. And this same principle, many people in the frontiers also felt, applied to them. So the ending of the Manchu Dynasty, the conclusion of the First World War, and the very liberal ideas propounded by the

American president after the war, I think, were certainly contributory to the changes in these areas. And GC was in many ways, during his formative years [1903-1927], came out of this period, even though, he was from a remote part of, let's say, the Chinese Empire.

GC was in Lhasa from 1927-34. What was the situation of Lhasa at that time?

Actually, after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama, Central Tibet, to a great extent, was fairly settled. The Dalai Lama's, the 13th Dalai Lama's sort of political legacy did still hold sway. And although there was this attempted coup d'état by Lungshar [in 1934], you know, a lot of these political upheavals affected only very few people on the top, the main players. This is not the kind of a communist situation, where the fall of one leader affects in the hundreds of thousands and the masses. Masses are not involved. It was basically a power play, and there was nothing really doctrinal or ideological in Lungshar's struggle against, let's say, the powers that would be the ministers at the time. Although certain modern historians, especially Western historians, more leftist bent historians, have tried to put up a kind of ideological sort of view on this incident. It was essentially internal politics. So these small little upheavals, I don't think it really affected the common people and social life in Lhasa as it was. It was a peaceful time. Then, also another factor was that, the Reting Regency may have been fairly incompetent, and it was to some extent corrupt. But it was not in any ways a vindictive, puritanical kind of regime. So, you had the people... you had a situation, where everybody was, to some extent, maybe enjoying the 13th Dalai Lama's legacy of peace and stability too much. It was a time... and specially, when the 13th [Dalai Lama] had gone away, to some extent, it was something like, as if a very strict father had gone away. The 13th was not only someone who had given the Tibetans a strong political kind of stability, but he had also imposed certain laws, like on the way women dressed. He did not like aristocrats to buy expensive jewelry for their wives. He felt it created a competition among aristocracy, and it sort of bankrupted many junior officials. He did not like lavish parties; he made strict limitations on the kind of banquets you could hold. Prior to the Dalai Lama's edict on banquets, there was something like an 18-course Chinese dinner, and the 18 were only the main courses, not the subsidiary courses. So, when the 13th Dalai Lama asked about the kind of banquets, the official banquets that were given to embassies and so on, and when he heard this, he was shocked. You know, he was a very thrifty person, you know, even in government affairs, and he said this was terrible. So he created this new banquet, which means six cups and four dishes, so that was the limitation. And these are like... because every, in traditional Tibetan sort of parties, it's not buffet, everyone gets a tray, like the Japanese do, each one each separately. So, it's not like the Chinese, also, where you eat at a common table. Everyone gets a tray in Tibet. So the 13th Dalai Lama... and he also put strictures against gambling, it was used very strictly, especially on Mahjong, and also, not only smoking opium, but smoking cigarettes... so, when the 13th Dalai Lama left the scene [in 1933], the peace and the stability was still there. But then, you know, the people began to enjoy themselves a little more, after, of course, the initial period of mourning. And the mourning was genuine, people really missed him. It's like missing a bastion of stability. But after his departure there was a lot of fun. And the Reting Regent was... whatever his faults were, and his faults were, you know, many, but he was fun loving, he loved the Tibetan opera. He in many ways had a bunch of entertainers, very good singers and, Gesar singers [an old Tibetan epic], you know, singers of the Tibetan epic, the Regent loved this epic, one of his last Gesar

singers lives in Kalimpong. A person called Champa Sangda, who was language teacher to prince Peter [of Greece and Denmark], and informant for many Tibetan expats, who lived in Kalimpong in the 1950's and 60's. So, the Regent loved the Tibetan epics, he loved the opera, he loved parties, he wasn't really a very good monk, but he was a fun guy, as you would say these days. And so, it was a fairly easy, happy-go-lucky city [Lhasa]. So I think, when GC came there, also in that initial period, it wasn't usually liberal, but because of the more relaxed atmosphere, in Lhasa I think initially there was... I think that's how he got his own trails. There was someone new, who was intelligent, you know, who knew what he was talking about. And I'm sure his presence, although initially he was only in the monasteries... but people found out that there was this young monk from Amdo. Who was quite intelligent and was a good conversationalist. He was always welcome in the Lhasa salons, as you might put it.

But he was in Drepung monastery at the time [1927-34], how would they hear...

God, very easy, because monks move, this is not a monastery in the sense of medieval monastery, like a cloister in Europe, where you are locked in. The monks are constantly moving. Little businesses, meeting relatives... see, monks never really cut the relationships with their families totally, as in medieval times in Europe. They did... there is a constant movement between Drepung and the city [Lhasa]. And also because the monks... no, Drepung was involved in politics. A lot of the aristocracy... you know, the idea that the aristocracy and the monastery are separate, is very modern, in some ways again, these are Western ideas being imposed on Tibetan history. A lot of the aristocracies, when they got into trouble, they ran to the monasteries, because they had one college there that they sponsored. And they defended them. You know, so, there was a great interplay between the aristocracy and the monastery... and even between the common people, between business people, and even ordinary people, they had children, they had sons and daughters, the sons in monasteries were studying there. So there was a great deal of movement. It wasn't hugely... maybe, let's say, in monasteries like the Tantric monastery, like Gyutoe, there, the discipline was very much tightened, they tried to hold on to the... as fast as it could be possibly done in Tibet... in a place like Tibet, they tried to hold to the true [Buddhist] code, as the Buddha, the early Buddhists, had in some ways elaborated. But otherwise, it was not so strict in these monasteries, so there was a lot of movement. And there were a lot of monks, you know, like Mongol monks who came in, and they needed sponsors. So, they had to come to the cities, to meet up with the aristocrats and talk to them, and, you know, maybe there would be, and often there were, pious aristocrats or merchants, or even ordinary sort of households, who sponsored a monk during his studies. Because a lot of these monks were itinerant, they came all the way from eastern Tibet, from Amdo, and they had no money. They came all the way from Mongolia, and some may have had some money, or, you know, or were supported by certain business- and commercial interests. But otherwise, many of them had nothing. They came all the way from Ladakh [in the southwest of Lhasa]. And pious people in Lhasa supported them, of, you know, of very different social backgrounds. So they had to go back [to Lhasa] to meet their sponsors. And there are all sorts of strange jokes in the Tibetan world about a Mongol monk, you know, all they could really return to their sponsors was, sometimes, when they were given special cookies in monasteries, or bread, you know, they took that to their sponsors back in Lhasa. Not because that the bread was as a food item, but because it was specially blessed. So there are all sorts of strange jokes about Mongol accents and

things like this, but there was this great interplay. And that is why that was the strength of the church, The Tibetan church. It had very strong roots in the community. So GC obviously people knew. And especially someone, I'm sure, with the brilliance of his mind, very early on, especially as an artist... and he was, in some ways, a Renaissance man. He had many gifts. And having a city where you really had... didn't have that many avenues for entertainment, all it had was the opera and maybe religious dancers, and that was seasonal, and you had certain processions, but in the evenings, conversation was the main thing. And especially, when gambling was prohibited in Lhasa, you know if you couldn't play Mahjong, well, you had to have conversation. And the Tibetan dice game, you can only play that so long, after a while your arm hurts. So conversation was the main staple of, let's say, society there. So GC, I am sure, was welcome.

GC was in India from 1934-46. What was the situation in India?

Well, on the... one has to sort of, in many ways, see India from the point of view of a Tibetan. As I said earlier, he wouldn't see the revolutionary part of it at once [the struggle for independence]. And he came from, in some ways, the outbacks, even from Amdo, you know, he didn't come from Lanzhou or Xining, or some of the major [Chinese] cities. So when he came to India, I'm sure it must have impressed him. The technology, electricity, factories, and specially the railway and the roads, it does to almost all Tibetans... and also decent hospitals. I mean, it's nothing compared to what you have in the West now, but, you know, there were good quality missionary-run hospitals and things in India. And I'm sure it must have impressed him. And towns like Darjeeling, which, even civilized by Western standards now, you know. With all the amenities that you have in the West. You know, the fire brigade, fire hydrants on the side of the road, municipal railings, little parks... you can take your children, and the maid takes little babies in perambulators, and, you know, the town band playing there on Sundays, you know that, what you have, everything that in the 1930's you had in small towns in Europe and... So, Tibetans all were highly impressed. And all the great shops. And in the 1930's, you must remember that India was still part of the British Empire... so, whatever you could buy in Britain, you bought in India also. All the goods that you got, you know, in the Empire, was there. Plus, then you had all the British colonial servants out there, administrative officers, especially in Darjeeling, because that's where they took their holidays. It was very impressive, you know. I'm sure it was... that initial reaction was that he was impressed with all that. And then, of course, gradually, as he moved on and, I'm sure that, when he went to poorer areas like Bihar [in Central India], when he went to Gaya, you know, it must have struck him, you know, the condition... This strikes a lot of Tibetans, because, when we read about North India at the time of the Buddha, it's easy to get this impression, and I'm sure it was, especially around Varanasi, and Bihar, that these were lush areas, forested areas, with deer. The deer park is where the Buddha gave his first sermon. And these places were not only lush in the environmental sense. You know, they... the city-states that existed at the time, Magadha and, you know, Pataliput [Patna], all these areas, were sophisticated. They had a sophisticated culture, in terms of art, philosophy, rhetoric, of course debate and discussion, and this was something that all Tibetans if they had ever read Buddhist texts, would get as a background. And if you got to it in modern times, what do you get? It's like going back to the Stone Age. You get people who are, you know, who have, well, been deculturalized. Savage, environmentally it's a wreck, the poverty level is like

unbelievable, crime, you know, anarchy, and... of course, I am not blaming the British for it, and the Muslim invasions [during the Moghul period, 16th/17th century], and generally a lot of other things caused it [the poverty and the decay of India]. But this was a contrast that must have struck GC, you know. It struck my uncle Tomjor very much... you know, how wonderful it must have been under Buddhism. Not just, he's not just saying that as a Buddhist, but it was that period, even the pre-Buddhist era, in those... you know it was an amazing place. And I think a great deal of the... let's say, the change of a place because of environmental... that whole lush Gangetic Basin, that somehow changed from Buddha's time... to becoming the semi-, sort of disaster-area that it is now. So that must have obviously struck GC, and of course, later on, specially when he was down in Varanasi, and meeting professor Rahul Sankrityayan, the great Indian sort of Buddhist intellectual, but also leftist intellectual... meeting people like him must have then opened his eyes to British colonial practices and the inequities between the ruler and the ruled, and the problems of India. Being a sensitive and intelligent person, I am sure; he must have absorbed it all at once. But I think it was all gradual, you know, he is traveling, he is first of all a Buddhist traveler, he is not there for the politics, he was never there... and he is not in that sense, I don't think it is a compliment to him to say that, you know, right from the beginning GC was a kind of a revolutionary. Because that means, he is simple-minded, essentially, and I think he wasn't, he was a person of diverse interests. And spiritually bent, I think, that was something that a lot of people overlook, you know, that was there. But he was a mystical person in some ways. He was a true Buddhist.

Some more history. GC got back to Tibet in 1946? What was the situation then until 1951?

I think, when he got there in the 1940's [in 1946], one of the problems he must have faced, was a lack of friends. Because the regime had changed, from the Reting Regent to the Taktra Regent. And one of the problems was that, not to say I favor one of the other, but the Reting Regency patronized many of the people that GC knew earlier in the aristocracy, like Tomjor and others. And later on, when he got there, people like Shakabpa, the aristocrat, and others who were, sort of not happy with GC, were in favor with the Taktra Regency. So politically, an unfortunate time for him, although he was not a political player, the fact that all the... his friends, the people he liked, were out power, and that people who didn't really like him all that much, were in power. Kapshopa was in power, Shakabpa was in power... that was, I think, the bottom line for, let's say, what happened to him later. But also, there was a period at that time of slight paranoia that had come back again to Tibetan politics. Because of the... let's say, the Reting conspiracy, the power play between the Reting and the Taktra Regency. And [the Regent] Taktra was very, very suspicious of anyone, who had anything to do with the [earlier] Reting Regency. And the Reting Regency... the Reting Regency had unfortunately extended an appeal for help to the Guomindang government [in China], which made the Taktra Regency even more suspicious. The 14th Dalai Lama's father had gotten himself involved, because he was in, sort of in favor with the Reting Regency earlier. He had gotten himself out of favor with the Taktra Regency, by also trying to extend... by also trying to appeal to the Guomindang. And he tried to play a devious political game, which was very unfortunate. So, the Taktra Regency was highly suspicious of anyone with that background of association with the Reting Regency, and anyone, who had anything to do with the Guomindang, with the Nationalist Government in China. So, GC was... he came from Kalimpong with a letter or, I don't know what, but

some kind of connection with the Tibetan Improvement Party, started by Rapga Pangdatsang, who was a Guomintang official, and the party itself was Guomintang inspired, doctrinally, and it was sponsored to some degree by the Guomintang [See interview: Tsering Shakya]. So right from there, you know, he was walking into a lot of hot water. So it was not the right period, it was a period of great suspicion. And I am not saying the Taktra Regency was wrong to have that paranoia. If you are dealing with the Guomintang, I think paranoia is the right sort of mental attitude, you know... psychological attitude, you should, I think, adopt. So it was unfortunate, but here was a political naive person, getting sucked into this very, very difficult and ugly situation. And also being from Amdo didn't help, at that time. Because the Taktra Regent didn't like the Dalai Lama's family. The Dalai Lama's father, not only himself, but he had involved a lot... quite a few Amdo business people, sucked them into this Guomintang plot against the Taktra Regency. And that's why the Dalai Lama's family, even now insist that the aristocracy in fact had poisoned their father... which wasn't so, really, I don't believe that at all. But he died... and, he was involved in a whole lot of stupid things, and all this didn't help GC at all.

When, do you think, did the people in Lhasa start to feel the threat from Mao?

Well, there was a lot of fear, right from eastern Tibet, because earlier, you must remember, the Guomintang were fighting a constant war against the communists, you know, the Long March and everything and there was the Guomintang propaganda written in Tibetan. So, Chiang Kai Shek... there was propaganda from the Guomintang about what the communists constituted, and which had been spread, you know, hundreds of thousands of copies of anti-communist tracks had been spread all over eastern Tibet, which had gotten up to, even to Lhasa. It said they [the communists] were the enemies of religion, this and that, so, the Tibetans were very well aware...

At the wake of the Chinese revolution around 1949, what was the situation in Lhasa?

So, that was the situation then... and when the Taktra Regency did make efforts, actually, at the time, to counter this, they tried to send a number of young Tibetans, aristocratic children, especially to English schools in Darjeeling. To St. Joseph's college [the same that JN went to several years later], and although it may seem now that actually they were just favoring young aristocrats, sending them to English schools in Darjeeling. In those days it wasn't a favor, you know, it was more like an order. Just going out of Tibet was considered hugely an exile, you know, so people, the parents, didn't want to send their children out. And then they tried to send missions out to the West, to, in some ways, improve the army, to add some regiments to it. But it was all too little, too late, and then there was... it's like with the Tibetans, generally, even now, we react to a situation by doing the minimum. We try to do it, because it wouldn't look good if we didn't do anything, but it's absolutely the minimum, there is never any kind of real, deep running revolutionary change, that is all, you know, that was needed at that time. So it was just a minimum, and anyway, they did it. So, it didn't really help that much. But there was an effort. So that was the kind of situation that GC was coming back to. A society that had changed from the rather happy-go-lucky society, you know, after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama in the thirties, to one, where there was... where we not only had a society that faced great upheavals within itself, because of conspiracies and civil war

[JN is referring to the Sera War], but where the new threat of communist invasion was now a reality, and where the Tibetan government was making, you know, inadequate efforts to face it.

Let's move away from history now to something more personal. Did knowing about GC somehow influence or shape you as a Tibetan, or your self-awareness as a Tibetan?

You know, I am sure it did, but I must be quite frank with you, it was indirect. Because GC was... it was something that I had absorbed over a period of time, because earlier on, I mean, I really projected a lot of the stories I heard from very simple Tibetans, you know, about GC. GC had become a bit, a sort of mythologized in the Tibetan world. They said there was this man called GC, who was so clever that he created mechanical boats, you know, and sailed them on the Yamdrok Lake, and things like this, you know. And he could, you know, just... and that is the idea of intellectualism on that level, that you can create these mechanical toys that amazed everyone. I heard this from certain monks, you know. But later on, I think, the influence that GC had on me, came through my uncle, Tomjor, because GC tremendously influenced him. He always talked about... he always talked about... like, GC said this, GC did this, or told me this. And I think GC influenced his kind of liberal, sort of humanist outlook, to a great degree. And that I got, I inherited that in a way, because of my proximity of my own uncle, especially in Dharamshala, in the 1960's and 70's, which was, intellectually, really a bleak place, you know, there were very few people you could talk to. I mean, o.k... I wasn't really that much into Buddhist philosophy, and I wasn't close to his holiness the Dalai Lama or people around him, and I wasn't really much into the flower power sort of peoples. I needed to talk about history, and I loved to hear stories and to talk about books, and the only person there, was my uncle, Tomjor, and he influenced me a lot. And so, in a sense, I am an indirect kind of product of GC's kind of, let's say, his intellectual kind of delvings. So, yes, you could say in that way I was, but not directly at all.

You are talking about the 1960's now. I thought that GC became sort of famous only within the last, let's say, 10 years or so?

No, no, no, no. That's not true. Writings about him in exile were not that relevant [the first one was published in the late 1970's], because... but there was... well, writings of any kind, in the early 1960's, was not relevant at all, we didn't really have a proper press [in Dharamshala and in the Indian exile in general]. And there were priorities, taking care of children, getting people resettled was... took... you know, it was the most important thing. But there was always talk in the refugee community, because, at that time, you must remember that the Dalai Lama had started a kind of a modernization program. And all the Tibetans that came out from Tibet [after 1959] had understood one thing... you know, they faced this huge catastrophe. And the initial reaction to this was, look, we are not against Buddhism, I still love Buddhism, I still believe in Buddhism, but there were many things wrong in our old society. And we should modernize and change, although we don't need to give up Buddhism. And I think it was a good reaction. And His Holiness and... everyone had this. There was a kind of a trend at that time, to learn about democracy, to learn about science, in schools, and to learn about the Western world. It was really a healthy society. And when I first came into that, I was very happy, because of it. You know, I had some, a small little contribution to make, also. And my ideas, at that time, in the early 1960's, had some value in

that society... and at that time, there was a lot of talk about GC being a pioneer in this respect. And people, whenever there was a conversation, where people felt that those in power were rejecting their ideas, GC's examples would always come out. See, they did this to GC, and now they are doing it to you, and they are doing it to me, you know. So, no, he was not forgotten at all. This is one thing I must say, you know, about Tibetan society. It was not a democracy, far from it; it was in many ways a medieval feudal society. But because of that background, you know, although it was not equitable in terms of economy and social status, there was an idea of right and wrong, of justice and injustice. And the injustice that GC had faced, people discussed, everyone in society. Or even what happened to Lungshar [who had his eyes gauged out in 1934]. He was the one minister, who'd actually started a coup d' état, and he was punished for it, in a terrible way. But everybody talked about it. People talk about it to this day. I mean, where do you have this in the modern world, you know, especially in a place like China, how many intellectuals have died? Thousands of them, and who talks about them? They're all forgotten. But in the Tibetan world, there is that moral... there is a moral sense. People even now talk about, you know, Tongstan Gar, the great minister Gar, from the time of Songtsen Gampo [7th century]. Because the Gar family, in some ways, went against the Emperor, and their family was punished. So they say that is the reason, why even now, Tibetan politics don't work too well. Because the Gar clan had deserved better. You know, so, there is a sense of... there is a kind of a moral balance in the society. So GC always, whenever any Tibetan, who even considers himself to be, you know, partially an intellectual, faces some kind of criticism from the authorities, the whole GC example is started out. See, they did that to GC, now they're doing this to me. No, no, he wasn't forgotten, writing about him, of course, came later, you know. But he was always there; his presence was always there.

People who think differently, or people who have the courage to voice their opinion, are easily sort of put to the fringes of Tibetan society?

Yeah. No, that... this is a problem, because, see, it's changed now. In the 1960's, as I told you, there was this whole period of modernization. Tibetan society in the 1990s and all years in the 2000's has gone backwards, the exile society, right from His Holiness [the Dalai Lama], you know, it's gone backwards, it's really going back into magic and mystery and superstition, there's nothing modern about it anymore. And primarily, you know, it has to do with a society that is facing a threat to its traditional culture. And basically, you know, it tries to cling to it even more; it becomes even more conservative. Secondly, there was the idea that democracy would work quite fast. And when it didn't, and this is not a Tibetan sort of... there are a lot of societies... – even the West rejected democracy, because they felt it didn't work on that level and they aspired to... they picked fascist dictators like in Italy and Germany – but Tibetans also faced this problem. And another thing is, the intellectual society in exile was very limited. We really had no teachers. I mean the Dalai Lama already had no one to talk to in Dharamshala. And that's why I was lucky because I could connect up with someone like Tomjor Tethong [JN's uncle], who really was a great teacher. In many ways, he was the one who inspired Tenzing Tethong, his son, Tenzing Geshe, Gyari Rinpoche, Lodi Gyari, Sonam Topgyal, who was the chief prime minister, many of these younger Tibetans, he was the one who'd talk to them. We sat at his feet, as it were, and he'd talked about politics, he was the only one, who really had this huge, wide, encyclopedic knowledge about the world. Well read

in Chinese, in Tibetan, in English, and he told us, what was going to... what was happening, he was the one who encouraged the formulation of the Tibetan Youth Congress. In fact, he also, like... the naming of the name of the Youth Congress, he said, look, I don't want you to call this organization something league. League has... leaves a bad taste in my mouth. Leagues have always been unfortunate, like the League of Nations, or it's been... it's bad like the Muslim League, or the Gurkha League, you know, there's something negative about it. He said, call it 'congress', like the great American Continental Congress, or the Indian National Congress, or the African National Congress. I mean, he knew all, that's why he influenced younger people to form... and I think he really made a political contribution, because the Tibetan Youth Congress, whatever its shortcomings these days, is the only genuine democratic organization in the Tibetan exile world. And it's been consistently so. And Tomjor Tethong's influence is heavy on this. So, but His Holiness, you know, the thing is, the people in power didn't have it, the people in power didn't like Tomjor Tethong, because, you know, he was an eccentric to some degree. He was too sensitive. He talked too much. So he was not really with... the people in power, intellectually, were totally deprived, they didn't reach out to the Indian community, to Indian intellectuals in Delhi, to Indian leaders at that time. There were amazing leaders, you know after the... and many Indian leaders of the Indian independence movement were interested in Tibet, did want to talk to the Dalai Lama, but there was fairly little meeting of mind. And then, of course, the hippies came. Young Westerns came, who had rejected their society, and they were anti-democratic. Democracy in their words was a rip-off. Science was for the, you know, just Agent Orange [a chemical weapon, used during the Vietnam war] and nuclear weapons. So if you said, you know, you believed in democracy, oh, man, that was totally uncool, you know, it was that attitude. They encouraged Tibetans to go backwards. They thought it was wonderful to do magic and Tantra and Shantra... and then... the Tibetan lamas at once, in our society, the voices of reaction got a new lease of life through the support of Western patrons. So, people who earlier were rejecting their robes, who were saying I want to be democratic now, I am a democrat, I am not going to be a lama anymore, at once switched right back to becoming lamas and selling them milk and water, Buddhism in the West, you know. So, this is the kind of society that we have now. And this, very... let's say, conservative society we have created in 2000, is not only conservative in the traditional sense, Western liberals support their conservatism. Western liberals, who tell us, why do you need democracy, democracy is a failure, what you need is an Enlightened Ruler, a philosopher king, this is what Bob Thurman [professor at the Columbia University in NY] told me, and some other sort of Western Buddhists. We don't need democracy; in democracies we get George Bush. What you need is a philosopher king like the Dalai Lama. I mean, you know, it's not only the Tibetans fault, why we are going backwards. That is why, even now, we have a society where, far more than what GC faced... GC actually got a hearing, there was a section of society that was not only listening to him, but who patronized him. You know, rich aristocrats did that. And also lamas, like Pabongka, Trijang Rinpoche, people in Drepung monastery, you know. It was only that, when he returned in a difficult period, when he faced that problem. Right now, in Tibetan society, there is no room for intellectuals. Intellectuals are harassed, as far as possible, they are driven out of any kind of power, and they are harassed in very, very ugly ways. I am not only talking about myself, you know, there are people like Thubten Kesang, this academic in Kyoto, who wrote this book, and people interpreted it as being against the Dalai Lama. There's been Karmay Gyatso, an editor of the

Tibetan Youth Congress newspaper, he was practically, you know, taken to court and threatened with violence and this and that and other... Then, one of the great modern intellectuals, who came from Amdo, actually from GC's own village, a writer called Pema Bhum, who is now living in the United States, one of the brightest of the recent arrivals [from Tibet], and he was... when he came to Dharamshala, because he started speaking out against mixing religion and politics, and he spoke out against the Dalai Lama's brother, in some ways influencing politics in a negative way. They had a fat warrant on him, people came out openly, you know, in front of a tape recorder and actually said yes, we have a fat warrant on him, 200'000 Rupees if you kill Pema Bhum. And, you know, he is a sensitive person, finally he had to leave that society, and he is now living in New York... actually he told me that he was quite happy to live in a place, where he couldn't see a Tibetan face. I am sure he has changed of course now, but, you know... and it goes on and on, there's no room for innovation, for change. All... you know, and His Holiness... you know, he presents, I think, the liberal exterior out in the West, as many Tibetan lamas do, but... you know... they are not wicked people, in the sense that they don't go around ordering executions this and that, but they are deeply conservative. I could say even reactionary in their ideas and the way they conduct Tibetan politics.

Did you observe young people, who are sort of influenced by the thoughts of GC?

See, one of the problems, I think, with GC is, you know, his writings are not that extensive. What influenced a lot of people is, what they hear about him. Not so much his own personal writings. And for me, also, there was very little. You know, what... my Tibetan is not, unfortunately, that good, but, you know, even like the White Annals that I read, translated by Samten Norbu, and it was a bad translation, and it's not hugely impressive... I really got impressed with GC as a writer, when I read this sort of... although I knew that his English was not that fantastic, you know, the poems he wrote in English, that were published in the Mahabodhi Society Journal [See 'GC in Mahabodhi'], and then suddenly it struck you, whatever the limitations of, let's say, you know, his capability in English literature was, the sentiments were not only genuine, but they were extremely well expressed. And then one begins to connect with him, you know, on that level. So, a lot of young people I know have taken the GC kind of spirit. And, I know there was... in the Tibetan children's village there was one young person, actually called GC, you know, and who became a poet and... the drunken poet, you know the kind of stereotype... unfortunately this young man died in an accident. But there were people of promise, and I think there will be, even now there are people who are following that line. So I think, the more, let's say, documentaries and even books, and, you know, publications come out on GC, I think this will... it can only be positive and helpful to a reformulation of Tibetan culture.

DONALD S. LOPEZ JR.



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How did you first become familiar with GC?

Well, I was a graduate student at the University of Virginia in the 1970's, studying Buddhist philosophy with Jeffrey Hopkins. Prof. Hopkins used to make a vague reference to someone named GC, who had rather unorthodox and strange ideas about the concept of 'Emptiness' and what it meant. This was largely just a name to me. I later heard from Hopkins that he had translated the *Ludrup Gongyen* [Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts], that GC wrote an erotica manual... that of course peaked my interest as well, but I had never read it. But then in 1978 I went to India and I visited Sarnath [north of Varanasi], which is the place, where the Buddha gave his first sermon after his enlightenment, where he taught the Four Noble Truths for the first time. It is a large ruin of a former monastery, a big Ashoka stupa is there and I kept looking for the precise place, the marker, that marked the spot, where the Buddha first taught the Dharma... pilgrimage places almost always have something like that. In Tibet it's often the footprints of the person that are still there in stone to mark the place. There was no such spot marked here, and it occurred to me as kind of odd. So I was wandering around and Paused in front of what looked like the ruin of a doorway. It was brick with some white stones just broken off, nothing in particular, but it clearly was the entrance way into something. I was just looking at that and a Tibetan monk came up next to me. I didn't know him, and he said to me, 'That is the place, where the Buddha first taught the *Dharma*'. I said 'Oh really, how do you know that?' And he said, 'GC said so.' So that, you know, was this kind of wonderful moment of GC being there in this place. There is this groundedness about him, that he went to so many places [in India], and we know he went to Sarnath and investigated, read the old texts, compared things against the traditional accounts with the archeological remains and did his own research and decided, this is the spot where the Buddha was standing, when he first taught the Four Noble Truths!

Did other people tell you about GC, too?

There was a very famous Tibetan Geshe [a monk scholar] named Geshe Wangyal. He was one of the first Tibetan Lamas to come to the United States in the 1950's, and he had known GC. He told the story of GC

visiting his room one day. Geshe Wangyal, like most Tibetans, was offering water in little bowls to the Buddha and he was filling those bowls with water. Tibetans do this every day; they fill it in the morning and empty it at night. GC was apparently sitting there and said, 'Why don't you just fill those bowls with shit? What's the point of offering water? Just offer shit.' Geshe Wangyal often told this story to illustrate what a jerk GC was; he really didn't like him. GC point of course, as we know from other stories about him, like blowing cigarette smoke in the face of a Buddha statue [See interviews: Amdo Champa, Thubten Wangpo], was that the Buddha is of course indifferent to what is offered to him. He doesn't have the ideas of purity or pollution – what is clean and what is dirty – that we do. It's really the *intention* of the offering that matters. What is offered is utterly immaterial, literally, to the Buddha. So GC is making a philosophical point, but I think, obviously, Geshe Wangyal thought it was a point made in very bad taste.

What is the importance of debate in Tibetan Buddhism?

The great monastic universities of Lhasa – Drepung, Sera and Ganden – are the places, where learning is passed on in the tradition. Unlike western universities, where we write books, their primary means of education is debate. It's a formal debating style in which one person holds a position and is sitting down, the other person is standing and attacks that position. So one's skills as a debater is really, how one builds a reputation as a scholar. And what is interesting is that you don't always have to be right. One's skills to *defeat* someone else are held much more highly than one's own kind of philosophical opinion. So the greatest debating skill, the thing that Tibetans praise most highly, is actually taking a Non-Buddhist position, say a Hindu position, and using that to defeat a Buddhist position, because that shows that you are taking something that is philosophically wrong, but your debating skills are such that you can defeat your opponent. So monks debate for hours every day on the debating courtyard. This is really where reputations are gained. GC did not like to debate very much; he did not spend very much time in the debating courtyard. But he was a very skilled debater. When he got to Gomang, his college at Drepung, he attended classes very irregularly, he didn't go to the regular debating sessions. But on one occasion, dressed up as a *Dhob Dhob*, a kind of Tibetan Hell's Angel. They are monks who are illiterate and very proud of their illiteracy, who wear these long, black... they let their sideburns grow down long and they take yak butter and grease them. They wear their monks' robes very short. They are very athletic, because they do a lot of prostrations. They are kind of the enforcers at the monastery, the monk police, but very anti-intellectual in the extreme. They beat-up other monks, and they are feared by the scholar monks. So GC disguised himself as a *Dhob Dhob* one day and came to the debating courtyard and defeated the brightest of the students. They didn't recognize, who he was at first. So of course there would be nothing more humiliating, then to be defeated in debate by a *Dhob Dhob*. This was one of his jokes that he played on his fellow monks... [See interviews: Alak Chongsay, Alak Yongtsin]

There still is this kind of awe, when people tell these stories, even among the Gelugpa monks?

Well he's a kind of a folk hero in a certain sense and the gelugpas very much want to maintain him as one of their own. So the fact that he was a Gelugpa, that he was trained in Gelugpa monasteries in his youth, that he came to the great monastic university of Drepung and studied there... all that means a lot to them. He is one of their own. So, despite the fact that he did all these iconoclastic things and tried to embarrass

others often, this is still just part of the lure. And there is a whole, kind of, as you know, crazy wisdom tradition in Tibetan Buddhism and he kind of embodies that in a certain sense, but within the Gelugpa context [See interview: Ju Kesang]. So, because the monastic fraternity is really like a kind of brotherhood, they kind of talk about each other in that close way. If somebody knew him, they would tell a story and this story is passed on. These stories are often told by people, who never met him. There are very few people still living, who knew GC personally, but the stories continue...

Do these stories somehow fit into you being a Buddhist scholar?

Well, I mean, there is a personal attraction to GC to me in the sense that I have always wanted to think of ways in which to look at Buddhist philosophy from a slightly different angle. There is kind of an orthodoxy that is found in the Gelugpa traditions, particularly which is what I was trained to study. And so, the fact that GC is able to provide some rather unusual perspectives on the traditional positions that are put forth in the Gelugpa tradition is something that has always attracted me to his writings.

Did GC somehow draw from this 'crazy wisdom' tradition to make his point?

He certainly knew that tradition very well. I think one thing that it is very important to recognize about GC, is that he was a great scholar. He didn't spend much time in the traditional monastic curriculum, once he got to Lhasa, but he was very well read [See interview: Alak Chongsay]. You can just tell by the quotations in his writings that he had a range of knowledge of Tibetan literature of many genres. That was quite unusual for his day and he certainly drew upon that. So I think, in a certain sense, he did see himself in that tradition of kind of the wandering *Yogi*. And his poetry also makes that clear. But at the same time there is a sense of displacement... there is a kind of sadness about his poetry, a kind of loneliness, which I think is more unusual in Tibetan poetic literature.

Can you explain that a bit more? The last point you made...

Well... he talks about being just wandering alone in a foreign land [India]. That's a very unusual kind of position for a Tibetan to be in. Tibetans didn't travel all that widely during that period and certainly they didn't travel alone very much. And so he felt he was doing historical research, he was learning to read Sanskrit texts, he was learning English, and he was improving himself as a scholar in very unusual ways. And through that research that he was doing, such as the research at Sarnath, his work on the Dunhuang manuscripts, his work with Roerich upon the 'Blue Annals' [a Buddhist History of Tibet], all these things were giving him a new perspective on his own tradition. He felt that this was valuable, but was also utterly unappreciated by his countrymen. So, there is a sense in his writing, of talking directly to the Tibetan people, that is, he's having a conversation with them. He's not writing for himself that's very clear, he's not writing so much for posterity. He's talking to the Tibetans of his day. There is something very personal about that conversation. Someone who is, in a certain sense, almost a kind of self-exile from his homeland and from his tradition. But is adding to that tradition in a much larger sense, and trying to communicate that back... and he is feeling, I think, that he's not being heard. So, there is a tone of resentment at some points, and sometimes, I think, it's just a much simpler kind of loneliness and sadness...

What did GC try to communicate to his fellow countrymen?

Let's see... in the last chapter of his travel journals [See: 'GC in Horkhang], he's describing modern history, contemporary history in the 1940's. He talks about the succession of the British throne and says that Queen Victoria passed away in this year and was succeeded by her son. Then he'll have an aside that says that some Tibetans believe that Queen Victoria was an incarnation of Tara [a female Buddhist goddess], and that this just goes to show you how stupid the Tibetan people are. Later on, in his discussion of science, he's talking about how Tibetans really must understand this new knowledge of science, how important it is to see, how Buddhism and science go together. But he always keeps referring to how benighted the Tibetans are, and how closed minded they are. Therefore, his writings to Tibetans are often mocking, accusatory, but at the same time he is writing to them, he is conveying the information to them, but with a kind of scolding tone... that, 'We Tibetans must get out of this kind of narrow mindedness, that we have held for so long, and we need to enter into the modern world.'

Can you put his writing into the context of the situation in Tibet and India at the time?

He left Tibet in the 1930's. This was the period of the death of the 13th Dalai Lama and the discovery of the 14th. We know, when we study Tibetan history, that this period between the Dalai Lamas is always a difficult time, because there is a certain anxiety in the nation... the Dalai Lama has passed away, they're looking for the new child, the new child is discovered and the new child has to grow up to assume the throne. So there is this period of often 15-20 years, in which the country is ruled by a regent, this interregnum is often a very difficult period. And this time, it coincided of course with the great changes in world history, during the 1930's and early 1940's. Tibet was under the ruler of a regent named Reting, who, as we know now, was a very corrupt person. The Lhasa society was really in difficulty. There was a great deal of sectarianism, the Gelugpas where at the pinnacle of their power, and there were very strong sentiments against the other sects, especially against the Nyingma... and there was an entire Shugden worship, the worship of this deity who protects the Gelugpas and punishes the Nyingmas – all this was very much at it's height. So GC left the country at that time, and entered into India, which was of course at it's height, with the independence movement, the movement for independence from Britain... and the world war is beginning in Europe... so, he is just being exposed to all sorts of things that were known only vaguely in Tibet. And then, coming back to Tibet at the end of his journey [1946], again into a time, when the same political intrigue, uncertainty about the future, and this sectarianism were still thriving in Lhasa... and he suffered as a result of that.

What else was shaping his position?

Well in India, of course, he was very closely allied with Rahul Sankrityayan, a leader of the independence movement [Rahul was a member of the communist party]. So, GC clearly imbibed from him this sense of the evils of western colonialism. And GC writes very powerfully about the rape of Asia by, largely, the British. He talks about such things as slavery, the slave trade in America; he talks about the black hole of Calcutta. He actually gives a very interesting but brief account of the Europeans in India, from the time when the Portuguese landed. He's obviously getting this information from his Indian friends. From these conversations, and whatever he might have read [in the libraries], we haven't identified that precisely yet,

he really gained a sense of solidarity with the Asian peoples. That is, he wasn't just from Amdo [Northeast-Tibet], he wasn't just a Gelugpa monk, he wasn't just a Tibetan, but his identity expanded to include... he was an Asian, and he was an Asian like other Asians, oppressed by the Western powers [colonialism]. There is a real bitterness in his writing against the colonial powers and the need for independence, and the need for self-determination among the Asian nations, which at that point were still European colonies. This is quite unusual for the time, and among his many identities then, his writings really show him as being someone, who saw himself also as a colonial subject and as an Asian colonial subject...

Who was he, then? What identity, or identities, did he have?

He was taking in the experiences from his travels, from his conversations with friends, from his readings, and so we see him gaining these various identities... I think it's better to think of him as having many different identities, which express themselves in different situations. For example, he gained an identity as a Buddhist – of course all Tibetans, or most Tibetans, say they are Buddhist, but that means something different – he became aware of the Buddhist independence movement. As you know Bodhgaya, the place where the Buddha received enlightenment, was at the time of his travels under complete control of the Hindus. It was a Shiva temple, and GC was just appalled by the fact that animal sacrifice was taking place at the same spot, where the Buddha had achieved enlightenment. And so, he allied himself with the Mahabodhi society [See interview: Tsering Shakya], he mentions that specifically... and with the work of Anagarika Dharmapala, the great Singhalese independence leader, he really became part of a pan-Buddhist movement that was evolving at that time... Buddhists from Sri Lanka, from China, from Japan, were all allying themselves to make India back into a Buddhist land and especially to liberate, as they put it, the Buddhist monuments from the control of the infidels, from the Hindus. So there is this kind of world Buddhist identity that he achieves through his travels. That is unique among Tibetans of his day.

What other identities would you ascribe to GC?

Well, of course we have his erotic identity... this is very important... for someone who had been a monk and taken a vow of celibacy. Obviously he gave up that vow and spent a lot of time in the brothels of Calcutta. It is very clear from his writings that his work 'The Tibetan Art of Love' is not simply a scholarly investigation from texts, but is based on some of his own experiences, and GC writes in beautiful Tibetan poetry about that. There is this erotic self, which is not... which is rarely expressed in Tibetan literature. We also know of his friendships with members of the Tibet Improvement Party. Exactly what role he played in that is not entirely clear. We have his role as kind of historian, going back and trying to re-write the early history of Tibet, based on his own research. We have his role of a kind of archeologist, who is going to Buddhist monuments, trying to figure out what happened here, what happened there, Taking what he knew from Buddhist texts and trying to match that up with what he saw on the ground...

There is a kind of groundedness to his research, which is very interesting. There is a point at which he is talking about the Buddha, finding the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, the tree the Buddha sat under, when he

was about to achieve enlightenment. When the Buddha came to this forest filled with trees – of course the Bodhi tree is a sacred tree, and the Buddha must sit under that tree – but the Buddha didn't know which tree to sit under. He knew, however, that the sacred tree was indestructable. So the Buddha simply opened his mouth and shot out from his mouth a flame and the flame burned the entire forest and left only one tree standing... so, he went there and sat down under that tree. That is one story GC tells... and this is a story that is very important for people who think the Buddha was an environmentalist... [Laughs]

His many identities, what do we project on him?

Well, GC became very famous for a variety of reasons, partly because of the wide range of topics that he wrote on. But there are also these many legends about him. And as the Tibetans went into exile [in India after 1959], there has been a real need for a kind of culture hero [See interviews: Tashi Tsering, Tsering Shakya, Pema Bhum, Ju Kesang]. The Dalai Lama, of course, is a culture hero, but he is still alive, he's present and culture heroes, I think, are more effective in a society, after they're gone. One can project, more, identities onto them in their absence. So, GC is someone who was in a sense... someone untainted by the fall of Tibet and all the kind of horror and incrimination and guilt, that surrounds that terrible time in Tibetan history [1940's/50's]. He's someone whose life spans this very important period, beginning in 1903 with the Younghusband invasion of Tibet, this first trauma of Tibetan... this kind of encounter – and a very involuntary encounter – with the West. And then dying in 1951, which marked this very involuntary encounter with China [the invasion of Tibet 1950/51]. So Tibet is encountering two imperial powers, two colonial powers in the year of his birth [1903] and the year of his death [1951]. His spans this whole period, which makes him very important almost just symbolically.

Then, during that time, he was the one who left Tibet to go out into the outside world to learn new things, to have opinions, to have views on the nature of reality, the nature of sexuality, on Tibet's history and Tibet's politics and the future of Tibet... all of these things turned out to be incredibly important. He wasn't recognized so much in his day, but after he died, people could then see in him someone, who was doing probably, what they felt, should have been done before. If there were more people like him, perhaps we would not have lost our country. So, there is kind of seeing into the future of Tibet in GC writings. He can then be kind of worshiped as a hero. Someone from his region, the people from Amdo [Northeast-Tibet], can count him as one of their own; the Gelugpas can count him as one of their own. But because he wrote a text that was critical of Gelugpas, also the Nyingmas can count him as one of their own. Young Tibetans can just be captivated by his wonderful writing style... his learnedness, his colloquialisms; he can be seen as one of their own. So he can be embraced by many different communities, without the taint of having to go through, either staying in Tibet under Chinese occupation, or leaving Tibet as a refugee. He escaped that by his death, a death, which was really brought about by those powers, as they came together.

All this reading on GC, how did it help you to find your identity as a Tibetologist?

Well, in my own study, I was trained to read the most technical kind of Gelugpa scholastic philosophy. Tsongkhapa [the founder of the Gelugpa tradition] and his commentators, and their commentators, and

their commentators, generation after generation, layer after layer of commentary, sub-commentary... this is what I know to do best in Tibetan literature. But as I kind of matured somewhat, I guess as a scholar, I found all that less interesting than it had been, when I was younger. I was trying to find some way of putting all this into a kind of cultural context. Of finding some way to relate it to Cultural Studies, to Social History... and that was often difficult to do, because we often did not have a lot of information about the lives of these authors. And their ideas seemed somewhat disembodied, off in the realm of fairly complicated technical philosophy...

I had heard so much about the *Ludrup Gongyen* [Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts], this famous text about the *Madhyamika*, the 'Middle Way' philosophy. Everyone talked about how controversial it was, and also how difficult it was, that it was so hard to read... and I said to myself, I should take a look at this and I began to read it. It was clearly written by someone, who was a great scholar of the Gelugpa tradition, who knew this kind of technical philosophy, but it had a completely different angle on it. The first time... GC talks about a conversation between two Muslims that was the first time I had seen that in a Tibetan text. The first Buddhist author that GC quotes is *Buddhagosa*, a monk that lived in Sri Lanka and whose works were never translated into Tibetan. So I knew something interesting was here. What became fascinating to me was that here was a chance to look at something that I was trained to read – I knew the topics, I knew the background, I knew the philosophical implications – but it was written by an author who, first of all, died the year, before I was born. We also knew a lot about his life, we knew a lot about his times, obviously, because he was so modern. So, for me, it was an opportunity to take this work, which had that kind of difficult technical philosophy, and look at it in the light of a period that had just recently passed. There were people still alive who knew him, right. And this gave me a chance to go back – after doing a lot of work on other topics – to go back to what I knew best, what I was trained first of all, to read scholastic philosophy and use whatever knowledge I had in that arena, and whatever I could bring from cultural studies. So, in a way, this will allow me to bridge the gap between my early interests, and my more recent interests.

In which context is GC's version of the *Madhyamika*? In regards to the history of his time?

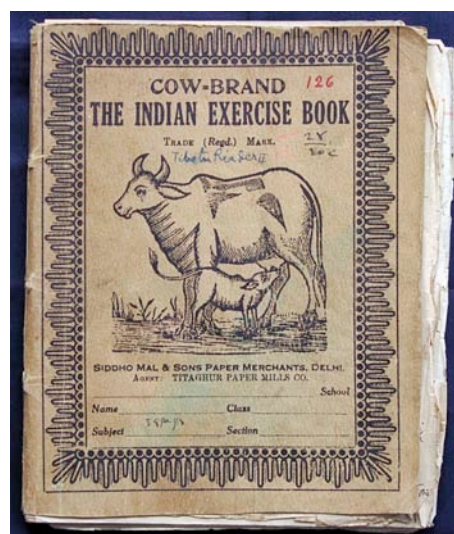
We have records of works that GC wrote that dealt with logic and philosophy and that thing. We also know that he did translations, while he was in India. But the only work of his that we can really classify as being a work of Buddhist philosophy is his final work, the *Madhyamika* text, the *Ludrup Gongyen* [Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts]. I see that as his... perhaps knowing that he wasn't going to live much longer, or knowing that probably his facilities may be failing him, his time was passing very quickly and he wanted to have a kind of final testament. His own statement about these ultimate questions – the nature of reality, the nature of consciousness, the nature of authority, the nature of knowledge. You know... some people have seen it as a modernist text. Some people have seen it as influenced by whatever Western philosophical ideas he may have encountered in India. Frankly, I don't see that. I see it as a fairly traditional work. He is speaking to this highly educated audience of *geshes*, speaking sometimes harshly to them, but in a vocabulary that really only they would understand. So this is his, kind of final testimony to the elite scholars of his culture.

Can you explain what *Madhyamika* means in Buddhist philosophy?

Well, *Madhyamika* means 'Middle Way', and everyone knows that Buddhism is famous for being the philosophy of the 'Middle Way'. In the Buddha's first sermon, the one he gave at Sarnath – at the place that GC identified to be spot, where he spoke – the Buddha talked about the 'Middle Way' between two extremes. One should not follow the *extreme of self-indulgence* on the one hand – talking about his own life as a prince and the opulence he experienced there – and on the other hand one should also avoid the extreme of *ascetism*, in which he had gone and starved himself and practiced all these difficult breathing exercises and so forth. He found that neither of these extremes led to happiness. So one should find the 'Middle Way' between self-indulgence and extreme ascetism. Now, about 400 years after the Buddha passed into Nirvana, an Indian monk named Nagarjuna came forward to talk about the 'Middle Way' in a different sense, in a more philosophical sense; the 'Middle Way' between *existence* and *non-existence*. These are the two extremes, and both of these positions are wrong – to say that everything exists is wrong, and to say that nothing exists is wrong. Nagarjuna is trying to then find the 'Middle Way' between those two philosophical extremes. Now, these two extremes of *existence* and *non-existence* are interpreted in many ways, both in India and in Tibet. So, when GC composed this text, and the conditions of its composition are interesting and controversial, he called the text *Ludrup Gongyen*, which means the 'Ornament of Nagarjuna's Thoughts'. An ornament for Nagarjuna, is an idea, so GC is adding, embellishing, he is beautifying in a certain sense, what was really in Nagarjuna's mind, when he said we must avoid the extremes of *existence* and *non-existence*. So, that's the *Madhyamika* and GC's use of Nagarjuna's name in the title of the work. Do you want me to go on and talk about what is in the text itself?

Please... what is the essence of GC's text

The work is unusual, because it is clearly in two parts. The first part is a self-contained essay on the limits of human knowledge, and the idea of authority. That is, how do we know what we know? Now this is a work that does not talk about *Madhyamika* at all, it doesn't mention Nagarjuna at all. It is much more about this topic of 'valid knowledge'. How do we know anything for sure? We know from accounts of GC's friends that he wrote this text in his own hand, in an elephant brand notebook and gave this text to his friend Lachung Apo. (Image 18: One of the many notebooks of GC from India, 1934-46). So that clearly is a small little essay that was actually written by GC. This is indisputable in my opinion. This part ends with a poem, which is very traditional, and therefore we know that the first part ended there. The [rest of the] text that we have goes on for about the next two thirds of the work. It is much more fractured. It will start with one topic, talk about it for five pages, drop it, talk about something else for three pages, come back to the first topic... it's going back and forth, it has no real structure, no real progression. It



is a bunch of kind of musings, but musings on the most... technical topics in *Madhyamika* philosophy. This is the part of the whole text that appears to be the notes taken by GC Nyingma disciple Dawa Sangpo. They were meeting at night or in the daytime. This seems to have occurred both right before [1946] and right after [1949/50] GC went into prison. In these conversations [with Dawa Sangpo] GC is talking about *Madhyamika* philosophy, he's quoting many texts from memory and Dawa Sangpo is just there, taking notes. Now it's clear that Dawa Sangpo does not know much about *Madhyamika* philosophy because we have all sorts of misquotations. Tibetan language has so many homophones, word that sound exactly the same, and he would mishear something and write down the wrong word. But if you know the background, then you know what GC must have said and how Dawa Sangpo misheard it. So, these [notes] are then just a kind of his transcription of GC's thoughts about *Madhyamika* and those notes were then assembled and published after GC died. So, the first part of the text, I think, is the more accessible; this really is a critique of knowledge. The second part of the text is very interesting on various points, but it is very hard to follow, because it jumps around all over the place.

How can you obtain 'knowledge' and what is 'valid knowledge'?

GC's critique of 'valid knowledge' is very much in the context of speaking against the positions of his contemporary Gelugpa monks. There is a term in Tibetan, which means 'valid knowledge' and the question is, how, before enlightenment, can we know anything. We obviously have limited knowledge of the world, and the basic Buddhist position is that everybody is completely benighted by ignorance. So, how can we say anything with certainty? In the Gelugpa tradition, they talk a lot about how you can have 'valid knowledge' about certain things within this world, but still not understand the 'ultimate reality'. So there seems to be a kind of a *conventional* 'valid knowledge' and then there is an *ultimate* knowledge, which one gains upon achieving Buddhahood. The Geluggas kind of divide knowledge into two categories – *ultimate* knowledge and *conventional* knowledge. They place a lot of emphasis on talking about the 'conventional knowledge and all sorts of rules about inference, and how one can understand something that is not visible, and how the senses are correct in this way, and not in that way... there is a huge amount of discussion of the parameters of 'conventional knowledge'. The 'ultimate knowledge', that's just something that happens upon enlightenment and we don't really know about that, so let's not worry about it... there is a bifurcation of these two realms of knowledge.

GC is trying to get the 'ultimate knowledge' back into the conversation. What he wants to do is, really, to remind these people, who are making such elaborate claims about 'conventional knowledge', to say to them, 'You are ignorant sentient being, you are unenlightened, your knowledge is extremely limited because of your own ignorance.' So he talks a lot about the consciousness of the unenlightened [beings], and of course in Buddhism, the unenlightened are not just humans, but there are also gods and demi-gods, animals, ghosts and hell beings. So, consciousness is something that travels from lifetime to lifetime, and is embodying itself in different physical forms. GC is really interested in this kind of embodiment of knowledge, he's grounding it in a very physical sense... you know, given his interest in erotica, in traveling, geography and space, the kind of groundedness of his philosophy here, is very interesting. What he is saying is that our knowledge of the world is completely a function of the kind of body we

have. For example if consciousness is in the body of a donkey, then grass tastes wonderful, but if consciousness is in the body of a human, grass tastes terrible. So it is simply a function – your knowledge and your experience – are simply a function of the kind of body that you're in. When consciousness is in the body of a rooster, one knows naturally, when the night is over and the sun is about to rise, but once in the body of a human, you don't know that. So, there is a kind of limitation of knowledge, a specificity of knowledge that is bounded entirely by the kind of body you are in... GC talking about the ways in which physical form, that is the very embodiment of consciousness, affects what you know. Once you're a human with two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and the other sense organs, we can't know anything more, then what these sense organs can emit, can bring inside our consciousness... and so, he says that we are like, a dog or a cat, [compared to Buddha]. Dogs and cats have three different kinds of meows or barks they can use, when they are happy or sad or angry. They can express maybe three or four emotions with these few modulations of their voice. Humans are like that, compared to a Buddha. Our complete ability to express reality is about as limited as a dog's is, compared to human knowledge. Relative to a Buddha, we know nothing. So, how can we make any claims about what a Buddha knows, how can we make any claims about what a Buddha experiences? So, GC says, 'You [learned monks], do you really think, when you were a Buddha, you would see trees and rocks and houses, the same way as we do? We actually have no idea what enlightenment is like.' He really attacks those *geshes* [learned monks], those scholars, the Gelugpa scholars, who want to make these claims about knowledge, because he's saying, 'Look, you have to admit that you're ignorant, you're unenlightened, that's a tenet of our faith... so how do you know anything at all?' And they would say, 'Well, of course we don't know, we are an ignorant sentient being, but we know this, because the Buddha said so.' And GC says, 'Well, how do you know the Buddha knew that? How do you know that the Buddha is a valid source of knowledge on this point?' They would answer, 'Well, it's because Nagarjuna said so.' GC, 'Well how do you know Nagarjuna is valid on this particular point?' 'Because Tsongkhapa said so.' GC, 'Well, Tsongkhapa was a great scholar, but on what authority can you say, he really knew?' 'Well, because my great Lama, my teacher, told me that himself.' This kind of conversation would go on endlessly... GC's point is that, in the end, you're just coming back to worldly opinion. What is knowledge, what is valid knowledge, is what the opinion of the world, the opinion of the majority is. He then tells this Indian folktale to illustrate this point. So, there's a king and he's a good king and his ministers come to him and they say, very soon we are going to have a monsoon, a heavy downpour of rain, but this will be kind of a poison rain, and anybody who drinks the water that comes out of the sky, is going to go mad. So, the king would have to announce this to his populace, but there was no time, so, to protect all his own wells and cisterns he covers those up and saves a lot of fresh water. Then the rain comes and the populace drinks the [poisoned] water, there is no way to avoid that, and they all go mad... So what's left then is an entirely insane population and a sane king... the people then have a revolution, they say that the king has gone mad and the king is wondering what to do. He wants to lead his people, he cares about them, but they are all crazy. But in the end he has to drink the [poisoned] water himself and goes mad. This is GC's point. What is truth, what is knowledge, is what the majority of the people agree on. Whether they are crazy or not, it is the majority rule in this case...

TAPE 2

Now lets go on about the Madhyamika, valid knowledge...

His discussion of authority and valid knowledge... GC talks about how people decide that something is true. And sometimes, he says, they look in a book... What is interesting here – this is the first example GC gives in his text – he is not talking about two Buddhist disagreeing about something and looking in the *Sutras* to find out, it is two Muslims, who aren't sure if they are allowed to eat camel meat. They agree that they don't know the answer, so they look in the Koran and they find out that eating camel meat is permitted, and so they eat camel meat, and they looked to the book [Koran] for authority. Another example, two people might want to know, whether there is a fire on the other side of the mountain pass, but they agree within their system of logic, that where there is smoke there is a fire. So if they see smoke coming from behind the mountain, they know there is a fire there, that's inference... and sometimes it is just opinion. People just decide, based on their knowledge. GC also talks about these nomad people, who have never tasted anything sweet, except for milk. And so if you give them something sweet to taste, they think, this must be milk, because it is sweet. Their vocabulary and their experience are limited to just one thing, and therefore, anything that is sweet, must be milk. That is their [limited] logic. What GC is talking about, he is trying to imagine with our limited mind, the unimaginable abilities of the Buddha. What he is trying to do, is really, to get people to break out of these very small confines of their ignorant mind, and to try to take seriously the fact that the Buddha can take an entire planet, and turn it into the size of an atom, without changing the size of the planet or the size of the atom. GC wants people to take that idea seriously what he finds is that his fellow monks say - well that's just an exception, that's just outside the canons of logic. What we want is to get back to logic and not worry so much about such things. He wants people to... so what GC is doing, in a certain sense, is trying to recover enlightenment. And that is so fascinating about his text. We have him on one hand, seeming very critical of Gelugpa monks, very skeptical about the possibility of knowledge, but it is a skepticism that is only within the *conventional* realm. But in the *ultimate* realm, he is a deeply devout and pious Buddhist, who is honoring the Buddha for his inconceivable wisdom. What GC is saying is, that, when the Buddha says, we have to think about something between existence and non-existence, let's think about what that could possibly mean and how it is completely outside of our abilities to even imagine. What GC is trying to do... I think he feels, correctly, that, what the Gelugpas did in many cases, were to take these beautifully poetic statements in the *Sutras* – these accounts of these utterly incomprehensible miracles – and they domesticated them, they interpreted them down and down and down, until they could fit them into this tiny category of *conventional* wisdom. GC is trying to break out of that, he's trying to recover a sort of poetics of enlightenment and make that the basis of Buddhist practice again. He wanted to de-emphasize to a great extent the canons of conventional logic...

...To keep the paradoxes as paradox...

...I think that his emphasis on the poetics of enlightenment was really meant to kind of preserve paradox, and to preserve the power of paradox to explode our conventional understandings. That is, GC sees these paradoxes as expressions of great power in a beautiful language, and once you, as I would say,

domesticate them, bring them under control, they lose all of that potency. So he's trying to restore that to the tradition, and he's trying to bring that back to his own Gelugpa sect, which has a very long tradition of great *Yogins*, great meditators, and great poets. He quotes them in his text on Madhyamika philosophy. He's trying to remind his contemporary monks that this is our tradition and you've forgotten about it, by just limiting yourself to these petty arguments about this and that.

I would like to take this as the starting point to discuss the political impact of GC text

When the *Ludrup Gongyen* was finally published it was a very controversial text, part of it had to do with the fact that it was written by GC, since he was a controversial figure, and everybody knew that. Another part of it had to do with the fact that GC gave his teaching, not to a Gelugpa disciple, but to a Nyingma disciple – the sect, which is considered the most different from the Gelugpa... Gelugpas and Nyingmas are kind of always opposed in a certain sense, or have been at moments in Tibetan history, and certainly were at that time [the late 1940's and early 1950's]. And finally, the text of GC was published with funds provided by Dudjom Rinpoche, a great Nyingma Lama. So, what we have is a political situation, in which there is deep sectarianism in Tibet, particularly at that time, between the Gelugpas and the Nyingmas. The *Shugden* controversy is still ongoing after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama. So, it was just deeply insulting to the Gelugpa hierarchy that a text, critical, not of Tsongkhapa [the founder of the Gelugpa tradition], but of the Gelugpa monks of the day, that such a text would be published with the support of a Nyingma, and that the text had been written down by a Nyingmapa. That led many people [Gelugpas] to say that GC never said this [in his text], that this was not his work, that this was all made up by his disciple Dawa Sangpo. They didn't really take seriously what the text said... they didn't really engage so much with the content... well, some did, extensive refutations were written, but in general, what you read about the controversy, is, whether or not it is GC own idea and not so much, whether the ideas themselves are right or wrong. So this just kind of gives you some sense of the political impact, the political sensitivity of a work like this. Because the Gelugpas, from the time of the 5th Dalai Lama [17th century], when he assumed the throne of Tibet and ruled the nation, the three monasteries of Drepung, Ganden and Sera [in Lhasa] were very powerful politically. The government of Tibet was run by Gelugpa monks for the most part. And so, when you are then criticizing the sect, which is ruling the state, and a state, which is very much run through the manipulation of conventions, then that becomes something very threatening... so, the fact that GC is talking about the Buddha's enlightenment and the Buddha's inconceivable powers and his miraculous deeds, there is nothing particularly threatening about that. But once you start attacking the ability of the Gelugpa *geshes* [scholars], and therefore the Tibetan state, to make valid judgments – that is politically sensitive. When you start to question the line of authority by asking how does one know... on what basis does one know... where does authority abide – well, that then is deeply threatening, politically. We can see then, why a text like this would stir up the controversy that it did. Fortunately or unfortunately, GC was dead by the time the text was published, so he didn't suffer so much. But already then, some people were trying to protect him, to kind of subtract GC from the text, to remove him from that text, and to have it just be the musings, the ignorant musings, of some Nyingma disciple, who then forged this and put it in GC's name in order to cause trouble...

When did GC start to work on his Madhyamika text?

It seems that he wrote the first part in an elephant brand notebook [from India], he might have written that actually in India, because he presented it to Lachung Apo [See interview: Namgang Tsomo], shortly after his return to Lhasa [in 1946]. Now the rest of the text... it seems to be... it's hard to say... it simply says that they met over a course of some time, and the colophon, the end part of the text, written by Dawa Sangpo, talks about GC already having passed away and GC's last instructions to gather up the notes from their conversations and make those into a book. So it's hard to know exactly when it happened, it seemed to be right before prison [1946], and right after prison [1949] and... right up to the point of his death, almost [1951]. It seemed to be one of his last wishes that this text be published. And of course we know, that by then, the Chinese had already invaded Eastern Tibet on their way into Central Tibet, so of course this was a time of the highest political tension in Tibet... and the last thing that the Gelugpa hierarchy needed to worry about, was this challenge to their authority, when a much greater challenge was on the border...

In which way GC was a go-between for tradition and modernity?

GC does form this... he's a go-between, he's a sort of conduit... he provides a kind of link between the old Tibet and the modern Tibet in a number of ways, both in exile and in Tibet itself under the Chinese. First of all, he... his writings have now been published, there is something to read and this is something that has happened fairly recently, that his works were all collected and brought together. It's important to note that these were all collected and brought together and published in Tibet, not in exile! So there is a kind of... as the political situation, for a very brief period, relaxed a bit in Tibet [after Mao's death in 1976], we see this wave of publications that occurs in the late 80's and early 90's [See interview: Hortsang Jigme]. One of the first things that people wanted to bring out was the collected works of GC – that this was the work of a culture hero and needed to be available. Once it was made available, people started reading that, so there was a whole new generation of young Tibetans in Tibet... and then of course it was immediately published in Dharamshala [in India] – the exact same set of three volumes of his collected works came out in Dharamshala. So, we have two communities of young Tibetans, one in exile and one in Tibet, reading the exact same words simultaneously – this is very interesting – and discovering a person that they probably had not read before. They may have heard the stories, they knew some of the controversies, some things were known in one way or another, but here is everything in one place to be read. I think people were just delighted to see the range of his interests, the beauty of his prose, the beauty of his poetry. And just to read... to be so impressed that one of their own, prior to the exile, prior to the Chinese invasion, had gone to all these places, done this research, done all these things that they now knew that they should be doing, like historical research, archeological research, being good poets, being good historians, writing about Buddhism, being a kind of... he was a renaissance man, and that is something that young Tibetans aspire today in the educated classes. Just the very presence of his writings at a certain moment in recent Tibetan history, I think, has been very important culturally speaking. He is a link in that way. Then, for the older people, of course, the people of Amdo [Northeast-Tibet] know him – he's *the* Amdowa, right, he's one of their own. But then he can be a representative of Tibetan identity, which is an identity he felt very strongly. As we know, Tibetan identity is something really only strongly developed

after the diaspora. The Tibetans thought of themselves as being from Kham [East-Tibet] or U-Tsang [Central Tibet] or Amdo. They talked about... a Tibetan would often say, when he went to Tibet, I went to *Po*... they meant Lhasa by the word Tibet or *Po*. So this whole idea of Tibetan national identity is, in a certain sense, a post-exilic phenomenon. An identity developed in exile from outside of Tibet, and within Tibet under Chinese rule. And so, to have GC speaking as a Tibetan with a national and cultural identity, prior to all that [the loss of the country in 1951], is a very important link between generations... what else can we say?

GC was part of the Old Tibet, but at the same time, he was open to what was to come...

It is clear from reading his works that people, who see him just as a skeptic or as a troublemaker or an iconoclast, have misread him. I am very convinced that he remained deeply Buddhist throughout his life. He expressed it in different ways, but he was a Buddhist. He was a Tibetan, but he also went outside Tibet and encountered colonialism, which Tibetans would encounter very soon thereafter from a different direction [China]. He encountered science, he encountered different religions and he tried to learn about those and incorporate that knowledge back into what he thought Tibetan knowledge should be. He was a kind of an educator in a strange sense, in that he is really making it his goal to educate his people, on what he feels, they need to know about their own history, about world history, about politics, about science, so, that this could be incorporated into a new Tibet. I really think that he was a deeply devoted nationalist, a patriot, in many ways. And that's why, in some ways, he is such a tragic figure, because he was born in the year the British were invading Tibet [1904], and he died in the year the Chinese were invading Tibet [1951]. His life is bracketed by these great encounters with colonial powers, one from the West and one from the East. In those years in between, between his birth and his death, he grew up in Amdo, he became a monk in Amdo, he traveled to Lhasa, which was the center of culture and learning, he studied there at the largest Buddhist monastery in the world, then he left, he became a native informant for an Indian scholar, and went with him to help him find Sanskrit manuscripts in the monasteries of Southern Tibet. Then he went with him to India, absorbed all of these influences – erotic influences, historic influences, Buddhist influences, non-Buddhist influences, and he left Tibet [1934] before the exiles left [1959 onwards]. He went to India before they did. But unlike the exiles, he went back [to Tibet], some of the exiles have gone back, some have stayed – it's a very complicated question. But unlike... GC left Tibet, went to India, he left Tibet and went to India before the exiles did and unlike most of the exiles, he went back to Tibet and he was killed. He was killed by his own people, ultimately. The government imprisoned him, whether it was with the influence of the British or not, that's something we don't know. But he was placed in prison, and while in prison his health failed to the point that he was a broken man by the time he came out. He died shortly thereafter [1951]. So the tragedy of GC, as one the great Tibetan patriots of the 20th century... he left Tibet, prior to the time when many Tibetans had to leave, but unlike those Tibetans he went back to Tibet and he was killed, because he did so.

Do you see a connection of his dying with the projections that surround GC?

Oh yeah, sure. I mean, I think all of us, who have studied his work just wish that he could have lived – that he could have come into exile. You know, it is possible that we could have met him. There are people

alive today that were his contemporaries – he would be one hundred years old now, but twenty years ago, thirty years ago, he may still have been alive, and how different things would have been perhaps if he could have lived. There is a great sense of loss about that. But maybe from another perspective, he died at the right moment. He died before having to confront the... both the horror and the tragedy, and the kind of shame of the Chinese invasion and the diaspora. Because the Tibetans have always wondered – what was it, what could they have done? If you look at it from a Buddhist point of view, what did they do that caused them to lose their country? You often read accounts that say in 1950 the collective black karma of the Tibetan people ripened with the invasion of the Chinese army. The Tibetans often wonder, why the mountain deities, who are so powerful, did not destroy these invaders. So, there is a great sense of doubt, of questioning, of... sometimes of self-recrimination that surrounds the reflections on the invasion and the exile. GC died before that happened, so he is preserved as a hero of the Old Tibet, just at the moment, when that Old Tibet is about to disappear.

Isn't his life story somehow reflecting the wider tragedy that befell Tibet?

Yeah, I mean, being born in the year of Younghusband [the British invasion in 1904] and dying in the year of the invasion [of the Chinese in 1951] and then in the middle of all that, he goes to India and sees modern armies... GC was not a pacifist; he believed that Tibet should have a modern army. I think he would have supported all the reforms that the 13th Dalai Lama had tried to make, whether those reforms would have protected Tibet against this huge invading force from China, is difficult to say, but he was certainly a reformer in that he saw, as the 13th Dalai Lama himself did, that if Tibet did not make significant changes in its political and military structure, that there was a great danger from China.

Why did GC get involved with people who had such a strong political agenda?

I think he encountered the other Tibetans with a political agenda in Kalimpong, and became friends with them, because he saw them to be kindred spirits. I think he was so eager to have friends, to have comrades, to have associates who were Tibetan. After having encountered all these things through Rahul Sankrityayan, through other Indian friends that he had, of writing always back to the Tibetan people in his travel journals and so forth... these are journals that haven't been read yet [by his fellow Tibetans in Tibet], remember, he's writing to them, but it is the letter that hasn't been received yet by the proper recipient. So, he's writing to them, but he knows at the same time, they haven't read it, and therefore they haven't heard it – they haven't absorbed what he has to say. They haven't taken his advice, because they haven't heard it yet. So, there is a sense of frustration in his writing that he's always telling Tibetans they need to do this, they need to start thinking about this, they need to get out of their narrow thinking... so, for him, to actually encounter Tibetans in Kalimpong, who were not the narrow minded people that he had encountered in the monastery or who were not the people, he knew in Lhasa Lassa or even back in Amdo. To find kindred spirits in a kind of diaspora community, but very near Tibet, and to just be able to talk to these people about all these ideas, to actually find an audience for all of these ideas that are just flowing out of his brain... I think he must have just been delighted with that and that's what probably led him into his association with them.

What were the key experiences that helped shape his personality?

Well, I think the fact, you know... first of all he is born into a Nyingma family, he seems to have been identified as a *Tulku* [reincarnation], as an incarnate Lama, and the entire institution of the incarnate Lama in Tibet is a way of passing authority, charisma and an actual wealth from one generation to another. That is, the new child [the reincarnation] inherits the wealth, the Labrang [the monastery], of the estate of the previous Lama. But in GC's case that didn't happen. The estate had been completely run down, all the money had been spent, so he inherited nothing. So, we have a person, who if the traditional rules had been followed and things had gone as they normally would, here is someone, who would have been identified as a Nyingma Lama, who would have received authority as an incarnate Lama, and who would have received an estate, a certain amount of wealth as an Nyingma incarnate Lama. But those things didn't happen, we therefore find someone, who is basically penniless throughout his life..., this poverty, that almost afflicted him since birth, is something that he retains throughout the rest of his life. So, he's looking for that kind of wealth on one level, but he is also, above all, looking for that authority that he never really got... He was penniless most of his life and saw himself as a mendicant, as a beggar, even in India. This is part of his identity, and this would have been very different, had he inherited that estate. The other thing he did not inherit was authority and so, I think, we shouldn't be surprised in the least that, throughout his whole life, he is questioning authority. He is calling into question the authority of the Gelugpas; he's calling into question the very means of knowing anything, and gaining authority on any topic in his book on the Madhyamika philosophy. At the same time he became an author, and gained authority in that sense, by writing about so many things, by becoming an authority, a self-taught authority, on so many topics... and then wanting to have the recognition as an author, as an authority from his people. So, I think that moment, so early in his life, when he lost the estate, and the authority as the Nyingma Lama, he was identified to be, was really pivotal in his life.

Somebody mentioned that one of the key characteristics of GC is 'displacement'?

Yeah, he is displaced, obviously, he's displaced from his own identity as a Nyingma Lama and then he goes into Gelugpa monasteries [Labrang and Drepung], which is a fairly large displacement. Then he leaves his homeland [Northeast-Tibet, Amdo], is displaced from his homeland and goes to Drepung monastery in Lhasa. I think we have to say, regardless of how much he learned at the monastery, he was bored there. And so, when Rahul Sankrityayan came through [in 1934 they met in Lhasa], GC was probably the first volunteer, ready to leave and displace himself from his homeland to go to India. Even then he goes from India to Sri Lanka and comes back [to Tibet] and finds himself in his own homeland and displaced into prison...

PEMA BHUM



Recorded on the 30th of January 2003 in New York, USA.

Born 1956 in Jamo, Northeastern Tibet (Amdo). Formerly associate professor of Tibetan literature at the North-West Institute for Minorities at Lanzhou, China. In 1988 he left Tibet for Dharamshala in India, where he became a co-founder of the Amnye Machen Institute. Since 1994 he lives in the USA. Presently the director of the 'Latse Library of Contemporary Tibetan Culture' in New York. Author of the book 'Six Stars With a Crooked Neck: Tibetan Memoirs of the Cultural Revolution'. Tibetan, not in the film.

Your name and age?

My name is Pema Bhum. I will turn 47 in the coming *Losar* [Tibetan New Year].

Tell me in detail how you came to know about GC?

That was perhaps in 1970-1971. At that time, I had a monk, an uncle, living with my family. It was during the time of the Cultural Revolution [1966-76]. Monks were not allowed to stay in the monasteries at that time. They lived in the lay community. They didn't wear their monk's robes. Sometimes, I had a lot of discussions with him. My uncle used to say this: 'To become a practitioner of Buddhism, your intellectual aptitude should be neither too low, nor too high. If your aptitude is too low, you will not be able to understand the teaching of Buddhism. At the same time if you are too clever, you will cross the boundary of the teaching and will not be able to devote your mind to spiritual practice. If you want to become a good practitioner, you should have a stable mind and average intellect.' He gave the example of GC to drive home the point that too brilliant a mind would not be conducive to spiritual practice. He said, 'There was a monk in Rebkong. His name was GC. He was too brilliant. He went to Lhasa and then to India. From India, he returned. He wrote a guidebook for pilgrims. He produced counterfeit currency notes. He did all these things, because he was too clever by half. And, that ultimately landed him in prison. If a person is too clever, he thinks too much. And that is not useful for spiritual practice.' That was the first time I heard of GC. Since clever and intelligent people are naturally inspiring, GC's name aroused my curiosity.

Cultural Revolution and stories about GC do not go together. Wasn't it dangerous?

My uncle spoke in secrecy. My uncle lived in a separate house. There were some monks who were not allowed to stay in the monastery. They were living with the lay community, but in separate houses. From the outside, it would appear that they were laboring together with the lay people. But internally, the lay people tried their best to ensure that the monks had the soft tasks and a quiet life. So, I went to my uncle

to talk about cultural things. It was, of course, in secrecy. I still carry the impression left by my uncle's talk. He said, 'If you are too bright, you will not make a good spiritual practitioner' [See interview: Alak Yongtsin, Alak Chongsay]. But when I heard about GC being very intelligent, I was naturally fascinated and wanted to know who he might have been.

More about your interest in GC?

About three or four years later, I graduated from the teachers' training college and went to teach in a nomadic area. At that time, books on Tibetan culture or tradition were a taboo [See interview: Hortsang Jigme]. So, we did not have many books. All we had were Mao's Red Book, his collected statements, etc. In short, we only had books on the revolutionary ideology. One day, a teacher from my old school came to the nomadic area, where I was working. Since he was my former teacher, I met with him. The nomadic area did not have good accommodation or medical facilities. And he had to stay there for a few days. I helped him to find an accommodation. I helped him in buying provisions. By and by, we became friends. He was always reading from a notebook, and that aroused my curiosity. One day I asked him what he was reading. He said, it was the *Debther Karpo* [The White Annals]. I asked what it was. He replied that it was a book written by GC. At that time, I did not know that *Debther* meant 'historical account'. But I had not forgotten my uncle's advice about too much cleverness and spiritual practice. I asked him if it was this GC of Rebkong. He said yes. I now realized that it was that very clever GC, about whom I had heard from my uncle. So, I was interested in reading the book. I asked him if he would loan me his notebook. He said yes. It was in 1973 or 1974, when I read his work for the first time.

The book was written in U-med script. I read it. Since I had not had the opportunity to do much study in Tibetan, both in school and outside, I did not understand it very well. At the same time, I grudgingly returned the book to him. So, I copied the whole book in long hand. As I went along, I came across some poems. I seemed to understand the poems. They even seemed to stay in my memory. This is what happened. As I came towards the end of the book, I saw the following lines:

*The white beam of loyalty to my people
Stays naturally in the core of my heart.*

Each verse of this poem begins with the word *rang*, 'we' or 'our' or 'self' [as opposed to somebody else]. Then, I realized there was such a thing as 'our people' [as opposed to Chinese]. I therefore became conscious about Tibetan nationalism. It was a very lyrical poem. I realized that he was deeply nationalistic. I did not understand the historical account very much. But I found his verses very lyrical. They lingered in my mind, and that also for a long time. Many years later, I came to India [1990's] and saw a writing by Samdong Rinpoche. He says that if a poem remains etched in one's memory after one reading, it should be considered a good poem. These are the words of a learned man.

Later I returned the teacher's notebook. But I loaned my copy to a friend, who was also a teacher. He later went to a place called Xonghua. Now he is dead. His name was Kunchok. He was slightly older, more learned and more intelligent than me. He was very good in Chinese. I told him that I had copied such a

book and asked him if he was interested in reading it. He said yes. As he read it, he noticed GC's contention regarding Songsten Gampo's age at the time of his death. GC had said that Songtsen Gampo lived till the age of 34 and not 82. If we say that Songtsen Gampo lived till 82, there would be a lot of confusion in the history. Because, it would then mean that he married Wengchen, when he was in his seventies. This is implausible. Kunchok was able to notice this argument about Songtsen Gampo's age. He told me the whole story chronologically. From the way he argued about Songtsen Gampo's age, I realized GC was truly an intelligent man. Then, he opened my eyes towards..., should I say Tibetan nationalism, the contemporary word may be nationalism. He mentions that during the reigns of Songtsen Gampo and Trisong Detsen, the Tibetan army swept across and ruled two-thirds of the world [7th and 8th century]. I don't remember that verse now. But he had written about this in very lucid verses, and with what I thought was a sense of pride. For the first time, I became aware of Tibet's past glory. The Tibetans had at one time reigned over a territory stretching from the bank of Ganges to the border of China...

There was another teacher in our school. His name was Dhaku. He was from the same village as GC. He was close to 50 years old. He was later struggled against during the Cultural Revolution, having been imposed the hat of a class enemy. He was known as a scholar in Rebkong at that time. One day, I visited his home and asked about GC. Although he was from the same village as GC, he knew nothing about him. Two years later, the elder teacher, whom I had asked about GC, went to Beijing. At that time, Mao had initiated a campaign to criticize *Shui-hu Zhuan* [Legend of the River Bank]. To be able to criticize the book, it first had to be translated into the languages of the minority nationalities. *Shui-hu Zhuan* is an ancient Chinese story. Now if it was to be translated into the minority languages, then it must be translated into Tibetan as well. The scholars from all the three provinces of Tibet [Central-, East- and Northeast-Tibet; U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo] – the remaining scholars, most having died in prison – were mustered and sent to Beijing. He was one of those scholars. He spent about a year there. After one year, when the translation project was completed, Mao died [1976]. Then he came back. Now, he knew a lot about GC. Because, he had met many scholars from Lhasa in Beijing.

Before that, we used to hear a lot about Sherab Gyatso [the teacher of GC from Drepung, 1927-34], but not so much about GC. When he returned, he said, 'Actually, Sherab Gyatso was not that famous. GC was famous; he was famous in Lhasa. The people of Lhasa regarded GC as the only scholar.' It was then that I heard a lot of stories about GC. He said GC was from his village. He even claimed to be GC's relative. I don't really know if this is true. Then, we printed GC's 'White Annals', I and Dhaku, the teacher whose acquaintance I made in the nomadic area. Mao had died by then, and the Chinese had announced the policy of liberalization. We printed the book for the first time. We must have printed about 50 or 60 copies. We distributed them to the teachers. That's what we did.

More...?

I can't say more. Then, for a long time, I did not come across any writings of GC. I did not hear much. But he was becoming more and more famous in Amdo [Northeast-Tibet, GC's home country], where many people were beginning to talk about him. Some people said that, when GC was a monk in Labrang

monastery – you have to know, there was a river called Sangchu in Labrang – they said that he made a wooden boat, a toy boat, which sailed back and forth across Sangchu. Don't know if this is true. That's about it. I did not hear much more... in the 1980s, I was in Lanzhou [the capital of Gansu province, formerly Northeast-Tibet]. There, I came across a photocopy of Rakra Tethong's biography of GC. I read that. Although the book was banned from circulation, many people had made photocopies and were reading it. The Tibetan delegations from India started coming to Tibet [as part of the 'liberalization' or opening of Tibet after Mao's death, some fact-finding missions were sent from India to examine the destructions of the Cultural Revolution. The first in 1978]. When they came. They brought a lot of new books. I did not get to see the original editions. I saw only their photocopies. This way I got hold of Rakra's book. I read it and learned more about GC. I came to know his thoughts, temperament, etc. in greater detail. The book had a preface by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It was a very favorable preface. It referred to GC as a progressive scholar of the modern age. I felt a sense of great loss that such a scholar should die so young.

Later, I saw GC guide to the pilgrim sites [in India]. It had maps. I thought if I went to India, I would be able to find my ways with the help of those maps. I read it many times. This is what I felt. And, his 'Art of Love' left a lasting impression on me. Among the bygone Tibetan scholars, Ju Mipham had written the 'Art of Love'. I had read Ju Mipham's book before. But, because my Tibetan was not good, I did not understand it fully. Later, I came across GC's 'Art of Love'. It was again copied in a notebook, it had been hand-written in secrecy. When I read it, I was impressed by the lyricism of his writing. Some stanzas he had written in colloquial Amdo dialect. It was then that that I told myself, 'If I adore a girl, there is no reason to feel embarrassed about declaring it.' Before that, I used to be embarrassed to talk about my amorous feeling for a girl. I could talk about this only to my very intimate friends. This despite the fact that I was not a celibate monk. After reading GC book, I told myself, 'Why I should feel embarrassed to declare my love for a girl. Whether people express this or not, it is only natural for men and women to desire each other. This is something that even religion acknowledges.' Thereafter, when women showed embarrassment about love affairs, I began to feel angry. I would think, what is there to feel embarrassed about it. It is something that everyone desires. This is what I felt. I read it in 1982 or 1983

What impression did GC leave on you?

He was very gifted. His account of how the name Tibet came into being, its description of ancient Tibet, according to the Chinese historical records, of how the Tibetan script came into being, etc. changed my perception, which had been shaped by what I had heard earlier. What should I say? It changed my perception; it gave me a great deal of new insights. He was very gifted and a very good poet. I marveled at how on earth had he managed to write such beautiful verses! That is all.

What happened to you when you read his travel account?

I read it after my arrival in India in 1988. It was a fascinating book. It contained the wisdom of Tibet, India, Buddhism, and the whole world. It was a repertoire of the world wisdom. A large section of it... our [Tibetan] culture had come from India... many aspects of our culture had come from India. He went to

India to find out if our understanding of the Indian culture was right. And, he discovered many misconceptions. He went to the source of Tibetan culture [mainly Buddhism] and discovered that many of our borrowings had become corrupted in the process. For example, in our Nyingma tradition, the *dakini* is viewed in a positive light. We consider *Vira*, *Dakini* and *Dharmarakshak* as deities. GC said that if you call someone in India a *dakini*, he or she will fight with you, will want to kill you. To the Indians, a *dakini* is a cannibalistic woman, a kind of demon. GC discovered that although our culture had come from India, it had become different from the Indian culture. The *dakini* is viewed in the positive light in our tradition. This belief has taken a very deep root, having prevailed as it did in Tibet for many generations. Now, even if this was wrong, the mistake had been made not just in one generation, but in many generations. So much so that it was difficult to rectify it. This is one thing.

Secondly, one thing that comes across frequently in his writings is his paranoia about people being envious of him, 'If I say this, the envious people will say that, or if I say that, the envious will say this, etc.' He thought very strongly that people were envious of him. But who were these envious people? They are not named in any document. And, we do not hear anything about them from his contemporaries. Perhaps, there were envious people at that time. But, it seems that he did not tolerate criticism or envy. It may be true that he was a lone voice. But he was a bit too sensitive about being a lone voice...

Let me go back to my earlier story. When I was in Lanzhou, something happened. At that time, one of our teachers was Alak Tseten Shabdrung, a scholar. He taught us from *Bod-kyi lo-rgyus mkas-pai dga-ston*, the History of Tibet: The Joy of the Learned. In the process, he discussed the dates in Tibetan history. He rejected GC's contention, regarding the length of Songtsen Gampo's life. He rejected GC's contention several times and in very strong terms. He used some very abusive words to criticize GC. Now GC felt very deeply that many of his contemporaries were envious of him. I have read nothing to this effect. But Geshe Sherab Gyatso criticized GC. Geshe Sherab said that His Holiness the Dalai Lama's two tutors had asked him to criticize GC. Geshe Sherab wrote to them to say that he could understand, why they wanted him to criticize GC, and that he himself saw many reasons, why he should do this on his own. Geshe Sherab criticized GC's works, and later, my own teacher, Alak Tseten Shabdrung, also criticized him. I wonder if these were cases of envy. I should think that as scholars, they saw numerous reasons to criticize him [See interview: Donald Lopez].

And recently, last year, the Western Nationalities University [in Lanzhou] published a book. It was a criticism of GC's *Ludrup Gongyen* [Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts]. It is a criticism of GC's writings [See interview: Ju Kesang, Hortsang Jigme]. Alak Torshi has written the preface of this book. The criticism in this book has gone far beyond anything that was written in the past. It says that there is nothing to marvel at GC, and that he only knew what normal school children know nowadays. Now, whether one calls it envy or not, many people have disagreed with GC, and their disagreements came in the form of writing. His writings seem to provoke frequent criticisms. I can't tell you why this is so.

Why so much criticism?

As I see it, it has to do mainly with Tsongkhapa [the founder of the Gelug tradition]. I read the *Ludrup Gongyen*. I understood the first one-third of this book. As I went along, I did not understand much. Therefore, I am not sure what he had said in this book. Some scholars say that GC had criticized Tsongkhapa, that he had disagreed with the doctrine of Tsongkhapa. To the Gelug followers, the doctrine of Tsongkhapa is the soundest doctrine, the ultimate of all doctrines. Therefore, when Tsongkhapa's doctrine is criticized, they will naturally feel angry. I don't know who are the other critics of GC. Among those I know one is Geshe Sherab Gyatso. He criticized GC's work at the behest of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's two tutors [Ling Rinpoche and Trijang Rinpoche]. The others are Alak Tseten Shabdrung and Alak Torshi. Then there is Aku Mugi Samten. I have not seen his writing to this effect. But I have heard some of his statements against GC. All the critics that I know were Gelug followers. I think their criticisms have to do with Tsongkhapa and his doctrine.

Some people say that GC was indeed a learned man, but that he did not author the *Ludrup Gongyen*, that it was authored by Dasang or what was the name of his student... Dawa Sangpo? They praise GC and hold Dasang responsible for the *Ludrup Gongyen*. I don't know who really authored it, GC or Dasang. This is something that I cannot figure out. But the poem in the beginning of *Ludrup Gongyen* is a masterpiece! In Rakra Rinpoche's book, GC is quoted as having said this: 'I wrote this poem in my drunken state. And, when I read it the next day, I saw that it had turned out to be surprisingly good.' This is what he had said. I wonder if anyone else could write a poem of that quality. This must be the work of GC. Of course, I can't say anything about authorship of the remaining part of the book. I think GC hasn't had critics among the followers of other schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

I met a Nyingma scholar two years ago. I will not name him. He had very high esteem for GC. He regarded GC as an Exalted Being. He said that if GC hadn't been an Exalted Being, he would have never been able to understand the doctrine that he had discussed in *Ludrup Gongyen*, that he would not have been able to comment at such a length on it. The person who said this was a very learned Nyingma scholar. Some other Nyingma scholars said the same thing. Since he was my teacher, I have not written about this. I wonder if it is proper for me to say this in public. I will not name him here.

What about GC's writing style and language?

GC never uses metaphors. He had said this to Rakra Rinpoche, and I heard this from Rakra Rinpoche. He had said that the quality of a writing should be judged by whether people can understand it in a single reading or not. If it was a good writing, people should be able to understand it in one reading. Rakra Rinpoche said that this was GC's secret.

Mainstream writers use a lot of metaphors and hyperboles. In his *Tamgyud Sekyi Thangma* [the Golden Field of Stories], GC writes: 'Tibetan scholars have a tradition. That is if you make a difficult thing simple, you will not be regarded as intelligent. On the other hand if you make a simple thing difficult and pretend that you know more than you care to write, then you will be seen as intelligent.' GC's style

reflects his ideology and personality. His first motivation is... now I don't remember the exact words. He said a scholar should be able to accept the truth. Secondly, the job of a scholar, he said, is to make difficult things easy to understand. This being his principle, he does not use metaphors and redundant words in his writing. Generally speaking, Dokhar Tsering Wangyal's *Miwang Tokjoe* [Biography of Miwang] is considered as an example of good writing. However, in order to show off his erudition, he devotes the first 80 pages or so just in determining the birthplace of Miwang. He starts from Bodhgaya. From India, he takes us to Tibet etc. and, finally, he reaches the birthplace of Phola. This is just to show off his erudition. He does not come to the point. He has to write something long. This is the tradition, which many Tibetan scholars follow. GC sees problems in this type of writing. In his *Tamgyud Sekyi Thangma*, GC writes this. Tibetans write like this as a matter of tradition.

In the past, there were many Tibetan scholars who claimed to know Sanskrit. Of course, their knowledge of Sanskrit was helpful in translating texts into Tibetan. GC gave the example of *Dhar Lotsawa*. The 'Jataka Tales' had been translated into Tibetan as 'The Wish-fulfilling Tree of Jataka Tales'. *Dhar Lotsawa* had written an annex to this in Sanskrit. GC said that no one in India understood his Sanskrit. *Dhar Lotsawa* had the competence to translate from Sanskrit to Tibetan. He had been a translator in the old time. Many Tibetans believed that, since he could read Sanskrit, he should also be able to write in Sanskrit. We allowed ourselves to be deceived thus. But when GC took his Sanskrit writing to India, no one could read it. He saw problems with scholars, who, instead of calling a spade, a spade, would indulge in showing off their erudition. Therefore, he made sure that every word he wrote was understandable to the readers, as indeed it served to enrich their knowledge.

TAPE 2

What do you personally like best about GC?

One thing I like about him is this: The logic and reasons he gives to support his contentions are very clear. Our own reasoning takes us to the same conclusion as him. All his works follow this style. This is the first thing I like about him. For example, we say that the *U-chen* script was developed from *Lentsa* and *U-med* from *Watu* [See 'GC in Tibet Mirror']. A well-known scholar, *Shalu Lotsawa* or someone, said this. And, the Tibetans clung to this belief for generations on end. Later, GC went to India... actually this contention needed to be questioned, even before GC went to India. How can you prove that *U-med* was developed from *Watu*? Who developed it? How can *Shalu Lotsawa* prove that it came from *Watu*? No scholar before GC had questioned or challenged this contention. *Bonton Thanchey Khenpa* had said something else. He said it had come from *Devnagari*. Apart from that, no scholar challenged *Shalu Lotsawa*? No one asked him the basis for his claim that it had come from *Lentsa* or *Watu*.

As I see it, GC must have had some doubts about this even before he went to India. He must have wondered how *Shalu Lotsawa* had come to know this. Even so, he did not say anything, until we went to India and realized the truth. He went to India and studied the Indian history and language. He then

realized that *Lentsa* script hadn't been invented, when *Thonmi Sambhota* was in India. The script that was prevalent in India at that time was... what was it called? Now I have forgotten the name of that script. There was some other script. *Lentsa* came much later and then it was used only for writing scriptures. It did not have widespread currency in India. When he looked this script... pity I have forgotten the script's name [Gupta script]. When he looked at this script, he saw that all the characters were almost the same as the Tibetan characters, the Tibetan script, as we know it today. It looked like a clumsily written Tibetan script. When GC read it, Indian scholars were amused. They said, 'we can't read it. How come you can read it?'

When he compared the time of *Thonmi Sambhota's* arrival in India with the prevailing script of the country, when he read this script and compared it with the Tibetan script, he became convinced that *Shalu Lotsawa* must be wrong. He also stated that the Indians did not have the phonetic sounds like *tza*, *tsa*, *dza*, and *wa*. He based his contention on reasons, not merely on scriptural sources. Another thing I like about him is this. I like him for this reason and can't keep quiet. He propounds his beliefs and reasons... for example, GC talked about the two names, *Gya-kar* and *Gyanak* [India and China]. He said that in the past the people of Amdo [Northeast-Tibet, close to the Chinese border] read *Gya* as *Dra*, that they pronounced *yatak* as *ratak*. GC also said, 'When we look at the past history of Tibet, what we know today as *Gyanak* [China], was actually a *Dra* [enemy] and *nag*, which in Amdo dialect means 'core'. When one studies the language of Amdo, *Gyanak* thus refers to the 'core enemy'. Now, that will bring us to the next question. People will ask, in that case, should we take *Gyakar* to mean the 'white enemy'? This sort of prejudice-inspired questions will be asked of me. Furthermore, when we named China as *Gyanak*, we [people from Amdo] were making a point. Later, India was named *Gyakar*, not because we considered India as an enemy, but because we followed a precedent of naming other countries. Now, the Tibetan scholars will challenge this. And, I will not bother to reply to them.' GC never displayed any interest in debating with scholars, who were influenced by prejudice rather than reasons. This is something, which I like. Actually, this is good. But when people are prejudiced, they don't follow reasons.

The third point is as I stated earlier. Whatever he writes, his motivation is to enlighten us. He writes in very simple language. Then there is this about him. Whatever the stature of the bygone lamas, he judged them objectively. If they were wrong, he was able to say so. Although Tibetan culture and tradition were centuries old, he was able to question them again. Isn't this something to be happy about?!

In what ways did GC inspire you, or influence you?

I will not say that GC has inspired me. But I did learn a lot from GC's works. Some people call me a scholar and writer. I don't say anything in reply, although I can't accept that title in my heart. I can't accept this title from a general point of view. More particularly, when I read GC's *Tamgyud Serkyi Thangma* [GC's travel account from India], I just can't see myself as a scholar. For example, last year I discovered something. In the Tibetan language, by merely adding the suffix *na* to an adjective or a verb, one can change it into a noun. I thought I found something great. And, I toyed with the idea of writing an article on this. But later, I read GC's book only to discover that he had said this some fifty or sixty years

earlier. I thought about a lot of others thing also. But these, too, he had already discussed. I realized that that what I learned with great efforts did not constitute even one percent of what he had written in his *Tamgyud Serkyi Thangma*. That's when I realized that I am not at all a scholar. Although people do not praise my writings highly, they do say that they are easy to understand. I wonder whether this is the influence of GC or just reflection of my own personality.

Why do you think GC is important to young Tibetans growing up in Tibet?

I am not very sure. But one reason is his poems and intellectual gift. When people read his poems, they find them very lyrical. His poems are easy to remember. Everyone likes this kind of writing. And, he was always saying new things. There are many works by earlier scholars... For example, 15 different scholars may have written commentaries on *Pharchin*, but they were all basically saying the same things, may be with slight variations. In the case of GC, every time he wrote something, he was saying something new. If he had nothing new to say, he would not write.

Secondly, because of the Cultural Revolution, people of my generation had no intellectual focus. Our culture in Tibet is religion. But we grew up in an era, when religion was being persecuted. We all had to oppose religion. So, we did not have any religious underpinning. Instead of religion, we had to study Marxist and Maoist principles. When the Cultural Revolution ended, the Communist Party started discarding the Marxist and Maoist principles. On the one hand, we had not been able to learn our own religion. On the other hand, they said that their [Marxist and Maoist] principles were wrong. Now, we completely lost our focus. We realized that we should believe only in what we ourselves found through our individual reasoning, and that we should not believe in what others said. GC had questioned many of the bygone scholars and established his facts through his own reasoning. This had a natural appeal to us.

Then, in the 1980s, the exile Tibetan delegation came to Tibet [See above. The first came in 1978]. They received tumultuous receptions from the Tibetans in Tibet. Tibetans in Tibet saw their exile brethren as learned and broad-minded. And in the books they brought to Tibet, many people, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, had expressed dismay at the death of this consummate scholar. So, the Tibetans in Tibet said, 'Oh, even these Tibetans in exile, who are so learned, respect GC.' Those who of us, who already regarded GC with high esteem, said that even the Tibetans in exile respected him. In this way, we found support for our view of GC. This is how it started.

Then, in the 1990s, there was a movement called 'Individualistic Poetry'. It started in 1990. Its essence boils down to this: your own views are important and you must liberate yourself from servitude to the views of others. This was the main belief system of this movement. Whether people like it or not, I must show what I am like and what I think. In such a scheme of things, GC became a natural role model. In his 'Art of Love', he maintains that to denigrate women is to breach both, the spiritual and secular value systems. For the first time, he said that it was against spiritual and secular value systems to denigrate women. Coming very strongly with this view, he challenged the traditional view on women. Therefore, the scholars in Tibet, should I say young people, respect him.

Why are so many Westerners interested in him?

I am not sure. I think in the western culture, particularly in the American culture, unique people, or people with unique views are respected. This must be one reason. Secondly, those who take interest in GC are the ones who are interested in Tibetan culture and Tibet's fate. People like me and many westerners believe that Tibetan culture is suffering and that Tibet has met with such a sad fate only because we were too steeped in our tradition and closed to new ideas. The third is the same as I said earlier about Tibet. GC... western society, and particularly the American society, believes in expressing individual views or desires. This is considered healthy in such societies. Now this must have something to do with the difference between the western and eastern societies... In the Tibetan society, it is considered good manner to hide your desire for a girl. GC was initially a monk. Then he defrocked and wrote of his sexual experiences. Not only that, he said that there was nothing to be feel embarrassed about this. This probably sits well with the temperament of westerners. Then, his writings must appeal to westerners. One westerner scholar, I don't quite remember who it was, told me that GC was the pioneer of modern Tibetan literature. He said GC's writings were scientific, that he based his reasoning on the empirical experiences of the mortals. This, the western scholar pointed out, was scientific, and all of GC's writings were like that. The reasons he used to support his conclusions with were understandable to all of us. They are credible to all. Many Tibetan scholars if you ask them questions, will say this is beyond your cognition, that only the Exalted Beings [enlightened ones] can understand this. The door of discussion is closed thus and we would not know what lies beyond what we see. GC was not like that. His contentions are understandable to all. Credible to all. This must be the reason why they like him.

...and for Tibetans who grew up in exile, in India?

About 100,000 Tibetans came to India with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When they first came, they faced extreme hardship in the alien environment; they were unable to adjust to the climate, land and water. Naturally, they started questioning why we had lost our country. They contemplated on this. There must have been many reasons for that. But one reason they all agreed on was the fact that we had closed our door to the outside world. The second reason they decided was Tibet's failure to adopt new ideas. Then they searched for anyone who had gone beyond this rigid outlook. They found GC. And, when you look back at that time, His Holiness the Dalai Lama had frequently referred to GC as a great scholar. He does not repeat this nowadays. But in those days, he repeatedly referred to him as the great scholar. His Holiness himself also must have contemplated a lot on why we were in a foreign country. And, Rakra Rinpoche, and other scholars, wrote GC's biography, throwing light on the fact that GC had been a gifted scholar. About 100,000 Tibetans have lived in India. But among them, no one has been able to introduce the Indian culture to Tibetans in the same light as GC did in his *Tamgyud Serkyi Thangma*. GC himself had written something like this: 'India and Tibet have very close cultural relations and very close teacher-student relations. So much so that no country knows India better than Tibet does. However, no Tibetan scholar has so far written a detailed introduction to India.' And, this holds true today, even after 100,000 Tibetans came to India. Therefore, it is natural that they should marvel at his intellectual gift. This is all I can say.

He had one foot in the past and at the same time; he had one foot in the modern world...

Sure, this is certainly one quality of GC. He went to India and wrote *Tamgyud Serkyi Thangma* [the travel account from India]. In this, he says, such and such is written in the Tibetan texts, but this, as he found out, is not really true, and that that it is actually something else, etc. He probably did not agree blindly with everything what was written in the Tibetan *Kangyur* and *Tengyur* [Buddhist texts]. He did not agree blindly with everything the past Tibetan scholars had written. When he went to India, he probably did not take all the books with him. He did not have the books at hand to check the veracity of each and every contention. He probably checked everything from his memory of Tibetan texts. He was holding in his memory the whole of Tibetan culture, which is so vast and deep. He was traveling in India with all this knowledge in his memory. He did not say that these texts should not be corrected. He was checking the authenticity of what was said in the texts. But what is the truth that lies out there? He was checking for facts. He was not complacent, not a blind follower.

I will put it in another way. If GC were living today, would it be much easier for him?

Of course, many people say that GC was born in the wrong era [See interview: Tashi Tsering]. People say that GC's outlook was liberal, whereas the society of his time was so narrow-minded. This may be true from one perspective. On the other hand, which time would have suited him better? What would have become of him if he had been born in the 1950s? I would like to say, GC may have died, but his society survived. Tibet had to live with China. And, during the time of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese society was very restrictive. Even if the Tibetan society had allowed him to flower, the Chinese society wouldn't. In 1958, China launched the Anti-Rightist movement and persecuted all intellectuals. Then we had the Cultural Revolution [1966-76], during which the intellectuals suffered another round of persecution. There were a series of other campaigns, each of which persecuted the intellectuals, or thinkers. So far, we have not had a government, or government policy, that was friendly to someone like GC. Secondly, to speak about the public, although people praise GC now that he is no more... Now it is not the question of whether, what he said was right or wrong. We can't say, 'we will respect you if you are right in what you said. Otherwise we will ignore you or finish you.' The crux of the matter is that the society should have had the courage to tolerate the principle of free expressions, even if the idea expressed is wrong. The Tibetan society so far, whether in Tibet or in exile, haven't had the courage to tolerate such expressions that go against the traditional thinking. And, when the society lacks such courage, it becomes an impediment for courageous speakers to thrive.

Many people say that GC would have done better if he had been born later. But, as I see it, things would have been much worse for him later. If he had been born in 1950, there would have been no way he could visit India. And if he hadn't visited India, how could he have written all the works that he had produced? Let alone India, he wouldn't have had the opportunity to go to Lhasa. Even for traveling from one district to another, he would have needed permission. We have lost so much freedom in Tibet. Under such a situation, he could have achieved nothing. Despite his intellectual gift, he would have had to spend his life working the fields in his village. There would have been no chance for his intellect to flower, no chance for him to use his intellectual gift.

I think that if he were born today, probably he would achieve more. But looking at past history, it wouldn't have made any difference, no matter when he had been born. As I see it, all the intellectuals must lead this kind of life. The fact that someone is an intellectual need not automatically entitle to a life of riches and happiness. If people feel a sense of loss at the death of an intellectual, his life should still be regarded as successful. Because, he has then gained what he needed to gain. I think there must have been many other intellectuals who were unknown during their lifetimes, and continue to remain unknown even today. These intellectuals, I would say, had the rough end of it. So, as I said earlier, it was better that GC was born before 1950. Although he had a difficult life, he was at least able to write all those works, he was able to say so much. Some of his works survived up to today. The Tibetan people right down from His Holiness the Dalai Lama consider him as a great scholar. One wonders if an intellectual can expect more. On this point, I think very differently from many other people. The scholars, who came later, like Alak Tseten Shabdrung, Dungkar Rinpoche, etc., suffered so much. The Panchen Lama was the most highly respected Tibetan in Tibet [under Chinese rule]. But he had suffered so much in prison. They all suffered. And, no one can expect a life that is totally devoid of suffering.

Do you think that the tragedy of GC's life reflects the tragedy of Tibet?

I would say that GC's life was not all that tragic. Why? First of all, he was able to translate his intellectual gift into writings. This would have been impossible if he hadn't had freedom. This would have been impossible during, say the Cultural Revolution. He had the full freedom to bring his intellectual gift to fruition. He was able to read, write and visit India. We should not lose sight of this fact. This freedom was not there later. Of course, he was later arrested and jailed for some time. But he was released from prison. And, he was able to write so much and preserve his writings. As a result of this, many people now recognize him as a great scholar. Now if an intellectual wishes to seek the truth to its end, he must suffer. He can't achieve this easily. He suffered to some extent, and I think this was necessary.

People like us have neither his intellectual gift, nor his courage to speak the truth. We do not have his type of courage. Now, having courage means being able to face difficulties. We don't have such courage. He had all of these qualities. He faced the difficulties, and consequently, he is now gaining renewed recognition as a great scholar. Westerners and Tibetans, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, put him on a high pedestal. Now, what more can an intellectual expect? This is my question. He got this. If he had been born in 1950... Of course, it is sad that he died young. But it wasn't such a huge tragedy. Probably, this is just normal. Many people nowadays regret his death at a young age; they recognize him as a great intellectual. He deserved this recognition and he got it. That he led a life of want is a small matter.

Recently, I talked to Jamyang Norbu. He says that even now the Tibetan community does not like critical positions. He says in those days it was very difficult. People didn't like what GC said. Jamyang believes that people like GC would have a hard time in the present Tibetan community, because Tibetans in general don't like those, who are straightforward in their opinions. Jamyang says it is still the kind of very protective situation [See interview: Jamyang Norbu]. Is there something you... but another question is why GC was arrested? What was the background of his arrest? I am not very sure. When I first heard

about GC from my uncle, he said GC had forged Indian currency notes. That time, I was a child. Later, I heard that he had joined the communist party in India, of which the British government took note and informed the Tibetan government. The Tibetan government, in turn, arrested him under suspicion. This is what I heard. I think at one point of time, GC did take interest in communism, although he may not have joined a communist party. Alak Tsayul [See interview: Alak Tsayul] once showed me a photo. There were three people in the photo. I think GC was in the middle. The photo also had the communist hammer and sickle banner. That photo surprised me [Unfortunately, this photo seems lost. I have never seen, nor heard of it before and after the interview with PB].

Then, recently, I came across another bit of information. Rahul Sankrityayan, who took him to India, was a communist. He was one of the founders of the Indian Communist Party. Therefore, it seems GC did have something to do with communism. I can't say that he came to Tibet to propagate communism. Neither can I say that he was a member of a communist party. I think communism aroused his curiosity, which led to his association with the members of the communist party. The British noticed this and informed Tibet. This, I think, was the reason for his arrest. Some people claim that envy was the reason for his arrest. But... unless they mean to say that some envious individuals framed him. Certainly, a government cannot become envious of a scholar. I really don't know.

Do you have an opinion on, why GC died and how prison must have affected him?

I don't know. All I know is what I read in Rakra Rinpoche's biography. In that he said that, when GC was in prison, people came at night to frighten him [nobody else confirmed this story]. This caused him heart problems. And, when he was released, he had become something of an insane [See interview: Amdo Champa, Tseten Yudron, Golok Jigme]. Then, he drank too much and died. I don't know more than that. I can't think of any specific reason... [Thinks] Now this is my own hypothesis. I can't prove it, though. Someone as gifted as him had to waste his time in prison. His talent was wasted; he did not find the opportunity to put his talent to good use. This must have depressed him. Now, this is merely a hypothesis. I don't have any factual evidence leading to this conclusion [See interview: Thubten Wangpo].

Many opinions on GC: cultural hero, madman, free spirit, poet, etc. How do you see him?

I see him as an open-minded man and intellectual hero. He was liberal in his thinking. He was a Gelugpa monk. But he still wrote the *Ludrup Gongyen* [which was critical with some tenets of the Gelugpa school], to discuss whether Nagarjuna's thoughts had indeed been fully understood. Secondly, in the whole of Tibet it was universally agreed that the Tibetan script had been developed from *Lentsa*. But GC had the courage to go against this belief. He would not have done this had he not been liberal-minded and an independent thinker. He was attacking the beliefs that had become established in Tibet for centuries. And, he was also an intellectual hero. He unraveled many intellectual secrets. He investigated many aspects of Tibetan culture. He also introduced many new ideas from outside. But recently, I read somewhere that the absence of GC had harmed the cause of Tibet's independence. I can't believe in this kind of claim. I can't believe that we would be independent if he had been around, just as I can't believe that his absence caused us to lose our independence... but, in his writings, he occasionally talks of his

sense of nationalism as a Tibetan. But the loss of independence by Tibetans as nation or the need to restore our independence as a nation today... for example, at that time Amdo [Northeast-Tibet] was not under the jurisdiction of the Tibetan government. It was under the jurisdiction of China [as part of Qinghai and Gansu provinces]. But GC has not expressed regret for this. At least, I have not come across any writing of his to this effect. He may probably have said this. But I have not seen it. So, politically... of course, he was probably learned in political ideologies... democracy is like this, our Tibetan government is like that, etc. But he never seems to have taken interest in political reforms, or in political activism [See interview: Jamyang Norbu, Tashi Tsering]. I consider him as an intellectual hero and liberal thinker. As far as I am concerned, he has not made any contribution to the political cause. Others may have seen his political contributions...

If you meet GC today, what would you ask him?

I would ask him for some tea or drink. I would say, 'Would you have some time to drink?' I would like to drink tea or *chang* [Tibetan beer] with him and talk at leisure...

Is there anything that you would like to know from him?

If I were to meet him, I would discuss intellectual matters with him. First, I would ask him about the Tibetan language. He had said two things about the Tibetan language. The first was in his 'White Annals' or... now I don't remember the title of the book. He said two things. The first is this: 'Our scriptural language is read, understood and used by all the Tibetan scholars, right from Ngari [West] to some parts of China [East]. This single scriptural language is prevalent over such a vast expanse of the Tibetan region. If we were to lose this language, all our scriptures would be reduced to waste papers. Nobody will be able to read them.' He talks about what a great loss it would be if we lost our common scriptural language. But then, in his *Tamgyud Serkyi Thangma* [the travel account from India], he says, 'If I had political power, I would develop a new written-language.' He says that, while the spoken language has changed, the written-language hasn't. In this way, the gap between the spoken and written languages is becoming wider with the passage of time. This, he says, is making life difficult. Many people quote GC to say that the old system of writing must be used or else the writing will not be understood by all. That is, why they advocate the use of the old system. But as I understand his contentions, on the one hand he says this. On the other hand, he says that the written language must change with the change in the spoken language. Otherwise, the gap between the two will widen and there will be no relationship between the written and spoken languages. This is what I think he had said. He had said two different things. He had not drawn a definite conclusion with respect to this. Each contention has its respective merits and demerits.

Now, to come back to your question if I were to meet him, I would ask this. I would say, 'On the one hand, you are right to say that the classical system of writing should have currency. Because, I can read and understand old books. But the younger generation today finds it difficult to read Tibetan at all, because the written language is so different from the spoken one. Many young people say that it is easier to read in English. Why? Because, with respect to English, the written language is the same as the spoken

one. But with respect to Tibetan, you write a language that is different from the spoken one. So, what would you do? Do you want to continue to allow the gap between the written and spoken Tibetan to widen, just so that people can understand the old books? What do you want to do? What, according to you, is better. I think I would ask this question...

HEATHER STODDARD



Recorded on the 21st of February 2003 in Paris, France.

Born 1947 in England. Currently she works as professor of Tibetan history and literature at INALCO (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales) in Paris. In 1985, after more than 10 years of research with Samten Karmay, she published the first Western biography of GC: 'Le Mendiant de l'Amdo' (The Mendicant from Amdo). Author of several articles on Tibetan art and literature. English, not in the film.

Just for the record, your name and age?

I'm Heather Stoddard and I'm 56 years old.

Tell me about the occasion, when you heard of GC the first time?

The first time was in Delhi in the Dalai Lama's office. I was having lunch with some of the people, who were working there and they were joking and telling stories. I couldn't understand very well at the time, in fact, I couldn't understand at all, but I realized there was something quite enjoyable going on and they were talking about the... telling stories about GC's life. Obviously very funny and satirical. It was in 1966, when... I think it was about the time the Cultural Revolution began. And at the same time, in India, GC's book on the 'Art of Love' had just been published by Dudjom Rinpoche, so all the Tibetans were of course buying it up and talking about it and telling jokes about his life. That was my first exposure to GC.

How did it continue?

Many times I heard people talking about him over the next two years, when I was in India. I gradually came to understand that he was a controversial, complex, multi-faceted person, that he had traveled in India, that he was an artist, that he was a very famous dialectician. What attracted me most of all was this controversial and unusual aspect of his personality. He was obviously not an ordinary person and the Tibetans obviously appreciated him and enjoyed very much telling stories about him. At that time I really didn't know Tibetan very well. It was, when I went back to England and did Chinese studies and Tibetan studies and when I met Samten [Karmay]. I wanted to do a Ph. D. and was looking for a subject, I thought about doing something on his life. And Samten suggested reading the first part of the *Ludrup Gongyen* [Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thought], his treaty on Madhyamika. I started reading it and we translated it together into English. I was immediately completely taken over by the beauty, the simplicity, the elegance and the masterly presentation of his philosophical standpoint. I decided I would like to work on his life and his work, and then we went off... we left for Asia for four years, traveling in Asia, India, Nepal, Japan

and Taiwan. At that time I did my fieldwork, and Samten helped me a lot. We went visiting many people all through the Himalayas for six months. We were also collecting his publications and trying to find out, where the black box was, the famous black box, with all his writings in it [See interview: Alak Tsayul]. We lived in Japan for two years and there I met Hisao Kimura, who had visited GC in prison, a famous Mongolian spy [Kimura was in fact Japanese]... and in Taiwan I went to meet Surkhang Shape, the former Kashag [Cabinet] member... the head of the Kashag. During that time I met, over a period of two or three years, I met about seventy people, who had known... who were GC's disciples, his friends, his enemies. That was an important time for the fieldwork.

Can you give me a timeframe?

Well I first heard of him in 1966, but really started doing the fieldwork from between 1971-74, thereabout. During that time there were a lot of people like Ragpa Pangdatsang, Shakabpa, Lachung Apo, and others... many people who knew him or were working on his life. Unfortunately... I mean, fortunately for me they were still there, but many of them passed away soon after. It was very lucky to have been there at that time. We decided... probably Samten swayed the decision, he thought the best thing would be, not to take any photos and not to take a tape recorder... so, we went to visit people, we arrived, most often without any kind of introduction and just sat down and asked them questions. This was quite a new thing for me, doing it was kind of... I had never done this kind of fieldwork before and it was also very... the reactions people gave were very varied. After meeting a certain number of people, we discovered that often people were rather nervous to talk about the subject [the life of GC], some people refused point blank, and some people, once they got started, they couldn't stop. But then if we went back the next day, they would shut up completely and wouldn't say another word. When we arrived in Kalimpong or Darjeeling, it was... the people there were extremely nervous, it was a not a... it was a subject that was almost taboo... to talk about GC. This was in 1973/74...

In retrospect, do you have an idea why there was this caution?

Well, the subject itself was a delicate subject in relation to the [Tibetan] government in exile, because GC was considered as a renegade, as a controversial figure, as somebody, who had attacked Tsongkhapa [the founder of the Gelugpa tradition] with his *Ludrup Gongyen*, his book on Madhyamika [philosophy]. So the subject was sensitive from a religious point of view, and also very sensitive from a political point of view. Because GC had, as I came to understand from Gene Smith and from Ariane McDonald in Paris, that GC had been closely linked with Rahul Sankrityayan, and Rahul himself had been a member of the Peasant's Union [fighting for the Indian independence], so Rahul was a well known communist in India. GC was strongly associated with him and had been accused by the Tibetan government of being a communist himself... and the British government also was involved in condemning him and putting him in jail [See interviews: Hugh Richardson, Tashi Tsering]. There was a very strong resistance to talking about GC in any positive terms at that time.

GC was a great debater; do you recall any stories of his debating skills?

Well, they say that, when he was in Labrang monastery [1920-27], where he had this, what they called the 'School of Names', he gathered a group of friends, a group of dialecticians around him, who were... I suppose they must have been among the best dialecticians in Labrang at the time. They developed their own, almost private language, so they could debate freely and not be condemned by the older monks about the sort of subjects they were debating. One of the themes... when people try to give an idea about the sort of debates they might have been using, which would be outside the area, the region of normal... GC would deliberately step outside and beyond it [the rules] and say for example, 'Well, what about plants? Do they have a conscious principal?' It seems he would throw out unusual questions that people [debating monks] wouldn't even particularly think of. But actually getting hold of the words, the real words, the specific words and exchange in those debates, I found extremely difficult all through the fieldwork. Anyway, it seems that GC was very gifted and very difficult to beat in the debating arena, and that he really enjoyed stalling his opponent. He enjoyed manipulating the technique [of debating]. It is a logical structure, a logical technique that has been used for almost one thousand years in Tibet. It was well developed and well explored in all its facets. He enjoyed using this technique to go beyond it, to get... I mean, to astound the audience, I think he had a... there was a certain theatricality in his personality... and he... but he was, everybody admits, he was certainly one of the best if not the best debater of his time, with a profound knowledge of the [Buddhist] teachings and the different points of view. This is one of the most problematic aspects, because it is one of the themes, I mean, one of the aspects of GC's personality, for which he is most famous. And yet, it is one of the areas, where we have the least material, the least real and tangible material, in order to exactly see, what he was saying or at least to understand what these debates were about.

Confronting people is a sort of untypical thing for Tibetans?

No, in the... there is a great logical debating tradition in Tibet, an oral tradition of the transmission of the Buddhist teachings. And in this tradition, there is a very strong confrontation – it is a little bit like the logical tradition in the Greek world... Aristoteles... it is a very developed sophisticated technique, yet, at the same time, rather simple syllogisms, through which you exchange information or knowledge. It has been said in the West, that by the 19th and 20th century in Tibet, in the Gelugpa system, that the debating had become extremely stultified and rigid and was only moving within certain parameters. People [the learned monks] worked from a certain manual, from a certain standpoint and so... but at the same time they were supposed to learn all the *different* philosophical views in India, and they were using them in the debating arena, every day. It was in fact one of the main activities of the monks in the great Gelugpa monastic universities. [All these monks] came from all over Central Asia, from Mongolia, from all over Tibet, from all the different schools, all the different traditions [of Tibetan Buddhism]. They came to study in these debating arenas. So, I always felt it would be very difficult for the debating to become so stultified and rigid, that people couldn't think anymore, because it's a tradition that has been going on for a thousand years in Tibet and the greatest minds [of Tibetan Buddhism] have been involved in it, and the most glorious careers were within this context. For me it was therefore problematic to say that it was stultified, or that it was rigid or that it was inoperable... this was also one of the reasons, why I was

interested in the *Ludrup Gongyen*, in that philosophical tradition. It seemed to me if they produced someone like GC in the early 20th century, who had produced such a beautiful philosophical text, so how could this tradition be so rigid and so stultified.

For me that was one problem, and at the same time, as I said, I first heard of GC in 1966. In the summer of 1966 the Cultural Revolution began. I was living in Dharamshala, teaching English, and the director of the Drama school had been a former student at the Minorities Institute in Beijing, so he knew Chinese perfectly, he was also a great musician and he has also gone into the guerrilla forces, when the Chinese invaded in the 1950's. He was the director of the Drama school and twice a month he received Chinese papers from Taiwan and from Mainland China. Every day he would listen to the news from Lhasa. In the summer of 1966, when the Cultural Revolution started, I would go into his office and listen with him to the news. There was another person, a person who became a very good friend, who was also trained in the Nationalities Institute in Beijing and also spoke fluent Chinese. He was a former government monk, a government official, under the Dalai Lama's government. Everyday he was transcribing the news from Lhasa and from Beijing for the office, the Information Office of HH the Dalai Lama. Between these two I became totally involved in the Cultural Revolution in Dharmshala in 1966, and became extremely interested in what was going on. We heard the news day by day, of who was being put under struggle sessions, who died, for example. We heard on the radio first hand, that Geshe Sherab Gyatso [the former teacher of GC in Drepung] had been killed. Although I couldn't understand Tibetan very well, I couldn't understand Chinese at all... the quality of the voices coming through from the Lhasa radio was so compelling and so terrible and so frightening, it was like a machine gun speaking into the radio. This really struck me very strongly. When I went back to England after two years I went to the School of Oriental African Studies [SOAS], I said I wanted to learn Chinese, because this conjunction of what was happening in China at that time, and what was happening in Tibet at the time, and what I saw in the Tibetan diaspora in Dharamshala and in other places in India, was in such great contrast! And of course, hearing the stories of the refugees that had escaped over the mountains... what I wanted to do was understand the present day situation of Tibet. This motivated me to study Chinese and at the same time I had to do Sanskrit, but I was interested in the 20th century world, 20th century Tibet, the modern world. So I did Chinese studies and on the other side I did Tibetan studies and Buddhist studies. My main motivation all the way through, was to understand what was going on in Asia, in East Asia and in Tibet at the present moment. I joined... we formed a group of people called the 'Concerned Asian Scholars'. We were not armchair scholars, we were people who were actually interested, vitally interested, in the societies we were studying, the contemporary societies, we were studying. Not just the old poetry or the history or the old books. I became a China watcher. I bought all the magazines, all the journals, everything that I could possibly lay hands on, all the different propaganda instruments, just in order to see day after day, week after week, month after month, what was going on. I followed the Cultural Revolution all the way through. This way I had a very, I mean, really... for about ten years I was following this very closely. So in 1978, as soon as the Cultural Revolution finished, I wrote to the University in Tibet and wrote to some random people that I had heard the names of, or had seen the

names of in journals and said, 'I want to be in contact with you, we can we exchange publications?' Meanwhile I was writing the life of GC.

How does GC fit into the wider context of the Cultural Revolution...

GC was a man of transition. He was profoundly versed in his own culture, in the traditional Buddhist culture of Tibet. He was recognized as a Nyingma lama as a child, he became a Gelugpa dialectician, he studied in several monasteries in Amdo [Northeast-Tibet] and then he came to Drepung monastery [near Lhasa] and studied there. But he became, he left the monastery, he gave up his vows, he became an artist, he left for India, he traveled barefoot, I mean, the most simple way all over Indian, in a kind of exile. And already before he went to India, he showed the beginning of a different attitude towards knowledge and research. He himself became very deeply involved in finding out about his own roots and his own history, but from a new point of view, from a modern research point of view. He was a man, who was between the traditional world and the contemporary world. He was a man of... who was an extremely controversial figure, who had all the different ingredients of a romantic personality; he was a traveler, he was writer, he was a great poet, he was a lover of wine and women, he wanted to bring down his government – this is what people said – his whole life story would make the most marvelous romantic novel, but within a modern context within the 20th century struggle for identity, the struggle for recognition of many countries in Asia, of many intellectuals, who were the young progressive intellectuals in Asia. So, GC belonged... somehow he was the first Tibetan to make this transition between the old world and the new world, as a progressive individual.

Can you give us the political context? What were the forces at work in Central Asia?

It was a time, obviously of great movement, of change. It was the end of the Manchu Empire [in China], Mongolia... the rise of the Soviet Union... Mongolia was destroyed... the 13th Dalai Lama in Tibet... the independence movement was developing in India, in Burma. I don't think it was yet moving, but there was through the first half of the 20th century... there were many large important movements around Tibet. And in Tibet itself you have a small group of people, who knew... progressive intellectuals or nobles, who had received a modern education, either in India or in China, either in the British schools or the Guomindang schools. They were beginning to use modern technology, to have cameras, to be interested in film, to know what was going on in the outside world... and they began to think about Tibet's future and there was a certain type of apprehension. It seems to me, this is not just a projection from the 1960's and 1970's backwards into the first half of the 20th century, but I think there was a real apprehension on the part of some of these progressive intellectuals in Tibet. They came if you say it very schematically, came from the peripheral area, from Ladakh [West-Tibet], from Amdo [Northeast-Tibet], from Kham [East-Tibet], and also from the noble families in Lhasa, from the educated elite in Lhasa... you have this movement, which on the one hand saw that the [Tibetan] society was going to change, all the societies around Tibet were changing rapidly, and on the other hand, the extreme... I don't know what to say now... the weight of the Buddhist church in Tibet, this immense structure, this traditional, entirely traditional, this entirely monolithic structure that was ruling over Tibet. In spite of many attempts it seemed that it was very difficult to make any kind of innovation in the country. This led these people to... after the death

of the 13th Dalai Lama [1933], who was an enlightened ruler; this led several of the intellectuals to leave [Tibet]. There was a kind of deserting of the land in 1934 after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama. Whether these people were obliged to leave or whether they left of their own choice, there is a certain movement of people to go away from Central Tibet. GC himself went in 1934, Geshe Sherab went away, the Guomindang moved in, on the other hand, and set up a base in Lhasa, which they hadn't had before that time. Then there were all the events in Kham, in Eastern Tibet, since the beginning of the 20th century. The attempts to take back their former territories. Then the British intervention with Teichman [a British diplomat in China], which prevented the Tibetan from regaining their former territories [from the Chinese]. There were many things going on at the periphery, in Amdo also... all the wars between Ma Pufang and the Tibetans [See interview: Alak Tsayul]. There was a general unrest in Eastern Tibet, all along the Eastern Tibet frontier, whereas in Lhasa, from 1934 onwards, you have a regime under the Regent Reting, which consolidated the power, reconsolidated the power of the great abbots of the great monasteries [in Lhasa], and deepened the gulf between Tibet and the outside world, and the 20th century. During the early 20th century, during the time of the 13th Dalai Lama, there was a lot of progress, I don't know if it was progress but a lot of new modern ideas and modern structures were introduced into Tibet. Partially thanks to the British Imperialists. But after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama, from 1934 through to 1951, that is a real period of stagnation and incomprehension for me, on the part of the people, who were ruling in Tibet in relation to the outside world...

...GC seemed to be living in two worlds, the old days and the days to come?

Well, I think GC's discovery of the Tibetan history, of the documents, dating to the Imperial period [7th to 9th century], written documents, the earliest written Tibetan documents available. This was a like a catalyst to him, to change his whole vision of society. And when he went to India, Jacques Bacot, the French scholar showed him the photocopies of the old manuscripts from Dunhuang. GC was the first Tibetan to see the earliest Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang, from Central Asia, from the time of the military empire, between the 7th and 9th century. He became aware that Tibetan history wasn't only Buddhist history [See 'GC in Horkhang']. The Buddhist historians effaced, to a very large degree, this great military empire that the Tibetans had in Central Asia, which was a rival to the Kalifat of Bagdad and to Tang China for a period of more than two hundred years. GC decided that he would write a political history of Tibet, the *Debther Karpo*, The White Annals, which he spent many years researching, and gathering information and writing. Much of it was in note form. The [new] perspective that GC put on Tibetan society, based on this research, was that Tibet had another identity, that Tibet had another origin, that Tibet had – he didn't speak about Bon, as far as I know, about the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet – but he, in revealing to Tibetans themselves, to contemporary Tibetans, the existence of these military campaigns, this great expanding empire, he was trying to awaken them to a new vision of their own identity. This was very relevant for the 20th century, since Tibet, at that time, was surrounded by great empires [China, British India, Soviet Union]. I think he was keenly aware of the need to recreate a Tibetan identity, perhaps by exploring the historical past. Because, as we know, the Tibetans, in the beginning of the 20th century at Simla [1914], were rather shaky about where their frontiers were... there was a major problem about what was Tibetan territory, and what was not Tibetan territory. The

government was not particularly conscious of the vast expanses in Eastern Tibet. They had a different concept of what was a frontier in the early 20th century in Tibet. So, one of things he did, when he was in India, was to try to explore the Southern frontiers [of Tibet], just how far did the Tibetan civilization spread over the southern Himalayas into Assam [in the East] and into Kashmir [in the West]. Where were the meeting points of these different cultures? In one of the articles that he wrote in the *Melong* [Tibet Mirror], this Tibetan journal from Kalimpong was the changing of names and the changing of frontiers throughout history [See 'GC in Melong]. There was this very modern contemporary conception of the transformation of political entities that he was presenting very clearly and for the first time to a Tibetan audience. GC was speaking essentially to a Tibetan audience [See interviews: Don Lopez, Tsering Shakya], hoping to awaken them from their traditional vision, their traditional society.

GC was critical of his own society, but not against his people, he tried to wake them up?

Well, GC was profoundly Tibetan and profoundly imbued with the values and the rich religious literary heritage of Tibet. He wasn't anti-tibetan in any way at all. Together with these young progressive intellectuals [from Kalimpong], to put them all in one bag, they were really for a Tibetan identity, but finding out what could be a *new* Tibetan identity perhaps. One of things GC was supposed to have said towards the end of his life... he said, 'We need to join together Eastern Tibet [Amdo and Kham] and Central Tibet [U-Tsang], that are rather separate and contending entities.' He jokingly said, 'What we could do is, take the Jowo Rinpoche [the most holy statue of Tibetan Buddhism] and put it at Jyekundo, between Kham, Amdo and U-Tsang, the three major provinces of Tibet. We will build a new temple there, and then we can unite the Tibetan people through Buddhism and then...', the last phrase is additional, '...and then we can set about to destroy it [Buddhism]'. I'm not... he himself, like many of his disciples and friends; he himself was a profoundly realized practitioner. So, it seems very surprising that he would say, we would set about and destroy Buddhism after that. But maybe he meant, we would set about and destroy it as the *ruling* entity. Maybe there was an idea of putting a new government into position, a *non*-religious government. But I very much doubt that he had any real wish to get rid of the Tibetan traditional religious culture. He probably meant, let's throw out the bad things, the terrible things and let's keep Buddhism good for our culture and let us make a new culture in relation to the evolving world around us?

GC he got involved in this political movement in Kalimpong...

Well, the 'Tibet Improvement Party' seems to certainly have been linked with the Guomindang in China [the nationalist government under Chiang Kai Shek]. This is another taboo that people in Dharamshala don't like to talk about, the very strong connections of many Tibetans with the Guomindang Party. As for Rapga Pangdatsang, it's almost one hundred percent sure that he had a Guomindang party card and was receiving a salary from the Guomindang, as many Tibetans did later on. Many Tibetans in his generation [born in the early 20th century] were formed in Guomindang schools [in China]. The idea of forming the party [Tibet Improvement Party] came in the early 1940's, and it seems, there may have been some impetus from China, to just creating a new political party in Tibet. I think there was only one other attempt to make a political party in Tibet by Lungshar. How much they wanted to topple the [Tibetan]

government [in Lhasa] and create a new republican or democratic government in its place is not clear. Although it seems that all these different groups of progressive intellectuals, had some kind of project for a new government of Tibet. But I think... there was a crucial moment in the formation of this party, I don't know now if it was 1943 or 1944 or even 1945, when Chiang Kai Shek brought out his book on 'My Land and My People'. It is a book on his conception of the future of China... and in that it is very clearly stated that his objective for the minorities, the national minorities, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Tibetans etc. – ...in my memory... at least he says very clearly that in two generations the Tibetans will not even remember their names, the sinisation will have been so successful, through education, essentially education and political training, and that the Tibetan culture will have completely disappeared, he says, to the very name, it will have disappeared. So for Rapga Pangdatsang, when I met him in Kalimpong in 1974, I think, a little before he died, he said to me this was a profound shock to him. And he said, from that point on, when he read this statement, or this whole discussion by Chiang Kai Shek; he changed the orientation of the party. So, the 'Tibet Progressive Party' became... it was called the 'West Tibet Improvement Party' in relation to the Guomindang, the western regions... but he said this period on, from the publication of this book onwards, he was determined to make a break and reorient the party [See interviews: Tashi Tsering, Tsering Shakya, Jamyang Norbu]. I wasn't aware of that. I'm not sure what Goldstein [author of 'The Demise of the Lamaist State'] and Tsering Shakya [author of 'The Dragon in the Land of Snows'] have said about this, but I feel there is an important period between 1945, 1946 and 1949, when they were ejected, when Phuntsog Wangyal [one of the first Tibetan communists] and all the Chinese in Lhasa, were ejected from Lhasa. There is this very crucial period, and I think that GC was involved at that time, I mean, he was closely involved with Rapga [Pangdatsang] earlier on. Rapga said, he considered GC to be his Lama, but he was also like the think tank for their party.

In which way?

Well, the philosopher, the man who was aware of different traditions of political thought and would be somebody to discuss the whole setting up of the party and the development of the party...

... you mentioned in your book that GC actually helped design the party logo.

Well if I remember rightly, there was a letter. Rabga himself said this. There is this letter to Thacker & Spink in Calcutta [British printers, who immediately reported to the British-Indian police], describing how the [party] badge should be, how the badge and how the embossed logo should be on the [membership] card. And as far as... and it seems perfectly clear that it was GC, who did it. Although... yeah, because Rapga said so. I think it is quite a good indication.

Can you describe the logo?

It is a little bit like a shield. It has a snow mountain behind, a white snow mountain behind. It has the green... it is white and green. The colors are quite distinct from Guomindang or communist party colors or from Buddhist colors or anything to do with the British Imperial colors. It was white and green with a *sickle*, representing the peasants and a *loom*, representing the non-existing workers in Tibet, I mean, representing the artisans of Tibet. What else... there's a *sword*, representing... I suppose, representing the

guerillas, the fighters of Tibet. I'm not sure about the sword, I don't think... I'm not sure if anyone has explained that. But there is certain naïvety in the whole conception. And if you read... I didn't... if you read the regulations of the party, I didn't publish them on purpose, and Goldstein didn't publish them. They are rather; it's rather like a secret society. Very... extremely strict and rather rigid stipulations in relation to membership. It was not like a political, a contemporary modern political party, it was sort of more like a secret society, but maybe that was the nature of their operation. They had to be... had to act in secret maybe.

What was the situation in Kalimpong at the time [1940's]? What was going on?

It was a trade route; there was a big market there. It was one of the main channels for Tibetan goods to go into India and down to Calcutta [one of the major ports in India at the time]. And it was also one of the trade routes for Chinese goods coming through Tibet and down into India. So it was a very important place and it was a hotbed for spies; that's for sure [See interviews: Jamyang Norbu, Tsering Shakya]. Even when I was there in 1974 it was the most sensitive place that we visited. People were extremely nervous about talking. Notably the Guomindang teacher, the Chinese teacher in the Guomindang school, I thought he was going to have a heart attack, when we started talking about GC – he was frightened, absolutely frightened.

Why did GC go to Kalimpong and what did he do there?

He was working with Tharchin Babu [the editor of the 'Tibet Mirror']. He had gone to India with Rahul [Sankrityayan] and I think Rahul, they worked together on the reestablishment of this Sanskrit text on logic. They had some projects together and GC also had his own research to do, looking for the sites of the life of the Lord Buddha. And at one point he ended up in Kalimpong and started working with Tharchin Babu, and started writing articles in the 'Tibet Mirror'. He stayed there for some time. GC wrote some interesting articles, and he would go down to Calcutta and that was where he met Geshe Sherab [his former teacher from Drepung]. And then he came up to Kalimpong; he came back up and wrote this famous article on whether the world is round or flat and many nice anecdotes about his life in India and that period of his discovery of the western world. One of the most remarkable things are the two poems that were published in the Mahabodhi Journal [a Buddhist magazine, published from Calcutta]. I think somebody else has found some more articles – but there were two poems, published in English. One is called 'Milarepa's Reply' and another one is about a lake, about Lake Manassarowar [just below the holy mountain Kailash in West-Tibet]. And these poems are written in such superb, flowing, malifluous English, one is astounded. 'Milarepa's Reply', the style is like Longfellow as Sandy McDonald remarked many years ago. It's quite amazing that GC could have written that, in that perfect English – did he have somebody to help him? Was it the Roerich's? But the Roerich's were Russian and we don't know how good their English was. It's quite fascinating... and to see also that he was deeply involved in studying Sanskrit, and that he was extremely interested in Islam and the Koran and the lives of the Saints of the Islamic world. He had very broad interests throughout his life. This is for me, one of his aspects of his Tibetan identity. You might say there were only a few other Tibetans, who had such a broad range. But if you look back into Tibetan history, back into the Empire [7th to 9th century] and to the period, when the

Buddhist hierarchy of Tibet became the imperial preceptor of the court, the imperial tutors, the religious teachers at the courts of the Mongol and the Manchu emperors. The Tibetan Buddhist masters were in the center, or in very close contact with some of the greatest empires in Asia. And there is... all through Tibetan historiography, there is a multi-cultural, cosmopolitan theme that goes through, right from the military empire [7th century], to the present day. So, I don't think GC is a freak or an unusual character, maybe in his time, he is certainly an exceptional person in the Tibetan society, but at the same time this has very strong roots in the whole of Tibetan history...

TAPE 2

Okay, new tape, please go on...

I think the importance of this historical perspective for Tibetans that GC tried very much to introduce in Tibet... it was an attempt to make Tibetans aware of the relativity of history, of the possible variations, the possible different perspectives that history brings, and also the perspective of understanding one's own past, which produces the present. For me this also was part of my own career. Working on GC made me much more keenly aware of the importance of history, for understanding the present predicament of Tibet. So I wrote this book, really specifically for Tibetans to read, but unfortunately it was published in 83 or 84 [in French], and it still has not been published in English. So the very vast majority of Tibetans can't read it anyway! It was supposed to be translated into Tibetan and into Chinese, but this still hasn't been done. I hope to bring out a new [updated] version soon [planned in 2006/07]. This is really something that is yet to be understood in the diaspora – the importance of history. I believe the church, the Buddhist hierarchy, do not need to be afraid of history. I think there is some kind of deep-seated fear of history, because history is critical. History takes a critical stance on past events and reveals things, which may often not be particularly flattering. But... in this way, the Tibetans in Tibet today, the researchers in Tibet today, are much more aware of history... much more aware of the importance of criticizing society. The researchers in Tibet today have a Marxist perspective, they also have a traditional... they know about the traditional Buddhist historiographical perspective, they know about the western tradition of critical scholarship, they are also getting the methodology of world scientific research. And they know very well about the imperial period [7th to 9th century]. They are much better armed than the Tibetans, who are outside Tibet, to understand their own past, and yet they are also in a kind of predicament in that the regime that is ruling Tibet today, also has its own political agenda, and puts its own constraints on historical research. On both sides of the Himalayas [Tibet and the exile in India], there is a deep problem with exploring the past of Tibet. But it is indispensable to explore the past, in order to find the present day identity or to develop a new identity.

It's almost a paradox, the Tibetans who grew up in free countries feel they can speak freely, yet it seems that the people in China know more about what is really going on.

Well, in Tibet... the people who grew up in China, in Tibet, I mean in Amdo, Kham, in Central Tibet, in Western Tibet – in the regions of Tibetan civilization, at least they are there, they have around them –

although the cultural heritage is extremely badly damaged – they are in their ancestral territory and they have the whole cultural context. Whereas the people in the diaspora – in India, in Nepal and in the West – have completely lost their roots, well, not completely, but they have lost their contact with the land. And then there is this idealized culture, which is projected and which is fed to the [Tibetan] children, and on top of that, there is the problem of education. In what do you educate Tibetans? In what language do you educate Tibetans today? In Chinese? In English? In Hindi? In Nepalese, German or French? Where is the Tibetan language? Any university, in any part of the world, whether it is in Tibet, in Taiwan, China or in India, there is nowhere, well, almost nowhere, where Tibetan is used as a viable language at a university level. And yet Tibetan is perfectly capable of expressing all the nuances of modern scientific language and sociology, and all the other different domains that are used today. But it is unfortunately diminishing in its use in Tibet today. Tibetan is in very grave danger, the language today. And for GC, this would have been a major catastrophe, as for any Tibetan intellectual. Language and literature are one of the key aspects of any civilization [See interview: Pema Bhum].

GC seems like a go-between and he also became a kind of cultural hero?

This image of GC as a cultural hero has been developing since the 1980's, probably. I mean, really becoming a new phenomenon that brings together different tendencies within the Tibetan world. But at the same time, his multi-faceted and controversial personality, allows for very different tendencies or very different ideologies to try and use him and manipulate his image. So, you have the anti... the traditional anti-GC stance of the Gelugpa school, which is based on his Madhyamika text [the Ludrup Gongyen; see interview: Don Lopez]. Then you have the young westernized intellectuals, who are outside of Tibet today and treat him as their cultural hero. And then you even have the official voice of China, talking about him, as if he was one of their heroes, one of the popular heroes of the [Chinese] motherland, and a very good communist. So, he is... in fact, the complexity of his character and his personality and his life, makes him into a tool, even during his lifetime, almost. Probably, one could say, he may have also been used as a tool by the British and Tibetan government. This [GC complex character] is in fact a weakness of his personality. But at the same time his scholarship, the beauty of his writing – as one of the best 20th century writers – the breadth of his knowledge, the originality of his research, his superb capacity as a scholar, his wonderful art, as you have shown me – this portrait of the Sikkimese nobleman – puts him in a rank with any artist in the world today. He's by any standards a genial... I don't know about a genius, but certainly an exceptional personality of the 20th century world. So then, it's very fortunate that the Tibetans have such a personality, who bridges the gap between tradition and modernity, but unfortunately was the victim of his own... of this transition. He became his own victim, one might say. I don't think he was a victim of society, of course, but he himself engineered his own tragic end...

...can you explain that more?

He had many opportunities ... he was very well regarded, towards the end of his life, when he came back from India [in 1946]. He had many... many of the young nobles were coming to him to learn English to learn Tibetan or to learn about what was going on in the outside world. They offered him a young noblewoman as a bride. And he was eventually given... I mean, he was poor all his life, let's face it, he

was a very simple and poor scholar for most of his life. But towards the end of his life, he could, he was rising in favor and he could have... if he had been more astute if he had been a more..., as the Japanese spy Kimura [alias Dawa Sangpo] said if he had been a slightly more astute politician, in fact if he had any kind of political sense, he could have become a respected and influential member of the Lhasa society at that time. But he had this, he was a mad holy man for other people, he was a mad saint [or crazy saint], who cared nothing for society. He came from 2000 kilometers northeast of Lhasa, from a very far and distant frontier area of Tibet, and the nobles were... they considered them [people from the frontier] as Amdo beggars! But he could have... at one point if he hadn't become an alcoholic, which he seriously seems to have been if he had taken a little bit more interest in actually promoting, maybe himself, I don't know, promoting what he wanted, his conception of Tibet, maybe, he could have been alive today for example. But then, when you consider that he was flogged by the government, he was put in jail in miserable circumstances, and he was one of the most outstanding historians and scholars of his day... All his research notes were stolen; one can understand also, why he would abandon the task in the face of this giant, heavy traditional society that did not want to open a tiny... even a tiny crack in the surface.

Do you agree that his time was up, or that there this an aspect of inverted suicide?

There is a theme... there is a melancholic theme that goes through his personality; maybe from the time he left Tibet in 1934. I don't know the reason... but there is a certain underlying melancholy in his personality. There's a very strong, even today... but the situation today is dramatically different from thirty years ago, let's say, when I started doing research on GC [in 1966]. There still is a deep gulf between Tibetans of different regions. And GC, at the time, he was a product of Eastern Tibet, coming to Central Tibet to study at the great university of Drepung and being confronted with the nobility [in Lhasa], a very sophisticated urbane and even degenerate, we may say, from certain points of view, extremely wealthy nobility, who was opening up, slowly opening up to the western world. So, you have this profound problem of the Tibetan society... and the problem of GC's own personality, his strong disruptive character and, at the same time, this deep conflict within Tibetan society, which comes through really from the second part of the 19th century, through into the mid 20th century. You have this deep rift, this deepening rift between the East [Amdo and Kham] and the Center [U-Tsang]. And GC was, in a way, a victim of that, and then, in another way, he played into it – the things he says – he's playing into that role of the Amdo beggar, in relation to the central Tibetans...

Can you please comment on GC as an artist?

It seems that he started as a traditional painter, while he was at Drepung [1927-34], in order to be able to feed himself, because he had run out of food, he had run out of the provisions that his family had given him in Amdo [before he left for Lhasa in 1927]. So he needed to earn a little bit of extra... it wouldn't be cash, because they didn't give cash at that time, it would be extra barley or *tsampa*, just food to keep him going, while he was in Drepung. It seems that he studied under a traditional painter for two years. But then he started painting portraits. It seems that the transition was quite rapid... he didn't, according to one of his friends, he never painted *thangkas* [religious paintings], he painted scenes from ordinary life and decorated the houses of nobles and painted portraits. At that time, photos and photo art, was becoming *the*

thing in India. I suppose the nobles, who sent their children to India [to the schools in Kalimpong and Darjeeling], would have photo portraits of their families, which were tinted. The idea of making a photo [realistic] portrait, within a traditional context, like the paintings of Amdo Champa, for example, one of GC's disciples, one of his students in art, were in at that time in Tibet. So, maybe, it was in relation to the demand by the nobles that he developed this skill. And until I saw this portrait that you showed us a couple of days ago of Rhenok Kazi, of this Sikkimese nobleman I... my view of GC as an artist was, ah... he was okay... he was quite good... he can have some moments of great inspiration in certain line drawings in the sketchbook. But many of his drawings or his sketches or some of the paintings – you see, even in Kathmandu, there are some of his painting in this house – they are not particularly outstanding. A good draftsman... he certainly has a good line, a good calligraphic line, but nothing extraordinary, except for a few of these really superb minimalist line drawings. But with this portrait of the Kazi, he is in a completely different cultural milieu. It puts him in the rank as a great artist, in my view.

What about his line drawings? They seem to be out of the cultural context for a Tibetan?

Well, GC was with the Roerich's for some time in Kullu [in the northwest of India, today Himachal Pradesh], he stayed for, I think, two years with the Roerich's at the Urusvati Institute. While George [Roerich] was translating, I mean, GC helped George to translate the 'Blue Annals' [a Buddhist history] at that time. And I think with George and Nicholas Roerich and the mother, the wife of Nicholas Roerich, they were an extremely cultured, extremely sophisticated, intellectual family, an artistic family. Nicholas himself was an artist and the house must have been full of Nicholas' paintings from Central Asia and from Tibet. And no doubt there were books and other artists – other contemporary artists. Nicholas designed the set for Stravinsky's first production of the Firebird in Paris. So, GC probably saw much of western art, of contemporary western art, while he was with the Roerich's. I think that... and other people, maybe Bacot [who showed the Dunhuang manuscripts to GC], I don't know... and also Kanwal Krishna [the Indian painter, who was part of the expedition in Tibet 1938. See: 'Kanwal Krishna on GC']. He knew artists and intellectuals in India. *(Image 19: One of GC linedrawings from his original sketchbook, Tibet 1938).* And so, it's particularly surprising – he was exposed to Persian poetry, to the Islamic ideology, to the Gandhi movement, to Hitler... you know, every kind of movement, both political and cultural in India, and also the world. I mean, India was open to all kinds of influences and it was extremely vibrant, I suppose, what was going on in India at that time. GC was... Rabindranath Tagore... although he didn't meet Rabindranath Tagore according to some of his contemporaries, but he was in contact with that cultural milieu in India... so, this is not surprising at all, for me anyway...



Can you tell me about Rahul Sankrityayan and his collaboration with GC?

Well, Rahul is also a complex figure. He ran away from home, I don't know, I think once or twice as a child. He was a rebel himself, he was an unusual figure and also kind of a polymat – he delved into every

possible subject. He was a kind of Buddhist scholar, but he was also a member of the Peasant Union in India, and he was a member of the Communist Party. But in the same way, he was deeply interested and deeply involved in the movement of returning to the roots of Indian civilization. So, his main aim in going to Tibet, was not particularly Tibetan culture, but to find the Sanskrit... the Sanskrit manuscripts on... the palm leaf manuscripts [of the old Buddhist text that were brought to Tibet from India], which had all been destroyed in India, because of the heat and the humidity and everything [in fact, many of the Buddhist texts were destroyed in India during the Hindu revival and the Mogul invasion]. In Tibet it was said, there were dozens and dozens of these old palm leaf manuscripts in Sanskrit, with beautiful illustrations. Rahul's main aim in going to Tibet was to find these. He also wrote an incredible amount of articles on all kinds of aspects of contemporary life in India, and he was also involved in... he went to Russia; he had a Russian wife. He was in prison several times – he was a very dynamic, powerful personality. But I feel that somehow, he lead GC a little bit astray. Maybe some people do not agree with this, but I think, somehow he led GC onto... maybe, when they were in Tibet, in order to convince him to come along with him on his journeys... it was thanks to GC presence that they could get into the libraries of the monasteries, Rahul ... it would have been very unlikely that Rahul would have had access to the libraries in Sakya and all the other monasteries they visited [See: 'Rahul on GC' and 'Travelogue of GC']. It was thanks to GC that he could see these precious manuscripts and also bring back a certain number of manuscripts and paintings to Patna [in India]. But I think that GC had real hopes of going to Russia or to Europe. I think it is written in some of his private letters, and these hopes were dashed and I believe that Rahul was extremely occupied. He was in prison a lot of the time. He went to Russia. Perhaps he tried to get an invitation for GC and it didn't work? This is difficult to know about. But one thing that argues in the other way was, when GC was put in prison, just shortly after he was imprisoned in Lhasa, two noblemen came to visit Rahul Sankrityayan in his home near Darjeeling. They came to the gate and Rahul came out of the house and shouted, he roared at them, he said, 'Go away, get away you dogs! You put your most intelligent man in jail, you will never get a man like him in a thousand years.' So, this certainly doesn't support my contention that Rahul let him down, but maybe it was just by the force of circumstances that he wasn't able to fulfill the promises that he had made to GC.

What was the political influence of Rahul on GC?

They must have discussed, yeah sure. And certainly Rahul must have told GC about the different figures, the important personalities, important personalities that were in India like Bose [Subash Chandra Bose] and Tagore [Rabindranath] and Gandhi. He would have heard a lot from Rahul. But also Rahul must have heard... he was certainly interested in Tibet, not only the manuscripts, because he went to visit Geshe Sherab Gyatso. He describes the meeting with Geshe Sherab in Lhasa and how Geshe Sherab was listening every day... he had a radio... he lived in Lhasa and not in Drepung and he was listening every day to the news to know about Mao's progress. This must have been in 1934, this must have been just at the moment before Geshe Sherab left [Lhasa], to go to China and just before Rahul and GC went off on their travels through Central Tibet, and then out into India. Rahul was quite interested and very... he knew many of the nobles in Lhasa, and certainly he was interested in the political situation in Tibet as well... and in Mao's progress...

The two young bohemians Phani Mukherjee and Kanwal Krishna were part of the expedition in 1938, what could have been their influence on GC?

Well of course, there is this scene, where GC gets drunk and draws a figure; a full figure just in one line and Mukherjee was very impressed by that. I must say Mukherjee and Kanwal Krishna, I met them in India, many years after, 40 years or so, after their visit there... their visit to Tibet [in 1938]. And of course they went on a marvelous adventure. I don't know to what extent, they or even Rahul appreciated the depth of the person [GC] they were traveling with [They did. See 'Krishna on GC' and 'Mukherjee on GC']. This may be simply a question of language also and culture, certainly of culture. As you say, they were bohemians, a young artist and photographer, sort of modern people... Modern School [they both went to this progressive educational institution]. Kanwal Krishna taught in Modern School in Delhi afterwards. They were interested in the contemporary world. And Rahul, although he was a scholar, he was like... he was going from one subject to another, and was more a man of action than a scholar, I feel. Whereas they had with GC one of the most brilliant real scholars... and maybe that was not quite appreciated by them. I am sorry that the photos that Mukherjee took were lost. I think this is a tragic part of their journey that he made some absolutely brilliant photos and they were lost... I saw some originals, when I was in Delhi in 1974 and he said he was going to make a book. They were outstanding black and white photos and this would have been a very wonderful contribution to our knowledge of Tibet, before the arrival of the Chinese. And Kanwal Krishna, of course, his drawings, there is going to be an exhibition in Oxford, in September [2003], for the International Tibetological Conference, but Kanwal Krishna's main contribution is as an illustrator of Tibetan... the Tibetan nobility and the Tibetan elite at that time. And of course this is also very precious documentation.

How do you see GC work with Tharchin Babu, the editor of the 'Tibet Mirror'?

I met Tharchin just before he died, he was in bed actually and he was... he couldn't get up anymore. But he was perfectly... he was 80 something, and he was perfectly clear and totally lucid and very lively. The whole household was running around, doing everything he asked. He was a very dynamic and powerful personality, he ruled in Kalimpong for 70 years, as they say. But it is a kind of puzzle that he and GC should have somehow made a partnership or that GC should have worked for him. In a way GC was... GC had a strange series of liaisons for his work in India, with Rahul, with very different personalities, extremely different people, like Rahul, the Roerich's, with Tharchin Babu, with Bacot, Jacques Bacot. As a Christian missionary, Tharchin Babu, and no doubt as a British spy, seems to have been in quite the opposite camp to where GC was standing. And yet GC went and worked for quite some time, I think, with Tharchin at the Mirror Press, and produced a whole series of interesting articles, critical articles connected with his own research on the changing of frontiers, and the changing of names, the changing of frontiers through history... on whether the world is round or flat... on different customs in Tibet... he did a travelogue, a kind of guide to all the holy places in Tibet also, with illustrations. Maybe it [Tharchin's newspaper] was just an outlet, a good outlet for GC. But also... maybe GC was also interested in the Christian... very probably he was interested in knowing what Christianity was about, after all he had learned English and his first lessons in English were with Griebenow in Labrang monastery [See interviews: Tsering Shakya, Alak Tsayul, Hortsang Jigme], when he was a young monk [1920-27]. So

GC perhaps felt a kinship or a friendship with these missionaries, because of the importance for him of studying English and knowing the outside world?

What was the influence of the Tibet Mirror in the Tibetan context?

Well, I asked the Dalai Lama and I asked some nobles about that, because I thought it was a rather localized Himalayan journal, that it didn't have much influence in Tibet. But in fact, Tharchin had a regular number of people to which he sent the Tibet Mirror in Lhasa, and who were avid readers of it [See interview: Jamyang Norbu]. After all, Tharchin made a point of putting in articles, every week or whatever it was, very regularly, on all the visiting diplomats and notable people who passed by. So they would get all the news on their families, and their cousins and their brothers and sisters – they would get the news in the Tibet Mirror, that was one thing. And also Tharchin put in news about the Second World War, articles on Hitler, articles on Stalin, articles on what was going on in the world. So for the young, for the young or for the more enlightened nobility in Lhasa, the educated nobility in Lhasa, it would have been a very interesting source of information. Certainly, one of the objectives of bringing out the journal was to bring in some new information into Tibet [See interview: Tsering Shakya]. And at the same time Tharchin perhaps hoped that some people would become Christian, I don't know...

GC always seemed to have an imaginary audience in Tibet. He was kind of writing to them...

...yes, perhaps. He had had this real need, because he had been a dialectician all his life, and so... very much in a context of dialoguing with his people all the time. And there is this great tradition of debate, whether it is formal or informal, in Tibet. People... the monks and the educated Buddhist scholars are always in some kind of strong debate. And so with his new perspective, with his new historical perspective, with his new study of Sanskrit, GC became an extremely good and competent Sanskrit scholar. He wrote several articles or wrote letters to people, saying, 'Well, you know, the way we pronounce Sanskrit in Tibet is quite wrong, you know.' And GC actually wrote that we [Tibetans] should pronounce it in the proper way, and we have lost... So, he was trying... yes, as you say, he was trying to speak to his fellow Tibetans, to help or to create awareness of their own culture also. Very much in relation to the discourse concerning Tibet itself. The articles he wrote were directly connected with perceptions in Tibet at that time, and the changing. What GC hoped would be the changing of perceptions. For example the two different major styles of writing, the Uchen ... he showed perfectly clear that Uchen was a later creation... he was looking very precisely at different facets of Indian and Tibetan civilization...

For you, what are the most interesting elements in his life?

Well there's the...within the traditional context, there is the dual personality of GC being a Nyingma, being recognized as a Nyingmapa Lama, a reincarnate Lama, and later becoming a Gelugpa scholar and dialectician. This is a key element, I think, in his life... [Thinks] ...and secondly it probably helped creating his capacity or developing his capacity as a philosopher and a dialectician to a greater degree. On the other hand, one of the crucial moments in his career is the discovery of the inscriptions on the stone steles in Lhasa and in other places around Lhasa [the stone pillars with the historical inscriptions, going

back to the 7th to 9th century]. This was a turning point in his career, because he suddenly was confronted with his own history that was unknown to the Tibetans, they had forgotten totally about the Empire. The later Buddhist historiographers... the historians had reinterpreted and rewritten Tibetan history to such a degree that the greatness of this Empire, this 200 year Empire [7th to 9th century], had completely disappeared or almost disappeared. So, GC was confronted with the real political statements of that time, and then he saw the Dunhuang manuscripts, which were contemporary with the [inscriptions on the] stone steles, and it was a kind of 'satory' [enlightenment] for him. Suddenly he saw a totally different face of reality. The quotation I put in the beginning of the book from Al Gazel, from one of the medieval Muslim thinkers. In the 12th century he already said, 'He who steps outside his tradition, has no hope of ever going back to his tradition.' I think this discovery of the stone steles in Tibet, already when he was a monk in Drepung, put him outside of the tradition, projected him, in a certain way, outside the tradition and broke this hermetic closed environment of the tradition, which you normally are unaware of, as long as you are inside it. And GC stepped outside, and then could take a relative point of view, a relative standpoint on Tibetan history and Tibetan society – thanks to the discovery of Tibetan history. And what is history? History is a relative narration of events in the past. And this was another key moment, and this led him to go to India. There is no doubt, that the fact of him being a very brilliant dialectician, put him into this position... and having a Nyingmapa background... and this is part of the Nyingmapa-Gelugpa syndrome, which exists in Tibet strongly since the 17th century, and up until the present day. This allowed him to go beyond the parameters of the orthodox... or the university manuals that most people based their work on. It seems from very early on – maybe it was Griebenow [the Christian missionary in Labrang]. Maybe Griebenow did give him some new ideas or was it just that he spontaneously generated new ideas? Is it, because he was a Nyingmapa reincarnation, as Jangbu said yesterday [See interview: Jangbu]? Is it, because he had a huge cultural baggage, coming from past lives, from within the Tibetan context, which allowed him to break out of the parameters of Gelugpa orthodoxy? These are key things... and then going to India and being exposed to a new, completely different society. Being on the fringe of society... as a stranger, as he explains, when he goes to Sri Lanka... they thought he has come from the moon, I mean they treated him as a very strange being. He constantly confronted himself with otherness, this, as you mentioned yourself yesterday, perhaps that possibility of apprehending the otherness, his very deep interest in other cultures. His writing of books, his descriptions of life in Sri Lanka, the plants and all kinds of aspects of cultural life in India and Sri Lanka. Perhaps it was... the context [of his childhood] was rather cosmopolitan, or within a multi-ethnic context in northeastern Tibet [Amdo], as you suggested. I mean this is an important ingredient in his personality. He is of course a special person, who, I think, was deeply shocked, when he came back to Tibet [in 1946]. Another crucial moment in his career, when he came back to Tibet... maybe he was aware that he would be rejected, but maybe not to the degree that he was betrayed by the Tibetan government. There is a deep sense of betrayal of Eastern Tibet [Amdo and Kham], and of his own person, his own work, and his life's work, by the Tibetan elite, the ruling elite and the Tibetan government. This was in fact one of the major reasons for his untimely death.

Why do you think they cracked down on him so hard?

Well, there were certain political reasons. He was partly a scapegoat, an ideal victim. It was much more difficult to grab Rapga Pangdatsang or even Changlochen and Kunphela – they were much more established people, they had much better contacts, they had much better public relations in the Central Tibetan world than GC. He was a scholar, ok, he was an historian, but at that time, they did not appreciate the importance of what he had to say, they didn't know. And it's much easier to condemn a rather poor skinny, known but wayward, or controversial figure. Well he was already a very controversial figure from his twenties. Much easier to condemn that sort of person, and say, he was making counterfeit money, that he was a communist, that he was a... had formed a political party or whatever they said about him. It was much easier to condemn him, than any of the others in that group. I think he was a scapegoat and Richardson [the British envoy] didn't like him.

What was the connection between Richardson and GC?

Well, [today], Richardson is a major historian of Tibet [See interview: Hugh Richardson]. He had done some of the earliest and best work to this day, on the stone stele inscriptions. He was a very distinguished diplomat and English nobleman or Scottish nobleman, right to his last breath; he was an extremely distinguished person. But he had the weakness, I mean, the strength and the weakness, of the British Raj, of being... belonging really to the world elite. And considering, really, that these rather unsophisticated, Eastern Tibetans were not particularly interesting... I am not sure, what his take on GC was, but he told me that, he thought, GC had made a mistake, when he translated the ceremonial songs of the Dunhuang manuscripts, these very fine, early... the first Tibetan poetry, that GC had made a great mistake by translating them into modern Tibetan. What mistake could it be? What *is* the mistake? GC's vision was to make the earliest Tibetan literature comprehensible to Tibetans today. This cannot be a mistake? There is a rub between them, because they are both actually working on the same area, on early Tibetan history. I don't see, why Richardson should be jealous of him, but Richardson, like all the elites, the European imperial elites at the time, had a deep fear of communism. And GC no doubt was put into that basket of people, who wanted to get rid of the empires. GC himself wrote a poem, that Surkhang recited to me, about the 'yellow-haired monkey' [Richardson?]. I think there was a very deep misunderstanding between the two of them. I mean GC probably never met him, but he knew of his existence.

JANGBU (Chanaktsang Dorje Tsering)



Recorded on the 21st of February 2003 in Paris, France.

Born 1963 in Northeastern Tibet (near Rebkong). A highly respected Tibetan poet (and filmmaker). From 1989 editor of the art-magazine 'Tibetan Literature & Art'. He lives in Paris since 2002, where he presently works as teacher of Tibetan language at INALCO (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales). He published several books with his own works. Tibetan, not in the film.

Name and Age?

My name is Chanaktsang Dorjee Tsering. I am also known as Jangbu. I was born in June 1963, in the year of the Hare. I was born in Amdo [Northeast-Tibet], in a place, which is now in Sogpo Gachu, Rebkong.

When did you first hear of GC?

I was still in school. In 1979 or 1980, the monastery in my village was rebuilt. It was the Rebkong monastery. Before that, I had not seen any monks and had no idea what they looked like. There were no monks during the Cultural Revolution [1966-76]. The monastery was later rebuilt and monks were admitted again. I don't remember his name now, but one of my classmates talked with the monks. They talked about a strange book, said to have been written by a certain GC. They were talking about GC. The monks were saying that GC... In the past, people had criticized the book and suppressed it. The monks had this book, he said. Later, I came to know that it was *Ludrup Gongyen* [Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thoughts]. At that time, we were studying Tibetan and my Tibetan was good. The book was available then. But I could not understand it very well. When the monastery was rebuilt, we were also taught some Buddhism, but still we could not understand GC's book very well. We wouldn't know very much at that time... let me do it again.

Ok, when did you first hear of GC?

In 1979 and 1980 I was going to school. That was the time, when religion was being restored in Tibet [Jangbu is talking about the slow process of 'opening' in Tibet and China after Mao's death in 1976]. Monks began to appear for the first time at Rebkong monastery, near our school. Our schoolmates met and spoke with the monks from their village. The monks talked about the existence of an extraordinary scholar in the past, whose name was GC. They said he had written a book, which was different from the treatise Jamyang Zhepa had written for Labrang monastery, that it was also different from the other books of Rebkong monastery. They said the old monks had criticized his book very much. Later, the monks

started reading it. It seems they had heard about this two or three years after becoming monks. Somehow, I managed to get hold of a copy. It was the *Ludrup Gongyen*. We could not understand it.

At the same time, I heard of lay people talking about GC's the 'Art of Love'. Generally speaking, Tibetans by nature are very liberal about relationship between men and women [See interview: Hortsang Jigme]. But in Tantrism, extra-marital relationships are kept secret. The practitioners are not allowed to talk openly about their sexual relationships. People are very embarrassed to talk about this. There are many restrictions on talking about sex. There is too much secrecy about this.

This is how I first heard his name.

Of course, I could not understand the *Ludrup Gongyen* [even for educated Tibetans, most of the Buddhist philosophical texts are hard to understand]. But the verses were all very lyrical and special. By that time, many people were hearing about the fame of GC. His name was heard all of a sudden. Before that, I had never heard of him [See interview: Hortsang Jigme]. Some people had read some of his books, others had not. By and by, after 1980, people were producing copies of his books. They wrote the text in long hand and then mimeographed it. There were many books. As you know, he became famous after the second book ['Art of Love']. His reputation spread far and wide. Now, he is very famous. But this is how I heard about him the first time.

Do you remember more things about GC? From older people?

It happened like this. In 1982, when I was going to Beijing University, Thondup Gyal [a famous Tibetan intellectual and writer. He died untimely in 1985] taught some of us the history of Tibet. We collected some money and invited him to teach. There were all kinds of students. First, he taught us from the 'White Annals' [of GC]. Thondup Gyal considered it a very good book, one that dealt with the genesis of Tibetan civilization. When I later read the 'White Annals', it talked a lot about how the Tibetan civilization began. Thondup Gyal talked glowingly about GC. He said the Gelug followers didn't like him very much [he is referring to the Gelug monks distaste of GC's *Ludrub Gongyen*, which they believed to be a criticism of their founder *Tsongkhapa*]. He gave the example of Tseten Shabdrung, a very highly learned scholar. He said Tseten Shabdrung started each day of his teaching session by reading a verse of criticism against GC. I later heard from others that this was true. We came to know later that Sherab Gyatso [former teacher of GC in Drepung, 1927-34] had strongly criticized this book, too. We heard that the Gelugpas had suppressed this book. This is all we knew then. We, in our childhood, had not received much education in our culture. We came to learn the details by and by.

But the main thing for me is that GC's 'Art of Love' is an extraordinary book. We Tibetans don't talk about this subject in public. When the boys were alone, they would always talk about sex. But to write a book on this subject would be considered very improper. This is how I came to know about him...

Now, the 'White Annals'. Later, after I graduated from the middle school, we had a new teacher. He taught us Tibetan history. He talked about GC's style of writing *choejoe* – the traditional style of writing obeisance to deities in verse form in the beginning of each major work – about his poetic style, about how his historiography is special, about how the 'White Annals' is a very special historical work, how it is different from the 'Red Annals' and 'Blue Annals', about how the 'White Annals' does not deal with religion, but rather with politics and military matters. That's about it. At that time, the general public did not know much about GC. Those who had no interest in scholarly pursuits or those who had not gone to school would not know about him. Later, in the 1990s, there was hardly anyone [in Northeast-Tibet, who did not know him. Many people seemed to know GC by then. This is about it.

In which sense did the picture of GC develop in Tibet?

The Tibetan society then was extraordinary [he is referring to the time of the Cultural Revolution]. For about 15 years, the authorities had opposed religion. As a result, many people, the grown ups, had become alienated from their own religion. Some people said that GC had opposed religion, while others disputed this claim, and said that he had actually debated doctrinal issues. When I came to know about GC along with lots of other people... We came to know about him all of a sudden and at about the same time. This is because there was a sudden change in the Chinese policy towards Tibet, which meant we were allowed to talk and read books of that kind. If I talked about GC to a friend, he would reply, 'Oh yes, he is the author of such and such books. Isn't he?' But most of them knew about the *Ludrup Gongyen* and... In short, many people then knew about him, some took interest in him. They knew that he was from Rebkong, that he had gone to Labrang monastery, then to Lhasa and then to India. They knew that he had written a great deal. Particularly, people like Thondup Gyal knew a lot about him. Thondup Gyal knew that GC had translated many Indian texts and had also authored many works of his own.

Meanwhile, Horkhang Sonam Penbar published a short biography of GC [in 1982]. Before that, a story was circulating about a certain Horkhang, who was writing such a book. Then we did not know the details of GC's life. The larger public came to know the details later, in drips and drops. There weren't many books on him then, most biographies having been published only in India. But these books came to Tibet gradually. Our knowledge of him was sketchy, not very detailed. For example if I went to someone, claiming to know about GC, I would often discover that he did not know all that much.

There was a man named Kunchok Thondup. He was a student of Tseten Shabdrung. He died later. He taught us about the 'White Annals'. He was in awe of GC. He would read the poems of GC and comment that all poems should be like this. He commented on GC's research methodology in writing history. Kunchok Thondup wrote a book, in which he said that the 'White Annals' dealt only with politics and military affairs, and not with economy [See above]. He maintained that Tibet had close economic ties with the Tang China [8th century] and that one could write a lot on this. Kunchok Thondup later wrote a book called 'Greater Tibet's Economy' or something to this effect. I don't know whether this book was published. I never got to see it. He was our teacher. At that time, I was just 18 or 19 [early 1980's]. I didn't know much. We had no background in our culture. I used to hear different things, rather sketchily.

In those days, many people came to know him suddenly. People would tell stories like this: *GC went to Lhasa with a monk. The monk was from my village. I met the monk, who told me that GC had a precocious mind, that he had learned English in a matter of months, and he and the monk had come across a stone pillar on their way to Lhasa, that GC had gazed at the pillar for a while and said, 'Let's us move on. I can't understand this', that it transpired later that he could recite the whole text from his memory, that he had been joking with the monk, that later he explained the text to the monk, etc.* There were many stories of this kind.

But perhaps, GC became famous first in India. Then the words spread from India to here? Or maybe, it was because of his contributions in the form of his many research works. These, as you know, are great achievements. This is how it happened. All the people... many like-minded people... they said that in Amdo were two like early 20s. He was new on the scene. He and GC, people said, were like-minded. That is all.

What did you make of all those talks about GC?

I think it is important to give you some background information about Tibet. My generation of Tibetans started going to school during the latter part of the Cultural Revolution. In that era, absolutely nothing was taught about Tibetan culture. All the textbooks were translated from the Chinese textbooks. The quality of translation was not good. Class struggle and other such features of the Cultural Revolution made up the contents of these textbooks. There were of course few teaching materials. There were few films and a few books. The atmosphere was very restrictive.

Then, in 1979, the policy changed. Religious freedom came and we were allowed to read scriptures. Our Tibetan culture was then a new thing to us. We liked it very much. People read any book that they could lay their hands on. As for me, when I read biographies... you see, as we had been subjected to extensive indoctrination to view such texts as old and blind faith, some of the biographies seemed too farfetched. Stories about people having died and reincarnated, about people having flown, having become deities, etc., seemed too farfetched. As I stated earlier, before that I had not even seen a monk. I knew nothing about monasteries, statues, or thangkas [religious paintings]. Suddenly, we were hearing all these things. Our culture was completely new to us [See interview: Pema Bhum]. As I immersed myself in the study of our culture, GC made an impression on me. Older generations, especially the monks, would know about GC. Rebkong monastery and Geshe Sherab Gyatso had banned many of GC's works. When I was young, I used to hear about Sherab Gyatso. But I had never heard about GC. Probably, there was a ban on any knowledge of GC....

When I first read the 'White Annals'... Other books like *Chi-kyi Galmo Luyang*, *Gyalrab Salwey Melong*, etc. were like mystical religious stories. They talked about celestial beings of India, beings with bodies like rays, they talked about uncultivated harvests, about the Shakya race [Buddha himself was a Shakya], about how Buddhism came to Tibet, about the monkey who was Avolokiteshvara's emanation [Buddha of Compassion], and the rock ogress, who was Tara's emanation [Buddhist Goddess], etc. These are just

mythical stories. GC's book, on the other hand... you see, we had been educated to respect materialism, and not myths...

Our teachers had a lot of influence on us. Teachers were very important to us. If the teachers said something was white, many would believe that it was really white. This was our environment. Thondup Gyal had high esteem for GC. When I was young, I was very fond of literature. I used to memorize Thondup Gyal's writings early in the morning. I was influenced by Thondup Gyal's high regard for GC. Kunchok Thondup, my teacher, held GC in high esteem. Kunchok Thondup was very famous in our area. He was the best among the young, budding scholars. He held GC in high regard, which was another influence on me... GC's poems, his writing style, his ideas... in those days [early 1980's], I could not write well in Tibetan. Of course, I had studied Tibetan, but only political terms pertaining to class struggle, military policies, etc. So, I found it very difficult to compose anything in Tibetan. I would get excited, even if I could use just one figurative word. If I used a figurative word like *chuzin* – a water-holder referring to clouds – in my composition, I would feel great. In retrospect, I can't say, why we were so fascinated by GC. Perhaps, it was because he personified innovative courage to us. This is the first thing... that was the time, when all children were seeking something to fill our mental vacuum. And, we found GC. This is all I can say.

What influence did GC have on you?

I can't sum up GC's influence on me. Because, his influence on me developed and became stronger with the passage of time. Secondly, his influence on me has many dimensions. I can't put a finger on one and say this is his influence. GC added a Tibetan dimension to my thinking, a new perception, and awareness regarding my own identity. It has many dimensions. Take the example of his works in Tibetology. They deal not only with history or religion, but also with everything about Tibetans, right down to food, clothes, customs, transportation system, etc. His works are very comprehensive, dealing with so many aspects that they are too much for the mind of one person. Because his works are comprehensive, his influence is also multi-dimensional. Many of my thoughts have connections to him... I find him special.

But he has not influenced my style of writing. Modern Tibetan literature, as we know it today [See interview: Ju Kesang]. If we were to divide the Tibetan literature into the ancient and recent generation, I would consider GC as the father of modern Tibetan literature. There are all kinds of people: spiritual practitioners, non-practitioners, nomads, farmers, carpenters, scholars, etc. GC's writings reflect the universal human emotion or sentiment of all. They reflect the typical Tibetan perspective, not from the Buddhist perspective, but from a typical Tibetan perspective, and in a beautiful way. This is a major influence on me. I could not figure this out for many years. Gradually... Now I have come to this stage. Probably, years later I will see some other influence of him on me. To the Tibetan people, GC is an inexhaustible treasure... Whether he writes, or does research, or draws a conclusion, he is unique. This is what I think of him. His influence on me is multi-dimensional. I can't specify a particular one.

Is there any relationship between the conditions of Amdo and GC's versatility?

If this was so, then there should have been three or four GCs. Amdo is a multicultural region where the Mongols, Muslims and Tibetans live together, particularly in Rebkong, Labrang, and the areas around Xining [today basically the northeastern parts of Qinghai and Gansu Province]. In areas around Xining, the Tibetans gradually became sinicized, blurring their ethnic identity. Amdo is in this sense a special region, as compared to U-Tsang [Central Tibet]. Well, that someone like GC was born in Tibet... he had spontaneous wisdom. He was an emanation of a sublime being, which had accumulated merits over many lifetimes. And, the great deities of Tibet guided him...

Tell us about the history of Amdo at the time of GC [1920's]?

Should I start from the time of GC's childhood [1903-20]? Ma Pufang wasn't on the scene then. But the Muslims had already established their influence in Amdo. I wonder if I should talk from there. Fine. In the second decade of the 20th Century, in the 1920s, GC was just in his twenties. At that time, Amdo didn't have an overall administrator. A local ruler, or a tribal chief administered each area. At that time, the Nationalists established such provinces as Gansu, Qinghai, etc. GC's village was under Ma Pufang, the Muslim ruler of Qinghai. There was no center of political power in Amdo. But there were a few cultural centers. The biggest cultural center was Rebkong, followed by Labrang Tashikyil. In the south, Kirti Monastery and others became centers of culture...

GC's family background?

GC's specialty is that he was born into a Nyingma family. His parents were learned Nyingma lay practitioners. Their influence on him is recorded in his work. He talks of the prayers that he could recite as a child. GC talks about having recited prayers, while imitating his father as a child. He talks about what he did at the age of four, of his father having taught him grammar and poetry. This is mentioned in Geshe Sherab Gyatso's biography of GC. This was one part of his upbringing he had had. Later, he joined a Gelug monastery. That made him non-sectarian in his outlook. He was just a Buddhist with no sectarian prejudice.

What did you think, when you saw the old photos [1920's] of Labrang monastery yesterday?

The old photos of Labrang were beautiful. I can't say much more. I don't know much about the situation at that time. Tibet was a big round bread between India and China. Earlier, the changes in India had influenced Tibet. You know Buddhism came to Tibet from India. Later, the political changes in China during the Manchu period, and before that the changes in Mongolia, influenced Tibet. Amdo is on the border of Tibet and China. In 1911 when there was the Nationalist Revolution in China, the repercussions were felt in Labrang. Later, the Muslim influence became stronger. For 700 years, the Muslims traded and became rich in this area. They started occupying more and more lands. During that time, there were many fights. As well as hearing from people, I had seen some writings about that [See interview: Alak Tsayul]. Tibetans were not united. They did not agree to fight as a single force. This is the background. In the meanwhile, Christianity came to Tibet, too [he is referring to the American missionary in Labrang]. There was also the Chinese influence... Later, in the 1940s, graduates of Chinese universities came to

Labrang and became monks. Some of them studied Tibetan culture in the monastery. Chinese official researchers took a lot of interest in Labrang. Probably, since Labrang is near the Chinese border, it came under Chinese influence in that period. Christians came there, which is why it was possible to know about the outside world. That was GC's environment, one with different influences. But, as I stated earlier, the thing that really made GC, was his gifted mind. There were many people and families like that of GC in that environment. But no one became like GC. This is one thing. Besides, he was from a family of lamas. His achievement was the consequence of merits, accumulated over generations and many lifetimes. That the Tibetan people could not keep him alive was a great loss.

Do you have any idea why GC decided to leave Labrang to go to Lhasa?

This is perhaps easy to explain. He was hearing lots of things. He stayed in Labrang for many years. His mental disposition and his interaction with foreigners [the Christian missionary]. Then the Chinese influence... he must have seen something of the outside world. Moreover, it was a time-honored tradition for Gelug monks to go to monasteries in Lhasa. They studied hard to obtain the *geshe* degree [a kind of Buddhist doctorate]. If they did extremely well, they would obtain the First Class Doctor of Divinity the *Gendun Drupa*. This is the ambition of spiritual practitioners. This is the reason, why GC joined the Drepung monastery, when he first arrived in Lhasa. Each monastery had its own tradition.

The popular version of his leaving is that the guardian deity of Labrang drove GC away from the monastery, as he did not subscribe to the doctrines of Jamyang Zhepa [the abbot of Labrang], or because he did not believe in religion at all. But in GC's own writing, in his poem, he said, 'If you want to expel non-believers from the monastery, you must first drive away the bugs, birds and animals around the monastery. Then you may drive me away' [See 'GC's letter to Labrang']. He then went on to write about the transgressions of some monks. He criticized the monks. He criticized them for getting involved in business enterprises. What happened at the time, was, that a town developed around Labrang monastery. And if the monks lived with lay people, it is natural that they would gradually begin to think like lay people. Perhaps some doubts grew in his mind. GC's special quality was that he was able to have doubts. He would then investigate the matter and make his decision. Take the case of his *Ludrup Gongyen*. Now, whether it was written by him or not – as I understand it – first of all, he had doubts. Because of his doubts, he made investigations and came to a conclusion. This is what happened, I think. But his act of going to Lhasa was part of the tradition of Gelugpas. I think he did not know how Lhasa was like. He did not enjoy staying at Labrang anymore. So he thought it was perhaps better to go to Lhasa. Then he went to the Drepung monastery. This is what happened, I think. He did not go there with the aim of starting a revolution or something like that...

Do you know anything about what he did, while he was in Lhasa?

At the time it was the Lhasa of the minds of eastern Tibetans, which includes the people of Amdo and other areas on Tibet's border with China. It is not the same Lhasa that western tourists see nowadays. The Lhasa of GC's days was known to them as *Toe Nyima Lhasa*, the Top Sun Lhasa. Actually, the sun rises in the east, but still they referred to Lhasa as *Toe Nyima Lhasa*.

An important ambition in the life of all people from Eastern Tibet was to visit Lhasa to seek blessings from the statue of Jowo Rinpoche [the main Buddhist shrine in the center of the Jokhang Temple]. The Lhasa of their mind was not the Lhasa that we see today. As I told you earlier, I did not know about Buddhism, when I was a child. But we would frequently hear about *Nyima Lhasa*. It was an imaginary land in the minds of people. Therefore, GC, as I stated earlier... In Amdo, even today it is considered a great thing to go to Lhasa. Ordinary people visit Lhasa to seek blessings from the statue of Jowo Rinpoche still today. But that is not the only thing. Since it was the capital for many years, for over a thousand years, people saw it as the political and cultural center of Tibet.

But what did GC do after his arrival in Lhasa?

Basically, what I know is what I have read in the biographies. He joined the Drepung Monastery, Gomang College. He studied at Geshe Sherab Gyatso's school. Some people say that he argued with Geshe Sherab Gyatso, others say this is not true. There are different versions. But the fact, as I heard from this monk, Aku Tangku... I asked him last year about GC. This monk must now be in his seventies or eighties. He was about 20 years younger than GC at the time. He told me an anecdote, which he said, had happened, either before or after GC's return from India. It seems he was getting the times mixed up a bit. He said that one day many of them, the monks, went to the stone pillar near the Potala [Shol pillar]. GC asked the other monks to climb on the back of each other and read the text on the pillar. He said he would take notes as they read. They read. After a while, he said, 'It is fine now.' They said he wasn't taking any notes. Instead, he was making a sketch of monks standing on top of one another. Actually, GC knew the text of the pillar from early on. He pointed to the holes in the pillar and said, 'Look now. In the past, the holes were there. Now they are descending progressively. It seems that in the past, we Tibetans walked tall with our heads held high. Now, we seem to be walking like this.' I heard this in detail. Sometimes, he would suddenly say something. If the monks asked what he was talking about, he would say, 'this is history. You monks would not understand this.' He said such things. Aku Tangku said that some of the things GC said were difficult to understand at first. However if one thought over them for a while, one found them funny and amusing, even if one didn't understand them well. He said such things...

Some people say that someone from the Kapshopa family gave GC what looked like medicine, which caused GC's death [nobody else confirmed this story]. I have not read about this. But I heard that GC was friendly with the Kapshopa [at the time a Minister in the Tibetan Cabinet, responsible for GC's arrest], that after his release from the prison, GC used to eat and speak English at Kapshopa's. I don't know the details, though.

What did you think, when you saw the portraits that GC painted?

First, I doubted if they were indeed painted by GC. If they were, it is a matter of amazement. Not only did he paint, he seems to have done everything. That one individual at a time like that could do so many different things is truly amazing. I am not a specialist for paintings. I can't really judge the quality of his painting. But it is obvious that amateurs could never paint like that.

There is another anecdote in one of the books written by a foreigner. It goes like this: One person in Drepung monastery did not agree that GC was a great painter. He challenged GC to paint better than him. This man painted a mouse on the table. A cat mistook it for a real mouse and jumped on it. GC, in his turn, painted a flower. Butterflies landed on the painting. Not only did his painting *look real*, it also *smelled* like the flower! There is such an anecdote, an anecdote of them having had a painting competition...

TAPE 2

Why did he go from Lhasa to India?

India is the source of Buddhism; just as the snow mountains are the source of river water. Tibetans normally went to India for pilgrimage. There are stories of lamas or aristocrats having visited India at different points of time. GC said that he had a wish to visit India from early on. But I think that GC's India visit became possible due to the assistance from Rahul [the Indian Buddhist scholar and political activist Rahul Sankrityayan]. This is important. Later, there were different stories about the nature of their relations. Whatever the case may be, the India visit changed GC's life completely. That is important. People say that from an early time, GC... his reason for going to India was mainly pilgrimage... but later, it transpired that GC went there not only for pilgrimage. He visited all kinds of places for research. But you can't ask anyone the true subject of his research, whether it is history, or literature or something else. It is very difficult to ask this sort of questions to researchers. The researchers themselves are often not very sure of it either. It is very difficult to get a person to actually tell you, what he is researching...

GC's anthropological descriptions of India, what impression did this reading make on you?

In his writings on India [See 'GC in Horkhang'], GC often talks about his ideas regarding the Tibetan culture and makes comparisons. I like this part very much. But in his 'Travel Guide to the Holy Places of India', he describes the pilgrim sites he had visited in India. This makes no particular impression on me, the reason probably being because I don't have a deep understanding of Buddhism. I can't identify much with this. Of course, a practicing Buddhist will be very happy to travel to an important pilgrim site. But as for me, even if I went to India today, it would be there as a tourist. This is what has become of me now... I am not religious-minded...

In his other texts, there are passages that describe the Tibetan people and make comparisons between the Tibetan scholars' understanding of things, and the reality as GC has experienced and seen it in India. There are passages that describe our position in the world and tell us what the most precious things really are for us [Tibetans]. There are passages that tell us that it is not enough to hold something precious. Rather, we must understand its significance in the world's context? He makes an open-minded study of this. This is very useful for me in that it gives me courage to think independently. I went to Bodhgaya. It has beautiful art there. It is a very spiritual place. But I can't identify very much with it. Many people of my generation, who have been to school, would probably be like me. I believe that GC was not against

Buddhism. Being a highly realized person, he was questioning the practice of mixing materialism with spirituality. That's all he did. One can't say materialism per se is bad. Materialism is good and important in its own rights. However, spirituality should be practiced in its purity. As a highly realized person, he was saying this. I see no contradictions between the two. He was mainly teaching us about the world. I can see this. What he taught us is what all school children are taught in western countries. These days, the Tibetan children learn this in school. The earth is round and so on and so forth [See 'GC's articles in the Tibet Mirror']. But we did not know this at that time. That is why his aim was to teach us about the world.

On the other hand, Indian culture... Since GC was a true Buddhist believer and non-sectarian, he studied the Buddhist culture, whether he found this in India or Tibet. He worked very hard. He traveled everywhere in India, with all the heat, rain, hunger, etc. [See interview: Jamyang Norbu] Why did he make such a huge effort? Because, he cherished culture in general, not only the Tibetan culture, but the cultures of the whole world. Ordinary Tibetans say, 'The Indian people will research and preserve their own culture. What business was it of GC to research the Indian culture?' This is a wrong thinking. Buddhism came to Tibet from India and not the other way round. Nowadays, foreigners study Tibetan culture. Their aim is to introduce Tibetan culture to foreign countries. But their effort has the side effect of helping in promoting our own culture. The benefit is mutual.

In the case of GC... Buddhism had gone out of existence in India and Indians were no longer taking interest in Buddhism, which we thought was pitiable from the Buddhist point of view. It is not useful for world peace to engage in doctrinal debates between the Buddhist and non-Buddhist. In the past, we were not educated enough. While the Buddhists have a responsibility to live up to the teaching of Buddhism, non-Buddhists have a responsibility to follow the tenets of their respective faiths. This, I think, was his idea. He was a highly realized Buddhist. People don't seem to like highly realized beings.

What are the most important aspects in GC's works?

Numerous books and other works of GC have been published. As a rule, Tibetans like his works. I have not known any Tibetan, who did not like his works. GC felt at the time that if he made the Tibetan people aware of their past glory, they would develop pride in their country. He did this very passionately. This comes through in all of his works. He does not go about repeating what other people have said. He writes his own thoughts, which are vast and original. I see this in every letter and word of his writings...

Then, his Tibetan writing... we are particularly conscious of this, although the older generation may not be so. As I stated earlier, all our school textbooks were translations of Chinese texts. They dealt only with political matters, political heroes and class struggles as their main themes. But when I first read GC's works and other older Tibetan texts, I felt I was reading books that were not written in *pure* Tibetan. Pure Tibetan, I felt, should be written like our school textbooks. As I studied and wrote more extensively, I realized that our school textbooks were merely translations of texts from another language [mainly Chinese]. By and by, as we started comparing the writing styles, GC's style of writing impressed us so deeply that we felt he could very well be, as my friends put it, the inventor of Tibetan writing tradition.

His very style of writing, the art of writing, is so special. His ideas are special. These are some of his main qualities. Among his writings, I like his poems the most. I like his verses, his short poetic pieces, etc. I like his poems very much. Some of his poems talk about his feelings, others are words of wisdom supported by logic, and still others are just stories [See 'GC in Horkhang']. This is one thing. And it is not that his works were valid only during his lifetime, in the 1940s. One can always learn new things from his writings, no matter in which period one reads them.

Among this writings, his poems are the ones that I can relate to best. Through his poems run the threads of the Tibetan people's common experience. Take the example of his poem on the snow lion, entitled *Himalaya Tenchoy* [See 'GC in Horkhang']. This poem is considered to be very famous for many reasons, but the wrong reasons. Of course, GC's style of writing and ideas are good. He is talking about the snow lion of our *mind*, not about the *real* snow lion, wandering the mountains in flesh and blood. Some people claim that GC has written the poem from a scientific perspective. I don't think this is the right way to perceive this poem... his poems reflect his individuality. Whatever scholastic work you produce, it must show the height of your own intellectual talent. Whether you write a treatise on the *Sutras* [Buddhist texts] or on Tantrism [a special spiritual practice], it must show the best of your own intellectual qualities. He had written such verses.

The *Sutras* and Tantrism are the teaching of the Lord Buddha. We cannot change the teaching of the Buddha. GC said, our works should reflect the best of our individual talents. The teaching of the Buddha is something that we can talk about, discuss and contemplate on for generations on end. But you can also show your individual qualities in discussing the teaching of the Buddha. GC's works are not necessarily about religion. They are also about his experience in life. This is a unique quality in him. He is special, both in terms of his ideas and in terms of his style of writing. Our mainstream scholars would preface every piece of literary work by stating that they were not going to write anything that had not been written by bygone scholars already. This basically means they are just repeating what the others have said before them [this literary custom is also an old convention, establishing the writer's humility]. GC, on the other hand, believes that any work, whether on the *Sutras* or on Tantrism, must also reflect the original intellectual quality of the writer himself. This is an innovation in the Tibetan literary tradition. GC believes that one must write from ones own experiences, too.

In the Tibetan context, was GC overly self-confident, then?

In the West it would not be considered very bad to question, debate or even refuse the ideas of your own teacher. If a student questions you and says, 'your idea is not good. I will improve on it,' you would be happy. You would think him a good student. Whereas in Tibet, we would... some Tibetan writers had written that GC had disowned his own teacher Sherab Gyatso [by telling his teacher, he knew more than him], and that this act showed GC disrespect and that GC was a dog. Some people have written things like this. It shows the different perspectives of Tibetan people. But the main issue here is one of contradiction between the 'old' and the 'new... In the past, though... well, generally, many great Asian intellectuals, with firm grounding in their own culture and good knowledge of the cultures of others, were

able to reconcile the two. If you can't reconcile the two, you lean either completely to the 'new' or to the 'old'. In this way, the link between the two cultures is severed. This is it. What should I say now?

The conflict between the old and new is very interesting.

Now this is about the old and new. Generally, when I look at the Asians, I see this trend. With the advent of European culture, their ideas, technology, etc., Asians seem to renounce many aspects of their own culture. Under such circumstances, many people lean either completely to the 'new' or to the 'old'. It takes someone with vast knowledge in both cultures to reconcile the two and enrich one's own culture. As for GC, his knowledge of Tibetan culture is indisputable. He is the best. He has reached the level of the 'Doctor of Divinity' [the *geshe* title], although he has not sat for examinations for this degree. And, he learned foreign cultures in India. This is the main thing he did. When he was in Labrang monastery, he had seen photos here and there, met a foreign missionary [the American Griebenow, called Sherab Thanpel by the Tibetans], etc. He took a bite then. But the main thing is that he went to India and worked with Indian [e.g. Rahul Sankrityayan] and European [e.g. George Roerich] scholars. This is how he learned about the new cultures. He wanted to learn the methods and ideas of others and use them to take our people to a new direction.

Did he get involved in Tibetan politics?

What do you mean by the word 'involve'? What level of involvement are you talking about? He advised people as to what should be done for the wellbeing of Tibet. This is not an 'involvement'. It is just talking about politics. Involvement means direct action, like demonstrations with a lot of people, writing and putting up wall posters, etc. This is the level. He did take interest in politics. He would try to find out what was happening around him. To the intellectuals, the social happenings were as interesting as daily temperatures. Tibetan doctors would diagnose the disease by checking the pulse. The intellectuals are like the pulse. They would take interest in everything. GC's involvement was not only with politics. He got involved in learning the Indian culture. He got involved in the newspaper launched by others [The 'Tibet Mirror' of Babu Tharchin]. He got involved in spiritual matters, too. He was translating cultural works. He was doing *everything*. Some of his projects may have been for livelihood. But most of his works... it seems he was able to accomplish anything he put his mind to. Later, after his return to Tibet [1946], he wasn't able to achieve much. He would think about everything. He would try to find out what every family in a township was doing. For him, it was an act of learning about his people. Should this be termed as getting involved in politics? I don't know. He did take interest. He would take responsibility. He would talk and discuss what was best for us. This is it.

Tibetans in Tibet and in exile seem very proud of GC; can you comment on that?

There is a Tibetan saying, 'When you are in possession of a gem, you do not appreciate its value. Its value will dawn on you only after it is lost.' This is what happened to GC. People did not know his value at that time... but was the Tibetan government really afraid of him? If the government was afraid, it must have been, because they suspected that there was something behind him. The Tibetan government would not be afraid of GC as a person. Probably, the government suspected that there was an organization behind

him. But the government wouldn't be afraid of him as a person. Later, writers and biographers kept on churning out all kinds of stories, the cumulative effect of which was to create this illusion of the Tibetan government being afraid of him [See interviews: Amdo Champa, Tashi Tsering]. Some writers say this kind of things. If the Tibetan government were afraid of him, they would not have given him good facilities. But he was made a political prisoner. He was just an ordinary man in threadbare *chuba* [Tibetan dress]. I doubt the Tibetan government was afraid of him. Sometimes, people say all kinds of things. I don't know what to say. Later, there were many changes. On the one hand, the ideas that he propounded during his time proved true through the years. So, they had to give him recognition. Systems, or ideas, or isms must be tested many times. Only after many tests did GC's knowledge or his ideas or his sense of the Tibetan culture become the common heart of our people. This is what happened. Didn't it? I think so. If something is genuine, it survives, even if it totters all the way. Now this is complicated, very difficult to talk about. What should I say? Death and impermanence are the nature of life. I don't know. He did not live very long after his release. Are you asking me why he died so soon after his release?

He drank and smoked after his release from prison. Was it because he lost hope?

We hear cases of businessmen killing themselves by jumping from a height, when they lose all their wealth. Although they can earn material wealth and become rich again, they decide to commit suicide all the same. But if one loses ideas, one is sure to become insane. He lost all his writings, his ideas, his hopes, his historical and cultural materials. He put a lot of trust in the Tibetan government. And, he lost all his hopes. This must have driven him to insanity. He became ill. I am not sure. Drinking harms the health. Smoking harms the health. Overeating also harms the health. His time was up. That's it.

To give you an anecdote: This happened sometime in 1987. One nomad told me this about Thondup Gyal. The nomad was from Gangya in Rebkong. He told me this after Thondup Gyal had committed suicide. He said that the other day he had heard about a good Tibetan man, having committed suicide. The nomad was not educated. He would not really know Thondup Gyal. He said he had climbed the hill to offer incense for Thondup Gyal. The reason was that he had heard that a good Tibetan man had committed suicide. I felt happy that Tibetans cared for their own people. Although he did not know who Thondup Gyal really was, he had nevertheless gone to make the incense offering only because he had heard of the death of someone. As I contemplated on this, I realized that his action typified an aspect of the Tibetan personality. In the Tibetan community, GC has become a kind of idea, an abstract terminology. This is very important. He has become a sun that shines the warmth of its benediction on all. This is a blessing.

Briefly, what do you like most about GC?

In the 20th century, when GC lived, before the 1950s, there was no stability in the world. The first and second world wars were fought. There was upheaval in the world. The state of affairs in Tibet was deplorable then. Tibet was in need of someone like GC. And, he came. In the future, it is possible that scholars like him will be born in Tibet, in any part of Tibet. And, it will be easier for them to travel to

India and anywhere else. They will probably fly in their private aircraft. The fact that he came in that period makes him special. Now, we cannot recall that era. What a loss! He is unique.

If you met GC, what would you like to ask him or tell him?

His question is bizarre... GC's era is extremely important. Now he is gone. He won't come back. The Scholars, heroes, generals, politicians, etc. in that part of Tibetan history are near to me. That was a very important era in Tibetan history. If I met him, I would say 'Tashi Delek! Care for coffee?' That is all I would say. If he was around... [Pause] His reincarnation was born, did you know? His consciousness came back...

...where?

GC died in 1951. Didn't he? And, in 1953, Thondup Gyal was born.

Really?

Yes. Most probably, there is a connection between the two. Because, Thondup Gyal's activities... translating the *Ramayana* and *Shakunkala*... he completed many of GC's unfinished works. It is not for nothing that he completed those works. A reincarnation should be like that, completing the works of the earlier body. Spiritually, one can explain it like this. But he was always facing obstacles. Thondup Gyal died at the age of 33. Probably at that age. At the age of 32...

TSERING SHAKYA



Recorded on the 12th of March 2003 in East-London, UK

Born 1959 in Tibet. His family fled in 1967 at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. He studied History and Social Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. Author of several books on Tibet and Tibetan literature. Among them 'The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet since 1947'. His mother used to have GC as guest in her 'chang' (beer)-shop in Lhasa. Presently working at the Institute of Asian Research of the University of British Columbia (CA). English, in the film.

First question for the record, your name, and age please?

Tsering Shakya, I'm 44 years old, living in London,

Can you give me a bit of a personal background how you came to know of GC?

It is an interesting thing; I personally became aware of GC, his work and his role in Tibetan history through my own interest in Tibetan history from turn of the 20th century to the present. When in 1980 I was in Kathmandu with my family, there were a number of articles in the English language magazine, called 'Tibetan Review' on GC. Although I have heard of his name before, I never paid much attention. One of the articles was written by K. Dhondup. It was a very interesting the way he wrote about GC as modern revolutionary figure in Tibetan history, also the fact GC was jailed and imprisoned. GC was portrayed as a lost figure in Tibetan history and that was very interesting, because as a young Tibetan at that time, we were always looking at our own history at what happened to Tibet from the turn of the 20th century till today, about why Tibet lost its independence. So there was a group of young people about my age, who were interested in looking at our own history. So, reading this article was interesting to me, because at the same time I was also looking at the British records on Tibetan history of the same period [1903-51]. Coincidentally, when I was reading that article I happened to mention it to my mother, who was with me and who had just come from Tibet [as a refugee]. So, while I am reading about this person, she casually mentioned, oh.... yes, I knew this person, he used to come to our house to drink *chang* [Tibetan beer]. My mother, in the past, had a chang-shop in Lhasa; she was selling *chang*. My family was into trading, doing business with Kalimpong [Tibetan-Indian border town] and my brothers were very connected with India at the time and with the Newar business, the Indian trading community in Kalimpong. We were a sort of cosmopolitan household. My brothers had traveled to India and had Muslim friends there, also Chinese friends and Indian friends, we sort of had connections to GC and India of that period. Anyway, my mother said to me, when GC returned to Tibet in the late 1940's [1946-51], he used to come to have *chang* at my place. But that was just a casual remark she made. That was my

personal knowledge of him. But of course my mother did not know much about him and his work in great detail...

What did she remember of him? Did you ask her?

Ah... of course she remembered him coming to our house to have *chang*, and of course she knew about his imprisonment and had heard the rumors of GC being whipped. So apart from that she didn't really have great details to tell me and... like many Tibetans they don't tell you into such great detail. Personally, she didn't know him that well. He was just a customer to have *chang*...

You just mentioned GC imprisonment, why was he imprisoned and when was that?

GC went to India in 1933 and was traveling for nearly 10 years in India and he returned to Tibet in the 1940's. And the Tibetan government suspected him to be one of the key figures, involved in a political party that was founded in Kalimpong in India. Kalimpong, at the time, was the center of the Tibetan community in India. There were a number of very prominent and influential Tibetans, some from aristocratic families, who were opposed to the existing regime in Tibet [TS is referring to Changlochen, Rapga Pangdatsang and Kunphela]. (Image 20: Chensel Kunphela, 1940's). They set up a party, called 'Tibet Improvement Party'. This party was seen as a revolutionary party. There was a suspicion that they might have been communists or linked with the Chinese Communist Party. Anyways, it was a sort of a revolutionary party. And there was the Tibetan government's suspicion that GC was a member of that party and that he had returned to Tibet to instigate a revolution to overthrow the existing political system. So, on that ground he was charged of political conspiracy to overthrow the existing regime [See interview: Hugh Richardson].



How did the Tibetan government come to know about this party?

At that time, it was the late 1940's, the Tibetan situation was quite complicated, and on the one hand Tibet was really virtually an independent country, with its own total control of its foreign policy and internal affairs. On the other hand, the Chinese government was increasingly putting pressure on the Tibetan government and they were making a lot of efforts to encroach and gain Tibet into a Chinese nation state. Another aspect was that the British were very suspicious of any political activists in Tibet. In that these activists were sort of crating an instability or changes in Tibet, and would therefore be a danger to British India. So, a person like GC was carefully watched. And another aspect, why the British would be suspicious of GC was his personal association with some leading figures of the international movements. For example Rahul Sankrityayan, who was in fact known, in the inner circles, as Rahulji. He was one of the key figures in the international movement. He was reported to be a Communist and opposed to British rule in India. He and GC established a very close friendship. They traveled in Tibet together doing research into Buddhist texts. Rahul was interested in looking at ancient Buddhist manuscript that were lost in India and said to be found in [the monasteries of] Tibet. So he and GC were very close [See:

'Rahul on GC'. That would have meant that the British would have been quite interested in GC and Rahulji. Rahulji, after he traveled in Tibet, immediately on his return to India, he was arrested by the British and was imprisoned.

This could be one reason, why the British might have already been suspicious of GC's political leanings or even actions against British Rule in India. Other aspects are, as I mentioned before, that GC was active in a Tibetan political group, which was trying to establish a new system in Tibet. They wanted to overthrow the existing system, the Tibetan government. People like Khunpela, Changlochen and Pangdatsang [the founders of the 'Tibet Improvement Party'] were very prominent figures at the time, and were viewed by the British and the Tibetans, as a threat to the stability in Tibet. They were said to have connections with the Chinese Kuomintang Party and some believed that they might have an affiliation with the Communist movement [in China]. So, with these two sorts of things in mind, someone like GC would have aroused the suspicion of the British police...

You have gone through all these Political Files of the British; tell me?

What you see in these British files is the intense interest the British government had for these activists, these figures. Their letters were opened, when they went to Calcutta they were followed... when Pangdatsang went to a printing shop [in Calcutta] to print the membership forms, he was followed to the printing shop, the [British-Indian] police kept monitoring everything... the printers were interviewed, the letters between the printers and Pangdatsang were all intercepted, copies were kept in the British archives etc. So, there was this intense monitoring of their activities. This sort of shows how important and significant, these figures were at the time in this region [on the border to Tibet]. The British kept these files. [In Tibet] we didn't have these sorts of records. Only today we find these records of their activities, but only in the British sources... there are a few references to GC's relationship with this group [Tibet Improvement Party]. There are reports of his meetings with Pangdatsang. It was reported by the police [in Kalimpong] and went to the British mission in Lhasa.

Did you ever see the party logo [that was designed by GC]?

Yes, I said before that the British intercepted all their mails, and one of the things they had intercepted was the communication between Pangdatsang and the printer in Calcutta [who reported to the police]. There, the police learned for the first time the name of the party and they found the forms for the membership. Together with the membership application forms they also found this very interesting logo for the party. This immediately alarmed the British police, in that the logo of the party indicated their sort of Socialist or Marxist leanings... it had a hammer [actually a sword] and sickle in the logo... with a loom... the loom probably represents the workers and the other one [the sickle] the farmers, so there is some indications in that logo that they adopted... that the political inclinations of these leaders were towards the left if not Communism...

How do you see their aims, what were their ideas?

What is interesting... we do not... of course the logo has some indication that they thought towards the left and the use of the hammer [actually a sword] indicates that they shared some of the Marxist values or aspirations, but in reality, you have to look at them not as the agents of either the Kuomintang party or the Communists or agents of the British. There was a lot of suspicion, as to whom they represented. Whether they were acting just on their own initiative, seeking the creation of a new Tibetan society, or agents of foreign forces [Chinese or British], to overthrow the Tibetan government. In reality, I think they were sort of Tibetan nationalists. When you look at these figures, Pangdatsang, Khunpela and Changlochen, they lived in India, they traveled to cosmopolitan centers, such as Calcutta. They were aware of the tremendous changes in China and India. Also in the 1930's and 40's there was a very significant political movement in India, in terms of nationalism and independence [from British Rule]. All this... they would have been aware of the tremendous change in other societies. So, when they look back to Tibet, they see the stagnation, the social inequality, the injustice and the antiquated political system... and therefore it would have been natural for them to seek some kind of change to alter the existing society [in Tibet]. However, it has to be pointed out that these people were not just intellectuals or common or ordinary people, who wanted to change society. They were the elite of the Tibetan society, they have been members of the aristocracy [in Lhasa], members of the previous government, and they had positions... So, they also sort of had their own personal grievances with the [existing] Tibetan government. For example, Khunpela and Changlochen had been banished from Tibet. They were living in exile [in Kalimpong] after the death of the 13th Dali Lama. So, they had their personal grievances against the government in Lhasa. So, coupled with their social and political motivations of change, there is also a personal grievance against the last government. And these two aspects cannot be really separated.

Now, what was GC relationship? If I said, these people were politicians, who had personal grievances... but GC didn't have any personal grievances. So, how does GC fit into this? You can say he was very different. GC involvement was very unique. You cannot say that he was motivated by personal grievances against the Tibetan government or the Lamas. GC can be seen as... really, as an intellectual figure, who was to some extent motivated by social change, who wanted to promote social change. Because he was an ordinary monk, who came to India and he saw the changes and transformations that were taking place in the world. And he wanted to replicate that sort of change in Tibet. And so, his position within the party was slightly different from the other figures... GC reflects on the stagnation of Tibet. You can see this in his writings, his poems. He reflects on this change and the need for change in Tibet. His motivation for his involvement in this political party would have been purely sort of intellectual and as a social reformer, rather than being based on a political quest for power or a personal grievance against the Lhasa government.

Tell me about Kalimpong, what was going on in those days?

At the turn of the 20th century until about, let's say, 1959, Kalimpong was really the window to the outside world. It was the center through which the outside world was revealed to Tibet. There was an interesting mix in the community Kalimpong. Because many Westerners, missionaries, scholars, and

Tibetologist, who wanted to go to Tibet, but were unable to enter Tibet, often made Kalimpong their base. Therefore there was an interesting mix of the community that was being formed in Kalimpong. Also the people from the Tibetan aristocracy, who were in exile or had problems with the Tibetan government, settled in Kalimpong. Then all the pilgrims from all over the Tibetan world, who were either going to India or going back to Tibet, often stopped there. So Kalimpong sort of formed a center of Tibetan trade and also of cultural influence. It was a zone of contact between the different ethnic groups, different religious groups and of Tibet with the outside world. So Kalimpong had a very significant position in Tibetan history.

Was this influence also reflected in economical terms?

Yes, you have Kalimpong as the center of wealth, too. It was a major trading center, much of the Tibetan export went through Kalimpong, imports into Tibet also went through Kalimpong. It was the center of the Tibetan economic trade that naturally attracted many wealthy merchants. Like the Pangdatsang family [originally from East-Tibet, Kham], they were considered to be the Rockfeller's of Tibet. So, they had their base in Kalimpong [in the 1930's/40's, it was especially the wool trade that thrived]. Today, when you go to Kalimpong, you will see some of the locations, named in terms of former warehouses [and godowns] of the wealthy Tibetan merchants. You can see the Pangdatsang warehouse, the Sandutsang warehouse, the Reting warehouse, so these locations... often defined by the Tibetan name of these wealthy merchants.

Tell me about Babu Tharchin, who had this newspaper in Kalimpong?

Another reason, why Kalimpong was a very interesting and significant place for the Tibetan world... Kalimpong was the center of [modern] printing [technologies] of the 20th century. They used modern printing technology in Tibetan society [for the first time] and that is, why he is a significant figure. He is affectionately known as Tharchin Babu. He was from Himachal [in the North of India]. He moved to Kalimpong in 1925. He was a Christian; his own religious faith was Christian. He worked with Christian missionaries, initially with Scottish missionaries... In 1925 Tharchin founded the only Tibetan newspaper at the time, called 'Tibet Mirror Press' [Tib.: *Melong*], which was published until about 1972, 73. At that time, it was the only Tibetan newspaper, and one of the significant contributors was of course GC [See: 'GC in Tibet Mirror']. Also, I think, GC and Tharchin would have many things in common. They were kindred spirits in their outlook on life. Although they differed in their religious faith, nevertheless, their understanding of Tibet, to realize Tibet's need for change and trying to promote a new Tibetan cultural tradition and vitality, all this...

This Tibetan newspaper was significant on many levels. Firstly, it was the only source for outside news for Tibetan readers. It not only had news of Europe, the West, the Second World War, but also about what was happening in China... the civil war in China... the nationalist movement in India... the paper was a first hand source for Tibetan readers. Secondly, the paper was interesting, because it was the first sort of proper newspaper. When you look at some of the back issue of the 'Tibet Mirror', there was even a financial page. There was a very detailed list of the actual prices for musk, or wool or yak-tails and the

effect of the price in the open market... before, Tibetans did not have that kind of information. They would arrive in Kalimpong with their goods, and they would then have to depend on intermediate traders of the Marwari merchants to sell their goods. With the newspaper, the Tibetan traders suddenly had instant information about the exact prices of the goods they were bringing from Tibet or the goods they were taking back to Tibet. From gold, to wool, to yak-tail, all the prices were listed in that section. And thirdly, the 'Tibet Mirror' was significant in terms of the innovation of the Tibetan language, content and style. Because in a newspaper one has to write short articles and in a [simple] language, which is understood by a greater number of people, than just by the religious elite. So all these facts combined made this newspaper very significant for the Tibetan society.

Can you give me an idea of its distribution?

Although... I think the newspaper was not published in a great number. The actual number was maybe around 1000 published copies. Actually the readership was far greater than the actual number printed. For example, one paper could have 10, 20 readers; it would be distributed among the people; it could be read communally. So... actually the readership was much bigger than the number of publications.

Do you know anything about GC contributions, what kind of topics would he cover?

What is the interesting thing about GC contributions... his articles were rather provocative. He provokes the readers. One of his articles in the 1930's was, 'Is the earth round or flat?' For this, you have to remember that the majority of the Tibetans, the Lamas, the elite, the scholars, still believed in Buddhist cosmology. They believed that the world was resting on a tortoise and this kind of things... it was not really accepted that the world was round. GC provocatively challenges this believe [the world being flat], using modern knowledge, he had gained while being in India, and provokes Tibetan readers into that. Another aspect, he looks at the origins of the Tibetan script, which is said to be based on the *Soong* [?] script and was invented by Tonmi Sambhota, he questions and challenges this tradition. GC 's articles and contributions were very short articles, but rather provocative. In one article he finishes with a verse, saying, 'Although I have done this research and revealed, what is true, of course, the conservative readers in Tibet will not heed my advice, because of my humble status.' So he did this sort of contributions... Both Tharchin and GC were provocative in their articles. At one time, Tharchin published a drawing of the 3 monkeys, which were the emblem of the Gandhian movement. One monkey was covering his mouth, one covering his eyes, and one his ears. Tharchin asked his readers to write stories based on that image. Of course he waited for contributions to come, but no contributions came from the readers. So, Tharchin imagined himself as a reader of his own paper and contributed an article. In his article he said that these three figures represented Tibet... 'Don't look outside, don't listen to the outside, and don't speak with the outside...' This sort of reflects on Tibet's isolation and concept of tradition. The newspaper was constantly being provocative in its choice of articles. Another important and significant thing of the Tibetan mirror was, that it also focused on the unity of Tibet. Because of the vastness of Tibet, it was never really focused as one place. So what you see in the newspaper is, that Tharchin tries to place all the Tibetan speaking population, the whole Tibetan world, in one place, through his newspaper: you have news from Kham [East], news from Sikkim [South], news from Bhutan [Southeast], news from Ladakh

[West], news from Amdo [Northeast], news from U-Tsang [Center]. You have all the Tibetans speaking people being presented as *one* in that newspaper. That is very significant for the Tibetan formation of an identity later, that this whole territory is one people... of course Tibet always had to have a kind of vision of a Great Tibet. You can see that in the Tibetan historical writings. But somehow, the news from all these [Tibetan] areas, were very significant to Tibetan readers.

GC life is bracketed by two significant events...

I think the first half of the 20th century, when you look back on that part of history; it was a period of wasted years. Tibet had a real opportunity to maintain its independence or exert some sort of independent personality. At the time of GC 's birth in 1903 you have this increasing encroachment or this intrusion of foreign forces into Tibet. And this real threat to Tibetan independence... when you look at Central Tibet, 1904, the British invaded Tibet [the Younghusband invasion 1903/04]. The 13th Dali Lama had to go into exile [to Mongolia and China]. And 1950, the time of GC's death, the Chinese invaded Tibet, and this time the 14th Dali Lama had to go into exile [to India]. So, that period was the most crucial period in Tibetan history. Because China had really not much power at the turn of the 20th century, despite their claim that Tibet was part of China... but to enforce such a claim... the internal weaknesses of China made it impossible. Secondly, the threat of the British... if China had come to Tibet [in 1904], the British would have done everything possible to repel the Chinese invasion. So, that was the period when Tibet achieved a relative freedom from outside intrusions. There was a balance of power between the two major opposing forces: British India and the Chinese government. If Tibet, during that crucial period, actually had the wisdom and the ability, I mean the aristocracy, the elite... to exert its independence; it really could have achieved that independence...

Why did the attempts to reform the Old Tibet fail?

I think for Tibet, the first half of the 20th century was a missed opportunity. In the sense that Tibet should have been aware of the changing system, the transformation that the world was going through in the first half of the 20th century. There were many nations being reborn. For example, after the First World War, the League of Nations established the right of self-determination, and through that principle many countries came into an independent status. There is evidence that the Tibetans were aware of the formation of the League of Nations. They made enquiries about joining the League of Nations. But at the same time, they were reluctant to participate in an international forum. With the fear that somehow, that exposure... the greater exposure to the outside world, would lead to dramatic changes internally. And so they were sort of balancing between the exposure to outside world and possible repercussions inside Tibet. I think that the conservative attitude, both of the Tibetan aristocracy and particularly the religious community's fear of change, hampered any kind of change that might have happened. For example, the 13th Dalai Lama... in 1910/11, the sort of decaying Chinese government was trying to re-assert its authority in Tibet, invading in Tibet. The 13th Dali Lama had to go into in exile. Being in exile, he became aware of the tremendous changes in India, in terms of modern technology and the political systems. So he would have been aware of all these changes. When he got back to Tibet, he was trying to initiate certain reforms in the Tibetan political and social system. He sent a few students to England and

he tried to change the system of the [Tibetan] government. He tried to establish schools, modeled on the English schools and he even invited British educationalists to work in Tibet. But these schools were closed, because of the resistance from the monastic community. These were really a sense of missed opportunities... had this process of change or rather, this slow process of change, proceeded, by 1950, Tibet would have had a greater exposure to the outside world...

In which sense do you think GC fits into this whole tragedy, which you just described?

GC's life for the first half of the 20th century... He was born in 1904 and died in 1950 [1951]; it was a period of missed opportunities in Tibet. When you look at the biography of GC, we see that in his own life there is a mirror of the failure of Tibet. Two things about GC's tragic life and Tibet's tragic fate seem to be very much related. Here was a man, who was brought up in a traditional society. He had a monastic education and was very well versed in traditional cultural values. Now he comes out to India and he sees the world that has changed, and he reflects on his own society and the need for change there. So you have two things in GC, one is his personal and intellectual transformation, his way of looking at things, and secondly his reflections on the nature of the Tibetan society and the political conditions of Tibet. In intellectual terms... what he has is, that GC, when he came to India, he immediately mixes with a group of Indian scholars with a western education, like: Rahulji, Mukherjee and Kanwal Krishna [who were all part of the expedition through Tibet in 1938]. They were all internationalists, who were educated in the western tradition. And then GC worked with George Roerich [a Russian scholar], who is a sort of Western academic, interested in Tibetology. And GC comes to India at a time, when there was very much excitement among Western scholars about Tibet. [This excitement] was partly due to the discovery of rare and ancient Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang, which really had the first authentic historical records of Tibet of the Imperial period from the 7th to the 9th century. This documentary evidence had never been available to Tibetan historians before, and the discovery meant that many Western scholars were interested in looking at these texts and studying them.

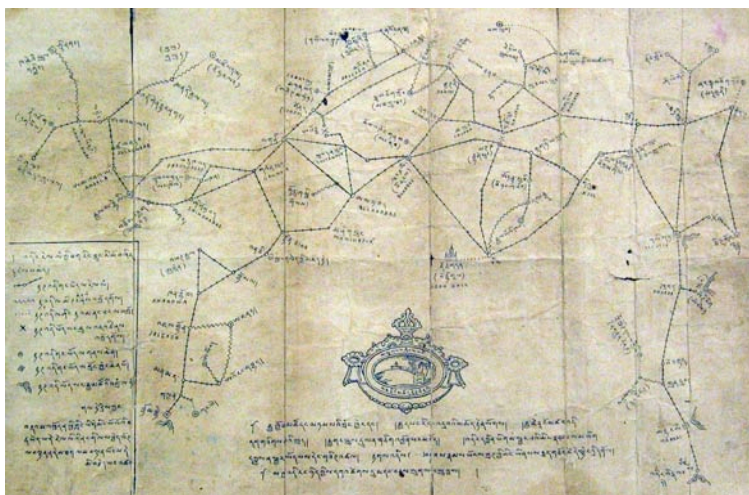
GC was one of the first Tibetan scholars to have access to these materials. And to him, it revealed a complete version of Tibetan history he hadn't been aware of. On his part, there was a reflection on what he had read before and what he had been learning by then. Another aspect was that in India, he found a revival of Buddhism through the Mahabodhi Society. At that time [1930's/40's], this was a significant social movement in India and Sri Lanka. They contributed significantly to the revival of Buddhist tradition in India and also to the Buddhist recovery of important Buddhist sacred sites in India [e.g. Bodhgaya. See interview: Golok Jigme]. So GC got caught up in that kind of social movement... on one hand you had these academic and Western scholars, and on the other hand there was this social and reformist movement in India. I think this had made a great impact on GC's way of thinking and the way he looked at Tibetan history and tradition.

Did he try to communicate his experiences back to Tibet?

As I said, the fact that GC wrote for the 'Tibet Mirror, required a different kind of writing. The newspaper was not written for the monk scholars, the Lama community. GC was writing for the general readers.

What you see in his writing is rather provocative, his poems... particularly this poem he wrote back to Labrang monastery [Northeast-Tibet], which stressed the wonders, he was seeing in the outside world [India], and the fact that the Tibetans were not aware of these changes, and the fact that they wouldn't believe it, even if they saw these changes. It was almost, as if he was provoking them... you are so isolated and conservative, but there is a tremendous change in the outside world. In one of his poems, he said that tradition of Tibet... he said, 'Everything that is new, is the creation and the work of the devil, and everything that is old, is the work of the Buddha.' Somehow, this unreflected reverence and belief in tradition as unchangeable, sort of irritated GC. He provoked the readers with his ideas.

Another thing is, that GC is interested in the practical use of his work. For example, when you look at his 'Travel Guide to the Holy Places in India' it is different... (Image 21: GC's map of train connections to Buddhist pilgrim sites in India, 1940's). There are many books on Tibetan pilgrimage sites. But often these guides are only concerned with



the sites itself... Although they were called 'guidebooks', they weren't, compared to what we understand to be a modern guidebook. What you have in his... for example... in GC's book you have a very simple timetable for trains, or maps, or the correct names of the places [in India] and a description of how to get there, and how long it takes... These are simple facts he gives, but they are very important. That is why GC's book is still used today. Of course, the train timetable no longer exists, but nevertheless, people still use his book. When you look at his historical works... it is like going back to the sources... He uses the sources to look at paintings, at Tibetan dresses and the costumes of the ancient Tibetan kings... So that is quite interesting, he does not begin with conjectures or assumptions. GC is looking at something tangible and he is drawing conclusion in his history.

People like GC didn't just see things; they were *influenced* by what they saw...

What is interesting... both about GC and Tharchin Babu [the editor of the 'Tibet Mirror'], they were the most significant Tibetan figures in the cultural history of Tibet during the first half of the 20th century. They were unique in the sense that they were living outside their cultural world [Tibet]; they both lived in India. They were exposed to Western traditions, Western cultures, a new thinking about Asian traditions, Buddhism and history... and they were absorbing and integrating these changes... reflecting on the Tibetan tradition. GC was not the first Tibetan to travel to India. There were thousands of Tibetans who went on a pilgrimage to Bodhgaya and the other Buddhist pilgrimage sites. There ere thousands of Tibetans living in India... there were Tibetan aristocratic children, being educated in British Indian public schools [in Darjeeling and Kalimpong], they knew English. So they had the same exposure as GC did.

But what you see in the others, is this almost non-reflective, unconcerned... they were unaware of the significance of their own position. Whereas GC, for example, immediately recognized the importance of the Dunhuang manuscripts, to re-access Tibetan history. This was very interesting for him. Whereas the other Tibetans, who have worked with Western Tibetologist were unaware or unsure of the significance of these Tibetan historical writings...

The same probably goes with Tharchin too...

Tharchin was different. He was less concerned with history, but more about the future and the present. GC was much more interested about the beginnings of Tibet [especially the period from the 7th to the 9th century]. Tharchin, because of his conversion to Christianity and his faith, the origin of the Tibetan history or the religious traditions were not of great significance. For him, a new Tibet was much more important. Therefore his newspaper sort of has this social reformer's concern for promoting change in Tibet, and the aim that Tibetans should be exposed to the outside world... Tibetans should be aware of their own unity, of their own culture, and of creating a new outlook on Tibet. That was Tharchin's concern. But Tharchin still published many articles in his newspaper that dealt with history [See: 'GC in Tibet Mirror'].

Which, do you think were the key features in GC's life that influenced him the most?

I think GC, from his early childhood until the time he left for India, had a very traditional upbringing, comparable to any other Gelugpa monk, born at that time. Of course, people who knew him in Labrang [1920-27] testify his intelligence and brilliance, so there is some exceptional quality... all the people who knew him testified his unorthodox way of looking at Buddhist philosophy, Tibetan history, Tibetan literature and language... Why he went to India is quite interesting. To some extent, Tibetans have always looked to India, as the source of their own tradition; it was the sacred land, the holiest of all the holy places in the world. It is natural that GC, as a monk, would be aware of India and the early Buddhist history of India. In that sense he is not unique compared to any other Tibetan monk at that time. But what GC did, once he arrived in India, he very quickly stepped out of his own tradition, while all the other Tibetan monks and pilgrims remained embedded in their own [Tibetan] tradition. There seems to be not much change in their writings or their perception of Tibetan history and religion. But GC became very much aware of the deficiencies or the incorrect assumptions in the old Tibetan religious texts on Buddhism and about the history of Tibet... He quickly learned this from his encounters with Rahulji and Roerich and other scholars. In his writings you see this attempt to correct the imperfect knowledge, the errors... you see this in his writings. I would say, regarding his intellectual formation, actually, coming to India and meeting Rahulji, and going back to Tibet to search for the origin of the Tibetan sources... this transformation is reflected in his later works on Tibetan history...

TAPE 2

Rahul was a political activist, a philosopher, a Buddhist researcher – a contradiction?

See, in some ways, what Rahul [Sankrityayan] was doing, and what GC was doing later [in his historical writings], was very similar. It was an attempt to recover the own ancient tradition and what was thought to be lost, or imperfect assumptions about the past. So, they were both engaged in the recovery of the past, to give an identity to the present. Rahulji was in some way a communist, or atheist, but at the same time he was deeply, deeply concerned with the national identity of India, concerned with the Indian history, and the authenticity of the Indian tradition. In that sense, by looking into the past, he was really delving into India's history and tradition and identity. And this is very important and characteristic of any nationalist thinking, nationalists often look back on their own history to search for the roots of their present condition. So, Rahulji was... it's not surprising that Rahulji was interested in the ancient Indian history and the fact that he was engaged in researching the Buddhist tradition [of India]. Because there is... what you had in the 1920's and 30's in India, was almost a revival of Buddhism in India, it was the rediscovery of the old Indian Buddhist tradition, initiated by all the colonial and scholarly works done on the history of Buddhism and the archeology of the Buddhist sacred sites in India. All this had a tremendous impact on Rahul, and in turn, on GC himself. So in a way, both were seeking to regenerate their own society. In that sense, they were both interested in history, philosophical tradition... the indigenous tradition is very important in any nationalist thinking.

How did people like Tharchin, Rahul and also GC help to shape your own identity?

What you have to understand is, that Tibetans today, of my age, we are very concerned with Tibet's past, we often look into the past to analyze the sort of present problems of Tibet. Why has Tibet lost its independence? Why has Tibet not changed? Why was Tibet left behind? So in doing that, you look into history and you see figures like Tharchin Babu and GC emerging. And they provide some sort of inspiration to young Tibetans. In a sense, they represent to them... their thoughts and concerns are very similar to the present generation, who regards these people as incredibly unique figures, who were ahead of their time, who if we had listened to their advice, Tibet could have been saved... In this sense, they become sort of cultural and national heroes, because all other heroes, or figures of that period [1940's/50's], seem to have failed Tibet. Whereas their lives sort of represent the attempt to create a new Tibet. The rediscovery and the valorization of GC is very much associated with the Tibetan people, looking back into their own history, looking for a cultural figure or a hero of the immediate past...

Can you comment a bit on his skills as a painter, what does that tell us about GC?

You know, the sketchbook of GC you showed me today, I mean this is very interesting... GC's drawings... he sort of appears in the Tibetan context as a renaissance figure, he is profoundly accomplished in the philosophical knowledge of Buddhism, he can sketch and draw perfectly, moreover he introduces a new ways of drawing [the line drawings in his sketchbook]. Again, he is poet, a painter, a writer, and a philosopher... So, he embodies... the entire figure of GC embodies a renaissance figure in the Tibetan context. When you see his drawings for the first time... it's quite unusual, when you see these figures.

They are in an individual context... they are isolated figures; they are line drawings. We don't know why he kept this sketchbook. Were they part of a greater work he was planning, or were they just isolated sketches. And his figures are very realistic figures. In the traditional Tibetan Thangka painting, you don't have this kind of realistic figures. You rather have *symbols* or *categorical* figures, whereas in GC's line drawings you see that he is striving to draw *realistic* figures. There is another aspect of his line drawings; there is a resemblance of his figures to the ancient Buddhist cave drawings from Ajanta and Ellora [in India]. And then there is this portrait of Rhenok Kazi from Sikkim; it is like a photography. This portrait really shows his skill, and that he was an accomplished artist...

Did you know that GC was involved in art?

(Image 22: The portrait of Rhenok Kazi, a nobleman from Sikkim, 1930's). Of course, I have heard of him being a great artist. Because I... there was another connection of GC to my mother... my mother had told me that GC was very good at drawing nobles from Lhasa [all seem lost, except for the portrait of *Rhenok Kazi*]. I didn't really know what she meant, then. She said there was a very famous Indian merchant in Lhasa, who was importing dyes from India to Lhasa, and he wanted to have a label made, a unique logo for his dye... And he asked GC to design this logo. That's I knew he was drawing something...



What happened to GC between 1946 and 1951? His was arrested, then prison...

When you look at GC's life, I mean, especially the last few years of his life and the time of his death, it is a very tragic story. There was a man, who was a brilliant scholar and who had so much to offer to Tibet. And now, when we look back on his writings, his incredible brilliance comes through in his work, yet, such a figure died led a tragic life in poverty, far from his family, without close friends, being imprisoned, being tortured and whipped... you know, he died sort of a broken man [See interview: Thupten Wangpo]. For him, reflecting on all his accomplishments and on what he wanted to achieve, it must have been very sad. In GC's lifetime, although his close friends recognized and saw his brilliance, he did not achieve a similar status, which he enjoyed today. In that sense, his life is not different from many other great poets or artists... It must have been a very tragic and sad thing for him, at the end of his life, and to face that he did not have the recognition from his own community. And specially going back to Tibet, and then being imprisoned...

In almost any culture, you have these 'lost' figures like GC?

I think because they are caught in a critical period, in a sort of watershed period. They are critical figures, who were shaping that exciting period. But they do not live to enjoy the fruit of their own work being recognized. It actually takes a long time for any writer or creative artist to achieve and establish this kind of recognition. When you look at GC, really, he became to be recognized as a significant Tibetan cultural figure only in late 1970s and 1980s, when the Tibetan refugees and the Tibetans in Tibet, seem to have rediscovered him as a very important figure... they were in their late 20's. They were looking at Tibetan history and searching for cultural figures, who they could immediately identify with. So, that's why you have people like K. Dhondup [a Tibetan writer and journalist, who died in India in 1985]. He was a very interesting person in the Tibetan exile community. He was one of the first people to seriously look into and study the works of GC. He wrote the first article in English about GC's life... people like him tend to very much identify their own life, their own political and social thinking, with what GC had accomplished... GC being a unique figure in the Tibetan history in the first half of the 20th century.

Northeast-Tibet was a hotspot. What was going on, when GC was still there [1920's]?

The area of Labrang, the monastery where he entered as a young monk [1920-27], is culturally positioned at the edge of the Tibetan cultural world. (*Image 23: A Muslim restaurant in Labrang, 1920's*). It was a meeting point between different ethnic groups of that region. You had Muslims, Chinese, Mongols, Tibetans; they were all meeting there. What is also interesting is the dominance of Buddhism in that region. There was a multilingual community with many different traditions. In a way... there was a sort of plural society, which often engenders much more creative reflection than a homogenized community. In that sense, I think, Labrang has always produced some interesting figures in Tibetan history. I think this has partly to do with the plurality of that region, and also the different languages... The exposure to the outside world was greater than in Central Tibet [with Lhasa as capital].



What role, do you think, played trade in this whole thing?

(*Image 24: The Chinese neighborhood in Labrang, 1920's*). Because... Labrang was not only a center of different religions and groups of people, but also of trade, and

trade always brings in new ideas. Through trade, which allows openness, you are exposed to outside world. You are exposed to new technologies... Labrang at the time of GC was an important center of trade in Central Asia; it was a transit point for goods going into China, and from China into Central Asia. There were missionaries stationed in Labrang, who had brought Western technology, Western books. There was the Islamic community, who was exposed to the wider Islamic world and they were bringing new technologies, new ideas... Labrang also had the Tibetan Buddhists, who were exposed to the whole wide range of the Tibetan Buddhist world.... so there was this very interesting mixture of community, trade and interaction that was happening. Labrang would have been similar to Kalimpong [at the Tibetan-Indian border]. Both places were a contact zone, where different religions, different languages, different traditions, different technologies met, and where people would have these things in common...

GC also wrote in English, were you aware of that?

Yeah, GC... you know, we have very little evidence that Tibetans wrote in other languages, other than Tibetan language for many centuries, especially of a significant scholar like GC. Of course, Tibetans had translated works from Sanskrit and Chinese [into Tibetan] before, but we don't have a great tradition of Tibetan monks learning foreign languages. The fact that GC learned English, and dared to write in English... in this sense, he was the first Tibetan since many centuries to use another language to write his experiences. He wrote poems in English, and he wrote several articles for the Mahabodhi Society journal in English [See: 'GC in Mahabodhi Journal']. Well, that is quite interesting... when we look at Tibet; there is a linguistic fragmentation. Today, there are many Tibetans writing in Tibetan, Chinese, English, Hindi, or Urdu... So you have the beginning of a linguistic fragmentation of the Tibetan culture. And you can already see this through the writings of GC...

What do you personally like about his writings? And why?

I think... particularly his poems are quite unique; they are sort of provocative. And he also writes as a social commentator, or social reformer [See: Texts of GC]. In fact, I like his letter back home [to his former fellow monks in Labrang], written in verse form. In this poem, he provokes and teases them. There's always a tone of teasing the readers... he is saying that there is so much change and wonders in the outside world, how come we Tibetans are not aware of this? This is interesting... On one level, GC is in India, witnessing all these technological changes and he is marveling at these changes like a little child. He is astonished by what he sees, and he is trying to convey what he experiences in the outside world to the readers in [his home] village, enticing them... and this is quite interesting, when you look at Tibet today, and why these reforms and changes never took place in Tibet earlier. In the four lines, at the end of the poem, he says, 'In traditional Tibet, all things that are old, are the work of Buddha, and all new things, are the work of the Devil.' So, there is this Tibetan sort of attachment to tradition as being unchangeable and sacred. And GC is ridiculing that sort of believe in Tibet.

ABU THINLEY (Wangdue)



Conducted in Dharamshala 1999 by Lhassang Tsering.

Born in 1916 in Tibet. He became the chief horseman of the trading company of the Reting monastery. He led several trade-caravans from Reting (north of Lhasa) to Kalimpong in India and back. As a servant (employee) of Reting Rinpoche, he later became directly involved in the turmoil surrounding the 'Reting Conspiracy' in 1947, which led to a short civil war between the Sera Monastery (that supported Reting Rinpoche) and the Tibetan government troops. After the Chinese invasion in 1950/51, Abu Thinley joined the Tibetan resistance forces to fight the Chinese, before he fled to Kalimpong in India. Currently he lives near McLeod Ganj (Dharamshala) in India.

I include this interview here much less for its information on GC (there is virtually none), but because it sheds a new and interesting light on a historical event – the civil war between the Tibetan army and the monastery of Sera –, which is still not thoroughly dealt with in historical writings about Tibet. Tibetan, not in the film.

What is your name and how old are you?

My name is Thinley Wangdue and I am 83 years old.

You were in Lhasa when the great 13th Dalai Lama passed away. Can you please briefly tell me what you have seen during that time and also what feelings did you get then?

When I was in Lhasa the great 13th Dalai Lama had returned from Reting Monastery. Before leaving the monastery, His Holiness had informed the Reting Rinpoche of his decision to leave Reting for Lhasa. His Holiness had then requested Reting Rinpoche to take his place in the monastery, with an instruction that he was not supposed to share his power with anybody else. His Holiness had made it clear that he would one day return to the monastery and when that happened, Reting was to hand over the authority back to His Holiness. In what can be seen as a pledge made between the two, His Holiness had assured Reting Rinpoche that he would be back soon, that he wouldn't be long in Lhasa. It was after having entrusted Reting Rinpoche with full authority over the monastery that His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama had set out for Lhasa. Upon reaching Lhasa, His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama sent a message to Reting Rinpoche, asking the Rinpoche to join him in Lhasa. (A contradictory statement follows.) Reting Rinpoche was reminded again that he had to take the place of His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama in the monastery. The Rinpoche was reminded categorically that he had to assume both the spiritual and temporal authority in the absence of the 13th Dalai Lama until a time when the great 13th himself returned to the monastery and assumed the authority that belonged to him. In the message, Reting Rinpoche was instructed to follow the instruction well.

After receiving the message, Reting Rinpoche later came to Lhasa. By the time he reached Lhasa, His Holiness the great 13th Dalai Lama had passed away. Following a series of meetings that were called by the government with the attendance of government officials and other aristocrats, Reting Rinpoche was immediately declared the Regent. Such a swift replacement of the vacancy left behind by the demise of the 13th Dalai Lama, and according to the wishes of the deceased leader himself, ruled out the possibility of any dispute over the post. It was in such a manner that Reting Rinpoche came to assume the spiritual and temporal power over Tibet, making Lhasa as his base. It was in the years following the Regent's ascension to power that some tensions took roots in Lhasa. I was in India during that time. I had not come to India to do any sort of business, but to carry out certain discussions. After having completed the tasks in India I stayed back for two months. And by the time I returned to Lhasa I was to hear that Reting Rinpoche had ordered the assassination of Lungshar. Lhasa was rife with rumors and tension.

What happened was that seven or eight officials and aristocrats including Tsipa (accountant) Lungshar and Kapshopa had held a secret meeting in which certain decisions were taken. These officials and aristocrats had decided to assassinate Reting Rinpoche and reinstate Tsipa Lungshar as the king in his place. Their plan was to share the power over the country among themselves. The seven or eight officials and aristocrats had earmarked important posts for themselves so that they could have some real power in the administration of the country. During the meeting the officials had bound themselves to a pledge to carry out the assassination of the Reting Rinpoche. Plans had also been drawn to carry out into practice the assassination of the Reting Rinpoche.

But Kapshopa had meanwhile approached Reting Rinpoche and told him the whole truth. Kapshopa had recounted how the plan to kill Reting Rinpoche was hatched among the seven officials and the aristocrats and so on. He identified himself as being one of the conspirators that even he had given his signature and seal to the document of pledge that had been drawn up. Reting Rinpoche then studied carefully the plan and the events leading up to the drawing up of the plan by the eight officials and aristocrats. It however struck Reting Rinpoche that the sinister plan had been drawn up most efficiently and that he had no time to lose. So immediately, Reting ordered the arrests of the seven people. It was later found out that hidden in the shoe-soles of Tsipa Lungshar and other accomplices were notes containing names of all the important lamas. This was major news when I reached Lhasa. The capital city was rife with rumors and speculations to this effect. Some said Lungshar did this or that, some said that Reting had reinstated Lungshar to a post of trusted official; some said Lungshar was not dead.

Among others his son, Lhalung, survived Lungshar. It was said that attempts had been made to kill him as well. Some rumors said that Reting Rinpoche had ordered for the assassination of Lungshar's son Lhalung. Some rumors said that Lhalung was not the real son of Lungshar, that in fact he had sworn before Kashag that Lungshar was not his father and hence he was not Lungshar's natural son. It was because of this that Lhalung was spared and no harm came to him in the later events, such rumors said. It was said that the aristocrats and officials were always plotting against each other (or does he mean that Reting Rinpoche was always plotting against the aristocrats and playing one against the other?). Where

physical disputes served his purpose, he incited disputes. People like Dapon Chongring were banished. Kunphela and many others were banished to Kongpo. So all the threats facing the government, Reting Rinpoche and the status quo were removed in this way. This was how the Tibetan government functioned, but behind it all was the monastic establishments. Reting was the head of the government but Kashag and everyone was involved in clearing up the mess. The people who had been banished to Kongpo were further ousted from there and they had to make their way into India before settling in Kalimpong. Kunphela was there, so was Changlochen. Chongring was killed in a fighting in central Tibet (?). He didn't get to return to Lhasa. The others who were considered rebellious stayed away from Lhasa for the time it took for order to return in Lhasa.

When calm and order had been restored to Lhasa, Taktra Rinpoche, a hermit-lama who had been in retreat in the mountains, approached Reting Rinpoche and said, „I am hermit-Lama and hence I am also the caretaker of the monastic establishment (*labrang*). As a token of my right over the Labrang I want to be made the regent for three years.' Taktra Rinpoche assured Reting that upon the completion of the three years' term, he would hand back the full authority. He was finally able to win over Reting Rinpoche to his proposal. After relenting, Reting Rinpoche finally said to Taktra „If you are facing problem from not having any right over facilities you can replace me for three years. But at the end of the three years, I need to have my authority restored back to me.' Reting explained to Taktra that in three years' time, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama would come to Lhasa, that Reting Rinpoche would then have to hand over the authority to the young Dalai Lama. Having made all these clear, Reting Rinpoche handed over the regency to Taktra Rinpoche.

Reting Rinpoche couldn't have refused to hand over the regency to Taktra Rinpoche because Taktra was Reting's teacher in Secret Tantric (*Sang-ngag*) discipline. It was said that if Reting had refused to comply with Taktra's demands, that would have amounted to a violation of Tantric teachings. It was said that Reting had remarked, „In this one case, there is no way I can say no'. It was in this way that the regency was handed over from Reting Rinpoche to Taktra Rinpoche. After Taktra had assumed power and come to Lhasa, I was back in Lhasa, in Reting to be precise.

While I was staying at Bongtak (*Dbong-rTaks*), a man got killed from my hands and I was handed over to the government. Though I escaped being given lashes, I did suffer a lot... But luckily I was asked by Reting (Was it Reting himself or somebody else?) to join him at the Labrang. I was staying at the Labrang as a guest. While the transfer of power was taking place between Reting and Taktra, I was in the Labrang. The events leading to the transfer of power transpired to us from being in the Labrang during that time. One morning Taktra Rinpoche had come to the Labrang to meet with Reting Rinpoche, a meeting that lasted for around two hours. This was what everybody was saying. A day or two after Reting Rinpoche handed over his authority to Taktra, he resigned from his position and returned to Reting Monastery. With Reting's return to his monastery, Taktra was the supreme figure solely in charge of ruling over the country. Taktra was to rule the country for the next three years, assuming complete authority as the

regent. There were a lot of subjects affiliated to the monastery of Reting Rinpoche. The whole of the area was divided into twelve groups, each of which had a lot of people.

Representatives of these people had approached Reting Rinpoche with a request that the Rinpoche visited them in the north of the area. And the Reting Rinpoche visited north (*byang-phebs*) after people living in the respective areas had made arrangements. I was a guest in the Reting. Being a guest I was taken along with his entourage to where he was conducting teachings (*byang-bhebs*). There was a big sBra-Nag (Manorial estate?) belonging to the Labrang where we stayed. We stayed there for around seven days. There were around forty people working on the estate. He gave a teaching (*Kawang* – transmission of learning) to these people. When he was proceeding on his way there were a lot of wealthy families making offerings to him. Each family would give him around 100 cattle or 100 sheep and so on. In three months he left for the north. We were acting as his attendants. We had a very good time. When we reached the north, it was nothing less than a summer picnic. Wonderful arrangements had been made to look after us by the people of the area (his subject). We made a stopover at Gone Gathok. The next morning we left for the Nagchu area where Rinpoche was to give transmissions. He gave the transmissions for three or four days at a stretch. Having completed his task of giving transmissions to the people of his area, to reach, which he had to travel for seven days and nights, he returned back to his monastery. He stayed in the monastery for the three years when Taktra ruled in his place.

After the completion of the three years' term, when Reting Rinpoche asked to be handed back the authority Taktra Rinpoche flatly refused to comply. Taktra was completely unwilling to let go of his authority and fulfill the pledge he had made to the Reting Rinpoche. All the Rupons were sympathetic to Reting Rinpoche and wanted Taktra to fulfill his pledge and hand over the authority back to Reting. They decided to draw up a petition to Taktra Rinpoche reminding him that he ought to hand over the authority back to Reting Rinpoche. But writing a petition was not as simple. A lot of formalities needed to be fulfilled to submit a petition to the regent. Not everybody could write a petition and submit it to him. Only a full-fledged secretary has the authority to draw up a petition and submit it to the regent. And when such a petition was finally drawn up and submitted, Taktra Rinpoche didn't even give it a proper look. Seeing that their effort had been a failure, Reting Rinpoche asked the Rupons (military leaders) not to worry about it. He said that he was sure if he talked it out with Taktra, he would get his power back. He said that the Rupons didn't need to worry about him. He said he would go to see Taktra in the fourth year.

Reting Rinpoche said that he was sure he would get back his power if he talked the problem out with Taktra. He even assured the military personnel that once he was handed back the authority he would be staying in Lhasa. He then came to Lhasa from his monastery. Whenever Reting Rinpoche traveled anywhere from his Reting Monastery a big and elaborate procession followed. It was a procession including around 100 horses. It was one such big procession that accompanied Reting Rinpoche during his return to Lhasa. The people of Lhasa accorded him a grand reception. The reception party also included representatives of the Tibetan army, representatives of the different monasteries and aristocrats and officials from the government. Once he was back, Reting expressed his desire to see Taktra Rinpoche

in order to ask him to hand over the power. Taktra was at that time staying in the Potala Palace. It was however not so simple to seek an audience. According to the Tibetan tradition, an audience involves an elaborate set of formalities. Above all, it involved presenting gifts. Reting Rinpoche arranged for around 130 people to carry the gifts. Then he arranged for ten or fifteen people to conduct prayers. The gift-bearers mostly carried butter, cheese and other animal products. Coming as he did from a nomadic area, his presents mostly comprised of animal products. There were however few people who also brought presents of silk and statues of Buddha. Having finally made the necessary arrangements, he proceeded to meet Reting in the Potala Palace.

When Reting Rinpoche entered Taktra's chamber, he found Taktra reading a text of scripture that was placed on his lap. Reting Rinpoche prostrated himself before Taktra because technically Taktra was the regent at that time. It was said that Taktra hadn't said a word to Reting. He gestured with his hands to instruct Reting to take his seat on a cushion nearby. Taktra was seated on a throne. Reting later told us that he was then offered a cup of tea, which he dutifully drank. Then the attendant poured him another cup of tea. Having finished the second cup of tea, he had the attendant pour for him the third cup of tea. This he placed on the table while waiting for Taktra to finish his prayers and start talking. But Taktra never made an effort to wrap up his prayers and open a conversation with the Reting. This awkward situation lasted for an hour. Then Reting Rinpoche realized that Taktra didn't want to speak to him because he didn't want to give up his claim to regency. Even if one is reading a scripture, one can always take a break if he wanted to and if something important came up. But Taktra was doing none of that. He was just reading the scripture, moving his head to and fro and never saying a word to Reting. It seems that he was not even looking at Reting. It was then Reting realized that there was no use for him to wait for Taktra to speak. It struck him that Taktra had made up his mind not to hand back the authority that actually belonged to Reting. So Reting Rinpoche rose to his feet. When Reting Rinpoche asked for his leave, Taktra Rinpoche just gestured to him as if telling him he should go. He still didn't say a word. Reting then prostrated himself before Taktra and quickly descended the steps.

Rinpoche mounted his horse and left. Soon after, the officials of the Potala ordered the entourage members to leave, including the group of 130 gift-bearers. I too was among the gift-bearers. I had a sword strapped to my waist, dressed as I was in white sheepskin *chupa* [Tibetan traditional dress]. I was wearing a traditional hat (*Chang da-ma*), my hands holding quite high a traditional scarf. I was supposed to be the one to offer a scarf. But all of us were instructed to leave. All of us made our way back to the Labrang. As soon as we reached the Labrang (monastery) Reting said to us, „Taktra doesn't want to hand over to me his position as the regent. He wouldn't even talk to me. Since he wouldn't even talk to me, there was no scope for me to tell him into doing this or that. So I had to return back. Now there is no reason for me to stay here. I want to go back to my monastery, Reting.' Before leaving for Reting Monastery, he said he wanted to go to Sera Monastery. He said that he wanted to make some offerings to the monks of the monastery. Before he left for Sera, we had to send some of his luggage including his robes. We had two mules to carry the luggage to the Sera. During the seven days that he was in Sera Je Monastery, he made offerings and sponsored tea (*Mang-ja*) for the monks. He sponsored tea for the three or four days of

religious gathering that followed. Then he sponsored tea at the Sera Ngag (Tantric) Monastery. He was actually from Sera Ngag Monastery it seems (or does it mean that Sera Ngag monastery had closer affiliation to the Reting Rinpoche).

We then let the cattle and horses loose for grazing in the *Nemo Dra-Gshongs* (valley). At that time the Nemo Dra-Gshongs County was under the jurisdiction of the Reting Monastery. In fact there was eastern Nemo Dra-Gshongs county and a northern Nemo Dra-Gshongs county. Since all the cattle had been left for grazing I thought that I should do some work and proceeded to go to the Labrang. I was just about to leave for the monastery (Sera Ngag) when Reting Rinpoche instructed me to get the cattle together. He said he wanted to leave for Reting Monastery at once. He said that I should leave the next day to collect the cattle at Nemo. I was instructed to bring grain supplies on the horsebacks on my way back. So I left for Nemo. As soon as I had gathered the cattle, I mounted them with grains. Then I left for Lhasa. I had packed food for the two days' of journey to Lhasa. I distributed the cattle (May be among different people who were to be in charge). As soon as I had done that, we set out. There is a big picnic hall belonging to the Yabshi family (family of the Dalai Lama). It is a big hall. The hall belonged to Yabshi Phunkong. It was here that Reting Rinpoche was to stay for sometime.

At the hall, I noticed that different people had made arrangement for kitchen facilities for our group. There were arrangements made by the government, by the different monasteries, by different lamas and so on. There were eight or nine different kitchen arrangements made for Reting's entourage. A big reception was accorded to Reting Rinpoche who was brought in a palanquin. Till late in the evening, different aristocrats and officials called on him. This visits by aristocrats and officials lasted for three evenings. If one left, another would come. The next day Reting Rinpoche left for Phenpo. He stayed at Phenpo Gadhen Choekhor. Phenpo Gadhen Choekhor and Reting Labrang. Phenpo Gadhen Choekhor had been under Reting Monastery's jurisdiction since Reting Rinpoche's regency. It was to this monastery that (one of the previous reincarnations of?) Reting Rinpoche had banished a spirit. (The transcription is very ambiguous, starting from here) There were many Geshes (monk scholars who have attained doctorate in Buddhist philosophy) who were propitiating this deity. It was being found very difficult to subdue this spirit. So it was one of the previous reincarnations of Reting Rinpoche who subdued this spirit. Since then it became customary for this subdued spirit to make prophecies for Reting Rinpoche.

The prophecy, which is known as the prophecy of Tsos-ru Chen, was issued in the tenth month. This was a very accurate prophecy (only he didn't pay much attention to it – who Reting?) He used to give prophecies every year. The medium went through trance during this occasion. Following the trance, the Reting immediately left the Phenpo Gadhen Choekhor. He left for Talung Monastery. The next day, we left for Reting Monastery. (Until here the transcription is very ambiguous) On the way to Reting a sandstorm raged with great fury thus obstructing our progress.

It was now clear to everybody that Taktra Rinpoche was not going to relinquish his regency. So the monk-leaders of Reting Monastery got together to discuss on the course of action they wanted to take.

There were officials (government or otherwise?), besides monk representatives from Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal (What is he saying is not clear). There were around twenty of these monk-leaders. They decided that it was not Taktra Rinpoche who was really at fault for not relinquishing his grip over the regency. Instead they decided that it was the main attendant (*Phyag-mZod*) to the Taktra Rinpoche who was behind the stalemate. They felt that instead of killing Taktra Rinpoche, his attendant had to be killed to solve the problem. So people were sent to kill him, but to no avail. He couldn't be found. Some time later the revolt broke out in the Reting Monastery.

It all began with a hand grenade. A hand grenade was sent to Taktra's attendant, wrapped up in a gift box. This hand grenade was procured and packed by a Lorel-wa. He had traded few horses with the bomb, which was given to him by a former official in the Tibetan government who used to work in the government artillery. This official had embezzled few bombs and guns from the artillery, which he traded with others in this way. It was a grenade, which the Lorel-wa had exchanged for a horse. He was given an aluminum box full of grenades (not one then?). The Lorel-wa brought the box and gave it to the monastery authorities. Lorel-wa is somebody through whom the monastery sells its horses. Lorel-wa had handed the bombs to the monastery, thinking them fit as the price for the horses. Some of the monk officials wanted to test the bombs so they planted one of it in the stable. It exploded forcefully, much to their satisfaction. Then a plan was made to send one of the bombs to Taktra Rinpoche's main attendant. But the first problem was sorting out how to send it to the attendant.

They realized that they had to send the package through the chief secretary who was the main person Taktra Rinpoche relied on. Having an easy access to Taktra Rinpoche, the two met almost every day. So they decided to pass it through the chief secretary, thinking that it would then reach its destination. (Transcript turns ambiguous). The next problem was who should go to him to deliver the package. Normally, only some Khampa people used to meet with him, but nobody from Lhasa. It would be easy to make out if anybody was from Lhasa. I was one of the people sent to deliver the package. We were three people in all. There was Gawa Lo Namgyal from Gawa in Kham who had just arrived in Lhasa. Then there was another Khampa from Karze. We were three people in all. The package was wrapped in a yellow cloth and sealed with a red mark. We said that the package came from Za Tsenyid Rinpoche and that it was meant for Taktra Rinpoche's main attendant. We were to request the main secretary to hand over the package to the main attendant.

Since I had been in Lhasa for quite some time, I had assumed a Lhasa accent so I was careful not to talk lest I should raise suspicion that I was from Lhasa. But the other two people spoke perfect Khampa dialect. They were both new from Kham and were dressed in white sheepskin chupas. So I stayed without talking. But it was I who knew the secretary and was familiar with the etiquette of being received into his office. However, the two Khampas did most of the explaining.

Unfortunately, the main secretary was not there. He had gone to Tatrud to meet Taktra Rinpoche and was supposed to return the same evening. The secretary's mother told us that the secretary would leave again

the next morning to meet Taktra Rinpoche. So we asked the secretary's mother to give the package to her son with an instruction that it should be delivered to the main attendant. We reminded her to tell her son that the package was sent from *Za Tsenyid Rinpoche* [?]. The secretary's mother was not one to be easily convinced.

She said that if the package really came from Tsenyid Rinpoche it should be having a letter along with it. Pointing that the package carried no letter along with it, she asked us where the letter was. I said that somebody else might have delivered the letter for we were given no such letter to be delivered to the main attendant. We said that if no such letter had been received, such a letter might come to them soon. Upon saying this, she just asked us to leave the package. So we had no option but to leave it there.

When the main secretary got back the next morning, his mother handed over to him the package meant for the main attendant. She repeated to him the instructions that we had relayed through her. On seeing the package, the secretary indicated surprise. He expressed his belief that the package must be carrying a letter and was genuinely surprised on seeing the package with no letter. He expressed his difficulty in delivering such a package, which had no letter with it. He said he wouldn't be able to deliver the package alone. He asked for the package to be left lying there, saying that an accompanying letter might arrive soon. He said that if he did receive such a letter meant to be delivered to the main attendant than he could also deliver the package. So the package was left lying like this for one or two weeks. Finally he asked for the package saying that since no letter had come he wanted to have the package delivered on that day itself. He wandered aloud to himself why no letter had reached him to accompany the package. He then asked one of his servants to take the package out of the shelf (or box) and open it. The servant proceeded to peel off the layers of cloths covering the package. When he finally opened the box, the bomb somehow got detonated. The servant was killed in the explosion. The main secretary's house was badly destroyed by the explosion but somehow he managed to escape.

Having survived the explosion, which had taken him by complete surprise, it was not very difficult for the main secretary to find out who had left the package. He began to think as to who could have sent the package with such deadly intentions. That's how Reting Monastery fell under suspicion. In the meantime Taktra Rinpoche wouldn't give Reting his regency back. The young Dalai Lama had been brought to Potala Palace. In fact the young Dalai Lama had to be returned his spiritual and temporal authority in a few years' time. It was felt that a meeting of all the leaders of the monastery had to be called in order to decide upon which course of action be taken next.

Lhalo Kunsab was a Tsipon in the Kashag at that time. It was the third day of the Tibetan New Year (Losar). Lhalo Kunsab was a popular Tsipon. It was said that there had never been a Tsipon like him in the Kashag. If there were ten people who would have approached the Kashag with their grievances or reports, he would convey their messages to the Kashag with an absolute accuracy and an unwavering compliance to details. It is customary for the people to bring *khatas* (offering scarves) with them. So he would take all of their scarves to the Kashag and narrate the grievances of the people one by one. Hence,

Lhalo Kunsab became a popular figure in Lhasa. Gradually he was promoted from *Tsipon* to *Shabpon*. Most people felt that his promotion to the post of *Shabpon* might spell problem for Reting Monastery. Lhalo Kunsab was the son of Lungshar whose murder had been ordered by Reting Rinpoche. A widespread belief had it that he would try to avenge the death of his father who had been killed by Reting Rinpoche. After the third day of the *Losar* (Tibetan New Year), the *Monlam* (Great Prayer) Festival took off. The festival was followed by a committee meeting (*Tsok-chung*). It was during the committee meeting that Lhalo Kunsab accused Reting Rinpoche of having a hand in the bomb explosion. Since he had been recently promoted, Lhalo was wielding considerable power at that time. There were four *Shabpons* at the time. He was the most influential, being also the most intelligent and qualified of the four and his words carried great weight.

Lhalo Kunsab then asked for the Reting Monastery to be sealed off. When the monastery was sealed off, Reting Rinpoche was there. There were few people who worked for the Reting in Lhasa like Dre-Jongpa and Dre-Jang. All these leaders were in Lhasa (some kind of authorities with affiliation to Reting?). Since the Rinpoche was at Reting, we too were at Reting Monastery. We asked for the release of horses and other transport cattle saying that they would be needed for the entourage for His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In this way the horses and other transport animals were allowed to be taken from Reting to Lhasa. A few of us went to escort the animal procession.

The Tibetan government army launched an attack on Reting Monastery at the dead of a night. Lhalu [?] and a colleague had brought a 500-strong troop. We were wondering why the sudden appearance of around 500-strong troop. We wondered if it might have to do with the age-old animosity between the government and Reting Monastery. There were few soldiers in the troop that we were familiar with. So we began asking them the reason for this attack. We asked them who had they come to defeat and what was the purpose of this military offensive. They told us that Kabshoba had escaped, that he had escaped to Reting Monastery. In fact the whole troop had been ordered to march to Reting for the announced purpose of capturing Kabshoba [?]. So they told us that they had come to capture Kabshoba who they knew was hiding in Reting Monastery. They said that Kabshoba must be in Reting Monastery. They even asked us to own up to the information saying that we must be in know since we had got back that morning.

We replied to them that there was no Kabshoba in the monastery. But they wouldn't be convinced. They said that he must be in the Reting Labrang then (seems to be a difference between Labrang and the smaller monastery where the troop first showed up). We thought that we had to inform the Labrang of what had transpired so far. We were fifteen or sixteen people who had come to help the animals to Lhasa. So I took one of them with me and hurried to the Labrang. But we noticed that all the routes had been blocked. We were making our way to the Phabong valley when we noticed that we had been blocked from all sides. We nearly got caught. To escape being captured, we dived into the stream flowing close by. This was the Reting River, which is a big river. After we had jumped into the river, we forced the animals into the river as well. The horses and other animals started to swim across the river. When we

reached the other side we came across several soldiers shooting at us. We couldn't even take a step forward. We were surrounded. We had to pass through some rocks to reach the clearing. Since we couldn't make it across the rocks, we returned back to the river and took another route around it. And then we proceeded towards the old stable-house (shelter-house for cattle). We noticed that two persons were riding towards us. They were the two *Phyag mZhod* (treasurer) who were working for Reting Rinpoche in Lhasa. They were riding on horses, galloping towards us.

When we asked them what had happened in Lhasa, they replied that Reting had been arrested. They said that the monastery (or the residence?) had been sealed off in Lhasa. We didn't know what was going on at Reting Monastery. Reting Rinpoche was being brought from the monastery. We thought that everything was finished. We were also being denied access to Reting. We decided that it was best for us to return back (to proceed towards Reting?). All of them started to gallop. We had a *drel* (a mix between horse and donkey) each to ride. So we proceeded towards Reting Monastery. We reached this big ground before the monastery that was called Sera ground. Upon reaching this ground, we saw a bunch of people riding towards us. They were the entourage of Reting Rinpoche. Shakabpa (is it somebody else?) was arrested there and then. There was one boy from Changra Shol whose name was Choezin. It was the two of us who arrested him. We used to carry out all such works. We snatched a gun away from Shakabpa's hands and threatened him with a sword.

Shakabpa then pleaded with us not to kill him. He volunteered to do anything we asked him to but requested us to spare his life. He even prostrated himself before us. At this point Choezin from Changra Shol intervened and said that Shakabpa was an official belonging to the Tibetan government, an attendant to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Choezin pointed out that since Shakabpa was a government official, he would know how the government was likely to deal with Reting Labrang and whether the government would deal with the Labrang in harsh manners or not. Choezin said that he was a stable-attendant and hence didn't know much about larger issues, the inner workings of the politics. He threatened to kill Shakabpa if the latter didn't answer him on this. I too had thought that Choezin was going to kill him. But this didn't happen.

Shakabpa assured us that nothing bad would fall on Reting Labrang. He even said that the Taktra had made a promise to such an effect. There was the custom of making pledges where you make prostration before the sun. So he was not killed. We were wondering what would happen if Shakabpa were let go like that. At around this time we received an instruction that Shakabpa be allowed to proceed down. So we let him go. He had a gun, which we put, around his neck. Upon going a little way forward, we saw that Reting Rinpoche was being brought in our direction. So we proceeded towards the path the group was riding on. We had a *landu* (pistol?) each in our hands. Upon finding ourselves near the Rinpoche, I was thinking to myself that Lhalo was behind all the troubles and therefore he has to pay for everything. At this point Rinpoche had one look at him. We were just having some kind of an audience with him when I heard something like a storm and found myself on the ground the next moment. A complete darkness fell around me as soon as I hit the ground. I had lost my consciousness. When I came around, I found people

throwing water at my face. I realized that Rinpoche had been further taken away and that he had by now covered some distance. I had nowhere to go to. So I thought it best to go to Reting Monastery. We reached Reting to see Lhalo in power there. He had brought around 100 soldiers with him. They were sealing off the Reting Monastery and all its properties. I was known as the gold-teeth muleteer (one who looks after mules) at that time. All the soldiers were looking for me, calling by my name. They were saying that I was one of the most notorious people in the Monastery that I was responsible for all the dirty works that was carried out by the monastery. They were saying that Reting Monastery would send me to different places to do various kinds of work. They were saying that I had to be killed immediately. Upon reaching the monastery, several people came running towards me. They said that I had to leave immediately. It was late in the evening. I found that no soldier was coming to get me. The same thing happened the next day. Lhalo went down. He was accompanied by four horse-bearers. They had scarves in their hands and were leading the horses with two people on either side.

Lhalo was sealing off all the houses in Reting. After having sealed off all its properties, he proceeded to return home. I was there after he had left. I had nowhere to go. There were around 25 soldiers who had been left behind by Lhalo to guard the sealed-off properties in Reting. I had my wife there. So I went to her. The next day two monks came to me and delivered a message that I was wanted by the monks in the monastery. I mounted on a horse and set off immediately with them. As soon as I reached the monastery I made my way towards Ghen Choksid as per the instructions I had received. Gen Choksid was one of the elderly monks (not very elderly though). Ghen Choksid told me that they wanted to beat up the guards who were, otherwise, creating big problems for them. He complained that they were even addressing Reting Rinpoche as the 'old lama' (*Lama Phagen*). They were even calling him other names like a married lama and so on, he added. He said such a behavior by the guards had enraged the monks greatly. The monks were now even ready to kill all of the guards, I was told.

At this point I entreated with the monks not to take this drastic step. I explained to them that they had no experience in fighting, that we had no weapon to fight the guards with, that being monks would be difficult for them to achieve victory over guards fully armed and prepared to fight. I also explained that Reting had already been captured, that nothing could be done on that account. So I asked them to forget the idea. But they were adamant. They had already made up their minds to fight the guards and no explanation was going to convince them against taking action. If the monks were really going to fight, there was no way I was going to do nothing about it. And I said it to them. I volunteered to fight the guards alongside the monks. Five of us, who were working for the monastery in different capacities, got together. We were servants who had experience in firing guns from our stint in Nangchen. The monks had to hide the bullets in their vests. But there were twenty-five soldiers standing guard outside the monastery properties. The seals (or is it keys?) had been entrusted for safekeeping with the Dre-Jang and a caretaker. There was the caretaker of the Labrang and a Dre-Jangpa. We had to break the seals at all costs because all the guns and ammunitions belonging to the monastery had been sealed off. There were guns as well as pistols. We had to have our hands on these, for otherwise we were completely unarmed and hence unprepared to fight.

We then decided to talk to these two people. We thought that we would talk to them and take out the weapons. We had planned to launch an attack on the 25 soldiers after we had got the guns and bullets. When we explained this to the two people, they refused to cooperate with us, saying that they won't have the ammunition house opened. They said that the seal couldn't be broken. They said that they had a responsibility to ensure it was not broken, that it would cost them dearly if they did allow it to be broken. We pleaded with them to understand us and give us their permission. We explained to them that we had no option left before us. But they wouldn't listen.

Thinking that their refusal called for a drastic measure from our part, I took the pistol from Appa [?]. After loading it I pointed the pistol at the younger of the two, the caretaker. I asked him if he would cooperate with us or not. I threatened to kill him if he refused, adding that I had no reason to be fearful of his designation. Finally he agreed to listen to us. I asked him to stay put in the house. Then I did the same thing again with the Dre-Jang pa. He too begged me not to kill him. We brought them to the storehouse and had them locked in there. Then we proceeded to break the seal. We broke into the armament store and took out guns and ammunition. We took out around five sacks full of arms. These had been brought from India and were not yet put together. The whole night we put the guns together and the next early morning we distributed guns among the monks. The bullets had to be put in the vests. Then we launched an attack on the soldiers who were putting up at a house (*Drag-khung* / a cave?) then.

We were just about to wage a battle there when we realized that words had reached the soldiers who were positioning themselves to fight us back. They were firing at us by the time we approached them. So we fired back. Bullets were whizzing past us, the morale was high, and people were reckless. We then arranged for ladders to cross over the fence surrounding the cave (*Drag-khung?*). We broke open the fence gate and into the cave. As soon as we got inside the shooting intensified. People were chasing each other and shooting at each other. When it was daybreak and the fighting was over, twenty-three soldiers were lying dead. But two were missing. On our side, three had been killed. I had been hit with around ten or fifteen bullets. But I survived because of the amulet I was wearing. Reting Rinpoche had given these amulets to me. Because of these amulets I had been saved. The bullets had just torn off my clothes, but they had been largely unable to touch my flesh.

There was a chief of a settlement of 25 families in there. His son is a peon at the Transit School. So his father had agreed to fight beside the soldiers and that was the reason he was there. I killed him without losing any time. I killed him because he had wronged gravely. His son knows about it now. But what is there to do even if he knows. Initially he hated me, refusing even to talk to me. But now he realizes that all he and his father had to do was out of their affiliation towards the Tibetan government, that whatever I had to do was out of my loyalty to my monastery. What to do now? He too is an old man. Both of us are about the same age. He too is around eighty-three years old. He is now a peon at the Transit School in Dharamshala. He is responsible for many chores, including ringing the bell for classes. He is still living. That day itself the government ordered a troop of 500 soldiers from Nagchu to put us down. Another troop of 100 soldiers were on their way from Lhasa. After having killed the soldiers we barely had time to

drink tea. Immediately we set about positioning ourselves to repel the soldiers. We were busy putting up barricades and so on. The main path was some kind of county highway. We sent the monks here and there. My main partner was Choezin from Changra Shol. He was a very able and trustworthy man. He was younger than I. We took our positions on the top of a small hill.

We had a birds-eye view of the ground before us. We could see the troop from Lhasa getting closer. We were waiting for them on that particular hilltop, ready to start firing at them as soon as they started to ascend the slope. The monks were there too ready with their supplies of bullets. When the troops were about to ascend the slope we noticed a woman walking towards them. It seemed that the soldiers had known about the woman. They had a bit of a discussion. The whole troop was mounted on horses. They were cavalry fighters (?). As soon as they finished talking with the woman, they turned back. We started shooting at them. We had a *Pura* [?] each, which is a very good gun. We kept a sack full of bullets beside us and started spraying bullets at a wide range of direction. The soldiers started to flee. All of them started to run towards the ground. We were able to kill nine soldiers. Their horses would come up rather than race towards the ground. Although the soldiers had left, we couldn't let our guard down. We still had to keep any eye for the other 500 soldiers coming from Nagchu. So we kept on waiting.

They came within our sight at around five in the afternoon. As soon as they arrived, we readied ourselves to shoot. They blew horns and so on. All their soldiers were mounted on horses. They entered a village nearby, took some food provision out and let the horses go off to feed themselves on the grain spread before them. So we waited to see what was going on. All of a sudden a horn was blown. A chaos descended on the scene. People were running for their horses. We thought they would now approach our direction. But instead they turned to go back. They took the same way the soldiers before them had. All we could do now was just shoot. We must have fired around fifty or sixty rounds. There were clouds of dust everywhere. We had managed to kill around seven soldiers. Then they all ran away. So they couldn't come to Reting. Instead they fled to Lhasa. But we couldn't go after them. Instead we took our position and stayed there. We started to send spies to them. They too started sending spies to check on us. We tried to send around twenty or thirty *dung-tse* [?] along with these people, but none got through. They too would send an equal number of people, but we would catch most of them. We even killed many of them.

TAPE 2

Once we intercepted a troop of twelve soldiers on their way to Nagchu... So this is what happened. We hid from each other (?). Reting Rinpoche passed away in Lhasa on the 11th day of the second month. When Reting Rinpoche passed away in Lhasa, the Tibetan government was in the midst of waging a war on the monastery. Around two thousand soldiers came to Jathang and Marthang from Lhasa. There is one pass lying in between Drigung and Reting. Around 1000 people came from that pass. Another 1000 soldiers came from Nagchu. All these troops launched a combined attack on the monastery on the same day.

When they attacked us, they blocked all our forward positions. So we even couldn't move from our position. We couldn't fight much. Already three people from the monastery had been killed. Later on when everybody got together there were only six of us. That was all that remained of us. On the second day they stormed the monastery asking it to surrender itself. It was the military force from Drigung that arrived first. They arrived at around dawn, just when the day was about to break. Then over 2000 soldiers arrived at around noon from the Jathang and Marthang (regiments). Just before darkness another 1000 soldiers arrived from Nagchu-kha. All of them had arrived on the same day. The Reting area then was brimming with military presence. When the soldiers first started arriving, we had tried to put up a resistance. It had not been very long when we had started fighting that the monks started to flee. There was nothing else they could do besides fleeing. Then the troops started to bombard the monastery. The rocky hill and the green hill behind the Reting Monastery were hit several times in the bombardment. When the cliff was being hit, one could see the rocks falling off like avalanches. And since most of the monks hadn't heard a cannon blast before, they got so scared that they ran away. They wondered what kind of gun it would be that could move a hill. The shock was so intense that they didn't dare stay for a minute longer.

At the end of it we were only six of us who were still standing strong and fighting. Of us, three got killed. There was a ground where you discarded the corpses. When we came to the ground we found that the army was attacking us. Tashi Shabdudpa was sitting on the path running beside the ground. Two of us had three guns each, besides three sacks of bullets as well. We had this gun called Khathung (short-mouthed), which is a really low-quality weapon. After a couple of rounds have been shot, it gets blocked. We had another gun called *Pamelen*, which is a good weapon. Pura could not be fired at all. We could fire it as much as we wanted (contradictory?). In this way we fought for a while. We were surrounded by the army, which was gaining in strength over us. By this time it was only Tashi Shabdudpa from Changra Shol and myself who were facing the army. The rest had all run away. A large number of us had already been killed.

So we kept on fighting. But the army was driving us further towards the Monastery. We were being cornered. Then we came to a small stream flowing beside the monastery. It was difficult to get to the stream because of the bullets that were hitting our direction. The stream was covered with blood. If I am now suffering from blood pressure, it is because of having been hit with bullets (or it is because of having fired the guns?) a lot. When we got to the stream we had a gulp of water. We later realized three bodies were bobbing up in the water. At around that time around 40 or 50 soldiers got the two of us surrounded. They were all ground soldiers and they knew me.

„Hey, you! If you don't want to die a dog's death, then drop your weapons and surrender,' they shouted. They surrounded us completely then. I couldn't think of anything at that point of time, so I took some time to rest. I had already thrown away the short-mouthed gun and the *Pamelen*. We took out our Pura and loaded it full with bullets. By this time the army was closing in on us. They again asked us to hand over to them our guns. When we got up, there was a fear for a brief moment. Then it was over. It occurred

to us that there was no use in being afraid, that we had already sacrificed ourselves by throwing ourselves into this conflict. So we drew out the pistols, grabbed some bullets in our hands and charged directly at them. Some of the soldiers started to run. They couldn't fire at us. So we were able to get out. We tried to get away from them. We tried to get out of their sight.

But we had been hit and it was difficult to walk. So we hid near a boulder. We stayed there till it was dark. When it got dark we returned. The army had already retreated. Even the soldiers didn't have horses and sheep. They were themselves. Then we went for the meeting at the Nunnery. By that time the monastery had been lost. Most of the soldiers had entered the monastery. Even we didn't have sheep or horses. We lost around four guests at that time. We killed some of their guests as well. Changra and I killed a lot of people. We must have killed some forty or fifty of Tibetan government's soldiers. There were Japon (leader of regiment Ja) Ani Dawa and another popular figure that we shot at. In the shooting Ani Dawa was injured in the foot and killed. After that we had nothing else to do but to wander around the hills. By that time we had lost Reting Monastery. When we reached Lhasa after wandering here and there, we found that Reting Rinpoche had already passed away. So we had nobody to come for in Lhasa. Then we reverted to wandering around the hills near the Reting, specifically at this place called one year and five months (a name given after some retreat tradition?). It is a forested area filled with rocky hills. It has got a lot of caves. So we were hiding there for the most of the time. We fed ourselves on animals we hunted down. Most of the time we were killing deer and eating its flesh. That's how our time in the Reting conflict was spent.

Before Reting passed away, a lot of monks from the Sera Monastery had gathered to receive the Rinpoche. A lot of monk-fighters were waiting at the Sera monastery and another group was waiting at the outskirts of the monastery to receive the Rinpoche. The monks kept in waiting at the path near the cemetery. The government officials on the other hand brought over the Rinpoche's body turning around the Tsangpo River. So they eventually arrived where the monks were waiting. Now the Sera monks could only send warnings. After the Tibetan government tried to avoid any confrontation, it declared its intention to wage a battle against the monastery in the next few days.

Soon a battle was launched against the monastery. The monks put up their positions on the hilltops, from where they started to shoot down at the army. The monks eventually turned so desperate that they started to use their tea-making cylinder (Dongmo), which they filled with explosives and fired like cannons. The monks didn't have weapons. There were only a few weapons in Sera. That was the main reason why the Sera monks lost. The Tibetan government army killed a lot of monks. This was all the work of Taktra Tsang. Taktra Tsang was the man (monk?) who actually sowed the whole seed of this conflict. It was his handiwork. Later we had a discussion. It was actually permissible at that time for us to leave. All my friends left for Kham. I came to India.

I came to India alone. I stayed in Kalimpong for one year. After a year's stay in Kalimpong I heard about the Chinese take-over of Chamdo, which was much talked about. Upon hearing this news, I thought it

best to return back. I thought that since Chinese would have arrived in Lhasa, they wouldn't much anything against me. So I thought it would be save to return back. I had my wife in Tibet at that time. She was living in Reting. So I thought it would be best to return. Few of the leaders of Reting Labrang were in India then. When I approached them for advice, they told me to stay. They said I was likely to face problems if I returned. I told them that I would return. I said that I didn't want to stay. At that time all my expenditure was being borne by the Labrang. If I ran out of even five *paisa*, the Labrang would reimburse the amount. There were several other traders of the Labrang in India as well. We had to report to the Labrang's representatives at Kalimpong. Then we could take money from them. So things were easy. Even though I was advised against returning, I insisted on doing so. I explained to them that since the Chinese government was in control over Lhasa now they wouldn't investigate into the conflict. So I returned. I was riding a horse. It took me nine days and nine nights to reach Lhasa. Finally I reached Lhasa. When I reached Lhasa, everybody was saying that Chinese would come.

Was Chamdo already defeated when you reached Lhasa?

No, Chamdo was yet to be taken over then. The Chinese had first come to India. There were only two Chinese leaders as such. Everyone was saying that the Chinese would come. So we acted as if we were on our way to receive them and partake the celebrations. Lhasa did witness the spectacle. It was the Nepalese who were receiving the Chinese. It was the Nepalese and the foreigners in Lhasa who went out to receive them. They were even garlanded. It was a grand ceremony. I was in Lhasa and having been given a plot of an agricultural land was just about to do some sowing when I went to see what it was all about. I found the Nepalese people in jubilant mood, showering them with garlands and so on. There were two tall men, wearing glasses, among the Chinese who they said were leaders of the Chinese government. They were not even wearing Chinese dress.

They were attired in some costume that looked like Muslim and were torn from here. So people were showering them with garlands and scarves. The two of them put up at Lhasa and were in a process of negotiation with the Tibetan government then. The Tibetan government was on its part trying to build some contact with them. It was only two of them. They hadn't brought along any servant or whatever. Two of three months after their arrival, some more Chinese arrived. They hadn't come through India but from Chamdo. It was much later that we heard about Chamdo's fall. By then Ngabo [chief commander of the Tibetan army] and the Tibetan army under him had capitulated.

Can you tell us something about when China People's Liberation Army first arrived in Lhasa? What was going on amongst the Lhasa population at that time? His [the director's] research is focused till 1952 and the later events when the Chinese communists came to Lhasa.

Lhalung and Ngabo were in Chamdo at that time. By the time this battle had been waged, Lhalung had fled to Lhasa. (This is not true, historically speaking. Lhalu was succeeded by Ngabo and was called back to Lhasa – Captured in Tibet by Robert Ford is an unbiased account testifying to this) Lhalu had sent his wife and children to Lhasa. Then he took some 1000 soldiers with him to Lhasa. Ngabo was in Chamdo at that time. He set fire to the arsenal. The Chinese later captured him. Lhasa was abounding with rumor

over whether or not Ngabo had been killed. But Ngabo was not killed. He had surrendered after being captured. He had set fire to the arsenal so as to pre-empt any chances of the Chinese getting their hands on the weapons. Ngabo never came to Lhasa. He never returned back from Chamdo. But the Chinese were getting near and near. Finally they arrived in Lhasa.

The Communist Chinese were in very poor condition when they arrived in Lhasa. The soldiers were shabbily dressed and they were poorly fed. Around five soldiers had one proper gun amongst them. They were so poorly equipped. Even the one gun every five of their soldiers carried was very rudimentary, not even like the Pura brand of gun, which can be found today. I think if we had wanted to, we could have even beaten the shit out of them with sticks. They were really poor and ill fed. They were really in bad condition that they almost look like beggars. They were at that time wearing long coats which had been made out of animal hides of sheep and goat. They arrived in Lhasa dressed like that. It looked like if we wanted to we could have easily overpowered them and drove them out of our country. But the Lhasa people and the Kham people had brought the whole situation to this. This was just after His Holiness the Dalai Lama was escorted to Lhasa. On that they could do nothing. They did nothing saying that there was nothing they could do (to stop the Chinese from overpowering Lhasa). That's how the Chinese came to Lhasa.

Gradually more and more Chinese started arriving in Lhasa. They started picking up in strength and power. Within the next two or three years, their weapons went through total transformation. The later batches of the Chinese soldiers were all armed with the Russian-made guns. Even their uniforms became much better. By then the Chinese were living along with Tibetans under some degree of co-existence. They stayed in Lhasa for a long time. There were policemen, both Tibetan and Chinese. All the Tibetan policemen in Norbulingka were under Chinese pay. It was the Chinese who were paying the bodyguards of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Chinese issued even their uniforms. It was in this way that the great banner of co-existence between the Tibetans and Chinese was carried out in Lhasa. Then Tibet Autonomous Region was established in Lhasa. In the eight-day preparatory run-up to the festival marking the establishment of Tibet Autonomous Region, skilled people came from areas lying above Lithang in Kham and below Ngari in Central Tibet. There were horsemen, construction workers (Shor), and other skilled people.

We had come to participate in the festival as horsemen from Reting. We had come to participate in a horse race in the festival. There were participants from Damshong, Reting and the Tibetan government, which had newly formed a Chinese communists section under it. There were around 100 horse racers from among the Chinese. There were sixty or seventy each from Damshong and Reting respectively. The horse race lasted for two days in Lhasa.

The Chinese were very clever and very accommodating. They would give whatever the Tibetans wanted. They would give a hiring rent for horses (corvee), and wages for people who would have worked for them. Anybody who would have lent them horses would be compensated most generously. We were

making preparatory arrangements for the celebration marking the establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region. The Chinese were very popular amongst the poor Tibetans in the villages as well. They were singing praises about Chinese generosity. They were impressed that the Chinese compensated with hard money for even a bowl of water. They were impressed that the Chinese paid for anything at all that they took from the Tibetans. There were even sayings in the streets which likened the Chinese act of compensating for anything they took from Tibetans with the generosity of one's parents. But the Chinese were not to remain like this forever.

Gradually they became worse, their policies turned more repressive and their behavior more oppressive. By then they had secured their claim over all parts of Tibet. Having established their control over Tibet, China became the immediate neighbor with India. The border area between China and India were to be filled with soldiers from both sides. The Chinese invited His Holiness the Dalai Lama to China. His Holiness the Dalai Lama met with Mao Zedong in Beijing. When His Holiness returned to Lhasa, the Chinese were talking about complete incorporation of Tibetan administration into Chinese governance. They were talking about a united political front to both the Chinese and Tibetan entities. Then the Chinese started to assert more and more control over Tibet and its administration. The Tibetans had finally come to understand Chinese and were now looking at them differently. The Tibetans hated the Chinese now. By then the *Chushi Gangdruk* [four rivers, six ranges] resistance movement had started. Resistance fighters from Chushi Gangdruk were fighting the Chinese in Lokha.

Messages started to reach us from the organization entreating all the able-bodied Khampa men to join the resistance movement. Some of us had decided to join the movement. We were just ready to leave to join the organization. We had put in reserve two horses, which could run really fast. There had been fighting between Tibetans and Chinese in Nyemo. So people from Nyemo were selling guns, which belonged to Chinese who had been killed in the fighting. I bought two of such guns called Pura from Lhasa. Both the *Puras* [rifles] are still lying in my house (Dong-khung) now. They are hidden below the floor of my Dong-khung. They probably are destroyed by now because of having been underground for so many years. I had hidden the guns because I didn't want to be caught with them, and also I knew that I could face a heavy consequence if I were to be caught with guns. So the Chinese became worse, and their policy oppressive, with the passage of time. They put up an impression of desiring to work with the influential Tibetans, before finally putting them in prison. Then one day they approached His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

What was the status of livelihood of the people in Lhasa? What was the scene like in Barkhor Square?

People's livelihood suffered after the arrival of the Chinese. Otherwise, things were fine before the Chinese arrived. Making a living was quite easy in Lhasa. For a businessman, it was good business. One could find a lot of Indian goods in Lhasa because India was closest foreign country and a lot of people preferred to trade between India and Tibet. Lhasa would import grains like rice and barley from India where such grains grew in abundance. One couldn't grow rice in Lhasa. As for export, Lhasa exported

wheat and barley to India. Then also, Tibet exported butter and cheese produced from the nomadic areas in Tibet. Since the nomadic areas in Tibet were huge and since Tibetan nomads used to own large animal holdings, meat and butter were found in abundance. So people in Tibet were more than self-sufficient before the Chinese arrived. I swear this by God. Tibet was a happy place then. One was free to do whatever he wanted. There was no restriction on anybody.

Since I couldn't join the Chushi Gangdruk, I went into business. I enrolled Changlochen as my partner. We had heard about this place called Dam Gyi Li where there used to be a two-month long trade festival which was equivalent to a new year celebration for traders and businessmen. One could not only do trade in all sorts of goods there but one could revel to his fullest. There were food, meat, butter and *chang* (Tibetan beer) in abundance. There were dancers too. Everybody relaxed and had fun in the evenings. One could also find a lot of prostitutes. One didn't have to work so hard as it takes in sweater selling business in India. At that time I had come to India many times for doing trade. I would make at least two trips once every year. I used to come to Kalimpong. I could buy whatever I wanted to from Kalimpong. If I couldn't find what I wanted in Kalimpong then I had to go Calcutta. That's what most Tibetans did. From Calcutta we sent the packages to Kalimpong. From there we sent the packages to Tibet.

Once we reached Tibet we wouldn't even have to put up a stall. As soon as we would open the luggage, the local traders would swoop down on my purchases. They would buy my goods there and then so that they could sell later in their stalls. These local traders could easily do business with the things they bought from others or myself. It is not like these days where hardly a customer comes by. In Lhasa doing business was really easy. It was mostly aristocrats who were doing business like these in those days.

Once we reached Kalimpong we didn't have to buy the goods one by one. We could just walk into a shop or a factory of an Indian who would then show us different samples. We would decide on the samples and lay orders for the quantity of goods we wanted. We would then lay order for ten sacks, 15 sacks or 20 sacks of goods. The Indian shopkeeper would take care of the rest. The sacks would be delivered to our doorsteps on horsebacks or mules. We didn't even have to look into the sacks to check on the merchandise. It wasn't that much difficult either to send the goods to Tibet.

So as I said doing business was easy in the early days in Tibet. So we were more into wholesale business at that time. The local traders would carry out retail sale. Not much effort was needed in having our merchandise sold to others. The local traders would just fight with each other in buying my goods, or for that matter any goods on sale by wholesale dealers. There would be certain poor traders who wouldn't have much of capital. So they would take our goods and promise to pay us within a given time. But we would let them and they always succeeded in paying us. So we had a code of trust, which was healthy.

As for eatables, we had a lot of butter, meat and barley. In Tibet it is mostly butter and meat. I don't think the Tibetans can survive at all if it were not for butter and meat. Where the two of them are available, Tibetans can be very happy. They would be lacking in nothing else then. Also meat and butter are

abundantly produced from Kham and Amdo and other parts in Tibet. We imported rice and barley from India. As I said before, we were very happy in Tibet then. We were lacking in nothing then. This is not the case today.

In the olden days we would have a lot of picnics. People would go for picnic after every two months. People would all the time be making plans to go for picnics. At other times they would be busy inviting each other to picnics. They would arrange for picnics by preparing meat dishes and making bread. They would bring jugs full of Chang. Then they would go to some nice place where they would picnic the whole day, getting drunk and making merry. They would return to their respective homes in the evenings. It was a happy time. Lhasa was a happy place. And this was all before the Chinese set foot in our soil. The same was the situation for sometime even after they had arrived. But gradually things changed for the worse.

Although there were things in abundance, prices began to shoot up greatly. For the first time Tibet, or at least Lhasa, was going through inflation. Tibetan currency was losing its value. Even if one had lots of money, it was difficult to make purchases of products. Before the Chinese came to Tibet, things were different.

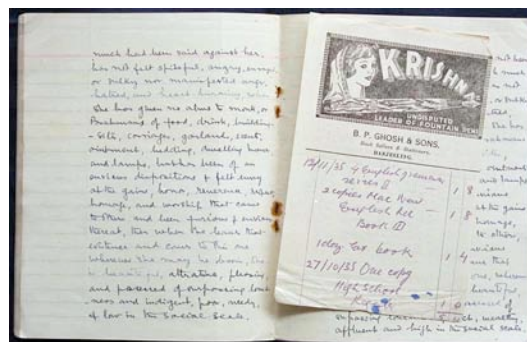
Even though Tibet was not such a big country like other independent countries, it was not lacking in anything by the grace of Jowo Rinpoche. In Lhasa one could find products from virtually all the countries. One could find all sorts of eatables in Lhasa. Now what could be better than this?

Lhasa really was a land of happiness. It only became such a bad place after the Chinese arrived. Before that, I had not heard of any major disruption or conflicts in Tibet. Before the Chinese arrived, the Tibetan people – mostly the lamas and monks – were pre-occupied with Buddhism. If not pre-occupied with Buddhism, they would be singing, dancing and having fun. Those who did business didn't have such a hard time. So it was a wonderful time we had before the Chinese arrived. People were happy and there was contentment and peace everywhere.

THE TEXTS OF GENDUN CHOEPHEL

At a very early stage of my research, which began in 1998, I realized that truly understanding GC was only possible through his own texts. So far I was only aware of two translations of his work: Samten Norboo's translation of GC's 'Political History' (1978), which I had read already in 1988 and Jeffrey Hopkins' translation of 'The Tibetan Arts of Love' (1995). It was in 1998, in an article in 'Lungta' (1992), a magazine published by Christophe Besuchet in Geneva, that I heard of Heather Stoddard's biography of GC for the first time. Her book 'Le Mendiante de L'Amdo' (1985), written in French, was mentioned in the footnotes to an interview with Rakra Tethong Rinpoche, a former student of GC in Lhasa 1946. I immediately ordered her book in Paris and through the Tibetan historian Tsering Shakya luckily got access to an English draft-translation, which I found much easier to read than her original French version.

It was through Stoddard's book that I realized the scope of GC's writings. Among his miscellaneous works were essays on Buddhist philosophy, a travel guide, anthropological observations of daily life in India, notes on the 'new wisdom' (science), a book and several articles on Tibetan history, even a series of articles written in English, poems etc. Some of his comments were even outright political and anti-colonial. (Image 25: From GC's original notes, India 1934-46). What fascinated me the most through all of his works, mentioned (and some of it translated) in Stoddard's book, was his curiosity about the world. He let the world around him – especially colonial India, where he lived for twelve years between 1934 and 1946 – influence him. In all of his texts he seemed to talk to an imagined Tibetan audience, trying to communicate to them the experiences and observations he had made. In his writings, read in Heather Stoddard's book, I felt a kind of 'cultural relativism' in his life, a being detached from his own society. Through his experiences in India, being constantly exposed to a completely different world, he gained a 'critical' view of his own Tibetan society. In this sense I began to see him as a truly 'modern' man.



The next step, after reading Stoddard's book, was to find more original writings of GC. I was very lucky that Donald S. Lopez Jr., Toni Huber and Sonam Tenzing had just finished their draft-translations of three major works of GC: the *Ludrup Gongyen*, a controversial essay on Madhyamika philosophy (Lopez), the *Lamyig*, a travel guide of India (Huber) and the *Debther Karpo*, a political history of Tibet (Sonam Tenzing). I was kindly given access to these translations and they all allowed me to use excerpts of them in my film. Through them I also heard of the three-volume edition of GC's almost complete works by Horkhang Sonam Penbar (1990). Interestingly this compilation was published in Lhasa (Tibet), where – as for a long time was claimed by the Tibetan exile community in India – such publications were not possible. This opened my eyes for the importance of GC, not just in the exile community, but also for Tibetan intellectuals in Tibet.

What I particularly liked in GC's 'Political History of Tibet' (Sonam Tenzing) was that Tibetan Buddhism was shown in its historical and political context and also the way he described the violent aspects of Tibetan history. Tibet was not just this peaceful Buddhist country, but had once been a major military force in Central Asia. His 'Tibetan Arts of Love' (Hopkins, K. Dhondup) came as a surprise, I had never expected a Tibetan to write about that. More interesting than Hopkins' translation, was K. Dhondup's book review, where he added some of his own translations. Different than Hopkins, whose translation was rather 'spiritual', K. Dhondup tried to focus on the down to earth aspect of the text, interpreting it as a kind of 'sex-manual', to put it bluntly. In my film I used his translation (and excerpts from Heather Stoddard). What interested me in the 'Travel Guide of India' (Huber), was the fact that GC had really written a kind of 'Lonely Planet' travel guide of his days. In his book he not only explained the Buddhist pilgrim sites, but he gave very practical instructions, as how to get around in India and how much it would possibly cost. But for me the intellectually most interesting of the translated texts I worked with, was his essay on 'Madhyamika philosophy' (Lopez), especially from the perspective of a visual anthropologist. In this text GC talks about 'valid knowledge'. What is 'valid knowledge'? How can it be obtained? He comes to the conclusion that 'valid knowledge' (what we know to be true about the world; reality) is not out there with a fixed set of 'meaning'. Meaning is constructed by the participants of a discourse, often through inference and deduction. This argument strongly reminded me of the 'crisis of representation', which is so hotly debated among visual anthropologists (See: James Clifford, 1998).

What was now left to be done, regarding GC's written oeuvre, was to go through Horkhang's three-volume edition (1990) and the Tibetan newspaper *Melong* (Tibet Mirror, 1925-51). Most of GC's texts in these publications (except for the books that I mentioned above), had not been translated so far, or only in little pieces, some of which were published in Heather Stoddard (*Le Mendiant de L'Amdo*, 1985) and Lopez (*Madhyamika Meets Modernity*, Tricycle 1995). With the generous help of the Tibetan scholar Tashi Tsering from the Amnye Machen Institute (AMI) in Dharamshala, I managed to select a variety of passages for translation into English from the Horkhang edition, as well as the Tibet Mirror.

I knew from the beginning that Buddhism would not be my main focus to look at GC's life and Tibet. I liked to see my film as a kind of counter-weight to the almost exclusively 'Buddhist' discourse, when taking about Tibet (to learn more about this decision, watch the 'bonus' on the DVD: 'Interview with Luc Schaedler'). More than anything, I was interested in the social, political and historical aspects of his life: GC as a social reformer, an intellectual critic and an 'iconoclast'. To be able to efficiently find and select the relevant passages, I set up a list of criteria together with Tashi Tsering. They were to a large extent influenced by the focus I wanted to give my film on GC. I asked Tashi to mainly look for historical and political references (colonialism), anthropological descriptions of India (food, dresses), funny anecdotes of a Tibetan traveler in India (the coconut that nearly killed him), critical observations of daily life in India (caste system, widow burning), passages reflecting GC's state of mind (loneliness, sadness, curiosity) and passages, where GC directly 'talks' to his fellow Tibetans (whether the world is round or flat)...

Most of the translations* of GC's texts that you will find below are the first ever made in English. Most of them are draft-translations, though. They may not live up to the standard of literary translations. Initially they were not intended for publication. The blame is on me, since I had instructed the translators to be fast and cheap. Nevertheless all of these translations are good enough to get an idea of the breadth of GC's writings, and they will certainly help non-Tibetan readers and speakers to get a glimpse into GC's literary work. During the many Q & A's after the screenings of ANGRY MONK, I realized that the interest to read his works in the original was certainly there.

* The translations of GC'S texts that were previously published in English will *not* be included here. Namely:

Norboo, Samten. The White Annals by Gendun Choephel. 1978.

Hopkins, Jeffrey. Tibetan Arts of Love: Sex, Orgasm & Spiritual Healing by Gedün Chöpel. 1992.

Huber, Toni. The Guide to India: A Tibetan Account by Amdo Gendun Chöpel. 2000.

Lopez, Donald S. Jr. The Madman's Middle Way: Reflections on Reality of the Tibetan Monk Gendun Chopel. 2006.

Sonam Tsering. The White Annals: A Political History of Tibet. *Forthcoming*.

THE THREE VOLUME EDITION OF HORKHANG SONAM PENBAR

Horkhang, Sonam Penbar. *dGe-'dun chos-'phel gyi gsung rtsom*. 3 Vols. *Bod-ljongs Bod-yig dPe-rnying dPe-skrun-khang* (Gangs-can Rig-mdzod 10, 11, 12). Lhasa 1990.



Image 26: The editor Horkhang Sonam Penbar with his family, Lhasa 1940's

All of Volume 10 and the first half of Volume 11 consist of GC's (almost) complete travel notes from India and Sri Lanka. GC regarded his notes as one single text, which he titled: 'The Refined Gold: A Travel Account of First Hand Experience' (Vol. 10 (p. 3-426) and Vol. 11 (p. 3-190)).

VOLUME 10

CHAPTER 1: INITIAL DEPARTURE FROM LHASA

(P. 3-40)

Homage to Samyaksambuddha!

May you receive rains of blessings from him, the Sun of the World,

Who conquers the dark world by means of the profound wisdom light,

Rules the entire samsara by means of 'peaceful samadhi of emancipation',

And holds in him a mind free from all kinds of stains.

The social custom of the elite groups of past Tibetan civilization

That has come down to us

Are but portraits

Of Indian customs. (Page 3)

A detailed discussion on such customs of this land

In comparison to what has been assumed to be

In the works of past scholars

May bring us a fuller understanding.

*But a fuller understanding is possible
Only if one observes it oneself with first hand experiences.*

*Here follows my analysis of certain gross and subtle distinctions
Illustrated with the help of some easy to understand examples.*

Following in the foot-steps of the past Bodhisattva kings and ministers, everyone in this land [Tibet], no matter whether he is rich, poor or a 'middle-class' man, has a great respect for India, for it is the land from where Buddhism came to Tibet. Indian influences can be seen deeply absorbed in the thoughts, speeches and physical actions of our Tibetan elite—as deeply as the oil in an unbeaten *seasum* [?]. Their scholarly talents demonstrated in their literary works, their costumes and their ritual etc. are well nourished by such influences. Read a verse of four lines from their works and there will be a list of Indian things such as Indian hills, Indian rivers and Indian flowers etc. Such a list is necessary to illustrate their ideas. Tibetan hills, rivers etc. for them are not feasible. For examples: a line of composition such as '*your body is as majestic as Mount Vindiyachal and your speech is as pure and stainless as river Ganga [Ganges]*' is considered classic. Whereas, '*your body is as majestic as Mount Magyal-pomra and your speech is as pure and stainless as river Machu [Machen, Eastern Tibet]*', is considered ridiculous, although such a composition is up to the literary standard. Such a style that has become a fashion among Tibetan elite has (Page 4) often caused confusing descriptions, as the Indian things described in them are exaggerated beyond what they really are. Removal of such confusions can be possible, only if one has first hand experiences, having seen and heard the things by one's own eyes and ears. Such a first hand experience does not make one a learned person. Nor does it make one a fool. But exaggerating them [the Indian things] beyond what they really are does make one a liar, for he may very well mislead anyone to assume an exaggerated or wrong meaning. Therefore, my attempt in this work is to present a collection of information I have collected during my travel in various parts of Tibet and India [in this text, only Tibet], which concerns the 'fields of learning'. This collection is not intended for those who are used to exaggerate the things conjecturally, those who include fictitious stories in their works in order to attract greater number of readers, or those who gloss over the matters that may harm their survival. Nor is this collection for my name and fame, but for those who are objective and unbiased in their perspectives. There will be no progress in one's understanding if one prefers to remain diplomatic for fear of criticisms. (Page 5). Being a Tibetan, I know what will be the reaction from the people of both high and low class if I openly give my comments saying, '*this is wrong*', '*this too is wrong*' and so forth. Yet, I am presenting this work. Hold your heart!

*I follow the path of truth and avoid
Exaggerations to attract fools,
Flatteries to please the elite groups,
And stories to invoke emotional faith.*

Thus I develop *bodhicitta* with these verses and begin my narration:

It was in the Wood male-dog year of 16th Rab-jung (*rab 'byung*), I, at the age of 32, traveled to India. That was the year 2476 of Buddha-nirvana, according to the Theravada tradition of Sri Lanka [1934]. This chronology is accepted as authentic in the countries where Buddhism is recently introduced. Since this chronology is now well known, I will use it throughout this work. It is rather a conjecture on the part Sakya Pandita when he said, '*in this chronology, they have confused the year of Buddha's birth with that of the installation of Buddha-stature at Bodhgaya.*' (Page 6). From my early young age, I had a strong desire to visit India at least one time [See interview: Alak Yongtsin]. After seven years in Drepung in Central Tibet [1927-34], I met Pandit Rahul [Sankrityayan], whose encouragement made my dream of journey to India come true [See Rahul in 'To Whom I'm Grateful']. Before that myself with Rahul went on a tour to Phenyul ('phen yul) and Rating (*rva sgreng*) monasteries etc. Also I began to study a little bit of Sanskrit under him. He has a lot of money. His Tibetan is as good as that of a seven-year old Tibetan child. His good connection with Tibetan aristocrats enabled us to have a good access to all the important holy objects preserved in the monasteries we visited. Phenyul [North of Lhasa] and Lhasa are located in a region with same mountain range, but Phenyul has a far more monastic-centers of old time than Lhasa has. Upper Phenyul appeared to me to be more like a nomadic place with its vast land of pleasant atmosphere. Important monasteries of Kadampa tradition such as Langthang (*glang thang*), Poto, and Tragyap (*brag rgyab*) etc. are located in the surroundings of this place. All these monasteries are full of stupas. So are the ancient Buddhist sites in India. Rishipatana in Saranath [near Varanasi], the ruins of Nalanda in Bihar and so forth are also full of stupas of various sizes. It indeed was an old custom. The oldest of those Kadampa monasteries, i.e. Gyal Lhakhang (*rgyal lha khang*), is located in the upper part of the Upper Phen-yul. (Page 7). This is one of the four major seats of Buddhist learning about which Golo ('*gos lo*) has made mention of. It was built by Shangnam Dorjee Wangchuk (*zhang sna nam rdo rje dbang phyug*), who was a disciple of Lumey (*klu sme*), the direct disciple of Lachen (*bla chen*), in around 113 years following the persecution of Buddhism by Langdarma (*glang dar ma*). Hence it is one of the earliest monasteries of the 'later spread' [second wave of Buddhism, 11th century]. This monastery has a huge statue of Buddha Maitreya and a huge stock of texts in traditional *poti* format [long pages], but without 'wooden covers'. Such a statue and stocks of texts are also seen at Rating and Sakya. All these texts are written in ancient Tibetan writing-style. More on this writing-style will be discussed below. In a corner of this monastery, there is a stone statue of Buddha Maitreya flanked by his two entourages. A little less than human size in height, it looked exactly like those from India. This was a big surprise for our Pandit [Rahul] '*This is from India*', he remarked. On close examination under candlelight, we discovered a text engraved on the back of this statue, which says:

'This holy object of Maitreya's statue,

Installed by Tsangdo Kontsek (gtsang do dkon rtegs)

As a sign of this region's victory,

May help all in generating Buddha-mind!

Om ema-hara-na hum'

Hence, it seems that this statue was made in Tibet by an Indian sculptor. The format in which these four lines appear is similar to those found in several rock inscriptions of old time. A long sign on the syllable 'Om' (Page 8) has been a subject of argument among the scholars, but it is found in almost all the old documents. The early Tibetan transliterations of Sanskrit are based on phonetics only. 'Vajra' is transliterated as ''ba' 'dza' ra', for such examples are found in the signed letters of several Lotsawas (*lo tsav ba*) [translators]. The standard transliteration system, which is currently known, seems to have come into being lately. This system however has given birth to mispronunciation of several Sanskrit words. For example, with the advent of this system, the Sanskrit '*pra-jna*' is transliterated in Tibetan as '*pra dznya*', which a Tibetan would pronounce it as '*ta-jna*' and not '*pra-jna*'. Whereas this term according to the earlier phonetic transliteration system is transliterated as '*par 'gya*', which is closer to the original Sanskrit pronunciation '*pra-jna*' than that of '*ta jna*'. More on this will be discussed below.

These monasteries have stores of Indian molded-statues and scroll-paintings, but for our Pandit [Rahul] this is the only one he has seen in Tibet. Gyal Lhakhang is located in the base of Lho hill, although it could have been built on any hill in the nearby locality, as there are several of them. In fact all those monasteries, which were built in the time of the Yarlung (*yar lung*) kings [7-9th century] and in the beginning of the 'later spread' [11th century] are located in hill-bases and not on hilltops. It seems that the custom of building monasteries on hilltops has come into vogue lately. The monasteries such as Nalanda and Mahabodhi in India were founded in plains. Perhaps the Tibetans of those days have followed the same pattern, disregarding the fact that there are very few hills in Indian plains. (Page 9). The Indians do seem to have great respect for hills. Whenever they come across a small hill, they would name it with epithets such as 'the mountain king' and pay great respect by building temples on them. Vikramashila as well is located on a mound of rocks in the bank of river Ganges. In that entire region, there are only three such hills; one in the middle of the river, and two in the nearby distance. Sapan has rightly said, 'Girdakuta, the great mountain of India'. However, 'India' in the ancient time means just the central part of what is now known as India. Otherwise, there are mountains such as Mount Vindhyachal with its ranges in the south and the mountains facing the Oceans in the East as well as in the West.

At the door of Gyal Lhakhang, there is a pillar of a human size in height with a four-dimensioned shape. On the four sides in the middle of the shaft are the portrayals of a *vajra*, a jewel, a lotus and a cross. On the eastern face, the following inscription is engraved:

(Thus installed. Generally speaking, people of religious thought are rare these days. However, as for those who have taken refuge in the Three Jewels, they should observe the followings:

Regard the deities as your Buddhas. Regard the Dharma as your ultimate source of advice. Regard the Buddhist view as your principal practice. Bring your speech and conduct to their natural state. Live on a pure livelihood. Act according to the Dharma. Get the essence of any group-discussion. Control each and every sense doors. Do not participate in harmful discussions. Follow the truth. These ten practices will bring happiness in your present as well as the next life.) (Page 10).

The immediate next line is only partly decipherable and it says *'keep this in mind without being forgotten...'* I have used this sign 'y' to mark the end of a line in the original inscription. There are a few lines more but totally undecipherable. The spelling of *'spyi'* (meaning 'generally speaking') in the inscription is the one without suffix *'ra'*. Also the words such as *'chig'* etc. are used in this inscription. Mostly but not always the oldest manuscripts have the reversed form of the vowel sign 'i'. But the present inscription does not have even one such sign. Was it a pillar of a king or a lama is hard to say. Judging from the wordings in the inscription such as 'thus installed' or 'control each and every sense doors' or 'do not participate in harmful discussions' etc., it seems that this pillar was installed by a king. In that case, this king could be either Tri Darma's (*khri dar ma*) nephew, ie. Tashitseg (*bkra shis rtags*), or his son Ngadag Ozer (*mnga' bdag 'od-zer*). There is another pillar located in a family's courtyard. Unfortunately, there was no one from the family staying home that day and the house was under lock. It is said that there are two more pillars located elsewhere in Phenyul. It would be good if a pilgrim with leisure could take down a copy of the inscriptions on each of those pillars. As for the inscriptions of Lhasa and other pillars, I may present copies of them below, together with a brief discussion of the recent discovery of new materials on Tibetan history.

On our way down from Gyal Lhakhang, we came across a small nunnery located in a beautiful hill-base. On reaching there, we were told that it was the Patshab (*pa tshab*), the seat of famous translator Patshab. It was nothing more than just a poor-looking temple (Page 11). Those who have not read much of the historical materials often vaguely describe sites of historical importance such as this one. In fact I was taken by a mixed feeling of joy and sadness when I approached this site so unexpectedly. I knew that this site was in Central Tibet, but not the exact location of it. All those temples of the Kadampa tradition are poorly built. The columns to support the temple-roofs are made of poor quality crooked woods. None of them have straight and fine-wood pillars. However, the grace of blessing that one could sense on seeing them is something that sends a shudder of joy throughout one's body. It is said that the Phenyul people are honest by nature. Indeed, it is a pleasant region.

Then we passed through Taglung (*stag lung*) and reached Rating monastery. We visited for blessing the images and juniper trees there. Its extremely pleasant atmosphere made me think *'can there be a place more pleasant than this'*. It is said that this monastery has a small collection of Sanskrit texts, but the person in-charge did not allow us to see them. Perhaps he mistook our Pandit [Rahul] to be a westerner. In fact, our Pandit's dark complexion does speak of his being unmistakably an Indian, but perhaps the person in-charge had little knowledge of foreigners. People of the Northwest India do resemble Russians in complexion, but their hair color is darker than those of the Russians. According to Jonang Kunkhyen (*jo nang kun mkhyen*), this monastery has many texts signed by Atisha as the author. Such texts include, Shantipa's Commentary on Taknyi (*brtag gnyis kyi 'grel ba*) and Dranag Gigyud (*dgra nag gi rgyud*) etc. (Page 12). He has suggested, saying *'do not be doubtful and read a few pages from the top'*. If we are to believe him, then this monastery's collection of Sanskrit texts included the above texts too. However, we learn from the Biography that Drom (*'brom*) has sent them to India. Hence, this collection may not have been a big one. The people in this monastery, nevertheless, said that their collection is as big as it could

make a man's backpack in size. The other collection of scriptures in this monastery included a huge amount of texts numbering up to ten thousands, which many silly people have believed them to be of Sanskrit texts. In fact, they are all Tibetan texts. The Sanskrit texts are written on palm leaves and are not wider than three finger measures in width. They may be long but not wide. When a shepherd approached Milarepa and asked about Marpa, Milarepa's reply was: *'Perhaps you are asking about my Phajo. He is a man who came from India with many animal backpacks of thin but long Buddhist scriptures for gifts.'* More on Sanskrit texts will be discussed below. Then the person in-charge of Rating guided us around the monastery complex. Pointing at the two juniper trees, he explained, *'the one is a white sandal and the other a red sandal tree'*. This drove our Pandit [Rahul] into laughter and remarked, *'sandal trees are found only in the warm regions of South India and not even in the Central India, not to mention of Tibet'*. Of course our guide has little experience of this big country [India]. Our country has little relation of interdependence with it, in terms of the 'land, time, cause and condition'.

Then we gradually turned toward Lhasa from where we were to leave for India. In around the seventh month, (Page 13) we came to Gyaltsé (rgyal tse) [Gyantse] via Yadrog (*yar 'brog*). This and the other monasteries such as Zhalu (*zhal lu*) and Tashilhunpo (*bkra shis lhun po*) [in Shigatse] are located in the valleys of the same river. At about two days journey (ie. on foot) towards the North of Gyaltsé [Gyantse] was a small monastery known as **Pokhang Tshogpa** (*spos khang tshogs pa*). This was one of those four monasteries, which in the time of Khache Panchen (*kha che pan chen bsod snyoms pa chen po*) were known as four great Tshogpas (*tshogs pa*). In those days this monastery was known as Cholung Tshogpa (*chos lung tshogs pa*). Previously it was located in the hill-base from where it was moved to the higher ridge where it is now located. Also there was an old temple, which they said, was one of the Thadul (*mtha' 'dul*) monasteries, but perhaps this is not true. It has many holy objects such as Khache Panchen's robes and bowl etc. The color of his robe is brown with a little yellowish shade, which is same as those of the monks in Burma. The fact that Nagtsho (*nag 'tsho*) had a 'brown robe' at the time when he met Atisha [Indian Saint] does not seem to suggest *'a robe turned brownish due to thick layers of filth clustered on it'*. The Sakya monks wear brown robes of *ther-ma* cloth to these days. The holy statues of early time are of golden face with brown robes. Such a craft-man-ship is very much prevalent in Kham regions [Eastern Tibet] even today. One of the letters Tshong Khapa (*tshong kha pa*) [Tsongkhapa] had sent to Khedupje (*mkhas grub rje*) says that he had presented a set of brown robes to him. Hence, a custom of monks wearing brown colored robes did seem to have flourished in a certain period in the past. Of the three types of color (ie. saffron, *tsag*, and blue) prescribed for a monk's robe mentioned in the *M-tok Trengyud* (*me tog 'phreng rgyud*), the *tsag* color seems to mean brown. The monks in Srilanka wear robes of saffron color only. The above-mentioned robe has a lotus sign to indicate the top, but I have not seen such a sign among those of Indian Bhikkhus [monks]. (Page14) The bowl is coded with aluminum from inside. Its shape is same as those of the Srilankan monks. These types of bowl have no cone shaped bottom and can easily be placed on the ground. Also there was a pair of shoes claimed to be of his. Its instep is made of cloth with red patch in the middle of the sole and a black strip on the toe and ankle. For detailed description, see the fig. [no figure in the book]. In hopes that the costumes of such a respected person like Khache Panchen may have a significant purpose, I have made an attempt to describe them here in detail.

Also seen among the holy objects in this monastery was an exquisite Indian styled thangka of the 'five deities', which Khache Panchen had used for his meditation. The one that is mentioned in his biography is said to be this one. The style of this thangka is that of the Gupta period and such a thangka is now rare both in India and Tibet. This piece is well preserved and is in a quite good condition. The statue of Hayagriva in this monastery has its canine teeth exposed upwards like that of an elephant; a style that has striking resemblance with those of the herukas painted in the Tibetan royal temples. Hence it shows that this statue is very old. The craftsmanship of this style is still prevalent in Kham regions [Eastern Tibet]. The style that depicts the herukas with their mouths wide open and their canine teeth resembling that of a tiger may be considered good but it is a recent advent.

The Sanskrit texts preserved in this monastery [Pokhang] are as follows:

A fragment of *Asthasahasrika Prajnaparamita*. It is said to be the personal text of Khache Panchen.

Gyud-chag Sum-gyi Treng-wa (rgyud phyag gsum gyi phreng ba) by Ashvagoshya. (Page 15)

The *Yong-kyi tam (yongs kyi gtam)*, 5 vols. full-length format with no colophon. A text of six folios with six lines on every face with a colophon saying 'Bhikkhu Dipamkarasya pustakam', meaning 'Atisha's text'.

A set of *Abhisayama-alamkara* and *Dharmata-vibhaga*, short-length format with a colophon saying 'presented from Ya-tse'.

Zhalu monastery also has a Sanskrit text with a colophon saying, 'presented from Yatse'. It is said that some of the later descendants of the Yarlung dynasty [7-9th century] were known by this title, 'Yatse King'. This region seems to have been a part of Ngari. The above-mentioned last two texts have colophons saying, 'written in the Vikram Year 1370'. From then up to the Tiger Year, about 1074 years have passed. Colophons of several Sanskrit texts have this year. This calculation began from the coronation of the Indian King Vikramaditya. This is all I have seen during this tour. During the Tiger Year that followed [1935], our Pandit [Rahul] accompanied by two more Indians did a survey of Sanskrit texts in Tibet. The present survey [1934] took several days and we had an opportunity to go through several texts. A brief report of this survey is included herein. The same follows with that of Zhalu and Sakya.

Then we came to **Zhalu Monastery** via Tashilhunpo. We visited **Riphug**. Buton's chamber is a room of one pillar and the floor is without any paint. Except for the door, it has no windows to receive lights into the room. Even an ordinary monk of today may not like this kind of room for his residence. The collection of important texts were stored in two grey color wooden boxes of (Page 16) one *tshon* short of three *tho* measure in length and six in breadth. It is said that these boxes belonged to him. The collection included several hand-written Tibetan manuscripts also. Among the collection was a text wrapped in nine different pieces of brocade. No one knew what it was. We unwrapped it and the text inside seemed to have been the first draft monograph of Buton's work *Dron-sel shed-jar tha-drug sel-ba (sgron gsal bshad sbyar mtha' drug gsal ba)*. It has a note saying 'This is hand written by Thug-se Lotsawa (*thugs sras lo tsa*

ba) and thus care must be taken against being lost'. All the pages have yellow lines and the text is in Umed (dbu med) script, very much resembling what is nowadays known as kham-dri. It is well preserved. It seemed as if it is just two or three years old. On seeing this, a kind of sad emotion erupted in me, and out of no reason I thought, 'Tsongkhapa might have copied this sometimes in his life time'. Other texts seem to have gone through a not very satisfactory care. So were those in Sakya monastery. Once during a dusting session, five sets of Sanskrit texts were carelessly mixed up; resulting in the page order totally messed up. Then some people suggested that the texts of disordered pages bring bad luck. So the monks moved them all in the basement and threw them among the trash. As a result all were damaged. It is indeed sad to note that such a valuable was treated so carelessly. In fact, the manuscripts written on palm-leaves have become so rare in India that it is hard to find even one folio [See Kanwal Krishna]. There are people who stole a folio from a set of such texts and used it as talisman in the form of a locket. Also there are people who scratched a piece from such texts and swallowed it taking it as source of blessings. The worse are those who inserted them inside a statue or a stupa; (Page17) thus totally wiping them off the scene. Such deeds are of tremendous harm to the preservation of Buddhism, although the persons involved may consider what they have done a laudable job.

The texts discovered from Riphug are sets of 42 works and they are as follows:

A complete set of *Tark-jawala* by Acharya Bhava. This is the root text of *U-ma nying po (dbu ma snying po)* and not a commentary.

A complete set of *Abhidharma-sammuchaya*.

A complete set of *Hundred Thousand Prajnaparamita*

The *Guhya-samaja* both root text and the commentary.

A complete set of *Bodhi-chitta*

The *Tri-samyā-purvasolva-viddha* by Acarya Jaya Prabha. Six folios of various sizes. Some are of full-length format with nine lines on every face. Here full-length format means the ones with a length of one *tru (khru)* and one *tho (mtho)* measure.

A complete set of *Prajnaparamita-tika*

A complete set *Manjusri-nama-samgiti*, short length format written on paper.

The complete set of *Siddhi-kavira-tantra*, 14 folios of short-length format.

A complete set of *Tara-stuti-tika*.

A complete set of *Trimshika* by Acharya Vasubhandu.

The *Prajnaparamita-pindarth* by Acharya Dignaga.

The *Trimshatika-karika* by Acharya Asanga.

A complete set of *Guhyentra-tilakakal-rajā*, short-length format with eight lines on every face.

A complete set of *Kham-lei dri-med od (khams le'i dri med 'od)*, full length format.

The *Prajnaparamita*, Vol. 12-16, full-length formats.

A text of one volume. This is said to be one of the four volumes set written in (Page 18) Nepal for Je-tsun Drag-pa Gyal-tshen, who is said to have edited them. Rest three volumes are in Sakya.

A complete set of *Ashtha-saharika-prajnaparamita*, a thick volume.

A fragment of *Tri-locana*, written on papers.

A complete set of *Sarmanjri*.

A complete set of *Ngam-ned kyi snye-ma* (*ngam nad kyi snye ma*).

The *Caturanga-saddhana-tika* by Acharya Samanta Bhadra.

A complete set of *Raha-pradepam-saravarhasya-nibhanda* by Acharya Shanti Ratna Sambhava, 14 folios of full-length format with seven lines on every face.

A complete set of *Krishna-yamari-tantra-panjika* by Acharya Kumara Chandra.

A complete set of *Vajramrita-tantra-panjika* by Acharya Vimal Prabha, 7 folios of full-length format with seven lines on every face.

The *Kalyana-kamdhenu* by Acharya Arya Nagarjuna, 5 pages of full-length format with seven lines on every face.

A complete set of *Pratishtha-bemdhem*. The text included in this set are of several Tibetan titles such as the *De-nyi chu* (*de nyid bcu*) by Lopon Rin-chen Tshul-trim, *Jinseg-gi Cho-ga* (*sbyin sreg gi cho ga*), and the *Sang-gye kun-gyi rab-gnas kyi cho-ga* (*sangs rgyas kun gyi rab gnas kyi cho ga*) with a colophon saying, 'here ends the 21st chapter of the tantra of *Sangye kun-gyi rab-gnas kyi cho-ga* (*sangs rgyas kun gyi rab gnas kyi cho ga*). Also it included the *Tor-mai de kho-na nyid* (*gtor ma'i de kho na nyid*) and others. In all it has 16 folios of full-length format.

A complete set of *Kalchakra-tika-vimprabha*, 46 pages of full-length format.

A complete set of *Yoga-pavar-saddhana*.

A complete set of *Bodhicitta-vajragatha-tika*. (Page 19)

The *Jyotish-vairyakakrota-patra* by Vibhuti Chandra, the text on medicine and astrology.

The *Apoha-siddhi* by Jnana Shrimitra. This has not been translated into Tibetan.

The *Tham-che khyen-pa drup-pa* (*thams cad mkhyen pa grub pa*) by Jnana Shrimitra, 14 pages of full length format.

A volume consisting of the texts such as *Ke-chig gi jig-pa grub-pa* (*skad cig gi 'jig pa grub pa*), *Tse-ma nang-du grub-pa* (*tshad ma nang du grub pa*), and *Wang-chug nam-par chod-pa* (*dbang phyug rnam par dpyod pa*), all authored by Jnana Shrimitra. Also it included, *Den-drup kyi gyu chod-pa* (*ldan grub kyi rgy dpyod pa*), *Sem-nyi med-par chod-pe rab-je* (*sems nyid med par dpyod pa'i rab byed*) and *Yen-lag can med-pa sum* (*yan lag can med pa gsum*) etc. These texts have no colophons. In all this set consists of 12 different works, thus making a thick volume.

The *Nyi-tri man-ngag* (*nyi khri man ngag*) by San-gye khol (*sangs rgyas 'khol*), one vol.

The *Phag-pa ge-dun phel-chen pe jig-ten le de-par ma-be dul-ba* (*'phags pa dge 'dun phal chen pa'i 'jig rten las 'das par smra ba'i 'dul ba*), one volume of full-length format folios. It is perhaps this text, about which the scholars have made conjectural remarks as follows: Golo Zhunu Pel in his *Blue Annals* has said, 'although the Tibetan sources say that Mahasamgikas consider taking wine as a major transgression of the Vinaya injunction....' Panchen says, 'this is a manual used by both Thanye Chigpa (*tha snyad gcig pa*) and Jigtenle Deparmaba (*'jig rten las 'das par smra ba*), according which committing adultery is considered a major transgression of the Vinaya injunction.'

A complete set of *Mahayanottara-tantra-tika*.

The *Abhi-dharma-pradhipa-vibhasha-prabhivriti*, about 70 folios of full-length format with nine lines on every face. Written in *vartu* script, this is a set of the root-text and commentary combined. (Page 20).

The *Vigrahayavartani* by Acharya Nagarjuna, full-length format with eight lines on every face. This is a Tibetan transliteration of Sanskrit written on palm-leaves. Its colophon says, 'written by Nub Dharmakirti, the disciple of Jo Tsamye (*jo rtsa mye*).'

The *Vinaya-sutra* by Acharya Guna Prabha. Also it included an incomplete set of its commentary with a note in the opening saying 'annotated by Shila Akara' and another note in the end saying, 'written by Nub Chokyi Dakpa (*gnubs chos kyi grags pa*) at Vikramashila in the early spring season.' This is also a Tibetan transliteration of Sanskrit. This transliteration system is more or less same as the one which is in use nowadays, except in the case of long 'i' and long 'u' which according to this system is written 'ii' and 'uu'. Vikramashila had long been collapsed and today its ruins are hardly identifiable, but this text, which was written there, could be seen intact. This Shila Akara perhaps was Lotsawa Tshultrim Jungney (*lo tsva ba tshul khrims 'byung gnas*), for he was a disciple of Tsami Sanbgye drak (*rtsa mi snags rgyas grags*). He had visited India several times and stayed there for about a total of 15 years. He had done many corrections to the translations of Vinaya and Prajnaparamita etc. Also he is said to have brought several Sanskrit texts to Tibet. Such being the case, it is reasonable to assume that the above-mentioned Tibetan transliterations are also his works. He was born when Ngog Lotsawa was in his late age. It was the time when a number of (Page 21) Tibetan translators were frequently visiting Vikramashila for longer stays. A special facility was available there to accommodate the Tibetan visitors.

A fragment of *Madhyamika*-commentary written on palm-leaves in Sanskrit often interrupted by Tibetan. This is in the handwritings of Nub Chokyi Dakpa. This is a commentary of *Passanapada*. Its opening stanza describes what does '*Nagarjuna*' mean. And also it says, '*the manner in which this master abided in the trend of Madhyamika doctrine which was the doctrine propounded by Buddhapalita (...) some say that Chandrakirti recalled his previous lives and saw Buddhapalita as one his previous lives, thus he preferred to follow his Buddhapalita doctrine.*' Also, elsewhere in this text it is written, 'the interpretation that '*mun-pa*' (*mun pa*) in Tibetan simply means lack of '*ngo-po*' (*dngos po* ie. 'things') is a misinterpretation of the translator. The Sanskrit term is '*Abhaye*' and '*bha*' means 'light', 'grace' or 'sun'. Absence of '*bha*' (ie. '*abhaye*') means darkness'. Hence it seems that it is a Tibetan commentary with the root text, ie. *Passanapada*, preserved in Sanskrit.

A fragment of *Dohakosha-tika*.

A fragment of *Vartika-alamkara* by Prajnakara Gupta.

A complete set of *Svadhi-shatna-kramvirti* by Kutli.

A complete set of *Abhisvodhi-kram*.

A complete set of *Panca-krambi-vritim*.

A complete set of *Panca-kram-virti*-commentary by Kulong Ka.

A complete set of *Anuttara-sat-virti*-commentary.

A complete set of *Svapanadya*. (Page 22)

A complete set of *Kavya-prakashan* by Acharya Raja Naka and Mamata, 73 folios of full-length format with lines varying from eight to nine. This is currently used as study manual by most of scholars in India.

A fragment of *Heka-saddhana* by Siddha Darika.

A fragment of *Nima-samgiti*.

A fragment of *Bodhisatva-malana-krama* by Kamalashila.

The *Kurukulla-saddhana*.

A complete set of *Likeshvara-mandala*.

A fragment of *Adhibuddha*

A complete set of *Yoga-sarbbhash* by Acharya Bhashkka.

A complete set of *Srabhdhara-stotra* by Sarvajna Mitra.

A fragment of *Buddha-namaskara* by Kutila.

A fragment of *Kalachakra-tika-vimalaprabha*.

A fragment of *Mahayana-lakshana-sammucaya*.

The *Vajra-bhairva*.

A fragment of *Vajra-bairva-tantra-pancika* by Kumara Chandra.

A fragment of *Mula-devalvakya-shastra*.

A complete set of *Shatamka-yoka-tika*.

A fragment of *Vasudhara-dharani*.

A complete set of *Mahamalaya-tantra*.

A set of texts on Sanskrita grammars. This included *Panini vyakrana* by Panini and *Chandra-vyakrana* by Vrihati Chandrapa. All folios are of full-length format written on palm-leaves with beautifully depicted pictures of gods in the middle and the sides. (Page 23).

A complete set of *Cakrasamvara-virti-bhalab-bhata*, 53 folios of full-length format created in the time of King Surapala. Each line consists of 130 letters. This shows the fact that Sanskrit letters occupy less space than that of Tibetan. Generally speaking, a translated version [in Tibetan] of any texts is far bigger in size than the original Sanskrit text. That is, perhaps, because several Tibetan words contain many letters, for example the word '*bsgrigs*' has four letters in row. Whereas the Sanskrit words are often compressed in the sense that most of the suffixes are written together with the root letter in a double storied form. The opinion that such difference in size is due to the fact that Tibetan-words are less connotative than Sanskrit words, I think is not true. Because there are several Tibetan words, which have less letters than, the Sanskrit words have, for example Tib. *kha*= Sans. *Mukha*, Tib. *me*= Sans. *agni*, Tib. *chu*= Sans. *jalam* and so forth.

The *Dorjee kha-dro tika* (*rdo rje mkha' 'gro'i tika*), 26 folios of full-length format with seven line on every face.

A set of text with a Tibetan title reading, 'various instructions on the rituals of *Amoghapashakvaraja*'. 166 folios of full-length format with seven lines on every face.

The *Pancavimshati-sahasrika*.

A complete set of *Katantra-vriti-pancika* by Tri Lochana.

A fragment of the *Unati* of Chandrapad, 265 folios of full-length format with eight lines on every face, written on Tibetan papers.

A fragment of Purna Chandra's commentray on *Chandra vyakrana*.

A complete set of *Caturanga-saddhana-tika*. (Page 24)

A fragment of *Theg-pa chen-po nyi-shu pa* (*theg pa chen po nyi shu pa*) by Nagarjuna.

A fragment of *Gyan-nang ba* (*rgyan snang ba*).

A fragment of *Dho-de gyan* (*mdo sde rgyan*).

A fragment of *Gye-tong pa* (*brgyad stong pa*).

A set of texts consisting of the *Rab-je sel-dhen* (*rab 'byed gsal ldan*) of Gyalwang Lo (rgyal dbang blo) in two parts.

The *Dhe-chog gi to-pa* (*bde mchog gi bstod pa*) by Jangsem Chagdor (byang sems phyag rdor).

The *Nam-che du-pe dho* (*rnam bcas bsdu ba'i mdo*) with a colophon saying 'composed by Pandita Yeshe Shenyen (Ye shes bshes bnyen)'.
A set of palm-leaf texts written in Tibetan. This text is hardly readable. The monograph seems to be the first draft of a translator's work. It is perhaps a text on Prajnaparamita.

A set of palm-leaf texts written in Tibetan. This text is hardly readable. The monograph seems to be the first draft of a translator's work. It is perhaps a text on Prajnaparamita.

A set of texts on various *dharanis*, one volume.

The *Dhen-shi'i drup-thab* (*bden bzhi'i sgrub thabs*), 10 folios of full-length format with seven lines on every face.

The *Nam-che dhu-pe dho* (*rnam bcas bsdu pa'i mdo*) by Pandita Yeshe Nyingpo (ye shes snying po), full-length format folios with seven lines on every face, in all 208 lines.

A fragment of Senge Sangpo's (seng ge bzang po) *Dhu-drel* (*sdud 'grel*).

A complete set of *Raktayamaritantra*, 34 folios of short length format with six lines on every face.

The *Samajamantalopayik* by Lu-yi Lo-do (klu yi blo gros), 7 folios of full-length format with seven lines on every face.

The Mano Rathandi's commentary on *Pramanavartika*, more than 100 paper-folios of full-length format with seven lines on every face. This is perhaps the text which inspired Sakya Pandita, as his biography says, 'having inspired by the *Commentary Yi-kyi shing-ta* (*yid kyi shing rta*), he studied Pramana (ie., logic) from Kha-che Pan-chen.' It seems that he had studied the Sanskrit text, as there is no evidence which could suggest who translated this text into Tibetan.

A fragment of texts on *Shravaka* and *Pratyeka bhumi*. (Page 25)

The *Sambuddha*, 6 folios of full-length format.

The *Dorje kha-dro tika* (*rdo rje mkha' 'gro'i tika*), 26 folios of full-length format with seven lines on every face.

A text on *Shravaka* and *Bodhisattva bhumi*, 266 folios of short-length format with seven lines on every face.

The *Gyal-po lug-kyi ten-cho* (*rgyal po'i lugs kyi bstan bcos*), 35 folios of short-length format with three lines on every face. Slightly damaged. The note written on it says, 'donated by Acharya Ozer Seng-ge ('od zer seng ge) of Ya-tse. This is the Chanaka.

The *Tag-nyi drel-wa rin-chen treng-ba* (*brtags gnyis 'grel ba rin chen 'phreng ba*), 23 folios of palm-leaves, short-length format with three lines on every face.

A small volume of a grammar text composed by Tri Lochana with a colophon saying, 'composed for Jnana seng-ge. The title says, 'It consists of an undamaged text of the commentary of *Nam-par cho-pa* (*rnam par dpyod pa*) by Chen-sum (spyang gsum) dealing with the *kri pratyaya* (*byed can gyi rkang pa*), *samasa* (*bsdu ba'i rkang pa*) and *tad-hit pratyaya* (*de phan gyi rkang pa*)'.

The *Sang-du dor-je sem-pe drub-thab* (*gsang 'dus rdo rje sems pa'i sgrub thabs*) by Acharya Lemla-vajra, 4 folios of short-length format, slightly damaged from one side.

A complete set of *Nyaya-bindu-panjika* by Dharmottara, 43 folios of full-length format with six lines on each face.

A Tibetan transliteration of *Sri Kalchakra-tantra* written on *tal* leaves. The handwriting in which this text is produced seems to be that of Nub Cho-kyi dak-pa.

A complete set of *Nyaya-bundu-panjika* by Dharmottara, 43 folios of full-length format with six lines on each face.

The *Nag-po be dor-je lu*.

The *Phag-pa nyi-su med-par nyma-pa-nyid nam-par gyal-be tok-pa* (*'phags pa gnyis su med par mnyam panyid rnam par rgyal ba'i rtogs pa*), 23 folios of full-length format with seven lines on each face. It has 22 chapters. The first folio is missing. It was the personal copy of Tharlo (*thar lo*) and was discovered from Mendro (*smon 'gro*) Temple in Upper Myang region. It is beyond doubt that Buton's translation is based on this copy. (Page 26). The passage he had restored from the Chinese edition of Kanjur (*bka' 'gyur*) is the passage that ends with '*thereafter, the sun-mandala is to be blessed visualizing it thousand times bigger in its size*', which is the passage in the missing folio, ie., the first folio. The subsequent parts are in perfect order. We made a through search; in the personal chamber, every store of old texts, even in the back of shelves. But this was the only copy in Sanskrit of this text that we could come across. It is possible that there are one or two copies of this text hidden in those thick volumes of other texts. Those who are interested may give a try. People fluent in Sanskrit may be rare, but those who are interested in consulting one or two words for clarification may find this text helpful. Thinking thus, I have made this list. [end of list]

People make tremendous effort to bring out a page with trilingual version of Tibetan, Mon, and Lanja. Then decorate the page with *prastra* framed in a design of dragon and *patra*. So much decoration but the text they have done is such that the authors themselves may fail to decipher after the passage of three days. Such an effort does not lead one to make difficult things easy, but is rather making an easy thing difficult. I would say, make efforts to decipher some difficult Sanskrit terminology and your achievement howsoever small may bring you so much satisfaction that you may no longer have to feel embarrassed. Do not go after those who follow the path of renunciation saying, 'everything is essence-less'. But follow the path of learning.

Then we came to **Ngor Monastery** (*ngor e wam chos ldan*), the seat of Khedup Chenpo Kunnzang (*mkhas grub chen po kun bzang*). Following the short cut from Zhalu it took half a day to reach here. (Page 27). Due to the fact that the majority of monks in this monastery are Khampas [Tibetans from Kham, Eastern Tibet], the Khampa accent of Kunkhyen Gorampa is still a living accent here. Ngorchen's collections of texts are preserved in a room in the middle floor of Khangsar residence. We went there to see them. Most of the Tenjurs (*bstan 'gyur*) are still present. Tibetan texts are comparatively better in condition and uniform in size. This monastery has over 40 volumes of Sanskrit texts. The volumes include both full-length and short length formats:

The *Hundred thousand prajnaparamita*, Part 4, excellent condition.

The *Kalachakra*.

The *Kriya-samuccaya* by Siddha Darven. Perhaps it is this text, which the *Blue Annals* makes mention of saying, 'donated to Sakya by a Nepalese merchant.' In the past, the *tantric* texts of this type are not allowed for multiple copying. One copy is preserved for transmission from teacher to disciple. Bringing such a text to Tibet was even more difficult. For instance if one sees a fragment of Kalachakra in Narthang, then one can be sure that this fragment was the one read by the past translators [Lotsawas] such as Rigral and others. Hence what I have just said is based on sound reasons and not just conjecturally. Due to the fact that the Sanskrit texts are very rare, many people have no knowledge about them. What I would say to them is 'do not be suspicious about these holy objects.'

The *Bhasha-virti*, a commentary on *Panini-vyakarana*.

The Commentary of *Ge-tshul gyi tshig-liur je-pa (dge tshul gyi tshig le'ur byas pa)* by Gyalsrung (*rgyal srungs*).

The *Nyen-dzog gyi cho-ga ma-ti (bsnyen rdzogs kyi cho ga ma ti)*. It has annotations in Tibetan, which says, 'it is different from the one that is currently in use.' The annotation continues saying, 'this is the Sanskrit-manual and annotations in Tibetan are done by me, Mati, for the sake of easy reference and supplementary notes to make it less confusing (...). [One line is missing from here] (Page 28) Several of such differences do appear. Whether correct or not, the learned scholars may examine.' These lines are in well-written Umed (*dbu med*) script. It is the handwritings of Sazang Panchen (*sa bzang pan chen*). It is on the folio 23b, which is half damaged and filled with handwritten notes on the sides.

A set of *Dron-sel (sgron gsal)* in Sanskrit.

Five large volumes of *Asthasahasrika-prajnaparamita*: consisting of both complete and fragments.

The folios are decorated with beautiful pictures.

A set of *Commentary on Kala-pa* by Durga Sinha

A Commentary on *su-pratyaya* and *pra-pratyaya* of *Chandra-vyakarana*.

The *Commentary on Tso-rig (rtsod rigs)*.

A fragment of *Ga-be rol-mo (dga' ba'i rol mo)* by Koga: this is a sex-book.

The *So-so thar-pe dho (so so thar pa'i mdo)*.

Anthology of the works in verses by the past scholars such as Kalidasa and others, compiled by Shri Bhim Arjun Sen.

A commentary by Dharmottara Jr.

Two sets of *Tso-rig (rtsod rigs)*.

A complete set of *Saha-doha-kosh* by Saraha.

A volume of *Dri-me od (dri med 'od)*: a short length format text written in beautiful handwritings. Lines on the folios vary from five to six.

A complete set of *Nyen-ngag me-long (snyan ngag me long)*: 23 folios of short length format with seven lines on each face.

The *Drub-thab tsho-kye kyi drel-wa* (*sgrub thabs mtsho skyes kyi 'grel ba*): 23 folios of short length format with seven lines on each face.

A commentary on *Nyi-shu-pa* (*nyi shu pa*) with no colophon.

A volume of *Tak-nyi dor-je nying-drel* (*brtag gnyis rdo rje snying 'grel*): 31 folios. The lines on the folio vary from nine to eight.

The *Tak-nyi dor-je rin-po che'i treng-wa* (*brtags gnyis rdo rje rin po che'i phreng ba*) by Keli-kuli with a note saying, 'a volume consisting of the original monograph up to the chapter 11'. (Page 29).

A set of *Kye dor-je drub-thab de kho-na nyid* (*skye rdo rje sgrub thabs de kho na nyid*) by Acharya Nag po, 13 folios with six lines on every face.

A commentary on *Amarkosha* part 2 by Rabjor Dawa (*rab 'byor zla ba*).

The *De-chog drel-ba rang jin-lab* (*bde mchog 'grel ba rang byin rlabs*).

A small volume of grammar works with a note saying, 'according to Zhang Lotsawa, this collection consists of the Kalapa's work dealing with case-endings such as 'su' and 'ti' etc. with a commentary by Acharya Jamdrag (*'jam grags*).

A small volume of sutras consisting of 74 folios with an undecipherable title. The colophon says, 'by Tokpa Chungu Chomdhenma (*rtogs pa chung ngu bcom ldan ma*).

The commentary of *U-tha nam-je* (*dbu mtha' rnam 'byed*) by Vasubhandu.

The commentary of *Bodhicaryavatara*' wisdom chapter by Sherjung lo (*sher 'byung blo*).

The *Dharmapada*. This is an important text of Srilankan monks. It has been translated into nearly 100 languages and has proved a source of great inspiration for many westerners. It comes under a class of sutras called *lhun-tseg* (*lhun rtsegs*). The *Udanavarga*, which gained great fame in Tibet, has been derived from this text.

A short-length format palm-leaf manuscript of *Nag-rin gyi to-pa* (*nag in gyi bstod pa*) with a note saying, 'according to Sakya Lotsawa (*sa skya lo tsva ba*), the author of this text is Phu Gemo (*phu ge mo*). It seems to have been written with a pen of iron-nib and the handwriting runs somewhat like this (...) The line in the end of this text says, 'according to some, this script is called *tal*-scripts. [end of list].

Some learned monks heavily criticized Tsongkhapa saying (Page 30) that he followed the inferior path of Buddhist practice. I tried to prove them wrong using a number of logical reasons, but to no avail. Then an idea stroke in my mind and I said, 'well then, does it follow that His Holiness the Dalai Lama as well is following the inferior path, because he is a follower of Tsongkhapa'. This made them shut up. I thought this is the secret of today's mode of argument.

Then we came to **Sakya Monastery** via Shapshung, the region where Pandita Smriti worked as shepherd. The texts of past Sakya lamas were preserved in the Gorum temple. There are over one thousand volumes of texts. The first volume on which I laid my hands turned out to be Pandita Naljor (*rnal 'byor zla ba'i rnam 'grel rgyan*) in his handwritings. It is a Sanskrit text written on papers. Thinking that there might be more of such texts, we did a thorough search, but no luck. (Image 27: GC in Sakya with an unknown monk, 1938). That was the only Sanskrit text there. Then we discovered another book-room, which was located a story above the assembly hall, just by the right side of the stairs. It has about 40 volumes of both short and full-length format. Following are the texts:



A fragment of *Pramanapaka-vriti*, a commentary of *Pramana-varatika* by Dharmakirti.

The *Pramana-varatika-tika* by Acharya Kantagoma. There should be two copies but one is missing.

The 2nd and 3rd chapter of Prajnagupta's *Vartika-alamkara*, wide folios with 13 lines on every face. (Page 31) Perhaps it was composed at Sakya and handwritten by the four entourages who accompanied Vibhatichandra Khache Panchen there. Because the two-stanzas of the sad song included in the end of Taranatha's *Tri-yig don-dhen lhan-thab* (*khrid yig don ldan lhan thabs*) says '...not well received by them due to the fact that Vibhati did not pay homage to Dakpa Gyaltsen.

A fragment of *Amarkosha* by Rabjor Dawa (*rab 'byor zla ba*).

A complete set of *Nava-sloka-prajnaparamita*.

A complete set of *Asthasharaika-pindartha* by Mal Pada.

A complete set of *Asthasahamnan* by Acharya Yonten.

A complete set of *Arya-guladharani*.

A complete set of *Arya-guli-kalapa*.

A fragment of *Manjushri-huhya-chakra*.

A fragment of *Vinaya-sutra-dhiti-pratimokha-sutra-tika*.

A fragment of *Vinayakarika* by Visakha.

The *Bodhicaryavatara* by Shantideva.

A complete set of *Triskandha Shadeshana*.

The commentary of *Mahamaya*.

The *yogacharabhumi* by Asmaga.

The *Asthasahasrika Prajnaparamita panjika* by Rinchen Jungney Shiwa (*rin chen 'byung gnas zhi ba*).

A complete set of *Addharvatashat* by Mitra Chandra.

A complete set of *Dhasa-rasayanam* by Nagarjuna.

A fragment of *Chandra-vyakarana*.

A fragment of *Asthasahasrikaprajnaparamitatika*.

A complete set of *Yukti-pradipa*.

The *Guhyasamaja-mandalapayika* (Page 32) by Bhatia.

A fragment of *Dashabhumisutra*.

A fragment of *Gandavyuhsutra*.

A complete set of *Saddharmapundarikasutra*.

A fragment of *Pancaraksa*.

A complete set of *Asthasahasrikaprajnaparamita*.

A complete set of *Shuddhacara* by Vachaspati.

A fragment of *Asthasahasrikaprajnaparamita*.

Three fragments of *Prajnaparamita*.

A fragment of *Shikshasamuccaya* by Shantideva.

A fragment of *Pashdhanushams*.

A fragment of *Vasatrajataka* and *Dri-me od (dri med 'od)*. These are in Sinhalese language [Sri Lanka]. Perhaps it was brought to Tibet by Nagrin (*nag rin*), the man who brought the Kalachakra also.

These are the Sanskrit texts we have discovered. There are a number of paper scrolls. Also there is by the side of the door a complete set of *Tenjur* of Chinese edition.

Tanag Thupten Namgyal Monastery (*ta nag thub bstan rnam rgyal*) has a few fragments of Sanskrit texts such as *Lankavatarasutra* etc. A fragment of the root-text of *Pramana*, which was said to have been discovered from Dagpo by an Indian, who made a copy of it and took it to India. Kunling Labrang (*kun gling bla brang*) has a copy of Kamalashila's *Tso-rig gi 'grel ba (rtod rig gi 'grel ba)* in short-length format, which our Pandita made a copy of it. The other texts preserved in this monastery are *Asthasahasrikaprajnaparamita* and *Manjushrinamasangiti* etc. Also it has a copy of *Ba shed (sba bzhed)*, which is among the rarest documents nowadays. (Page 33)

Narthang Monastery has no Sanskrit text. It has a big collection of texts running into more than 500 volumes. They all belonged to the past Chim (*mchims*) lamas. It has a collection of commentaries on *Bodhicharyavatara*, such as *Chu-mig ma* and *Yang-gon ma* etc., which I have never heard of before. Something amazing that we saw in this monastery was a piece of stone and sandalwood depicting the structure of entire compound of Bodhgaya. The one that of stone is said to have been brought from Bodhgaya. Indeed, it is the kind of black stone, which is very popular there. The one with sandalwood is said to have created in China following the instructions of Chim Namkha Dak (*mchims nam kha grags*). If one compares the structure depicted on this stone with that of the real Bodhgaya and the structure depicted in *Gyan gyi me tok (rgyan gyi me tog)* and Chaglo's Pilgrimage guide, one will find as if they are all done by one man. Nowadays, there are self-styled lamas who say, '*the present Bodhgaya is not the real one, for the real one is located in the north*'. They are liars.

The treasury of **Samye Monastery** was our greatest hope, but many people told us that it is empty. They are true. Today Srilanka has the biggest collection of Tripitaka written in Magadha dialect. Next to it, I

think is Tibet. Upon the basis of the number of Sanskrit texts we have so far discovered, one can say that Tibet has a biggest collection of Sanskrit texts. (Page 34)

It can be said with certainty that the texts such as the *Drel-wa yi-kyi shing-ta la ga-wa* ('*Grel ba yid kyi shing rta la dga ba*) and the works of Kana Gomi etc. are available only in Tibet and nowhere else in this world, except Shambala heaven perhaps! So are the works such as *Mahasamghika-vinaya*, the works on logic by Yeshepal (*ye she dpal*), the commentary of Dorje Khadro (*rdo rje mkha' 'gro*) and so forth. Care must be taken so that they do not fall prey of the cheaters from foreign lands. Those who know the value of these works can feel for them. What else an ordinary person like me can do. They are valuable and hence I have listed them in detail. A list of Theravada Pitakas and a selected bibliography of Sanskrit works will also be included below. Above listed Sanskrit texts often contain one or two folios of independent works and such cases are many. Such folios must be examined, whether or not they are authentic tantras. It is essential to examine them following in the footsteps of renunciation-lovers and say 'things are essence-less'.

Following the course of river Maja (*rma bya*) to the south of Sakya, we came to Soyul (*so'i yul*). Along the course of this river, to the north, is Latogyal Gyishri (*la stod rgyal gyi shri*), the popular seat of the clothless siddhas [holy people]. We went there but to see a barren desert hill. Then passing through Dingri, (Page 35) Nyenang and others, we reached Nepal. Throughout our way down, our Pandita [Rahul] took great care of me and hence no problem of any kind. However, a deep sense of disappointment often arose in me, although there was no reason for it. Now, this is an account well focused on a selected subject and hence I am not supposed to record all kinds of my own feelings.

Nepal is a land surrounded by mountains from all the corners. One third of the populations are Tibetan by race. Several regions have names, which are very much Tibetan, for example Phenpo, Phamthang, Tamang, Tsangkhug and so forth. Some families have in their possession volumes of texts written in Tibetan, but beyond my comprehension. Their current language is more or less a reformed Tibetan, for example they say '*chig-ga*' for Tibetan '*chig*'=one, '*nyi-ka*' for '*nyi*' two, '*sum-ka*' for '*sum*'= three and so forth. Also, '*mig-ga*' for '*mig*'=eye, '*na-wo*' for '*na-wa*'=ear, '*ne*' for '*na*'=nose and '*lag*' for '*lag-pa*'=hands etc. These people are of Nepalese origin. The Gorkhas came to this land lately and they are of Indian race known as Rajputana. The entire land of Nepal was under the rule of Tibet in the time of King Manglon Mangtsen (*mang slon mang btsan*) and Tride Tsugtsen (*khri lde gtsug btsan*). More on this will be discussed below, some in verses. On his visit to Nepal, Lama Ralo is said to have seen five hundred double storied buildings there. Today, a great deal of development has taken place. It is said that there are over ten thousand such buildings in Kathmandu itself. We met the Nepal's royal priest, Mahapandita Hemraja at Sergyal (*gser rgyal*). (Page 36). This Brahmin priest is known to be a highly learned in all the doctrines of Brahmanism and Buddhism. His fame is well known in Nepal as well as in India. He is the principal man, who holds the doctrine of Brahmanism and suppresses the Buddhists in this country. In fact the Buddhists are very small in population. It is said that once he predicted the King [of Nepal] of a certain misfortune that was sure to befall on him. So he instructed the King to arrange for a ritual called

'resurrection'. He enclosed the King in a big golden statue of a woman and instructed the King to come out from the door at the statue's genital region. Upon the conclusion of this ritual he grabbed the golden statue as his fee! He has with him a fragment of a Buddhist text, the *Pramana*. We [GC and Rahul] compared it with the Tibetan version. I went through the Tibetan and they [Hemraj and Rahul] compared it with his Sanskrit fragment. On passing through the part dealing with the refutation of a Brahmin doctrine, we came across a passage, which in Tibetan, read, 'eaters of dog-meat'. Here he [Hemraj] said in reaction, *'the text says 'eaters of meat' and not 'dog-meat'. Perhaps your Lama Lotsawas hated us and added the word of 'dog''*, he remarked and then burst into a thunderous laughter. The passage in the Tibetan version 'moral and immoral (*tshul and tshul min...*)' is also absent in the Sanskrit version. Perhaps the opinion that Sapan added this passage is true.

One day he [Hemraj] gave a half-day discourse. *'Today's intellectuals consider brain as the source of knowledge. Based on one's brain, one can predict what kind of person one is, intelligent, arrogant, greedy, short tempered or whatever. However, brain as such is as consciousness as a cup of curd [yoghurt]. It has no capacity to comprehend the things. Brain is the basis and there is something capable of knowing based on it.'* (Page 37). A laughter and he continued. *'That which is capable of knowing based on brain is known by various names. Some call it Alayavijnapti. Others call it Akasha [space]. Still others call it Atma or Niratma. In reality, it is the Atma.'*

In fact there are many such Brahmanist teachers in India. They explain Atma in a similar manner as this priest, making it more compatible with modern science. He is an old man of about 70 with his hairs as white as a conch-shell. A man with great capacity to accept modern science, he can easily move anyone's heart by his Sanskrit chants. Our Pandit [Rahul] told me what he had said about me: *'How learned Tibetan scholars are, is beyond anybody's guess, even this ordinary servant of a Pandit [Rahul] speaks about Pramana.'* His discourse on *Shon-nu ma-len gyi shung (gzhon nu ma len gyi gzhung)* will be included separately in this book. According to him, this teaching can be better understood with the help of *Pramanavartika*. The tradition of priest-patron relationship is still a living tradition in Nepal and many parts of India. These priests recite *vedas* to their kings and perform *Vedic* rituals. They are the king's *purohitas*, which in Tibetan is *Dunnadon (mdun na 'don)*. Lately, Tibetans have taken this term to mean ministers.

Lotsawa Shambala has said *'no one has located Liyul in Tibet, except Redawa and (Page 38) myself'*. Perhaps what he had said is true. Today people mistake Nepal to be Liyul'. In fact, the location of Liyul is indicated in the *Gopal-gandha* etc., the prophecies of Liyul. It is in the North of Tibet. In their native language, it is called Kotan. Chinese call it Sunja (Shin-jang) or Hotan. To the west of it is India and to the east Amdo [Northeast Tibet]. Indians call it Kamshadesha, meaning 'li-yul' (*li yul*). It is this land that was once conquered by Chinese Emperor Jayang and his minister Changsho. Ask any Chinese historian and he will tell you. The places such as Chubogom (*chu bo goms*) and Uthen Shelchab Shint (*'u then shel chab shinta*) are still known by the same name unchanged. Hence, the words of Galo (*sga lo*) and others, 'Tibet is located to the south of Shita' is correct. Drolungpa has rightly listed Liyul as a separate land from

Nepal, 'East-India, West-India, Liyul, Nepal.' A prophecy says, 'Tibet and Sumpa will rule this land'. It, indeed, went under the rule of Tibet in the post-Srongtsan [Songtsen Gampo] period and the rule of *thong-chab tri-de nga* (*mthong khyab khri sde lnga*) was enforced in this land. Ruins of the forts built by Tibetan armies could be seen there to these days. Volumes of Chinese and Tibetan documents and statues are said to have been discovered from the ruins covered under the sands in this land. Some of those discoveries have reached India and I had an opportunity to see them. The ruin of Goshring temple, ie. Langru Tsuglakhang (*glang ru'i gtsug lag khang*) is located there. Today it has become somewhat the homeland of the Hechi people. It is said that their holy site known by the name Hame is also located there. Perhaps the Hechis in Dhomey (*mdo smad*) region of Tibet [Amdo, Northeast-Tibet] are also their descendants. Longchenpa (*klong chen pa*) has rightly said in his *Gyag-ngen chen-mo* (*rgyags brngan chen mo*), 'Changra Mugpo (*lcang ra smug po*) etc., the land of Mongols.' (Page 39).

Then, soon after crossing the Chandragiri pass in the south of Nepal, we came across the Indian railways. At the age of 32, I drank the water of river Ganges for the first time and I spent that winter in Pataliputra [Patna] city with a heart full of sadness [1934]. © **Thupten Rikey (translator)**

CHAPTER 2:

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE LAND OF INDIA AND HOW IT RECEIVED ITS NAME

(p. 41-56)

First impressions from India, p. 41 [author's titles]

This land is called the great country of India and I pay my obeisance to the Buddha. The varied topography of India is the source of different kinds of people, communities, religion and behavior. There are very high mountains, with their summits almost touching the sky, and very low plains, with their surfaces like the face of a mirror; beautiful and happy royal class people, radiant like a lotus, starving and miserable common class people, as dark as 'coal'; the compassionate Buddhism, which forbids taking the life of even an insect, religions, which seek liberation through sacrificing humans, horses, and cows; and hills and flat deserts, looking like the back of a camel, colorful islands, like the neck of a peacock. It is the land of extremes, vivid and bright like an astrological chart!

On India, p.42

After crossing the snowy mountains, the hills and valleys were carpeted with junipers. A thick pine forest looms like a large cloud over the valley on the other side, while lush-green bamboo abounds below. Further down, *salas*, *banyan*, *pipal*, driftwood trees and sparkling flowers, jostle for space. Large parasol and dish-like leaves, with glistening dewdrops, struggle to find their place on the road from both sides. A variety of birds with unheard of musical sounds could be heard. In the midst of the mountain peaks, jutting out of white clouds enveloped with an expanse of forest, two or three clusters of houses can be

seen. With thatched roofs and supported on four bamboo poles, the houses were covered with different flower-bearing creepers.

When dawn came, one could see the mountain peaks from there, glowing like refined gold by the rays of the rising sun. Rolling waves of clouds stretched for eternal distance around, and the upper part of the forest and the big mountains appear like islands on top. This is popularly known everywhere, as the ocean of Himalayan clouds. Some people deliberately come to see this. At the foot of the mountains, large rivers make their way around with roaring noises. Wide fields of rice, barley and peas lay at the entrance of the valley. Many small and big villages and towns have their presence. It seems to enjoy a mild climate and the inhabitants have a fair complexion with a red tinge. A single day of climbing and descend on that mountain, can subject you to a cool or a hot weather. One cannot experience such changes in nature on mountains in any other places. These mountains on the Indian side are very cool at the summit, with some snowfalls in winter, but further down, at the distance of one salt-tea halt, temperature changes completely.

A wide variety of trees, flowers, animals and birds can be seen like a dream in a single day on that mountain, so that later the English people paved roads (*rdo gcal*), and built bridges, beautiful houses and planted orchards (*skyed tshal*), all over. They still continue to engage in many remarkable activities and I don't need to say anything in this regard. Due to natural changes (*bskal pa'i chags stangs*), this place in the mountain became heaven-like that one could only dream about. I can claim that such beautiful and majestic valleys cannot be seen anywhere else and I wouldn't be wrong. (44) Some say that by just looking at the majestic mountains and greenery on the Indian side, numerous sensations fill your mind. Uninterrupted poetry spring from within, as one is fed with the melody (*dbyangs*) of hundred sensations.

On Indian and Tibetan animals, p. 48

I think people living in other countries would be astonished to see our yak. Once Emperor Akbar [from India] was approached by a man who had been to Tibet. Asked as to what strange things he had seen, he is said to have replied: 'I saw many strange things, but the two strangest were lamas making *tormas* from *tsampa* [roasted barley flour] and butter, and a beast called 'yak' with long hair covering its limbs.' We Tibetans have also been struck by the very tale of lions and crocodiles in faraway lands, and have made unique drawings of them. Similar must have been the experience of Indian *acaryas* [teachers], when they first saw a yak. It is true that they are surprised to see the long hair of a yak, because no animal in India has such long hair. Those coming back from Tibet are first asked, whether they saw a yak.

The most important Indian domestic animals are cows and buffaloes. In some places, there are camels, and donkeys. Horses, bulls, and sheep are two times bigger, than in our own place [Tibet]. Bulls have camel-like humps (*nog*) and flabby skin on their neck (*lkog shal*), like a hanging cloth. (...) So far, as the horses are concerned that can walk on water, one does not even hear, let alone see them these days due to the moral degeneration of human beings. The forests around are filled many rhinoceros, tigers, elephants, and buffaloes. People also say, that almost all the animals are in this land of India. There are also many different types of snakes. If the thin black snake bites, one dies, even before being able to utter a word.

Taken the whole of the country, it is said that 5000 people die annually from snakebites. Huge log-like snakes can bite or swallow their bait, but very few are said to be poisonous. There is also a poisonous snake, making a slithering sound, and opening up their chest like wings in both India and Nepal [Cobra]. Snakes are said to like milk very much. Once, when a southern lady was taking a bath, a large snake (*lcam tsam pa*) appeared out of nowhere and wrapped itself around her body. After suckling both her breasts, it is said to have disappeared without doing any harm. The people are fearful that even the smell of milk will attract snakes.

Lands of tent-sized bears and goat-sized ants can be reached only if you sleep heavily. During the day, the ants and the bears one sees are like the ones in our land, and there is no big difference. Big lizards that are the size of cats can be found only in Ceylon. There it is called *Gona*. I think it was translated as *da byid* in Tibetan. Having spent much time near the ocean, one can see lot of dead and living crocodiles (...) There are living conches, shells, crabs and many other despicable animals and coral-type leaves and many peculiar insects that one does not know anything about. They all live in shallow and wave-less coves. They are also said to inhabit the depths of oceans where there is no sunlight at all.

Swimming in Sri Lanka, p. 50

After staying for a long time in Kami village near the ocean, in the west of Sri Lanka, I learnt how to swim well after forty years, acquired a taste for fish, which earlier smelled of mud, and even learnt how to eat the raw insides of oysters, swallow tadpoles, and suck the red limbs of crabs.

On the Indian caste system, p. 52

The order of tasting those [different] flavors (*ro*) is written in their treatises [religious texts]. First the sugary part and then the sour ones. Later the astringent and the bitter. All the vegetables should be boiled with peas. This is important. There is an alternative method of stirring and boiling (*gyo bskol*) for this also. Even if one has to eat from a different caste, boiled peas is never taken. If this is eaten, then one's caste becomes sullied. A Brahmin can eat deep fried dough cake (*snum 'khur*), that is not boiled in water, from members of the royal family. The boundary line is extremely precise, but thin. When cooking (*gyo bskol*), the members of a different caste are not allowed to touch the water and the fire. One cannot let the tea-maker's (*ja ma*) shadow fall upon him [a Brahmin], let alone touching her. The tea-maker wears nothing, except for a lower garment (*'doms dkris*). Clothes sewn with needles and cut with scissors are considered defiled and not worn. At least, they are not worn, when eating or cooking. It is unusual that they eat onions and garlic. Fish is considered cleaner than other kind of meats. They are very good at making all sorts of sweets. During big parties, many kinds of edibles are served. Once you have milk and crystal-sugar, everything else becomes tasteless. Tibetans will surely be disappointed to hear this.

p. 54

Of the five meats, pork comes after beef. The Indians consider both of them unclean, like dog meat and calf meat (*be'i sha*). Even if you hear beef being mentioned, people ask you not to say it, in great fear. In the *Vimalaprabha* text, it is written that barbarians (*kla klo*) eat beef, due to the scarcity of anything to

eat. It was also considered frightening that *bhikkhuni* [nun] Udagi cursed the monks into having their *puri* [fried leavened bread], change into a bull hide. *Ba lang* (holy cows) are considered the finest animals and no one is allowed to hit them. Women even wash their hair with the urine of the *ba lang*. At a certain annual festival, the *ba lang* are garlanded with flowers. Everyone drinks a little urine from the animal. Eulogies for cows in verses are recited. Five cow essences (*ba byung lnga* - urines, dung, milk, butter and curd) are from cows and not from elephants. In Hindu (*mu stegs*) tantras, it is written: 'The nectar of cows has five essences, filling the mouth with accomplished substances (*dngos grub rdzas*). The *Vinaya* [monastic discipline] states that the monastery's walls should be plastered with cow dung. This is, what is meant by washing your teeth with cow dung if one doesn't find *so shing* [twigs, used as toothbrush].

A Brahmin is purer than one thousand common men. One Brahmin woman is purer than one thousand Brahmin man. One Brahmin youth is purer than one thousand Brahmin women. He is equal to a red cow. This can be understood clearly from the above context. No one is higher than Brahmins and cows. If a cow dies of suffocation from being tethered at night, the owner has to stay on a fast, tied to the same peg for a week, to atone for his sin. A dying person has to hold the tail of a cow before breathing his last. The king of *Sa tra la* is said to have demolished the walls of his palace, and arranged for a cow to be carried on the roof of the palace.

Most of the Indian Brahmins are vegetarian and the followers of *Mahavira* [Jains] never take meat throughout their whole live. But for most of them, this is just a family ritual and has no ideological depth, unlike for us Tibetans. For non-vegetarians and vegetarians to be eating at the same place is very uncommon. (56)

Indian customs, p. 54

One doesn't urinate on one's shadow. At night, they [Indian people] face south and during the day they face the north, when relieving themselves. When washing one's mouth, they face the east; when sleeping, the west; and when engaging in sexual intercourse they don't face their heads in the north. There are many suitable traditions for the superstitious Tibetans. These are also found in the many tales one finds in our *Vinaya* sutras.

CHAPTER 3:

HOW COUNTRIES WERE NAMED IN THE PAST

(P. 57-82)

On Rama, p.63

Presently, *Rama* and *Sita* are the main deities the Indians worship. They recite their names as we recite the *mani* [Om mani padme hum]. When meeting a friend, the Indians say: 'Ram,

Ram'. They call *Rama*, even when they stumble over stones, and they recite and sing the *Ramayana* [an Indian epic] throughout full moon and new-moon nights.

On stupas, p. 64

Lama Sog-Dhokpa's mentioning of stupas [pagodas] in Indian thangkas [skroll-paintings] is either mistaken, or what he saw was a thangka, drawn in Tibet by a Nepalese painter. Because of their forefather's love for snow- mountains, Tibetans are fond of pointed hats and shrines. I think, in reality, this [liking of stupas] seems to be an old Bon tradition and practice. I think the practice of placing a white stone between yak horns on top of a Bonpo's ritual hat, has influenced our [Buddhist] stupas. It is thus understandable that among the thousands of stupas in good shape or broken that are found in India even now, none matches the known dimensions of the stupas in Tibet. Four types of stupas, named according to their shape, are known to the Indians, – shaped like: bubble, crown, bell and rice-heap.

On statues in Tibet and India, p. 67/68

Like our Lhasa Jowo [Buddhist statue in the Jokhang Temple], which is crowned and necklaced, and has its right hand out of its robe, such aspects [positions] are found in countless old stone images in India. Old bronze (*li*) statues in India are also depicted in a similar way. The crowned Buddha originated in India, but I think it did not spread to Tibet. However, this type of image is very common in Burma and Siam [Thailand]. At the very least, a band of precious stones would be tied near the forehead on small statues. If this is not there, the statue is considered to be somewhat incomplete. The crowning of the Jowo statue by Tsongkhapa is considered, by some, to be extraordinary and a new development, but it seems such people lack the knowledge of other places (*mtshong rgya*). Some say, although casually, that although the Jowo image had no crown in Tibet, it had one, when it was still in Urygen [Swat Valley in Pakistan] (...) Whatever the facts, during the time of king Ashoka, no images or statues of Buddha were made, but this is not accepted with our [Tibetan] characteristic stubbornness, by shaking the head like a *damaru* [small hand-held Tibetan drum], without properly studying the facts. This is being self-centered.

On erotic statues and female deities, p. 72

In India, *yab-yum* [male and female deities in embrace] images are common everywhere. The cosmic forms of *Chakrasamvara* and *Guyhasamaja* with multiple faces and hands, and with female companions, seems to have been very rare in India. However, they did exist in Nepal. Temples of *Ganesha* [the Elephant] are surrounded on the outside with numerous *yab-yum* deities in Nepal. The early non-Buddhist (*mu stegs*) temples also have at least one such image, but none of them is depicted as deities. The *Surya-Vishnu* temple of Odibish in Kalinga, which was built a thousand years ago, has some magnificent stone carvings, amongst which tens of thousands of statues, from human-size to thumb-size, in sexual embrace decorate the whole exterior of the temple. Even the mouths of the water fountains are given the shapes of sexual organs. It is said that seeing the images of different sexual positions on the knot (*pa ta*) and ruby (*pad ma ra ka*) will make you ejaculate.

CHAPTER 4:

THE NORTHERN MOUNTAINS AND SOME CRITICAL ANALYSIS CONCERNING THEM

(p. 83-147)

No translation.

CHAPTER 5:

WHAT THE FAMOUS REGIONS OF THE PAST WERE LIKE

(p. 90-148)

On Indian dresses, p. 97/98

All the Indians, including those from the central region (*yul dbus*), wrap their head with two fathoms (*'dom*) of cotton cloth. The *Marwaris* wrap their head with a thin cotton cloth. Some wrap it in the shape of a square. A three to four fathoms [roughly 4 meters] of cloth piece is worn on the one side like a Tibetan monk's skirt-like lower garment, and the two ends passed are passed below the legs, making it look like a trouser. The remaining cloth is left hanging loosely like a fold on the thighs, with the edge coming up from the front, reaching where a man's private part is. The legs can be seen from the back and for us [Tibetans] this looks most unattractive. The [Indian] farmers wear a wraparound of a very short cloth. Some wrap their sexual organ so tightly with a small cloth, the size of one's palm (*ras lag mthil tsam*), that it almost seem like a goat's head, put in a small pouch. It is indeed such a strange sight.

Males wearing colored lower garments are considered barbarians. On top, they wear a big collarless shirt, touching their thighs. A big cloth of any color is worn like a shawl (*gzan*). In winter, they wear fine linen (*be'u ras*) and soft woolen cloth (*lwa ba*). Some don't wear anything sewn with a needle. They wear sandals, protecting only their heels, while some wear handleless (*yu med*) shoes, on the nose of which is a pipal leaf-shaped long leather piece. At home, no one goes around in shoes. Shoes are also not worn during meal times, ritual performances and making offerings. Most of the [Indian] males have thick hair, covering their chest and stomach area. Adult men lacking such hair are looked down upon. Those who don't have any hair on their wrists and calves are called the chicken-footed ones.

On Brahmins, p. 99

Most of the Brahmins wear saffron-colored clothes. When young Brahmins come of age, they rub themselves with vermilion powder and white sandalwood and lines are drawn with ashes on the forehead. Two finger-breath (*sor*) lines are drawn vertically and three finger-breath markings are drawn horizontally on the forehead. A white line is drawn on both ears. The chest, shoulder, and wrist are lined with other marks. All parts of the body become vivid. Then placing rice and flowers in the front, their hair-knot is flung back on the neck and prayers in Sanskrit are recited, with the belief that they are the world's chaplain (*'jig rten gyi yon gnas*). This feeling of the Hindus (*mu stegs*) does also spring up a little

in our mind. Not only the Hindus, but the Buddhists also believe that a pure Brahmin is worth more than one thousand ordinary humans. We both consider Brahmins and monks to be important. (p. 100) However the Brahmins are very bad mannered, malevolent, extremely fond of wealth and they down on everyone else as defiled. They always keep their nose wrinkled to humiliate someone. People prostrate and fold their palms together in veneration before them, but the Brahmins are definitely not someone, whom you would cherish, respect or befriend.

On women, p. 100

The womenfolk cover their lower parts with half of a diaphanous lengthy cloth; the short end is arranged at the front. The other half is worn like a shawl over the torso. There are red, yellow, green, black and many different colored clothes. Although it is said that black signifies mourning in India, it isn't true of these days. Elderly women wear white mostly. The villagers wear tens of bracelets and anklets on their wrists and ankles. Gold earrings are also worn. Perhaps, hearing that such things might not hold, gold earrings are sometimes hanged from the ear with a fine string. It must look quite strange to travelers from other places. The women living in towns wear only light bracelets and anklets. They keep their hair rolled in a knot on their shoulder. The synonym (*mnyam nyid*) example of Kavyadarsana states that this knot of hair on the neck is called *alanka*. It is also translated as *cang lo can* [knotted hair] in Tibetan. Many well-experienced travelers have said that no women's dress is more beautiful than in Central India. The women paint their hands, feet and fingernails with lac dye. Our tradition of drawing deities with red palms and heels is derived from this practice. In *dByangs can dga' ba'i zlos gar*, A Treatise on Poetry, it is written, 'the feet of women are so dark-red that they look like pearls.' This is not evident on male deities in old Nepali art. It is also possible that *sNyangag Melong's* [Dandin's Kavyadarsana] reference, 'a complete red like the lotus', refers to the same thing. However the word *atamra* here is copper-colored and the character 'a' is negative and not emphatic, and so should be translated as, 'a little red'. It can be said, therefore, that too red isn't beautiful. (...) In this context if 'too red isn't beautiful', then what about 'too slim a waist' and 'too ample breasts'? Should we then say 'a little slim'? (...) I would like to mention that we must not spend too much time struggling over such matters. I felt like saying this and no one should get unnecessarily angered. Coming back once again to Indian women, they wear on top a flesh-clinging bodice, reaching just below their breasts. This is called *Chel*. They also wear bras (*nu rten*) inside the bodice, to lift their breasts, supported by two straps over the shoulder. This is amusing. The private parts are left uncared (*btang snyoms*) for. I also saw balls of cloth placed on both hipbones to enlarge the buttock.

On the beauty of Indian women, p. 102

Pale blue (*sngo bsang*) is the grey color of an infant's skin. Elephants also share the same grey color, and it is called the brightness of pale blue *tamal*. In some parts of Amdo [Northeast-Tibet], grey is also called pale blue. They both mean the same thing. This was in olden days considered more beautiful (*'jam*) than white, but one doesn't often see such these days. Calling the dark-complexioned women beautiful (*'jam*) is very true. The eye-adjacent areas of fair Indian women are very dark, and it is considered a sign of youthful beauty. The soot of burnt sesame oil is collected in a container, and with a delicate iron spoon

they apply it around their eyes, making a black circle. This is called drawing with a *mig sman* or eye-medicine, but in this context, *mig sman* does not mean the liquid eye-medicine that one drops into the eye. Long and proportionate dark eyelashes, like the eyes of an ox are considered as beautiful. The one, having beautiful eyelashes, is said to become the foremost of the herd. (Image 28: Painting by Gendun Choephel, India 1934-46). The eye-medicine (*mig sman*) is also applied for this purpose, and its name *paksham* is also the term for eyelashes. The Indian women are very expressive. Even when saying one word, their eyes flicker right and left. Their necks also bend right and left. When walking, they twist the whole of their body like a flying sack of straw. Once in the land of Videha (*lus 'phags*), a Brahmin was giving teachings and it had attracted a crowd. Some gaudy women, with their thighs spread, walked past swinging their hips. An elephant also followed with a mahout. I remembered the saying that the most beautiful woman walks like an elephant, and I laughed. The other beauties all have big eyes, a thin waist, ample lower parts of the body and other features that naturally bring out the poetry within you.



More on Indian woman, p. 103

The Indian women always prostrate before their husbands, and they drink the water with which they washed their feet. The women don't even utter the name of their husbands. In the Jetavana Grove, Yasodhara inquired about Udagi's [an attendant of Buddha] whereabouts, by asking where *he* had gone, not saying his name. She respected tradition. Some women paint their forehead with vermilion (*li khri*), mixed with the dust on the feet of their husband. If the husband becomes excessively angered, he effaces the color on the forehead. This is like killing the wife. Some women kill themselves. Generally, those women not having vermilion color on their forehead and lac dye on their heels are widows. A picture of Chinese women springs into mind, when 'red cheeks' are being talked about. The phrase 'cheeks, red like vermilion' doesn't exist in India. In Indian poetry, there are such expressions, as 'red lips' but not 'red cheeks'. Khenchen Nesarwa said, 'Stay away from those having red and oily cheeks and gold rings on their nose'. This sentence is very suitable. There is no reason why we should leave alone our Easterners having red cheeks?

On the Indian caste system, p. 105

The caste system is still growing profusely, like a tree branch without a root. In some parts of India, where there are strict religious codes (*chos khrim*s), a low caste member, accused of contaminating a Brahmin by coming in contact with him, cannot seek justice if he is beaten. They must wait and seek permission from a higher caste member if they want to drink water from a pond. They cannot just go near the pond and take some water out. This is considered a very serious crime. However, the rules of the caste

system during the day, are violated during the night in bed. A Brahmin becomes an untouchable and an untouchable, becomes a Brahmin. Such incidents are countless.

p. 106

People, whose castes get contaminated, are born from wedlock with low caste women. Such people travel around in remote places in Tibet and India. Drinking water from the hands of a low caste member, being bitten by dogs, breaking of the Brahmin's thread, or falling on excrements, is supposed to cause contamination to a high caste member. However, bathing once in the river Ganges, can purify everything. One can also bathe three or seven times respectively, in the rivers Yamuna or Cauvery and get purified. Staying on fast for seven days, entering a hole in the earth, drinking a bull's urine or drinking the water, with which a Brahmin or a king's feet were washed, are other difficult methods. Particularly in Nepal, one can get reinstated in one's own caste, by only offering silver and copper to Guru Hemraj.

p. 106/107

Despite such a strict casteism, one thing that astonishes me so much, is, when a stranger is asked about his caste, whatever he answers is believed without any further examination etc. So, due to my strong curiosity, I smeared my forehead with white clay, and disguised as a Brahmin. I entered in all the forbidden Hindu temples. I gained much confidence and to some I said, 'I'm a Brahmin from Kailash etc.', gaining even more respect. Otherwise, even to step inside the temple's compound, was impossible [for a non-Hindu]. Low caste Hindu communities, who worship Vishnu and Brahma, have no chance of entering the temples of the gods they worship, during their lifetime. Such is the affair of the compassionless religion, called Brahmanism.

On Pataliputra [Patna], p. 107

The biggest city in Bihar is Pataliputra [today: Patna]. It lies south of river Ganges. Some three hundred thousand people inhabit the city. A lot of *patal* trees grow there. Some learned people say that the city derived its name from this tree. *Patal* generally means lungs. *Madapatal* can also mean beautiful women, having red cheeks. This was the first big Indian city, I came across, and I stayed for a year [probably around 1934].

On telling the truth, p. 122

Doubts of the unwise are conceptual, such as the contradiction between the loud 'bang' that one hears, and the small 'drum' that one sees. Thus one is unable to synchronize them on the same single object. If this narrow mindedness is thrown away, I have no reason, why I should tell a lie or try to deceive you. Moreover, I'm neither a foolish person, who blindly follows whatever others say, nor one, who tries to impose his views on others, by use of power. By all means, and in every case, I tried to examine things by hundreds of ways, to come to my convincing conclusions. I talk in black and white [clear facts] to tell the truth. I assure you that you can believe me. It may be true that most of my statements may seem to be to limited and not fascinating enough for the Tibetan mentality, but whenever you go for a pilgrimage and

investigate the historical aspects, I request you to take my words into consideration. You will thus make less mistakes [identifying these historical places]...

CHAPTER 6:

CONCERNING THE MEN, WOMEN, FOOD, DRINK, AND POSSESSIONS

(p. 149-225)

On the caste system, p 164/165

There are striking features in the ancient religion of Iran [Persia]. Everyone, high or low, belongs to one caste, to which he or she is born into. Regardless of how much you change your character or attire, it is said that a royal member can never become a Brahmin, and a Brahmin never a royalty, let alone marrying a member of another caste. Cooked food or water touched by a low caste will be avoided. They are not allowed to come in contact with one's body and clothes, and are barred from entering their house and compounds. During the time, when the Brahmin codes were strictly followed, low caste members didn't even have the right to live *in* the city. If a low caste dishonored (*smad*) a high caste lady, he was killed by pouring boiling oil or red-hot iron down his throat. This is clearly stated in the ancient Manu Code. Also in the religious treatise (*chos kyi bstan bcos*), it is written that killing a cat, insect, or low caste; all incur the same amount of sin. Even in recent times, a stranger, injured seriously by a falling tree, will be left to die and not be touched by people living nearby, without knowing the caste of the injured person. Sick people, living on the outskirts of a community, will not be given even water, without knowing what caste the person is. Such people will die of sheer thirst. Such things are quite common. I pay my homage to such great a religion!

On Buddha's daily routine, p. 199/200

The Buddha continually followed the same routine: getting up early in the morning and cleaning his teeth with a twig. After meditating calmly for a short while in the house, the Buddha would collect his alms bowl and go out to collect alms. He would give teachings to the family that gave alms. Again, he would go out and see, whether each of the monks had received alms or not. Then going to the kitchen, he would teach and prepare food. During very hot days, he would take a short nap. Visitors in the afternoon were given teachings, according to their liking. At sunset, he would take a bath and clear the doubts and confusions of the disciples. After the first meditation session is over, he would get up and take a walk outside. This would complete the second session of meditation or practice. On the third session, he would wash his feet and go to sleep. For nine months, after the rainy season is over, the Buddha and his disciples go to other places. They would rest daily after traveling for 10-20 furlongs (*rgyang grags*).

CHAPTER 7:

IDENTIFICATION OF FLOWERS AND TREES AND HOW TO RECOGNIZE THEM

(p. 226-245)

Rahul Sankrityayan, p. 226

After Pandit [Rahul Sankrityayan] and me reached Nepal [in 1934], we went to see the priest of the King, the great Brahmin named Sergyal. We went to his house. He had a complete but mixed up commentary of the Pramanavartika in Sanskrit. We translated it into Tibetan and arranged the pages in order: I went through the Tibetan text and told them the words that I could make out. They [Sergyal and Rahul] searched through the Sanskrit text and accordingly put the pages in order.

On palm trees and coconuts, p. 230

Some palm trees are four or five storeys high. They stand erect like a pillar. Instead of branches like other trees, soft parasol-like leaves hang from their top and coconuts grow amidst them. Inside the coconut there is, what is called the black hard core of the fruit. This is called *talkuj* or the breast of a palm. Oil can be extracted from it. Inside there is a cool sweet juice that is delicious to drink. The fruit is big and heavy and it sometimes kills people, when it falls on their head. It can even make a hole on a clay roof if it falls on it. One night a coconut fell through the roof of my house, and I came close to death.

On mangos, p. 235

The mango flower gives out a very nice fragrance, but is so small that one has to search for it on the tree. The fruit is called *am* by Indians. The tree is about two storeys high. The mango trees and palm trees are very numerous in Central India. The fruits are green or yellow and about the size of a child's head, to the size of a fist. The saying that there are four types of mangos, which are ripe externally, but not inside, is very true. There are also many different types of mango trees. We [Tibetans] can't choose good mangos, when we buy them. But Indians just know by looking. Some mangos are golden from the outside, but are full of fibers inside. Some are green and appear raw from the outside, but are ripe and delicious. This fruit ripens in about the 3rd Tibetan month. Mango is the most delicious fruit. It tastes somewhat like fresh curd with honey. The kernel is white, shaped like a tongue and bitter. When it is dry, it is exactly the same, what we call *Amdre*. Other Indian foods are not so appealing, but I thought that the absence of mango in Tibet is surely a misfortune for us.

On crabs, p. 238

Crabs are called *kakat*. So-called crabs, born (*'byung*) in the snows are considered similar to the white Himalayan crabs. Some Indians also eat crabs. The skull-like stomach part of a crab is eaten raw in the belief that it causes strengthening. In all the drawings of the twelve zodiacal signs of India, there are crabs, but not frogs. So I would like to say with great hesitation that our using the term *kakat*, frogs, seems to be wrong, since such minor things can cause a mountain-like stubbornness. A lizard is also different from a crab. Some say *kakat* frogs and *kakat* crabs. This is wrong.

CHAPTER 8:

THE ORTHOGRAPHY OF VARIOUS REGIONS FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE PRESENT

(p. 247-276)

On Tibetan script, p. 256

In the city of Lucknow, there is a stone pillar of the king Surya-Varma. On the first sight, I started reading sporadically, and many pandits laughed. They said, 'this is an ancient script over one thousand years old, we studied it, but it is difficult and strange to read. How can you read it, even without studying?'

p. 257

The Gupta script [referring to the script above] was the only one that the Tibetan script was based on. The omniscient Buton and others mentioned the Nagara script and nowhere mentioned the Lancha etc. to be the base of the Tibetan script. This was the very script, which, at that time, was known as the Nagara script. Up to now, no one has ever doubted this. But, by chance, a wandering Tibetan has reached India and has discovered the true fact [that the Gupta script is the base for the Tibetan script]. This is a new wonder; therefore, you should be delighted, despite the humble status of the exponent [GC himself]. If you are not delighted, it will be unbearable for me:

A scholar has accumulated [knowledge] by wandering the world,

This precious wealth of the poor scattered on the ground.

It is not comparable [to the] teachings of the wealthy,

Which are whispered from ear to ear - so, I say.

CHAPTER 9:

CONCERNING THE LINGUISTIC RULES OF THE TIBETAN ALPHABET

(p. 277-292)

On truth, p. 285

Alas!

It is natural for the unwise,

To backfire with criticism,

If a difficult subject

Is explained in a simple way.

*But if a simple thing
Is explained in a difficult way,
One is treated as a scholar,
This is the door of degeneration,
But that can't be helped.*

P. 292

*The naked truth,
Frightening it may be to the eyes,
Is not covered with the cloth that fools one.
This is the first vow of a scholar
And it will be protected at the cost of one's life.*

CHAPTER 10:

THE EDICTS OF THE *DHARMA* KING ASHOKA INSCRIBED ON THE STONE SURFACE OF MOUNT NAGARE

(p. 293-304)

CHAPTER 11:

THE GUPTA DYNASTY

(p. 305-353)

On 'sati' (widow-burning), 340

Around this time, the Hindu religion became more rigid than ever. The low caste not only lived outside the city, even their shadow or sight was dreaded. If a husband died, his wife had to commit suicide by jumping into a fire. If the wife was not able to do this, then the family members forcibly tied her up and burnt her with the dead husband. Some fearful women ran away, when their husbands were about to die and some came out of the fire half-burnt. Newborn sons were carried by parents and placed in a small grass-boat garlanded with flowers and left in the middle of river Ganges to the accompaniment of a song. This is called 'Making Offerings to the Goddess of Ganga. Dying parents were taken to river Ganges and suffocated in the water. Many such horrible actions in the name of religion with rock-hard scriptural authorization took place. Even now such practices are common although they are done secretly. Dead bodies are still thrown in the Ganges. The *sati* system was also very popular in Varanasi. One can still see many stone statues of couples that died together, following the *sati* system. When I was there, an old man

died, and on the same day his wife also died. They were both cremated together. A lot of people gathered and expressed their joy over having accomplished *sati*, like in the old days. They made flower offerings and loudly announced, what had been done. This perverted tradition is still cherished so much.

On earlier pilgrim accounts, p. 350

During the time of this monk I Qing, there were still ordained nuns in India, but in poor condition. There were also ordained nuns in China. Reading the guide (*lam yig*) to India of these three Chinese monks, one gets the feeling of having just traveled to India. It was a detailed and genuine account. Our country [Tibet] is close to India and a lot of Tibetan scholars visited India. No one was more familiar with India than Tibetans. But except for Chag Lotsawa's account of Bodhgaya, no one else had written such detailed impressions [as these Chinese monks]. Later writers have always recorded the extent of the regions or temples they visited [in India], as being huge. Maybe it was, because we lived in a small country. The Chinese monks had measured everything in 'cang', a Chinese standard of measurement, and they are still accurate today. These great teachers have said that the distance between Gaya and Dorjedhen [?] was between 14-15 'cang', and it is exactly right.

CHAPTER 12:

THE PERIOD OF THE *PALA* DYNASTY

(p. 354-385)

No translation.

CHAPTER 13:

FROM 1600 YEARS AFTER THE PASSING OF THE BUDDHA TO THE PRESENT

(p. 386-426)

No translation.

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CHAPTER 14:

CONCERNING THE HISTORY OF SRI LANKA

(p. 3-76)

GC speaking to his countrymen in Tibet, p. 4

Here, I shall write about the features of this island [Sri Lanka] and how Buddhism spread etc. What I write is neither a shastra, nor a composition, nor a treatise. Your ear and my mouth are far away from each other. This is the reason why I *write* this, since I can't *speak* to you directly. All I want is to give some advice. Therefore, I request you that for this lengthy advice put into writing, I shall not be put into a big legal suit and should not be scolded for having done any wrong.

GC feelings upon arriving in Sri Lanka, p. 5

From Rameshwar [in India], I traveled by sea for about half the night and reached Sri Lanka. After staying for a long time in a land of Hindus, when I arrived in this island, among black mountains, I saw white shiny stupas and gray haired old monks enjoying the sunshine. I had a mixed feeling of joy and sadness; as I felt I might have reached somewhere near to my own place.

GC meeting a Buddhist monk, p. 17

Once a nice Bhikkhu [monk] was waiting in the field. Out of devotion, I bought some fruits and offered them to him. He saw two 'parras' [money] in my hand and asked me to buy more. Having bought more, he let me carry the fruit. We walked some distance and he begged for chickpeas and got a big bunch. Then, as we moved on, he saw fibers of coconuts, saying this was useful for sweeping, he also had me carry a big amount of these fibers on my back, and we returned to his monastery. I thought all those monks were supposed to be leading a life of Dharma and Karma, but their hunger for things is similar to other people, and I felt like laughing, as well as sad.

On Buddhist statues, p. 18

It may be because of convenience of construction, there is a big Parinirvana statue [of the Buddha] in each of the monasteries. Such Parinirvana statues are abundant in other countries such as China etc., but astonishingly these statues are not to be seen in Tibet. It seems as if the passing away of Buddha [when he reached the Parinirvana] is not a good omen. This believe is deep rooted in our mind. The Shravak schools [in Sri Lanka] have a very good understanding of the Dharma. For them the Parinirvana is the ultimate liberation, thus it is their main object of worship.

Describing a Buddhist ceremony, p. 22

At the end of the earlier summer retreat, all the dwellers in the neighborhood assemble together to celebrate the occasion of *kathnedan*, the provision of the yellow robes [for the Buddhist monks]. For this, all the men, women and children get up around midnight and stand in queues, carrying big lamps.

Everyone carries a big plate on his head, which contains white cloth pieces. With the chanting of Saddhus, and the playing of various melodies, they walk around all the stupas in that place. At last they come to the *vihara* [monastery] and make the offering to every monk. At about dawn, a huge platform, bedecked with flowers, and applied with sweet scent is prepared. A big piece of cloth is spread on it. Four monks are carrying small knives, a marking-string and a needle etc. Then a long marking-string, immersed in saffron, is held on one end by the *Bhikkhus* [monks] and the other end is held by the sponsor [of the robe], behind whom children rush to hold the string. That reminded me of pulling a boat on the bank of the Machu River [*Huang Ho*, the Yellow River in Tibet]. Then as the marking line is made, all lay people from outside shout: 'Sadhi', 'Saddhu!' Then a big drum is beaten. They shout with loud voices: 'The teaching of the Buddha flourishes and the 'Ocean of Sheel [Vinaya discipline] does not degenerate.' Then they play music and sing and dance. The monks all recite mantras of the Vinaya practice. This is more elaborate than Dag-jung of Kunrig. In short, the acquiring of their robe seems to be the most elaborate accomplishment of the monks in a year. Then, till noon, everyone helps to complete [sew] a robe and dye it. This robe is offered to the Sangha [the congregation of monks] and given to a monk in need. This ritual convinced me so much, that I wrote about it here in detail. This occasion takes place in about the 9th month of our calendar. Thus, this month is also called the month of saffron.

On Buddhist sectarianism, p. 25

The Buddhists in Ceylon [Sri Lanka] should be called *shravakas* or Theravadins, or else if you call them Hinayanas [the other major school in Buddhism], they would get furious and argue, how can you call the Buddha the teacher of Hinayana? Moreover, they consider Vajrajana as a subject of mercy. (*Image 29: GC with two Theravadins in Sri Lanka, early 1940's*).



When I told them that even the great Buton and Tsongkhapa in Tibet practiced Tantrism, they showed displeasure. Once, a monk here heard about Milarepa and said that Milarepa must have been a nice holy man and that he had quite a lot respect for him. But when I told him that Milarepa was also a tantric practitioner, the monk did not even listen to the rest of my words. He stood up and went away.

On Hinayana Buddhism, p. 33

In general, any history of the Hinayana Buddhism is told in the conventional sense and the accounts of Buddha's deeds are even more appealing. In contrast, most of the legends told according to Mahayana tradition [to which Tibetan Buddhism belongs] are too elaborate, which can only convince, either the very learned one or the very foolish one. But they can hardly convince all the common people.

Western monks in Sri Lanka, p. 39

Here, among the Sri Lankan monks there are quite a number of Westerners as well. A well-known and very learned monk, named Gyantelok, is a German. This German monk has converted many non-Buddhists to Buddhism. Gyantelok is held as an authority on Vinaya. However, compelled by time, many Westerners are faithful to Buddha, thus if in any case a Russian comes to you [referring to the monasteries in Tibet] to seek an ordination, it seems that there is nothing wrong, so you should accept his ordination.

On Buddhism, p. 68

Many thousands of people adopted Buddhism. I saw their arguments documented, just wonderfully. There is no debate on *ideological* viewpoints, but the counter arguments are based on the knowledge of modern learning. I think, for us [Tibetans], to answer them would be utterly difficult. Since the introduction of Buddhism, shortly after the Parinirvana of the Buddha [enlightenment], to the present day of becoming a modern country, the monks here also have maintained the study and practice of the Tripitaka [three Buddhist canons]. This is the pure tradition, and among all the Buddhist countries, this land [Sri Lanka] remains like a pure gold ornament. In short, the teaching of Buddha flourished without degeneration for over two thousand years in a remote island, where people from all other countries come together. This, for those right thinking people, is a subject of extreme astonishment.

A Buddhist festival, p. 68

Here I'm narrating a few conspicuous accounts: an account of recent history worth mentioning is that the stupa called Gyalpo Ruambela, constructed by Dutak-muni [?], has crumbled down long ago and has become like a hill. All the inhabitants of that place worked very hard to rebuild it for sixty years, and it was completed in the year of the dragon in 1940. It appeared as a newly constructed stupa, a wonderful one. Then the Buddhists from Burma offered a pinnacle-top, a long crystal of about one foot, studded with diamonds and decorated with gold, worth two lakhs of rupees [Indian currency]. The 'Festival of Offering' started from the full moon of the 5th Tibetan month and the festivities lasted for one month. Almost every family and almost all bhikkhus [monks] of the whole island converged together. It is said that such a great festival never happened for many generations. Many people from other distant Buddhist countries like Burma, Siam [Thailand] and Cambodia also came to watch. By coincidence, I was also there and people believed that the news had even reached Tibet and that someone from Tibet has come. But without any knowledge about the stupa itself, how can we [in Tibet] know about the festival? There is no way. At that time the stupa was covered with a five-colored rainbow of electric lamps up to the top. The four actions of the Buddha were depicted from four directions: from the empty sky verses from the *Sutras* were heard, various melodies resounded, airplanes flew amidst the clouds and showered rain of white flowers while encircling the stupa in clockwise circles. Such were the shows of modern artificial miracles. It seemed Buddha himself might be surprised to see this. During the procession elephants knelt before the stupa to pay respect etc. This is said to be the biggest stupa on earth in good condition.

Wandering around, p. 72

[Sri Lanka being a Buddhist country], many Tibetan Lamas have visited this island with miracle powers, but among the ones without miracle power, I think, I should be one of the pioneers. I stayed here for one year and four months just short of a few days. During this, I didn't stay at one place. Disguised as an *upasak* [holy man], wrapped in a loose robe, I kept on moving and covered almost the entire island and combined with the depression of being in a remote place, I often got charged with tearful devotion. As I traveled more through the forests, only the elephants scared me and once I couldn't get food and water for over two days. Most of the time I wandered along the seacoast. I stayed in fishing villages and learned to swim what I didn't know for forty years. I could even suck red-legged lobsters [crab] and swallowed tadpoles etc., what I was unable to do before. At other time, when I arrived at a *vihara* [monastery], in each of them the *bhikkhus* helped me so much. In the cities, as word spread like white fire that a new being from Tibet has come; I couldn't even make my way through the onlookers. In short, there are no problems of food, cloth and shelter etc. for any Buddhist pilgrim in this island.

p. 73

At present, the ancestral home of Magadha [the place, where the historical Buddha was active] is captured by the Hindu bride and Western bridegroom [meaning: it is not a Buddhist place anymore]. This is unpeaceful and unpleasant. Now it is a time that the small island in the south called Sri Lanka, should be the substitute. The embodiment of *vajradhara* and the dependent origination of the *sarvastivati* and *sthavirvadius* and moreover, the four philosophical seals of the Buddha's teaching, are common between the Mahayanas of the north and Hinayanas of the south. Such a deep-rooted relationship should be respected by all. But those who hold black alms-bowls [the Hinayanas] are extremely contentious, and those who use human thighbone as flutes [the tantric practitioners of the Mahayana tradition] are extremely imposing. Since they both are extremely stubborn and persuasive [believing their tradition to be the true one], for the time being, it is important, not to let disappear, even as little as one footstep, the sense of fraternity of belonging to the same Teacher and Teaching [Buddhism]. This is a lengthy piece of advice.

The attirement of a monk has long disappeared,

No trace of Vinaya conduct remains,

But this meeting with the assembly of sthaviras,

Is surely to be the fruit of the past life.

This is a song that I sing at the end of this advice

CHAPTER 15:
 CONCERNING THE LIFE OF TIBETANS IN ANCIENT TIMES
 (p. 77-98)

[GC often writes, as if his readers were already familiar with the subject. He often relates to places and people, without giving further explanations and/or details. The translator]

Let us now consider the ancient customs and traditions of the Tibetan people. They are physically energetic, less cunning, firm, committed to promises, brave and affectionate to their race. Many ethical and moral values are prevalent, like being faithful to their King and less contemptuous to their servants. The learned people or intellectuals can speak clearly; they can speak for long hours interspersed with different kinds of proverbs. People like tales and stories that are by nature indications and gestures. Whenever a minister says if this is done, the mountain in the East will fall; or the opening of the sea in the North will be disjointed, many elderly women with intelligence spend days deciphering the meaning of this adage. Similarly, many ancient tales and stories are accepted with certainty. Because there is no land better than the land of Tibet, it is therefore believed that the King of Tibet descended from heaven. (77).

Large houses known as king's palaces were found in the vast interior land perhaps these palaces were not surrounded by cities, towns, trading centers, etc. Arriving at the gate of the palace was like entering the desert. Later, at the time of the Religious Kings [7-9th century], temples became the largest objects, which were visited upon and seen by the people of the country. Embellished with arrows and lances on top of Marpori [in Lhasa], it bears resemblance to the present day fort [Potala Palace]. Heaps of arrows and lances collected on top of all the passes and mountains became God's abode. Hoisting lances with prayers-flags in the fore, of the people's houses have also become to this day a symbol of Tibet. From the East, bordering China, the people of Tibetan race residing in the region, hoist prayer-flags on top and in the fore of the house. As the people in ancient days considered building houses astounding, the tales are full of houses with nine stories. Since the ruins of destroyed towns are largely not visible, a form of nomadic dwelling probably existed. It is said that the demon had one eye on the forehead, whereas the demoness had long copper-lips with which they eat human skulls. These two tales were a common belief of the people of Tibet. Gods were adorned with numerous ivory and turquoise ornaments. Brown colored skin was considered beautiful. Women with thin and tall physique were greatly desired (78). Each region [Amdo, Kham, U-Tsang] had tales and stories that were very different. Based on the different tastes and motivation of the people, including when to do good and bad actions, whether desire is important or hatred is important, etc. could also be very clearly defined. Therefore, this instruction may always be remembered. (79)

On the ground adjacent to Marpori Hill, there were two tall houses belonging to the King and Queen. From the 3rd and 4th storey it was linked by iron-bridge. But, because the system corresponds with the Phurdo iron-bridge, it was believed to be a little dangerous. During festivals and other occasions, approximately three men's share of food and drinks [Tibetan beer] were placed before each person.

All the large and thick utensils and equipments were believed to be an element of merit. But these explanations cannot provide conclusive evidence. Actual understanding is only possible by studying the ancient practices, which have probably remained uninfluenced by the races of other countries. This leads one to understand many [of our] ancient customs. For example, U-tsang [Central Tibet] being a large region, its behavior, dialect, costumes, etc., have undergone many changes. Its dialect and costumes are undoubtedly different from Amdo [North-East Tibet]. But, the dialect of Ngari in the West and many villages bordering India (79) are very similar to the dialect of Amdo. Also some tunes of songs were unlike in U-tsang. Instead, the songs with long tunes were sung similarly as done in Kham [East Tibet] and Amdo. As to the song itself, the style of composition was two lines of 'illustrations' and one line for an 'explanation'. This type of composition was prevalent in the poems of Kham and Amdo, too.

Today, poems in U-tsang are mostly composed in four lines. One day in the country of Kuluta in West, a scorching sun appeared soon after the rain had stopped. Not far from my dwelling place, at a visible distance, a shepherd was singing a tune, which actually resembled the tunes sung by the people of Drag-Yab in Kham. I had a mixed feeling of sadness and astonishment. But when I approached the shepherd, I discovered an Indian child dressed in woolen cloth. The wordings of the song were in the language of that Indian region. Later a person who arrived from Garzha in Lahul [North India] informed me that this region had been the territory of Tibet at one time; it was lost during the time of one of the Religious Kings of Ngari. Alas! That is the true story. Therefore, the people of Amdo in the East, living along the border of China and a tribe of people in the West living along the Indian border, though separated by long distances covering several months and many villages to cross, speaking different dialects and wearing different costumes, perhaps existed without any relationship. Yet, the prevalence of a common language, behavior, costumes, etc. are traditions undoubtedly inherited from our ancestors. (80) Based on this inference, only little has been written, in order to describe that such were the ancient customs and traditions. Do not think this writing makes a sort of prediction. (81)

Merely making assumptions on the basis of these reasons could sometimes cause minor mistakes. But, to examine the ancient traditions, customs, etc., no material is available other than this, on which to base any inference. Considering this unbelievable, but to feel satisfied without any reason after studying the written scriptures, is solely a practice of unlettered people, who rather like to sleep. Such practice must be discarded. Also, asking, 'what is the benefit of knowing them [the old customs and traditions]?' This is a statement uttered only by people who do not prefer seekers of knowledge or are filled with jealousy. Thus if you want knowledge, refrain from following others. (81) Therefore, it may also be noted that sometimes, people desiring to be historians, can examine properly, without ever thinking that knowing such conditions is an act of foolishness. A much clearer understanding of these traditions may be discovered [by thinking oneself], as opposed to those found in some of the popular historical records.

'Not desirous of liberation from the cycle of existence to achieve a higher rebirth;

Not able to make earnings of gold and silver;

The conditions of a state between birth and rebirth;

Unknown by everyone, though, is deeply examined by me' (81)

Then, consider what were the dreams of the King. It was certain that before Namri Songtsan, our country did not really have trade-movements from other countries [India, China, Central Asia]. Our people did not know weaving properly. Therefore, natural skins were understandably used. In one of the Chinese texts [from Dunhuang], it is believed that the Lord of Tibet was draped with skin. As to the dress of the subjects, it may be surmised through the study of ancestral statues, actually available with the people of Golog [nomads in Eastern Tibet]. Later, the country prospered under the Religious Kings and silk-cloths were found in abundance. In the historical text [from China], it was mentioned that Tibetan subjects were presented with silk [as a tribute], after conquering the large fort of China. At that time, the [Tibetan] Lords & Ministers most probably emulated the styles of Tazig [Persia]. On the head was a Dartod [a red Turban]. Its size was not so big, as it was used by the Indians, but it had a long top and a great height, same as used by the Tazig. The custom of Sontsen Gampo, who is said to have used a red headdress [Turban], was also practiced by the kings of Tazig in former times. As to the dresses of the local iconographical deities [in Tibetan Buddhism], they reveal the primary dress style of the people [of those days]. Thus, the names of our Lhatsen and Gyalpo should remind us of the ancient rulers and kings. In U-tsang, the so-called ruler's hat, used by the mediums of local deities, was shaped as a long arrow-case or curve-shaped hat. (82) In Ngari, the Ladakh region, a tribe, still claiming ancestry from the line of Songtsan Gampo, would wear the ruler's hat during the [Tibetan] New Year and other celebrations. A red-silk scarf is attached on the front, whereas two-sides are kept dangling from right to left ears. On the body they wore dresses with long draped sleeves of soft-woolen garment, their color as red as the one used by the judge of Nangtseshag [the office of the Lhasa magistrate]. Red colored dresses were valued. The forts of the ruler, the military colors, etc. bear a deep red color. The deities Gyalpo and Dorje Lekpa are depicted wearing a Sagshu [a garment]. Many believe the Burmese infallibly are of Tibetan stock. Sometimes, their kings also wore a Sagshu Therefore it is very likely that our rulers too were draped in garments similar to the Sagshu. Many might criticize that seeking inference of ancient customs from the people's dresses, revealed by the local deities, is like a child's intelligence. A closer study of the wool hat worn by Magyal Pomra [a deity] and the bangles worn by Lhamo Palmo [deity] will actually reveal the people's dresses adorned by them. Trisong Detsen [a Tibetan King], who made an agreement with China, is also called TriRalpachan. This leads one to think that the Kings might have had long hair. Or, the top hair might have been in a style similar to the ones of the Indians. The people of Golog [nomads from East Tibet] and Tsongon had a similar hair-do; but most probably, many people [in Tibet] had their hair totally shaved. (83) There is a saying: '*Indians are long haired and Tibetans are bald.*' All the people of Bhutan clearly cut their hair.

Perhaps the militarymen went to war zones together with their wives, as tents were built. Mention of this was found in old Tang Chronicles [Dunhuang] that Tibetan army built tents [7th to 9th century]. The Tibetan soldiers wore woolen hats in summer and fur caps in winter. When fighting a battle, blood or red color was applied on the face. 'Black haired' tents [out of dark yak wool] were built and the soldiers resided in them. This was understandably mentioned in the Chinese historical texts [Tang Chronicles from Dunhuang]. Most of the people in Amdo, especially the nomadic tribes, whose customs and traditions have basically remained unchanged, are people descended from the military tribes [7th to 9th

century]. These tribes are known to this day as *ru-pa*. Because their livestock moved from places, they are also called *ru-do*, meaning 'traveling with their livestock'. *Ru* [line or group] is a military name. Because battles were fought by applying blood on the face, they [the soldiers] were termed 'red-faced Tibetans' [by the Chinese]. It is likely that the [spiritual] army of the red-faced demon might have been derived from the same meaning. The tribes of Amdo [North-East] and Kham [East] descended from the tribes of smaller 'countries', such as Turu-ka and Minyag, which were under the subjugation of Tibet earlier. This is undoubtedly true. Therefore, in the dialect of Dega situated in the south of Rebkong [near GC's village], the popular dialect of *tore* is a language of Turu-ka, which might mean the 'dialect of Tur'. The black cloth worn by women on their head is said to have been a dress of Turu-ka, too. (84) Therefore, the basis of Turu-ka's country is situated to the Northwest of India [Central Asia]. From there originated Li-yul. Since the Eastern border of Li-yul is close to our Tsongon in the North, its tribe inhabited it in this manner. Similarly, *Nang-so* [internal watchman] is a Tibetan word and a Tibetan title. In former times, a watchman was posted to maintain primary watch along the borders. In fact, the minister who maintained vigilance against external enemies was known as *Chi-so*, whereas the Minister who maintained vigilance within the state was known as *Nang-so*. *So-lon* [the minister of intelligence] was mentioned to decide on their appointment. In recent times, the stone-pillars of Lhasa contained descriptions of harm done by *So-lons* of the respective states. Five tribes of the *So-lons* were also known to be posted at a visible distance of Li-yul.

The battle-formation of the [Tibetan] army might be guessed to some extent from the retinue of the King, known as Ruden-Deshi [four army division]. While describing King Mutig-tsanpo's military march, the chronicle of Gyal-po has noted thus: 'At the fore, one hundred cavalry guides; to the left, one hundred tantric commanders brandishing *phurpa* [name of a ceremonial article]; to the right, one hundred commanders in tiger-skin; and to the rear, one hundred spies in heavy coat of armor, manœuvring the lances.'

There is no doubt that the well known 'five parts of orders' of Padmasambhava [a Tibetan saint] and its remaining parts were written since time immemorial. However, many of the words and phrases were omitted and numerous lies, involving foolish ideas were added that it is no longer interesting. Yet, all the ancient historical texts were found in such manner. It is hard to find a single text, which does not contain a mix of lies from top to bottom. (85) Because of that, the 'infallible' ancient historical texts became headless and ended abruptly. The students of history must not forget [to distinguish] the most clearly written legendary tales from the imagination of the contemporary people. (...) [10 lines not translated]

Yet, it would be wrong to think that the 'miracles' did not happen in those days, on the pretext that they were invisible. It was written that, when building the central cathedral of Lhasa [the Jokhang Temple], the pillars were designed in the shape of *phurpas* [a ceremonial article] to please the tantrics; and the four-sides were designed in the shape of a *yungdrung* [swastika] to please the Bon-pos [followers of the Pre-Buddhist religion]. But, it is not clear, whether many tantrics, who liked the *phurpa*, actually existed at the time, when Buddhist texts were barely translated. Moreover, it may be noted that the foundation of all

the old temples and universities of India, including Nalanda [Central India], bore the architectural design of a *yungdrung* [swastika]. Or, that he [Indian] stone pillars were shaped as *phurpas* like the pillars of our Jokhang [in Lhasa]. Not only the architectural design and decorations were matching, the size too was like a new temple built, exactly on the ruins of the old. Therefore, the description in the chronicles, stating that the [Tibetan] King built the temple [Jokhang], following the example of Vikramasila [in India] is accurate. (86) In former times, very little information on the number of the population is given, or, how much land was available, etc. Thus it is difficult to make any inference. Generally, the five sections of the chronicles [Dunhuang?] are also described in the chronicles of Depa Neudong and others. Though it is too late to conclude for the purpose of providing accurate information, there is no doubt that the following description relates to the ancient times:

*'The foreknowledge that reveals the three times in all perfection
And the courage to say one's guesses boastfully
For a poor man like myself who benefits of these two qualities
Such is my method of study of a subject that has become too obscured'*

Let me further explain that since ancient times our country is known as *Bod*. The Central Indian people refer to us as *Bho-ta*. That is, the term *Bod* gradually developed into Indian linguistic forms, such as *Bho-d* and *Bho-ta*. In my view, Indians did not give a proper name to our country. Names such as *Kawachen* and *Gangchen* might have been given by men of letters [scholars] and the people of India. It was certain that these were not the names of the country, known since time immemorial. What then is the meaning of *Bod*? A single reasonable meaning may not be found at all. Say, an old man named Namgyal may have arrived in that land, and the land derived its name from him, this might be given as a reason for the name of the land, but it is impossible to locate the land. This sort of superstition does exist.

Bon was the ancient religion of our ancestors. (87) In those days, the people of whole Tibet undeniably followed this religion only. The land, which practiced this religion, in my view, might have been referred to as the 'land of Bon'. Even today, the people of Bon-po, residing in some parts of Mongolia to the North of Tibet, are referred to as *Bod*. In the old orthography, the affixes '*d*' and '*na*' were found frequently interchanged, as for instance, *tsad-po* for *tsan-po*, *chell-po* for *chen-po*, etc. In most regions of Amdo [North-East Tibet], *chen-po* is pronounced as *ched-po*. In general the affix '*d*' occurs after the alphabet due to its closeness. In the stone pillars of Lhasa, it was mentioned that the people of China came to call our country the 'kingdom of Phon'. This is also due to the phonetic resemblance of *Phon* and *Bon*. Otherwise, it might be more appealing to many of your ears if it is explained that the term *Bod-pa* is only used because religion and wealth were brought into the country; and the Son of God came to be the Lord of men. I do not have the time to explain here.

It is claimed that due to close association of Tazig with the regions of Ngari [West Tibet], the people of those regions were referred to as *Tod-pa* or *Tod-Bod*, from which then derived the term *Ti-bhed*. Today, we are known by this name [*Ti-bhed* = Tibet] in many countries of the South and West, including India and other countries. Astonishingly, it certainly is! In the Northwestern region of India, including the Five-

Rivers, we were referred to as the 'Great China'. This is said not only in these days. In the biography of Ngawang Gyatso of Ogyen, it is described that a Muslim called Min told a monk that he was a Tibetan having arrived from Great China. (88) In the words of Buton, it is identical to *Mentse*. But this was not due to the occupation [of Tibet] by China. The people of China are called Chinese, due to their distinctness. *Bho-ta* meaning *Bhu-t*, the name of a demon or spirit, was not actually referred to our people. Be that as it may, Great China and Bhu-ti region [Tibet] were given the same treatment. In former times, numerous scholars also mentioned that the name of *Bod* is 'Great China'. Thus, in the root tantra of Manjushri [Buddha], descriptions made about 'Great China', were said to be referring to the 'land of Tibet'. This is a subject, which requires more examination and study. Otherwise, I see no justification. The term *China* was known, when China was ruled by the Chinese King Chin. It is possible that 'Great China' is used, due to the distinctiveness of the country. People with more understanding and experience should conduct further examinations.

Amongst the various regions [of Tibet], since the descendants of Choegyal [Songtsen Gampo], such as Gonsum, ruled the region of Ngari Korsum and the people became their subjects. It is certain that the region was known by that name [Ngari Korsum]. The regions, including Amdo, were referred to as 'land of Kham'. In the ancient dialect, *Kham* denotes 'border', or 'land on the border': *Khamgi Gyaltan* is also called a small principality on the border. Both *U* and *Tsang* [in Central Tibet] bear the same name and meaning. *Tsang* denotes the principal or large size. Our country is categorized into Ye-ru, Yon-ru, Gong-ru, etc. We know that this categorization is made because in ancient times four military divisions proceeded from left, right, front and back. (89) [See before].

That the people of Tibet originated after the battle of Pandava is incorrect. It will be difficult to believe that the word 'Tibet', which was said to have originated, simultaneously from the Tantra of 'Generating Supreme Happiness', described during the perfect aeon, was explained properly in the manner as is written in Indian language. As for *Bod* and *Bod-chenpo*, since Ngari region [in the West] was owned by the king, it is termed as *Bod*, whereas the remaining regions including *U-tsang* are identified as *Bod-chenpo*. This may be verified from a biographical work containing Drom's observation to Jowo [Atisha, an Indian saint], who was residing at Manyul. In this biography, Drom invited Atisha [to come from India], by saying that there are a large numbers of monks in Samye monastery in *Bod-chenpo* [Greater Tibet]. As a result, Atisha is believed to have proceeded to *Bo-chenpo*. Therefore to maintain that *Bod* was inclusive of *U-* and *Tsang*, while *Bod-chenpo* was reserved for *Kokham* area is incorrect.

In the 'Blue Annals' of Goelo [a Buddhist history], it was mentioned that the Great Master [Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelug sect], was born in *Tsongka Dekham*. Since the birthplace of the Great Master was near the Southern part of Ma-chu River, it was in fact extremely distant from the birthplace of Tsongkhapa. Thus, in former times, the entire area of Amdo [North East Tibet] or all the regions along the Northern Ma-chu River, were probably referred to as the 'land of Tsongkha'. According to old historical text discovered from Li-yul [in Central Asia], it has been stated that: 'During the dog year in Summer, Tsanpo [ruler] campaigned in the North, while his great minister Triding marched his army

against the greater and smaller Tsongkha, resulting in the arrest of the Chinese military officer Thukpu-shi'. This describes the existence of two Tsongkha's: 'greater' and 'smaller'. The Tsanpo of the period was the lord Tridusong Manpo.

The name of Tsongnombo [today: Kokonor (Mong.) or Qinghai Hu (Chin.)] may be found on the Eastern side of the stone pillar, standing at the gate of the Central Cathedral of Lhasa [Jokhang Temple]. (90) On the stone pillar of Shol [underneath the Potala Palace], erected during Trisong Detsen's time, it was mentioned that Ngenlam Lhugong marched his army against Yarmothang and Tsongkha. Therefore, some maintain that Yarmothang is also situated in the direction of the Tsongnombo [in the North East of Tibet]. When Tibet conquered China [7th/9th century], it was said the Eastern borders were surrounded by 'ten oily rivers'. These regions are still given different names in Amdo and Chinese languages. *Ka-ju*, *Thojcu*, etc. as per the Chinese language, but there is no doubt, that based on the principal rivers, the regions were named as *Kachu* and *Thechu* in Tibetan language. The areas in the East were named in such manner. In the King's Chronicles [?], it was apparently mentioned that the King of China during that period, was called the 'Chinese King of Be-chu'. At that time the [Chinese] capital was at Shen-shi and the great river called Be-he is still said to be known by that very name. Because the sources of most rivers [in this region] have the starting confluence in Tibet, and the territories, starting from the sources, till the end of the river were occupied by the Tibetan army, it is probable that Tibetan names were given. We had fought great battles against China, beginning perhaps from the time of Namru Songtsen [7th century]. Prior to that, since China was greatly disliked, many battles were fought apart from the one mentioned, but no enemies were made with anyone else. China and Mongolia were referred to as 'Black China' and 'Yellow Mongol'. In our old orthography, the subjoined letters 'ra' was mostly written as 'ya' and the pronunciation 'ya' is found in abundance, as for instance 'gyi' for 'gri', 'kyog' for 'Trog' etc. Many people of Amdo still pronounce 'gya' for 'Da', 'gya-ya' for 'Dra-ya', 'gyanagpo' for 'Drathushoe', etc. Therefore, there is no doubt that in former times the term 'gya' meant China only. Although, it is certain that the Mongol [?] is none other than Zog-po. This later became the corrupted version.

It is not clear, how the people from India were referred to since time immemorial. But, one or two persons, who arrived from that direction [the South], were called *Monpa*, the border people. For this purpose, in the ritual offering traditions of the Bon [Pre-Buddhist religion] followers, the family of the demons were represented by *Monpa's*. They had faces and dresses very similar and characteristic of an Indian. In the region of Dromo, Indians are still referred to as the Monpa's. Later, with the spread of Buddhism, many Panditas [Buddhist masters from India] who arrived in Tibet were greatly respected. The word *Atsar-ya*, meaning teacher, developed into *Atsar*. Some even write that there is a separate country and language of *A-tsar*. The people along the border always scorned at each other. The people of Sillim [?] called the people of India 'animals' and India was called the 'land of animals'. By carefully holding the hands of a person, he was called an 'animal' with respect. The people of Burma called the people of India as 'black'. But when saying this is 'black'; this is the language of the 'black'; and Buddha was born in the 'land of black', both the speaker and listener did not have any distorted cognition. Therefore, the word 'gya-nag', originally used with a bad connotation, later became the corrupted version.

The corrupted forms, such as the later 'yellow Indians' of India, may have been named in this manner. It is, like after knowing the Mongol tribe of Hor, the army of Garlog, was named as *Tod-Hor* [upper Hor]. Therefore, do not say if the previous word was termed 'black enemy', the latter word was necessarily 'white enemy'. (92)

It is natural to construct a similar form of names and words, without understanding the meaning of the corrupted version of the original word. Without understanding the meaning of the 'horse of wood' and 'rope of iron', it is like saying, the 'golden wood horse' and 'golden iron-rope'. Moreover, among the ordinary words, which changed from their original meaning, is *Jomo*, referred to as *Tsun-ma* [a nun] by the people of Amdo. Likewise, there are many other words, whose original meaning was hidden, having changed into the opposite and became words of shyness. In the territories and region along the Ka-chu, which are now in possession of Heji, there are many Tibetan land names such as *Taglung* and *Ragshido*. Especially, the consolidation of Tantik and Ragshido into one region was mentioned in the old historical text as Malum Ragtik. Therefore, the kingdom of Tibet, known to be stretching up to the white stupa in the East, is an unmistakable statement. In Amdo, the places where battles were fought against China, were known as 'Chinese bloody ground'. These were said to be found in the direction of Drotsang and Palri. Some are known to tell the stories of such occurrences up to this day. In the Rebkong district [in North-East Tibet], three villages falling under the name of Gyal-po [king], Lon-chen [great minister] and Tsummo [nun], were adjacent to one another. In the old texts, *gyal-po*, *lon-chen* and *tsun-mo* were written, as I had discovered, as *gyal-po*, *lon-chen* and *tsun-mo*. Undoubtedly, each share of land was given these names. (93)

In Amdo there were many villages, towns, tribes, and mountains, etc., whose names are found mentioned in old texts and stories. *Tsun-mo*, the queen, is not only the name of the wife of a king, etc. She was given such a title [of honor]. Moreover, titles such as *Tsan-po* and *Tsun-mo* were mentioned [in the texts]. In fact, some of the local deities were called *Tsan-po* and *Gyal-po*. Studying the ancient language [of Tibet], it may be known that they were honored as 'gyal-po' and 'tsan-po'. In the same way, for instance, I had once heard of *Tsan-gyal*, also known as 'Zenem-zin'. It is as if the deities and Tsan-po's, which had ascended the sky, were worshipped, as they were known to be quick in the sky. A kind of documentation [painting] of *Tsan* was made, which was decorated with many arrows and lances. This may have been done, following the example of the King's Palace. Look at the Palace of Marpori [in Lhasa], built during Songtsen Gampo's time [7th century], which bears architectural resemblance to the design of the houses of Tsan. This painting [the documentation] is authentic. In his work, titled the 'Index of Lhasa', His Holiness the 5th Dalai Lama describes that 'an old specimen of the painting is to be found in the Jokhang [the main temple of Lhasa]'. But this painting is not visible nowadays, as it is obscured by smoke and dampness. A similar painting may be glimpsed at the Eastern side of the Potala's entrance. It is said the same painting was repainted at the time of the 5th Dalai Lama. There seems to be no doubt that the original painting of Lhasa was copied [in the Potala] at the time.

If an extremely astonishing [mythical] story is described, such as: 'All the trees were transformed into armies; all the stones were transformed into horses; or the armies had crossed the great river Machu on a bridge, made of a single grass; (94) or a task, requiring a year, was being completed in a day and thousand men's work, was being completed by a single finger', then the foolish people will find them much more interesting, leading to crying, laughter and loud-noises in the family. On the other hand if true facts are described: 'In the year of horse, Tsan-po resided at On-changdo; the messenger of Garlog made prostrations before him; many camels, cows and oxen were presented as gift with honor; thieves of the upper and lower regions were vanquished', then the number of foolish people listening to these stories, will decrease, knowing that those [tales] were true stories of people that had actually happened on this earth. In such a situation, everyone prefers the former [mythical] stories, followed by the efforts to spread the stories, which are more astonishing [mythical] than the others. By doing so, the actual 'genealogical histories' [the history of the Tibetan Kings] and the corresponding periods of time are not valued at all.

In fact, in former times [7th/9th century], our Tibetan people were in possession of a country, the size of which included the kingdoms of Ashoka in India and the Tang in China, respectively. Thus, it is undeniable that minute details of [all] the activities, undertaken by our Kings and Ministers each month and each year, are actually available. In the recently discovered documents [the Dunhuang manuscripts] from Li-yul [in Central Asia], the stories of our army, marching from Thug-ka in the later period, had spread increasingly, while the genealogical histories [of the Kings] of the corresponding periods had occurred in subsequent order. Likewise, when saying that Tayang lived during the time of Choglang, Kanishka [an Indian King] cannot be his disciple. To give a detailed explanation [of the facts], requires good knowledge and listening ability.

If the speakers take great trouble [to tell the truth], the listener's faith diminishes. By writing from hearsay, like: 'The whole year [he] resided in India and in the Winter of the same year he proceeded to Tibet; and in that Winter he died in China', we are only repeating to the listeners the biographical stories of great people, which have been retold for thousands and thousands of years. To say, only a little has been violated [in this story], is more valuable and gratifying. Thus, the speaker enjoys the freedom and the listeners will feel safe. In this way, everyone takes side with the former [telling mythical stories]. Buddha, [although] he is the principal Great Exalted Being, still the dates of his life, are not reconciled. So, what is the use of studying if your main belief is not clear. Now, I have spoken as though I were the master reader of Ludrub [Nagarjuna]. Therefore, we can only hope that the words of truth, existing like the voices of bees, are not silenced by being carried away by such contentions. The mythical tales such as the origin of [Christian] religion also contained the commandments enacted by Solomon, the King of Israel; and the ancient tales of Makha, Baga and Tazig mention many names of their people and names of those countries. By reading a portion of it [these tales], this may be understood [The old legends and mythical tales, always carry a seed of the truth, too]

For instance, the Gesar Ling [epic] could be the story of the king of Dru-gu, who fought a war against Minyag. On a certain base, this may not be entirely impossible. But exceeding the limit [of truth] is like not showing the real object, at which to point one's finger. (96)

*'Ancient tales astonishingly carry seeds of truth
After the hare, leaping to the hills
And into the faded forest of wisdom, have I followed
Who will distinguish right from wrong' (97)*

CHAPTER 16:

THE RELIGIONS OF NON-BUDDHISTS

(p. 99-155)

Carrying a palanquin, p. 118

A palanquin is made of pieces of wood, arranged together. The parts of the palanquin are elected by the master. The common palanquins are made of four pieces of bamboo, attached to a cloth, supporting it from four sides. The front piece and the hind piece are tied at the middle of a beam and carried by two men, one in the front and one behind – as shown in the drawing. While walking they walk with side motions, so as to maintain concentration and swaying motions. It is also called the dolly. There are various kinds of dollies, but the palanquin most frequently used is this one [in the book there is an illustration of a palanquin].

CHAPTER 17:

CONCLUSION

(p. 156-190)

The following excerpts are selected from a translation of Donald S. Lopez Jr. Already at a very early stage of my work for the film (in 1999), Lopez had shared his own research results with me. I decided to include these passages here, because they helped shaping my view of the scope of GC's thinking to a very large extent. But even more so, I'm indebted to the generosity and scholarship of Donald Lopez, who, in many discussions, was an inspiring advisor and became a friend [For more translations of Donald S. Lopez Jr, see: The Madman's Middle Way: Reflections on Reality of the Tibetan Monk Gendun Chopel. Chicago University Press. London 2006].

On colonialism [my titles], 157

It is generally the case that in every kind of worldly custom, the intelligence of Europeans is superior to ours in a thousand ways. They could easily spin the heads of the peoples of the East and the South, who, honest but naive, had no experience of anything other than their own countries. And thus they came to

many lands, large and small, accompanied by their armies. Their hearts were filled with only self-interest, in their sexual behavior their lust was greater than even a donkey. Sponsored by kings and ministers who disregarded others' welfare, they trod upon the happiness of others like a turnip on the ground, sending out a great army of bandits, calling them 'traders'. The timid peoples who subsisted in the forests of the small countries, terrified to hear even the braying of donkeys, were caught like sheep and taken to the [foreigners'] own countries. With feet and hands shackled in irons and given only enough food to wet their mouths, they were made to perform the most difficult work until they died. It is said that due to this severe hardship, even the young were unable to last more than five years. Young women were captured, and to arouse the desires of the gathered customers, were displayed naked in the middle of the marketplace and then sold. If thoughtful people heard how they treated the bodies of humans like cattle, their hearts would bleed. It is in this way that the foundations were laid for all the wonders of the world, railroads stretching from coast to coast and multi-storied buildings whose summits cannot be seen from below. From Africa alone the people thus captured numbered more than one million, and uncountable numbers of unusable ones were put in huge boats and abandoned in the ocean.

On colonialism 2 (Christianity), 158

Having made rules prohibiting whatever the mistaken ones had settled upon or [believed] worthwhile, they forced them to practice all their scriptures, their Christian religion. They had laws prohibiting the birth of any new children. If someone had the great courage to give birth, having taken by force the people from temples of the Hindus and Muslims, they performed the baptism of their own religion and so forth.

On colonialism 3 (the Dutch and the British), 158/59

In their behavior, the Dutch and especially the English are not like that. They go abroad with deceit. As long as the power and income they need for themselves is not interfered with, whatever religion one chooses to practice is fine. They are unbothered by thinking about anything. Because they impose taxes and regulations affecting even those who have converted to their Christian religion, in most places [the people] start helping them.

On British colonialism, 161

[Queen Victoria] is an emanation of Tara. I think that it would be amazing if even the mere name of Tara were familiar to her. Then, [the throne] was taken by her son Edward the Seventh for only ten years, and then there was George the Fifth. He came once to India and was enthroned as the emperor in the capital of Delhi. He died during the spring of this past rat year (1936). Now there is a new king called George the Sixth in the capital, and it appears to be a period for his land to be suffering from a great war. A prime minister was made the victory of India, and they made it the custom for each to remain for five or six years. They introduced the new ways of the modern world, such as railroads, schools, and factories. Their law is only good for the educated and the wealthy families. If one has money and knowledge, anything is permitted. As for the lowly, their small livelihoods that provide the necessities of life are sucked like blood from all their orifices. The marvelous land of India appears to be filled with hungry ghosts.

On science and reason, 167/68

Now I offer a sincere discussion for those honest and far-sighted friends who are members of my religion. The views of the system of the new reasoning called 'science' is spreading and increasing in all directions. In the great countries, after scattered disagreements among many people, both intelligent and stupid, who say, 'It is not true', they all have become exhausted and must remain silent. In the end, even the Indian brahmins, who care more about the literal interpretation of scriptures than their own lives, have had to powerlessly accept it.

These assertions of the new reasoning are not established through disputation alone. For example, a spyglass constructed by new machines sees across thousands of miles as if it were the palm of one's hand, and similarly, a glass that sees what is close by makes even the smallest atoms appear the size of a mountain; one can analyze the myriad parts, actually seeing everything. Therefore, apart from closing their eyes, they [the opponents of science] had nothing else to try. At first, the adherents of the Christian religion in the foreign lands joined forces with the king, casting out the proponents of the new reasoning, using whatever methods to stop them, imprisoning them and burning them alive. In the end, just as one cannot hide the sunshine in one's hands, so also the parts of their religion that were unacceptable within the new system were defeated and they had to admit that they were utterly false. The glorious Dharmakirti said, *'Those who are mistaken about the truth cannot be changed, no matter how one tries, because their minds are prejudiced. The rejection of reason is the most despicable act.'* Even so, when we [Tibetans] hear the mere mention of the new system, we look wide-eyed and say, 'Oh! This is heretical!' There is the danger that if we come eventually to believe baselessly in the new reasoning, we will lose all faith in the Buddha, like some Mongolian of the Takhural region [Communists], and thus become non-Buddhists. Therefore, whether one either stubbornly says, 'No!' to the new knowledge or believes in it and utterly rejects the teaching of Buddhism, one is prejudiced; this is nothing more than recalcitrance and will not take you far.

On science 2, 169/70

For example, scientists say, 'In the second moment immediately after any object comes into existence, it ceases or dissolves. These collections of disparate things disperse like lightning.' Consequently, the first moment of a pot does not persist to the second moment, and even the perception of a shape does not exist objectively apart from the power of mind or of human language. Moreover, when examined as above, even colors are merely the ways a wave of the most subtle particles moves. For example, regarding waves of light, there is no difference of color whatsoever to be seen in the particles that are the basis for that color, it is simply that 800 wavelengths in the blink of an eye appear as red and 400 appear as yellow. Furthermore, they have invented another apparatus for seeing things that move too quickly to be seen, like drops of falling water. Something that lasts for one blink of an eye can be easily viewed over the duration of six blinks of an eye. More than ten years have passed since they made a viewing apparatus that is not obstructed [in seeing] things behind a wall or inside of a body. All of this is certain. They have also made a machine by which what is said in India can be heard in China in the following moment.

Because they are able to show in China a film of something that exists in India, all people can be convinced. The final proof that all things run on waves of electricity is seeing it with one's own eyes.

Explaining himself to his Tibetan readers 1, 173

I have a great desire to write a separate book on what the advantages are in considering things from the perspective of this new reasoning, but because of great difficulty and because it would become a source of disillusionment [for others], I have set the task aside. Do not think that I am a dullard, believing immediately in whatever others say. I too am rather sharp-witted. In serving the teaching, I do not find disciples to whom I can explain the dharma. Founding a monastery requires the accumulation of many conditions. I am incapable of these great acts. [My] sympathy for the dharma is not less than yours. For that reason, do not dismiss my statements, seeking only to refute and reject me. If one does not want the tree-trunk of the teachings and these roots of our Buddhist knowledge to be completely destroyed, one must be far-sighted. Having become an open-minded person who sees the important and unimportant, you should strive to insure the survival of the teaching, so that it remains together with the ways of the new reasoning. Otherwise, if, fearing complaints by others, one acts stubbornly, then one may gain great profit and many friends, [but only] for a short while. As it says on the pillar at Zonde above Drotsang, *'Like the light-rays of the sun and moon in the vastness of space, may the teachings of the Buddha and my reign remain equally for tens of thousands of years.'* Please pray that the two, this modern reasoning of science and the ancient teachings of the Buddha, may abide together for tens of thousands of years.

On Gandhi and Nehru, 174/75

However, talk about his [Gandhi?] having magical powers are famous throughout Tibet. But there's nothing to hear in India, especially in Vadhana. The practice of his Ahimsa-dharma, the dharma of abandoning violence, remained under the protection of the government. Otherwise, there are some [other] people even more famous than Gandhi, such as the one called Pandita Nehru, and for the sake of the Indian people they act without hypocrisy. Below them, one finds the empty-headed people with mere titles. There are only a few masters who guide the people through the darkness. Even in the legal systems of foreign nations, not contradicting the general populace is valued. In all the important cases there definitely exists real independence to say and do whatever is no one's mind. Because there is no fear of execution and so forth due merely to saying that what the government did is wrong, they have many opportunities to do anything. Apart from the ruling government of India, all the regional governments are in the hands of Indians. In more than seven regions a government of the people has been set up and the land rights are firmly in the hands of the government. By drinking repeatedly the fabled beer made from the amazing molasses, the head becomes drunk. I am weary of giving away the pure water, which is free of the salts of falsity.

Explaining himself to his Tibetan readers 2, 190

Here I say:

Walking with weary feet to the sandy south,

Traveling the circumference of a land surrounded by the pit of the deep black sea,

*Through pulling the thread of my cherished life across the sharp blade of a sword,
I have written this text in long years and months of hardship, forced in whatever way.*

(...)

If [what I have written] enters the door of a learned one's heart,

Then the fruit of my labor will have been achieved.

For the smiles of fools and the approval of the rich,

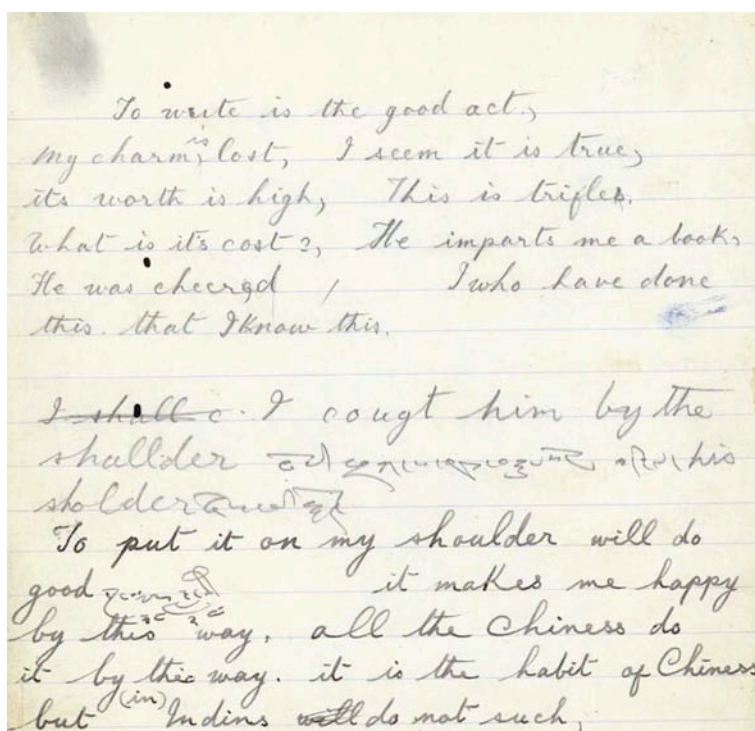
I have no yearning even in my dreams.

Explaining himself to his Tibetan readers 3

All the people who are born in this world are given, through their past actions, the work that is appropriate for them. This is the work set for me. Thus, I have wandered through the realm, expending my human life on learning. The fruit of that is left in the form of a book. I think that it would be difficult for me to either hope or expect to benefit others in this life through such things as teaching.

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Here end GC's travel notes from India and Sri Lanka: 'The Refined Gold: A Travel Account of First Hand Experience' (Image 30: From GC's original travel notebook: 'To write is the good act...', India late 1930's)



CHAPTER 18:

THE DHAMMAPADA

[GC's translation from Pali into Tibetan]

(p. 191-270)

No translation.

CHAPTER 19:

THE ADORNMENT OF NAGARJUNA'S THOUGHT

(p. 271-376)

This text has been translated and commented by Donald S. Lopez Jr. in: The Madman's Middle Way: Reflections on Reality of the Tibetan Monk Gendun Chopel. Chicago University Press. London 2006.

CHAPTER 20:

ABOUT THE HIMALAYAS

(p. 377-386)

'As a sign of his achievement in the 'method and wisdom'

He himself acted as a painter

And drew chakras on the soles of his feet.

May it protect all living beings!'

Here follows my brief discussion on the 'snow-mountains'. The Indian terms '*himalaya*' and '*himaprat*' are translated as '*gangchen*' [snow-clad] in Tibetan. But '*gangchen*' does not always mean 'snow-mountains'. What else does it mean then? It means all types of ranges in the North Himalayas, such as those of snow, forest, and pasture-mountains [hills]. It is a generalized term of all types of mountains and regions located there, which are hundreds in number. The *Satipathana sutra* says, 'beyond that there is the one called *gangchen*, the king of all mountains, with its peaks formed into various shapes, rising 1000 *paktshe* (*dpag tshad*) measures in height, shrouded in beautiful forests of juniper, sal and rhododendron trees.' From this quote one knows that the *gangchen* have forests, too. According to Neten Chendrang (*gNas brtan spyang drangs*), *gangchen* is a region, characterized by dense forests, where the yaks have hoofs strong enough to smash the stones. The poems on *gangchen* composed by Indian poets describe *gangchen* as a region with snow-clad mountains, forests, flowers, pastures and yaks. (Page 379).

Taking *gangchen* to mean a region entirely snow-clad is as confusing, as taking Sakya (*pSa skya*: 'grey soil' but also the proper name of a region in Tibet) to mean a region covered under 'grey soils'. The description such as 'snow-mountains are the source of medicinal plants' is to be understood in the sense that such medicinal plants grow in the forest and pasture-mountains. The name 'snow-lion' also is to be understood in a similar context, for the hills of dense forest, are the sanctuaries of wild animals such as tigers, lions, rhinos, and elephants etc. Buddhacharita says: 'Elephants of gangchen ... just as elephants in the forests of gangchen.' Choten Korwe Tshigche (*mChod rten skor ba'i tshigs bcad*) says: '*hundreds of snow-elephants...*' Hence, the lion is a forest dweller. As for its physical characteristics, the color of its body is grey. Its tail is long and with a tussled end. Male lions have a beard and a thick grey mane, hanging from their shoulders. Because its face, being of too large a size, compared to that of its body, the lion is named *Panchanan*, meaning 'the one with the large face'. Tibetans have translated it to mean 'the one with five faces' and have identified the five thus: forehead, dewlap, two cheeks and nose. This list of five does not lead us to any solution. The word '*anan*' only means 'face' and nothing more. Some people even identified the 'five' as the soles of its four limbs and its proper face – five in all. People's childish habit of listening to fabricated stories, seem to have gone so deep into them that they are now no longer satisfied with genuine and true stories. (P.380). [See a similar discussion of 'true facts' versus 'mythical stories' in GC's text 'On Ancient Times']

The 'snow-lion' is to be understood to mean 'lions in the forests of snow-clad mountains'. So is 'snow-elephant'. The description such as 'the lion, white in color with a turquoise mane, staying atop the whitest of all snow-mountains' resulted from the illusions of Tibetans. Panglo Chenpo (*dPang lo chen po*) has rightly said: '*...nothing more than an illusory creation of Tibetans*'. All the Indian sources unanimously agree that the snow-lion is a forest dweller. For example Dhawai Shidrel (*Zla ba'i bzhi 'grel*) says: 'Kings should protect their subjects. The subjects likewise should protect their kings. Just as lions protect forests and vice versa.' Also, Doha Shabari (*Doha of sha ba ri*) says: 'Just as lions roar in forests'. Ashoka's [Indian King] open letter in *Avadhana* says: 'The snow-lion is described as the Peerless Forest Dwelling Five Faced One.' If snow-lions were of such powers, then this king, Ashoka, would have used its name as his epithet, as this name would bring him dignity.

However, the lion-statues on the Ashokan pillars and on the seats of old statues in India and Tibet are clearly identifiable with this still not extinct long tailed forest-lion, which can be seen in the zoos in Indian towns. The lions depicted on the pillars and doors in Lhasa Tsuklakhang (*gtsug lag khang*) [Jokhang Temple] are also (p.381) easily identifiable with this flat-nosed forest-lion. Hence Panglo has rightly said: 'Declaring snow as the sanctuary of lions is a classic example of 'identifying the wrong place'. After Bo Khepa (*Bod mkhas pa*) had quoted a passage from *Lalitavistara* saying, 'then followed the little cubs of snow-lions, running down the base of snows', he jokingly asked: 'Why is this line not quoted as a standard example of 'identifying the wrong place'. He was absolutely right. Here the 'from base of snows' is to be understood to mean 'from the Himalayas', as Kapilavastu [Indian village] is at a distance of just one day's journey [on foot] away from the Himalayan forests. It is, as the *Sutra* says, 'nearby the base of snows'.

The above quote deals with one of the eight auspicious signs [in Buddhism], predicting the birth of Shakyamuni [Buddha]. It further says that the birds such as Bed (*sbed*), parrot, *ri keg (ri skews)*, cuckoo, pea-cock, goose and *ngur pa (ngur pa)* etc. came flying from the snow-mountain, over to the palace of King Shuddhodhana [at the time of Buddha] and sang songs of various notes, which marked the second auspicious sign. This quote says that these birds came from the snows. But they are definitely dwellers of forests, rather than that of snows. 'From the snow mountain' is to be understood to mean 'from the Himalayan forests'. The same applies to the lion also. Statements such as 'forests of *gangchen*' could be found in Tsuktor Gyaldhab (*gTsug gtor gyi yal 'dab*). The *Laitavistara* says more than once that the lions are forest-dwellers. Dampa Tokar Gyichebaikab (*Dam pa tok dkar gyi che ba'i skabs*) in reference to lions says: 'The forest of Vinaya. And those born in the outskirts (p.382) of the forest.' The verses in Dutulba (*bDud btul ba*) say that knowing that the lion is absent in the forest, the flocks of wolves burst into clamors. Also *Vinaya* says: 'The forest, where tigers live harmoniously with the lions and the cattle with their herders'. Kenai Tsigche (*Ke na'i bu'i tshigs bcad*) says: '...the manner, in which animals fall prey to the powerful canine teeth of the forest-lions' and 'lions fearlessly roam around in the forests and often burst into thunderous roars'. Such passages that attest the fact that lions are forest dwellers are too numerous to quote them all here. Many stories in the *Sutras* about lions, begin with a sentence such as 'Once upon a time, a lion with a mane was living in a dense forest...' Also, there are passages such as, 'A man walked into a forest and fell into a ditch along with a lion'. Or, 'Buddha and his entourage walked into the forest and two drum-men continued on their drums to scare away the lions'. Or, 'During a night-stay in the forest, a voice came suddenly saying 'there came Drug de (*Drug sde*)!' and the monks ran away thinking that lions have come.' These quotes are but a few examples. In fact, all the stories of lions recorded in the authentic Indian sources, are those of forest-lions. If I am true or not, check it yourself!

Also *Uttaratantra*, *Avadhana* stories and various *Strotas* have great number of stories of lions. It is rather ridiculous that we are familiar with flocks of varieties of lions, such as 'snow-lion', 'mud-lion', 'rock-lion', 'pasture-lion', 'glacier-lion' and so forth (p.383), but not with the 'forest-lion', which is the only existing one! There is a mention of a skin of a mud-lion in the *Drime Od (Dri med 'od)*, but it is based on the name Buton (*Bu ston*) had given elsewhere, ie. Buton gave the name 'mud-lion' to the one called 'lion of Drog gonpa' (*'drog dgon pa*). The Sanskrit for forest is '*arnya*' and Tibetans have, down the age, rendered it with the Tibetan 'Drog tong' (*'brog stong*). Hence, the one called 'mud-lion' in reality is a forest-lion. 'Forest-king' is one of the synonyms of lion in Ngonjo Natshog Selba (*Ngon brjod sna tshogs gsal ba*).

The fact that the lion has no mane of *green* color is clear from several *Saddhanas*, in which it is said that a *grey* colored mane is falling from its shoulder. Generally speaking, the lion is an animal found in India. The name 'seng ge' [lion] is a corrupted Indian term. We do not have an original Tibetan name for this animal, although we have, for those found in Tibet since time immemorial, such as horse, sheep, dog and pig etc. We portray snow-lions with a mane of green color, very much resembling the Chinese Pekingese [dog]; hence there is a Chinese influence. According to Chinese artists, the color of a lion's body is green, but according to Tibetan artists it is often white. The same is found in some Khotanese paintings too. It may be of Bon [Pre-Buddhist religion in Tibet] origin. According to an oral tradition of elder Bonpos

[followers of the Bon tradition], the four great clans of Tibet are: 1) Yeseng karmo nam gyi juthag chen (*ye seng dkar mo gnam gyi ju thag can*), 2) Changtrug yeshe lha'i dronma (*spyang phrug ye shes lha yi sgron ma*), 3) Moji nagmo khyi yi ngama chen (*mo rdzi nag mo khyi'i rnga ma can* and so forth.

Je Tshangyang (*rJe Tshang dbyangs pa*) was said to have seen snow-lions. (p.384) May be it is true that there are snow-lions of conch-shells, with tremendous power, as if it is born from the limbs of an elephant. May be it is true that there are golden elephants. And may be it is even true that there are crystal girls, capable of spinning threads from crystals. But to me, this [mythical] snow-lion is as non-existing, as horns on the heads of rabbits.

Now, one may say: Ttake it easy, no one is going to hunt lions, no matter whether they are from 'snows' or 'forests'. Indeed, but I am doing no harm to anybody. My attempt has been to distinguish the 'snow-lion' [mythical] from that of the 'forest' [real], the mane of 'green' color from that of 'grey', and the 'white body' from the 'green' one. This may help us to comprehend the things, such as meditation manuals, treatises, chronicles and statues, as to whether they are old, new, from Indian origin or Tibetan. Also, this may be applied to understand the Vedic story of Vishnu's thunderbolt, which is said to be as powerful as as to destroy the foundation of Mount Meru [the center of the Universe]. My attempt in this paper has been to say that 'gang seng' (*gangs seng*) is an abbreviation of 'gangchen nag gyi senge' (*gangs can nags kyi seng ge*) and I am sure this is no harm to any body.

'Snow-lion is nowhere to be found.

King Gesar is not suppose to stay in seclude.

The fabricated stories resulted from illusions

Can very well be used as a subject of an articulate essay. (385).

© **Thupten Rikey (translator)**

CHAPTER 21:

[SOME POEMS]

(p. 389-415)

A *Ka shed* for Labrang, p. 389

In this style of poem, each new line begins with a letter of the Tibetan alphabet in consecutive order. GC wrote it to his fellow monks in Labrang, just before he left for Lhasa in 1927.

Right after I left for other places [Lhasa]

Some elderly monks, who could not stop talking,

Credited Nechung Trinley Gyalpo [the monastery's protector]

And my arrogance for my departure [from Labrang Monastery].

If there really is a Protector deity [in the monastery]
 He should travel to all the strange places.
 He would not let such people [monks] stay,
 Who indulge in selling *chang* [beer] and meat.

Rolling up their monk's skirts, like a palm leaf,
 Holding weapons, like a knife or a stick,
 They [these monks] should be removed right now.
 There will be more next year.

If one doesn't have faith like Passang,
 Some say, one should be expelled [from the monastery]
 The bulls, cows, female yaks, birds, and insects,
 Why not save these unfortunate creatures?

The great Nechung Trinley Gyalpo
 Has no reason to get rid of people,
 Who undertake many difficulties
 And have strong faith [GC is referring to himself]

Well off people, who undermine religion
 And poor people, who do the same,
 They may look very different to us,
 But they look the same to the Enlightened One [Buddha].

Instead of banishing people [from the monastery],
 Who show arrogance about knowing a little about philosophy,
 It would be better if the people [monks],
 Who sell meat, *chang* and animals are banished.

Think, whether what I have said is right or wrong.
 Ask your elder monks and the *geshes* [learned monk].
 These words were said by
 The Lion of Sciences, Sangha Dharma [Gendun Choephel]
 [See interview: Alak Yongtsin, who quotes this poem from memory]

My Travel Experiences, p. 401/02

The representatives, who were elected by the people,
 Study carefully, before deciding what is right and wrong.

They finally decide in the favor of the majority.
Such is the system of the British government

The income of the country belongs to the government.
The powers of the government rest with a single person.
He or she is appointed by the people.
This is the system of the USSR and Germany.

Here, the high noblemen officials
Study somewhat satisfactorily.
They decide the affairs of the government.
This is the system of the Land of the Rising Sun, Japan

All the males are servants of the King.
All the females are maids of the Queen.
All the wealth of the land belongs to the King.
This is the system of the King of Nepal.

Everything should be hidden and thought about carefully.
Be clever and suspicious of everyone.
Claim everything old as the ways of the Gods.
Claim everything new to be a deception of the Demons.

Think of everything remarkable and wondrous [new science] as bad omen.
This is the system of the Land of Religion, Tibet.

The wonderful machines that can help everyone [technical inventions]
And the negative magical omen, which is supposed to harm everyone,
The two sharp edges of the Sword of Wisdom,
Will bring it together for sure

The Second Fragment, p. 407/08

The carnivorous wolf, and herbivorous rabbit,
Instead of competing with each other for food,
They'd better stick to where they belong.
It would be good if they follow their own nature.

Nomads, eating pork,
Farmers, drinking melted butter.

Nobody can force them if they don't want to.
Neither can they be stopped if they want to.

The blind ant runs around for its own welfare.
The legless worm goes around for its own welfare.
In short, everyone in this world,
Runs for his own welfare.

Sometimes you are repelled, even if you see a goddess.
Sometimes you are attracted, even to an old woman.
You see, what is really not there.
How can we count the number of cases,
Where people are fooled by their own mind?
From childhood to old age
Your mind changes a lot.
You will know if you have experienced it.
But how can we trust what we believe at present?

The failure to recognize oneself, due to one's insane mind [ignorance],
The scope of religion and politics and the Sky and the Earth,
These [illusory] appearances that we measure everyday
Will always protect us.

If befriended for a very long period,
There is no action in this world that won't make you sad.
Buddhism, which is the only answer [to this suffering]
Is bound to enter your mind once.

The Seventh Fragment, p. 410/11

Gathering around someone you like,
And hiding from someone who hate,
This nature of every human being,
I know it from early times.

Gathering around someone rich,
And hiding from someone poor,
This nature of every human being,
I know it from early times.

Wicked and vile people,
 Should be treated with capital punishment.
 They should not be treated with compassion.
 Instead, there is no alternative, but to show them the sufferings in hell.

Before the King and the noblemen, who are the rulers of the people,
 I, Gendun Chopel, who is at the lowest ranks of the social ladder,
 Repeatedly promise that I will drink no more liquor
 In front of a crowd of people.
 [See 'Texts on GC': Tashi Pelra, who quotes a short version of the same poem]

The Eighth Fragment, p. 411

On a pure white silken cloth,
 Shines the miraculous light of a bulb.
 Outlines of laughing and weeping; the Queen of Magic
 Shows her performance to the guests of the Three Spheres of Existence

Even if separated from the compassionate oil,
 By the powers of the magical electricity,
 Shows a crooked path to an honest person,
 Beware of the yellow-haired monkey [the British?]

CHAPTER 22:

THE BHAGVAD GITA [DRAFT]

(p. 415-422)

No translation.

CHAPTER 23:

ON HINDU DRAMA

(p. 423-448)

No translation.

VOLUME 12

From Horkhang's Volume 12 only a few excerpts of GC's 'Political History of Tibet' (The White Annals) will be included here. The first chapters of Volume 12 (p. 3-204) are some notes on Tibetan history, the great Tibetan kings (Songtsen Gampo etc.) and the ancient historical documents of the Tang Dynasty from the Dunhuang caves in Northwestern China. These chapters are followed by 'The White Annals' (p. 205-300. Translation see below). The last two chapters of volume 12 are GC's 'Pilgrim Guide' (p. 311-352) and his 'Tibetan Arts of Love' (p. 312-540). Some translations of the last text you will find in the chapter 'Excerpts from The Tibetan Arts of Love' (See below, p.).

THE WHITE ANNALS: A POLITICAL HISTORY OF TIBET

(p. 205-300)

The following excerpts are taken from a draft translation of Sonam Tsering (Dharamshala 1998). Unfortunately his new translation of 'The White Annals' has not been published yet, although it is more accurate and better to read than the much older translation of Samten Norboo (1978).

Introductory poem [my titles]

*Having compiled the accurate statements and lucid chronologies
Recorded in the available old documents,
I have gained the confidence to expound and evaluate, to some extent,
The political exploits of the Tibet of the past.
By decree of the Great Monarch Songtsen Gampo, like a wild horse,
Goaded by the crop of immeasurable bravery,
The Tibetans, who are 'Red-faced Beasts'
Are said to have conquered two-thirds of this global earth*

The former power of the Tibetan Empire

(...) During the following period, except for some records of religious history, everything was lost; for example, the historically proven facts on how the Tibetan forces reached India and occupied Kanyakubja, the capital of Central India. Having imprisoned the King Arjuna, they subjugated more than 180 villages. Even earlier, Nepal was brought under Tibet and remained under its domain for more than a generation. The Tibetan force even crossed Wan Tan Shu and also once dethroned the Chinese emperor. Similarly, Dru-gu, Liyul and Yu-nan had also remained under Tibetan Rule for more than a century. These invaluable historical facts are widely known to foreign historians. Our Tibetan people had reached known and unknown boundaries. Facts relating to Tibet's invasion of India have been well explained in the text rBa-bzhed. Also, the flight of the great Chinese emperor from his kingdom is clearly inscribed on the southern face of the Zhöl pillar, which shall be discussed later.

The main topic of discussion here shall be the historical facts related to the temporal exploits of these great kings and princes and the expansion of the political domain and geographical boundaries through warfare. Since the facts relating to the spiritual aspects of the life of the king, the royal father and royal

mother as well as their contribution to religious development are widely popular, I prefer not to take the slightest trouble of repeating the whole thing over again in this text (...)

Territorial expansion towards China

(...) The following historical accounts describe Tibet's territorial expansion towards China in the east. In brief, it was then held to be that there was no other kingdom in the whole of this continent, which was as powerful as Tibet. During the reign of King Trisong Detsen, Tibetan power reached its zenith and the kingdom extended its rule over almost the whole of the continent. There were also many small kingdoms, which were not directly subjected to Tibet yet paid annual taxes and tributes and were bound by the orders and decrees of the king. Rigzin Jigme Lingpa in his text states:

Trisong Detsen, the ruler of the world.

This acclamation, I feel, is not unfounded.

(...)

How Tibetans lived in ancient times

(...) The Persian literature *Hudud al-alam* also provides a picturesque description of some places in Tibet. It is difficult to identify the names of the places mentioned in the text. The text claims that in Tibet gold was in abundance and that gold as big as a sheep's head was to be found emerging from the earth. It also mentions that the wondrous thing about the land is that, whosoever reaches it is exhilarated and delighted for no reason and his face automatically breaks into a broad smile.

At times, when we feel inquisitive about the traditions and customs of our land we should study historical accounts of our country recorded by foreigners. As is common with every country, there hardly exists a text written by our own people, which adequately records the traditions and customs of our own land. When we examine the historical texts written by Tibetans, we find hardly any texts which describe the women of Lhasa wearing the bright and colorful striped Pang-gdan aprons worn at front beneath the waist, the sPa-drug headgear studded with precious stones or the men wearing the Pags-zhva sna-leb leather cap with four flap-like peaks. After 500 years, these prevalent traditions and customs would become completely unknown to future generations. Only by collecting and studying the accounts related by the people of other countries can we hope to learn about this, even if imperfectly. (...)

The might of the Tibetan empire

(...) The Chinese Emperor T'ai Tsung was then acclaimed as one of the most powerful emperors of the T'ang dynasty. But, even this great Emperor failed to withstand the might and power of the Tibetan force. Some scholars held that the Emperor earlier refused to give his daughter as a bride and in the pretext of fighting battles tested the might and strategies of the Tibetan military force. Later, when convinced of the invincible power of the Tibetan army, he immediately offered Kongjo as a bride. This indeed seems true to the fact. It is also held that since the reign of emperor T'ai Tsung, China lost nearly 300 fortress and households to Tibet. (...)

The poem at the end of the text

(...)

Through the white beams of fondness for my people

That glows spontaneously from the core of my heart

I extend to the kings and people of my snow land

A little service out of my greatest effort.

This text was written by Domey [Amdo] Gendun Chopel.

© **Sonam Tenzing (translator)**

UNPUBLISHED TEXTS: COLLECTION HORKHANG SONAM PENBAR

ON GEOGRAPHY AND ASTROLOGY

This text was given to Horkhang Sonam Penbar around 1946. Fortunately he had asked his servant to copy GC's notes. The original (in GC's own handwriting) was lost during the turmoils, following the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950/51. Albeit no literary masterpieces, these notes on geography, astrology still give a rather impressive idea of the scope of GC's interests and thinking.

I double-checked the text with Rakra Tethong Rinpoche in Switzerland, who, after reading it, was confident that GC had indeed written it.

The Earth [my titles]

Usually Tibetans are fond of describing phenomena of various types, but they make no mention of the topic, such as the motion of the earth. The shape of the Earth is round. It is simply lying in the space. The rotation of the earth causes day and night. You will start to like this idea and perhaps it will be acceptable to you, when you hear from others the story of Columbus. (...) Those, who do not believe this idea [the World being round], need explanations and verifications. Tibetans say, during lunar eclipse, the Moon is eaten. Whereas others say, when Rahula is gazing at this world, his shadow is cast on the Moon. Some Chinese say, the sky eats the Moon. However the fact is that the Earth casts a shadow on the Moon. In order to judge whether the Earth is round or not, look at the following:

1. The shadow fallen on the Moon, is round in shape and thus, it is proven that the shape of the earth is spherical
2. The length of the circumference of the round world is twenty one thousand eight hundred (21,800) *paktse* [a unit of distance in Buddhist metaphysics calculation].
3. If the world is balanced, there is no reason, why the ships in the ocean do not see one another. But when the ships in the ocean are far away from one another, the earlier ships seem to disappear and thus go beyond sight. This means the earth or world is round in shape.
4. When ships travel from either direction, right or left, ultimately, they reach at the starting position. It also conveys the same meaning
5. When a ground is very huge, it seems the earth and the sky overlap each other. The whole environment seems surrounded like this. This also means the Earth is spherical.

Look, our Earth has two motions. One is the rotation of the earth on its axis. It causes day and night. When it is dusk in America, it is dawn in Tibet, and vice versa. The reason behind is that the world is divided into two hemispheres. The second motion is the revolution of the earth around the sun. It causes the seasons: spring, summer, winter and so forth. The shape of the earth's orbit during its revolution around the sun, is like this... [No sketch given] (...)

The Moon

Our moon takes twenty-eight days to make one complete round around the earth. The distance between them is two hundred thousand *paktse*. The moon has no self-light. The rays of the sun fall on the moon

and thus the moon gets light. If we can travel to the moon, we will easily identify the planets and stars with light and without light. It is a clear fact that the moon takes twenty-eight days to make one complete round around the earth. And the earth takes one year to make one complete revolution around the sun. One can see only a small fraction of the moon on the third day of the lunar month and a full moon on the fifteenth day of the month. This is called waxing of the moon. What is the reason that on waning of the moon, the size of the moon diminishes and ultimately one cannot see it at all? When the moon is in between the sun and the earth, it turns its back toward the earth in the evenings. The reason, why we cannot see the moon on waning days, is that the light fallen on the moon is not clear from the earth. As the moon moves during the waxing days, and when it gets light, directly from the sun, we witness the full moon. What is lying behind the moon is totally unknown. For instance, when you face a person, only the front side is visible, not the backside. Tibetans say that half of the moon is of crystal and the other half is of sapphire. On rotation one cannot see the light, because the back portion of the moon, resembles the color the sky. Verify whether these findings are true or false.

Taking the earth as a water mill, try to see the following. When the mill is rotating, the small creatures on the surface of the millstone would not know that the mill is rotating. Is the Earth really revolving? If so, what is the reason that the people do not fall down? It is, because of the gravitational force of the earth.

Minutes, Days, Months

The terms for the units of time and the months of the year are as follows:

60 seconds = 1 minute; 60 minutes = 1 hour; 24 hours = 1 day; 7 days = 1 week; 52 weeks = 1 year. One year has 365 days or 12 months. The twelve months are:

The first month, *January* has 31 days

The second month, *February* has 28 or 29 days

The third month, *March* has 31 days

The fourth month, *April* has 30 days

The fifth month, *May* has 31 days

The sixth month, *June* has 30 days

The seventh month, *July* has 31 days

The eighth month, *August* has 31 days

The ninth month, *September* has 30 days

The tenth month, *October* has 30 days

The eleventh month, *November* has 30 days

The twelfth or the last month of the year, *December* has 31 days.

Geography

Regarding the existence of continents, islands, gulfs, peninsulas, tributaries etc.: In the past there was no description of the world, such mountains and plains. Later, high and low lands formed the hills and planes respectively. The continents and islands were projected from the oceans. There are six big continents. They are: Asia, North America, Africa, South America, North Europe and Australia. Of course there are

many islands at different places. There are five big oceans. Of them the biggest one is the Ocean of the East. In the East of this ocean, there are North America, South America, West Asia and Australia. The second ocean is [no name given] (...). This ocean is the Indian Ocean and it is in the South of India. The fourth ocean is the Arctic Ocean. It is little warmer in the South, but the Northern sides are extremely cold and one finds only ice and ice. The fifth ocean is Antarctic Ocean. The South of this ocean is extremely cold and every time it is frozen there. There are many gulfs and islands. Because of these gulfs, islands and other things, the ocean water became mixed and dirty in the summer, and it became salted (...)

Look at this map [no map shown]. There are continents, islands and the oceans. The great flow of water on the plane regions unceasingly covered the forest areas. This resulted in the formation of hills from the planes. Likewise the great amount of the flow of water on the hills also resulted in the formation of plane areas. Such changes are possible, due to the presence of wind, dew, water etc.

Many islands were formed at Norway. When the islands are devastated, one finds heaps of corals beneath the earth at a distance of thirty arms stretched length. When the growth of the corals is developed, due to the blow of wind and flow of water from all the directions, they fall on the devastated islands. Gradually they remain underneath the earth, covered with dust and ultimately become dry. The colors of the heaps of corals are white, yellow, red, blue etc. When they are in cold water they do not grow. When the water has no warmth, the bones of the insects are peeled off, and thus their limbs grow. The merchants take these items for sale. They make rosaries and other objects of their choice with beautiful designs and shapes.

The formation of the continent of Australia is nothing other than the combination of many islands coming together. The plants and flowers of various kinds are found in Australia. Then tortoise and other reptiles came forth. When the region became quite habitable, the humans emerged.

Fish and Oysters

There are various sizes of fish in the ocean. The people eat some and others are used for the manufacture of medicines. Some fish are very beautiful and attractive. Some fish are as big as four arms length distance. Their bodies are oily. The kingfish has a long and sharp fang. He jumps on people and harms them. Chinese make soup out of the feathers of this fish [not readable] Beneath the ocean, at a distance of fifteen arms length distance, there are oysters with pearls in them. Due to the whirling of waters, at times, oysters come on the dry surface. When one opens the mouth of an oyster, the pearls are stuck there. [Not readable] There are varying sizes of pearls and the smaller ones have wider breadth, and some of the big ones are as big as a pigeon's egg. Since these [oysters] are very expensive, Germans open the mouth of oysters and put a grain of sand in them. After five six years, one can expect very big pearls from the oysters. The Indian Ocean, the gulf of the Tirin [?] Ocean and the island of copper, are the main sources from where oysters are obtained.

Gems

As for Gems: [not readable] diamond, ruby, sapphire, emerald, pearls, turquoise, onyx, lapis lazuli, amber... are found. Lapis lazuli and onyx are formed underneath the water, whereas the amber is formed from the raisins of wood. In the beginning, one finds amber under the fallen raisins, in the midst of leaves. Everyone can notice this. Later the heaps of wood and leaves fell into the water, resulting in the formation of amber from the underneath. Diamond is the heart of everyone. Its formation and origin is identical to that of coal.

Planets

There are seven planets in the universe, excluding our earth. Usually there are unaccountable stars in the sky. Like our earth, these planets too do not have light of their own. It is the sunlight that is shared by every planet. The sun and the stars have their own light. If the stars, like our sun, were not far away from the center of the earth, the heat would be unbearable for us. The distance between the stars is extremely vast. The distance between the earth and sun is seventy-seven millions *paktse*. It takes eight minutes for the sunlight to reach the earth. There are stars whose lights do not reach the earth even after fifty years. Mercury takes eighty-eight days to make one revolution around the sun. Venus takes two hundred twenty five days to make one revolution around the sun. Our earth takes three hundred sixty five days to make one revolution around the sun. Everyone knows that there is only one moon to our earth. Mars takes six hundred eighty seven days to make one revolution around the sun. It has two moons in the sky. Jupiter takes twelve years to make one revolution around the sun. It has eight moons in the sky. Saturn takes 29 years to make one revolution around the sun. It has ten moons in the sky. Uranus takes one hundred sixty five years to make one revolution around the sun. It has four moons in the sky. Neptune takes one hundred sixty five years to make one revolution around the sun. It has only one moon in the sky.

Geography

Regarding the division of North America and the existence of rules and regulations, conventions and customs, grains, trees, animals etc. in North America: The world atlas is divided into two halves – the Eastern and the Western World. When the Eastern World did not know the existence of the Western World, it was Columbus, who found the Western World. It has been four hundred thirty years since its discovery. One half of the Western World is North America.

Countries

North America is divided into four divisions. Canada is one division. Many Englishmen came to this place. The place is rich in wheat, barley, fish, plants etc. Near the ocean, there are fish in abundance. People dry fish and insert salt in them. Some times they even cook them, and those salted and cooked fish are packed and sold. The capital city is Athevo [?] In its South there is [not readable]. It is quite warm. The export items of the place [Mexico?] are gold, silver, copper, lead, cotton, yams, and titida [?]. The import items are iron objects [machines?], canvas shoes, and kerosene oil. The capital city is Mexico. There are two islands in North America. These islands [no names given] are extremely cold [Alaska?]. There are not many inhabitants and animals. The mercantile goods of the businessmen are the fangs of

otters, the hair of the water birds, and fish. (...) There are many volcanoes and springs, which however are surrounded by snows and icebergs etc. These two islands are Menimar and Mexico [?]. Of these two, Mexico has more freedom. In the South, there is Central America and its six regions. Bananas and oranges are grown in these places. There was the Gulf of Panama between the North- and South-America. In the past, the ships had to travel around Panama. Now, there is a canal between them and thus people can easily reach there. In the Northern side [of America], there is a region known by the name of Alaska. [The following does not make sense]. The business items of the region are fish, gold, ivory, and otters with fish feathers. The skins of otters are very expensive. In former times, this region belonged to Russia. It was bought by America by paying a sum of 2 *crores* [10 millions] 7 millions 200 dollars.

In the east of North America there are several islands and the one discovered by Columbus is El Salvador. He first thought this was India. Another island is Costa Rica. It lies in the Ayul region of America. The products of the place are woods, chilly, oranges, scents and apples. Another island is Cuba. It has great freedom. Their cigarettes [cigars] are of very good quality and people smoke outside. (...) In this region of America they bring coal to the ships [steamboats?]

One can find rice, bee forests, pigs, tea, oranges, banana plantations, and fruits, such apples. The capital city is Hanilumu [Honolulu?]. In the South of Asia there are the islands of the Philippines. These islands are within the jurisdiction of America. One finds forests such as of bee, salt, cloves, bananas, jutes and cigarettes. The capital city is Manila.

America

The common name for all the fifty states together, is known as America. America has ministers and the capital city is Washington. There is a common office where the four heads stay. It is a country of knowledge. It has cities in all directions, covering many *paktse*, and railways join these cities together. Also the buildings in the cities are joined by electricity, covering a distance of many *paktse*. The expert craftsmen manufacture cloth fibers, shoes, mirrors, and the products of gold, silver and iron. They [the experts] extract minerals like gold, silver, coal and oil from beneath the earth. The country is rich in fruits like apricots, apples, honey, oranges, grapes etc. As for wild animals there are deer, black sheep, bears, foxes, lynx, bats, thorny pigs, panthers, rabbits, otters, crocodiles, and insects. America is thinly populated and has grains more than their need. On the other hand, Europe is thickly populated, but has fewer grains. Therefore, America sends grains out of its country. This is its main export item. America imports toys for children from European countries. It also imports materials from China, like brocade cloths of all types, knives and ivory; bowls with designs and brocade cloths from Japan; gems such as corals and sandals from India. America has silver from its Western region, iron and coal from its Eastern region and copper from its Northern region. These are their export items. Other export items are khalma stones [?], kerosene oil, and all types of grains, meat, horns, combs, stone shoes, brush and manures. Regarding the evolution of inheritance [lineage] of America: All the people of the world have their evolution of inheritance, except the Tibetans. However, the color of the skin, eyes, hair etc. of Americans differs from others, because they are the derivatives of the combination of many different races and

lineages. Tibetans are of one cast [race] only and that is, why all Tibetans have black hair and eyes everywhere.

America versus Tibet

Where quarrels emerge within a Tibetan family, then the trust between the spouses is lost. The unfaithful ones are wrapped in leather and thrown into the water. In Tibet there are punishments like the death sentence, expulsion of sense organs and penalties for murder. These negative practices are existent in Tibet, but not in America. The Americans execute the death sentence with electric shocks. Some culprits are shot, whereas others are even hanged. As a punishment for murder, there is sometimes the death sentence and sometimes life imprisonment. The practice of the payment for a penalty does not exist in America. In America, even if there is disagreement or conflict on the agenda, there is no chance of the death sentence for only trivial matters. In America, irrespective of the social status, all children have to go to school, when they are 6 years old. They have to spend ten years in school for studies. It is up to the individual student, whether to go for further studies or not. America is a land of freedom. One can practice any faith one wishes. In America there is help for the poor, orphaned children, soldiers [veterans] and children, whose parents are very old. They are given food, clothing, residence and medical care. Also, there are hospitals for mad people. Leprosy patients are kept in Sendiveche Island [?]. The elders and heads [superiors] give advice on the inherent knowledge in the practice of crafts and medicine. If a man and a woman agreed to live together as husband and wife, and later they are found to be unfaithful, then the higher authority will give them a material punishment and sometimes they even have to go the prison. If there is disagreement within a couple, they can make a petition to the head [judge?]. The head can summon them and if it is impossible to come to an agreement, they will have to divide the property. If the couple had children, it is the children's wish, whom they want to join. But the one with no children will have to provide money for his or her children's living. However he or she has no say in their private life of the other. Each of the divorced couple can remarry. As for theft, no matter how small the amount one has stolen, one is imprisoned for several years. In prison they [convicts] have to make ropes and prepare food. If the stolen object were very valuable, one would have to remain in prison for more years. Usually, the convicts are made to dig earth, clean and repair the roads as punishments. There are head people [guards] with guns to look after them, to prevent them from escaping. Bribery is considered a great offence, and hence one has to stay in prison for many years. In addition, the convicts are made to engage in very hard labor.

South America

As for South America, it has rules and regulations (...). There are thirteen countries in South America, that are within the jurisdiction [control?] of North America. Of these countries, the six big ones are... [No names given]. These places are very hot. In these regions there is big water [river] known as Amazon. Many animals live in this water, such as fish, tortoises, crocodiles, and so forth. This water is flanked by dense forests on both sides. Since there are many trees and plants, one can see multi-colored butterflies, different kinds of birds and animals. There is a huge bird known as *Nomabe* [?]. This bird catches and carries baby sheep and baby cows within no time. This bird lives in a big nest on the trees. Again, on the

trees one can find ant-houses. The ants harm this bird. There are coiled snakes. They catch all sizes of wild animals. They squeeze the animals and lick them with their tongue, without actually killing them. Finally, the caught animals do not survive. There is a four-legged animal known as Nel [?]. People make dresses out of their hair by weaving. As for mineral stones, there are diamonds. This mineral has a very good color and is very hard like iron. There are medicinal plants also. Trees of several hundred tastes are seen outside. One can also see iron wheels [trains], various other objects, leather and cloth from outside. (...)

Columbus found South America, when he traveled and came out of his ship for the third time. The area, which was found by Columbus, is known as Colombia or Bogotá. The time of Columbus' discovery of North and South America is almost the same. The people of America are divided into three divisions. Two divisions belong to North America [USA and Canada?] and one division is South America. The one division of South-America has thirteen countries. These are: 1. Brazil and its capital is Rio de Janeiro, 2. Colombia and its capital is Bogotá, 3. Venezuela and its capital is Caracas, 4. Peru and its capitals is Lima, 5. Bolivia and its capital is Sucre, 6. Uruguay and its capital is Montevideo, 7. Paraguay and its capital is Asuncion, 8. Argentina and its capital is Buenos Aires, 9. Chile and its capital is Santiago, 10. Guyana and its capital is George Town, 11. Haiti and its capital is Port au Prince, 12. Jamaica and its capital is Kingston and 13. Ecuador and its capital is Quito.

Generally if we divide those countries into five human groups, one group is very enthusiastic for knowledge. The remaining four groups are savages. In Chile and Peru, the system of schooling is excellent. In the thirteen regions of South America, French people taught them [their] religion and that is, why there are so many Christians here.

Europe

European countries have their own rules and regulations, systems and customs, grains, forests and animals. There are more ethnic groups in Europe, than in America. There are twenty different sizes [countries?] in Europe. Today, their heads [main opponents?] are England and Germany. These two countries had fought against one another for two years. The remaining countries, [among them] America, won the war in 3-4 years. The machine guns, ships and weapons of Germany were looted and snatched. Even the king [ruler?] had to run away, vesting no power with him...

In the continent of North America there is a place that still belongs to England. (...) In the past, the fifty regions [states] of America were under the control of England. But under the leadership of General Washington, the American people fought against England. Since then, it became an independent nation. It has been 146 years, since they had been ruled independently.

In the South America there is a region within the jurisdiction of England. Also in Asia, there are several regions that are within the jurisdiction of England, including India. The name of one continent is Australia. Another island is known as Serpageni [?]. In this region there are several countries that belong

to England. In England there are many huge cities. London is the capital. The population of England is seven millions and three hundred thousands. Because of the dense population [in England] and the scarcity of products, many items for living were brought from other continents and islands [talking about colonialism?]. It included fruits, brocade cloths, cotton cloths, gold, silver, leather, meat, and grains. These are England's main import items. Its export items include motors and wheels, fine woven cloths, knives, medicines, medical equipments and various kinds of rubber items. There are many travelers across the continents that visit England. England has power over the oceans; it has big ships in good number. The kingship in this country is hereditary. The prince will succeed to the king's throne. If there is no king or prince, then the princess will hold the throne or crown. England has ministers and learned and wise elders [House of Lords?] with which the kings will seek advice and discuss important matters. England has two parliamentary houses. Also there are Courts, where all are treated equally, irrespective of their origin, faith, richness or social status. Everyone has an equal say. There is honesty. The schools and temples [churches] are excellent. Regarding the observance of the rules and regulations, it resembles America. See more in the 7th chapter. It will be clear there. [No chapters indicated in GC's text]

Germany

The people of Germany are experts in all kinds of worldly activities. Their excellent skill is manifested in the production of telescopes, human photos and printing of medial texts. All the inhabitants of the country, irrespective of their sex and position, never waste their time. The king of the country [Hitler?] claims that he has conquered the world and has the say over the oceans. He is very proud and claims to have sent many hundred thousand groups of people, resulting in the construction of fifty palaces. Due to this, many healthy adults are trained in military education for two years. The Germans have wheat, barley, grapes, potatoes, cigarettes, white reddish, wine (...) Also, there are coals, iron plates, salt, silver, etc. in various factories. They have guns, machine guns, small ships that float on the oceans, ships that go beneath the water [submarines], and so forth. The Germans have many distinct objects of their choice. Import items are brocade cloths, wool, cotton cloths, and rubber. Export items include sugar, wine, strong liquors, iron objects, telescopes, and carved materials. They also make butterfly toys for children.

(...) The capital of France is Paris. This region [France?] is very big. In the past the head of France was a king. He was very cruel and even for small offenses, the death penalty was given as punishment.

[No name of a country indicated] The standard of education here [where?] is very low. People are sent to North America, where they are educated in the field of literature and others. The living condition of the people is very poor. Their foods consist of deer milk, cheese and deer meat. Their dresses are made from the skins of deer. In the Southern region, there are wheat, barley, potatoes, insects, jute (...) gold, silver, copper, lead, coal and iron pieces. As for animals, there are bears. Export items includes the skins of animals and various kinds of grains. Import items include machines, guns, cloths and wool. (...) In the Northern region there is a country, known as Iceland.

In Russia there is a place known as Siberia. This region is extremely cold. The prisoners are banished to this place where they often married and settled down. The prisoners have to do various kinds of hard labor such as stone works and soil works. They are made to work in making a steel bridge [pipeline?] from Siberia to the big ocean in the East. Earlier they had fought against Germany with the support of England. [Russia] is a peaceful country. However the subjects revolted against the King [Zar], which resulted in the complete destruction of the King, Queen and the Prince. Today, there is eminent person in the region [Russia?]. Now there is a change in Siberia. (...) Lead by England, the whole world is engaged in war against Germany.

Saudi-Arabia and Persia

In Arabia there is Mecca city. It's the city of Muslims. Every year three hundred thousand Muslim followers visit Mecca for pilgrimage. It is said that one, who has paid his visit to holy Mecca, is freed from falling into the hell. This city is rich in grapes, seyab [?] fruits, bananas, tea and many others products, which are export items. Also it has camels, horses, cats, and very big lions. Dugra [Medina?] is in Arabia. It is the birthplace of Mohammed, the Prophet. Bodhgaya is the place where Shakyamuni [Buddha] was enlightened. In Northern India, there is also a Muslim city, however that is not the birthplace of the Prophet Mohammed. To the Northeast of Arabia is *Tazik* [Persia, Iran]. The people of this region worshipped the sun and fire in olden days. Here we find very good qualities of brocade, thorns, fragrant flowers, carpets, and others. From beneath the earth, one finds turquoises and from the ocean one finds pearls, which are used as ear-ornaments. These are their exports. From the nomad families, one gets wool, cows, horses, goats, ships etc. The head of these nomads is their King and the capital city is called Tehran.

Africa

In Africa they also have rules and regulations, customs and traditions, grains and forests and animals etc. The continent of Africa lies in the South of Europe. The color of the people of this region is very black. Many countries are the colonies of England and France. Earlier, there were colonies that belonged to Germany, but nowadays, all the colonies are under England. The African continent is in the center of two continents (...) In the North of Africa; there is the Sahara desert. White people cannot survive there because of heat. There are lions, elephants, tigers, rhinos, water horses, multi-colored horses [giraffes?], zebras, apes, panthers, monkeys, crocodiles, horses with wings [sic], antelopes and so forth. In the South, there are buffalos. The people [here] use these animals for loading and dragging carts. Sheep are also found here. There are many casts [ethnic groups] in this region. Some people in this region are huge and grey in color, whereas others are really black. Because of the heat, they put on leaves, to not be totally naked. The different materials they use for their crafts are wooden barks, cotton cloths, skins and others. The women keep their hair tied on their heads like turbans. As an ornament of beauty, people use feathered turquoises on their heads. The teeth are sharpened like sharp fangs. The women keep their necks covered with iron [rings] and copper ornaments, and their hands and legs are ornamented with cowry. Their ears are ornamented with brass and iron rings. The lower lips are also adorned with wood. The upper portion of the body is covered by grass, but they do not have sleeves. The stomach is also

wrapped with grass. In this continent some people even eat human flesh and bones. During the installation of the heads [chiefs], a child is killed and its meat is offered to... [No further explanations given] (...) If the girl is young and beautiful, then she is sold to others, in consultation with her parents (...) Arrows are their weapons. They [the Africans] have arrows, poisoned by the poisons of snakes. Their weapons also include arrows, small daggers and spears. They tie big stones to the spears and lay huge traps to even catch elephants. When the elephant is trapped inside, the tip of a spear is struck into the elephant. In this way the elephant is killed. In the past hundred years, the black people of this continent were attacked and made slaves by the Europeans. Thus their people were sold. The chiefs of the Europeans [slave traders] shamelessly exploited this continent of Africa, despite repeated instructions from higher authorities. When the authorities happened to check their ships to see, whether they carried people for sale or not, the chieftains [traders] threw these people in to the ocean water mercilessly. The number of black people exploited and taken by the European [slave traders] amounts to two millions. The heads [leaders] of one half of North-America, were very much disappointed with this exploitation and thus war arose. [President] Lincoln won the war, and then he declared that there should be no difference in position anymore, based on the color of the people, be they black or white. Today there is no notion of 'slave' and 'master' anymore, between black and white people.

There are four big waters [rivers] in Africa; they are called Sambesi, Congo, Niger and Nile. Of these, the greatest one was Nile. The gathering of high snow waters and other rivers and seas, forms this huge amount of water. [In Egypt] one can find wheat, barley, maize, orange, tala woods, grapes and various grains and fruits... They use buffaloes, camels, horses, donkeys, goats and sheep for loading. In the past, the European ships had to sail around Africa by making a [counter-] clockwise journey through the ocean to reach India. This was indeed very difficult. There is a gulf that joins Asia and Africa, known as Suez. Today, there is a canal [Suez] from the Red Sea to reach India very fast. In olden days, there was a tyrant king in the continent of Africa [Egypt]. This king always exploited its subjects. The king ordered his subjects to make a temple made of bricks [the Pyramids?], in which the subjects were immensely tortured. ...

In the Southern part of Africa, there are wheat, barley, cigarettes, maize and others. There are many birds with huge wings. Also there are animal skins, tea and flying horses with feathers. The people carry their luggage by keeping it on their heads. They use camels, when they send their export items, as heavy as three hundred kilograms. A camel can travel sixteen hours at a stretch and it does not need water for as many as three days. Today, the Europeans are wishing to make iron tracks or roads from the edge of South Africa to the edge of North Africa.

Tibet and India

In olden days, Indians and Tibetans never traveled to distant lands. They had the suspicion that if the British troops entered their countries, there was a possibility of loosing one's country. Therefore, the British were barred from entering India and Tibet. The first French priest Odorico da Pordenone left for Lhasa from India and it has been 590 years since then. Another British group, Gruber and d'Orville, left

for Lhasa from Xining in China. It has been 257 years since then. Another Britisher, called Manning, traveled to Dedang and it has been 111 years since then. Bogle reached Shigatse in Tibet. It has been 144 years since then. Later two French Huc and Gabet reached Lhasa from Mongolia. Seven Englishmen [?] from Dekhano region came to Lhasa and stayed for few years. Unluckily they were killed on their return journey by bandits. The Japanese Kawaguchi and an Indian having dressed in monks robes, arrived Lhasa from India. After knowing that they were from a foreign country they were expelled from Tibet. Even those who helped them were severely punished. An American Rakgoshe [Rockhill] by name, came via Amdo and wrote many descriptions on Tibet. An Indian Wosi by name [?] traveled in all the directions and knew where about of Lhasa. An Indian [?] who is a citizen of England measured the distance from India to Lhasa by walking with the aid of England. A Tibetan, who is a British citizen, Lama Ogyen Tsho [Ugyen Gyatso] by name also measured the distance between India and Lhasa.

Sarat Pandita [Sarat Chandra Das?] was an Indian and also a British citizen. He disguised in a monk's robe and took admission in Tashilunpo monastery. Then he was sent to Lhasa with the help of four big incarnate lamas. After he was in Lhasa, he was made to return from where he had come. Sven Hedin was a European who came from the Northeast and had permission from the 13th Dalai Lama to travel to Lhasa, which is in the West of Tibet. The purpose of his visit was to know the significance of the Land of Tibet. The British General Younghusband withdrew his army from Lhasa [in 1904] and made a trade agreement between Tibet and England.

Translated by Sangye Tendar Naga (2000)

A LETTER FROM SHOL-PRISON

Sent to Horkhang Sonam Penbar [1946/47]. The handwritten note of Horkhang reads: *Fire Dog Year: on 30th day of 11th month. I received this [from GC] on a day, while I was making an Offering Puja.*

The letter

[Gendun Choephel] I received your Thü block [cheese cake] and the blue bag of Tsampa intact. It's amazing that even at this despairing time you [Horkhang] have kept up your courage to fill the missing parts of the history book [The White Annals] without becoming disheartened. Although I had expected an obstacle right from the beginning, this one [imprisonment and 'hot' interrogations] is too much of it. But it is just as Milarepa has said: *'If the Dharma instructions of the Lama are profound/How will hindrances from the evil beings occur.'* If our ancestral Kings [7-9th century] had their messenger gods and if these gods have some power, I am still hopeful to finish this history book. Otherwise, I do not have any one to save me.

Yesterday, during the interrogation when I mentioned that this book [The White Annals] is my evidence that I hold no malice against Tibet, with some emphasis in the tone of the words, I found that they have written thus, *'You know well which one is more grave between the two: the benefit this book has for the nation or the damage you have done by sending your ordinary letters to Rabga [Pangdatsang] several times'*, and so forth. Even though so much of the history is still left undone, how grave a crime it is that is presently alleged, will be decided in future by people who would have the wisdom to judge. I would not be more delighted and satisfied than that then. Should I [GC] or my seeds of historical notes be destroyed, then, since I have finished the history up till Mangsong, insert this at the end of the text [Horkhang published the text in 1951, after GC's death]:

*With the light of my pure heart towards my fellow Tibetans
Held at the core of my heart of the nature
For the leaders and the subjects of our country, the Snowland
I have done my best to give a service.
So, here ends this unfinished historical account*

You may write at the end of this yourself, saying that I was obstructed by 'obstacles' in such a way, as not to hurt the feelings of anyone. And include the inscriptions on both the pillars at Samye and Karchung. The book should be concluded with a commentary on the Karchung inscription by you. The inscriptions on the Karchung pillar could right many an erroneous historical account. One big mistake is that many later scholars like the Omniscient Buton, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Drukpa Pema Karpo, etc., have all agreed unanimously that Tride Songtsan and Ralpachan are synonymous [Tibetan Kings, 9th century]. Whereas Ralpachan was the brother of Langdarma who lived two or three generations after Trisong. The reason why they confused Ralpachan with Tride Songtsan is because they thought that Drajor Bamnyi was the text for modernized Tibetan written by Ralpachan, as it is well known that he modernized Tibetan language. And then, as at the beginning of the Bamnyi it's written that: *'In the Horse year the Tsanpo, Tride Songtsan lived in the palace of Onchang Do. In the early and late (...) he defeated the battles of*

Nyingje (Compassion) and Kunchan (the Bandit). The messengers of Garlok prostrated to him. The great Minister Zhang Trizur or Gag, Mangje Lha Öd, etc. passed through many important cities and handed over most of the horse tails and cow milk. In response to receiving their awards each of the ministers below Zhang (...), etc.' So, it seems that in order for consistency they thought that Onchang Do was built by Ralpachan and thus mistook Ralpachan to be the name of Tride Songtsang. Here, it seems that the reference in *'Tride Songtsan lived in the palace of Onchang Do'* is that in that year the Tsanpo's residence was built in Onchang Do. So, on the Karchung pillar the former three kings are referred called 'the Ancestral Tsanpos' whereas for Trisong it's written 'father Trisong'. As such it is clear that Tride Songtsan was the son of Trisong and thus understood to be not Ralpachan. Moreover, it is evident when we compare the Karchung pillar with Bazhe and Gyalpo'i Thanyig where it's mentioned that Tride Songtsan is the name of Mutik Tsanpo.

Moreover, the mention of Tride Songtsan being the name of Mutik Tsanpo in 'Ba' bZhad (Songs of Ba) and the King's Biographical Account coincides with the Karchung inscription. It is well known that Mutik Tsanpo built Karchung Temple and the pillar's inscription tells us that Karchung was built by Tride Songtsan. So, from these two facts, we know that they were the names of one and the same king. Further, in the Two Volume Text of Modern Tibetan by Tride Songtsan it says: *'Earlier during the time of the divine prince father, the Indian Abbot Shantarakshita, the Acharya Bodhisattva Zhiwa Tso,'* etc. and since all the names of the Translators [lotsawas] and Panditas [Indian scholars] listed in it are from the time of Trisong, 'the prince father' refers to Trisong. From this also we could infer that Tride Songtsan was the son of Trisong and he was not Ralpachan.

Again, in the Karchung inscription the mention that *'Tri Düsong built a Temple on the Tritse of Ling'* is an important account that is not found in the other history books. Again, in the Karchung inscription, since two lines from the Samye pillar are quoted, it says, *'the manner in which those who did not know the Dharma swore during the time of my father.'* Thus it can be understood that the Samye pillar was built by Trisong. Hence, the Lhodak History is mistaken for claiming that the Samye pillar was built by Mutik Tsanpo. Since [the author] was mistaken, when he actually saw in the Treasury of Samye the long oath of Mutik Tsanpo to protect the Dharma from being destroyed, he then thought that that was the inscription referred to by the outside pillar which said *'the detailed letters of the decree is somewhere'* and presumed that the pillar was built by Mutik Tsanpo. But I think the inscription, which he saw was not the one made when the Karchung pillar was erected. However, there is still some doubt about it. So, I ask you to look into the Lhodak History itself. I think Kundeling has the book.

Therefore, both of the pillars on top and below at Samye were built by Trisong. And judging by the inscriptions on the Lhasa pillar, it seems to be Trisong's, but it is popularly known to be Ralpachan's. Much of the Karchung pillar inscriptions are easy to understand, but there are two ways of understanding this one: *'The Tsanpos, Kings and the Princes, from those who were young to those who became political rulers, learned whatever Dharma they could commit to their memory.'* In relation to a single person, it could mean that the Kings learned the Dharma [Buddhist teaching] from their childhood till they ruled the

nation. Or, in the context of different persons, it could mean that from the young Princes of the Kings to those Kings, who were old, all learned the Dharma.

The remnants of Karchung could be identified through this pillar. Even if one doubts, whether it could be at another place where Tride Songtsan had built Karchung, it cannot be otherwise. For, wherever the pillar was erected, it must bear the name of the temple, which was built there, and on this pillar there appears no other name after Karchung. Since the area on which Karchung was built is said to be 'the size of a small star', it, however, cannot be considered to be referring to a star in the sky, but a *skar ma*, according to Abhidharmakosha. So, I think that one *skar chung* (a small star), is equal to one *rgyang brag* or so. This you may ask Geshe-la [Geshe Choedrak?]. To researches such things as these, you may further make some clear and down to earth explanations, which may be placed at the end of the very rare and unfinished History of our nation [The White Annals]. This being the remains of Karchung is clear from the life story of either Taranatha or Ogyen Rinpal, but I am not very sure which one it is.

The other day, I wrote down and sent you the song of Tride Songtsan that I had memorized, which I request you to put in a glass frame after I have passed away. Right from the beginning there were unique signs of auspicious and good omens that you would be able to carry on with this History. Here in prison I also had two dreams related to you, one very auspicious and the other a common one. If you could help me with the History, then I don't need any other people to help me. Although you might need to conceal this [Horkhang's support of GC. Horkhang and his friend Rakra Tethong were told not to help GC] with shame and suspicion for a while, there will definitely come a time in the future, when you could show them with pride. Although I had thought that you may have forgotten history due to lethargy and depression, but it is wonderful that you have not.

*I will not regret
Whenever this corpse-like body dies.
But, its very sad if this gold-like wisdom
Dies out along with it.*

*Hence, without being weighed down
By the weaknesses of depression, boredom and self-pity,
May the merits from your efforts
Please the powerful kings.
Tashi!*

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A SPIRITUAL SONG

Attached to the above letter was the following poem:

Here in this world, unknown to anyone,
 This long Heavenly Rope of the Swastika God
 Ties the boundless reality-space to the Awareness-sphere
 The young child, which is tied within this body,
 This body's pile tied to the foods and drinks,
 The foods and drinks tied to the outside conditions.
 Thus the rope running through one to the next
 Has no other end to be broken.
 But the only end is the one that everyone dislikes:
 Only at the time of death, when the body and mind disconnect
 (Will it end).

The one limit no one knows
 Is only when the rope is rotten and
 Awareness merges with the space.

This mind is a goddess without limit
 Whose native land is not this world, though.
 One little toe of this goddess-mind
 Is bound tightly to this body by a thread.

Thus until this thread breaks,
 Whatever the body feels, the mind experiences it.
 Whatever good or bad is done to this toe,
 The goddess feels the bliss or pain.

How nice if here this rope breaks,
 But the whole world fears severing this rope.
 When striving for the connections of this rope's
 [*When striving to free from this rope's means of binding?*]
 All around the rope is found full of thorns.
 To cover each head of a thorn
 A profession each is learned.
 Thus this obligation of covering the thorn
 Would carry on busily until death.
 This endless unavoidable restlessness
 Seems what this life of ours is for.

A portion of this space-vast mind
When bound in this karmic swamp of flesh and blood,
I presume, there is no end to the miseries
Of cold, hot, hunger, thirst, hopes and fears.

But obtained from hundreds of efforts
This body created by the excellent wisdom
Like the prophecy of the truth of the queen of the sky
May live on this earth for a few more years.

Thus I sang this song.

© **Tenzing Tsepak (translator)**

EXCERPTS FROM 'THE TIBETAN ARTS OF LOVE'

The following passages are taken from Heather Stoddard (Le Mendiant de L'Amdo, 1985), K. Dhondup (Sex in Tibetan Literature, 1995) and Ganjong Rigne (Perspective of Tibetan psychology: traditional sources to look down upon smiths, butchers, and women. Published in Tibet).

From Heather Stoddard, p. 201/202

As for me, I have little shame,
 I like women.
 I'm the kind, who chooses the bad and rejects the good.
 Although at first, I had no thought
 Of taking a monk's vows,
 Recently, here [in India], I have abandoned even the pretence.
 A fish's agility depends on his depth in the water.
 What one experiences oneself, one knows.
 Thinking about this, I applied myself seriously
 To the composition of this work,
 Which is my personal task.
 If monks wish to deprecate it, let them.
 If the tantrists wish to praise it, let them.
 Old *Lugyal Bum* is only moderately interested in it,
 The young cat *Sonam Thar* is seriously preoccupied by it.
 The author is Gendun Choephel.
 As for where it was written, that was the town of Mathura.
 An old Brahmin explained the difficult passages to him [GC],
 A Kashmiri girl gave him practical instructions
 On the red couch of experience,
 The essence of the matter is inspired by Indian classics,
 The verses, easily understood, are in Tibetan style.
 Thus all conditions without exception, being united,
 I think that a rich fruit will certainly be produced.

The monk Mipham wrote from hearsay.
 The libertine Choephel writes from experience.
 Voluptuous men and women, who make a practical experience,
 Will know the difference between the two from the details.

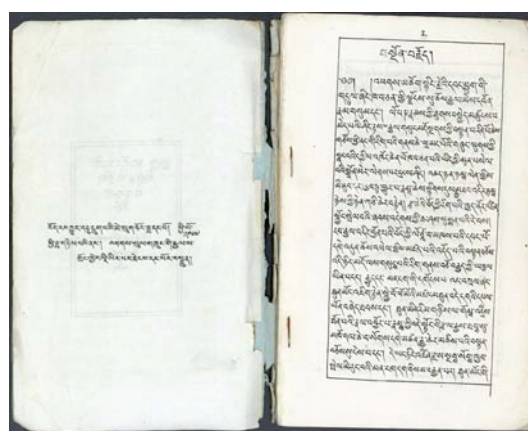
May all simple people living on the vast earth
 Be liberated from the pit of the merciless law.
 And may they have the ordinary freedom to practice
 This necessary, harmless and acceptable pleasure.

Near the flowing banks of the great River Yamuna [Ganges]
 On a brilliant summer dawn in my friend's house,
 My lady friend Gangadeva of Panchala,
 This 'Treatise of Love' was completed.

From K. Dhondup, p. 11-17

In his article on GC's 'Tibetan Arts of Love', K. Dhondup frequently mentions that previous translations (e.g. Hopkins, 1992) tended to 'spiritualize' the text, instead of seeing the down-to-earth poetic beauty, which he felt within GC's open and straightforward way to talk about 'sex'. (Image 31: The first edition of GC's 'Tibetan Arts of Love').

The venerable Mipham has written
 From reading, what others wrote.
 I, the dissolute Gendun Choephel,
 Have written by tasting personally.
 The difference in flavor
 Between the two treatises
 Will be felt by the passionate couples,
 After trying them out in practice. [Also see above]



One king takes a thousand queens.
 This is praised as a royal deed.
 If a woman were to marry a hundred husbands,
 She would be condemned and slandered,
 As if nothing worse could happen.

Every man has a woman,
 Every woman has a man.
 Both in their minds desire sexual union.
 What chance is there for moral and clean behavior?
 If natural passions are openly banned,
 Unnatural passions will grow in secrecy.
 No laws of religion,
 No laws of morality,
 Can suppress the natural passions of mankind.

Even the women, well read in many books,
 Say the female body has no sperm.
 Because I enjoy talking about sex
 I asked many of my girl friends.

They either shy away or shake a fist at me.
 I found no one would confide me the truth.
 I hoped Yanchen Dolma may know the truth.
 But even she is not very certain
 Women, from my own experiences, may not have sperm.
 But they do have a secretion.
 Is it water or is it wind?
 An old man, experienced in sex, would know.

In the *Anguttara Sutra* of Sri Lanka
 The Buddha himself spoke these words:
 The most beautiful form in the eyes of man,
 Is the body of a woman.
 A more beautiful form than this,
 I have not seen.

To provide a woman to a man of passion,
 Is the supreme gift one could give.
 So it is said in the *Kalachakra Tantra*.
 If you do not believe me,
 Turn to the Practice Chapter of the *Kalachakra Tantra*
 And you will read it there.
 The beggar pretends to frown on other's gold.
 The guest, though hungry,
 Pretends to spit on the food.
 Everyone pretends to dislike sex,
 But in the mind, sex is the only thing everyone likes.

The fish knows best about water.
 One is best at what one has experienced.
 Thinking of this, I wrote this dedication,
 The 'Treatise On Passion', which was my *karma* to write.
 The monks if they condemn it, will not be wrong.
 The Tantrics if they praise it, will not be wrong.
 The Treatise is of no use for the old man *Lhugyal Bhum*,
 But it is of immense use to young man *Sonam Thar*. [Also see above]

The secrets of the profound *Mantra* and *Tantra*,
 Their practice and vocabulary etc.,
 Have not been proclaimed in this Treatise.

Even then, the acts attached with a sense of shame,
 Must be hidden and kept secret from others.
 Monks and spiritual persons
 Are not among those intended to read this Treatise.
 Rather than read it thoroughly, to become angry and annoyed,
 They should instead read the title and close it there.

Similarly, the characteristics of the women
 Must be explained,
 According to the different parts of Tibet.
 Since my own experience is limited to
 The women of Kham and Tsang,
 I'm not qualified to write in detail.
 The woman of Kham has soft and delicate skin,
 And is tender in passionate lovemaking.
 The woman of Tsang is skilled in
 The art of lovemaking.
 She has the fine rhythm of thrusting upwards.
 This mere outline of Tibetan women is written,
 As a call of lovers of women and love-making,
 Whose extensive experience with women
 Of Amdo, Kham, Ngari etc.,
 And their erotic acts of loving and frolicking,
 Known to any passionate old hands,
 May add their experiences to this chapter.

The author is Gendun Choephel,
 The place of the composition is Mathura
 The difficult points of the original,
 Were explained by an old Brahmin,
 The naked instructions were provided by a Muslim girl.
 The root texts of this Treatise are the Indian *Shastras*,
 Rendered into Tibetan verses
 That are easy to understand. [Also see above]

From Gangjong Rigne

In his article the author tries to analyze GC's 'Tibetan Arts of Love' from a modern (even 'feminist') standpoint, in order to make the claim that GC was ahead of his time.

Quote 1: In India, every morning a women bows at the feet of her husband and marks her heart and forehead with vermillion, mixed with dust of his feet. In Nepal etc., even if a man forced a women to have a sex, at the end of the affair, the women would get up, touch her forehead to his feet and go away. In the same way, some say that widows are impure, even food cooked by them should not be taken. These are things told by merciless Brahmins. In ancient India, a widow used to jumps on the pyre of her dead husband and die. Those who can't die this way are treated as dead. That is the only reason, why a widow is impure. The followers of *Acharya Badhvarbi* maintain that there is nothing wrong to use another man's wife, except that of a Brahmin or Guru. This is a shameless dacoit, but in the past, the *shastras* [religious texts] were mostly written by Brahmins, and they always wrote the same.

Quote 2: Women are essential for private and public objectives, for a king to rule, the livelihood of a beggar etc., and for all big or small works. The world is vast like a desert. Due to the load of many tasks, a man is bound to be sad; the one, who can make him happy, is his girlfriend, and for him, she is like an incarnation, due to his own *karma*. She is the goddess of form that pleases those who see. She is the field, to produce noble offspring; she is a nurse, for those who suffer; a poet, to consol those in distress. At home, she is a mad servant for every work and she is the lifelong friend in love, pleasure and pain. A wife with *karmic* connection will have these qualities.

Quote 3: It is said that women are unreliable and engage in sexual misconduct. This is a totally false statement, because in the art of adultery both are equal partners. If minutely examined, men are far worse. A king, having thousand queens, is even acclaimed for this act of good quality. Just imagine if a woman were married with hundred men, how much she would be defamed, as if an impossible thing had happened! Thus in many countries, people with power and wealth have made various rules, according to their own wishes and branded them as morality. This suited the mind of the kings, and the scholars approved of it and followed. To contemplate on them means an endless sorrow. Therefore, we should not listen only to the highly publicized voice of like-minded people, but, on the basis of honest reason, we should express the truth as a neutral person.

GENDUN CHOEPHEL'S LETTERS TO RAHUL SANKRITYAYAN (1934-38)

Collection 'Library of Tibetan Works and Archives' (LTWA) and 'Amnye Machen Institute' (AMI), Dharamshala. I was kindly given access to the letters below through Tashi Tsering from AMI. The letters (postcards) are ordered by date. Except for the last letter to Rev. Babu Tharchin (1949), they were all written to Rahul Sankrityayan during the first period of GC's stay in India (1934-38).

Gytun Chhephel Gomang Lupum [Drepung 1934]

To the Arhat Rahula [Rahul Sankrityayan], whose egoless lion's roar resounds in ten directions. Although you have sent a message through a monk that I should come down [to Lhasa], I am sorry to inform you that I can't. I am studying scriptures right now, as I have to go to an examination at Loseling [one of the five colleges of Drepung monastery] on 28th of this month. I can only come down if it is really an important matter. Otherwise we can meet each other, when you come to the monastery early in sixth month. The *Abidharmakosa* and *Vinaya* examinations should begin from early this month, but it is still not decided. If you have anything else to say, send your message through the same man. [This letter was written shortly before GC joined Rahul on his expedition through Tibet in 1934]

Buddha Home in the Himalayas

Bhutia Busty [in Darjeeling], P.O. Darjeeling, India

Dated 6th July 2426/35

To Panchen Rahula, Omniscient in Five Sciences,

I am very happy to receive your letter here. I am currently in Darjeeling. Although I don't have any new Sanskrit teacher, I am studying texts, I have been taught before. I am also studying some English. Write to me about when you are coming back to India [from Japan, USSR etc.]. I think I will go to Magadha [near Bodhgaya] or Nepal to study Sanskrit under the *Brahmin* Sergyal and work a little in winter. I don't want to go to Tibet right now. Darjeeling is very cold, much more than Lhasa. Do send me some letters sometimes.

Gendun Choephel

To Panchen Rahula Sankrityayan,

I am very happy to know you have returned safely to Magadha [near Bodhgaya] after traveling in Japan, and USSR. I would really love to hear about what traditions [customs] and knowledge you found in these Eastern and Western parts of the world. I am with Jino Rasa in Darjeeling. Although it is a little difficult, but due to the free food and accommodation, given by him, I have been able to complete three to four books on English during summer. I have not been able to learn more Sanskrit, as there are no Sanskrit teachers here. If possible, I would like to study Sanskrit and English well for two or three more years in India. I have heard that maybe Geshe Sherab will come to India and return to his fatherland [in Northeast Tibet].

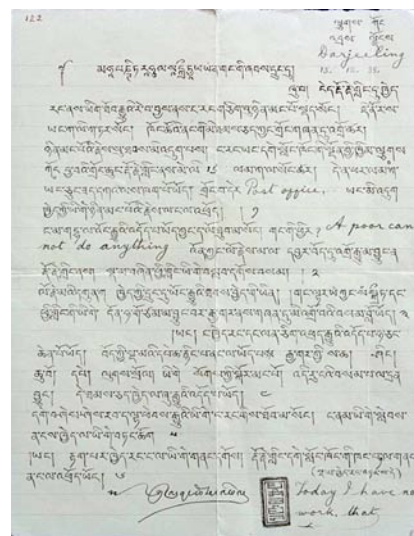
8/9/35

Darjeeling

15-12-35 (Image 32: The letter to Rahul Sankrityayan, India 1935)

To the Mahapandita Rahula Sankrityayan,

I stayed alone in Darjeeling for many days, waiting for a letter from you. Jino Rasa went to Calcutta. All his family members have also left for other places. After some days, I was left with no alternative, but to go to the small village of Chakung [in Sikkim], 15 miles from Darjeeling, where the *Bhikkhu* [monk: Jino Rasa] earlier stayed. The road leading to this place is not very good. There is also no post office here. I only received your letter after many days. I wanted to come to Magadha [near Bodhgaya], but I could not come this year. Why? *A poor cannot do anything* [written in English]. However next year if I cannot go to Tibet in summer, I have plans to study English



in Darjeeling like I did earlier. I will try to come to your place [?] in winter of next year. I have no plans to go to any other places, unless I have learned some Sanskrit and English. I really would like to meet you for once. I have remembered many names of Indian places, trees, rivers, proverbs, traditions, words, etc in old Tibetan texts and I would like to ask you about them. I have not received any letters from Geshe Sherab about him coming here [to Darjeeling] at present. I will write to you, when I get letter from him. Please do write letters regularly to me. Send your letters to the Darjeeling Bhikkhu address [Jino Rasa].

Gendun Choephel

To Panchen Rahula

I have dispatched a letter to your earlier. Presently I am in the small village of Chakung [in Sikkim]. This year I have not been able to go to Magadha [near Bodhgaya], as I have no money at all. I have plans to meet you next year. In India, I have not been able to do anything. Although I want to go to places, described in old texts like Ajanta, Mathura, and Sanchi, I could not, since I have no money. My plan to translate Shakuntala Natak (Bya len mo'i zlos gar) also came to naught. However I have no plans to return back to Tibet. Although I do want to return back to my fatherland [Amdo, East Tibet], I don't have any money. I am very sad. Money is the only god of this earth. By the generosity of Bhikkhu Jino Rasa, my English has improved a lot. I am going to do something to meet you next year. Geshe Sherab is not coming this year. If you send letters to me at the old Darjeeling address, they will reach me. After the Tibetan Losar [new year], I will be in Darjeeling. I want to ask you many questions about the history of texts. 14/1/36

Chakung [in Sikkim]

19/2/36

To Panchen Rahula,

I am very happy to know that you are in good health. I wrote four letters to you, one in English [See: English letter]. If I get this job in Patna, it will be very helpful. It is very difficult for me at present, since I have no money at all. I am learning English with the help of free food and lodging provided by Mr. Jino

Rasa. Right now, I am in a small village in Sikkim. I have plans to go to Darjeeling after one month. I am translating the *Ramayana* tale here. If you like the *Bya le mo* play, I would very much like to translate that also. I'm certain that if someone else translates it into Tibetan in the future, he will have great difficulty in rendering it in beautiful Tibetan. Kindly give the other letter to Samlo Geshe Rinpoche.

Please write letters regularly to me,

Yours Gendun Chopel

To Pandit Rahula [no date given, but also written in Chakung]

-SANSKRIT- [not translated]

If you come to India [from Tibet], it will be very helpful if you will bring a catalogue of all the sutras and commentaries [of the Buddhist texts] from India that had been translated and not translated into Tibetan.

Chakung, Sikkim

Sahu Bhajuratna Manihasajoti

GENERAL MERCHANTS AND GUHYA KOTHI

Dealers in Tibetan and Nepalese Brass and Copper Pots and Wares

Kalimpong 248/193 [24/8/1935?]

Great Rahula,

I am very happy to hear about you. I did send a letter to you earlier. I think you have received it by now. I have received many letters from Jino Rasa asking me to come to Darjeeling. However I have to stay here for some months. Write to me about where you are going.

Yours, Gendun Chopel

Darjeeling 31/3/26 [1936?]

Rahula Sankrityayan,

I sent one letter to you earlier, together with a letter to Samlo Geshe in Nepal [they met Samlo Geshe in Shigatse in 1934]. Did you receive that letter? Will you send me a reply soon? Do you plan to go to Lhasa? If yes, then bring any letter that Geshe Sherab [the former teacher of GC in Drepung] might write to me with you.

Gendun Chopel

Write back before you return. I am now in Darjeeling.

Y.M.B.A. School Bhutia Busty

Darjeeling, 29/5/36

Panchen Rahula,

I am sure you are enjoying good health. I have received a letter about Pandita Jigme Senge going to Tibet. I am with *Bhikkhu* [monk] Jino Rasa in Darjeeling, studying a little bit. When do you plan to come to India? Do you plan to come to Darjeeling? Do write to us. Have you found any other Sanskrit texts? Is Samlo Geshe okay?

Your humble friend, Gendun Chopel

Y.M.B.A. School [Young Men Buddhist Association]*Darjeeling, 12.8.36*

Panchen Rahula,

I received your letter. I am very surprised to learn that you have found many Sanskrit texts in Tibet and I am very happy to learn that Pramanavarttika's commentary has been found. I have great desire to meet you. You really must visit Darjeeling if you come to Kalimpong. It would be very good. Mr. Jino Rasa says this. Write to us before coming here. I am physically fine and am studying English. Now I can write something, although speaking is still very difficult. I would love to know, what these Sanskrit texts are, that you found in Tibet. Write to us about when you are coming and by which road.

Yours Gendun Chopel

[In 1936, Rahul was on another expedition to Tibet without GC]

Darjeeling*Bhotia Busty, 30-10-26 [1936?]*

To Panchen Rahula,

I have received your letter from Tashilhunpo [Shigatse in Tibet]. Send me a letter immediately once you are in Gangtok [Sikkim]. It is difficult for me to come to Gangtok. Mr. Jino Rasa also won't be able to come. If you send the letter on time, it will help me, when I reach Siliguri. Mention the date very clearly. I have sent one letter to you by hand through Gyaltshan Kazi.

Yours Gendun Chopel

C/o Mr. Tharchin [editor of 'Tibet Mirror']*Mackenzie Cottage, Kalimpong, 1.4.1937*

Panchen Rahula,

I hope you are fine. I have decided to stay in Kalimpong after arriving here. Did you get travel permission from the USSR? What other places are you planning to visit? Do write. My address is as mentioned above. I have nothing more to say.

Yours Gendun Chopel

To Panchen Rahula [1938, after the second expedition with Rahul?]

By your kindness, I am very happy in Sewan [?], but I am not able to do any work here. I have been given a Sanskrit teacher here, but since we both don't know a common language, it is very difficult to even learn a single word. Now I am learning some English by using Bell Sahib's book [Sir Charles Bell, former Political Officer]. There is no other way. I want to visit Jetavana Grove, but you were not able to come. I want to ask so many questions to you, but now the heat is coming within a month [in late Spring?] and I won't be able to stay at all. The Ponpo also has so much work now that he has not been able to learn any Tibetan. He told me that he will send some letters to his relatives in Calcutta if I want to go to Calcutta on the way to Darjeeling and I really want to do this [therefore GC must be South of Calcutta]. However I have no money to go to Darjeeling from there. What should I do? Can I sell *Ri metog tsa*? I want to meet you before that. Send me a letter soon. The heat is around the corner. Ponpo is treating me very well. He

said, I could go to Darjeeling during the summer and come here [Sewan] during the winter. I really want to stay here for two or three years to study Sanskrit in this part of India. Please help me to make this possible.

From Gendun Chopel

Did my text from Gyantse reach Patna?

GC'S LAST LETTER (to Rev. Babu Tharchin)

17th 8th day of the 2nd month in Lhasa [probably 1949]

To the knowledgeable and pioneering Tharchin-la [the editor of the 'Tibet Mirror' in Kalimpong],

I would very much appreciate if you could include a few words of my gratefulness to the Tibetan Government for releasing me on the 28th day of the 9th month, in one corner of your newspaper. I am also grateful to all my friends here and there. Kindly write my name as *Amdo* Gendun Chopel and not *Geshe* Gendun Chopel.

With countless *salaam*

Letter to Rahul Sankrityayan (English), part 1

124

Chakung
Sikkim

1. 2. 36

Rev. Rahula ^{འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷན་པོ་}

I have received your kind letter on 5/2/36 and I am very sorry to hear that you were sick, but it must be a good luck to regain your health now. I also sent three letters to you before, and long to see you very much, but I was not able to do with my will, for I am not blessed with the white God, and now it is drawing nigh the hot season. I had nothing to do here, so I learned some English since last year. Now I am able to write some words hardly, but my pronunciation is still worse, as English is the opposite to འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷན་པོ་.

I have been translating the important text of Ramayan with Mr. Norgya who knows three language well. If it will be finished, I think it must be a help to know many roots of old འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷན་པོ་ clearly.

And still I long most to translate འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷན་པོ་ with the help of your honour, and I can promise to make it as beautiful line as a great Tibetan poet has done, and never defile your bright fame. Please let me know how is your health now. I am keeping quite well. With my

(Image 33: Original English letter to Rahul Sankrityayan, frontpage)

heartly Namaskar. I remain
yours sincerely.
U. Prasanna Kumar

Now a days I am living at Chaking the
village where neither post office nor
bazar, ^{of Sikkim} but I think to go to Darjeeling
after this month. Please write me
from time to time.

As you know our ^{འཕགས་ལྷན་པོའི་མཉམ་སྐྱོད་པོ་} who lived
at ^{མུ་ལ་ལ་} Muru Lasa. Perhaps he may come
to India and then go to China

I sent him some story about ^{འཕགས་ལྷན་པོའི་མཉམ་སྐྱོད་པོ་} Δ and δ
in Ashoka's letter and he was very
very pleased.

(Image 34: Original English letter to Rahul Sankrityayan, backpage)

GENDUN CHOEPHEL'S LETTERS TO HIS MOTHER AND FRIENDS IN AMDO

During my research for the film (1998-2002) it was frequently mentioned that GC had written quite a number of letters from India to his mother and his friends in Labrang Monastery. Only the two first ones have survived in the original (Anonymous. Copy with the author). The rest of the letters below were quoted from memory to Dorje Gyal, who included them in his biography of GC (In: Dorje Gyal. dGe-'dun chos-'phel. N.p., Kan-su'u Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang. Rebkong 1997).

Letter to his mother 1 (1936)

(Image 35: The letter to his mother, India 1936).

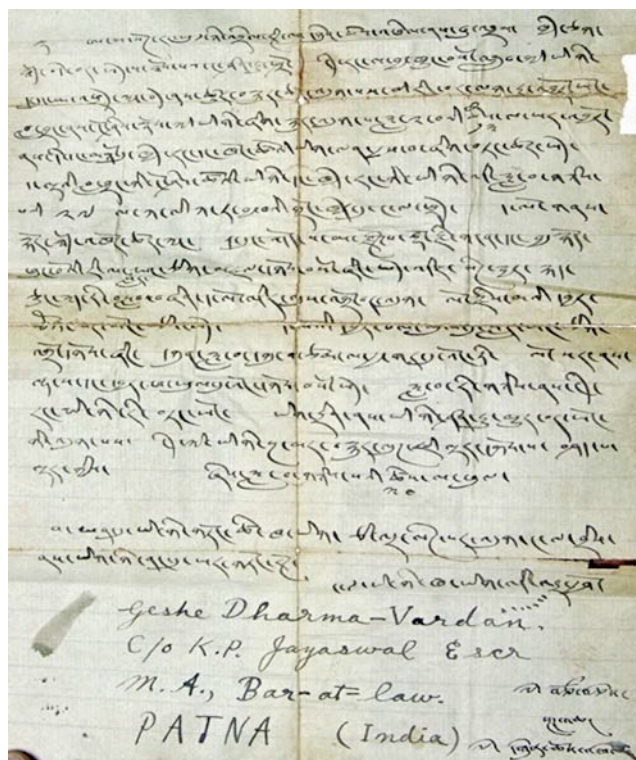
Dear Mother and all relatives, I am very happy to hear that all of you are well. I have not yet received Jakhyung Samdup's letter, but as it has already been sent from Tibet, I shall receive it shortly. I have received a letter from my acquaintances of Labrang [monastery] on the 13th of the second month. And along with the reply to it, I have sent you a detailed letter. The letter from Labrang and your letter were delivered to me at a city called Calcutta on 27th of the second month. This year, I have covered all the pilgrimage centers, but my desire, still being unfulfilled, I am thinking of going again to Bodhgaya and Girdhakuta. Here, as I am learning a bit of Sanskrit, I will remain for this year. In summer next year, I plan to come down [home]. This summer, I have to go to Nepal once more and shall be back in India in the ninth winter month. By Losar, I shall be in Lhasa and in the summer, I'm thinking of coming home. After every one or two months, I shall send you a letter. Send your letters in the same way as I have instructed before.

Yours, The Tantric Gendun Chophel.

Dated: 30th of the second month. [1936]

[Together with the letter, GC had sent a photograph of himself. On the backside of it were following words in his own handwriting: 'From Gendun Choephel, photo taken in Bengal at the age of 34, in the year of 1936. This is the photo that I have put in the cover of the book 'Dentam Nawai Chuelen'.']

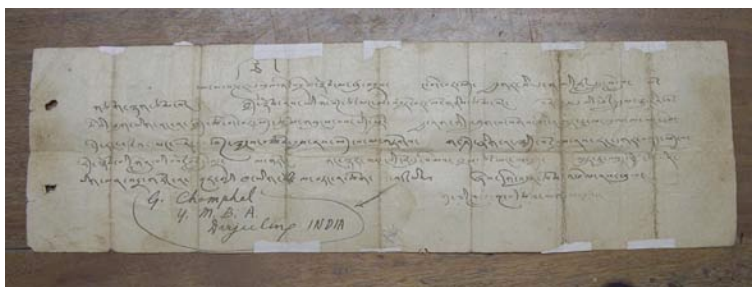
(Image 36: A portrait of GC in India 1936)



Letter to his mother 2 (1942/43)

Dear Mother and all close relatives and friends, I am well.

(Image 37: Original letter to his mother). It is now over a year that I have reached the Indian island of Ceylon [Sri Lanka]. However,



news of your well being in Mipham Tulku Rinpoche's letter has comforted me. If the fightings etc in China becomes peaceful, I shall definitely return home quickly. Here [in India], I am persevering my studies. So don't have the foolish notion that I am just enjoying somewhere. Anyway, don't worry at all on my account. We shall surely meet soon. You may reply to my letter on the old address.

Yours, Gendun Chopel [1942/43]

Letter to his friends in Labrang (1940's)

In: Dorje Gyal. dGe-'dun chos-'phel. N.p., Kan-su'u Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang. Rebkong 1997.

The karma of previous births, is like the air-horse, without any definite course,

I am a Tibetan boy, born in Tibet; part of my life has passed in India.

For a cycle of 12 years, I could not see the nice place of my birth,

I could not see my mother, who was specially kind to me,

To think of this makes me nervous.

From the long Silk Route of the North, to the Great Ocean of the South,

This seems like the journey of a courageous man,

But it is the cause of discouragement for me.

Letter to Gendun Gyatso in Labrang (1940's)

In: Dorje Gyal. dGe-'dun chos-'phel. N.p., Kan-su'u Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang. Rebkong 1997.

I didn't take a lovely wife, while I was young.

I had not accumulated needed wealth, when I was old.

I had the life of a beggar, along with my pen.

It makes me feel sad.

Letter to the *geshes* [erudite monks] of Labrang [1940's]

In: Dorje Gyal. dGe-'dun chos-'phel. N.p., Kan-su'u Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang. Rebkong 1997.

An octagonal box with small wheels,

When rotated by a single person,

The earth trembles even beyond 20 miles.
Don't you think this is wonderful, but untrue?
Oh, that is not the only thing wonderful [here in India]

Even an old man over 80 years,
By the removal of a tiny gland,
He can be made 20 years younger.
Don't you think this is wonderful, but untrue?
Oh, that is not the only thing wonderful.

In the empty outer space without earth,
High speed electrical messages can be sent over 10'000 miles,
Don't you think this is wonderful, but untrue?
Oh, that is not only thing wonderful.
A white beam, as fine as the hair of a horse's tail,
Dispatched from a far-off place,
Can grasp huge machines,
Don't you think this is wonderful, but untrue?
Oh, that is not the only thing wonderful.

A NEW IDEA WHICH SPRUNG UP UPON VISITING INDIA (I)

August 1936, Vol. 8/6

Until now, we have all been thinking that since from the time of the Buddha to the time when Thumi [Thomni Sambhota, 7th century] created the Tibetan script, the letters that were always used in Central India were *Lantsa* and *Wartu*. Here are the earlier (Indian script) and later (Tibetan *Uchen* script) letters, which do differ greatly (for the letters of the alphabet, see the letter-shapes in lines 3-5 in this article). If this is hold as a mere imagination that is not the case. In many stone pillars, which were erected during the time of the Religious King Ashoka [in India], soon after the *parinirvana* of the Buddha, and in stone inscriptions, which can be found in many places like Varanasi, Kalingka and Girinagar only this kind of letter-shapes [as seen above], are found, and these can be seen even nowadays. In the outer surface of a Buddha, hidden in the time of *Ajatashatru*, and on the ruined stupas, which were built before the time of the great Hearers, solely this kind of letter-shapes can be discerned. Moreover, in the hundreds of old immaculate [Buddhist] *sutras* and treatises, which were translated in Tibet, there are traces of these letter-shapes. For example, in the *Vinaya* scripture, there is a bow shape like the letter *ta* (inverted) which is articulated as a retroflex sound. The mentioned letter *ta* also resembles the letter *ta* of *Lantsa* and *Wartu* [see letters written on l.12]. Even though these do not actually resemble a bow, in the ancient letters, the letter *ta* greatly resembled the shape of a bow. (Also in the commentary of the *Saraswati Vyakarana* in 'dzamri jor la'o' the letter *dza* is being written like this: [see letter shape in l.14]. This letter resembles the letter *dza* of the above written alphabet, but has only been written turned downwards. The triangle shaped letter *e* (this letter *e*), which can repeatedly be seen in scriptures like the *Mahakala Tantra*, resembles the letter *e* of the above script. (...) For example, the letter *ra* has the shape of a vibrating tongue and the letters *ta* (inverted), *da* (inverted) and *dha* (inverted), have the shape of bending the tongue, and the letters *pa*, *pha*, *ba* and *ma*, clearly have the shape of closing the mouth. Furthermore, the many representations of *ewam*, which are found in the tantras there, is also the marvelous way of writing it with the ancient script [as shown in l.21). In short, in the old immaculate *sutras* and treatises, the way of discussing about the letter-shapes, relates to this script. When an honest person examines this, he will come to understand. —By Dharma [GC]

A NEW IDEA WHICH SPRUNG UP UPON VISITING INDIA (II)

September 1936, Vol. 8/7

Gradually the shapes of the letters underwent changes. The letters, written on a copper plate, in the time of King *Kumaragupta*, who lived during the same century as Thumi [Thonmi Sambhota, 7th century], appear like this: (see column one, l.7 'Namo Mahadeva' = 'To the name of the Great God') and also the letters *kha*, *tsa*, *dza*, *tha*, *ra*, *la*, *sha* and *sa* are written, as shown here. There is no doubt that this script appears identical to the Indian script from which Thumi took model, on creating the Tibetan script. Moreover, also, as for the character, written in the beginning of the script (see l. 14), can be understood to have its model in the long *Oom*. The long *Oom* is the origin of all phenomena, and the Brahmins [highest

Indian caste of priests] always attach *Om* in the beginning of their *mantras*. The *Om* in the beginning of the script was written like this: (see l.19) and the long *Oom* like this: (see l.20). These days, also, when writing *Om*, the Hindus can be noticed to use only this way of writing it. These observations are very inspiring for sincere scholars and they have not been discussed earlier in Tibet. I have strived to write this down and wish to later engage in further studies of examining, how the letters were written in ancient times in Tibet. These words hardly appeal to the ears of some jealous and biased persons, but as intelligent persons, one more clever than the others, do appear continuously after one another on this earth, soon, all intelligent persons will come to believe in my words. —By Dharma [GC]

AN ACROSTICAL POEM

October, November 1936, Vol. 8/8

Wherever it may be, whoever it may be,
 In Calcutta, in Nepal, In Beijing
 Or in Lhasa, in the Land of Snows,
 If I observe them, all men show the same behavior,
 When they see tea, butter, and clothing.
 Even those who dislike noise and chatter,
 Whose manners are calm and disciplined,
 Think no differently from an old fisherman.
 Proud and dirty nobles enjoy praise and flattery,
 As for the common folk, they enjoy tricks and cheating.
 Youths like games and the delights of love.
 And now, nearly everyone enjoys beer and tobacco.
 People are attached to their families,
 They hate and reject those of another origin.
 For me, the brute nature of all human beings
 Is the same as that of a bull!
 They go to Tsari on pilgrimage for fame.
 They [monks?] practice the difficult mastery of heat and cold
 To get their food,
 They recite the words of the Conqueror [Buddha] for some reward.
 If one thinks closely on this subject,
 Everything is done for the benefit one gains.
 For me, hats, robes, banners and thrones,
 Sacrificial cakes, offerings of food and drink,
 All these rituals, which we carry out,
 Are nothing, but a gorgeous parade.
 Although there is no happiness,

Neither in the valleys nor on the mountaintop,
 We have no choice, but to remain on this earth,
 As in the stable or in the cocoon,
 Until this illusory body of flesh and blood disappears.
 'Adzi!' Such openness will irritate everyone!

© Heather Stoddard (translator)

THE EVER-RISING EGO

May 1937, Vol. 9/1

The 'ego' has the desire to attempt to do something different from the rest of the world all the time. In olden days if there was a king, everyone considered him a leader. Some regions had only one king. From a certain period, the 'king'-title bearers increased, and they started commanding less respect. During the days of Buddha, the greatest of kings was called *maharaja* or the 'Great King'. The *sutras* [Buddhist texts] talk about Maharaja Prasenajit. Then, the 'maharaja'-title bearers also increased. During the rule of the Guptas [an Indian dynasty, 4th century], some of the great kings were called, *Maharaja-di-raja* or 'a king even greater than a maharaja'. Some kings, including Harshavardhana, also assumed this title. He was called, *Maharaja-di-raja*. (Image 39: Tibet Mirror: The Ever-rising Ego. Illustrations by GC).

Similar is the case with the ornaments of different regions

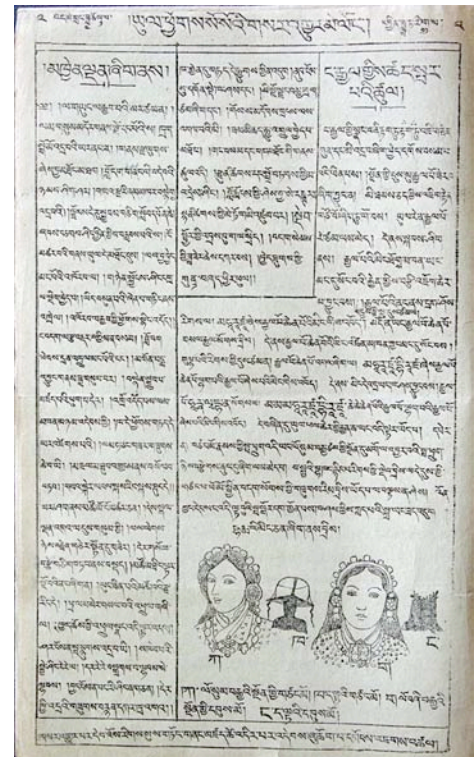
[in Tibet]. For instance, the *spa phrug* [headdress] of Tsang women was a small double-stacked *spa phrug* close to the head, some three hundred years ago. This can be seen, by looking at the drawings of males, females and patrons in the old mural paintings of the Sakya Monastery. However these days, wearing such *spa sgor* [worn by Tsang women], creates the impression that one is becoming bald. –
 Written by Dharma [GC]

Caption: Ka. A Tsang lady, three hundred years ago

Caption: Kha. A present day Tsang lady

Caption: Ga. An U lady, four hundred years ago

Caption: Nga. A present day U lady



LHASA AND RASA: *LA* AND *RA*

June 1937, Vol. 9/2

In the colloquial speech of many countries [India, Tibet and China], the letters *la* and *ra* are alternative with each other. In times before, also in the middle of India, *ra* was pronounced as *la*. In many inscriptions of the *dharma* [Buddhist] king Ashoka, instead of calling the king as *ra dza*, this word has been written as *la dza*. Instead of *Rahula*, the name of son of Buddha (*tib. Dracen Dzin*), has been written as *Lahula*. Also these days, the Chinese are pronouncing *la* as *ra*. Judging on this, in any of the earlier sources, manuscripts and old histories, the name of *Lhasa* and *Lhasa's* temples, cannot be found at all, but only, spelled as in *Rasa thrulnang* temple and *Rasa Ramoche* temple. I think that the sound of the word, has been adjusted to the needs of pronunciation from *Rasa* to *Lasa* and then gradually to *Lhasa* and *Lhaden* (The One Having Gods). For instance, likewise, also the name of the Samye temple was earlier written as *Zan yang*, which is Chinese language, but these days it is being written as *bSam yas*. Also in Tibetan language there are many cases of *la* changing into *ra*: these days, in some places, *selpo* (clear) is being pronounced as *sarpo* and so on. Please let us know if you can find any other reason for this. —
Written by Dharma [GC]

THE ROUND AND GLOBULAR WORLD

June 1938, June 23, 10/1, p. 11

Before, in the old continent [Europe] and also in other foreign countries, according to the unscientific way of thinking, the world was hold to be flat, and there was not even one, who would say that the world was round. Also in the old religions of the various countries, the world is described solely as being flat and not at all as round. Therefore, when some intelligent people, for the first time, suggested the world to be round, they were exposed to various difficulties, such as burning alive on fire, in order that this kind of speech would not spread any further. However, finally, the splendor of truth gained victory and all people came to believe the world to be round. Now, not only the fact that world is round is beyond doubt, but also the scholars in the developed countries are confident, as to the matters, such as the measurement of this entire world, including that of the smallest continent of 4-5 *pagtse* [Tibetan measurement].

There is not even one Buddhist in countries such as Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Japan and China, who would hold it false that the world is round. However, in our country of Tibet, we still stubbornly state that the world cannot be round. Some speak childish nonsense that, when the foreigners sail on boats to the ocean, they will get lost there. Even though some sensible people understand the matter, they are afraid of what the others will say, and it appears to me that they remain unable to express their thoughts openly. Even those European scholars – who were extremely obstinate and did not believe in things, they couldn't actually see – could not remain against this theory [the world being round], but had had to accept it. It is needless to say that this obstinacy of ours will lead nowhere.

If argued that the Buddha said the world to be flat, to hold it as round wouldn't create any harm of even the size of a tip of a needle for adhering to the scriptures. Moreover, as for adhering to the scriptures, most of the sermons of the Buddha are said to be in accordance with the thoughts of the sentient beings. In this case we do not know, whether the matter should be understood directly or be interpreted. Even important matters, as emptiness and the stages of the path to liberation, are taught in such a way that it conveyed direct meaning, in order to suit the intellectual capacity of the sentient beings. (...) It is said that during the life-time of the Buddha, he found that the manner in which some of his monks were eating, was not acceptable to the then prevailing customs [in India], hence he imposed new rules. Since in that period [time of Buddha], the world was commonly hold to be flat, even though the Buddha would have claimed it to be round – who would have listened to him? Even if he had insisted on it, it wouldn't have made sense, even had he shown it as a miraculous appearance.

Nowadays, when millions of people precisely know the matter [the world being round], some would still hold them to be mistaken. It is certain that they wouldn't believe in our words, saying that it was only a 'magic trick' of Buddha. Therefore, it is better to believe in the world that we actually see with our eyes, than in the world described in the scriptures. — Written by *Drangpo Dharma* ('Honest Dharma') [GC]

THE IMPORTANCE OF A POLITICAL HISTORY OF TIBET

November 1938, Vol. 10/3

In ancient times it was certain that Tibet had a long and detailed history of Kings. Later, most of our people neglected the established dates and interesting royal lineages of Tibet. Instead they were carried away by fascinating stories, such as a million temples were built in one day; or, the globe is toured in one hour. Due to this, our history and royal lineages were transformed into 'rays of light' [miraculous stories]. Apart from general informations, such as King Songtsen Gampo was born in the Iron Horse Year, it [Tibetan history] did not specifically mention the exact date, year etc., on which certain actions were performed in chronological order, like the dynasties of Kings in China and *Tazig* [Persia]. At present, some information [on Tibetan history] can be found in books, such as the 'Red Annals' by Tsalpa, the 'Blue Annals' by Goeloe and the 'Choejung' by Buton. The little detailed account of the royal lineages [of Tibet] in the 'Red Annals' was translated from the 'History of Kings' from China. In the 'Blue Annals' the history of Tibet is described in not more than five to six pages. In the 'Choejung', significant information, such as both, the emperor and his son, took an oath not to bring harm to the [Buddhist] religion, was reproduced word by word from the original text. (...) Amongst the historical accounts of other countries, containing information about Tibet, the accounts of China, were the most detailed. It was believed that the accounts of *Tazig* [Persia] also contained a lot of information [on Tibet]. Some of the ancient stone pillars and inscriptions, standing in Samye [monastery], Lhasa, Shol [near the Potala Palace in Lhasa] and other places, might become damaged and effaced. Many of these pillars were struck by stones [some kids throwing stones at them]. Thus, the Kings' names were effaced from the Lhasa pillar that was built during the time of *Tri Ralpachan*. As the words on these pillars were not reproduced in any other historical

records to this day, it would be a great loss if any [further] damage was done to these pillars in the near future. On the pillar standing at *Shol*, it is mentioned that taxes were collected from China, after the wars [against China] were won, during the reign of *Trisong Detsen*.

[This article is proof that GC's interest for Tibetan history dates back to at least as early as 1938, if not even earlier. Interestingly, in his article, GC already stressed that Tibet was once so strong, as to even extract taxes from China!]

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE EXECUTION OF OATH TAKING BETWEEN CHINA AND TIBET
& THE FORTRESS OF KING PALPACHEN AS RECORDED IN THE CHINESE TEXT *T'ANG-CHEN GANG-MU*

July 1943, Vol. 12/12

At one time [9th century], the Chinese Imperial messenger Li Yun-t'u (*Li-yun-tu*) came to Central Tibet. The summer palace of the Tibetan King Tri Ralpachan was found located on the northern side of River Tsangpo (*gTsang-po*). Massive wooden fences surrounded the King's palace. Long spears, hundred in all, were fixed every ten step inside the premise. The fence had three gates, with each standing a hundred steps apart. An army camp was set up inside the fenced area. Guards clad in armory suit and army officers donning tiger skins were found guarding the gates. Priests wearing crow-shaped headgear and tiger-skin at their waist were found playing ritual instruments like cymbals, et cetera. [Brackets by GC] (I wonder if the sentries were meant to guard the palace from human intruders; and the priests, non-humans). At the gates, visitors were properly checked for any weapons before letting them in. There was an elevated area inside the fenced palace, wherein lies 'the Precious Platform (*bang-rim rin-po-che*).' Further inside was the gold-fenced enclosure where dwells the Tibetan King. In front of the King stand sculptured images of various animals, such as tigers, leopards, wild-oxen, and horses. The King, dressed in a dark-brown costume, was seen sporting a golden sword at his waist. To the right side of the king, sits the chief minister. The other ministers sat on a lower level in a descending order.

When the imperial [Chinese] messenger arrived at the palace, the chief minister came to conduct the oath-taking ceremony, after which a grand banquet was organized on the right side of the palace. The manner of offering food and beer had semblance of the Chinese tradition. The tableware used was mostly imported from China. Many songs of foreign origin were sung during the musical entertainment [at the banquet]. Military songs of the *Ch'ing* dynasty were also played during the event. [The *Ch'ing* dynasty was one of the oldest among Chinese dynasties, and is dated as early as the time of Buddha Shakyamuni].

The platform reserved for the oath-taking ceremony was ten footsteps in width and length, and twelve footsteps in height. The Chinese envoy sat on a seat higher than the other ten ministers, accompanying him. In front of the platform, sat more than a hundred Tibetan kings of smaller principalities. A wide sheet of cloth covered the platform. Then the Tibetan minister stood up and pronounced the oath, which was then translated in other languages to the gathering by a minister sitting near to him. Horses, cattle,

and sheep were slaughtered and their limbs severed into pieces. The internal and external anatomical parts were taken out, and blood was applied to the lips of all those present, except the high ministers. It was then sworn that, whosoever may commit a breach in the oath, be slain like those slaughtered animals. Having taken the oath according to the Tibetan tradition, everyone then proceeded to the temple to conduct the oath in a Buddhist way. The people present drank the blessed water in the temple, and after the completion of the oath-taking ritual, exchanged good-will sentiments amongst themselves. The Chinese messenger then took the written pledge and left for Ta-hsua Chuan (*Ta-sya-chon*) to see Minister Zhang Tagtsen (*Zhang stag-btsan*). The Minister summoned hundreds of his army chiefs and showing the written document, ordered that everyone safeguard their own jurisdiction and does not wage any aggressive assault on other kingdoms. During conversations that took place between Zhang Tagtsen and the Chinese envoy, Tagtsen said, 'the region of Hor is very small. Earlier, I proceeded towards Hor to subdue and bring it under Tibet's domain. However, when I was just a four-day distance from the capital, I received the news of the King's death. And therefore, I had to retreat. As they lack the power and might to invade other kingdoms, why do you Chinese feel terrified by them?'

Although a childish person treats with no importance

The precious gem of truth,

Whose hue remain unchanged by critical comments,

The value of its greatness still remains at its core.

(To be continued in next month's issue...)

THE CUSTOMARY OATH TAKING CEREMONY BETWEEN CHINA AND TIBET & THE CONQUERING OF THE CHINESE IMPERIAL CAPITAL BY TIBETAN FORCES)

August 1943, Vol. 11/12

The domain of the Tibetan empire was greatest during the reign of Tridhe Tsugtsen (*Khri-sde gtsug-btsan*) and Trisong Detsen (*Khri-srong lde'u-btsan*). Then, China sent 50,000 rolls of brocade to the Tibetan king every year. Tibetans considered it as tax, while the Chinese saw it as gift. However, the custom of sending offerings stopped, when Emperor Wang Te'i-wang (*Wang-the-wang*) ascended the throne. In the ninth month of the Tibetan Hor calendar, Minister Taktra Lukong (*sTag-sgra klu-gong*) led a Tibetan force of 100,000 and captured the Chinese town of Lin-chou (*Lin-jo*), Hei-chou (*He-jo*), and Hsin-chou (*Jin-chou*). The same winter, the Tibetan force reached the Chinese Imperial capital Ch'ang-an [modern Xian]. The Emperor and the ministers fled to Shin-chou (*Shin-cu*). The Tibetans then extended their rule over the city, and later appointed Li-chin-hu (*Li-chen-hu*) of the Pin clan in the Emperor's place. The forces however remained in the capital [of Xian] for fifteen days, during which they resorted to plundering and looting, thereby driving the city to the edge of complete destruction. At the end, the force left for Tibet. Ensuingly, the Emperor returned and seized the throne. These events occurred in the ninth and tenth years of King Trisong Detsen's rule. (Gedun Choephel: *As these accounts sound new to our*

ears, we may find it hard to accept. However, identical accounts of this event are being recorded in the Chinese annals and the Shol pillar in Lhasa)

In the following years, Tibet and China drew an agreement of reconciliation. The Tibetan minister Zhang Getsen (*Zhang-dge-btsan*) and the Chinese chief Jang-yi (*Byang-yi*) made promises on the banks of the river Ts'un-zhi (*Tsun-zhi*). Lan-chou (*Lan-jo*), The-chou (*The-jo*), Yan-chou (*Yan-jo*) and Hei-chou (*He-jo*) were brought under Tibet's domain; and the mountain range known as He-lan (He-lan) was used as demarcation between Tibet and China.

Then, a great upheaval took place in China, during the 31st regnal year of [the Tibetan] King Trisong Detsen. The Tibetan minister Manglu (*Mang-lu*) led a force and assisted the Chinese minister Hsuan-tsang (*Hun-zan*) in guarding the Imperial capital. During that time, an epidemic spread in China, resulting in the withdrawal of the Tibetan force from China. In return for the safeguarding the Chinese capital from imminent invasions, four provinces including Chin-chou (*Cin-jo*) and Lin-chou (*Lin-jo*) were promised to Tibet. However, when the battle drew to an end, the emperor, not willing to give away the provinces, presented 10,000 scrolls of brocade each to the Tibetan minister Zhang Getsen and minister Manglu. With the Tibetans offended and infuriated by this act, Zhang Getsen, leading a mighty force of Tibetans, waged a massive assault and captured Yan-chou (*Yan-jo*) and Sha-chou (*Sha-jo*). They plundered the wealth of the people residing on the borders, thus leaving them impoverished. Then the emperor sent his envoy Ts'u-han (*Tsu-han*) with a message, asking why Zhang Getsen immorally captured Sha-chou and Yan-chou out of disregard for the treaty drawn between Tibetan and China. Getsen replied: 'Although, you promised to give four of your provinces, you did not keep to your words. I therefore came to this place. Besides this, I have a matter to settle with the chief of Yun-san province over not receiving my messenger with due honor. It's been quite some time, since I came here, but to my displeasure, no Chinese envoy was sent to receive me. For your knowledge, the chieftains of Sha-chou and Yan-chou took to flight, not because we waged a forceful aggression, but out of fear for the mighty force. If the Emperor accepts to make another promise, we are willing to return the province of Sha-chou and Yan-chou. When pledging by the bank of river Ts'un-zhi, because there were not many Chinese representatives, the parties did not observe the pact seriously. Hereafter, a high-ranking Chinese minister and twenty-one representatives must be sent to witness the procedure of making treatises. Army General Tu-hsi-tsou (*Tu-si-tso*) of Lin-chou and Army General Li-kuan (*Li-kvan*) of Tsun-an (*Tsu-'an*) should be sent, as they command great respect amongst the foreigners.' Getsen then said: 'As the geographical location of Tsun-zhi is not favorable, we shall meet at Tu-lei-shu (*Tu-le-zhu*) to sign the treaty.'

At that time, as army generals of Lin-chou and Tsun-an were sent on a mission to other places, the Chinese emperor sent Hsuan-tsang, with the palace caretaker Ts'u-han (*Tsu-han*) as his assistant, on the eve of the treaty. They decided to sign the treaty in the fifth month of the year. When the Chinese gathered to discuss the forthcoming treaty, Ma'u-lang (*Ma-yu-lang*) said: 'The Tu-lei-zhu is in a very narrow valley with dense forests and high mountains, the Chinese force might face the danger of being ambushed and surrounded by the Tibetan armies. Therefore it is safer to meet at the wide plains of F'un-

lang (*Phun-lang*).¹ They all agreed to this, and further consulted Zhang Getsen for a date. They agreed that during the oath-taking ceremony, a force of one thousand strong soldiers from each side shall guard the area, while only four hundred people will be allowed to witness the oath-taking rites from inside the fenced area. It was also decided that military drills by both the forces, shall be presented on the D-day.

When the oath-taking day was near, the Tibetan minister Zhang Getsen gathered a force of 30,000 to the northern side of the venue. Initially, he sent four spies to the Chinese encampments. The Chinese General also sent spies to the Tibetan base, but were unfortunately held hostage by the Tibetans. The Chinese Chief Hsuan-tsang was completely unaware of this incident. Later, when the Tibetans requested Hsuan-tsang to dress up and to carry his sword, the Chinese dispersed to their respective tents to dress up for the occasion. That very moment, a violent signal was made from the clanging of cymbals, to which the armies rose up with whistling roars. Not knowing the reason, Chief Hsuan-tsang, out of terrible fear, rode a horse with no reins and saddle. The Tibetan armies pursued him from behind and shot arrows that fell like showers. However, he was successful in tying a rein to the horse and finally reached safely at the military base of Lo-yun Kuan (*Lo-yun bkwan*). The Army chief Xin-chuan (*Zin-con*) led the force to a base from where they fought the Tibetans till their last arrow. They then fell into the hands of their enemies. Chief Han-yun (*Han-yun*) and Sun-ping (*Zun-phing*) were killed in the battle. Minister Chu-han (*Cu-han*), Jan-shu-chi (*Jan-zhu-ci*) and the imperial secretary Yuan-thon-ji (*Yun-thon-ji*) were held hostages. Sixty other Chinese army officials, including Phyu-yi-chu (*Phu-yi-cu*), Mo-nin (*Mo-nyin*), Men-shi (*Men-zhi*), Li-chi-yen (*Li-ci-yen*), Lo-yan-min (*Lo-yan-min*), Phan-te (*Phan-te*) and Ma-yen (*M'a-yen*) were captured by the Tibetans. Five hundred Chinese armies were killed and more than a thousand were held hostage. When the Tibetans were about to kill the [Chinese] minister Ts'u-han, he said: 'I am the friend of minister Zhang Getsen. So if you kill me, you all will die at the hand of Zhang Getsen.' He was thus saved. Ts'u-han had met Trisong on two different occasions. The Tibetans placed a log, each on the back of the Chinese, and tied the end of their braided hair to it, and then they were taken away. During the night, the sentries unrolled a carpet on the Chinese hostages, and lied down on them to rest. The Tibetans then left for Gu-yan (*Gu-yan*). There, the Tibetans took the hostages and presented them to Minister Zhang Getsen. Getsen, with a smile on his face, ordered that shackles tied around the neck of Ts'u-han be removed. He then scolded the other hostages. He said: 'With the support of us Tibetans, Army General Hsuan-tsang was successful in guarding the capital and vanquishing the enemy force. We were promised many things in return, however, it never happened and we were deceived. We then thought of capturing Hsuan-tsang and taking him to our King, but unfortunately he escaped. There is no reason for keeping you as prisoner, so I am releasing you all.'

It is also held that Getsen initially planned to attack the capital city of the Chinese empire, but when his mission failed, he diverted it to the arresting of General Hsuan-tsang.

THE ZENITH OF THE TIBETAN EMPIRE DURING THE TIME OF THE EARLY KINGS

September 1943, Vol. 12/2

One thousand and two hundred years have passed from the time of King Trisong Detsen's (*Khri-srong lde'u-btsan*) accession to the throne up to this year of Sheep [1943]. During that time, Kan-chou (*Kan-jo*), Lan-chou (*Lan-jo*), Wei-chou (*Be-jo*) and Yunnan (*Yu-nan*) were under the control of Tibet. During the reign of Namru Songtsen (*gNam-ru srong-btsan*), even Nepal was under Tibet's domain. Following the death of the Indian King Harsha, Tibetan forces arrived and held Arjuna, the king of Magdha, as hostage. Then, nearly three hundred families from northern India were subjected to Tibetan rule, although the subjection, however, did not seem to have lasted for long. Khotan [in Central Asia] was brought under Tibet from the time of King Songtsen Gampo, who later set up the five divisional districts of Thongkhyab (*mThong-khyab*).

*In the ring of snow mountain, the Spontaneously Arisen One,
Entwined with the conch-like ribs of two-fold system with method and wisdom,
This kingdom created by the emanations of the three great Bodhisattavas
Extend towards the four directions.
Who can measure the expanse of this vast and great kingdom.*

Although the religious deeds of the great Kings were extensively explained in many Tibetan historical texts, their political exploits still remain unclear. Therefore, I have here tried to relate these [secular] aspects based on some new historical findings. If possible, I will write more in the next month's issue.

NO TITLE

A copy of a letter sent to the newspaper by Geshe Gendun Choephel many years ago. No original, December 1950 (Jubilee No. 19/1-2, December 1950 - January 1951, p. 13.)

To the widely learned Tharchin,

I am happy that you are well, and recently I received your letter and the newspaper [an issue of the 'Tibet Mirror']. It is very good news that 'The All Seeing Panchen Lama' takes a liking in your newspaper. I pray that soon, also here in Tibet, we will be able to read about the daily happenings in our own language; even if we don't hear about the events 'on the seven golden mountains and seven miraculous lakes', it will be enough to learn about the news of this modern globe of earth.

From Choephel [GC]

© Sonam Tsering and Riika Virtanen (translators)

GC'S ARTICLES IN THE 'MAHABODHI JOURNAL' (INDIA 1939-41)

Gendun Choephel was most probably introduced to the Mahabodhi Society as early as 1936, either by Rahul Sankrityayan or Rev. Babu Tharchin. During his stay in Calcutta in the late 1930's up to around February 1941, GC was given the opportunity to write several articles for the Mahabodhi Journal – the official publication of the Mahabodhi Society – in English. Although GC may have been rather fluent in spoken English by then (having studied and practiced it in Kalimpong between 1934 and 1938), it seems highly unlikely that he has written the articles without the help of the editor of the journal.

Very similar to his notes and texts written in Tibetan – where he often seems to talk to an imagined Tibetan audience, trying to convey the foreign land of India to them – GC here addresses an Indian audience, trying to bring his homeland Tibet closer to them. [GC role as conduit is discussed in the interview with Donald S. Lopez Jr.].

KUMBUM, THE MYSTIC CITY

In: Kumbum, The Mystic City. Mahabodhi Journal. Calcutta, August 1939 (355-58).

By Lama Gendun Chompell [sic]

Lama Gendun Chompell [sic] is a learned Tibetan who is at present in India. He is a gentleman of extensive travels. – The Editor

Kumbum, mystic name, monastic city in Mongolian regions, reposing in mountain valleys. Boats gliding north–westward on the *Hoangho* [Yellow River] may carry the passenger on to a not long distance from this place, so strange, so mystic, known but to few of the West.

A few miles North [actually South] of Kumbum is the village of Repkong, where stands my childhood's home [actually *Zhoepang*, West of Repkong]. Here still dwells my aged mother, peacefully, attending to her religious duties and praying for her absent son, where memories linger of early days, when a fond sister, even in play was ever tender to her 'little brother', where I had games with my boy friends – a big ball of wool, made by my mother's dear hands, figured prominently in these plays. I received my knowledge of Kumbum by personal experience; I paid numerous prolonged visits there.

Kumbum is a monastic city; inhabited by about three thousand monks of the Yellow Cap or Galugpa [Gelugpa] Order. The permanent Head of this monastery is Akya Lama, the incarnation of Chongkhapa [sic – actually, *Tsongkhapa*]. Under him is the Chief Priest, who is chosen annually.

The famous Lama Chongkhapa [Tsongkhapa], who lived about six–hundred years ago, was born in the place now known as Kumbum [near Kumbum]. He was the incarnation of the Bodhisattva Manjusri. When the child was one year old, the usual Tibetan ceremony of hair–cutting was performed. The hair is then divided into two parts, one of which is buried, and the other kept as a talisman, to be carried on the child's body. Now, in the place, where Chongkhapa's mother buried his hair a wonderful tree sprang up, and it is, in fact, this tree that has *made* Kumbum, and is today the marvel of the world. This tree is mentioned by Chongkhapa's biographer, about 600 years ago.

Three hundred years ago, the then Dalai Lama erected a temple round this tree, – the Serdang Temple, a marvelous edifice, which might rank among the master-pieces of architecture of the world. It stands in the center of the city [around the temple was a Tibetan village] and towers six stories high. Its outer-walls are enameled with a costly Chinese porcelain, of a pale green color, and so highly polished that it is a reflecting mirror. The building is capped by four projecting roofs, the lowest being the largest. These are richly ornamented with gold. The walls within are covered with costly fresco-paintings and many art articles of untold value are kept in the shrine-rooms; some of these having been presented by the Emperors of China. [Kumbum was built in a mix of Tibetan and Chinese styles, making it a unique architectural masterpiece]. There are but few windows. The interior is illuminated by lamps of fragrant oils [also butter]. This is to symbolize the fact that the Light of the Dharma [Buddhist teaching] cannot come from without; the lamp of the Tathagata [Buddha] must burn within.

But the greatest treasure of the temple is the *Tree*, – Chandan-Dongpa. Over it, a golden stupa has been erected, which rises to the fifth story. There is a door – well locked and scaled – on the North side of the stupa. Once a year this door is opened – on the anniversary of Chongkhapa's departure from earthlife, the 26th day of the tenth month of the Tibetan year. On that day, the officiating High Priest is instructed by the Head of the monastery to enter the stupa. This he does accompanied by some officiating lamas next in rank to him. They then bring out three leaves, on each of which, as I have personally witnessed, there is the figure of Manjusri in clear white outline. The leaves are oblong and of a yellow-green color. On them there is further to be seen – in Tibetan characters – the *mantra* of Manjusri; but I have been able to decipher two or three of these letters only, and they were barely visible. These leaves have medicinal properties and are used in cases of fever.

The monks of Kumbum feel certain that the Tree is still alive. Should it dry, great misfortune might be expected. From the main tree a root has branched Eastward, and from this, three branch trees have sprung up. These are honored with special distinction: the first, that is to say the largest in size, is the tree of the 'Emperor of China', the second the 'Tree of the King of Mongolia', and the third, that of the 'Lama King of Tibet' [Dalai Lama]. In the month of the serpent in April, these trees bear delicate white blossoms, sweet and fragrant.

At the time of the 8th Dalai Lama, the largest of these three trees went into decay. It was then prophesied that the Emperors of China would cease to be, – a prophesy which has seen its fulfillment. All Buddhist devotees are eager to break the bonds of Karma and numerous are the ways to which pious searchers resort in order to accomplish this. The monks of Kumbum, in their fervour, make untold prostrations to the Tree, and a very severe practice it is. They throw their whole form down in a sharp fall, holding high the hands. Throughout the 24 hours one sees the devotees in this practice. The face turned towards the Tree, hot tears rolling down their cheeks, they call out in agony, –

Oh, Lord Chongkhapa, the Regent thou of the Buddha.

'Protector of sinners'

'Incarnation of Manjusri'

'Sun of the world'
'Friend of all without distinction',
Give me wisdom, give me a heart of love all beings.'

Often hands, forehead and knees are bleeding from deep cutting wounds, but that does not induce the devotee to stop. There are those, who continue from sunrise to sunrise. I met one aged monk, who had in this way, saluted the Tree two million times.

These are a few words on the monastic city of Kumbum, which rests safely in its mountain valley of Mongolia, undisturbed by the noise and the dim of modern civilisation, yet having a life's purpose, a mission to fulfill that towers far above all that science has ever accomplished.

MY JOURNEY FROM KUMBUM TO LHASSA

In: My Journey to Lhasa. Mahabodhi Journal. Calcutta, July 1940 (241-243)

By Lama Geshe Chomphell [sic]

While at Kumbum, I heard of a group of people, – partly merchants, partly lamas [monks], – who were arranging a journey across the Gobi Desert to Lhasa [GC and/or the editor are wrong here, the Gobi desert is to the Northwest of Kumbum]. The desire to join them was strong in me. But I could not go without my mother's permission. To horse then, and off to Repkong, three-day ride.

My aged mother was overjoyed to welcome home her wandering boy. But when it came to the question of the long journey, she became pensive. She called my sister into counsel and I found them both exceedingly reluctant to consent. My repeated entreaties, however, finally overcame their anxieties, and with the blessing and liberal provisions on my material comfort on the lone desert path, I started for my ride back to Kumbum. I arrived there just in time, for on the following day the caravan was to start.

So at dawn, on the 6th day of the path of the Dragon (March), in the year of the Dragon (1927 A.D.) our caravan left Kumbum, in cheerful mood on its long pilgrimage. There were two hundred of us, all well prepared for the ordeals before us. Three days in the saddle brought in Lake Ko-Ko-nor [Tsongnombo or Blue Lake] in Mongolia. The lake itself is something like a big ring of water round a central island. The island rises upward in a fairly tall mountain. Tradition has it, that it was brought from India by Padmasambhava [a Buddhist Saint], who crossed the Himalayas in the 15th century and founded in Tibet the Red-cap sect [Nyingmapas]. He had previously resided at *Maha Dev* mountain, and legend makes bold to assert that Mahadev himself cut off the top of that mountain, and sent it to Tibet with Padmasambhava riding upon it, and a jolly ride it must have been. But Sambhava rode farther and settled the mount in Mongolia, were it is to-day.

However that may be, the fact remains that the place is wonderful. The top is called the 'Heart' and the lower part the 'Lung' of Ko-Ko-nor. There are some natural caves and from twenty to thirty hermits reside here, a Buddhist Temple has been erected. Nature has blessed this place with sweet-water springs and verdure, and the blue waters, founding the shore make the scenery charming to behold. The spiritual atmosphere is strangely uplifting. The peace of nirvana rests on this isle, and it is well to linger there, but my *karma* drove me onward. The hermits quit the place only in winter, when the ice on the lake is sufficiently strong to bear their weight. They then go to lay in their simple provisions for the year. That done, they return to their silent retreat. A few goats are kept for the milk they yield.

Noble mountain isle of Ko-Ko-nor, I still see you with my mind's eye resting in the grandeur of your silence. You are strangely blessed, for never before, nor since have I felt the nearness of the Bodhisatvas [Buddhas of Compassion] in such reality.

However, onward with the caravan. Four more days and we reached the Salt Lake Chamcho [probably Tsaka salt lake, South of Kokonor]. This lake contains such quantities of salt that it remains in its crystal-like condition, being but lightly covered with water. Naturally this has made the place one of great activity, and a fairly large town has sprung up here, – Chadam [Tsaka] by name. The salt is carried on camels and yaks to markets in Tibet and China, and to judge by the number of pack-animals employed, the salt industry of this place must be a lucrative one.

Now came the hardest part of our journey, – ten days through a narrow valley where we were for three days without water. It took energy to keep up spirits in that place, and we did so by lending our dry throats to songs, which resounded back upon us from the rocky mountain sides. However, the worst road must see its end, and at the close of the tenth day we entered upon open space, a mighty stretch of land, – the Desert of Gobi [wrong, actually Chang Tang], silent vast and expanding, – not an animal to leave a footprint on its red pebbly sand, not a bird to break the stillness with a chirp. Cold and snowy white beckons the tops of the red and rocky mountains [Nyenchen Tangla?] that surround it, cold is the atmosphere, for even in Summer the desert invites snow. And yet, you mighty sands of Gobi, you speak in a voice more eloquent than words. The spirit of the 'Eternal' rests upon you, and 'Nirvana', whisper your stony pebbles. Here the mind expands and knows its own greatness.

But not without danger, can the bold venturer cross Gobi. There are rivers, black with the slime and mud that rest just below the surface of their water, and the undercurrents are strong and swift. These had to be forded on horseback on a riverbed, made of quicksand. Here the desert claimed her toll, for two of our men fell from their horses, yet we could [not] rescue them, the sand had drawn them to the bottom.

There are hot-water geysers in Gobi, which send their fountains onward, and some oases, where we rested, but not a sign of life on top of them, although fresh grass for our animals and clear water for all was there. Sometimes, we felt a pressing loneliness, in spite of our huge numbers. Then we resorted to the natural mode of cheering up and made our 200 voices ring through the desert air. Till night came, we

rested and then the stars, those stars of the desert, nowhere else are so large and bright. They penetrate deep into the mind and leave an impression never forgotten.

A month's travel in the desert brought us to the monastery of Nagchu. Adjacent to the monastery is a city of the same name. It is a large and lively place, with a bazaar, which well supplies all needs. Here, on the border of Tibet [in 1927], we were delayed for nearly a month, waiting for permission to proceed from the Tibetan Government.

In Nagchu I encountered the only mishap I sustained on the entire journey, for one dark night my pack-mules were stolen. However the loss was soon replaced, owing to the generosity of my dear mother and sister, who on my departure from Repkong had made provision for such a mishap.

The rest of the journey went on uneventfully. However, we were glad to reach Lhasa, our destination, and in the month of the Monkey, (July) we entered this far-famed city.

LHASA, THE CAPITAL OF THE LAND OF SNOWS

In: Lhasa, The Capital of the Land of Snows. Mahabodhi Journal. Calcutta, April 1940 (115-119).

By Lama Geshe Chompell [sic]

[This account may be of interest to our readers on account of the recent installation of the 14th Dalai Lama – Ed. Maha Bodhi]

Lhasa, a city of one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants [probably less at the time], is situated in the Center of Tibet, on the banks of the *Tsang Po* River [actually *Kyichu* river, a tributary to the Tsangpo], which is the upper part of the Brahmaputra. The river is navigable in these parts, and on it one sees numerous small crafts, mainly row-boats. They are made of leather [yak skin], but are strong enough to carry passengers and goods.

Lhasa is the capital of Tibet, the seat of the Tibetan Government and the residence of the Lama King, – the Dalai Lama. The royal monastic palace, the Po-tha-la [Potala], is situated just outside the city limits to the Northwest, on a hill called the Red Mountain. It is a large and wonderfully imposing building, covered by five roofs, of which the lowest is the largest, and all of which are covered with gold plates. It is a nine-storeyed structure and contains more than five hundred rooms, but there are no surrounding gardens. With the exception of the inner apartments, the palace is open to all comers, and I have myself paid frequent visits to it.

There are some remarkable stupas in this monastic mansion, two of which are particularly noteworthy. They are entirely made of gold and reach from the ground up to the 6th storey. They are each erected over the remains of a lama of special importance [the Dalai Lamas]. The gold of these two stupas is said to be

without alloy. All the departed Dalai Lamas have indeed a stupa in the palace – more or less tall in size – dedicated to their memory, under which their ashes repose.

The sixth [Dalai Lama] Lama alone is exempted from this honor. This ill-starred one is struck off the list as a renegade, because he entered into a matrimonial alliance with a Tibetan maiden, – a daughter of the people. This act of indiscretion on his part came to the ears of the Emperor of China, who forthwith dethroned and exiled him. The unfortunate lama went forth a lovely pilgrimage, begging his meals, as he went along. He entered India on his travels and visited Rajagriha [a Buddhist pilgrimage site]. Later, his wanderings brought him to Mongolia, and to the very land of my birth – *Kansu* [actually *Amdo*, which today is divided into the Chinese provinces of Gansu and Qinghai]. Already advanced in years, he lingered here for some time, and then here, at Kansu [Gansu], laid down his body, which was cremated there, and over which a silver stupa has been erected. As stated above, he has no stupa at the palace of Lhasa. [See GC's article on the 6th Dalai Lama below: *'The Ill Starred Dalai Lama'*]

The Fifth [Dalai] Lama was a man of special distinction, and it is indeed over his remains that one of the two large gold stupas referred to, stands. At his time, Shah Shuja, the then Governor of Bengal, under his father Shah Jahan, sent two messengers to the Court at Lhasa. The object of the embassy was to procure a curio, and it came about in the following way, –

There is in Tibet a mountain, Yar-lung-shell-brag by name, which means Glass mountain. This, however, is a mere title, the mountain, being as rocky as many others. But the old adage that distance lends enchantment to a view, proved itself once more here. Shah Shuja having heard of the mount and its enticing name, pictured before his mind's eye, a hill of scintillating glass. This so inspired him that he sent an embassy and valuable presents to the Lama King at Lhasa, with the request to be favored in return with the gift of a crystal from this far famed hill. Unfortunately his request could not be granted. The embassy was, however, received with great honor, for the illusion of the 'glass mountain' seems to have reflected as a mirage in Tibet. The Lama King mistook the *Moghul* Shah Shuja for a descendant of the Sakya race, from a royal House of which Gautama the Buddha had sprung. This was, no doubt, due to language confusion, since Shah Jahan is in Tibetan pronounced Shakya Han, which, taken literally, would mean Sakya King. Many presents were sent to the son of Shah Jahan, the mistaken Shakya Han. They were accompanied by tender expressions of regret that the desired crystal could not be forwarded, since it was not existing. The Lama King further favored the Governor of Bengal with a letter, written by his own hand, which was a special distinction.

There are countless numbers of images at Po-tha-la, many of which are of the Buddha. But the chief one is of Avalokiteswara, The Bodhisatva [Buddha of Compassion], who is worshipped here, even more than the [historical] Buddha himself. Of this image, its devotees claim that it is alive. But, although I visited it many times, I never succeeded in detecting a sign of life in it. I was told that this was due to my own imperfections. Perhaps then, – who knows?

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is a very exalted personage. One of His official duties is the ordaining of bhikkhus [monks]. There are always at least three hundred *bhikkhus* at Po-tha-la, daily reciting gathas. But the residents, all counted, number over a thousand, most of whom take their meals at the royal palace. This makes the culinary administration of that place a very extensive department. It is divided into many kitchens of different grades, according to the rank of the official for whom food is prepared in each. Remarkable to say the Dalai Lama himself sits down to dine with his personal attendants.

The officials residing at the monastic Palace are of two kinds, – The *Cheytung* or great ones and the *Shoultung* or lay officials. There are four officiating Grand Ministers, of these, one is a lama and three are laymen. His Holiness has three palaces at his disposal but only one of these, the Nor-pu-lin-ka [Norbulinka], has a garden. The apparel of the Lama King consists of religious garments, and he wears the pointed hat of the Galugpa Sect. Although, himself a strict adherent to this sect, he still is ever ready to extend his help to the other denominations.

The Tashi Lama [Panchen Lama], who is second in rank to the Dalai Lama, has several monasteries and three palaces, two of the latter being surrounded by gardens. The Chief Monastery, Tashi Lumpo [Tashilunpo in Shigatse], at the foot of a hill, is about five days horse-travel from Lhasa. In the center of this Monastery is the Palace Gyal-tsan-tumpo, a magnificent building. It is three storeys tall and very broad. It has but three roofs, but these, like those of the Dalai Lama's Palace, are covered with gold plates.

The monastery of Tashi Lumpo is in the famous district of Shingatsi [Shigatse], where numerous pious lamas reside. I have heard it said that several Mahatmas [holy people] have made this district their dwelling place, but I cannot reach for it, since I have not met them. Another noteworthy place, belonging to the Tashi Lama, is Kunknyap-Linka This palace is famous for its magnificent garden, the foremost in Tibet. In it the loveliest and the rarest of Himalayan flowers bloom and send forth their fragrance in their season.

But to return to Lhasa proper. The main thoroughfare in the city is Par-Khor [Barkhor]. This is a square, round which the residences of the wealthy are built. The largest and best equipped shops are also found here. These are owned by merchants of varying nationalities – Tibetans, Chinese, Nepalis and Kashmeris [Ladakh]. In the center of Par-Khor is the temple of Cho-Khand [the Jokhang], capped with four goldplated roofs. It contains an image of Buddha [Jowo Rinpoche].

Other streets are Unda-shin-khor and Lu-bhug. They are lively in business, as well as residential quarters. Of these, Lu-bhug is inhabited by people of lower strain.

There are schools for boys near the palace [Potala]. Few girls attend public educational institutions, and a school is provided for them at Lhasa. The greater number of girls [from noble families], however, receive their education from private tutors in their homes. Many boys become lamas [monks], and many

girls, especially the daughters of the wealthier classes, enter nunneries. Both the monasteries and the convents own large estates, and are further subsidised by private gifts, which in most cases are extensive.

The average age for matrimony is eighteen for a young lady. She never marries under that age, but has the privilege of extending it. Family life in Tibet is based on the patriarchal system, as it is in India. The bride is sent to her father-in-law's house with great ceremony, richly adorned with costly jewels, and the marriage is solemnised there. This ceremony is very elaborate and lasts for weeks; much holy water is used during its performance. The new daughter-in-law marries into the whole family, since polyandry is still en vogue in Eastern Tibet. There is only one daughter-in-law in each family.

Tibetan ladies are quite free. They do their own shopping. They are fond of silks, which they buy from the different shops, preferably Chinese and Kashmeri. Home-spun too is worn, and there is a weaving loom in every house. The ladies are, as a rule, proficient in the arts of weaving and embroidery.

In the wealthier houses, many servants are kept. The interior of such a house is often elaborate. On the walls are pictures by Tibetans, but more often by Chinese artists. The floors are covered with thick carpets, called *bol-den*. There are small oblong tables, more or less richly carved or inlaid with stones. The Tibetans [the people from the nobility], like the Chinese, eat with chopsticks, and their food is served on plates, of either Tibetan or Chinese manufacture. Of these, the Tibetan are of wood, – usually carved, while those imported from China, are either porcelain, alabaster or bronze. As a rule, three meals are served daily, and the members of the family eat together. Preparations of barley [*tsampa*] or of meat form the staple food. Tea, imported from China, is prepared as a drink and then churned with butter. This forms the main beverage.

In the cold part of the year, a fire is kindled on a hearth in the center of a room. Round this the house hold gathers. Every house has a Buddha statue, and on the small altar before it stand seven cups, filled with clean water and seven lighted lamps. A statue of Avalokiteswara [the Buddha of Compassion] is important and never absent. The belief prevails that the ancient kings, and the present Dalai Lamas are incarnations of this particular Bodhisatva, and that Tibet is the mundane part of the Paradise of Avalokiteswara.

The streets of Lhasa are well populated by beggars, and they are as much noticeable in fashionable Po-Khur [Barkhor], as in the less favored parts of the city. They make their night beds on the stony pavement and face the inclement seasons with a sturdy heart. It is indeed a wonderful characteristic of the Tibetan, that he never loses his cheerfulness. Every day, these people, meet cold and starvation with song, and they are always kind to children.

Outside the city limits of Lhasa to the Northeast, there is a suburb, assigned to the outcasts and butchers – Ragappa or Horn City. The houses of this ill-starred place are made of the bones and horns of yaks, loosely held together by clay. But sometimes, one sees a whole skeleton-head of a yak, immured in the

walls, – an uncouth and gruesome sight. The clay, being of inferior quality, often breaks loose in patches, and leaves openings for the winds from the northpole to whistle through, and the winter snows to find entrance. The sanitary conditions are deplorable, and altogether a woeful place is Horn city.

While the lifeless bodies of the lamas are cremated, the disposal of the dead outside the priestly circle, falls to the care of these poor out-casts. I have often felt pity for them and yet, they are ever cheerful. Their sons have access to the monasteries, where many of them become lamas. Neither are the daughters exempted from becoming nuns if they choose this career.

I spent about seven years at Lhasa [1927-34, mostly in Drepung monastery, a few kilometers outside of Lhasa] and made many friends there, and today, in a far-away land, I look back to it with pleasing reminiscences. It has long been my desire that the world outside Tibet should know more of this forbidden land, and it is with this purpose in view that I place my account before my readers.

AN ILL-STARRED DALAI LAMA

In: An Ill-Starred Dalai Lama. Mahabodhi Journal. Calcutta, October 1940 (370-374).

[GC's biography of the 6th Dalai Lama is not accurate, but the interesting aspect of this article is rather the biographical connection between GC and the 6th Dalai Lama. Both were great poets, lovers of women and wine, and both were a kind of outcasts. Also, interestingly, both had a Nyingmapa family background, but were actually ordained as Gelugpa monks]

By Lama Geshe Chopell of Tibet

There are many strange tales in the lives of men, – of the perversity of fate and of uncommon adventures, – tales often more strange than any fiction can portray. Of these, the life of Tshang Yan Gyatso the 6th Dalai Lama of Tibet, ranks among the foremost.

His predecessor, the 5th Dalai Lama, had once an extraordinary dream. He saw himself as a hatless wanderer, barefooted and without a drinking cup, fleeing from a dangerous foe. In thinking over this dream vision, it became clear to him, that it was a forecast of an event to be, which would, however, not occur in his present incarnation, but in the one following. Later events proved that this interpretation was correct. It might be mentioned here that no Lama of repute, is ever without a drinking cup.

Tshang Yan Gyatso, who occupied the monastic throne of Tibet as the Sixth Lama, was born in the Southern part of his country, in the District of Mon. He was the only son of his parents and had an elder sister. At the age of seven [6] he was chosen as the Incarnation of the Lama, and received from the Tashi Lama [Panchen Lama], the sacred thread, knotted on the throat. [But he was kept in anonymity until the age of 14, because the death of the 5th Dalai Lama was concealed by the Regent].

His only sister, unfortunately, allowed her prerogative as a first born to carry her too far at times. When, on one occasion, he did not respond to her call, she lost her temper, grappled him, and pulled him into the house, by his sacred thread, beating him the while. Now he, whom she was beating, was a Bodhisatva, and therefore her unruly behavior was doubly wrong, so she not only gave pain to a younger brother, but to an incarnated Bodhisatva as well, and any injury done to such a one, reacts strongly on the door. How bitterly she herself had to pay for this act, we shall see later on.

The father of Tshang Yan was not a man of distinction, and as a quite unprecedented act of Karma, about the time that Tshang Yan entered earthlife, another Dalai Lama was discovered to have been born near Lhasa. The Government debated a long time on the matters, till the choice fell on the native of Mon. Thus at the age of sixteen [14] Tshang Yan Gyatso was installed in the Palace of Lassa [Potala] as the Dalai Lama. Fate, however, had decided otherwise for him. For eight [6] years it went smoothly enough. He then came to his cross road. At the age twenty-four [25], he met a maiden, who was to change the entire course of his life. [The 6th Dalai Lama frequently visited Shol, the 'red-light' district, right below the Potala palace, of which he composed several poems].

He now went to the Tashi Lama, who had ordained him, and, after saluting him three times, requested him to take back the priestly robes, which he had conferred on him. The Tashi Lama, now grown old, wept and would persuade his young disciple to desist. But words and prayers alike were vain. The younger then left the Lama's robes at the feet of his master, and, giving him due salutation, departed. He then abandoned [sic] layman's attire, and entered into matrimony with the lady referred to. The young Lama previously spoken of was then installed in his choice. Unfortunately, however, he kept his seat only two years, when death cut short his reign.

But such an act as matrimony on the part of one, who had occupied the highest Monastic Throne, could not remain unchallenged; a year passed and the Emperor of China heard of it. He became enraged. He forthwith sent an embassy to Lhasa, and, under military escort, the unfortunate Lama was to return to Peking. There is no doubt that nothing short of decapitation would have awaited him, had he reached his destination. This, too, the martial guards knew, and they would pity on the poor prisoner, and gave him a chance of freedom. At lake Ko-Ko-nor [Tsongnombo], in Mongolia, the best officer, assisted by the cook, managed his escape. He then told the retinue that their charge had died. A mock funeral was held, accompanied by religious rites, and a stupa was erected over the supposed remains. Thus the embassy returned to Peking.

And the escaped convict, how fared he? The vision of the dream was realized. Hatless, shoeless and without a drinking cup, he stood facing the lonely road, dressed in a single garment of brown Chinese silk. The only few articles, which he had saved were a Buddha relic, encased in a double casket, – one of gold and the other of silver, and the *mala* [rosary] of the 5th Dalai Lama, which he wore round his neck.

He later spoke of that eventful escape as follows, – 'As I left the enclosure of my guards, I felt deeply touched by the sobs of the cook, who knew my fate. The sky hung ink-black overhead, not a guiding star to point the way, while the Northern storm howled with relentless fury. My head became dizzy, and I saw sparks of light before my eyes. However I walked on, not knowing where my feet were carrying me. The morning dawned red and cruel, and a wild Mongolian dust storm blinded my eyes. Thus moving on, slowly against the beating storm and dust, I met a halting caravan. I noticed the leader to be a kind looking man. Silently I stood at a distance. I could not beg. The chief caught sight of me and beckoned me to approach, which summons I gladly obeyed. Upon his solicitous inquiry regarding my whereabouts, I resorted to a ruse. My tale was that I was the only surviving member of a mercantile caravan, which had encountered robbers, and whose members had all been put to the sword. He offered to serve me with tea, which offer I accepted with a smile. 'Hand me your cup', he said courteously. Unfortunately. I had to explain that I did not possess this valuable article, for which I received a volley of loud laughter from the rough crowd. 'Here is a lama in a silk gown, who does not own a cup', they screamed. Still I remained solemn and the master of the caravan too retained his dignity. Taking from his coat pocket an unclean drinking vessel, he filled it with tea and courteously handed it to me, and oh, that beverage! I had lived in palaces, where tea was prepared by experts in the subtle art of tea-making. But nothing that ever touched my lips, – before, or since – equaled the drink, which I received that storm-laden morning from the hands of this kind man.'

On starting to proceed on its journey, the chief of the caravan invited the forlorn stranger to join, which he did. Riding on a yak, the former Lord of the Po-ta-la jugged along with the crowd. Thus did they reach the Mongolian tent, which was the home of his host. Here he remained for about a fortnight, performing the duties of an ordinary lama by reciting *gathas*. On his departure he received the customary reward, which in his case was a common sheepskin coat.

He now continued his mendicant's life in Southern Mongolia, traveling from tent to village and from village to tent. In a town near Yunnan, which is South of Kansu [Gansu province], he contracted smallpox. It seems to have been of a virulent type, for his fever was extremely high and his eyes swollen to such an extent, that he moved on in almost total blindness. His tottering steps brought him to a lonely forest. Here he laid his weary form down on the root of a grapevine, and thus he lay unconscious and unattended for a time. Then a raven brought him some meat. Eating this he regained sufficient power to stretch forth his hand for some grapes, and thus strength gradually returned. Finally, he rose with the greatest difficulty, and slowly, very slowly went forward till he reached a nearby village. There the village Headman, 'Katch' by name, felt for the poor lama pilgrim, and offered him the hospitality of his hut, where he rested and regained his normal condition and was able to continue his pedestrian tours. He traveled as far as Urga [in Mongolia], whence he turned his native Tibet.

On this journey, while passing through a forest, he was met by a sympathetic monkey, who tenderly embraced him, shedding bitter tears for a while. She brought him fruit and berries and it seemed she could not bear to see him leave her. He then recognised her as his erring sister, who by her rough treatment to

him, – as already related – had earned herself this sad fate. But he could not linger. 'Ever onward,' that was his Karma. Leaving the forest, he, after some days travel, came to a lonely tent. He entered and a sad spectacle met his eyes. The elderly lady, who, together with two children, had been the occupant of this dwelling, lay dead, and the state of decomposition, which the corpse had reached, suggested that it had been lifeless for days. The poor little ones were nearly dead themselves, from hunger and fear. Our pilgrim came just in time to save them. Seeing first to the interment of the dead body, he took the children with him. He reached a monastery in time, and there a kind lama had pity on the poor little things and kept them in his care.

Reaching the border of Tibet, the traveler came to a small monastery that was named Gar Dan. While on his begging round in the streets, the old Lama of the Monastery saw it. He had been his disciple and he stayed in the Palace [Potala] with him for a year. He was impressed by the stately bearing of the mendicant and called him. Enquiring of the whereabouts of the stranger, the Dalai Lama replied that he had come from Kansu. But the other recognised him by one of his teeth, which was unusual inasmuch as it was green in color. The younger Lama was overcome by his feelings. Jumping from his seat, he fell on the feet of the supposed stranger and could not restrain his tears. 'Why do you weep? Came the surprised question, 'perhaps you mistake me for some one who resembles me.' But the tears of him, who lay prostrate, would not cease to flow. 'I know, I know,' was all he could bring forth. Then there was no more of hiding facts. In the silence, these two devoted friends made themselves known to each other. After two months of daily companionship at the monastery they parted, and our pilgrim took once more to the road.

Near Lhasa there is another Gar Dan [Ganden, southwest of Lhasa] Monastery. This one is large and famous. It holds a stupa of Tshong Khapa [Tsongkhapa], the founder of the Galugpa [Gelugpa] Sect, whose remains lie buried there. Our wanderer tried to enter the enclosure round this place, but the gatekeeper refused to grant him admission. The devotee, however, persisted, and it came to blows, with the final result that the Lama had to leave the field, defeated and disappointed.

And now Tshan Yan Gyatso, the former, occupier of the Monastic Throne at the Palace, Po-ta-la, actually entered Lhasa, unhonored and unknown. Still, there was one, who knew him as the Ex-Grand Lama. This was a man, Nay-chong Choli by name, who was at times obsessed by the deity Nay-chang [Nechung]. Under this influence, he became the knower of hidden things. Always surrounded by a large crowd of Lamas and laymen, he made a show of his powers. In this crowd stood our pilgrim, and the Choli [oracle] knew him, even from a distance. Raising high his sword, he made his way through the dense crowd, till he reached the man, he had recognised. He made obeisance, but soon saw the expression of great displeasure in the eyes of him he had come to honor. He then realized that there lurked danger, and to divert the attention of the onlookers, he made the customary prostration to the four quarters, and thus no suspicion was aroused.

Wandering further, the ex-Grand-Lama reached India and worshipped at Rajagriha [a Buddhist pilgrimage site]. On this journey, he met a young layman, So-gya, who threw in his fortune with his, and

became his devoted pupil. They remained together, till death separated them, for after eight years of comradeship, So-gya left the earthplane. The master had grown fond of this pupil-sharer of his lonely days, and as a souvenir, always kept with him a pocket knife, which had belonged to the departed.

While staying in Behar [Bihar in Central India], our exiled hero once had a strange and noble vision. He saw a white cloud approaching him, which on coming near, proved to be a white elephant, who shone with a scintillating light of five colors. He walked round his surprised beholder and then disappeared. Now the wanderer once more turned his steps towards Kansu [Gansu] in Mongolia [actually China]. This time, however, he was not alone, a company of Lamas made up his suite. One day, on this journey, he had, what he considered, a great mishap. While swimming through a river, he lost the Buddha relic, which he had so faithfully carried all these years. The grief over this loss over-powered him to such an extent, that he was ready to immolate himself, from which, however, he was fortunately prevented by his friends. He had intended to send this relic to the Emperor of China at the hour of his death.

But fate was perhaps kind in preventing this for this act would have disclosed the whole secret of the escape and false report of his death, an act which the Chinese Emperor would never have left unavenged on those of the party, on whom he could yet have laid his hands.

However, the Ex-Grand-Lama once more reached Kansu [Gansu], the land of my birth [GC's home country, also: Amdo], here he remained unto his end. He lived and taught here for many years and was held in his honor as a great incarnation, He was known as Gyalse Lama and gathered round him many pupils. When finally, he did depart from earthlife, he received a funeral worthy of him and a silver stupa was placed over his remains.

ENGLISH POEMS OF GENDUN CHOEPHEL

In: Mahabodhi Journal. Calcutta (November 1940).

Manassarowar

By Geshe Chompell [sic]

In the times now long forgotten
 In the night of other ages,
 When things were not as they now are
 Lay the earth a lifeless body,
 Cold and hard and all unyielding,
 Like a maid in dreamless slumber,
 Untouched by life's budding springmood,
 Ere the glow of sunrise calls her.

And the sky looked down and saw her.
 Gently then in stealth descending,
 In the rose of early twilight
 Stooped and kissed her in her slumber.
 And behold her young heart heaving,
 Throbbled her pulse, her eyelids opened
 And those eyes, all filled with wonder
 Shed the hot tears of her being.
 Thus was born this Lake Himalayan,
 Mother of the holy Ganga.

Mountain-wave, mystic and dreamy,
 By thy shore does stand a maiden
 And the rhythm of thy water
 Blends into her burning bosom,
 Knows not where her flocks are straying.

The young hunter aims his arrow,
 And, behold, he sees thy water,
 And no more sees he the roebuck
 Slacks the bowstring, flees the quarry.

When the sun in golden glory
 Sheds his aureole o'er thy surface, –
 Standst thou like the shrine *Chamcapa*
 But the white dreamrays of moon–light
 Veil thee in a garb of silver,
 In the robe of Melareppa [Milarepa].

Oh Where?

By Geshé [sic] Chompell

A city there is which lone does stand
 In ruins mid bamboo trees
 Where dry shrubs sigh on the thirsting land
 Where monkeys cry, and with these
 Joins the shrill cry of the jungle cock
 Where a maiden drives her scattered flock
 To the tune of an ancient lay.

Where an ox-cart moves on its lazy way
 And halts for shade neath a jutting rock;
 Oh, City, where is the day,
 When on thy golden Throne sat Kings
 Of a mighty name and a mighty race,
 Who held the Sceptre high in this place?
 Hark, heareth thou Time's fleet wings?

Rebkong

By Geshé Chompell

My feet are wandering neath alien stars,
 My native land, – the road is far and long.
 Yet the same light of Venus and Mars
 Falls on the small green valley of Repkong.

Repkong, – I left thee and my heart behind,
 My boyhood's dusty plays, – in far Tibet.
 Karma, that restless stallion made of wind,
 In tossing me; where will it land me yet?

Like autumn cloud I float, soon, there, soon here,
 I know not what the fleeting moons may bring.
 Here in this land of roses, fair Cashmere,
 My years are closing round me like a ring,

Fate sternly sits at Destiny's hard loom
 And irrevoked her tangled pattern weaves
 The winds are blowing round my father's tomb
 And I but dream of those still summer eves,
 When – child – I listened to my mother's voice,
 Whose stories made my youthful heart rejoice.

So far, so far I may not see those graves.
 Ah, friend, these separation pangs are sore.
 My heart is thrown upon the ocean waves
 Where shall at last I reach a peaceful shore?

I've drunk of holy Ganga's glistening wave,
 I've sat beneath the sacred Bodhi tree,
 Who leaves the wanderer's weary spirit lave.
 Thou sacred land of Ind, I honor thee,
 But, oh, that little valley of Repkong,
 The sylvan brook, which flows that vale along.

Milarepa's Reply

By Geshé Chompell.

The earth and the sky held counsel one night,
 And called their messengers from northern height.
 And came they, the stormfiends, the bleak and the cold,
 They, who the stormwinds in grim fingers hold.

They swept o'er the earth, and then they called forth
 That glist'ning maid from the far Polar North
 In white trailing robe, the Queen of the Snow
 And she sent her flutt'ring plumed children below

And downward they flew in wild, whirling showers,
 While in black masses hung threat'ning the sky.
 Some were like large cruel sharp-tinging flowers
 Some pierced his chest with a fierce-cutting eye.

Thus stormfiends, snow and icy frost blending,
 Came cold and sharply upon him descending.
 On his half nude form these shapes did alight
 And tried with his single thin garment to fight.

But Melareppa, the Snow-mountain's child,
 Feared not their onslaughts, so cruel and wild.
 Though they attacked him most fiercely and grim,
 He only smiled, – they had no power over him.

TWO FAMOUS BENGALI PANDITS IN TIBET

In: Two Famous Bengali Pandits. Mahabodhi Journal. Calcutta, January 1941 (31-32).

By Lama Geshe Chompell [sic]

It is not known to many that the Founder of Lamaism in Tibet was a Bengali, – Pandita Shantarakkshita. He visited Tibet together with Padmasambhava [Guru Rinpoche], and all the Tibetan monks are his followers.

The last Pandit [learned scholar], who came from India to Tibet was also a Bengali, Vanaratana by name. He arrived there [Tibet] in the 13th century, about fifty years after the death of Sakya Selabhadra, the great Kashmiri Scholar. Vanaratana was a native of East Bengal. He visited Ceylon [Sri Lanka] twice, once before going to Tibet, and again after his return from his first visit to the Land of Snow. In Ceylon he received his ordination under a priest named Buddhaghosha. After entering Tibet a second time, he did not again leave that country, but made it his permanent residence, and there finally laid down his body.

On his first visit he encountered difficulties on account of the language, and therefore some lamas suspected him of being a heretic. In order to test his sincerity they took him to a Temple and there showed him mural paintings of the Buddha and of scenes from different Jatakas. Vanaratana satisfied his inquisitors to a certain extent by naming some of the figures. They did not, however, trust him sufficiently to accept him as their Preceptor. It was therefore that he went once more to the land of his ordination.

He remained in Ceylon for several years. Once while meditating by an ancient stupa at the foot of Adam's Peak, he had a great experience. Suddenly, behind a brilliant light, shining forth from the said stupa; two glowing balls issued forth and settled in his hands. These he soon discovered to be sacred relics of the Lord Buddha's body.

Armed with these occult weapons, he once more started on his journey to Trans-Himalayan regions [Tibet]. This time he traveled via Assam. On this long and lonely journey, longing often drew him to the Guru he loved, and he then felt a sad homesickness. It was under the influence of this feeling that he carved the name of the Guru, named *Buddhaghosa*, into a rock. This sacred inscription was for many years read by travelers passing that way.

On his second arrival in Tibet, he was fortunate in meeting a lama who was a Sanskrit scholar. This gentleman acted as his interpreter, until Vanaratana himself could master the Tibetan tongue. He gave one of his relics to lama Rong-don-ba, who was a spiritual descendant of Tsong-Ka-pa [Tsongkhapa], the founder of Gulugpa sect [Gelugpa].

Vanaratana studied the Kalachakra Tantra, and in time had a large following. He made some translations from Sanskrit into Tibetan. From him the Tibetans learned that already at that time Buddhism was nearly

extinct in the land of its birth [India], and that, outside of East Bengal, there were no Buddhists in India [anymore].

In Tibet Vanaratana is known as the last Pandit, although after him *bhikkhus* [monks] came from the West at the time of the 3rd Dalai Lama. But they were of no importance. It may be mentioned that Indian scholars are styled 'Pandits' by Tibetans, in distinction to their own, who are called 'lamas'.

TIBET AND LANKA

By the Rev.l. LAMA GESHE LA (Kalyanamitta)

TIBET and Lankā follow the same Great Teacher, and pursue the same lofty ideal.

When many nations of the West were yet unknown, these two ancient countries were linked by the golden link of the Buddha-Dhamma.

In one of the monasteries of my country, I saw palm-leaf manuscripts in Sinhala characters. They, I think, were taken there by the Venerable Vanaratana, a Bengali teacher who was instructed in the Dhamma in Ceylon.

Aryadeva, the teacher of revered memory, was a Sinhala. According to the Tibetan tradition, the illustrious Asvaghosa was converted to the Buddha-Dhamma by Aryadeva.

Satyasrī, a Kashmiri teacher, who studied the Dhamma in Ceylon, went to Tibet and did much good to the Sāsana there. Hearing that an Arahant lived in Srī Lankā, a brother of the Venerable Satyasrī visited that fair isle. For four months he lived in the shadow of the Holy Man and concluded that he was truly an Arahant. I think that the Sinhala Saint seen by the brother of Satyasrī may be the Venerable Maliyadeva Mahā Thera, of whom there are still current many beautiful stories.

Long and long ago, even before the city of Lhasa was founded, the Venerable Sīlakaramati, an Indian Buddhist monk, took from Ceylon a sandalwood statue of the Bodhisatta of Infinite Compassion, and presented

It to the king of Tibet. This auspicious statue was later enshrined in a large statue, and one may see the latter even this day.

My countrymen believe that the renowned teacher, Padmasambhava, is still alive in Ceylon, and it is a great pleasure for me to be here in the enchanted island.

I am often asked about our Scriptures. We have our *Tipitaka* called the *Kajur* (කජුර්) and our commentaries called the *Tanjur* (තන්ජුර්). Our Patimokkha is an almost exact Tibetan translation of the Théravāda Pātimokkha and our Vinaya is called the *Dulvā* (දුල්වා). In this precious book one finds the history of Jīvaka, the father of medicine, who attended on the Blessed One.

*It will surprise many to hear that Jivaka had his own X-ray, a kind of gem, and performed the most successful operations.**

He was a man of the purest character, and was kind and gentle.

I see that some Sinhala characters are very much like our own Tibetan characters. Both scripts are derived from the Brāhmī (or Asokan) script, the parent of Devanāgari, Bengāli, Burmese, Tamil and many other scripts.

Two thirds of the population of my country are monks and nuns and our chiefest concern is the Dhamma. To the Tibetan, Buddhism is the life of his life, and the tinsel of the West could not lure him.

* This is "the earliest reference to the use of an X-ray like substance in the diagnosis of disease."—Prof. P. B. Fernando.

He does not ask those who are wrapped in ignorance, those who do not observe the very rudiments of morality, those whose god is money, to teach his children. Hence, *in Tibet one finds only Buddhism.*

Finally, I thank the great Theravāda Sangha for preserving, for the benefit of the whole world, the pure Teaching of our Blessed Lord; and I request all laymen to strive for the preservation of the Buddha-Sasana, the priceless possession of the world.

* * * *

නසුළු කමමං කතං සාධු—යං කතො නා'නුතප්පති
යසස පතීනො සුමනො—විපාකං පටිසසවති.

That deed is well done which, being done, one repents not, and the fruit whereof one reaps with joy and pleasure.

—Dhammapada Bala Vagga.

* * * *

*For five-and-twenty years on the Exalted One
I waited, serving him with loving speech,
And like His shadow followed after Him.*

—Psalms of the Brethren.

* * * *

*With varied winsome charm
pleasures seduce the heart;
their menace recognize
—and go thy way alone.*

—Lord Chalmers' Sutta Nipata

* * * *

Wrong belief, the nursing of delusions the dullness which cannot open its eyes to the deep realities of life are in themselves ethically wrong; to believe a lie is an obstacle to any advance along the path.

—Prof. T. W. RHYS DAVIDS
in American Lectures, p. 182

POEM TO DOLMA YANGZOM

This poem was given to me by Jane Perkins, who had done a research on GC's friend Dolma Yangzom in Dali (near Darjeeling) in the 1980's. See also the interview with Lhakpa Phuti, who was the granddaughter of Dolma Yangzom. She vividly remembers GC coming to their home and painting their family altar.

Never betraying if relied upon.
 With the blessings of the Three Jewels,
 From the meaningless delusion of cyclic existence,
 May your mind be blessed towards religion.

Thinking about worldly affairs in any aspect,
 There is not even an oil-seed-like substance.
 Changing my mind about this short-spanned life,
 Now, I will devote myself to the meaningful practice of Dharma

The duration of youth is like the duration of a summer flower.
 Beauty is like a rainbow in the sky.
 There is no permanence in man's life.
 Now, devote yourself to the practice of Dharma

Craving for happy days in times of sadness,
 Fearing for future sorrow in times of happiness,
 There is no way out of the path of craving and fear.
 Now, yourself to the meaningful Dharma.

The source of illness and senility, even when lovingly cared,
 The source of dirt, even when beautified with ornaments,
 There is no substance in the impermanent body.
 Now, give yourself to the practice of Dharma

The rich talk about the sorrows of the rich
 The poor about the woos of poverty
 Each individual's mind bears his own burden of suffering.
 There is no moment of real happiness in this cyclic existence.

All the senses arising from external factors
 Are the delusions of one's own mind.
 These are the reflections of one's mind
 And not the cause of external factors on one's mind.

Thus if properly examined,
 And when finding the root of the mind, which is the source of all decisions.
 Out of the clouds of senses,
 Can be perceived the space of the ultimate truth.

Being is an artificial creation.
 Non-being is also an artificial creation.
 Clear from all these artificialities
 Is the mind of the Perfect Buddha.

The delusion of being and non-being is like a water ripple.
 Where one follows the other endlessly,
 The mind at rest from dependence,
 Reaches the sea of the ultimate truth.

In short, all senses arise from our mind's delusion.
 Mind is empty, baseless and rootless.
 Clinging to the baseless knowledge
 Has been the cause of you and I, wandering in this cyclic existence.

Therefore, not following the senses,
 When one examines the senses,
 One sees the unspeakable truth.
 This stage is not far from Enlightenment

With the blessing of the Three Root Deities,
 May we discover the emptiness of the mind.
 And from the realm of the Great Perfection,
 Being able to serve the endless sentient beings.

*This has been written by wanderer Gendun Chopel [sic]
 for the sake of Dharma-inclined Dolma Yangzom.*

[See interview: Lhakpa Phuti, the granddaughter of Dolma Yangzom]

MORE TEXTS OF GENDUN CHOEPHEL

The following quotes are mainly taken from an English (rough-) translation of Heather Stoddard's book on GC, originally written in French: Le Mendiant de L'Amdo, 1985. This (rough-) translation was one of my guidelines for my own research on GC between 1998 and 2002. The letter at the end is from Dorje Gyal: dGe-'dun chos-'phel, 1997. Throughout the whole project (1999-2005), Heather Stoddard was generously supporting and advising me.

THE SAD SONG

(P. 198-200)

Oh son of Suddhodhana
 Friend even to those who do not know you
 You who effortlessly accomplish the two great designs
 Send down from the clouds' pavilions
 Of accumulated compassion,
 The honey of infinite and endless blessings.

On the great endless plain [of Bengal]
 Smoke-colored clouds are billowing.
 The Kanglang sings his birdsong to an unknown friend.
 The rainbow shines on the picture of vast fields.
 Meetings of near ones, of the entourage and servants:
 Travelers crossing a market.
 Strength, wealth, pride, youth: the delight of a dream.
 Experience mingles happiness and sorrow
 As winter follows summer.
 Under the force of these thoughts,
 The melody of this poem has escaped spontaneously.
 If one has nothing, one fears hunger,
 One will force oneself to get food and drink.
 Made stupid by the fear of poverty, one will accumulate money.
 Counting on the worn beads of my rosary my futile efforts,
 The thin thread of my short human life is worn out.

Whatever we do, the activities of this world are endless.
 The weight of fatigue of careful work,
 Day after day, is, in the end
 Such that the satisfaction, collected
 In pride at having achieved something
 Does not count for a tenth part of my sufferings.

Thus, the game lies and cheating
 Which is forever entangled.
 The activities of this world, accomplished through hundreds of efforts
 All that had been done, after a long wait,
 Is revealed to be empty and illusory.
 Ah! What fatigue after three years of painful work!

In times of fortune, they bow humble before me,
 'Sit, sit'
 In times of poverty they keep away and point at me
 Thinking of the nature of the false friend [George Roerich]
 Who did not understand that he was being favored
 A feeling divided between tears and laughter
 Rose up in me.

The humble subtleties of an erudite man
 Having been crushed by the tyrannies
 Of an idiot, who is bent over with riches
 The respectable order of prescience
 Between companions in the Dharma has been overturned
 What sorrow, the lion [GC] has become the dog's servant! [Roerich]

Although half of my life has been used up
 In a state of senseless agitation
 Forcing myself season after season to make a living,
 Youth's careless folly is always great.
 What sorrow, a spirit still young in an aging body!

As an unguided child
 My spirit wandered far, so far,
 In a plain where flowers were phenomena
 Which appeared to our six faculties.
 What sorrow! This habit of contemplating the essential
 This path is now abandoned
 Leaving no traces.

Having wandered like a beast from the land of six mountains [Tibet]
 I arrived in the distant and unknown world of men.
 And there I fell in love with a woman
 Who was seductive and easy
 A lost child
 Forgetful of her loving parents, how sad I am!

Following the fantastic dance of ignorant thoughts
 Illusory phenomena and vacillating lies, 'yom yom' (my head spins)
 Apparitions of today are forgotten tomorrow,
 What sorrow, that state where nothing can be trusted!

Looking at this world's pleasures
 How pleasant they seem!
 When we get them
 Each one produces its pack of suffering.
 Fleeting moments of happiness fade like dreams.
 In any case, there are many causes for our spirit's sorrow.
 Having mixed with the milk of spontaneous joy
 The bitter ferment of suffering
 And the flux of imagination full of hope and fear,
 Even if I have enough agreeable things
 Such as food, drinks and possessions,
 Inside myself I am not serene.
 Giving it to the fire
 I've burnt the root of the hope for greatness.
 I have thrown into the ditch of ashes
 The forced duty of monastic obligations.
 Behaving like a madman
 Who follows whatever comes to mind,
 I've traveled from land to land in complete freedom.

The dilapidated fortress of the three logical worlds
 Having been destroyed at its foundation,
 The knot of the eight extreme theses
 Has undone itself.
 Ah! If after having understood
 That all phenomena have no basis
 I could only lift from the depth of my spirit
 A sense of joy!

If only I could have the chance to taste for myself
Day and night
The pure inexpressible felicity
Of absorbing myself into what is by nature intangible,
The sphere of emptiness, limitless and centerless,
Of the Clear Light.

I, Gendun Choephel, feeble-willed one
Wandering in the great unknown plain of Bengal
I sing this complaint of my own memories
Sometimes happy, sometimes sorrowful
Changing as the smiling or serious face of our mother Impermanence.

ON SADNESS, POLITICS AND SOCIALISM

'On his sadness in India'

As quoted by Gojo Lachung Apo [a friend from Lhasa], p. 208

GC: 'During my stay in India [1934-46] and Sri Lanka [1940-41], I never spent a single day, when I would have wished, doing nothing. At this time I was carrying a load heavier than a mountain. I nurtured a great hope: to be in some way of use to Tibet. Sometimes I lived of, at most, one or two rupees and at other times, the western scholars with whom I worked occasionally put three or four hundred rupees into my *'ambag'* [pocket]. Whatever, I hadn't the least desire to make money for myself for comfort or wealth. When the mad man should die, there should be nothing left of him, but the name, which is the same as saying, nothing at all.' [See also: interview with Namgang Tsomo]

'On Mao'

As remembered by Gaylong [a simple monk from Northeast-Tibet], p. 255

We [GC and Gaylong] often spoke of the war in China, in which the republicans [Guomindang] and communists opposed one another. I [Gaylong] had been to India, and in 1943 I went to Calcutta for the first time, on a business trip. My old-fashioned mind had been transformed by it. GC liked to talk with me, because I had some understanding of what was going on in the world. He invited me to come to him to learn to read and write, and in 1949, he often sent me to the house, which belonged to the Guomindang in Lhasa, where the Chinese used to smoke opium. There was a radio set there, which told us of the events taking place in China. GC wanted news of the battles and of Mao's advance. GC said, *'I wonder if Mao will manage to kill enough people to establish communism. He will have to if he wants to succeed.'*

'About the war in Amdo and Tibetan patriotism'

As quoted by Rakra Tethong, p. 256

GC: 'The majority of the people of Central Tibet have no authentic feeling of patriotism. How is this? If you consider the *'mouth and the heart'* [*'words and feeling'*] of our Amdos, Gologs etc., the Tibetans from the border areas, who are under Chinese domination, they all turn to Tibet! Poor men! Abandoned in distant valleys with no help at all, they still have a heartfelt love for Tibet. They fight, they kill and are killed by the Chinese, and they do it, I'm certain, in the depths of their hearts, for our country. It is said that the left and the right of the entrance to the tent of Jamyang Zhepa's father [the abbot of Labrang monastery in Northeast-Tibet] are decorated with banners made from the skins and the heads of dead Chinese and Muslims. It's true. Near a bridge, on the border between the Xining [today the capital of the Chinese province of Qinghai] and Amdo regions, the heads and hands of dead Tibetans are exhibited on the far bank. It's true, also.'

'(...) if one side or the other manages to take a prisoner alive, they inflict terrible tortures on them. When the Amdos take a Chinese, they hang him naked from a tree. The children bring glowing coals from the brazier, stick them onto the prisoner's skin and when a blister appears, they pierce it with the point of a knife. On the other side if the Chinese capture a Tibetan, their tortures are even more brutal. The worst torture is the one called 'doing the boards'. They take long, thin sticks of about an inch in diameter and they make a bundle of four or five of them, and they hit the victim from the neck to the foot, not very hard, for two or three days, non-stop. In the end, you just see a piece of flat meat, covered in blood, screaming. After a few days of this torture you die. Oh! It's terrible! Such suffering! We Amdos, and many other border people, sacrifice our lives for the love of Tibet. I can talk about this, because I am an Amdo and I know. That's the true situation. It would be interesting to write the history and make a count of the Tibetans killed under the Chinese regime, killed in battle, and also to make a count of the Chinese killed by the Tibetans.'

'On politics and the need to fight'

As quoted by Gaylong, p. 258-259

GC: 'We must fight to regain all the territory, which used to belong to Tibet. For example, Tsaidam in the north. The name itself is Tibetan and it means 'saline marsh' and Chone, Gayrong and Muli in Yunnan, for all these areas are really Tibetan lands. For more than a thousand years Buddhism has soaked into the soul of the Tibetans, and now, what can we do about it? An ironic solution would be to take the Jowo [the holiest statue in the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, Central Tibet], the symbolic center of all Tibetan Buddhist traditions, and set it up in the center of the Tibetan territories, between Kham [East-Tibet], Amdo [Northeast-Tibet] and U-Tsang [Central Tibet], to unite Tibet with religion. We would then have to fight to destroy religion. If the Tibetans do not grasp and understand this fact, that the Tibetans from the border areas [Kham and Amdo] are the descendants of the armies, sent in all directions by the ancient kings [7th to 9th century], we will never be able to be united. Trisong Detsen founded a Tibetan republic, a lay state, using Buddhist ideas like the 'dharmaraja' [Buddhist King] Ashoka [in India]. Now we have united the Dharma and politics in Tibet. That is the problem. If you mix sugar and salt, is that edible?'

'On the Chinese'

As quoted by Gaylong, p. 259

GC: 'The Middle Kingdom [China] was surrounded by barbarians in all four direction, including the Tibetans at the time known as the *Xifan*. (...) The Chinese still recall what happened a thousand years ago, and they still dream of eliminating the barbarians. The Guomindang are planning a road, which will come into Tibet, claiming that within three hundred years, they will thus resolve the 'Tibetan problem'. The Chinese think long term and they are our mortal enemies. The Chinese communists are coming. Now our country is in danger of disappearing altogether, take care of our language, both written and spoken.'

'On socialism'*As quoted by Gaylong, p. 287*

GC: 'Now it is too late, but if we wish to do something about our country and practice socialism, some of the great nobles must be beheaded. The members of our government should meet and bring to a banquet all the representatives, who are present, declare the country's independence and explain our program of socialist reform. They should engage negotiators to sign international agreements. That is what we should have done. But now it is too late.'

Letter to Rakra [Rakra Tethong Rinpoche]

This letter was scribbled on a cigarette wrapper, which was smuggled out of prison (1946 or early 1947). Out of fear Rakra destroyed his whole communication with GC. Here, almost 50 years later, Rakra quotes from memory. In: Dorje Gyal. dGe-'dun chos-'phel. N.p., Kan-su'u Mi-rigs dpe-skrunkhang. Rebkong 1997 (1-152).

GC: 'I thank you and your mother for not abandoning a protectorless man from Amdo like me by providing bedding and food. Although I feel great sadness that a protectorless wanderer like me has fallen into prison, but from a corner of my, the thought that I am innocent shines like the smiling face of truth. And when I think that I have a few faithful friends like you two, I get peace of mind. But I hope that on my account, you will have no trouble.'

Gecho.

GENDUN CHOEPHEL'S INDIAN FRIENDS ABOUT HIM

In his lifetime, between 1903 and 1951, GC had made friends with a number of Indian and Western* scholars, artists and missionaries. It seems certain that these friendships have left their traces on him. But GC himself never really mentions the influence they had on him, except maybe for his friendship with Rahul Sankrityayan. As much as he may have been influenced by them, they were certainly fascinated by him, too. Their writings about him, surely speak of the deep reference and respect they had for their 'Tibetan friend', as they often called him. Especially for the two young Indian intellectuals – the photographer Phani Mukherjee and the painter Kanwal Krishna, who traveled with him in 1938 – he had opened the door to Tibet.

The larger parts of their memoirs below are the first English translations ever made [except for the article of Kanwal Krishna, which was already published in 1988]. Although originally planned, I did not include their statements in the film. As homage to them and GC, I will present them here. Through the memoirs of his four Indian friends, we can certainly learn more about GC as a person and how his meeting and traveling with them, helped to shape some of his own ideas.

Most of the texts below were written in Hindi [except for Krishna, 1988, English; and Tharchin, 1951, Tibetan]. For the Hindi texts, it was only with the generous help of Jaya Sankrityayan, the daughter of the late Rahul Sankrityayan, that I was able to make this selection. The criteria for selection were simple. I asked her to mark all the passages, where the authors directly referred to GC or where an anecdote would shed some light on the kind of (political) conversations they had. I then chose the passages that I thought to be most relevant and Jaya translated them into English. Especially the many books of Rahul Sankrityayan, relating to his Tibetan journeys, and the series of articles of Phani Mukherjee (1939/63) in the 'Saraswati Journal', need further investigation, an additional effort, which, unfortunately, I was not able to do for this project.

Rahul Sankrityayan

The strongest influence on GC certainly came through Rahul Sankrityayan. In his autobiography (1944/50), as well as in his book 'To Whom I'm Grateful' (1957) – where a full chapter is dedicated to GC alone – we can read several accounts of what the two friends were talking about on their expeditions through Tibet in 1934 and 1938. One of the most interesting passages to me is the anecdote, where Rahul describes a conversation he has with the Tibetan Lama Samlo Geshe [?]. In the Tashilunpo Monastery in Shigatse, they hotly debate, whether the world is round or flat. Many of Rahul's arguments, we can later find in GC's famous article in the 'Tibet Mirror': *The Round or Globular World* [Melong, 1938]. Very interesting is also the way Rahul talks about GC. On the one hand he treats him as one of the greatest Tibetan scholars and artist, but often talks about him as his student and sometimes even, as if GC was a little boy: *'I took him with me to the many places associated with Lord Buddha [e.g. Bodhgaya, India]. I started teaching him Sanskrit, but he did not have an inborn urge to master it.'* This view is reciprocated, though, in GC's own account of the expedition in 1934. He describes Rahul's Tibetan as that *'of a seven*

year old child' [See: Initial departure from Lhasa]. Despite their friendship, there certainly seems to have been a bit of a competition between the two scholars, too. I have to add here that in Rahul's writings personal and anecdotal passages are rare. He rather focuses on his Buddhist research and his social and political observations of Tibet [and other countries he traveled through].

Phani Mukherjee & Kanwal Krishna



Image 40: GC (1st from left), Mukherjee (2nd) and Kanwal Krishna (4th) with dignitaries of Sakya, 1938

Rather different are the accounts of Phani Mukherjee and Kanwal Krishna, where you can find one anecdote after the other. Both writers are full of adoration for GC – an adoration, which may have grown even stronger, when they heard of his tragic death in Lhasa in 1951. The two bohemians, as I like to see them, had just finished Art School in Calcutta in 1938, when they joined Rahul Sankrityayan for his expedition to Tibet in 1938. Mukherjee was the official photographer and Krishna the painter of the expedition. But for both it was the first big adventure of their life. Naturally they were more interested in what they experienced, than supporting Rahul in his research [a fact frequently complained about in Rahul's notes].

In Mukherjee's accounts, published in the 'Saraswati Journal' 1939 and 1963, we can read a lot of stories, describing GC not only as great scholar and artist, but also a the one person, who explained the 'Tibetan world' to him and Kanwal Krishna. It may have been through Mukherjee and Krishna that GC learned to look at his own society from the 'outside', when trying to explain it to others. An ability that later helped him to communicate his new experiences in India to his fellow Tibetans in Tibet [See: The Writings of GC]. Another aspect of GC comes to the fore in Krishna's article. The two of them, both being painters, apparently discussed their different traditions and styles of art. Krishna was explaining 'modern' and Indian painting to GC, whereas GC would explain 'traditional' Tibetan painting to Krishna. When reading

Krishna's article, I was immediately reminded of GC's famous sketchbook with the line-drawings – some of which are included in the film, when discussing GC's love for women in India and his book 'The Tibetan arts of Love'. I assumed then that GC had learned this 'modern' style of line drawing from Krishna. When many years later, I was given access to Krishna's own line drawings and sketches from the expedition in 1938, this assumption became a certainty.

Rev. Babu Tharchin

The last text, the obituary of GC, published in the 'Tibet Mirror' of December 1951, was most likely written by the editor himself: Reverend Babu Tharchin. For many years, starting as early as 1935, Tharchin had asked GC to write for his Tibetan newspaper. Writing these articles was one of GC's few sources of income in India. It not only helped him to sustain himself, but it also provided GC with the opportunity to write about Tibetan history, the 'new wisdom' [science] and 'The Round and Globular World'. It was also through Tharchin that GC became part of the critical and intellectual environment in Kalimpong, where GC met the people from the 'Tibetan Revolutionary Party', namely *Rapga Pangdatsang* [See Rapga's article in 'Melong', 1938, Vol. 9/10], *Jentse Kunphela* and the *Duke of Changlochen* [See article in 'Melong', 1938, Vol. 9/7,8].

* For accuracy, I would like to briefly mention the Russian scholar George Roerich, for whom GC had worked on a history of Tibetan Buddhism – *The Blue Annals* – in 1941/42 in Naggur, India [today in the province of Himachal Pradesh]. Except for a short note in the introduction to his major work, Roerich never mentioned GC in any of his other writings. It seems certain though, that GC's contribution to '*The Blue Annals*' was far more important than Roerich acknowledged in his short introductory note: '*It has been a source of much satisfaction to me that I was able to discuss the entire translation with the Rev. dGe-'dun Chos-'phel, the well-known Tibetan scholar, and I gratefully acknowledge here his very helpful guidance.*' [Personal communication Heather Stoddard, Donald S. Lopez Jr., Tashi Tsering and Tsering Shakya].

RAHUL SANKRITYAYAN ON GENDUN CHOEPHEL



(Image 41: Rahul Sankrityayan in India, 1920's)

Born 1893 to a Brahmin family as Kedarnath Pandey in the province of Uttar Pradesh. He became a Saddhu (Hindu ascetic) in 1910 and studied Sanskrit and Logic in Varanasi. In 1921 he joined the Congress Party, becoming part of the Indian struggle for independence. In 1930 he converted to Buddhism and took the name of Rahul Sankrityayan. He made several journeys to Tibet between 1929 and 1938, where he met GC in Drepung Monastery (1934). In Tibet he was looking for old Buddhist (original) palm-leaf manuscripts, which had been destroyed in India long time ago, but had, so he believed, survived in some remote Tibetan monasteries. After his return from Tibet he was again involved in politics between 1938 and 1947, now as member of the Indian Communist Party. He served several prison terms. Extensive travels to the Soviet Union and Europe. He died in Darjeeling in 1963. The following statements are taken from his books 'Jinka maim krtagya' (Allahbad 1957), 'Meri jivan-yatra', vol. 2 (Allahbad 1950), and 'Esiya ke durgam bhukando me' (Allahbad 1963).

JINGKA MAIM KRTAGYA

[Engl: To Whom I'm Grateful]

Gendun Choephel

My first meeting with GC took place in Lhasa [1934]. He was a disciple of Geshe Sherab Gyatso, the most learned *pandit* [scholar] of Drepung, the largest monastery of Tibet. Geshe [Sherab] was an authority on Buddhist philosophy; thus his disciple would also be a student of the same subject. However our GC was not only a student of philosophy. That he was a poet and composed many beautiful poems in Tibetan was a fact known only to a few. Most were aware only of his artistic talent. He had studied and mastered Tibetan painting of the traditional school. It also did not take him long to master the modern style. Many individuals of the nobility were eager for him to paint for them. As a talented artist he could have lived a comfortable life in Lhasa. However, GC never aspired to a comfortable life.

He was born in the beginning of this century in the Amdo region [1903], the northernmost part of Tibet, which had off and on merged with China during various periods of its long history. Although the Amdo people share a deep similarity with the Tibetans from the point of view of language, they are well known in the pages of history by their other name, the 'Tangyut', from an even earlier period of time. The main

area of Amdo falls in the Hwang-ho valley [Yellow River] of northern Sinkiang [today Gansu Province]. These people were quite civilized in the 4th and 5th century and Buddhism had left its impact there. Buddhism reached Tibet three hundred later. The capital Lhasa was established and the Tibetans began learning the rudiments of culture. Even today the Amdo people are renowned all over Tibet for their valor, wisdom and versatile ability.

The late Panchen Lama, the principal Lama of Tashilunpo Monastery [in Shigatse] had brought three or four Amdo lamas with him to improve the standard of his monastery and to give momentum to the pursuit of knowledge there. During my travels [between 1934 and 1938] only one of them, Samlo Rinpoche still remained. Not to be left behind, the then Dalai Lama [13th] had also called for scholars from Amdo. Of them only Geshe Sherab remained.

Geshe Sherab and I used to have many discussions. Not only was he a scholar of ancient disciplines – he was also open to new ideas and had an understanding of world events. He was one of the first to welcome the success of Mao Tse Tung and the Communist Party.

(...) In all religions we find priests and monasteries. A layman's heir is his son or his grandson. A priest's heir is his disciple. In Tibet this tradition is carried to an extreme. The heir is the reincarnation of the priest. The meaning of 'lama' in Tibetan is 'guru' or 'high priest'. When the Panchen Lama or the Dalai Lama dies a search is instituted for the place where he will be reborn. Then the child who is recognized as the reincarnation is enthroned. Of course reincarnation is a myth and very often there is a great deal of maneuvering when the new incarnation is chosen on the basis of the late lama's relics. In Tibet there are more than thousand lamas, whose successors are chosen on the basis of reincarnation. The belief in reincarnation is common to all four [Tibetan] sects – the Nyingmapa, Kagyugpa, Sakyapa and Gelugpa.

GC was an incarnate lama of the Nyingmapa sect. His monastery in Amdo may not have been the richest but its various holdings would have provided enough for him to live his life in considerable ease [here Rahul is wrong]. But his thirst for knowledge did not allow him to be content with such a life. After many years spent in learning he left for Lhasa for further studies. The Nyingmapa sect is the oldest in Tibet and Gelugpa the most recent. Like the seats of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, the great monasteries of Drepung, Sera, Ganden and Tashilunpo are all of the Gelugpa sect and provide the opportunity of learning in a systematic way. GC did not hesitate to enter a Gelugpa monastery as a student and did not fear as to what those of the Nyingmapa sect would say. [In Drepung] he became a student of Geshe Sherab and under his guidance started the study of Buddhist philosophy and logic. When people [from the nobility in Lhasa] got to hear of his painting skills his fame spread.

In 1934 when I went to Lhasa for the second time, I met GC at Geshe Sherab's and got to know him closely. I realized that his depth of classical learning combined with his artistic background would be invaluable to me in the search for ancient [Buddhist] manuscripts (Mss.) and art, and this increased my interest in him. On his part, he wanted to accompany me to India and see and learn more. We became

friends from that time onwards. In the beginning of August I was to visit the ancient monasteries to the north of Lhasa, GC accompanied me. This journey was of no great hardship to him because the route between his birthplace and Lhasa took over a month. And every moment held the added fear of attack by bandits. Today this danger and distance is a dream-like memory – the whole distance can be covered in great comfort in two to four days in a motor vehicle. After visiting many monasteries we finally came to Reting monastery established in the 11th Century. Tibet has a scanty rainfall and at the time of our arrival richly painted thangkas had been hung out for an airing. GC's heart leapt at the sight. They were of Indian workmanship and it is also possible that they had been brought from India. He was eager to sketch them with an index for the various colors but alas! The serpents that guarded the treasure prevented this

After finishing the work at Lhasa we left for India together [1934]. We had many bittersweet experiences en route. At places we were welcomed and at others suffered ignominious refusal. But we were so single-minded in our search for the ancient Mss. that honor or disrespect had no meaning for us. All our bitter experiences would be soothed in the satisfaction of unearthing one precious Mss. GC did not know Sanskrit and thus did not at first understand the significance of the Sanskrit Mss. but he had studied our [the Indian Buddhist pandit's] books of Logic in their Tibetan translations. He had also heard from me that many [of the ancient Mss.] had been lost in their original Sanskrit version [in India] and it was important that they be restored to India. He started regarding them with my eyes.

We met his compatriot Samlo Geshe at Tashilunpo Monastery [in Shigatse]. I was a slave of my rational approach and sometimes unwittingly a certain topic would slip from my tongue. I mentioned the matter of the earth being round before Samlo Rinpoche. Even the old [Buddhist] tradition in our country [India] does not give credence to this fact. Thus Samlo Geshe's objection was bona fide – how could I, a believer in Lord Buddha, utter something that was antithetical to Buddha's word? I would attempt to strike a compromise between belief and acceptance. GC and Raghuvir Chonjela from Kinnaur [Northern India] often were present during these discussions and were undoubtedly influenced by them. (...). [See Gendun Choephel in 'Tibet Mirror']

My Tibetan journeys [1929, 1934-1938] were a combination of bittersweet experiences – the bitterness as extreme as the sweet. Sometimes pack animals to carry us and our goods were as readily provided as a householder's hospitality. Sometimes, though we ourselves were willing to walk, we could not hire porters and it was difficult to get a yard of space to rest ourselves. However the second Tibetan journey was extremely successful [1934]. I saw many dozens of ancient Sanskrit Mss. I was able to photograph many of them and to copy many by hand. Sharma (*Image 42: A set of ancient palm-leaf manuscripts brought back from Tibet, 1938*). Engrossed in my work, I would be unaware of the passage of time. GC did not have as much to do but he did not get impatient at any time. I got a great deal



of help from a person as well educated and cultivated as him in many unfamiliar places. We were returning to India via Nepal after visiting Sera and Sakya and other monasteries. I was unable to find a complete text of the [original] Pramanavartika in Tibet, only three chapters of some commentaries in which I found the outline of the sutras. In Nepal I was able to examine the photos of some palm leaf Mss. of the *Pramanavartika* that were with the 2nd Guru Pandit Hemraj.

The place marking the page numbers had been irreparably damaged. This is the time GC's knowledge was of immense help to us. If a line of Sanskrit was translated into Tibetan, he would take out the relevant context of the Tibetan Mss. Thus it became simpler for us to arrange the sequence of the sutras. Ten leaves were still missing but this was no mean achievement. Some of the lost portions were found at another place and some I restored into Sanskrit from the Tibetan translation.

We arrived in India [1934, for GC the first time]. The scholar and artist from the distant valley of the Hwang-ho [Yellow River] were most eager to see the land of the Buddha. His long-cherished dream was realized. I took him with me to the many places associated with Lord Buddha [e.g. Bodhgaya]. I started teaching him Sanskrit but he did not have an inborn urge to master it. Whenever he visited a place, particularly the ones associated with Lord Buddha, he would compose a poetic description of it. He would also depict them in paintings. [See: photos of the sketchbook]

Now my situation became uncertain. I re-entered the political arena and started guiding the *Peasant Satyagraha* [uprising during the struggle for Indian Independence]. This posed a challenge to the Congress government. From the beginning of 1939 I was in and out of prison, but by then GC was familiar with India. In the summer he went to Darjeeling. There was no need for him to be in need. Even if his learning had no takers his painting would have enabled him to earn a living. While at Darjeeling he translated sections of the Gita into Tibetan with someone's aid and it was even printed. Then he got to know the Roerich family [from Russia] and for a long time he was in Naggar [Kullu valley]. It was not advisable to correspond with him as it would have got him into trouble as he was a foreign national and I a suspect in the government's eyes. After some years, on 29th December 1943, a letter he wrote from Naggar reached me in which he says: '*For two years I traveled in Sri Lanka. An invitation to visit America had also come but I was unable to go because of the war.*' GC had now learnt a great deal of English and while at Naggar he was assisting George Roerich in his research [The Blue Annals] In October 1944 I left India and remained in Russia, returning in August 1947. I learnt that GC had returned to Tibet.

In Tibet he suffered great tortures. He had become a supporter of socialism and was unable to prevent this being reflected in his writings. In the final twelve or thirteen years he wrote prolifically [1934-51]. With the idea of benefiting his country by his mature knowledge, many of his books were published in Lhasa. The authorities were aware of his ideas. China was in the throes of the struggle between Communism and Chiang Kai Shek. Thinking GC was a supporter of Communism he was thrown into jail and also flogged. The conditions in the prison of Lhasa are worse than the torture of Yama [the god of Death]. The

prisoners are locked up in cells where no light penetrates and fresh air only enters through the small doorway. In addition to that it was a bitter cold of a place on 11'000 ft above sea level. Although GC was of a sound body he was only slightly built. As soon as I heard the news [of his arrest] I was extremely worried.

In the early part of 1949 the son of Surkhang Shape, a high-ranking official in the Lhasa court, was in India on a mission. When I met him I told him: *'It is impossible to find another person as learned as GC. Entrust him with the task of writing the history of Tibet. Your kind treatment of him will benefit you. No one can prevent Communism from reaching Tibet from China. At that time such a man's friendship will be of great value.'*

Throughout most of 1949 I spent most of my time in Kalimpong [near Darjeeling, North-East India] on the very doorstep of Tibet. I often met the son of Surkhang Shape. One day he said: *'Gendun Choephel is no longer in jail.'* I learned that he had been given the task of writing the history of Tibet. Of course he could not move out of Lhasa as he was under house arrest. Dr. George Roerich was living in Kalimpong [at the time] and was also pleased to hear this news. However our happiness did not last for long. After a few months [in 1951] we heard that this extraordinary scholar, talented artist, expressive poet and believer in socialism had departed this life at such a young age, leaving his dreams unfulfilled. Now was the time for GC's true work. In a few months the Communists were going to reach Lhasa [the Chinese troops had already entered Lhasa by then]. How invaluable would GC's writing and his voice have proven in the resurrection of his land! [See Tharchin: 'Reminder of Impermanence and Death']

On the Treasurer of Sakya (1934)

(...) Both of us [GC and Rahul] were given accommodation here. Even if we had not had a [introductory] letter, I believe we would have been greeted in the same way. He [the Treasurer from Sakya monastery] was an extremely erudite and cultured person. He had a deep knowledge of Tibetan learning. As soon as he started conversing with GC, he became his firm admirer and I too earned his respect as a learned Gyagar [Indian] lama. He was the highest official of the Sakya kingdom. Actually he had been proposed many times to become a minister by the abbot [from Sakya], but he had not agreed. From this it will be clear that he was an extremely influential person in Sakya. He knew traditional medicine and treated the patients for free. At that time he must have been about sixty years of age. His wife Tsering Palmo – one blessed with a long life – was also a literate and cultured person. Both of them had no children and the Treasurer had appointed his brother-in-law as his heir and thus united the two families. Pg. 710

MERI JIVAN YATRA Vol. 2

[The autobiography of Rahul Sankrityayan]

Meeting GC in Lhasa (1934), [titles of author]

On the 20th of June [in 1934] I met the Amdo artist for the first time at Drepung. GC was introduced to me by this name. At that time I was unaware that this slightly built, slender, simple person was a formidable scholar of Tibetan literature and philosophy, a gifted artist, a poet of a high order and a generous-hearted, idealistic man. Since then over many years I got to know Dharmavardhan closely and became his great admirer. When I learnt in 1948 that the Tibetan government had imprisoned him for his radical ideas, I was deeply worried and was only reassured when I heard of his release from General Surkhang [in 1949]. On that first day we only conversed. There was no indication then that GC will accompany us. I have written in my diary: *'He has a great knowledge of literature and dialectics, has made a study of the Pramanavarkita. He also remembers many sutras of the Sarasvat. Thus he is not merely a painter. He wishes to come to India. Why not take him along on the trip to Samye?'* [The oldest monastery in Tibet] Pg. 160

On his friendship with GC [1934]

In 'geshe' GC I had found a permanent friend. 'Geshe' is a title given to a great scholar in Tibet and there was no doubt that he was a formidable scholar. He had made a deep and systematic study of Buddhist logic and was also a rationalist. He was a good poet and had an abundant knowledge of Buddhist literature and Buddhist tradition. Combined with this was his greatest trait that he did not have any conceit about his learning. He thought that he had grasped but a drop or two from the Ocean of Knowledge. He was an artist of the top order. In the houses of the nobility in Lhasa there may not have been many takers for his learning but his artistic talent was widely recognized. It was his love for learning that had caused him to forsake a life of ease and comfort. Like the other reincarnate lamas he too had the means to pursue the pleasures of the rich [Rahul is wrong here. One of GC's reasons to paint was to earn money]. Yet he abandoned the inheritance, the glory of his monastery and took the road to Lhasa in pursuit of learning. He continued his studies for many years at Drepung [1927-1934]. Later on we were together for many years though intermittently as I had to travel alone in and out of the country for my other work [the political struggle for Independence in India].

Yet this I must state that it is difficult if not impossible to find as learned, talented, sacrificing cultured, idealistic humane a person as GC in all of Tibet! Often my heart says that the two of us live and work together but it is not in our hands. Then only the recollection of sweet memories provides satisfaction. Later the Lhasa government jailed him for his radical views. Pg. 168

Meeting with Sir Charles Bell [former Political Officer in Tibet, 1904-1913]

The next day we set off early. The sky was overcast but it had not started to rain. It was 10 and Nampashiva [?] was about a mile away, when we met Sir Charles Bell and his caravan. Sir Charles had been a good friend of the 13th Dalai Lama who had died last year [1933]. When he [Charles Bell] was

Political Officer [in Lhasa], his influence had led to deep and amicable relations between Tibet and the British. Now he was very old [64, Bell died 1945] and had retired to England on a pension. However he wished to see Tibet one last time. The 13th Dalai Lama had granted permission for his visit, but departed this world before he could meet his friend again.

Sir Charles met me on the road. Perhaps he knew of my presence in Tibet. He could understand from my features and my yellow robes who I was. We conversed for a long time, sitting astride our horses, while a man with a movie camera continued to record the scene [the footage of this journey is with the British Film Institute, but no images of Rahul or GC]. Sir Charles asked me the purpose of my journey. I told him that I had come in search of Sanskrit [Buddhist] Mss. lost in India. When he asked my place of origin I said 'Chhapra'. He told me that he had been posted in Chhapra for a year as a young ICS officer [Indian Civil Service]. He had not forgotten Ekma station and could still speak Hindi. He took out some money and offered it to me, but I politely declined it. Although he was not making a journey like mine – he had an entire army of attendants and provisions – this was no ordinary journey for a seventy-year-old man. I cannot but commend his courage. Pg. 172

Rahul on religion (the 'opium' factory) [1934/35]

The next day we went to Gorakhpur. I had to show GC some Indian things. So I took him to the Gita Press. He had already seen a [modern] printing press at the Law Journal Press in Allahabad. I told him that this is the shop, where they sell 'opium' [religious texts] cheaper than in China. Here, in the guise of ink and paper the cheapest 'opium' is sold to encourage the aberrations of humanity, the blind beliefs and practices of the Hindus. In earlier times the kings had given the right to sell 'opium' to the caste of the Brahmins. However now, this tradition is in the hands of the Banias [the trading community]. Just as they are responsible for all trade in cotton, making huge profits with it, they are now eager to keep all the business of religion ['opium'] in their hands. I told GC: *'If you relate some miraculous deeds in the name of the Tibetan yogis, then this printing press will take the responsibility of testifying them as true and printing and publicizing them amongst the thirty crores [300 millions] of Hindus'* Pg. 192

GC and atheism [1934/35]

Dharmavardhan [GC] is already a little atheistical from the beginning and what little lack there is will be fulfilled in my company. Till the age of 21 he lived as a reincarnate lama in his birthplace in Amdo [North-East Tibet]. Later he renounced it. He said: *'There is an almost frightening devotion towards a lama amongst the Tibetan people. Out of this reverence they go to the extent of ingesting their urine. It is mixed with tsampa and other things and is given away as little pellets.'* I asked him: *'And what about feces, then?'* He answered: *'Even that if it can be procured.'*

After my return from the first journey [1929], Baba Shivprasad Gupta asked me exactly this question. Perhaps a slight hint had reached his ears, but I misinformed him, because I did not know. Last December [1933] the 13th Dalai Lama had died. For many months his body was kept in salt. I heard in Lhasa that many people have been able to secretly procure that salt as a blessed offering. Even one grain of that salt

is enough to ensure one's deliverance from numerous sins of this and the coming world and the most serious ailments can be cured. (Pg. unknown)

Ancient scripts at Lucknow Museum [1934/35]

I showed GC around the [colonial] Lucknow Museum. Upon seeing some of the [ancient] rock inscription from Hadarah, he said: *'This really looks like Tibetan characters, but upon reading it I cannot make any sense of it.'* I said to him: *'Yes, this is the script from which the Tibetan alphabet is derived.'* Pg. 192 [See Gendun Choephel in 'Tibet Mirror']

A conversation on whether the Earth is round or flat [1938]

Samlo Geshe [in Shigatse] was a great scholar of Buddhist Logic. But he was a scholar of the old school. One day it emerged from my tongue that the earth is round and not flat. He pounced upon my words and asked: *'Then you don't believe in the Words of the Buddha?'* How could I say no and place myself in the category of the non-believers? My mind was under great pressure as I carefully thought out my answer, thus asked him: *'When the Lord Sakyamuni achieved Parinirvana in Kushinara did an earthquake not occur?'*

'Yes it did'

'In that earthquake, did not a large portion of the earth heavily shake?'

'Not just a portion, not just the whole earth, the whole Universe! All Creation was shaken to its foundations!'

Smiling, I continued: *'Geshe Rinpoche! Even when an ordinary earthquake occurs that, which is under water, becomes land and that which is land goes under. How many mountains are flattened, how many islands submerged in the ocean! Then this extraordinary earthquake must have wrought extraordinary changes? Is it not so?'*

'How could change not occur?' He replied

Then placing the backs of my two hands in the l shape of a tortoise's back I continued: *'First the earth was this shape – semispherical. After the Great Earthquake it took this shape.'* Saying this, I altered the position of my hands placing them together to describe a full sphere. What could poor Samlo Geshe say? I continued: *'The words of the Buddha are not inaccurate, because he was speaking of things, before the Parinirvana [his enlightenment] and the Great Earthquake.'* Samlo Geshe thought for a while and asked: *'In the center of that earth was the massive Mount Sumeru, what became of it?'*

'When the earth had changed from the semi-spherical shape into a full sphere, Mount Sumeru disappeared into the very bowels of the earth. The present day earth [1938] has been measured and charted. Maps of it exist. People with airplanes consult these maps and fly in a certain direction and they reach their destination! So these maps cannot be wrong.'

Samlo Geshe thought for a while, then said: *'If Mount Sumeru disappeared, what became of the gods who made it their abode?'*

Donning an expression of great regret, I exclaimed: *'Samlo Geshe Rinpoche! That is indeed a sad tale. But such incidents do occur in such earthquakes. In the earthquake two years ago [1936] in one of our [Indian] towns, over 20 thousand souls perished. In last year's earthquake in another town, the toll was*

even 50 thousand souls. The realm of the gods had to suffer even more ruin. Did the earthquake not occur in the later part of the night?'

'Yes in the later hours.'

I continued: *'Poor gods! They continued to dance and drink till the late hours. They had just retired for the night. The first sleep is the deepest. Just then the earthquake occurred. Alas! All the gods of the realm were wiped away from the face of the earth. If they had been awake, they could have flown away. Many of them could have saved themselves. No one could awaken and Mount Sumeru descended into the very womb of the earth, carrying all of them just as they were.'* Pg. 250 [See GC in 'Tibet Mirror']

ESIYA KE DURGAM BHUKHANDO ME

[In Remote regions of Asia]

Description of Sakya monastery (1934), [titles of author]

We left at 10 in the morning, taking the custodian with us. After crossing the bridge, we first went to the main temple, the Lhakang Chenmo. This has been built enclosing a small courtyard in the center. This is absolutely similar to the Talung Monastery. The walls are extremely high. Outside the temples are the rooms for the monks to stay and right on the outside of this compound is a 'palace' of eight square enclosures with towering domes that at one time were made from the point of view of military usage [to defend the monastery from invaders].

We entered the main shrine. The young novice monks greeted us with a burst of laughter upon seeing our yellow robes. The courtyard is quite extensive. On the western side is the main temple. We entered through a small doorway. There are many beautiful brass images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. In front of them the gifts received from China are arrayed. Through a small doorway on the left we entered the perambulatory. This passage is quite long. Handwritten Tibetan manuscripts are stacked like piles of bricks. Some manuscripts are of very large size and of unusually large dimensions. Over the ages these texts have stopped being used for study and have become objects of worship. [See GC in 'The Refined Gold].

Showing us a tall pillar almost one foot in diameter, we were told that this had been made from a splinter through divine power. I told Dharmavardhan [GC] that today with the help of special tools, machines and implements, fragile splinters could be pressed into pillars and columns, even stronger and smoother than this. In front of us were many gigantic columns made of pinewood, some of which are so vast in girth that two men would not be able to encircle them with their arms and they are at least thirty hands tall. We were told that they had been sent to the custodian's guru and preceptor Phagpa from China by his disciple, the Chinese emperor Kublai Khan. Dharmavardhan asked: *'How were they brought so far?'* Alluding to the incident about the sage Karma Bakhshi (1110- 93 AD) [?] from Tsurphu Monastery, I said: *'What is*

so difficult about that? Just as Karma Bakhshi threw all the gifts received from China into the river and they reached Tsurphu, so in a similar way these pillars of the sage Phagpa would have reached Sakya.'

After seeing the lower regions, we went to the terrace. The stairs going up are located outside the shrine. As it is very steep and a straight climb, one is very fearful when descending. The terrace is very wide. We went to a shrine to the north. There are many statues here. The one that I found most appealing was that of the Pandit Gayadhar of Vaishali, made according to Indian norms. Pandit Gayadhar had translated numerous Sanskrit volumes, while staying for a while with Dogmi Lotsawa [?]. The area of Lhartse on the banks of the Brahmaputra is still pointed out as the place where Pandit Gayadhar lived. The statue is life-size and the face typically Indian. I requested Dharmavardhan to make a drawing of it on paper. The colors, however, could not be copied. In that cramped, dark room, there was also no question of being able to take a photograph.

Emerging from the confines of the main temple, I took a photograph while going towards the Tara Palace. Upon reaching we found that it would take a while before we could meet the abbot. Nearby, towards the south we visited the abode of Vari Lotsawa (1102-1111 AD) [?]. The building itself is not very large but inside is an old and beautiful statue of Tara. It is said that Vari himself had commissioned it. In the southerly direction from this area, about half a mile distant Khonkon Gyal (1034-1102 AD) [?] had established the Sakya Monastery. There is no sign of that building. Earlier there was even a village of which there is no sign today. Tara herself, in the guise of a little girl, is supposed to have looked after Vari Lotsawa. One day the girl went to the nearby village to get embers for a fire. The village dogs chased her and she fell upon a stone. In the southwestern direction from Vari's temple that stone is still pointed out with the impression of the knees of the girl [Tara]. If all other such myths were true, why not this one too? Pg. 82

GC and Rahul in Ngor monastery

The next day we left for Ngor. GC had to walk on foot. The *gompa* [monastery] is huge. There are many temples and shrines. We had no acquaintance here. After trying, we found some accommodation in a deserted house, which had no doors or windows. This meant that we may leave for the temple and somebody could easily make away with all our belongings. At night two palm-leaf Mss. were brought to us, which were volumes on [Buddhist] logic. Upon asking, we were told that there are about 20 Mss. here. From originally 100 the number had fallen to 20, but it was good to know that at least there was something.

In the morning, GC went to fetch some fuel. With great difficulty he got a little bit of wood. It was doubtful if it would even heat up the water. From the morning it was becoming clear to us that we will have to leave this place as soon as possible. On the one hand, somebody had to constantly keep an eye upon the house; on the other hand, there was an extreme shortage of fuel. On top of that, the custodian of the temple was an extremely gruff man. Instead of being the custodian [of a monastery], he was more suited to the role of the leader of a band of dacoits. GC was to try his utmost, so that we could stay here

for a few more days. He [GC] was a learned scholar but in this assemblage of fools, it was as useless as being a launderer, settled in a village of nudists. Pg. unknown

MODERN REVIEW

(1937/61, Calcutta)

My Impressions of Tibet

Today, as before, the monks wield a great power in [Tibet], and it is they, who control all the most powerful institutions. It [Tibet] is, as may naturally be expected, very conservative. It strictly upholds the old order in which reforms are not permissible. This is one of the main reasons why the Tibetans are supposed to be living even to this day, amidst the environments of a fifteenth century civilization.

(...) Their murky archives covered with layers of dust conceal within them thousands of manuscripts as old as a millennium. In spite of their best efforts, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge [in England] have not been able to preserve much of their most valued relics of the past, whereas the monasteries of Tibet generate in the visitor profound sense of veneration and wonder and compel him to reflect on the glorious antiquities, livingly preserved for uncounted centuries. In fact one feels that the 12th century is but yesterday for the Tibetans.

(...) One remarkable thing about the people [in Tibet] is that they are not conservative by nature. But their geographical isolation, coupled with the bigotry of the political authorities, ever resenting and resisting any possible reform, is mainly responsible for making them what they are. If they get any chance of breaking away from the shackles that arrest their progress, the Tibetans are sure to transform themselves in no time. The transformation will astound the world in the manner of Srong-tsang-sgam-po [sic], the greatest Tibetan and father of the Tibetan culture, who within the period a few years built a vast empire.

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PHANI MUKHERJEE ON GENDUN CHOEPHEL

Phani Mukherjee was born in Calcutta, where he later studied photography at the College of Art. He was the official photographer of Rahul Sankrityayan's 1938 expedition to Tibet. Most of his photographs from Tibet were destroyed during a flood in New Delhi in the 1960's. An idea of his work in Tibet we can only gather through the photographs that he had published in the 'Saraswati Journal' in 1939 and 1963/64 in a series of articles on the expedition in 1938 (Image 43: One of the 23 articles of Mukherjee. Copies with the author).

The following statements of Phani Mukherjee are taken from the 'Saraswati Journal' 1963/64 ('Marwari Hindi Library' on Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi) and from an excerpt of Heather Stoddard's Le Mendiant de L'Amdo (1985). The passages of the Saraswati Journal are originally in Hindi [English translation by Jaya Sankrityayan].



MY JOURNEY IN TIBET

Sandstorm & Tibetan phrasebook (article 3) [my titles]

(...) One day we were astounded to see the sky darkening at around three in the afternoon. We thought to ourselves that perhaps it was a solar eclipse. On looking through the binoculars we found it was a fearsome black storm building up. Our tiny caravan was in confusion, people ran hither and thither, driving the mules with lashes. Seeing them I too started beating my poor beast. Rahulji [Rahul Sankrityayan] had come to Tibet earlier, he was aware of the havoc such a black storm would cause in this sandy desert. He began lashing his mount and leaving us standing, without a word to us. (...) GC and Abhay Singh [a monk from Sri Lanka] bounded ahead carrying the moneybags with them. They left me behind to keep an eye on the valuable photographic equipment and the chests, containing gifts for the lamas, which were loaded onto the mules (...)

(...) Soon the storm was whistling around us. Our faces, eyes, ears, heads and hands were assaulted by fierce winds, carrying sand and pebbles. My mule started running stubbornly in one direction. All this activity had aggravated the pain in my chest, but what could I do? Hanging onto the reins and digging my heels in, I somehow kept my seat on my mule. The cold wind was accompanied by small hailstones and it felt like being pelted with small balls of ice. My mule finally got tired of running and started braying as he circled that dusty desert ground. Not a soul was visible in that murky air and the shadows of evening were closing in. There was no one there to guide me and neither could I speak any Tibetan. I had only a knife for self-defense. The tired mule suddenly sat down and refused to move another step forward. The poor helpless animal could only bray his distress. I somehow managed to pull him onto his feet, mounted him and started crawling ahead, lashing him all the while. Suddenly the donkey started running blindly and this time he fell into a pond of slush. I too was thrown into the mud and got stuck. Somehow I extricated myself and pushed and pulled the mule out (...)

(...) It was almost nightfall. The storm had now abated. I neared a village. All at once a pack of large fierce dogs leapt forward to greet me, the stranger. As long as you remain upon your mount they do not

attack, but as soon as you dismount or fall off, they can tear you limb from limb just in a moment. The dirty unkempt villagers emerged and stood quietly, watching me. As I drew near they doffed their caps and stuck out their drooling tongues in greeting, as was their custom. I did not know a word of Tibetan. Mixing up words from Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali, and with wild gesticulations, I asked them in which direction the Indian Lama had gone. They too said something in their own language, raising their hands and pointing in a certain direction. Saying thank you, I proceeded in the direction indicated. The sun had set and only the dark horizon was visible ahead. All around I could only see dark expanse and the broken outlines of hills. All at once, like a dark silhouette, a rider emerged from the landscape and rode desperately towards me. Seeing this aggressor approaching me so suddenly, my heart trembled with fear. Perhaps he was one of the dacoits who waylay and rob lone travelers in Tibet. My imagination told me that finding me alone, he would kill me with his sword, steal my goods and clothes off my back and decamp with my mule. I at once drew out the knife from my pocket and unsteadily held the blade in my hand. I had bought the knife in Calcutta. I was faint with fear and terror, but had decided that before he attacked, I would leap forward and drive the blade into his heart (...)

Upon directly confronting me, the rider called out loudly my name. I was surprised at the familiar voice. I realized that the imagined bandit was my dear friend GC, who was hastening in search of me. In great happiness we embraced. Walking slowly we reached the village of Toge where we rested for the night. That day we had walked a distance of approximately thirty or thirty-five miles. Early next morning, we proceeded towards Shalu Gumpa. After my bitter experience of the previous day, I had become cautious. I filled two small leather bags with some foodstuff and other necessities and stowed them on my mule. I also asked GC to give me the Tibetan meaning of some essential phrases and noted them in my pocket notebook. In this way I took precautions to save myself in any further crises (...)

Presents to Lamas (article 3)

Summary: Abhay Singh had already informed the Head Lama of the visit [to Shalu Monastery] of Rahulji and his group. When they arrived, permission to meet the Head Lama was obtained. They were led through various cobbled courtyards and steep staircases for an audience with him. The colorfully curtained windows and beautiful balconies enhanced the beauty of the huge buildings that stood against each other. A painted staircase covered with colorful carpets led up to a series of rooms through which the party was conducted until they reached a staircase that led to a large room on the topmost level.

(...) In this room the Head Lama was present along with six other high lamas. Amongst the six was the lama at whose house we had spent the previous night. We had brought along with us many strips of gauzy cloth which were called 'khatas'. According to [Tibetan] custom, we doffed our caps and offered each lama a 'khata'. In the same way they drew out 'khatas' from their pockets and offered them to us. With great respect we were told to be seated upon small colorful carpets. After we were seated they also sat down (...)

After a few moments of silence our interpreter GC started the conversation. Just then one of the lamas suddenly said something hearing which, Rahulji opened the bundle we had brought with us and presented each of them with a pocket watch, an alarm clock and a fountain pen, wrapped up in colorful Japanese handkerchiefs, along with three shiny Tibetan coins. They were delighted on hearing the ticking of the pocket watches, the ringing of the alarm clocks and on seeing the 'ever flowing' ink of the fountain pens. They kept sniffing at the scented silk handkerchiefs and examining the brightly colored designs on them, as though they had received extremely valuable objects. [Buttered] tea was brought and served to us in beautiful cups covered with gold and silver lids and placed on small colorfully painted stools. Dried cheese was placed before us on small plates. Our conversation was carrying on amicably (...)

We would always conceal our true intentions [of photographing the old Buddhists texts]. We only told them that we were Indian Buddhist monks and that the ancient religious texts had been destroyed in India [long ago]. We had heard that ancient palm-leaf manuscripts were safely stored in Tibetan monasteries. We had traveled here from India in order to study them so that we can return to preach the Buddhist doctrine in India. If this was not done, the Buddhist faith would be destroyed forever in India (...)

Rahulji with a class of monks at Shalu Monastery (article 4)

(...) One day, at around 10 o'clock, Rahulji went to meet the Head Lama of Shalu [monastery]. To reach the living quarters of the high lama, one had to pass through two courtyards and through many rooms, then to ascend to the third floor. Rahulji went alone taking no one to guide him. All three of us were busy at our various tasks. As the day drew to a close at three o'clock all of us began to get worried as to why Rahulji was taking so long (...)

Abhay Singhji left to summon him and he too went missing. It was five o'clock and our stomachs were in spasms with hunger. Leaving me to keep an eye on our possessions, our dear friend GC also left in search of Rahulji and Abhayji. Soon darkness closed in all around. The cymbals and other musical instruments sounded the evening prayers. I stood in wait upon a balcony, when I espied the three of them hastening through the courtyard in front. I jumped for joy on seeing them and hurried out to escort them back. I was ravenous with hunger and we at once sat down to a meal, accompanied with hot cups of tea (...)

After a while Rahulji told us that at around twelve he had taken his leave of the Head Lama and was on his way back. Bemused, he had lost his way back to our rooms as he had passed through a labyrinth of several dark rooms and had wandered off in another direction. As he passed from one courtyard to another, one room to another, he found himself before a large hall, where a class was being held for the student monks. Upon seeing the Indian monk [Rahul was wearing a yellow robe], the teaching monk caught him and forced him to tell them something about Buddhism. At first he tried to stall but then he became inspired and spoke for a long time on Buddhism. Other student monks and lamas from nearby classes also ran over and requested him to continue his lecture. He only came to himself when he heard Abhay Singh's worried voice calling out his name (...)

Abhayji was made to sit down [by the monks] and Rahulji started to make some points in conclusion. When he had finally bid farewell to everybody and taken his leave it was already very late. Upon his return he was roundly scolded by GC. But Rahulji smiled and jokingly said: *'My hunger has been sated by the religious fervor of the learned Tibetan lamas, and my thirst has been quenched by the angry reprimand of GC.'*

The way to clean a cup (article 4)

(...) Early one morning a quarrel took place with the 'Black Maiden' [as the Indians called their female servant] who used to serve us tea. On telling her to clean the cup, she spat into it and rubbed it on her outer garment. Upon seeing this filthy procedure I became enraged and started berating her [one has to understand here that Phani comes from a Brahmin family]. At this she spat into it more liberally and drawing her undershirt from beneath her coat, she wiped it and placed it on the stool before me. I could not control my anger now. I picked up the cup and threw it away. The cup was shattered. Seeing this, she started crying loudly and ran towards the lady of the house. In a few moments all the people of the house gathered there and started crying and wailing as though someone had died. Rahulji and GC also grew agitated and started scolding me. I lost my control and shouted back, then left the house and hurried out (...)

Summary: Phani then proceeds to a village where he meets all the members of a Tibetan family and helps them on the fields. Then they take provisions and go on a picnic near a lake, the younger lady being much taken with the not-unwilling Phani. They all spend the night in the open. The next morning as the group is on its way back Phani hears his name being called and sees Abhay Singh and GC summoning him from a hilltop. He bids farewell to his Tibetan companions and rushes out to meet them. GC scolds him for his rude and impolite behavior.

...continued in article 5

As we returned towards the monastery GC and Abhayji told me that the entire clan of the 'Black Maiden' had gone without food and sleep in deep dismay at my bad behavior and madness. (Image 44: Abhay Singh (l.) and GC in Zhalu, 1938). When I still had not returned to the monastery till late at night, an angry Rahulji had started fretting. The two of them [GC and Rahul] said that they had



somehow comforted all the worried people and had set out vowing to fetch me back safely. Telling me

about Tibetan customs GC said that in this country it is not a habit to wash utensils and clothes. If need be the object is rubbed with a little spittle and thus purified. A woman would use a portion of her undershirt only to clean a precious object belonging to her honored husband. It was a gesture of sacrifice on her part, when the 'Black Maiden' had cleaned my cup upon my repeatedly asking. When, despite this, I threw and broke the antique china cup, it was as if a mountain of sorrow and fear collapsed around her. In the same way as dread would assail us if an image worshipped by our ancestors were to shatter (...)

Upon reaching the monastery I first went to beg forgiveness from Rahulji. When he [and GC] told me how a Tibetan maiden had sacrificed her marital honor in order to leave nothing wanting in hospitality towards the Indian guest and had been rewarded instead by insult to her clan, I rushed downstairs to the lady of the house and begged her forgiveness. When GC explained to them my heartfelt regret at my ignorant deed, they were pleased and forgave me. I started to weep and the anger in my sullen heart flowed out as tears from my eyes (...)

About Tibetan food (article 7)

(...) Upon obtaining a reprieve of four days the four of us [GC, Rahul and Abhay Singh] decided to have some fun, so we stole a couple of chickens from the village and made off for the hills. If we had tried to purchase the chickens from the villagers, they would have considered us imposters and would have apprehended us. Here the villagers keep a great many fowls, but only their eggs are eaten (...)

Even though we pumped the bellows the whole time, the fire made up of sheep and yak dung did not have enough heat to hardboil the eggs due to the lack of oxygen in the atmosphere. The fire would not catch at all without the bellows. This is why in the kitchens [in Tibet] one does not see much besides hot water for tea being made. In the richer homes, on special occasions, besides dried meat, a variety of other dishes are prepared but all are half-boiled in a soup. The flavor of these foods is like Chinese food, bland and tasteless, like a meal prepared for patients (...)

Rahulji removed four large dried chilies and a lump of rock salt from his bag. The villagers brought some long grass-like leaves called 'chong', which taste like onions and are used as a substitute. Along with this they brought radishes. These look and taste like the white turnips from our country [India]. Such things are only available here in the summer. We saw a type of shrub that had small leaves like those of a pomegranate plants. Here this fruit is called 'debu', and children relish its sweet taste, even though we found it bland. In the desert-like expanse of Tibet, children find no fruits apart from radishes, pomegranate flowers, green peas and their pods.

Hiding the two stolen chickens in a cloth and putting some utensils and dung cakes into a bag, the four of us took off towards a high mountain. Three or four miles away we camped besides a waterfall and some bushes. We removed the feathers off the chickens, cut them into pieces, and then, on a fire made of brushwood and the dung cakes, Abhay Singh and I made a curry. The four of us finished off the meat of the two large chickens, eating our fill and drinking from the cool waterfall. Today I was thinking of the

spicy food of my own country. Abhay Singh and I showed off our freshly acquired strength and agility from eating the meat by indulging in a few bouts of wrestling.

Suddenly GC pointed towards the far snow peak where some animals were crawling. Rahulji drew out a pair of binoculars from his bag and looked through them, saying that they were black yaks, which could easily climb the steep smooth rocks. Yaks prefer to live in the high cold reaches of the mountains. While I was lying on my stomach and training the binoculars randomly upon another snow peak, I saw several brown animals grazing. Seeing them, GC said that they were deer, and it was from their navels that musk was extracted. These musk deer, too, prefer to roam in the high cold regions. When the winter brings snow to the higher areas, the herds wander down to the lower plains and valleys. Butchers slaughter them and eat their meat. Their soft, smooth and grey pelts of velvet-like fur are bought by the rich to spread on chairs. Their musk is taken to the big cities [in Tibet] and sold to Nepali traders.

Reflecting on the later destruction of many of the old texts in Tibet (article 7)

(...) Today [1960's] the priceless treasures from Tibet's religious past have burnt in the conflagration of the political turmoil in Tibet [the Chinese invasion and its aftermath]. Due to the ravages of the Chinese looters, these ancient religious texts and palm-leaf Mss. have been destroyed. These historical gems have been lost for all eternity and the people of the outside world do not even realize their loss. In those ancient gompas [monasteries] the golden pages of our own [Indian] history had been preserved (...)

Phani's dose of Tibetan medicine (article 8)

Summary: The altitude, the cold and the delay in obtaining permission to photograph the manuscripts, all conspire to slow down their work. Phani organizes a spare room as a photo lab and has an open fire inside it to maintain a constant temperature. This seems to help in developing the films and Phani tries to do as much as possible, often working from eight in the morning to ten or twelve at night. This eventually results in bouts of fever.

(...) As a result of this hard work, and constantly having my hands in cold water, I became ill. On using a thermometer I realized that I had a constant fever of 40 degrees. In the bitter cold of Tibet a patient does not realize the severity of his fever for several days, and for this reason, is often killed by pneumonia after suffering for three or four days. According to GC's instructions, even during the fever, I would eat my fill of raw, dry meat and tie a long sash around my waist (...)

When Rahulji and GC went to the monastery to exchange the manuscripts the Head Lama there inquired after me. He had a soft corner for me because of my beautiful beard. Upon hearing of my illness, he was concerned and sent four small black pellets for me to swallow and a talisman wrapped in a red cloth. When, upon his return, Rahulji related all this to me, I was pleased and sat up. Touching these items

reverently to my forehead, I tied the talisman to my left arm with GC's help. I asked the servant to bring some tea and was about to swallow the pellets when both my friends burst into laughter.

GC told me that these pills were not medicines made of any herbs or chemicals but in fact were the Dalai Lama's saliva and urine, kneaded with tsampa and shaped into pills. In this country this is believed to be the best remedy for patients of all ailments and fortunate are they who can avail of this medicine. The patient with full faith in this medicine is cured, while any patient with the faintest constraint in his heart dies promptly. This was the belief amongst these people yet even after hearing all this, I could not toss away the pills. I untied and opened out the talisman, put the pellets alongside the scrap of paper, inscribed with a holy chant and once again tied it on my arm. With God's grace after a few days my health improved and I was able to go back to work.

Phani Mukherjee's account of GC (article 9)

(...) After journeying over formidably precipitous assents and descents, we finally reached the famous town of Shigatse. In the absence of Rahulji who was the leader of our Tibetan expedition, the three of us were able to wander at will and observe Tibetan life and customs closely and with enjoyment. (*Image 45: GC's three Indian friends: Kanwal Krishna (l.), Rahul Sankrityayan (m.) and Phani Mukherjee (r.), Tibet 1938*). The opportunity, which we had been eagerly



awaiting, had at last presented itself and we were free to roam in this town, which had been in existence for so many years, and as we wandered about its street it was as though we were searching for the lost pages of history of our own land (...)

As far as religious and political status is concerned this town was second after Lhasa, the capital. This was our first opportunity to see such a large Tibetan city and such a large monastery [Tashilunpo Monastery]. The monastery was situated on a promontory approximately two miles square. The five high domes of the monastery seemed like golden crowns. Between this large monastery and the town flowed a mountain stream spanned by a wooden bridge. The marketplace at Shigatse was very large but most of the shops were set up under colorful awnings and shades. This marketplace gave us the opportunity to interact with many tradesmen and high officials and, upon their invitation, we went to visit them in their homes (...)

One day whilst we were busy in painting and photography we suddenly noticed numerous lamas and novices busy with preparations for the reception of some high personage. The uneven and precipitous roads were being cleaned and the paths leading to the monastery were being festooned with colorful featherings and banners. After asking the lamas our dear brother GC told us that a High Lama [Mukherjee mentions *Jamyang Zhepa* from Labrang Monastery, also Heather Stoddard (1985), p. 192)] from the

province of Amdo [North-East Tibet, GC's home country] was arriving on a pilgrimage to Tashilunpo. We too began waiting for the arrival of that grand almost royal procession, our cameras ready to hand. Suddenly we saw that for a great distance the road had been lined on either side by monks and novices, dressed in their best. They were carrying the ceremonial instruments – huge drums, long trumpets and horns, cymbals, conch-shells decorated with gold bands – and were all standing in long artistic rows (...)

Some horsemen thundered up from a distance. The men and women had lined the roads for a great distance in welcome. The monks started sounding their conches, cymbals and long trumpets and the lamas started reciting sonorous mantras in a musical cadence. Some high officials, both ecclesiastical and lay, drew in front, carrying sacred flags in their hands. Wearing elaborate costumes and carrying spears in their hands, fourteen horsemen passed rapidly in front of us and in a little while we saw a well-built lama riding up on a white horse. When he drew close we saw that the Amdo Lama was dressed in shiny silken robes. His tall pointed cap was aglitter with gold and silver threads. Behind him rode his brothers and sisters, parents and other clansmen and relatives, all resplendently attired. Following them were high officials of the government of Amdo and its monasteries. Upon seeing the arrival of the Amdo Lama, thousands of Tibetan men and women started prostrating themselves in obeisance. The sounds of the cymbals and the droning pipes and gongs rent the heavens. Even as we watched the procession passed rapidly in front of us and disappeared towards Tashilunpo (...)

The next day our dear brother GC took us to meet the Amdo Lama and it was then that we had the opportunity to see this monastery with the five golden domes which housed a huge gilded statue of Lord Buddha. The domes had been built by the previous 5th Panchen Lamas. This monastery must have seen uncountable changes in its history of over a thousand years, but nothing had challenged its prestige and importance in the hearts of the people of Tibet. When we arrived before the huge gilded statue of Lord Buddha that towered at least eighty feet, we stood there stupefied and gazed at it. We wondered who could have cast and molded such a mammoth statue with such artistry and where it could have been done. Gold leafs had been applied on the brass and then polished with such skill that it appeared as though a glow was emanating from the Lord's body. Huge butter-lamps burnt at the feet of the statue and many smaller ones glimmered on low tables and stands. One of the lamas present informed us that some of the lamps had been burning continuously from the time the statue was dedicated. So many thousands of monks had come to this temple living out their lives tending these lamps, some till their dying breath (...)

The following statements of Phani Mukherjee in chapter 9 are not anecdotal anymore, but attempts to understand the personality and the political views of GC in retrospect. They are written with the knowledge of later events [GC's arrest, his death and the Chinese invasion] and mixed with his sad and melancholic memories of GC.

On GC

(...) His old mother and a younger brother [GC had no brother] still lived in Amdo. He now had no hope of ever visiting his mother or seeing his native place again, because his province was located at the border

of China and en route from Tibet was a formidable desert, with the added fear of dacoits. The easy and save way was to go via India along the sea route to China, but this was very long and the journey expensive. The once prosperous [here Mukherjee is wrong: GC was a reincarnation but of the abbot of a *poor* monastery in Eastern Tibet] GC was now a poor mendicant monk in reduced circumstances, roaming in search for knowledge (...)

The story of the rest of his life is more painful [after GC's return to Tibet in 1946]. For openly expounding his modern political views he was caste into a dark cell and had to give up his life in the festering darkness. All this happened when GC went alone for the second time to Tibet [1946] to warn of the great political revolution that was to take place soon. Speaking about the Tibetan scholar, who was his friend [the Amdo Lama], GC said that just as his own exposure to the outside world had revealed to him the need to destroy the old decaying system in Tibet and create a new, strong society, his friend agreed with him.

The Amdo Lama on GC

(...) Showing his sorrow toward his country [here the whole of 'Cultural Tibet' is meant, not just North-East Tibet] and the system of governance there, he said that our friend GC has been trying so hard and for so long to convince the people in authority. The time to change ourselves immediately has come, and if we do not do this, this country will become involved in a political storm so violent that it will disintegrate and disappear in just such a way as we see Kuomintang China. China is a huge country and upon its disintegration, we too will disappear so that even a trace of us will not be found in the whole world (...)

On the Chinese invasion (1950/51)

(...) When I [Mukherjee] saw the flood of the Red Color advancing Tibet by way of China and lashing its borders like a storm, it seemed to me, at first, to be the color of a new energy for Tibet and at the time the remembered words of this scholar [GC] seemed like a prophecy to me. When I saw the submerging of the highest religious country created on solid rock and the stampede of its highest lamas to save their lives along with the soul of their country, I remembered the last tragic days of my kind GC, who tried to warn the unseeing authorities of the coming storm and had to loose his life. Even as we watched, the same invincible Tibet slipped into the eternal sleep of Kumbakaran, dreaming golden dreams and was destroyed and disappeared from sight (...)

A conversation between Rahul and GC

(...) As we were eating, a discussion started between Rahulji and GC on some serious topics. As they spoke it emerged that the Amdo Lama had requested GC to accompany him back to his native land [North-East Tibet]. After the years spent, acquiring knowledge, GC was not prepared to return amongst the old-fashioned lamas. Their conversation was carried out in English and in Tibetan, so I could not

understand all of it. But at one point I heard GC say in a forceful and emotional way that it was now impossible for him to wear a long robe, wrap a *chaddar* [cloth] over it, hold a drum in one hand and give out orders. From the highest to the lowest, the desire for freedom has been ignited in the hearts of every man. If we give up the attempt to make fools of people and instead devote ourselves to the revival of the country [Cultural Tibet], it may be possible for our country to survive the imminent deluge that is leaping towards us (...)

Homage to GC and Rahul

(...) A few months after our return to India, when I saw a picture in the newspaper of Rahulji in handcuffs and trussed up with thick ropes, I laid the picture against my forehead. In my heart I said: *'May you be blessed, brave mahatma!'* In the same way, when I heard a few years later that the interpreter of our expedition, GC, had destroyed himself by rotting in the dark dungeons of Tibet, whilst walking the path of life's battle as shown by Rahulji, I remembered the famous Shigatse of Tibet. I was an eyewitness when, upon this sacred ground, two great persons had taken up the challenge for the upliftment and enlightenment of their countries (...)

Tibetan Soldiers (article 10)

(...) Early this morning I went to that part of the town where there was an open field where the army was on parade. I had stepped forward to take photos of this line of Tibetan lads, wearing no uniform and being put through their paces, when suddenly their gun-toting officer approached me. Although I regretted my foolishness, I was rooted to the spot. On reaching me he stretched out his hand and politely asked: *'Will Babuji give me a cigarette?'* In relief I pulled out a whole packet of cigarettes from my pocket along with a box of matches and offered them to him. He looked pleased and, giving me a firm salute with the words 'thank you', he turned away.

Two or three of the other brave soldiers standing around also stepped forward to ask for more stubs. I did not have anymore cigarettes, so I handed my half-lit one to a soldier. Seeing such behavior [the lack of discipline] on the part of a corps of the Tibetan army at such an important outpost, I turned back towards my lodgings, deep in my unspoken thoughts. I had only covered a few yards when eight or ten huge ferocious dogs attacked me. Fearful and unarmed, I started running away, screaming for help. Hearing my screams, the 'lions' of the Tibetan army leapt to my aid. In my confusion, I stumbled and fell. The soldiers were still some distance away, when one of the slaving dogs jumped towards my chest. From a distance the officer took aim with his pistol and shot the dog, even as he was in mid-air. The bullet pierced through the dog's chest and the carcass landed at my feet, spouting blood. My hearted bowed in respect at the unerring aim and willingness to help a stranger in trouble displayed by the same army of whom I had been thinking with derision a few minutes ago (...)

Rahulji said that after the defeat of [the Tibetan army] in 1903/04 [meant is the 'Younghusband Invasion'] the victorious British had imposed some conditions on the defeated Tibetans and a part of the British [Indian] Army was stationed at Gyantse. In imitation, the Tibetan Government had also raised an army and started parading them to the accompaniment of a band on the English model.

Phani Mukherjee and Kanwal Krishna in Lhasa (article 11)

Without the permission of Rahul Sankrityayan, the leader of the expedition, Mukherjee and Krishna take off for Lhasa, where they stay several days. GC remains with Rahul and supports him in his work.

(...) As we [Mukherjee and Krishna] drank tea, we heard a melodious song being sung in a woman's voice. We found that the neighboring shop was a liquor shop. So after finishing our tea we went there. The one who brewed the liquor was a woman who was herself tipsy and in a high falsetto voice was singing, as she served Tibetan chang [beer] to the traders from far and near. Inspired by the atmosphere our friend Kanwal Krishna took out his sketchbook and started sketching (...)

From a Nepali trader we learnt that because of the great poverty here, Tibetan girls were available as cheaply as radishes and carrots. For as little as two or three *annas* to fourteen or fifteen *rupees* [Indian currency], anyone could purchase a Tibetan woman for a day or two. Even for a few years as it suited him. When he had had his fill with her, he could just cast her outside his door along with any children, putting a few coins in her hand. The extreme poverty here made it difficult for the existing religious and civil laws to take action against such oppressive and unethical behavior of the rich (...)

As we spoke he [the trader] began to ask about the war in China [against the Japanese]. In this country of no newspapers, when I myself did not know what was happening in my own country, how could I tell him about the occurrences in far-off China. Then he himself started relating the current rumor and gossip about the war. He said that the people here are very pleased with the fact that the Chinese are being severely bombarded by the Japanese. I was secretly amused by all this gossip and cock-and-bull stories that he related. He also told us that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama had been found (...)

Being attacked by bandits (article 12)

(...) I was deep in my restless thoughts, when suddenly our retainer's younger daughter rushed into my room and started saying something in Tibetan in a worried voice and with wild gestures, then running towards the door again. I could not understand what she was saying but I realized that something was seriously wrong. Obeying the instructions that GC had given me, I grabbed the pistol. He had said that at the slightest hint of trouble, one should grab one's weapon in order to guard one's life and then go to find out the trouble or to solve a problem. It appeared that the girl wanted to take me with her to some place where something was happening. I too ran after her with a loaded pistol in my hand (...)

From a distance I saw that our friend Kanwal Krishna was lying on the ground while a man was kneeling over him with a huge sword, attempting to cut him. Our robust 'Panjabi youth' [Krishna] was grappling with him, grasping his wrist and trying to deflect his knife. Two or three Tibetans were attempting to urge our laden mules towards the hills. Upon seeing this attack, I started shooting and rushed to the defense of my friend. On hearing the pistol shot, that man left Kanwalji and started to run towards the hills. The men who were attempting to steal our mules also desisted and started fleeing and as we watched the gang of dacoits disappearing into the shelter of the hills. When I reached Kanwalji I found him lying in the dust in a state of collapse, like the brave warrior Arjun [a Hindu hero]. Blood was flowing from his forehead and he was breathing faintly. Kanwalji came to his senses in a little while with the help of sprinkling cold water. Then groaning painfully and speaking slowly, he related how he had seen three men attempting to flee with our laden mules as he walked out, smoking his cigarette. When he ran in an attempt to prevent them, one of the men hit him on the head with a well-aimed stone. He had barely recovered from this, when another man grabbed him by his long hair and flung him to the ground. The one who had thrown the stone pulled out his knife and straddled him in an attempt to kill him (...)

Draconian Law in Tibet (article 13)

(...) In this land situated on the barren stony highlands, the religious and political systems have petrified into solid pillars over a number of years. Their unbending rules and stringent laws have no recourse to appeal and have shaped a rigid society. For the serious crimes of stealing government property and treason, the punishment is death. The culprit meets his death by being hurled down from a mountain peak, smashed with stones or thrown into a dungeon to rot (...)

Blinding can also take place along with the cutting off of the hands and feet [the last blinding took place in 1933, when Lungshar was convicted of conspiracy against the Tibetan Government]. On the streets of Shigatse we had seen a man, whose neck was encircled by a large heavy wooden frame like a cartwheel. It was difficult for him to walk around with this heavy load. He could also not lie down easily in such a condition. This criminal had been made helpless in this fashion and left to roam the roads by the authorities, as a warning to the public, as to what was the punishment for stealing government property. (*Image 46: From the original article of Phani Mukherjee*). At the same time the citizens were warned not to give food or shelter to the man. What a harsh punishment it was! This man will die a dog's death through hunger and thirst, buffeted by the cold. For smaller crimes the prescribed punishment was flogging from a hundred to three hundred lashes a day, with the prisoner tied to a post while the lashes were being administered. Fed on rotten meat and decayed tsempha, he was left to languish in a cell for months and years.



Reflecting on the destruction of Tibet (after 1951)

(...) Lacking flexibility the whole immense edifice of Buddhist religion had solidified. It was hammered by the blows of political revolution and this age old fortress was demolished. The fall of such a huge fortress caused the whole world to tremble. Even as we watched, the great religious god-king and his highest retainers were swept away in the flood. Even as they battled for their lives, they saw the ancient castle of Buddhism being swept away in the crimson flood. The golden domes, widespreading roofs and mammoth pillars were engulfed in the raping torrent. The fury of the storm was so violent that the gods and chieftains of the god-king could not even turn around to look at the devastation (...)

Homage to GC (chapter 14)

(...) GC studied many books of the Tibetan and Indian literatures. He had had the opportunity to meet great scholars. Thus he was a scholar much above the ordinary lamas from the monasteries. Sometimes he would sit with Rahulji and they would carry out fervent discussions on ancient history or on psychology. Today I am thinking about those long gone times. *Oh Rahulji! Oh GC!* Both of you are no more. We console ourselves by singing tales of your lives in this mortal world. Taking the initiative from an extremely modern thinker like Rahulji, GC stepped onto the path of revolution. He waved the silken scarf of his lover as a red banner to challenge his opponents. Today when the cold north wind blows, then, along with the pain, I remember those two great warriors who jumped into the battle to reform the world. A bitter arrow of regret twists in my heart, when I think of you, brave fearless GC who died fighting alone across the Himalayas amidst the Darkness of Tibet (...)

GC's lover Passang Dolma (article 14)

(...) As the three of us were talking, I noticed a beautiful Tibetan lady standing and observing us. Seeing this Tibetan angel in that dirty lane both of us [Mukherjee and Krishna] stared at her. She too stood before us with her head bashfully bowed. Two thick plaits of brownish hair were wound around her head. Her rosy cheeks shone like rosy Kashmiri apples. The lively eyes under her slanting brow were like two dark bees that were sharing a quiet smile with her finely drawn pink lips (...) Without thinking I asked GC: *'From where did you get this wild rose?'* GC answered:

'She is my woman'. (Image 47: GC with his Passang Dolma in



the market of Gyantse, 1938). In his sketchbook he would make sketches of this Tibetan beauty and had made a beautiful drawing. The woman was about twenty-three and from the Kham Province. GC told us her name was Pasang Dolma. He had written a long descriptive passage on her. So her name became a two page long poem. GC had completed a portrait of her that was so beautiful that one could not tire of

looking at it. He had a frame made for it and once it was mounted, he wrote out the poem at the back in a beautiful script (...)

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'The Bandit Anecdote' [my title]

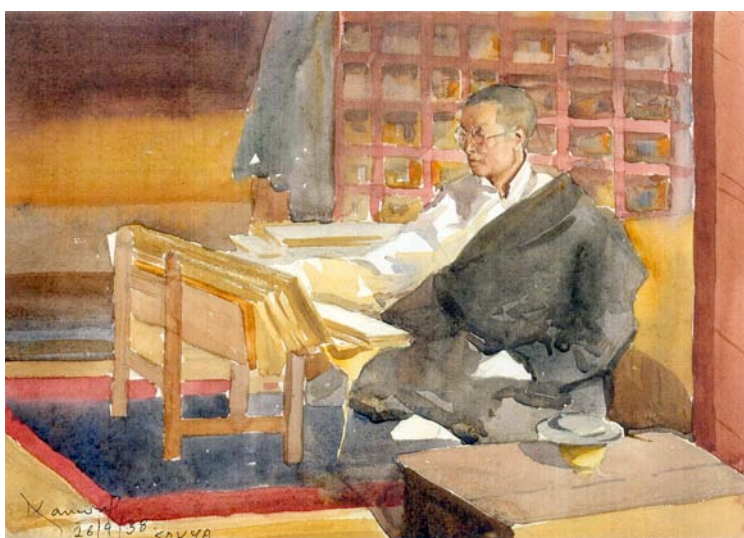
[In: Heather Stoddard. *Le Mendiant de L'Amdo* (1985), page 197] (...) Tibetan brigands are not simply bandits. They came up, began a conversation, smoked cigarettes, and drank the tea they were offered while all the time looking around the camp. I was carrying a tripod on my shoulder and GC told them that we were great Indian princes, rich beyond their wildest dreams, and that I was carrying a special rifle on my shoulder, which was capable of blowing the mountains to the heavens. The brigands left us next morning before dawn. GC asked for a gun and galloped off. Later, I saw a rider approaching the camp at great speed and I was petrified, thinking that the brigands were returning. What a relief to see our GC! He had made a tour of the camp in an eight kilometer perimeter, armed only with a pistol. He did not know what fear was. Reporting to us that the brigands had disappeared for the time being, he advised us to leave straight away (...) © **Heather Stoddard**

KANWAL KRISHNA ON GENDUN CHOEPHEL

Born 1919 in the Punjab region (Northern India, today partly Pakistan). He initially studied engineering, what he soon gave up, joining the College of Art in Calcutta. In 1938 he accompanied R. Sankrityayan and GC as a young artist on their expedition through Tibet. From this journey stems a huge collection of water colors (among them a portrait of GC in Sakya Monastery, 1938). In the late 1950's he became the head of the Art Department of the progressive Modern School in New Delhi. As artist he was frequently invited to Europe and the USA. 1993 he died in New Delhi.

The following statements of Kanwal Krishna are taken from his article 'My Days With Gendun Choephel' (In Vol. III, No.1. Spring 1988), the 'interview of Jane Perkins' with Kanwal Krishna (late 1980's) and a quote from Jeffrey Hopkins's 'Tibetan Arts of Love' (1992). I put the statements in consecutive order.

MY DAYS WITH GENDUN CHOEPHEL



(Image 48: Gendun Choephel in Sakya, painted by Kanwal Krishna, 1938)

[From Tibet House Bulletin] If was in the year 1938 that the well-known Indian scholar and daredevil explorer Rahul Sankrityayan managed to get funds from the Bihar Government. (...) Rahul Sankrityayan wanted to travel to Tibet to document and take photographs of some of the very valuable ancient palm-leaf manuscripts lying in the monasteries in Tibet.

In the olden times, monks from Tibet would come to be with their Buddhist gurus in India to learn about the teachings of Buddhism and on their return, they would carry a few books about the philosophy of Buddhism; valuable books, which were then preserved in these monasteries. Rahul-ji, during an earlier trip to Tibet [1929], had catalogued all the texts lying in these monasteries, and was now searching for a scholar, who could help him in his immense task. He came across a person in Lhasa by the name of GC, who was passionately interested in the history of Tibet.

From the ancient literature, GC had gathered that the language in India was Sanskrit. Talented as he was, he started learning Sanskrit, sitting in Lhasa. So when Rahul-ji met him [1934], he had to tell him that Sanskrit was the language in India some centuries back. If he wanted to travel in the India of today, he would have to be well versed, at least, in English, which was spoken in every part of India, especially by

the scholars. By the time I met him [1938], he was speaking English very fluently. It was indeed remarkable, for one would never have expected a Tibetan to speak English so well in those days.

(...) It turned out that the Orient Illustrated Weekly, a Calcutta publication of the Indian Press, were looking for photographs from different regions, and especially from Tibet. An arrangement was made, whereby they would lend their photographer to the expedition, and Rahul-ji would pay his pocket expenses. The person who was selected as Photographer was finally Phani Mukherjee, who was with me for three years in Art School in Calcutta. (...) When I met Rahul Sankrityayan, he proposed that as a young man and an Artist, I could join the expedition. (...) Naturally, I jumped at the idea, as it was a great opportunity for me to travel in a place, where I could do some fantastic work. (...)

[From Jane Perkins] (...) Tibet was the place, I only realized later, where the Lamas meditating in those hilltop monasteries, were painting within. I could feel the answers to my questions on their faces. That made me realize why our ancestors were coming to the mountains for meditation. Most of the beautiful peaks were considered sacred.

In Tibet, when the people were in terrible circumstances they rose above this by chanting the mantra Om Mane Padme Hum. It stilled them. Every stone carved and not carved was a teaching to me in that area. Every voice. The whole country was charged with something spiritual which affected everybody whether [they] believed it or not. I did not paint portraits - they were character studies with a spiritualist approach. [See: photos]

[From Tibet House Bulletin] In Shigatse, I met GC for the first time. I had been traveling for weeks through Tibetan territory, and I had found that the Tibetans were an openhearted people; so much so that I rarely saw smiles on their faces, only loud laughter. When I met this scholar GC, I was taken by surprise, for he was a singularly reserved type of person. His smile was a scholarly sort of smile, and he would smile only when there was a great necessity to smile. Of course, he was quite friendly with Phani Mukherjee, having already spent a month in his company.

[From Jane Perkins] GC was, what I would call an observer type. He had no communistic traits. But undoubtedly he became more liberal, when he saw how different India was from Tibet. He was a scholar in many different directions - but his weakness was the history of Tibet and India. And he found Tibet to be very closed.

[From Tibet House Bulletin] To begin with, I was busy with my painting. At times I would help Phani Mukherjee in the darkroom, or if Rahul Sankrityayan wanted certain objects in color, I would do them for him, so on the whole I was quite occupied. I did not have more than a passing acquaintance with GC, who seemed to spend all his time discussing with Rahul-ji, about the texts that they were studying and copying.

At that time I was on the Impressionistic trends, and GC started to ask me many questions about the type of paintings that I was making. I, in turn, asked him if he could explain Tibetan painting to me. Much to my surprise, he had a sketchbook with him, in which he would make some sketches, to explain to me the spirit of Tibetan painting. So it was through the art of painting that we came closer to each other. He became a sort of lecturer to me, and he taught me about the principles of the paintings done by the Tibetan artists. I was tremendously happy to be able to appreciate the thangkas, wall paintings and frescoes in the monasteries. [See: photos of GC's sketchbook]

It was in the Narthang monastery that I really came to know intimately GC's qualities as a scholar and even as a good painter. There is in this monastery a printing press, with thousands, but hundreds of thousands, of wooden blocks in carbon reverse, made by hand, to print books. (...) I was lucky to get a few samples, which I value very much. GC explained to me the technical excellence, and the underlying philosophy of these works. Being a painter himself, he could really explain from the depths of his heart, so it was from there that we started coming nearer to one another, and after this I enjoyed my stay in Tibet in his company. (...)

[From Jeffrey Hopkins (1992), p. 17]. We used to talk about art a lot. I was educated in the Western tradition in which art is one activity that can be picked up at the moment's notice and put down again, but Gendun Choephel said the most important thing is concentration. The mind must be totally absorbed in the subject. One day for a joke he said that he would show me what he meant. He went to the market and bought a bottle of arak [Tibetan liquor], he started to drink. He drank and drank and kept asking whether his face had gone red yet. By the last drop he was quite inebriated. He stripped off stark naked and sat down and started to draw; he drew a perfect figure of a man starting off at one fingertip and going all round in one continuous line until he ended back up at the fingertip again.

[From Tibet House Bulletin] GC instructed me in the history of Sakya. The Sakya monastery, founded in the 11th Century had such a wealth of the most valuable treasures lying there, that it would normally take a scholar studying it years to understand the significance of the cultural heritage of Tibet. GC would constantly lecture and supply us with details. He took us around from room to room, explaining everything. Sometimes ours were innocent children's questions. I remember one day I remarked how the Tibetans were such a peace-loving people and yet when I watched their masked dances, the masks had such horrible, devilish expressions! For the first time GC laughed aloud. He really laughed. Then he explained that in war, to win, one had to be a bigger devil than the other, or else one was a loser. Apparently, when a student lama puts on his mask, and looks through the eye-holes at the others, he feels similarly encouraged that he has a companion who is equally a devil and a helper. The dances pick up their steps along with the music, which is again vibrating to the spiritual tunes, which help them to gain the understanding of steps, which lead them to win the war. It was difficult to understand, but GC would try to educate us about these things.

He told us several stories about the designs of the masks and how they originated. For example, a certain lady gave birth to a child and immediately after its birth, the child began to grow at an alarming rate. He grew bigger and bigger, and soon after, the mother died. The High Lama of the neighborhood thought that the child was a devil and so he changed himself into air and entered the body of the child-devil. He appeared through its head, neighing like a horse, and this created a sort of nervous breakdown, and the child-devil died. To celebrate his victory over the devil, the Lama painted his face with devilish expressions and danced the Dance of Victory. According to GC, when the Lama was no more, the monks copied his expressions in the shape of masks that they would put on for their dances.

We stayed at the Sakya monastery for three weeks, and I do think this was the most valuable period of my learning about Tibetan culture and the spirit of Tibetan Art and Dance. In places where neither Phani Mukherjee nor I knew a word of Tibetan, GC would come to our rescue, explaining our problems in the most beautiful, scholarly manner. [See Mukherjee: 'My Journeys with GC']

From my childhood, I had always been interested in magic tricks, that is to say, stage magic. GC had told the Sakya Lama that I was a Brahmin from India, who had developed powers of magic and tantra. The high Lama said that he had, in fact, read about the Indian Brahmins, and indeed my nose was like that, my forehead was like that, my face was like that, but my hair was black! He had read that the Brahmins had brownish hair! GC looked at my face and I simply smiled and told him to explain that I was traveling in disguise, and not as a Brahmin, and that I could change the color of my hair any time I liked. As you know, we were traveling with photographic materials and chemicals and there is a chemical which one can apply to one's hair and after a day or so, it turns brown. Of course, this is just what I did, and I was transformed into a brown-haired man. The Sakya Lama was fascinated.

His two daughters were terribly eager to know what we were doing, even in the darkroom, wanting to watch the negatives and see how the printing is done. We could not do our work properly, nor could we ask them to leave, as we were the guests of the High Lama. GC came to our rescue by saying to them that as we were doing our meditations and [rituals, prayers], we did not like to be disturbed, and so for one week, we should be permitted to be within ourselves and after we would display the powers that we had. The Sakya Lama was also interested when he came to hear of this and later I regaled them with some tricks, which impressed the whole family very much.

After that we crossed over into Sikkim from the Northern Pass, and entered into Gangtok. Rahul-ji had to go back to Patna to deliver the photographs, and Phani Mukherjee accompanied him [expedition 1938]. GC came to Calcutta with me, and stayed at my house for some time. I contacted the Royal Asiatic Society and introduced GC to the Secretary. Apparently, there were innumerable documents and books that needed to be researched. GC thought he would work on this in Darjeeling, as the climate was more agreeable for him. I think it was not just the climate; there was also something important he said he had to do in Darjeeling. It was evidently not possible to give him the manuscripts to work on while he lived in the mountains, but he left anyhow.

Phani Mukherjee had told me that before I joined the expedition, on the way to Tibet, a party from Amdo had come to meet GC. They were from his hometown, and it seemed he was the ruler of that place, or an incarnation, and that he had come to Lhasa for his studies. As these were completed, they wanted [GC] to return to his study hometown [Labrang Monastery]. Since GC was interested in traveling, he wanted to make the best use of his life; he had refused to accompany them. (...) [See Mukherjee's account].

(...) With the bombarding of Calcutta by the Japanese, and the evacuation, I lost complete touch with that region. I lost contact with GC and after that, I never saw him again. Some time later, I heard that he was no more, in mysterious circumstances. I think only Tibetans living in Lhasa at that time can say what actually happened. This was the testimony of Tibet. A short while after, Tibet was doomed and I think the doom came to this great, great man. It was a great tragedy, for the Tibetans. I should say that he was a great authority, he could really have dug up their roots and written History.

(...) He had knowledge of things we do not have, and his words had authority. I have come across very few such personalities in my life, although I have traveled all over. I have traveled in the most primitive areas of the world; I have traveled even in the islands of Spitzbergen, north of Norway, where the day lasts three months. I have traveled to know the beauty of human existence and the tragedy of human suffering to educate myself as to what we are living for, what we are going to gain or lose out of this living. The personality of GC has made a profound impression in my memory, and I salute him. Tibet has lost a very great man to inspire her, a tremendous personality, a man of very broad views, who is no more.

REVEREND BABU THARCHIN ON GENDUN CHOEPHEL



Image 49: Rev. Babu Tharchin in India, 1940's

Born 1890 in the village of Poo in the Kinnaur Valley in Northern India. At an early age, he was baptized by the Moravian mission and received his education in one of their schools. He traveled to Tibet and Lhasa several times between 1918 and 1921. In the same year he opened a school in Gyantse after the Indian model. In 1925 he launched a newspaper called 'The Tibet Mirror' [tib: Melong] in Kalimpong, which was printed until 1963. 'The Tibet Mirror' was the first Tibetan language newspaper, distributed in Tibet. It was a rich source of information on the world of High Asia of its time: it featured news from all of Tibet, world politics, as well as the prize of wool in the markets of Kalimpong, and also carried Tharchin's moralistic advices. It was read by the nobility in Lhasa, and even the 13th and 14th Dalai Lama were subscribers. Tharchin passed away in 1976.

The obituary, written by Babu Tharchin is taken from 'Melong' [The Tibet Mirror], 1 December 1951. I will add three more direct references to GC from 'Melong', as these little clips have most probably been written by the editor Babu Tharchin, too (1935, 1946/47 and 1949).

REMINDER OF IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH

Kalimpong, December 1, 1951, 19/9.

It is with extreme sorrow that we heard the news of GC's death on 15th of August. He died of illness related to his excessive drinking. GC was a famous teacher and master of both internal and external fields of study. He spent 12 years studying Tibetan scriptures on great pilgrim centers and cities of India [1934-46]. Simultaneously, he visited the great pilgrim centers of India, where he studied English and the divine Sanskrit language. GC also translated Sanskrit texts into Tibetan [Dhammapada] and wrote a guidebook on the Indian pilgrim centers for the benefit of others. In 1947 [it was in 1946] GC returned to Tibet via Bhutan in the South. In the same year [1946], the Tibetan Government arrested him for an unknown reason. Last year [1949], he was released from prison, and started working on a history of Tibet, which the Tibetan Government had asked him to write. These days, even if one were to spend several hundred thousand rupees [Indian currency], it would be difficult to acquire as much knowledge as this late teacher [GC] had. Alas! His death is a great loss! It is indeed a great loss. It is not known whether there is any publisher for the manuscripts he wrote in India and his incomplete history of Tibet [The White Annals: A Political of Tibet]. © **Tendar (translator)**

UNTITLED

1935, No. 8/3-4, column 3

The Indian *pandit* [scholar], called Rahula [Rahul Sankrityayan], who visited Tibet in the year before [1934], has recently gone to Japan. The Amdo *geshe* [Gendun Choephel], who came with him from Drepung, and is very learned in linguistics and also in painting etc., arrived in Darjeeling and we heard that he is now staying in Dotsug.

NEWS HEARD FROM TIBET

1946/47

Batshang and Gendun Choephel: The news has been heard that the Tibetan government has examined their case and that they released Batshang. It is also said that Gendun Choephel is still being examined and under arrest.

NEWS FROM TIBET

Vol. 17, May 1949, No. 8, p. 5-6

During his many years in India [1934-46], Geshe Gendun Choephel engaged in thorough studies of the old Buddhist history and doctrine and other [historical] documents. Also, he translated Tibetan the royal genealogies etc. from some of the languages of India and China [Dunhuang documents]. Due to his vast knowledge, it is said that he recently has been appointed to the task of compiling and writing a new royal genealogy [history], based on consulting some earlier Tibetan sources. [The article refers to GC's 'White Annals'].

OTHER SOURCES RELATED TO GENDUN CHOEPHEL

Among the many different sources that I worked with on this project were the 'Political Files' of the British secret service in India, wrongly titled '*Chinese Intrigues*'; a transcribed interview with the Lhasa magistrate Tashi Pelrawa, who arrested GC in 1946; and a poem the Tibetan writer Ju Kesang had composed in the mid-1980's. This poem of Ju Kesang – we incidentally have the same age – became a strong inspiration during the making of the film. Many of the points he raised I could identify with and I realized that his view as a young Tibetan intellectual was not that different from my own. On a symbolic level, to me, it also exemplified GC importance for a younger generation of Tibetans:

(...)

Pulling a long chain of many question marks for

Things you [GC] left unanswered.

In a dim twilight I saw you

Slowly departing from the highest ridge above the snow.

The smoke swirling from the rifle barrel,

Cleared after a while.

And I found your grave at a bend in history.

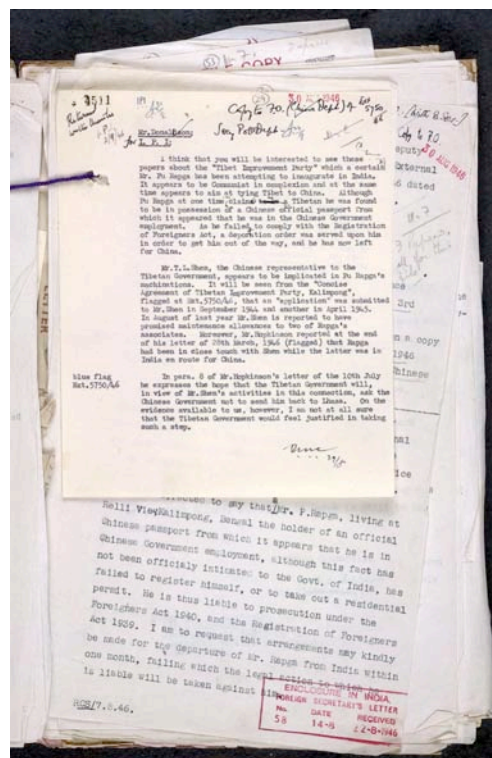
Regrettably I did not manage to include the poem in the film. I remember that my editor and myself tried several times, but never really found a suitable spot within the film. In retrospect, I think, we should have looked harder. It could have helped to strengthen my thesis of GC being an important figure for a younger generation of Tibetans. To this question and to what in the end is *in* the film, and what has to be left *out*, see the 'bonus features' on the DVD: Interview with Luc Schaedler (both parts).

At the end of this chapter I will include some excerpts from the '*Melong*' [The Tibet Mirror], which have no direct reference to GC, but shed some light on the intellectual environment he was exposed to, when working for the '*Melong*' between 1935 and 1946.

THE 'POLITICAL FILES' IN THE INDIA OFFICE LIBRARY

In the early 1940's, the British Secret Service opened a dossier called: Tibet: Chinese Intrigues (Rapga). Coll. 36/39: Sino-Tibetan Relations. Chinese Threat to Tibet. The agents in the Indian bordertown Kalimpong (near the Tibetan border), reported about the activities of the 'Western-Tibetan Improvement Part'y (also: Tibetan Revolutionary Party), which was founded by Rapga Pangdatsang in the late 1930's, together with Jentse Kunphela and the Duke of Changlochen. Several passages of these reports directly refer to GC, though his own involvement in the Party's activities is still rather unclear. Yet it is certain that he designed the Party's logo for their membership card. (Image 50: A stack of 'Political Files' from the India Office Library in London, 1940's).

The reason, why the dossier is called 'Chinese intrigues', has to do with the fact of Rapga Pangdatsang receiving money from the nationalist Guomindang government in China. Rapga had previously studied in their schools. What the British failed to see, was, that the members of the 'Tibetan Revolutionary Party' were first and foremost Tibetan nationalist, who took the (financial) support, from wherever source it came from.



Dossier 4211

(L/PS/12/4211), page 5

'(...) A letter, in original, by Rabga to *Gendun Choephel*, in which it was mentioned, that the time was inopportune for the starting of the communist movement and that for the moment the Tibetan Improvement Party's activities should be pursued (...)'

(L/PS/12/4211), page 18

'(...) How much of the facts Richardson should divulge to the Tibetan Government is a question that Richardson and I have been considering for a long time. I think Richardson should any how let the Tibetan know the general nature of the conspiracy against them and the part taken, in particular, by Mr. T. L. Shen (...)'

(L/PS/12/4211), page 29

'(...) I think you will be interested to see these papers about the '[Western-] Tibetan Improvement Party' which a certain Mr. Pu Rapga has been attempting to inaugurate in India. It appears to be communist in complexion and at the same time appears to aim at tying Tibet to China. Although Pu Rapga at one time was claimed to be a Tibetan he was found to be in possession of a Chinese official passport (...)'

(IOL/PS/12/4211), page 36

From the 'Concise Agreement of Tibet Improvement Party, Kalimpong':

'(...) 2. Recently President Chiang has declared to allow autonomy of Tibet. According to this we must exert our efforts mainly for Liberation of Tibet from the existing tyrannical Government. Also we must act in the light of other progressive and democratic nations of the World (...)'

(IOL/PS/12/4211, 36 file 39(1), letter 3 (7) L/46/126, 17.10. 1946

'(...) Mr. Richardson [See: Interview with Hugh Richardson] reports that the Foreign Bureau know all about *Choemphel la*. They say he is always demanding interviews with the Shapas, decrying Tibetan Buddhism as corrupt, praising the 'New Wisdom' (which seems to emanate from India), speaking in favor of Nazism and generally conducting himself in an eccentric way. For these reasons the Tibetan Government have had him watched. They say he is corresponding regularly with [Nicholas] Roerich (a Soviet Tibetologist) (...)'

Dossier 4202

(IOL/PS/12/4202 Coll. 36/30(2), 10. 2. 1946 and 13. 3. 46), page 134

'(...) The National assembly met for two days during the week. It is believed that one of the subject's discussion was Gendun Choemphel and his share in the Kalimpong plot against the Tibetan Government. It is believed that enough evidence was found in the search of his house to call for severe treatment. It is understood that little evidence was found against the firm of Baitshang which was also suspected (...)'

(IOL/PS/12/4202, 26.3.1946), page 178

'(...) Gendun Choemphel, referred to in item No. 7 of T. I. R. No. 1/46, dated 4th of January 1946, is in Lhasa at present and is reported to be writing a book vis. history of Tibet in Tibetan. It is also reported that he has recently translated a Sanskrit work know as 'Dhammapada' into Tibetan (...)'

TASHI PELRAWA ON GENDUN CHOEPHEL AND HIS ARREST



(Image 51: Tashi Pelrawa during a parade of the Tibetan army, 1940's)

Born in Lhasa, Central Tibet. At the time of GC's arrest in Lhasa 1946, he was one of the two Lhasa magistrates, who arrested GC on the order of the Tibetan Kashag (Ministry). Tashi Pelrawa had been instructed by the Kashag not to tell GC the 'real' reasons for his arrest. [See below].

His statement was transcribed from a taped interview conducted by Kirti Rinpoche on 2 December 1980 (In: Kirti, Rinpoche (sPrul-sku). s.Grol-ma dbyangs-'dzom-la gnang-ba'i bslab-bya. LTWA, Dharamshala 1983).

Testimony of the arrest and imprisonment of Amdo Gendun Choephel

By Lhasa Magistrate Tashi Pelrawa

Regarding GC's imprisonment: At that time [1946], Nangtse Shag [the office and prison of the Lhasa magistrates] was entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining law and order in Lhasa. Normally, this office dealt with law and order problems. However if there were serious cases, the Kashag would summon the two magistrates and give instructions. Shagjang Surpa and I [Tashi Pelrawa] were magistrates at the time of GC's imprisonment.

(Page 141) The Kashag summoned us and instructed us to track down a person called Amdo Gendun Choephel [GC] in Lhasa. We were to arrest him since he was under the Tibetan government's suspicion. We had no idea as to the whereabouts of GC. So, we told the Kashag that we would search for him. The Kashag told us to track him down on that very day and imprison him for the time being. We were told also to seal GC's house. The Kashag said: *'There are many reasons for his imprisonment. But the Kashag does not see the need to tell everything to you two magistrates. We will let you know gradually. GC is highly learned. He may probably ask the reason of his arrest. (Page 142) Don't tell him anything else for the time being. Simply say this: 'A large amount of 100-gormo [Tibetan money] counterfeit notes are in circulation. These counterfeit notes seem to have come from India. We suspect that you are responsible*

for this. This is the reason why we are arresting you.' This is, of course, not the real reason for his arrest. There are many other reasons.'

As a rule, it was the head of police department, which looked after security matters like this. We, the two magistrates, went to the police barracks at Tromsikhang. There were some *khorjawas* [officers patrolling the city] under us. We asked them about GC. Some people in the barracks knew him. Asked where GC's house was, they replied that he lived in a house called Wangdhen Pelbar, located near the barracks. (Page 143) This house belonged to the Kundeling [family]. We gave an instruction to go immediately and find out if he was at home. We were informed that the house was locked. On further inquiries, we found that he had gone to Horkhang's [Horkhang Sonam Penbar] house. Horkhang Sey was a *rupon* [captain] of the Body Guard Regiment. He was very keen on studying poetry. GC visited him regularly to teach him. We sent for Horkhang's house. GC had been there in the morning, but had now gone to the Body Guards' barracks with Horkhang Sey. We were informed that he would return in the evening and head straight for his own house. He would certainly not spend the night at the barracks, we were told. We waited for him.

(Page 144) There were guards at the police barracks. We told the guards to watch out for GC. We were informed of his return around three in the evening. We immediately sent a 'nyerpa' [non-gazette subordinate stiffer under the magistrates] and a '*drungyik*' [gazetted subordinate stiffer] to GC's house. We instructed them to tell GC that the two magistrates wanted to see him. GC arrived immediately. We told him: *'We have to detain you at Nangtse Shag for a few days. A large amount of 100-gormo counterfeit notes are in circulation. It seems you distributed the counterfeit money. We have to interrogate you about this. The Kashag has instructed us to detain you at Nangtse Shag. Therefore, you will have to stay here for a few days.'*

GC said, *'If the government suspects me, that is fine. I have nothing, but a small house. (Page 145). This is the government's decision. You may order me to go anywhere. I will surely obey your orders. You will probably search my small house. I have nothing much there. I am writing a history of Tibet for the sake of the Tibetan people's cause. My house is strewn with notes and documents. I have written notes even on cigarette wrappers. You may look at all these papers and replace them properly. I went to different parts of India and made efforts to collect old Tibetan documents. I managed to copy some reliable documents. I copied all the useful documents, even on cigarette wrappers. I have collected a substantial quantity of documents. Please leave these documents as they are. (Page 146). But you may search my house and read these documents. I have the welfare of Tibet in my mind. I am not a person to indulge in unlawful activities. You will know this gradually as you make inquiries. Please tell this to the higher authorities. Today, I will go wherever you want me to.'*

Then we took him to Nangtse Shag. There were different categories of cells in Nangtse Shag. On the top floor, there was a conference hall. In the corner of the conference hall was a small room, where the magistrates normally took rest. We respectfully showed him to this room. We did not treat him like a prisoner. I told him that we had to detain him on the Kashag's order. Then we went to the Kashag and informed them that we had tracked down GC at his home, Wangdhen Pelbar. (Page 147) We said it had

taken us quite a while to track him down, because he had gone to the Norbulingkha barracks after teaching scriptural text to the Horkhang Sey. Later, when he came home, we summoned him. We narrated the exchange between us and GC. We also reported that GC was now under custody. The Kashag approved of our action, but instructed us not to let GC communicate with anyone, either orally or through letters. The Kashag instructed us to make our *nyerpas* guard GC in turns. We were instructed strictly against being lax. (Page 148) We put the *nyerpas* on sentinel duty. They were to take turns in guarding him, two in each shift. The *nyerpas* were instructed strictly against allowing GC to communicate with anyone.

About two weeks later, the government instituted an inquiry committee to question GC. Dzasak Gyaltag, Surkhang Depon [military commander] and one Lhasa Nyertsangwa [Government rank] were members of this committee. They used to have their meetings in Nyertsang Office, the building adjoining the Jokhang Temple [in the center of Lhasa]. This building was known as Lho-gyued [Southern Part]. Important prisoners were detained and interrogated there. GC was taken there and interrogated regularly. We asked GC about the interrogation. We asked him what he had said in the course of interrogation. *'Exactly the same thing as I had told you.'* He said. (Page 149) *'I had nothing new to say. I could not satisfy them. They were very severe and kept on telling me to 'think carefully'. They may skin me alive. But I have nothing more or new to tell them.'* This is what GC told us.

About one or two days later, GC was subjected to more interrogations. One day, he was subjected to the 'hot interrogation' [with whipping]. It seems he was whipped. On that day, a message arrived for GC to report there. We sent him with one or two escorts. When he returned, we saw him pass by our windows. He was looking downcast. Then we asked the escorts if GC had been subjected to a hot interrogation. They replied in the affirmative. There was nothing we could do. We could not even meet him.

(Page 150) The reaction of my wife was rather unusual. It must have been her karma. As soon as she heard the name GC, she was moved and expressed compassion for him. When I returned home on that day, I informed her that GC had been subjected to a hot interrogation. My wife prepared mincemeat soup for GC. The next morning, I went to GC's cell. Putting my head through the cell door, I asked him if he had been treated badly during the interrogation on the previous day. He said he had been beaten badly: *'Even if they kill or behead me, I have nothing new or more to say. I can only repeat what I told you the other day. What is happening to me is too bad. It is very sad.'* I tried to offer him consolation. I said: *'Nothing will happen to you. You should not feel sad. These things can happen. You have been to a foreign country. You went to different places, which probably must be the reason why you became a suspect. Nothing untoward will happen to you. (Page 151) In the Tibetan legal system, we have a saying that the innocent and guilty will be distinguished. Similarly, the truth of your case will become clear ultimately. If you have nothing to hide, they will not be able to convict you. Don't you worry at all.'*

GC thanked me profusely. After that round of hot interrogation, the Inquiry Committee did not interrogate him again. Then the Tibetan New Year came. Every year, Nangtse Shag prisoners were shifted to Shol

office during the Tibetan New Year. GC was shifted to Shol with other prisoners [Shol is directly underneath the Potala Palace]. After the celebrations, all the prisoners were sent back to Lhasa. GC also had to go back to Lhasa then. (Page 152) After reaching Nangtse Shag, GC fell slightly ill one day. He said he was slightly unwell. He wrote something in English and asked us to get this medicine for him. We couldn't read English. We decided to seek the Kashag's approval to get the medicine. We thought it wouldn't do for the two magistrates to make this decision without the Kashag's permission. We, the two magistrates, had a discussion and then took the letter to the Kashag. We showed the letter and explained that GC had asked for this medicine. We asked the Kashag's permission to give this medicine to GC.

Far from granting the permission, the Kashag reprimanded us. The Kashag wanted to know how GC got hold of the stationery to write that note: (Page 153) *'You two magistrates have been instructed to isolate him from human beings, letters and material things. But you seem to have been lax with him. You seem to have given him access to the tools of indulgence. This is too much.'* [Kapshopa, Surkhang Depon and Rampa la were the members of the Kashag at that time]. We, the magistrates, had followed the Kashag's instruction and held GC incommunicado. Our order was to prevent him from communicating with anyone outside the prison. And we followed this order faithfully. We had heard that some foreign medicine would kill instantly. This is the reason why we were afraid to give the medicine to GC. This is the reason why we had taken GC's note to the Kashag. We showed it to the Kashag because we had not done anything wrong. (Page 154) We had not left GC unguarded. We couldn't read English. That's why we took his note to the Kashag for their perusal. We had not been derelict in our duty. Kapshopa reprimanded us very severely: *'The two magistrates give a lot of liberty to GC. This is absolutely wrong.'* He said a lot of things like this. After some time, Surkhang spoke. He said: *'The two magistrates have approached us because they treated this matter too seriously to make decisions by themselves. They have done the right thing. There is nothing incriminating in this letter. This is not a secret letter. This is merely a name of medicine. The magistrates have come to ask us whether they are permitted to give this medicine or not. We can't reprimand them for this. It is okay to give this medicine. It is okay.'*

(Page 155) Two or three months later, the Kashag summoned us. We were told that GC had been detained thus far in Nangtse Shag and interrogated in all manners, but that he had not said anything useful. We were told to hand him now to Shol office. Then we instructed two 'nyerpas' to escort GC to the Shol office. He did not suffer special interrogations or harassment in Shol. He spent some three years in Shol prison [until 1949]. (...) (Page 156) Then His Holiness the Dalai Lama took spiritual and political power of Tibet. To mark this, all the prisoners were granted amnesty. GC was released at that time. (...)

GC then [after his release in 1949] wanted to know what had become of the notes and documents in his house. I forgot to tell you [Kirti Rinpoche, the interviewer] this earlier. One day, while GC was in captivity in Nangtse Shag, the Kashag summoned us, the two magistrates, and ordered us to hand them all the notes and documents of GC. I said the following, *'His notes and documents cannot be submitted in one bundle like some neat scrolls. (Page 158) GC himself said that he had traveled to different parts of India and copied old Tibetan documents everywhere, even on cigarette wrappers. He told us to leave*

these notes where they were. He said that he wouldn't be able to put together his history of Tibet if even one note was lost. These must be important documents. How about we two magistrates examining these documents and then leaving them as they are?'

On hearing this, the Kashag told us to look at the documents. Shagchang Surpa and I went through all his documents and did not find anything incriminating. There was one paper which had the names of the Kashag, Yigtsang [Office of the Dalai Lama], etc. Under the name of each office was a list of names of the respective officials. Under the Kashag there was the list of 'sawang' [members of the Kashag]. Under the 'Yigtsang' was the list of secretaries. (Page 159) Under the 'Lhasa Nyerstang' was the list of its staffers. The remaining documents were all about the borders, the Chinese White Stupa, etc. Then there were some personal effects, sealing wax, two chubas, one or two shirts, etc. Under the mattress were 400 Indian rupees. There was nothing else. The paper with the names of offices and officials could be removed without causing any harm. [Hugh Richardson, the British envoy in Lhasa, indirectly confirms this statement by saying that GC regularly contacted high officials upon his return to Lhasa from India]

The Kashag asked us if we saw papers with the Russian hammer and sickle on them. No, there were no such documents. [But among the British files on GC, there was such a paper]. We showed the list of offices and officials to the Kashag on that very day. The Kashag told us to bring all the other documents. I suggested that these documents might help the Tibetan government in the future and that it might be a bad thing to lose them. (Page 160). We made a big cloth bag and put all the documents in it. Then we handed the bag to the Kashag.

Later, GC came to my house and asked me what had become of these documents. I told him of the exchange between us and the Kashag. I told him that not a single document had been lost: *'All the documents had been put in a big cloth bag. Of course, they are not in the same place where you left them. But they are all safe. I think you should complete your book. I will ask the Kashag to return these documents. I am sure the Kashag will return the documents. After all, they are only for writing a book. GC, you should complete your work,'* I suggested.

He replied: *'It can't be done now. Even if all the documents are intact, even if you manage to get all the documents returned (Page 161), I have become insane now. [See interview: Amdo Champa] I can never do this work now. Let the documents go. I don't need them. I have asked you for the documents merely as a friend. But it can't be done now. A great damage has been done now. I worked very hard for these documents.'* With these words, he went back to sipping his chang [Tibetan beer]. We were a middle class family. That's why we always had chang at home. This is what my kind mother-in-law used to say. GC left, promising to meet me frequently in the future. He came to my home every day. He would ask for chang. He would drink chang and lie down. In this way, we used to have small talks. One day, he said: *'I don't blame the Kashag. I know the man who engineered my imprisonment.'* I wondered who that person might be. (Page 162) He only said he would tell me some other day.

During one of his subsequent visits, I asked him again to tell me the name of the person who got him arrested: *'It is funny. But that person has not been able to do you much harm,'* I suggested. GC said: *'That's right. It is no one else than Richardson, the British representative living at Dekyilingkha [the British Mission in Lhasa]. He is the man who put the black hat of guilt on me, an innocent man. Richardson poisoned the Kashag's ear against me. I know why he did this. I have been to Britain. At that time I translated a book. I translated it very well. Since my English is very good, the British government asked me to stay back. I was promised a good salary. But I refused the British offer. Since then, the British government has disliked me. Richardson is a Briton, too.'* [The British secret service reported GC's involvement in the 'Tibet Improvement Party' in Kalimpong to Lhasa, where Richardson informed the Kashag]. (Page 163) *'He [Richardson] asked me some questions in the past. It was quite obvious then that he did not like me. Richardson poisoned the ears of Kapshopa and Surkhang, who, in turn, reported against me to the Kashag. That is why they framed charges against me and put me under arrest. Richardson is responsible for this.'* [See interview: Hugh Richardson, Tsering Shakya].

GC continued: *'When I was in Kalimpong, I met Rabga Pomdatsang [also: Rapga Pangdatsang]. He was well learned and asked intelligent questions. He was a strange man. He was quite highly learned. I spent many days at his home. He warned me against going back to Tibet and promised to pay me a monthly salary. You [Tashi Pelrawa] must have found Rs. 400 or 500 at my home. Did you find it?'* [Rapga Pangdatsang was the leader of the 'Tibet Improvement Party' in Kalimpong, together with other members from the Lhasa nobility]. (Image 52: Portrait of Rabga Pangdatsang, probably in China 1940's).



I said that the money was indeed there. *'It was spent on you. We two magistrates did not use it for ourselves. Neither did the government take it. (Page 164) I sent you food from my own home. Sometimes, I gave money to the 'nyerpas' and told them to buy food for you. That's how your money was spent.'* GC said that the money was the monthly allowance from Rabga. He went on to say: *'The Tibetan government does not like Rabga Pomdatsang. The government knows from where the money came from. This is the reason why the government acted against me. Otherwise, I had done nothing wrong.'* This is what GC told me. Since then, his depression became worse. After His Holiness the Dalai Lama assumed full spiritual and political power, GC was given a room in the Agriculture Office building, near the Kashag office. He was also given a regular salary. We requested him to complete his book of Tibetan history. But he wouldn't listen to us.

(Page 165) GC taught some students [See interview: Thupten Wangpo, Tseten Yudron, Ngawanthondup Narkyid]. Apart from that, he didn't do anything. The Sampho family was closest to him. The late Sampho Shape was highly learned. He helped GC a lot. Sampho received teachings from him. Numerous other members of the government received teachings from him. But Sampho and my family were closest

to him. Later, when the government provided him accommodation and allowance, he remarked that he was very happy due to the kindness of His Holiness the Dalai Lama: *'However, my mind has gone crazy.'*

(...) (Page 167) GC told me that during the interrogation the government had charged him of being a Russian spy. This is all we know. We do not know the details of charges leveled against him. He looked depressed one day, the day on which he was subjected to the hot interrogation. One morning, I came to the office early and offered him words of consolation. I asked him what had happened to him and what charges had been made against him. He said he had been asked to name the printer of counterfeit notes. The Kashag had charged him of distributing counterfeit notes. Secondly, he had been accused of being a Russian spy and asked how he had contacted them: (Page 168) He continued: *'I repeated what I had told you before. I had nothing else to say. I was interrogated gently for three or four consecutive days. I said that I had nothing else to say. When this was reported to the Kashag, Kapshopa said that there was no other option now, as to use the method of hot interrogation on me'*. This is how the hot interrogation method came to be used. Otherwise, Surkhang Depon of the Inquiry Committee was very fond of GC.

During one of my personal conversations with GC, he said the following: *'Before my arrest, Kapshopa used to treat me very well. He used to treat me like his root-guru. (Page 169) But later, they [the Kashag, including Kapshopa] arrested me at the instigation of others [Richardson]. Similarly, they drove me to insanity. This is the work of Surkhang and Kapshopa. After my release, one day Kapshopa sent a servant to invite me to his house. I declined the invitation at first. The servant arrived again and insisted on my visit. This time I went. Kapshopa was waiting to receive me at the head of his doorsteps. He expressed regrets over my recent tragedy: 'We had to arrest you as part of our duty. But we tried to be as lenient as possible.' Kapshopa was giving himself a lot of credits.'* I said: *'What's this all about? [The arrest] was perhaps the consequence of my karma in the past life. I was innocent. I was working for my country. I never depended on foreign forces. (Page 170). Whether you did me anything good or not, you have driven me, a healthy man, into insanity. You have reduced me to a half human being!'* [See interview: Tseten Yudron, Amdo Champa]

'Despite that, Kapshopa insisted that I spent the night at his place. I did. I drank tea and alcohol and I had food. Kapshopa said I should feel free to approach him whenever I needed any favor. I said I did not want to stay at his home and that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had given me a house of my own: 'I only came to your house today because you had sent the servant twice. But I will never come to your house in the future! I have come here this time, because you asked me to do so. I will certainly not ask you for any favor.' I never went to him after that.'

(...) (Page 174) Later, GC had a wife [Tseten Yudron]. She was a Khampa woman [from Eastern Tibet]. GC met her after he started working at Shol office. She wasn't a bright woman. Cooking was all she could do. GC used to say: *'She does not know anything. If I gave her a substantial sum of money, she would cook very well.'* [See interview: Amdo Champa, Tseten Yudron]

(...) (Page 175) GC frequently offered to teach me scriptures. I appreciated his offer, but said I wouldn't be able to persevere since I was used to the life of distraction. *'Never mind, we can take rest whenever you are bored,'* he would say. He kept on encouraging me to study scriptures. I was then young and had no interest in studying scriptures. However, I asked him to teach me English. He said that I would be able to learn English, but that first I must listen to him and study scriptures for one year. Then he would teach me English. This is how I learned English in the end. I never went to school to learn English. (Page 176) If I studied the scriptures first, he promised to teach me English. He would say things like this: *'If you want to play or go out, we can stop the lesson. I will not insist on continuing the scriptural lesson. If you want to learn English, then you will definitely learn it. Just think over this. Suppose you want to go to Chushur. First, you have to go through Kyangthang Nagang. Then you have to go to Dhenbag. After crossing the Trisam Bridge, you will gradually reach Chushur. You won't reach Chushur straightaway. Similarly, you must listen to me and study the scriptural text first. I guarantee you that you will later learn English.'*

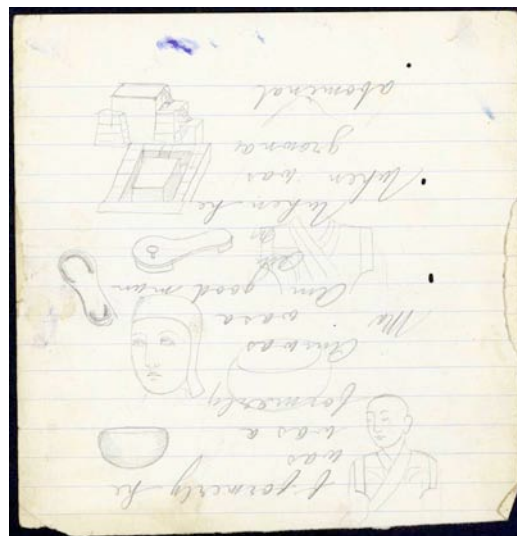
But I never really studied any scriptural text. In those days, the text of Shonu Dhakme's Story was rare. I had a scroll of that story. (Page 177) One day, my scroll was lying somewhere in the house. GC saw it and asked me what it was. I told him that it was Shonyu Dhakme's Story. He said it was an interesting story. I said I could not understand anything, no matter however many times I read it. He said that it was fine and that I would understand it. He took a pillow and lay near where I was sitting. Smoking a cigarette and sipping chang, he asked me to read it with him. We read it *'sholokha'* [a verse of four lines] by *'sholoka'*. It was written in a poetic language. GC explained the meanings of all the words to me. We read it three or four times. With the help of GC, I was able to understand it. I noted down the words, whose meanings I had forgotten. Then I would ask GC to tell me again. When I read it later, I could more or less remember the meanings of the words.

(Page 178) GC drank a lot of *'arak'* [a hard alcoholic drink]. He always carried arak on his person. He drank whenever he wanted to. One day, though, I advised him not to drink arak anymore: *'It will harm your health. Arak kills people. Don't drink this strong liquor! It is better to drink chang. We always have chang at home. You can drink chang whenever you visit us.'* I had a servant at the time. His name was Bhuney. He was not interested in religion or lamas. But due to some karmic relationship, he was very fond of GC. He would frequently disappear from his work to meet GC. (Page 179) When I asked where he had gone, he would say he had gone to GC's house to ask if he needed anything: *'I went there to serve him.'*

(...) (Page 180) Sometimes, he asked me to accompany him on his visits to the temples. I never refused these invitations. In the Jokhang Temple he would go straight to the statue of Avalokitesvara [the Buddha of Compassion]. Then he would climb the steps and visit the shrine room housing the statue of Tsongkhapa [the founder of the Gelugpa sect], then to the statue of the Sakyamuni Buddha and finally up to the shrine room housing the statue of Songtsen Gampo [one of the three Warrior Kings]. At this point, he would say, *'our pilgrimage ends here. Let's return.'* If I suggested going to the upper floor to the shrine

of Dragmo and Palden Lhamo to make tea offerings, he would say this was unnecessary. He would leave from the southern door, which was not far from his house. [See interview: Amdo Champa]

(Page 181) He would sometimes invite me to his house. We would go there together and smoke. Then I would take leave and ask him if he would like to visit my home the next day. Sometimes, he came and other times he didn't. GC had lots of documents and notes. He had many books. There were many notebooks scattered on the floor. Most of the notebooks had his own handwriting. (Image 53: Original notes of GC, India 1940's). He had written most of his notes in notebooks [from India, Elephant Brand]. Some notes were on loose Tibetan papers. There were notes even on cigarette wrappers. All in all, the bag that we [the two magistrates] confiscated and had delivered to the Kashag was huge; it had the size of a human body. Most of the notes were on tiny scraps of paper. Some of the documents were in an archaic script; the kind that ordinary people like me can't read. (Page 182) All these documents ended up at the Kashag.



On the other side of the Kalons' seats were many identical-looking white bags. The petitions, on which the Kashag could not take action, were put into those bags. Those petitions were as good as dead. GC's bag was there, too, even one or two years later. I saw it when I sometimes approached the Kashag. Later I told GC that he could try to reclaim his documents. I promised to request the Kashag for his documents. I promised to reclaim the documents. But GC wouldn't listen to me. He said he had absolutely no need for these documents. (Page 183) Actually, the documents were intact at the Kashag. They were neither lost, nor burnt or destroyed. [Upon his release, GC did not get all of his documents back. Some remained with the Kashag and were later stolen or lost, See: interview Hortsang Jigme]

Other than that, GC had no material possessions. No black trunks [There were rumors about two black trunks]. Strangely, he had a life-size doll made of rubber. GC asked me not to tell anyone about this doll. *'I am not a monk. If I took a wife, I would spend time talking with her and this would cause my work to suffer. That's why I brought this rubber doll from India.'* I told no one about this. Of course, this rubber doll couldn't breathe. Otherwise, it was a veritable woman. He said he had reasons for keeping this doll: *'I am not a monk. I need this sometimes, when I fail to control my desire. If I had a wife, then I would talk with her and spend time cooking.'* (Page 184) *This causes my writing project to suffer. So, I keep this doll.'* The doll was in a bag. It was the kind that you could blow up. At that time [when the house was searched, 1946], the doll was fully blown. GC had a small house: two rooms, plus a tiny kitchen. A white curtain screened his bedroom. Shagjang Surpa went in and said there was something in a bag. We opened the bag. Inside was a female doll. Its body was made of rubber. The face had been sculpted and fitted on the

body by GC himself. It looked like a real human being. It had hair also. It was made like a nomad woman. Shagjang got scared. He shouted: *'O Colleague! O Colleague! There is something weird here. Come and have a look.'* (Page 185) Far from seeing anything like this before, Shagjang had not even heard of it. As for me, although I had not seen this sort of things, I had heard stories of such things: *'Such things exist in foreign countries. Don't be scared,'* I said. I ripped the doll and got rid of it. [This story is highly disputed. But K. Dhondup also mentions the doll in his famous article on GC, *The Man Behind The Legend*, Tibet Review 1978].

There were no material possessions in his house. There were some clothes and kitchen articles. There was this rubber doll. Otherwise, there was nothing in the house. But there were those documents, a biggish table and some small chairs, his bed. The rest of place was strewn with documents and notes. There were notes on small scraps of paper. There were books also. There were some books in what looked like English. There were small notebooks. At the end of one of the notebooks, he had written the following: *In the past there were many 'pandits' [scholars] in India. (Page 186) Nowadays, there are no pandits in India. However, there is one pandit in Lhasa. And that is Gendun Choephel.'*

There were also lots of letters, looking like tantric scripts, on the top. I couldn't read them. Then there were three pages in Tibetan, which was described as the translation of the tantric scripts. The Kashag put this on the table. Kapshopa and Surkhang were surprised. They remarked that it was a great feat to summarize so many pages into just three pages of translation. GC, they remarked, was indeed a great scholar. They kept the three pages on the table. The remaining documents and notes were in the sack. GC's signature was very strange. A person who could only read Tibetan would see 'Gendun Choephel' written in Tibetan. (Page 187) But the same signature would show 'Gendun Choephel' to a person who could only read English!

His paintings were astounding. The Samdrup Phodrang [Sampho] family had a small house. As one enters the door, one will see a lion and a tiger painted on the wall. At the first glance, they looked like real animals. GC had very deft hands. [None of his wall paintings survived]

Later, when GC became ill, I went to see him. I asked him who his doctor was. He said he wasn't seriously ill, that he was only feeling weary and that he could go for walks anymore. I asked him to send me a word if he needed anything. I asked him, whether my servant [Bhuney] visited him every day? *'That's right. He visits me every day.'* He replied. (Page 196) I asked him to send me a word through my servant if he needed anything. (...) I have never seen him since then. The night before his death, GC told Bhuney that they were now meeting for the last time. (Page 197) Strange. That evening Bhuney came to me and reported what GC had told him. I asked him how GC's illness was. He replied that GC did not look too bad and that he was eating well. *'This is very strange. Isn't he about to die?'* I asked. He said no. GC had told him that he wasn't very ill.

But GC died the following day, probably early in the morning. I called for Bhuney. He was nowhere to be found. I asked my wife if she had sent him somewhere. She said no. After some time he arrived, looking sad. I asked him where he had been. (Page 198) He said he had gone to GC's house to find that he had died. I asked him, who else was there. He said there was no one there. I asked how he had died. GC's wife [Tseten Yudron] had told him that he had died in the morning, just as the sun was rising. Before dying, GC had told his wife that he wanted to face east. Normally, he always faced south. But that morning he wanted to face east. So his wife helped him turn his face to the East. After that, he died.

When Bhuney went there, he found GC dead in an upright posture. There was a pillow behind him. Otherwise, there was nothing supporting his body upright. Then some monk officials, who had been his students, took the body for cremation. My servant also went there. At the time of his death, there had been no one except his wife. [She was not there] GC had said a prayer at the time of his death. He had not taken any medicine. (Page 199) It seems the Chinese had offered to employ GC. It seems the Chinese had told him to work for a salary. GC told me about this: *'Since I am famous, the Chinese asked me to work for them. They wanted to pay me a salary. I said that I was incapable of doing any work. I have spent many years in jail. I am insane. I am of use to no one. I can't do any work.'* He was ill perhaps for some months. He wasn't ill for a very long time.

JU KESANG'S POEM

Born 1960 in Machu, Northeastern Tibet. He is a famous Tibetan intellectual, writer and poet. Composed a poem in the honor of GC and edited several publications of rare books on Tibetan Buddhism. Presently working as translator in Golok Prefecture (Qinghai Province). See also the interview with Ju Kesang.

Gendun Choephel

Once you understood the mortality of the world
You found it easy to laugh, but you also knew how to cry.

Having smashed to pieces innumerable large and small terminological clay pots
You merged the spaces left behind into one space.
However thick the thread of hope and fear
You always had a needle with an eye of just the right size.

On the one hand, existence or being -
And on the other, non-existence and not-being -
As inclusive as these are,
They don't apply to you.
Thus, nearing the age of fifty
(No - fifty is not your age,
That is just the march of time.
That's not you.
You never left us with a hoary old conclusion to your life,
Just as you never knew what it was like to write the poetry of old age)
Your mortal head is bloodied
You knock on the door of the world beyond.
Pulling a long chain of many question marks for
Things you left unanswered
In a dim twilight I saw you
Slowly departing from the highest ridge above the snow.

The smoke swirling from the rifle barrel
Cleared after a while
And I found your grave at a bend in history.

© **Ronald Schwartz (translator)**

འཇུག་པ་ལ་བཟང་།

དགོ་འབྲུག་ ཚོས་འཕེལ།



(ཚན་པ་གཉིས་)

འཇིག་རྟེན་འཇིག་རྟེན་ཏུ་སྐྱེས་པ་ནས་བཟུང་
ཕྱིད་རང་དཀོན་སྐྱེས་ལ་ཅུ་ཡང་ཕྱིན།

ཐ་སྐྱོད་ཀྱི་མ་འཁུར་ཚེ་རྒྱུད་ཏུ་མ་
སིལ་བུར་བཅག་ཉེ།
ན་མ་མཁའ་དང་ན་མ་མཁའ་ལྷག་གཅིག་བཟུང་
རེ་དོགས་ཀྱི་ཕྱུད་པ་རྒྱ་ཞིག་ཀྱང་
རྣམ་གཞག་གི་ཁབ་མེག་རི་ཉུར་ཕྱེད།

གཅིག་ནི་ཡོད་པའམ་ཡིན་པ་དང་
ཅིག་ཤོས་ནི་མེད་པ་དང་མིན་པའི་མིག་ཟུང་དེ
རི་ཉུར་བཟུང་བྱང་
ཕྱིད་རང་མི་ཤོང་བལ་
ཕྱི་ན་ལ་བཟུང་འི་གངས་ལ་ཉེ་བའི་ཚེ་
(མིན་—— སོ་གྲངས་ལ་ཉེ་བའི་ཉུར་
ཏུ་ལ་ཕྱི་བཟུང་པ་ལགས་ཀྱི།

ཕྱིད་ཉིད་ག་ལ་ཡིན།
ཕྱིད་ཀྱིས་ཐོས་ཚོག་བཟུང་པ་ཞིག་བཞག་མེད་ལ་
ནས་འཇོགས་ཀྱི་ཉུན་རག་ནི་དེ་བལ་བྱང་ཕྱིས་མ་རྒྱུད་)།
འཇིག་རྟེན་ཀྱི་མཚན་པོ་ཁྱེད་ལ་བཟུང་ཉེ།
འཇིག་རྟེན་ལས་འདས་པའི་སྐོ་སྐྱེགས་བཟུངས་པ་ན་
བདག་གིས་ནི་རབ་རིམ་ཀྱི་ས་རྒྱུད་ཅིག་ལ་
ཕྱིད་རང་ལན་མེད་པའི་འདྲི་རྟེན་ལ་ཏུ་མ་ལས་ཟུབ་པའི་
ཕྱགས་ཐག་རིང་པོ་ཞིག་ཏུ་དེ་
ས་ཤང་གི་གངས་མིག་མཚོ་ཤོས་ལས་
དལ་བུར་བཟུང་པ་མཚོང་།

ཉིག་ཤོལ་ * ཁྱ་རིང་གི་ཁ་ན་འཐིབས་པའི་
རྣམ་ཏུ་དཀོན་པོ་དེ་ཕྱིན་ཀྱིས་དྲངས་པ་ན་
ཕྱིད་ཀྱི་བང་སོ་དེ་
སོ་རྒྱལ་ཀྱི་རྒྱུག་མཚམས་ཞིག་ནས་རྟེན་ཏུང་།

TIBET MIRROR PRESS

News from world history, politics and the modern world (1930-51)

The initial idea to work with selected passages of the 'Melong' in the film was threefold. Firstly, I hoped to show the kind of intellectual environment GC had been exposed to, when he was in India between 1934 and 1946. The 'Melong' at the time was full with news from the Second World War, new technical achievements etc., thus exposing its Tibetan readers to a 'modern' and often unknown world.

Secondly, I tried to show that there had been efforts from within the Tibetan community to open up and modernize their country. Although Tharchin, ethnically a Tibetan himself, was a missionary, raised and educated in Christian boarding schools, he still had a heartfelt love for Tibet and his own people.

Thirdly, I hoped to illustrate that Tharchin managed to integrate the different Tibetan regions (at that time under Tibetan, Chinese and Indian rule) in one newspaper. In this sense he was among the first to create and establish a Tibetan identity, which was not bound to geography and politics only, but rather to culture and language [More on this in the interview with Tsering Sakya]. This 'nationalist' aspect of Tibetan identity later played an important role in the formation of a 'new' Tibetan identity – especially since the Dalai Lama's escape to India in the late 1950's. Except for a few visual references, I did not manage to include most of the passages below in the film.

Untitled

May 1930, Vol. 5/12

A drawing of the famous German airship Zeppelin, flying over the German city of *Ya ru sha len* [?]

Sino-Japanese Battle in Shanghai

March 1932, Vol. 6/6

Under massive reinforcement and heavy aerial and surface bombardment, the Chinese forces retreated from the city. After taking over the city, the Japanese forces pursued the Chinese, but the Chinese forces dug trenches and, fenced with earth, fire, electricity and other materials, they fought back. Japanese forces suffered heavy casualties, and the Chinese captured a large number of weapons and other equipment. A Japanese general was also killed. A large number of planes and ships landed. They caused a lot of damage to the Chinese. About 100,000 soldiers died on both sides. With the disastrous fighting going on, the international nations [Völkerbund?] met, to bring about some peace. So fighting ceased and talks between the two warring sides started. Today the battle of Shanghai is over and the Japanese forces have withdrawn.

Mahatma Gandhi's Vow to Stay on Hunger-strike unto Death

October 1932, Vol. 6/9

Recently, the British government established that the constituents to the Central Government be composed of representatives on the basis of 'religion' and 'social status'. In this, the high Hindu castes, like the 'Brahmin' and 'royal members', and the lower castes, including the ordinary people and blacksmiths, were divided into two different sections, and their constituents set up accordingly. Mahatma Gandhi has

demanded that there is no need for any division and that both the upper and low Hindu castes should be treated as one.

Tsipon Kungo Lungshar of Tibet

September 1934, Vol. 7/12

A brief translation of a report that appeared in 'The Statesman' [Indian newspaper], Simla and Calcutta, 30th May:

Lungshar, who was once Tibet's military commander-in-chief and the Dalai Lama's *chensel* [personal favorite], had his eyes gouged out by the Tibetan authorities on allegations of having extended his powers on different monasteries and places. Lungshar lost his power after the Dalai Lama passed away. Later, the monastic authorities began to regain their power and pressured the National Assembly to also arrest the Dalai Lama's *chensel* Kunphela for being the ringleader [of the conspiracy]. On the same basis, Lungshar was arrested on 10th of May, on allegations of conspiring to rise against the Tibetan authorities. On 20th of May his eyes were gouged out as punishment. Alas! It is really true of the saying: *'Suffering follows happiness, and downfall accompanies success.'*

The Capital of Tibet gets Electricity

August 1936, Vol. 8/6

The Tibetan government has set up an electric plant in the previous year of 1925 at Drapchi, outside of Lhasa. Some factories (*bzo rigs*) are already run on electricity. According to our source, the city of Lhasa is gradually being connected with electricity. Initially Jowo's head and Jowo Rinpoche's offering room in the *Tsuglakhang* [Jokhang Temple] and the homes of officials and aristocrats have been connected to electricity. Soon, the Barkhor and all of Lhasa will be filled with electric lights.

Caption: Mackenzie Cottage [when GC was in Kalimpong, he used to stay in this house of his friend Babu Tharchin. Right below, on the 10th mile, the main street, was the printing press of the 'Tibet Mirror']

Untitled

September 1936, Vol. 8/7

Stalin's slogan of war: *'Prepare to sacrifice one's life'*

Stalin, the leader of Red Russia

Recently, the leader of Red Russia, Stalin, said to his people: *'We are now at the sunset of a critical period. You people, for the progress of the fatherland, will soon receive calls for sacrifices. Prepare yourself for such a call.'* Judging from such calls, it seems likely that there will be a big war soon.

German Chancellor Hitler

At the grand closing ceremony of the Olympic Games that were held in the German capital city of Berlin on 16th August 1936, and attended by 100,000 people, the national flag of Germany was pulled down and handed over to chancellor Hitler. In a loud voice, he requested the youths of the world to go to the next Olympic Games to be held in the Japanese capital city of Tokyo. The 1940 Olympic Games will be held in Tokyo.

The Protector of Tibet, the Dalai Lama, is born again

August 1937, Vol. 9/3

According to an English newspaper, based on a report from Nanjing on 21st July, a child, presently aged two years old, has been recognized as the next Dalai Lama. The boy was born into a wealthy family near the grasslands of Kokonor [today Qinghai Province], some hundred miles from China's northwestern Tsaidam Tsongon [in the Tibetan region of Amdo].

Personal Attendant [of the 13th Dalai Lama] Kungo Kunphela and Gung Changlochen

January 1938, Vol. 9/7,8

In an article, titled 'the Personal Attendant Detained' that appeared in Vol. 7, No. 11, of the 1st month of the Tibetan Wood-Dog year, it was included that *Kungo Kunphela* was detained and banished to Chabnag monastery in Kongpo [in the south of Tibet] by the National Assembly, about three months after the Dalai Lama's passing away. In another article of the same year, in August, Vol. 7, No. 12, it was reported that *Kungo Tsipon Lungshar* was arrested by the Tibetan government on 10th [of May] and had both his eyes gauged out on 20th, on allegations of being the ringleader of a subversive group. At this time, many other nobles were banished outside Tibet. One of them was *Gung Changlochen*. Recently, *Kungo Kunphela* and *Gung Changlochen*, together with their attendants, managed to arrive safely in Kalimpong through Calcutta. They explained that they were banished to Kongpo after the [13th] Dalai Lama had passed away in the Water-Bird year [1933], and due to the sheer unsuitability of the humidity [in Kongpo] to their physical health, they had moved to India [on the pretence] to go on pilgrimage. They had left Kongpo on the 20th day of the 8th Tibetan month, and it took 24 days for them to reach *Drukney* ('Brugs gnas). After staying in Bhutan for about a month, they had moved to Calcutta, where they stayed for another week. Now, they are in Kalimpong.

Untitled

April 1938, Vol. 9/10

German forces in Austria:

(Underneath is a drawing of Europe, listening to whatever German Chancellor Hitler says).

What Hitler said: 'Germany has no territorial ambitions in Spain and it has no desire to help any of the parties [China, Japan] in the war of the East, but it does not like the expansion of communism. The

German government will recognize the Manchu Emperor. It will not remain in the League of Nations. It will strive to regain German territories lost earlier.

From Rabga, son of Pomdha [Rapga Pangdatsang]

April 1938, Vol. 9/10

To all the dear friends, who belong to the same race, creed and country as myself [Tibet]:

(Image 54: Original article with a portrait of Rapga Pangdatsang) The great religious and political sayings of Indian and Tibetan scholars are basically for the sincere benefit of everyone, and everyone should embrace it. Particularly the term, king and subject, first originated in India. The first king was appointed for the benefit of everyone by the people, and given proper privileges that the term 'king' became common like the term 'tax'. Descendents of these kings underwent countless severe hardships for the welfare of their people, even to the point of sacrificing their own lives. When our ancestors



asked our first king, Nyatri Tsenpo, [who resided] on Mount Yarla Sampo in Yarlung, where he was from, he, unable to understand the language, pointed at the sky. The People thought he descended from the heavens, and so he was enthroned as the king. The *Manjushri Root Tantra* says that he belongs to the Licchavi clan, one of the three Sakya clans [like Buddhas himself].

These 'Religious Kings' venerated the deities of Buddhism and worked incessantly towards bridging the gap between rich and poor. Later, some powerful kings cared less for the welfare of their subjects, and always indulged in their oppression and control. Unable to tolerate this, many intelligent and popular people, sacrificed theirs and countless other lives, for the benefit of the common people. All the subjects had great respect and faith in them and they were honored, even after their death. These individuals, who worked during their lifetime for the common people, and were even ready to sacrifice their own lives, should be respected by everyone, when they die like one's own people, without looking too deep into their mistakes. Whatever they have done, it was for the welfare of the common people. Each of their words can move your faith and belief. These days, some people stir up trouble, simply because they have a personal disagreement and thereby make their own people suffer or dependent on others. This is very bad. Personally, I have since my childhood, always thought about the welfare of the common people. Now after having seen, heard and studied about India and China...

Continued page 27

...our Tibet is politically and economically in a good situation, and I have great hope that it will maintain its freedom amongst other foreign countries [China and British India]. The common people of Tibet lack education, though. Thinking less about itself, and more about the majority, the [Tibetan] government should provide clothing, food, shelter and roads for the people, in order to bring about equality between

the leaders and the [common] people. Even if there is only a little problem, troubling the people, it should be investigated by the government and prevented. But the people should also think about their own country. These days, educated and young Chinese students strap their body with explosives, called *gola*, and run towards enemy tanks and other war machines [of the Japanese], thereby causing heavy damage and casualties. Even, when there is fighting amongst the [Chinese] provinces, it stops and they unite, when there is an external enemy.

Earlier, when the Drapchi regiment of the Central Tibetan government arrived in Ba [Batang in Eastern Tibet, Kham], to fight against the Sichuan Chinese forces, Baba Kalsang procured arms from the Xining Chinese [Qinghai province] band tried to unite with the Tibetans. But in the end, he was lured by the Sichuanese [people from Sichuan] and eventually ended fighting against the Tibetan government forces. It is a reminder, of what the country has taught its people, about whom to consider close and whom to consider foreigners. Some countries, to protect their kings, the subjects, and the [different] regions keep huge amount of modern weapons and sacrifice many lives. Looking at such behavior, our Tibet [Rapga seems to include Kham, by saying *our* Tibet] is presently free and not under anyone's power, but time has come to make everything more efficient. Instead of engaging in self-damaging activities, like the compulsory horse service and heavy land taxes, it [the Tibetan government] should concentrate on more important matters, like advising its people to keep out the Chinese. Particularly those, who have some disagreement, should settle their petty differences and work towards making justice and taxes fair. This will make the people love their country more. However to do this, it is not enough to cut some branches. We should deal with the root of the matter. I have written the above for the wellbeing of my country and countrymen, as I could not keep it in my heart any longer.

Untitled

July/September 1938, Vol. 10/2

The Caption to a drawing:

In July, when the whole of Europe was nearly dragged into an all-out war due to disputes between Germany and Czechoslovakia, the famous Prime Minister of England, Lord Chamberlain, managed to extinguish the fire of war for the time being.

Sino-Japanese War

November 1938, Vol. 10/3

There has been heavy fighting along Yangtze River in recent days. The Japanese forces have long tried to capture the Chinese city of Hankow. Guangdong [province] in the South has already been taken over by the Japanese with large naval and other forces. The Chinese forces retreated from the area, fearing that their strong resistance might result in the deaths of many ordinary people. This is, why the Japanese are said to have easily taken over the region. Now the Japanese have been able to capture the city of Hankow after launching a major offensive. The Japanese are now planning to capture the Sichuan city of Chengdu, the current capital city of China. The Japanese are hoping that the regions like Batang, near Tibet and

those bordering Burma and Yunnan, will be their next battlefields. Recently, Chengdu has been bombed by the Japanese air forces with chemical (*dug rdzas*) bombs, called *go la*.

Caption underneath a drawing of Hitler

A small throat for a big mouth.

Untitled

November, 1939, Vol. 10/11

The reincarnation of the Dalai Lama,
Radiant in the light of one thousand suns
Smiled on the spiritual field of Tibet
Bringing glory to this world

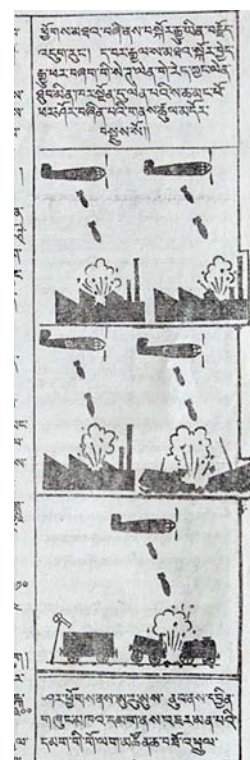
Russo-German War

October 1942, Vol. 11/3

Heavy fighting is raging on around the Don and Volga rivers these days. As written in the news of earlier months, the Germans, in order to capture the Russian city of Stalingrad, launched all its forces, but they have only been able to get control of a few of its roads, streets, and markets. The 'Uchsui Tank Wheel Factory' in the northern part of the city, remains unoccupied. (*Image 55: An illustration of the necessity to bombard German infrastructure, Tibet Mirror 1940's*).

Caption:

German propaganda claimed that England would be destroyed and reduced to the fate of France within a week.



Indian Independence

September 1947, Vol. 15/11

May the holy Indian land of Hindustan be prosperous!

Caption: May Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Indian freedom struggle, live forever!

Caption: May the first Governor-General of Independent India, Lord Mountbatten, be successful!

Caption: May the Prime Minister of Independent India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, be triumphant!

May the Indian State of Pakistan become an independent country of its own!

In the great holy land of India, there are a variety of people and religions! Although they are different countries at present [Pakistan and India], may they be reunited soon!

Caption: Pakistan's Governor-General, Muhammad Ali Jinnah

Caption: Prime Minister Liaquat Ali

The People's Liberation Army [PLA] in Gyantse

November 1951, Vol. 19/8

It has been learned that a month before, on 13th day of the 9th Tibetan month, some 500 Chinese soldiers arrived in Gyantse and are expected to shortly reach Dromo and Phari [near the Indian border]

A list of weapons in this world

According to news from France, the USA, England and France have called for talks between all the countries, in order to bring complete transparency as to how many weapons are possessed by all the nations. However, it is difficult to believe the countries honestly revealing everything.

Caption: 1. *Marching with Mao Zedong. Photos, when PLA forces arrived in Lhasa*

Caption: 2. *PLA soldiers waving their five-starred flag*

Caption: 3. *Chinese forces marching through the Barkhor in Lhasa towards their new army camp.*

Liberation song:

Arise! Tibetans brothers

Living under occupation

Work unceasingly

To revolt in a united way

To liberate the Tibetans from suffering

One should sacrifice one's life

Arise! All the Tibetan brothers

Living under forcible occupation

To regain freedom and prosperity

We must fight together

Arise! Arise! Arise! Tibetan brothers

Arise! Arise! Arise!

© **Riika Virtanen (translator)**

PART 4

THE APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGY

Year	Place	What
THE IDEA (first preparations)		
1998 August	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	I have the idea to do a documentary film on Amdo GC (GC). Working title: <i>The Life of Gendun Choephel</i> .
		Prof. M. Oppitz accepts me as his Ph. D. student in Visual Anthropology. He agrees that the documentary will be the main 'text' of the dissertation.
1998 September	Paris, <i>France</i>	Meeting the French Tibetologist <i>Heather Stoddard</i> , who wrote the first (Western) biography of GC: <i>Le mendiant de l'Amdo</i> in 1985. She assures me of her support.
	Jona <i>Switzerland</i>	Meeting <i>Rakra Tethong</i> , a former student and friend of GC from Lhasa (1946). During the whole project (1999-2005) <i>Rakra</i> will be one of my main advisors and informants.
1998 September October	Dharamshala <i>India</i>	Meeting with the Tibetan writer and political activist <i>Jamyang Norbu</i> and the scholar <i>Tashi Tsering</i> , who has a large collection of photos, paintings and writings of GC. Both agree to support me. Tashi Tsering suggests a number of people to get in touch with (for interviews).
		Presenting a festival of Swiss films together with <i>Jamyang Norbu</i> and <i>Tashi Tsering</i> from the <i>Amnye Machen Institute</i> : the first festival of this kind in Dharamshala.
1998 November December	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Intensive reading on GC, Tibetan history, the contemporary situation in Tibet (under Chinese rule) and the 'Myth of Tibet'.
		Writing of a proposal (research design) for my dissertation to apply for grants. After receiving a lot of encouragement, I decide to continue with my idea.
		Email contact with two Tibetologist (<i>Donald Lopez</i> , <i>Toni Huber</i>), who both work on GC. They promise to share their materials (translations) with me: GC's <i>Travel Guide to India</i> (Huber) and his last and to date, most controversial work on <i>Madhyamika</i> philosophy (Lopez).
1999 January February	London <i>England</i>	Meeting the historian <i>Tsering Shakya</i> and <i>Yangdon Dhondup</i> (YD). Asking YD to be my guide and translator for my planned research trip to Tibet.
	St. Andrews <i>Scotland</i>	Doing an interview with <i>Hugh Richardson (94)</i> , the last British envoy to Tibet. He had a hand in the arrest of GC in 1946. Only a few months after the interview, HR passes away.

1999 January February	Göttingen <i>Germany</i>	Meeting <i>Irmgard Mengele</i> , who had just translated the first Tibetan biography of GC into English. She gives me the only remaining copy of GC article on ' <i>Whether the world is round or flat?</i> ' (Tibet Mirror, 1938)
		Visiting the <i>Niedersächsische Staatsbibliothek</i> that has a large collection of water colors of the Indian artist <i>Kanwal Krishna</i> from an Indian expedition through Tibet, of which GC was a part in 1938 (the organizer was the scholar Rahul Sankrityayan. Unfortunately no image of GC.
		Meeting the indologist <i>Gustav Roth</i> , who is in possession of the famous sketchbook of GC (which Roth had bought from <i>Kanwal Krishna</i>). The small book is dating back to the expedition through Tibet in 1938.
1999 March April	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Applying for grants to do the <i>research</i> for my PH. D. I get financial support for two years.
		At the same time applying for support to <i>produce the film</i> , which cannot be financed with the grants alone. I get enough support for the planned trips to Tibet and India.
1999 May June	London <i>UK</i>	Discussing the research trip to Tibet with YD, who is working on her Ph. D. on Tibetan literature. She fluently speaks Chinese, (Lhasa-) Tibetan, German and English, which makes her the best possible choice.
		Visiting the <i>British Film Institute (BFI)</i> and the <i>British Library (BL)</i> , in search of archival material (films, photos and political files) of the 1930's/1940's. First viewings of an abundance of material.
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Preparing the research trip to Tibet in detail. Putting together a list of places to go and people to meet, consulting the notes that I had gathered over the last few months.
	Jona <i>Switzerland</i>	Several meetings with <i>Rakra Tethong</i> , who helps me to trace people and places in Tibet that played an important role in GC's life.
		Following up the applications for financial support. I now have sufficient finances to do the trip together with YD.
THE RESEARCH (in Tibet)		
1999 July	Dharamshala <i>India</i>	Meeting <i>Tashi Tsering</i> to discuss my list of places and people. He suggests more people, (lost) writings of GC and materials that I should look for in Tibet.
1999 August October	Beijing <i>PR China</i>	Meeting YD, who is finalizing our trip through Northeastern- and Central Tibet. She has some new names of people to meet from an old Tibetan professor, who is an admirer of GC and his works.
	Zhoepang, Yama Tashi Kyil, Labrang, Rebkong, Xining <i>Northeastern Tibet (Amdo)</i>	Several weeks of (exhausting) bus journeys through Eastern Tibet in the footsteps of GC, often to very remote areas. The <i>places</i> , where he lived are still there, but in a process of fast modernization and/or renovation.
		We manage to trace most of the people on our list and since many are very old, we decide to <i>interview</i> them on the spot, among them <i>Alak Yongtsin</i> , an old friend of GC from Labrang monastery (1920's). In the birthplace of GC, we live in the house of his family.

1999 August October	<i>Amdo</i>	We are overwhelmed by the <i>support</i> we get from local people, who are proud of our interest in one of their own.
	Lhasa <i>Central Tibet</i>	Roaming through Lhasa in search of <i>places</i> , where GC may have left his traces (mainly wall paintings). Unfortunately all of them have been destroyed since the early 1950's.
	Lhasa <i>Central Tibet</i>	We manage to trace some contemporaries; among them we <i>interview</i> his wife <i>Tseten Yudron</i> and <i>Amdo Champa</i> , an old friend from the time shortly before GC's death in 1951.
		By the son of a former friend of GC, we are given several <i>texts</i> that have not been published before, among them a letter he had written from prison (1946) and a study on astrology and Western geography.
1999 November December	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Evaluating the first research trip: I already have an interesting set of <i>interviews</i> with contemporaries (9) and young Tibetans (3). It will be possible to shoot in Tibet if we are careful and work in a small team, 'acting' as tourists. Through the research I could already make a preselection of the most interesting <i>places</i> for the shooting, both in Northeastern Tibet and Lhasa. Trying to find a Tibetan, to translate all the interviews into English. The translations turn out to be a major problem during the making of the film, since the very distinct Tibetan dialects are not understood by everybody.
	Jona <i>Switzerland</i>	Discussing the <i>texts of GC</i> that I was given in Lhasa, with <i>Rakra Tethong</i> . He is convinced that they were written by GC. He had heard of these texts, but never seen them before.
2000 January February	London <i>UK</i>	Visiting the <i>British Film Institute (BFI)</i> and the <i>British Library (BL)</i> . This time gathering a lot of the researched materials (preselection). In the <i>BFI</i> I had the relevant archival films copied to VHS (20 hours) and at the <i>BL</i> I made copies of the political files, in which GC is mentioned.
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Preparing the research trip to India. During my previous studies I had read of GC's Indian friends (from 1938), hoping they were still alive.
THE RESEARCH (in India)		
2000 February April	Dharamshala <i>India</i>	Going through <i>Tashi Tsering's</i> collection: especially the photos and paintings of GC are visually of great importance for the film. Together with Tashi Tsering I select a number of passages from GC's writings that have not been translated into English yet. My main focus is on his <i>critical thinking</i> and his <i>travel notes</i> . Again, finding suitable translators, turns out to be very difficult. Interview with <i>Alak Tsayul</i> , a former monk of Labrang monastery.
	New Delhi	Meeting some family members of GC's late Indian friends. The family of the former political activist and Buddhist scholar <i>Rahul Sankrityayan</i> turns out to be very helpful. Through them I get access to a set of articles, written on the expeditions GC made with his Indian friend in Tibet (1938). See: <i>Indian friends on GC</i>

2000 February April	Bombay	Visiting the <i>Films Division (FD)</i> , hoping to find archival footage from the places, where GC had lived in India, especially Calcutta and the Tibetan-Indian border town of Kalimpong. I don't find much, except for interesting footage of the Indian struggle for independence (1940's).
	Calcutta	Trying to find the <i>places</i> , where GC had lived in the former Chinatown of Calcutta. I had previously heard of <i>Tibetans</i> in Calcutta, who still remembered GC, but I never managed to trace them.
	Kalimpong	Meeting old Tibetans who remembered GC from the time of his political activities in Kalimpong (1940's), but they all refused to talk to me, for reasons I never really found out. Some said it was still too dangerous.
		Luckily, I found the former printing press of the <i>Tibet Mirror</i> , for which GC had written a series of articles in the 1930's/40's. It was already severely damaged and luckily I decided to film it (when we returned in 2002, not much of it was left).
Dharamshala Dehradun Darjeeling	Several <i>interviews</i> with contemporaries of GC, among them <i>Rinchen Dolma Taring</i> , and <i>George Tsarong</i> , fearing they would die, before I had the chance to see them again. Unfortunately I was right, they both died shortly after the interview.	
2000 May	Kathmandu <i>Nepal</i>	Visiting a family who had been very close to GC (late 1930's). They remembered a set of photos, but claimed to have lost it. Through a coincidence I met an old <i>travel companion</i> of GC and interviewed him immediately. <i>Golok Jigme</i> died shortly after the interview.
	Dharamshala <i>India</i>	Taking care of the translations of the <i>interviews</i> and the selected <i>texts of GC</i> . With Tashi Tsering's help, most of translations had been finished, including the <i>articles</i> GC had written in the <i>Tibet Mirror</i> .
THE PRODUCTION (financing of the film)		
2000 June September	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Evaluating the research: I now had already 40 hours of translated <i>interviews</i> as well as a selection of <i>texts of GC</i> . Especially from the <i>articles</i> of his Indian friends (from Delhi) I expected to gather more information on his life.
		Writing of the proposal (treatment and screenplay) for my documentary film project: <i>The Life of Gendun Choephel</i> . With the finished proposal I start with the financing of the film project. It will take until April 2002 to get all the money together. More than 20 different institutions, foundations and sponsors are involved in the end.
	Jona <i>Switzerland</i>	Going through the <i>Indian articles</i> with <i>Rakra Tethong</i> , who fluently reads Hindi. Together we do a preselection of relevant passages, where GC is mentioned.
		A young Russian scholar, whom I had met in India, sends me five photos from the <i>Roerich Archives</i> in Moscow. Among them a photo with GC and another monk on it. When I ask <i>Rakra Tethong</i> , who this other monk could possibly be, it turned out to be Rakra himself!

2000 October December	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Lecturing on the ' <i>Myth of Tibet and Film</i> ' at the University of Zurich during a course in Visual Anthropology (lasting until March 2001).
		Following up the financing of the film, getting the first positive answers.
2001 January	Göttingen <i>Germany</i>	Meeting <i>Gustav Roth</i> , who allows me to take photos of the <i>sketchbook of GC</i> . I also ask him about a <i>watercolor portrait</i> of GC, that, to my knowledge, should have been in his possession. He doesn't seem to have it.
2001 March June	Santa Fe Salt Lake City <i>USA</i>	Meeting a number of Tibetan scholars, among them <i>Jamyang Norbu</i> and <i>Lobsang Lhalungpa</i> , to discuss my project.
	San Francisco	Taking a brake (the first since I started the project).
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Writing an article on 'Buddhism and Film' for a book on world religion and film. Developing the idea for a website of my film project.
2001 July December	Zurich	Getting the first positive answers of the cultural institutions and foundations. It looks, as if I could begin with the shooting in Tibet in April 2002. For the originally planned start in Fall 2001, it turns out to be too late.
		Starting to organize the <i>shooting in Tibet</i> . YD is already in Tibet (for her own Ph. D. studies in Tibetan literature) and she is, at the same time, preparing the upcoming shooting.
		Getting the <i>crew</i> together for the shooting in Tibet and organizing the <i>technical equipment</i> (camera, sound etc.). I decide to work with a very small crew, only four people (camera, sound, translator and myself). The camera equipment needs to be small and the least conspicuous, in order to go through as 'tourists'.
2002 January April	Zurich	Following up the financing of the project. In February I get the last positive answer and we agree to shoot in Tibet in May/June 2002.
		Looking for a new cameraman (Filip Zumbrunn) and discussing the project with him from scratch. Together we decide on the shooting plan in Tibet. I decide to do the stereo ambient sound myself to keep the team as small as possible (and also for financial reasons).
		Together we organize the shooting in Tibet. We need permits for all the places, a car, as well as hotel reservations. At that moment it seems impossible to travel freely in Lhasa and Tibet.
		Founding of my production company 'angry monk productions'. For the first time, I have the idea to call my film ANGRY MONK.
THE SHOOTING (in Tibet)		
2002 May	Beijing <i>PR China</i>	Meeting Yangdon Dhondup in Beijing. Discussing and adjusting the shooting schedule with her. Departure to Xining (Qinghai Province).

2002 May	Xining <i>Qinghai Province</i>	Meeting our (Chinese) driver and beginning with the shooting. We face no 'problems', until the very end of our stay in Amdo, when a Tibetan family refuses to share their materials with us. They are in possession of an original photo of GC and two original letters that GC had sent to his mother from India in the 1940's. Our Chinese driver makes them suspicious. In the end they let us take a photo of the letters only.
2002 June	Lhasa <i>Central Tibet</i>	Shooting in Lhasa (part 1). After some political problems (demonstration), we decide to split the shooting in Lhasa in two parts. We are afraid that to long a shooting would attract the police. Other than that, we face no problems.
2002 June	Gyantse Sakya	Meeting our Tibetan driver and guide. Traveling through Central Tibet in the footsteps of GC, following the journey he had made together with his Indian friends in 1938.
	Lhasa	Shooting in Lhasa (part 2) and Drepung monastery. We meet an old lady, who is in possession of an old <i>painting of GC</i> – a portrait of the famous saint Milarepa. She still vividly remembers GC, although she was only a girl then. By the end of the shooting we do have more than 50 hours of digital videotapes and 16 tapes of ambient sound. A couple of days ago the police had made inquiries about us and we are a bit worried. We split the material equally among the three of us, in order not to attract any attention at the airport. Luckily we face no problems, when we leave the country.
2002 July	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Evaluating the shooting in Tibet. Checking all the video- and the audiotapes, which seem to be ok. The camera needs a complete overhaul after the rough shooting conditions in Tibet (dust and heat).
		Renting an office for the editing of the film. Deciding on- and buying the editing equipment. Installing the editing suite.
2002 August September	Geneva <i>Switzerland</i>	Working on the website for the film: www.angrymonk.ch with my graphic designer <i>Christophe Besuchet</i> , who will also do the graphics for the film.
	London <i>UK</i>	Meeting with Tibetan friends of mine, who are also filmmakers. They help me to prepare the shooting in India. Different than in Tibet (where YD was our sole production assistant), we need different production assistants for each location, which complicates the coordination.
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Last preparations and confirming our schedule, with the different production assistants in India. My cameraman <i>Filip Zumbunn</i> is already in India for another shooting. Interview with <i>Rakra Tethong</i> , a friend and student of GC.
THE SHOOTING 2 (in India)		
2002 September October	New Delhi <i>India</i>	Meeting with <i>Jaya Sankrityayan</i> , the daughter of a late Indian friend of GC. She agrees to translate excerpts from her father's writings on GC, as well as suitable parts of the Indian articles from the expedition in Tibet (1938). Neither her father's work, nor the Indian articles had ever been translated before.

2002 September October	Dharamshala <i>India</i>	Meeting <i>Tashi Tsering</i> , who was preparing his collection for the shooting. We get additional material from the <i>Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA)</i> . We find some new articles of GC in the <i>Tibet Mirror</i> , which need to be translated.
		Meeting my cameraman. Photographing Tashi Tsering's collection (photos, paintings, writings). Photos guarantee a better quality of the material, when we later digitalize it for the editing. With the higher resolution, we can 'move' within the image, without losing quality.
2002 September October	Dharamshala <i>India</i>	Doing more <i>interviews</i> for the film, among them with <i>Tashi Tsering</i> and <i>Ngawangdhondup Narkyid</i> , a former acquaintance of GC.
	Varanasi Bodhgaya Calcutta Kalimpong <i>India</i>	Since GC was traveling on trains through India, we do the same. We shoot in three different places: <i>Varanasi</i> (GC first real contact with India), <i>Bodhgaya</i> (major pilgrimage site), <i>Calcutta</i> (GC contact with modernity) and <i>Kalimpong</i> (GC getting involved in Tibetan politics).
		In Calcutta we are arrested, when we try to shoot the famous Howrah Bridge, one of the old colonial symbols of British modernity. Taking photos or filming bridges, train stations and military installations is forbidden in India. Our tape is not confiscated, though.
2002 November	New Delhi	The cameraman is returning to Switzerland, with more than 30 hours of footage.
		Going through the translations of the Indian articles with Jaya Sankrityayan. She agrees to do some more translations.
	Srinagar	Interview with <i>Abdul Wahid</i> , a former friend of GC from Lhasa.
2002 December	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Evaluating the video- and audiotapes. Checking our technical equipment. Both cameras are broken. Sony refuses to repair them on their expenses, since, as they put it, we had overused them (they were right).
	Geneva	Finishing the website with <i>Christophe Besuchet</i> and going online. With the ' <i>GC newsletter</i> ' I keep informing interested people about the development of the film project.
2003 January	Zurich	Beginning with the evaluation and organization of all of my materials on GC: so far I have about 500 photos, 200 pages of translations, more than 40 hours of interviews (translated), over 80 hours of footage from Tibet and India and more than 30 hours of archival footage.
THE SHOOTING 3 (in the USA and Europe)		
2003 January March	Tennessee Ann Arbor Santa Fe <i>USA</i>	Interviewing several Tibetans and a Western scholar. Among them <i>Pema Bhum</i> , <i>Jamyang Norbu</i> and <i>Donald Lopez</i> , who have supported me throughout the whole project with their knowledge and advice.
		Going through the <i>Griegenow collection</i> in the Tibet House in New York. Griegenow was a missionary (and photographer), whom GC had met in Northeastern Tibet in the 1920's. A lot of interesting b/w photos, but none of GC, unfortunately.

2003 January March	Paris <i>France</i>	Interviewing <i>Heather Stoddard</i> , the French biographer of GC. She is presently working on an English translation and an update of her biography of GC.
		Visiting the <i>Bureau du Tibet</i> , which has a large collection of archival footage, especially from the Chinese invasion and occupation (1950's). I get more than 10 hours of VHS tapes for the editing.
	London <i>England</i>	Interviewing the historian <i>Tsering Shakya</i> . Over the years we have become close friends.
THE EDITING, phase I (rough-cut)		
2003 March April	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Viewing and evaluating the new English interviews (15 hours). Having the new Tibetan interviews (5 hours) translated in India and sent to me via email.
		Organizing of the editing, which is planned to begin in April. As for now, only a small portion of the footage is digitalized.
		Finding people who help me to transcribe the English interviews (more than 35 hours). For the Tibetan interviews, I do already have English translations.
		Viewing (and transcribing) all visual materials: 80 hours of footage from Tibet, and India, 40 hours of archival footage and hundreds of photos.
		Reading the interviews and translated texts of GC and his Indian friends. Making a preselection by marking my favorite parts.
2003 May June	Zurich	Beginning the first phase of the editing for <i>Salome Pitschen</i> . Viewing the full footage (and interviews) and together making a preselection.
		Digitalizing of the pre-selected passages: roughly 35 hours (from 180).
		I'm working on the Tibetan interviews with <i>Yonten Gompamitsang</i> , a young refugee from Tibet, who understands many Tibetan dialects. In a long process we narrow down the interviews to only the key passages.
2003 July September	Zurich	The developing and making of a first rough-cut of the film (appr. 150 mins.). We only work with the footage and the interviews, no commentary planned (yet).
		Subtitling of the Tibetan interviews together with Yonten Gompamitsang, who often has to correct the translations we had been working with.
		Making a second selection of the Tibetan interviews by showing them to other people. This helps us to further narrow down the number of interviews I now have a good selection of passages with the correct 'in' and 'out' points (and subtitles), which makes the editing for Salome Pitschen much easier.
2003 October	Zurich	Preparing my participation in a congress on GC in the USA. Finishing the subtitling of the rough-cut (now 90 mins.) for presentation.

2003 November	New York <i>USA</i>	<i>GC Centennial Conference</i> at the <i>Latse Library</i> . I meet many of the people that I had worked with during the research and shooting, among them many from Tibet/China.
		As a surprise Latse Library presents a new <i>collection of paintings</i> by GC that had just reappeared in Northeastern Tibet: water colors with 'anthropological' themes of Indian daily life. I get the permission to take photos and use the paintings in my film.
		Presenting the rough-cut, which is received with a lot of goodwill. They like the footage and the interviews, but believe that I'm far from having found the right mixture of biography, history and contemporary Tibet.
2003 December	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Repeated viewings of the rough-cut (also with the Swiss distributor of the film). As the viewers in NY, they like the footage, but strongly criticize the absence of my own reflections on contemporary Tibet and its past. They suggest working with a personal commentary.
2004 January March	Zurich	Taking an out time, without continuing the editing of the film for three months. I decide to end my collaboration with <i>Salome Pitschen</i> .
		Going back to the initial ideas of the film by reading my production dossier and 'screenplay'. Visually the rough-cut seems very close to the original ideas, but my reflecting on Tibet is completely lacking.
2004 April May	Zurich	Beginning my work with the second editor <i>Kathrin Plüss</i> . After viewing the rough-cut and all the digitalized footage, she assembles, what she believes to be the story of the film, this time closely following the structure of the original 'screenplay'.
		She quickly realizes that this film can never work without a commentary from my side; with the interviews alone the film cannot be told.
		We also decide to leave away the interviews with the Western scholars, whom we had used to 'represent' my own ideas of Tibet. I will have to do these reflections with my personal <i>commentary</i> .
2004 May June	Zurich	I begin working on the commentary (with <i>Josy Meier</i>) by writing down the key elements that need to be in each chapter. In a long process we manage to do the first draft, which <i>Kathrin Plüss</i> continuously integrates in her new rough-cut (initially 180 mins.).
THE EDITING, phase II (fine-cut)		
2004 July August	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	For the last phase of the editing, the <i>fine-tuning</i> of the commentary and the shortening of the rough-cut to 90 mins., <i>Kathrin Plüss</i> suggests to work with a new editor.
		Taking another out time to 'distance' myself from my own material.
		<i>Martin Witz</i> agrees to work with me on the fine tuning of the commentary. He has a name as 'trouble shooter' for complicated projects and a lot of experience in writing commentaries for documentary films.

2004 September	Zurich	Structural work on the film. On post-it papers that we put on the wall, we simulate the existing structure of the film. The idea is twofold: first, to shorten the film and second, to find the balance between GC's biography, historical remarks and my reflections on Tibet (past and present).
2004 October December	Zurich	Applying our paper-editing to the existing rough-cut. We realize that the initial commentary only helped to structure the film. We basically have to rewrite it from scratch.
2004 October December	Zürich	Working method: I do a loud 'free-association', Martin Witz notes down the keywords and then writes several versions, which we constantly adapt to the images (and vice versa). The main problem for the commentary turns out to be the constant oscillating between the past and present.
		Viewing of the newly edited versions (120 mins.) with a selected group of people. This time their feedback is positive. Integrating their suggestions.
		At the same time I start organizing the <i>archival footage</i> we used in the film: The <i>Films Division</i> in Bombay refuses to let us use their footage of the Indian Independence movement. Through a friend we can organize almost the same material from the <i>Gandhi Trust</i> in Bombay.
2005 January February	Zurich	Finishing the film with Martin Witz and more viewings. <i>Swiss Television</i> and the <i>Swiss distributor</i> both like and agree to accept this version, but suggest some last changes: my motivation in the beginning of the film needs to be stronger.
		Integrating their suggestions and finalizing the editing. We are now down to 97 mins. (incl. titles and credits).
THE POSTPRODUCTION (online editing)		
2005 March	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Beginning with the postproduction, which will last until August 2005.
		Recording of the German and English <i>commentaries</i> with professional actors at in a sound studio. Also recording the <i>voice</i> for GC's texts that we used in the film. I decide for a voice with a Tibetan accent.
		Integrating the recorded <i>commentaries</i> and the <i>voice for GC</i> in the edited film. Making last adjustments. From now on no more changes should be made on the images.
		Having the selected passages of the interviews (newly) translated into German and English for the subtitles. Putting the subtitles on the timeline and preparing them for the online editing.
2005 April May	Zurich	Sound editing and sound-design at <i>Zentralton AG</i> . Viewing the film with the sound editor, explaining and discussing my ideas. He then works on his own, occasionally getting my feedback.
		Organizing of the <i>Dolby License</i> from England.
		Getting high quality videotapes from the selected <i>archival footage</i> for the online-editing. Clearing the rights with the archives (and paying them in advance).

2005 April May	Zurich	<i>Dolby Stereo</i> mix for the theatrical version of the film at Magnetix Studio. Last (!) changes on the sound and sound-design.
		Discussing the <i>promotion strategy</i> with the Swiss distributor Xenix Filmdistribution. Putting together the materials for the Press Kit: photos, synopsis of film, interview with the director etc.
2005 June	Geneva <i>Switzerland</i>	Working with the <i>graphic designer</i> on the photos used in the film, as well as the titles and credits of the film. Adjusting them for the online-editing.
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Online-editing and color corrections at Andromeda Films. The film needs to be prepared for the transfer from digital video (Mini-DV) to 35mm.
		Editing of the <i>trailer</i> for the theatrical release of the film (90 secs.). Subtitling both language versions (German and English).
	Munich <i>Germany</i>	Final transfer of the whole film and the trailer (80 secs.) from digital video (Mini-DV) to 35mm in Germany. The transferred material is sent to the laboratory in Bern (Schwarzfilm AG).
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	<i>Mastering</i> of the German and English video versions of the film on Digital Beta (each 97 mins.). To be used for video projections and as basis for the shorter TV-versions of the film.
2005 July	Bern <i>Switzerland</i>	Making of the <i>sound negative</i> of both language versions at Schwarzfilm AG. Viewing of the results and giving the producer's ok. There is a problem with the sound that needs to be fixed.
THE RELEASE (promotion for the film)		
2005 July August	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Beginning with the <i>promotion campaign</i> for the film together with Xenix Filmdistribution. Theatrical release is planned for September 2005.
		First <i>press screenings</i> of the film. Several interviews with the Swiss German press (incl. Swiss TV and radio). Their main interest in the film is the 'critical view' of Tibet.
		Discussing the <i>marketing strategy</i> for ANGRY MONK together with Swiss Films (promoting Swiss films abroad). They advice me on the festival strategy.
		Sending applications and DVD copies of ANGRY MONK to several important <i>film festivals</i> around the world.
		<i>Pre-premiere</i> of ANGRY MONK during the visit of H. H. the Dalai Lama in Switzerland at cinema Riff Raff (more than 550 people).
		Prof. Michael Oppitz accepts the film as main part of my <i>dissertation</i> , (which will also include a written part).
		Pusan (South Korea) and Vancouver (Canada) invite the film to their festivals.
	Geneva <i>Switzerland</i>	Finishing the <i>new website</i> 'www.angrymonkthefilm.ch' with Christophe Besuchet for the release and promotion of the film.

2005 September	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	<i>Theatrical release</i> of ANGRY MONK in the German speaking part of Switzerland. Despite the good weather it does pretty well.
		Preparing the <i>promotional material</i> for the film festivals: posters, flyers, photos and DVDs. Informing international buyers about the screenings in Pusan and Vancouver.
2005 October	Pusan <i>South Korea</i>	<i>World Premiere</i> of ANGRY MONK in Pusan. The director of Sundance Film Festival watches the film and considers it for World Documentary Competition.
	Vancouver <i>Canada</i>	<i>Canadian Premiere</i> in a huge theatre in downtown Vancouver (more than 600 people).
2005 October	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Teaching at the University of Zurich: <i>The Making of Documentary Films (Seminar: October 05 - March 06)</i> .
2005 November December	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Official <i>invitation to Sundance</i> , one of the major international film festivals for independent films.
		Preparing the participation in Sundance. Putting together new promotional material. Transferring the film from the European video system (PAL) to the American system (NTSC).
		Participation in <i>Docs for Sale</i> during the Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival. The US distributor First Run/Icarus is interested to buy the film.
2006 January	Park City <i>USA</i>	<i>North American Premiere</i> of ANGRY MONK in Park City as part of the Sundance Film Festival.
2006 February March	Berlin <i>Germany</i>	Taking part in the <i>European Film Market</i> during the Berlin Film Festival. First discussions with a French world sales agent that is interested in the film (since Amsterdam).
		<i>Signing a deal</i> with Wide Management, a French World Sales company. They are in charge of international sales now.
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Editing of a shorter <i>TV-version</i> of the film (52 mins.) in English and German. Transfer to NTSC for the American market.
		Wide Management is <i>signing a deal</i> with the US distributor First Run/Icarus for theatrical, TV and DVD release in the USA and Canada (except Quebec).
	Thessaloniki <i>Greece</i>	Taking part in the <i>Thessaloniki International Documentary Film Festival</i> in Greece.
2006 April May	Geneva Lausanne <i>Switzerland</i>	Premiere of ANGRY MONK in the French part of Switzerland. Start of the theatrical release in Geneva and Lausanne
	Vienna <i>Austria</i>	Selling the film to the <i>Austrian distributor</i> 'Polyfilm' in Vienna. Planned release in October 2006.

2006 April May	Munich <i>Germany</i>	Taking part in the <i>Dok.Fest Munich</i> . Making contact with German distributors for theatrical release of ANGRY MONK in Germany.
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Teaching at the University of Zurich: <i>Workshop: The Swiss Filmmaker Luc Schaedler (Block-Seminar, 2 full days)</i> . Discussing my films MADE IN HONG KONG and ANGRY MONK, which were both part of my studies in Visual Anthropology (master and dissertation).
2006 June September	Seoul New Delhi Melbourne New Zealand <i>Asia</i>	Invitations to several international film festivals in Asia. For the first time the film is screened on TV in full length: EBS Channel, (a Korean educational TV station in Seoul).
	Munich <i>Germany</i>	Selling the film to the <i>German distributor 'Zorro Film'</i> in Munich.
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Organizing the production of a <i>Tibetan language version</i> : having the English commentary translated to Tibetan (in London), finding Tibetans to read the commentary, recordings in the sound studio, applying the Tibetan commentary to the film. Producing the DVD of ANGRY MONK: recording an interview with the director (myself) with the help of a journalist, editing of additional unpublished film scenes and new excerpts of interviews. The DVD eventually comes in four languages (English, German, French and Tibetan) with more than one hour of bonus material.
	Bonn <i>Germany</i>	Presenting ANGRY MONK at the <i>11th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS)</i> . Premiere of the Tibetan language version.
2006 October December	<i>Austria</i> <i>Germany</i>	Theatrical release in Germany and Austria with premieres in Vienna, Berlin, Munich and Freiburg.
	Vienna <i>Austria</i>	Lecturing at the University of Vienna: <i>ANGRY MONK: Reflections on Tibetan Resistance and Self-confidence, using my own film on sGe-'dun Chos-'phel (1903-51)</i> .
	Montreal <i>Canada</i>	Invitation to the international <i>Festival du Nouveau Cinema</i> in Montreal in the section 'International Panorama' of 2005/06.
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Release of the DVD of ANGRY MONK in Switzerland. Starting to work on the written part of my dissertation in Visual Anthropology (Prof. Michael Oppitz, University of Zurich): editing of several hundred pages of transcribed interviews and translations of GC's texts. Beginning a new job (50%) as assistant of Prof. Michael Oppitz in Visual Anthropology (film department).
		Teaching at the University of Zurich: <i>Film and Method: The Ethnographic Interview (Seminar: October 06 - February 07)</i> .

2007 January February	Amsterdam <i>Holland</i>	Invitation to the international <i>Himalaya Film Festival</i> in Amsterdam.
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Continuing the work on my dissertation. Publication planned for: April 2007.
2007 March June	New York Chicago <i>USA</i>	Premiere of ANGRY MONK in New York in the 'Rubin Museum of Art' in New York. Theatrical release in Chicago.
	Zurich <i>Switzerland</i>	Teaching at the University of Zurich: <i>The Classics of Ethnographic Filmmaking (Seminar: March 07 - June 07)</i> .
		Finishing the written part of my dissertation in Visual Anthropology: <i>The Making of ANGRY MONK</i> .

LIST OF DIALOGUES

This 'list of dialogues' comes in eleven (11) chapters, which correspond to the chapters on the DVD. The number of chapters is the same for all four-language versions on the DVD (English, German, French and Tibetan). To each of the chapters I have added some additional information, as to where the images were shot (2002); to which phase of GC's biography the chapter refers to; which historical period is covered; which period the archival footage was taken from (more detailed information to the footage can be obtained from the author); and also my originally intended 'message' of each chapter. This additional information is provided to help teachers, lecturers and students to actually 'work' with the film.

1. TITLE SEQUENCE

Duration: 00:00 - 01:57 (2 mins.)

Images from: Lhasa (2002)

Biographical dates of GC: none

Archival Footage & Photos: Potala; Lhasa (1952)

Historical Events: none

Intended content: playing with visual contradictions (tradition vs. modernity); visually introducing GC.

SUBTITLES

Watch it, you idiot!

They are filming!

MAIN TITLE

angry monk - reflections on tibet

2. INTRODUCTION

Duration: 01:57 – 9:55 (8 mins.)

Images from: Hong Kong (1996); Lhasa; Jokhang Temple (2002)

Biographical dates of GC: Tibet (1938); 1942 (India); 1946 (Lhasa)

Archival footage & photos: Tibetan uprising in Lhasa (1989); Lhasa, Drepung (1930's); 4 photos of GC (1934-1946); Electrolux commercial with 'flying' monks (1993)

Historical events: Tibetan uprising in Lhasa (1989)

Intended content: my biographical connection to Tibet and my motivation to do the film; cultural and political revival in contemporary Tibet; Tibet as a country of contradictions; introducing GC, who, for me, brings all these elements together; setting an overall tone of subjectivity ('reflections on tibet'); questioning the 'Myth of Tibet' I

COMMENTARY

My first trip to Tibet was over before it had even begun. I landed in Hong Kong instead of in Lhasa, where a revolt against the Chinese occupiers had just broken out. Entering Tibet by any of the regular routes was now impossible. That was in 1989, shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall. I sat in my hotel room, looking for news from the Tibetan capital.

Images of the repressive Chinese response, which were secretly smuggled out of Tibet, went out around the world. Only a few TV stations have shown these pictures: the violent resistance against the ranks of Chinese troops. At the forefront are the monks. Within days it came down to a bitter battle in the old town of Lhasa between the rebels and the army. These images have never loosened their grip on me.

Over 15 years have passed since the revolt; many of the demonstrators are still in prison. There have been no more mass demonstrations in the battle for independence. In everyday life the Tibetans have come to terms with the Chinese authorities. Life goes on in its usual way.

SUBTITLES

World Championship 2002

China has lost! We want China to lose!

COMMENTARY

The Jokhang, the main temple in Lhasa, was long used by the Chinese as a military barracks and slaughterhouse. Many of the Buddha statues today are copies. The originals have been destroyed and sold off on the international art market.

Over the years the Tibetans have battled step by step to take back their holy places. Today the Jokhang is once again what it had been for centuries: a touchstone of Tibetan identity. The Chinese tolerate this deep faith, which the Tibetans live out with more and more assurance, but they treat it with great suspicion.

In my attempts to understand Tibet in all of its contradictions, I kept coming across one name: Gendun Choephel – a monk from old Tibet, a wanderer between worlds. His own society, mythical in the West, is something he treated with skepticism. Tibet - for many the model of a peaceful, ideal society, full of magic and spirituality - is something he considered to be in drastic need of reform.

Very few photos of Gendun Choephel have remained:

Here he is on a research expedition in central Tibet.

Around 1941, traveling in colonial India.

In Lhasa, together with a friend.

Shortly before his arrest by the Tibetan government.

JU KESANG (tib), poet

He dared to question tradition, and to pursue new ideas. In his time, he didn't achieve much, but at least he had the courage to act.

HUGH RICHARDSON (engl), British diplomat

Well, the stuff he was producing in Kalimpong was aimed against the Tibetan government. Subversive not of the British government, but of the Tibetan government.

COMMENTARY

His last picture: taken immediately before his tragic death

JAMYANG NORBU (engl), writer

The great thing about him was...although he was a traditional person, raised and educated in a traditional milieu, he rose above it to see the need for change, to realize, especially after he came out to India, to see that the world was a bigger place.

GOLOK JIGME (tib), travel companion

As we traveled around in India, he didn't really act like the incarnation of a lama.

He was definitely intelligent, very sharp, indeed. But he smoked, drank and screwed women (laughs). Because he did all that, I thought at first that he wasn't learned.

3. CHILDHOOD IN NORTHEASTERN TIBET (AMDO)

Duration: 09:55 – 26:43 (17 mins.)

Images from: Eastern Tibet: Zhoepang; Yama Tashi Kyil; Labrang Monastery

Biographical dates of GC: 1903 until 1927

Archival footage & photos: Cultural Revolution in China (1966); Central Asia: Kumbum (1927/28); the missionary Griebenow (1920's) and photos of 'modern' achievements: train, airplane, skyscrapers in NY (1920's)

Historical events: Cultural Revolution in China and Tibet (1966-1976), ethnic turmoil in Central Asia (1920's)

Intended content: GC as (my) key to Tibet; GC growing up in a multicultural region; language and identity; fragile signs of revival in contemporary (Eastern) Tibet; GC's curiosity for the modern world; destruction vs. rebuilding.

COMMENTARY

How closely the life of this rebellious monk was bound to the fate of Tibet is something I discovered only gradually - as I traveled in his footsteps. Particularly in recent years, for many Tibetans he has become an important figure of identification. For me, he is a kind of key to Tibet.

Gendun Choephel's Tibetan texts are slowly beginning to appear again in public, both in this occupied land and in countries of Tibetan exile. One of his remarks about his own country has been with me from the beginning:

VOICE OF GC

In Tibet, everything that is old, is a work of Buddha

And everything that is new, is a work of the Devil.

This is the sad tradition of our country

COMMENTARY

Our journey takes us first to northeastern Tibet, to the fringes of the Tibetan world - the place of his childhood. The rugged mountainous area of the Silk Road - inhabited by Muslims, Tibetans and Chinese - has for centuries been the site of border battles. Today the region belongs to the Chinese province, Qinghai. After a long trip, we reach the birthplace of Gendun Choephel. Zhoepang - a small Tibetan village in the Chinese hinterland. Here he was born in 1903.

Earlier the people here lived as farmers and nomads, tending yaks and herds of sheep and supporting their families through modest agriculture. Today it is mainly the old people and women from the village who take care of the farming, while the men seek work in neighboring Chinese cities.

Not long ago, the only language which the schools were allowed to teach in Zhoepang was Chinese. The letters here are being written in the sand, but they are Tibetan. Even in Gendun Choephel's time, speaking one's own language in this mixed border region was a statement of Tibetan self-determination. Today, under the Chinese government, it is even more the case.

Close by the school we come across direct descendents of Gendun Choephel. Today, a great-nephew lives with his family in the house where Choephel was born.

YUDRUNG GYA (tib), relative

When I was still a boy, my father and mother often talked about him. Gendun Choephel's father had been a well-known lay monk. The people in the village believed the young Gendun Choephel to be the reincarnation of a famous lama from the region. That's why he became a novice in the neighboring monastery.

COMMENTARY

At the age of four Gendun Choephel entered the neighboring monastery of Yama Tashi Kyil. At that time it was normal for every family to send at least one son to the monastery. Today, after a long break, this tradition is being revived, with or without the approval of the Chinese authorities.

Even remote monasteries like Yama Tashi Kyil were systematically destroyed by the Chinese occupiers. In the eastern border regions the devastation began as early as the 1950s, shortly after the people's liberation army marched in. The Cultural Revolution brought all-out catastrophe. Mao demanded that the new be created from the rubble of the old. In the coming years the fanatical Red Guard left no stone unturned in China and in Tibet, even in the most remote mountain valleys.

The small monastery Yama Tashi Kyil has only recently been rebuilt by the villagers. As in other monasteries in Tibet, life has returned to normal. The growing legend of Gendun Choephel began here in Yama Tashi Kyil, where stories about the clever five year-old novice were told and retold with pride.

YUDRUNG GYA (tib), relative

In his teacher's cell in the monastery, he once broke a cup. He was afraid of being punished. He was only a boy, then. So he caught a cat and locked it in the room. When the teacher came back, Choephel blamed the cat for breaking the cup. 'I'm innocent, it was the cat!' he said. Such stories of Choephel's cunning were told here again and again.

COMMENTARY

For the boy, the years of security in Yama Tashi Kyil are soon over. In 1920, to complete his monastic education the young student moves to the big university at Labrang monastery. Our journey takes us further east, through a high-lying nomadic region. We repeatedly see little camps of roadwork brigades, migrant laborers from the poor Chinese provinces.

Gendun Choephel arrives in the monastery city as a 17 year-old. For him it is the beginning of a promising career. With over 4000 monks, Labrang was at that time the monastery of eastern Tibet. Its reputation attracted monks far and wide throughout central Asia.

After the long break, there are now just under 500 monks here. Many of the older monks have steadfastly held to Buddhism even in the worst times, and for that they have endured difficult years, sometimes decades, in prison - in the re-education camps of the Chinese gulag.

The rebuilding in Labrang started in the 1980s - and will continue for some time yet. The pilgrims have returned. The Chinese government has made a long-term commitment to the quickly growing market in domestic tourism. They are planning a kind of Buddhist theme park for city dwellers from the industrial coastal regions.

An important part of Gendun Choephel's Buddhist education in Labrang is philosophical debate. With his provocative style he quickly makes a name for himself in this discipline.

ALAK YONGTSIN (tib), schoolfriend

It was widely known in the monastery, that Choephel made mechanical toys. The parts for them he assembled from a broken clock. He made little mechanical boats, which he let drift across the monastery pond, from one side to the other. Once he said to me: 'if I think about it long enough, I should be able to construct a mill, that runs without the need for water!'

COMMENTARY

In the 1920s Labrang was not just a significant monastery, but also a bustling border town. It was a meeting point for traders and nomads from all points of the compass. But this prosperous market town on the Silk Road, in the middle of the Tibetan-Chinese borderland, harbored an explosive mix of peoples. Again and again armed conflict broke out between Muslim warlords, Tibetan militia - and Chinese government troops. Gendun Choephel was a witness to the bloody struggles for control of the region.

Under Chinese control, Labrang lost its importance as a market and border town. It became a provincial outpost like many others. What has remained are the different groups of people. For the locals it is a precarious balance fueled by suspicion, as true now as then. When it comes to food, however, people gather in the Muslim quarters, where the meat is the best - and the cheapest. On the wall of the kitchen: the holy trinity of the Communist Party. For many Tibetans the image of the hated Mao also has its useful side - as an effective defense against dangerous demons.

HORTSANG JIGME (tib), writer

An American missionary lived in Labrang at that time. The Tibetans called him Sherab Tanphel. The Christian mission was close to the market. Gendun Choephel went to see him often. He wanted to know everything about America and Europe. The stories of this foreign world left a deep impression on him. At that time 4000 monks lived in Labrang. The difference between Choephel and the others, was his openness to new ideas.

COMMENTARY

For Gendun Choephel - barely 20 years old - this is a discovery with wide-reaching consequences. His first sight of an unknown, fascinating world - and the beginning of his curiosity about the Other, about all things foreign.

YUDRUNG GYA (tib), relative

This friendship with the missionary was viewed by his family with deep suspicion. His mother and sister warned him that his hair would turn blond and his eyes blue! After each visit to the missionary, Choephel asked them mockingly: 'Now, has my hair turned blond yet?'

ALAK YONGTSIN (tib), schoolfriend

He told me that he would leave. In this monastery, he couldn't see a future for himself. He told me, he wanted to leave for good. He would first go to Lhasa and maybe later to India. Here there was nothing for him to learn anymore.

4. THE JOURNEY TO LHASA

Duration: 26:43 -30:05 (3:15 mins.)

Images from: *Tsongnombo (Kokonor Lake); Tsaka Salt Lake (industry); Central Tibet: Lhasa (2002)*

Biographical dates of GC: 1927/28

Archival footage & photos: *a caravan in the desert of Gobi (1920's)*

Historical events: *the Chinese Gulag (after 1959)*

Intended content: *leaving Eastern Tibet, as part of GC's curiosity to learn about the world; high hopes for the future; reinforcing the mode of the 'road-movie'; further establishing GC's 'voice'*

COMMENTARY

In the winter of 1927 Gendun Choephel leaves his homeland in eastern Tibet. After seven years, Labrang has become too small for him. His new destination is the famed monastic university of Drepung in Lhasa.

VOICE OF GC

At dawn on the 6th day in the year of the dragon in 1927 our caravan left Kumbum in a cheerful mood. There were two hundred of us, all well prepared for the ordeals before us. Soon we entered upon open space, a mighty stretch of land, silent, vast and expanding.

Four more days and we reached the salt lake of Tsaka. This lake contains such quantities of salt that it remains in a crystal-like condition, being only lightly covered with water. The salt is carried on camels and yaks on to markets in Tibet and China. And to judge by the number of pack animals employed, the salt industry of this place must be a lucrative one.

COMMENTARY

The huge factory on the Tibetan high plateau is no longer profitable - it's too far from the markets in the big Chinese cities. The day will soon come when the conveyor belts on the Tsaka salt lake come to a standstill. Not far from here are the Chinese *lao gai* still in operation today. The notorious labor camps, where for decades Tibetan monks, too, were imprisoned. Back then Gendun Choephel's journey to Lhasa took several months. Today if everything goes well, it's a matter of two days.

VOICE OF GC

The rest of the journey went on uneventfully. However we were glad to reach Lhasa, our destination. And in the month of the monkey in 1927, we entered this far famed city.

5. LHASA (CENTRAL TIBET)

Duration: 30:05 - 42:29 (12 mins.)

Places: Lhasa, Drepung Monastery, the Barkhor (2002)

Biographical dates of GC: 1928 until 1934

Archival footage & photos: the Tibetan army (1930's); Drepung Monastery (1930's); Lhasa (1940's); a photo-realistic painting of GC (1934); murals, depicting scenes of Tibetan warfare against the Chinese in the 10th century

Historical events: 13th Dalai Lama's efforts to introduce reforms (1920's); internal power struggles in Tibet (1930's); the warring past of Tibet (8th/10th century)

Intended content: the monasteries as places of power; the conservatives blocking necessary reforms in Tibet; subtle signs of resistance in contemporary Lhasa; introducing GC as painter; GC discovering the (violent) history of his country; stagnation vs. cultural revival

COMMENTARY

On Gendun Choephel's arrival in Lhasa change was in the air. In the 1920s the forward-thinking 13th Dalai Lama introduced reforms to the political system and the army. He wanted to lead the antiquated country out of its closed mindset, smooth the way into modernity and secure its independence.

As planned, Gendun Choephel shows up in the monastery in Drepung, just a few kilometers outside of the capital. Here the ambitious young monk from the provinces hopes to pursue his studies in Buddhist philosophy. His expectations are high, since Drepung is known throughout Tibet as an intellectual stronghold.

With a community of over 7,000 monks the monastery was also a gigantic economic enterprise. It owned huge tracts of land and trading houses, and its influence stretched as far as China and India. Drepung was a center of spiritual but also of worldly power.

In the monastery kitchen in Drepung today only the size of the cooking pots recalls the golden era. But now, as then, the majority of the monks are not highly learned scholars or venerable reincarnations. They are simple laborers and artisans - responsible for the smooth running of the monastery's operations.

Daily life in Drepung is carefully watched by the authorities - that there are informants for the secret police amongst the monks is an open secret. In fact, many of the monks have repeatedly taken part in the demonstrations against the Chinese occupation.

After being banned for decades, debate can once again be practiced - with the required approval. Interest among the young scholars is greater than ever. The students test and deepen their knowledge of Buddhist philosophy: the initiator, who stands, poses a tricky question, which the defendant must answer with as much wit as possible. The goal is to corner one's opponent with such tight arguments that he can no longer find an answer.

ALAK YONGTSIN (tib), schoolfriend

In debate, the brilliant Gendun Choephel was unbeatable... He didn't really follow the traditional methods. He was able to confuse even his best opponents. When he had his rivals cornered, the 3000 monks in the courtyard cracked up laughing.

COMMENTARY

Buddhist debate, which in Tibet is an 800-year old tradition, was originally an instrument for sharpening the critical understanding. But as the monasteries became more and more political institutions, debate became an empty ritual.

JU KESANG (tib), poet

In this very rigid tradition, everybody had to repeat, what other scholars had said before them. If someone deviated, he was scolded. What had not happened during the time of 1000 Buddhas would certainly not happen, during the lifetime of one Choephel.

COMMENTARY

With increasing fervor Gendun Choephel protested the dogmatic functioning of the monastery, inciting the displeasure of his fellow monks. In 1934 – after having spent nearly his entire life as a monk, he turns away from the monastery, disappointed. He moves down into Lhasa.

In the course of the morning the Barkhor, the old market and pilgrim road, begins to fill with people. Here in the heart of Tibetan Lhasa few traces of the original old town remain. Next to the Tibetan merchants are more and more Chinese immigrants offering their goods for sale.

On the Barkhor, which forms a ring around the Jokhang Temple, the pilgrims circle their holy place. On special days - like the birthday of the Dalai Lama, or the anniversary of the Tibetan people's revolt - even more people than usual walk the circuit.

In the middle of the old town, we find one of the back courtyards on which the last hundred years seem to have left no trace. This is where Gendun Choephel found his first lodging outside of a monastery. At the beginning he supported himself by painting, a talent he developed in the monastery. The majority of his pictures did not survive the Chinese occupation and the Cultural Revolution.

While today the traditional themes are experiencing a renaissance, 70 years ago Gendun Choephel made a name for himself as a painter of realistic portraits. One of his few works remaining from the early period.

Not just in the monastery but also down in Lhasa, Gendun Choephel experienced a world that had come to a standstill. After the death of the 13th Dalai Lama Lhasa underwent a sea change at the beginning of the 1930s. The reform and opening up of the political system, the modernization of the army - all this remained incomplete. After much intrigue and internal power struggle the conservative forces won the day. Closing Tibet off from the outside world brought stagnation and internal paralysis. Instead of finding its own way into the 20th century, the country retreated into time-honored Buddhist rituals. It was a victory for the fundamentalists - with disastrous consequences for the future.

TSETEN YUDRON (tib), wife of Choephel

My god if you only knew! In those days, the aristocrats were so powerful. To them, we were just insects. What did we know then? We were just illiterates! They were so vain and pompous. That's the way it was.

THUPTEN WANGPO (tib), teacher

In the old days, the Tibetans only accepted tradition. For instance... Let me think... they actually forbade soccer. Well, they claimed that the players would kick the head of Buddha. If a person did something new, it would immediately be forbidden. But a society has to make progress! It can't just stagnate and do nothing.

JAMYANG NORBU, writer

And therefore the Tibetans at that time, who were in Tibet, the conservatives, for me, you know, are part of something that was dying. Of old stagnancy, you know, what people in the West now find fascinating, the mysterious Tibet, this and that, for me it's stagnant Tibet.

COMMENTARY

While the old society is becoming ever more rigid, the young intellectual makes an important discovery: In ancient writings and on historical wall murals he finds portrayals of the warring past and what had once been the extent of Tibet. Suddenly he sees the factual, and also the violent history of his country - which up until now he had known only in the form of Buddhist legends.

VOICE OF GC

In ancient times, it was certain that Tibet had a long and detailed history. But later we neglected the written facts and we were carried away by fascinating stories, such as a million temples were built in one day! Due to this our true history was transformed into rays of light and became a myth.

6. THE JOURNEY THROUGH CENTRAL TIBET (WITH RAHUL SANKRITYAYAN)

Duration: 42:29 - 48:39 (6 mins.)

Images from: Lhasa, Central Tibet; Sakya Monastery; near Phari (Indian border)

Biographical dates of GC: 1934, 1938

Archival footage & photos: photos of Rahul Sankrityayan (1934) and GC (1938); a caravan in Central Tibet (1930's); burning Tibetan texts (1966-76)

Historical events: defending Buddhism with military means (10th century); destructions in Tibet during the Cultural Revolution 2 (1966-1976)

Intended content: the study of history as a key to the present; the intellectual and political influence of Rahul Sankrityayan on GC; destruction and reconstruction of Tibet's cultural heritage

COMMENTARY

In the same period he becomes acquainted with the Indian historian Rahul Sankrityayan, who immediately fascinates him: In his home country the Indian is a well-known activist in the struggle against British colonial power. Here in Tibet he is on a research expedition, seeking Tibetan copies of original Buddhist manuscripts, which no longer existed in India. In the inaccessible monasteries in Tibet, many of these old copies have survived.

As a Marxist Rahul understands his historical research to be part of his political battle: the study of history as a key to the present - a point which Gendun Choephel himself is only beginning to discover.

For months the two of them travel through the country. They search through monasteries and dark cellars looking for the old texts, which Rahul photographs to take back to his homeland.

Today, now that it is again possible to travel freely in Tibet, one meets many pilgrims using the traditional routes from monastery to monastery. Gendun Choephel and Rahul traveled the same routes almost 70 years earlier. After visiting numerous monasteries, they found themselves on the road to Sakya in 1938. The famed monastic institution lies on a high plateau, 4500 metres above sea level.

Only the monastery's fortress indicates that centuries ago Tibet was ruled from Sakya. And that the rulers of the time - at the beginning of Tibetan Buddhism - knew how to use military means to establish and defend their new religion.

In the monastery of Sakya the two researchers found a great fund of old texts. Many of the valuable manuscripts were already then in poor condition.

TASHI TSERING (tib), scholar

For many centuries we kept our valuable scriptures rolled up in the old monasteries. Nobody really bothered to read them and to find out, who had actually written them. Rahul and Gendun Choephel went to see the monasteries Sakya, Ngor, Reting. And they visited other old monasteries. There, they found an abundance of amazing texts that nobody had heard of. Nobody had ever referred to these scriptures. In India they had been destroyed a very long time ago. The originals by the old Indian scholars were found and read in this monastery by Gendun Choephel.

VOICE OF GC

Some of the old texts have been completely neglected: once during a dusting session the monks mixed up the pages and threw them among the trash. Some pilgrims stole single pages and put them in their charm boxes. Others even swallowed them, taking it as a source of blessing. Such deeds are of tremendous harm to our culture!

COMMENTARY

Gendun Choephel could not know that the actual destruction of the texts was yet to come. Just 30 years after his stay in Sakya, the Cultural Revolution spread like a storm over Tibet and annihilated almost the entire cultural legacy of the country.

In only a few places were the Tibetans able to move the texts to safety in time. The correct order of the engravings is still today being painstakingly reconstructed.

In Sakya the research expedition for Rahul comes to an end. He has found the texts, which he had sought. Now he wants to return to India, once again to take up his political work.

7. THE JOURNEY THROUGH INDIA

Duration: 48:39 - 1:09:00 (20 mins.)

Images from: Central India: Varanasi, Bodhgaya, Calcutta (Chinatown), trains (2002)

Biographical dates of GC: 1934 until 1944

Archival footage & photos: a Tibetan caravan near India (1930's); 'modern' India (1930's/40's); one photo of Rahul and GC (1938); Rahul's arrest (1938); water colors and line drawings of GC (1940's); the 'Melong' [The Tibet Mirror]; the Indian struggle for Independence (1941/42); British colonialists (1930's)

Historical events: India as 'modern' society; the Indian struggle for Independence (1940's)

Intended content: GC's most productive time; GC's exposure to a new (and foreign) world; GC's development from a Buddhist pilgrim to becoming a critical travel writer; GC as an 'anthropological' observer (and painter); cultural relativism; sexuality; a sense of sadness and alienation; becoming a political person

COMMENTARY

Gendun Choephel, too has had enough of old Tibet: after the long travels with Rahul, after all the stories about the unknown land of India, the Tibetan has become curious about the world that lies on the other side of the mountains.

JU KESANG (tib), poet

In the past we were prisoners of our own restricted thinking. But Gendun Choephel was open and freed himself from these restrictions.

VOICE OF GC

On our way to India a deep sense of sadness often arose in me, although there was no reason for it. But Rahul took great care of me. And soon we came across the Indian railways. It was in the wood-dog year - at the age of 32 that I drank the water of the river Ganges for the first time.

COMMENTARY

The first stop in India is Varanasi, the holy city on the Ganges.

VOICE OF GC

India is the land of extremes! Uninterrupted poetry springs from within, as one is fed with a melody of a hundred sensations.

COMMENTARY

Little has changed here since his arrival. It is as though time has stood still. Now as then, millions of Hindus come here each year to cleanse themselves in the water.

GOLOK JIGME (tib), travel companion

Gendun Choephel told me, that for Indians this water was holy. They drink from the holy river and they pray to the gods in it. But at the same time they shit in it! What does that mean? They pray in the river for riches and clean their ass in it. With the same water! That doesn't make any sense, does it?

COMMENTARY

The colonial India that Gendun Choephel encounters in the late 1930s is a modern civil society built on the Western model: the big cities have electricity, capitalism has taken root, and the battle against British colonialism is in full swing.

Rahul Sankrityayan - having returned to political life - is soon arrested as an activist in the independence movement and thrown into the notorious prison in Hazaribagh. Gendun Choephel is not to see his friend again. From now on he is on his own. At the start he visits mainly the ancient Buddhist pilgrimage sites, seeking the comfort of the familiar.

It was here, under the Bodhi tree 2500 years ago, that Buddha achieved enlightenment. Today Bodhgaya attracts Buddhists from all over the world. It is from Bodhgaya that Gendun Choephel begins his travels throughout this foreign land.

JAMYANG NORBU (engl), writer

Just traveling throughout India on the train, you know, the noise and the chaos and the confusion, and just seeing the size of the country, of India - and the magnitude of its population, I think this would have really really impressed him. And especially for Gendun Choephel, who was a rather frail person, it took quite a lot of courage I think.

GOLOK JIGME (tib), travel companion

I was amazed, when I saw the railways for the first time. The trains looked like worms... like a chain of running houses. Gendun Choephel explained, that trains moved on wheels. I asked him: 'What would happen if I jumped out of the window?' 'You would be dead,' he said. 'Why do you want to jump?' 'Do you want to die?' 'What's all this nonsense?' 'Well', I said, 'when I jump from a yak, I am not dead.' 'Well, trains are different', he said. 'You would certainly smash your brains in.'

COMMENTARY

For a long time the two Tibetans travel together through India: from the Himalayas to the tropical coasts of Ceylon, from the Muslim Rawalpindi to Calcutta, city of millions - it is an odyssey lasting for years that criss-crosses the huge subcontinent.

VOICE OF GC

There are many different types of fruit in India, but mangos are the most delicious! It tastes like our curd mixed with honey. I think that the absence of mango in Tibet is surely a great misfortune for us all. Huge nuts are also growing on trees. One night I was nearly killed, when a coconut fell through the roof of our house.

GOLOK JIGME (tib), travel companion

While we were waiting for the trains, he wrote down everything he observed. He used toilet paper, which he carried in a checkered bag. He really noted everything: This house is like that, this man like that...

VOICE OF GC

The Indian men wear a four-meter long cotton cloth wrapped around their waist - like our monks at home. But the two ends are passed below their legs, making it look like a trouser. This way the legs can be seen from the back. For us Tibetans this looks most unattractive!

COMMENTARY

His writings are still personal notes, but he is also turning to an audience, as if he wanted to tell his countrymen in Tibet everything that had happened to him.

VOICE OF GC

Nowhere are the dresses of women more beautiful than here in India! And the woman with dark eyes like the eyes of a holy cow is considered the most beautiful of them all.

COMMENTARY

Along with the travel notes, he also drew sketches and watercolors. Many of the pictures he sent back home, where they have remained lost for decades. A few have recently reappeared in eastern Tibet.

VOICE OF GC

Due to my strong curiosity I sometimes painted my forehead with color, making me look like a Hindu. Disguised as a Brahman I could even enter the forbidden temples. Over the time I became growingly confident and I claimed to be a holy man from the Himalayas, gaining ever more respect!

COMMENTARY

While in India Gendun Choephel gathers his sketches together into a handbook for pilgrims - a travel guide that is still read today.

HORTSANG JIGME (tib), writer

Many Tibetans before him had traveled abroad. But until then, none of them had written a travelogue of India and Sri Lanka. In his book he describes the trees and the flowers of India, the pilgrimage sites and the local customs. He introduced a new form of knowledge to Tibet. In this way, he opened our eyes to new and foreign traditions. He showed us a way to take the good things of other cultures and to introduce them in Tibet. That was his greatest achievement.

COMMENTARY

In India he begins to publish his first newspaper articles. Like a travel writer from the West he now conveys his impressions of the modern world.

VOICE OF GC

In olden days, even in Europe, the world was thought to be flat. And when some intelligent people claimed the opposite, they were exposed to various difficulties, such as being burnt alive. Today, even in Buddhist countries everybody knows, that the world is round. However in Tibet, we still stubbornly state that the world is flat.

COMMENTARY

Gendun Choephel's lifeline to his homeland is the Tibet Mirror, a small magazine published in India but also read in Lhasa by open-minded nobility and monks. Tibet at this time still has no newspaper. In the Tibet Mirror he reads, among other things, about the rediscovery of the little 14th Dalai Lama in eastern Tibet.

Gendun Choephel has now been traveling in India for a number of years. He has begun to work as translator, written articles about Tibetan history - and finds himself turning to more and more political themes.

His next stop is Calcutta, populated by millions and home to colonial archives and libraries. Gendun Choephel spends much of his time in the National Library, reading everything that comes before him - about new technological discoveries, industrialization, slavery. His curiosity centers, however, on modern history - and increasingly that of his own country.

JAMYANG NORBU (engl), writer

For him history wasn't just something, an academic discipline. It was a kind of exploration through anecdotes and stories, into the past...

COMMENTARY

In India he witnesses the growing rebellion in the country. For Gendun Choephel this is an experience that makes a deep impression on him. In contrast to Tibet, the Indians have taken their fate into their own hands. The independence movement can no longer be stopped.

His view of the world is becoming more clear-headed, the tone of his writings more impatient - and more radical. He criticizes the Indian caste system just as sharply as British colonialism.

VOICE OF GC

Sponsored by kings and ministers the colonialists sent out a great army of bandits, calling them traders. They introduced new forms of living, but their laws were only good for the educated and wealthy. As for the poor, their small livelihoods are sucked like blood from all their offices. It is in this way the so-called wonders of the world were built, such as railroads and high buildings. I am an astute beggar, who spent his life listening. I know what I'm talking about.

COMMENTARY

Along with his historical work in the libraries, the erstwhile monk dives into the urban jungle of the city. In the 1940s Calcutta is a major loading point for tea - and opium; it is the most important port city in British India.

Today few traces are left of the old Chinatown, where Gendun Choephel found lodging. The once grand Nanking Hotel now stands in a slum in the middle of Calcutta - the bar is still open . . .

GOLOK JIGME (tib), travel companion

In Calcutta, there were hotels that belonged to an old Chinese fellow. We lived there together for a long time... For days we walked all over Calcutta. And often we went to the circus. We saw incredible shows there.

He often went to the brothels. He drank alcohol, smoked and screwed women. He did all these crazy things. In the streets of Calcutta he immediately recognized the prostitutes. 'You go home now', he said. Later he would tell me, that he had fucked 5 or 6 women. He said: 'When your spirit is happy, that is true religion.' 'Some strict monks claim that sex and alcohol are bad.' 'Well, for me, they are good things.'

COMMENTARY

Toward the end of his time in India Gendun Choephel discovers the Kamasutra, the Indian book of love, which he translates into Tibetan. In his homeland, this causes a scandal.

VOICE OF GC

As for me - I have little shame, I love women. Every man has a woman. Every woman has a man. Both in their mind desire sexual union. What chance is there for clean behavior? If natural passions are openly banned Unnatural passions will grow in secrecy. No law of religion - no law of morality can suppress the natural passion of mankind

GOLOK JIGME (tib), travel companion

Gendun Choephel said: 'A truly erudite monk, drinks and fucks, and his mind remains free' 'Many may disagree with me, but drinking beer and sleeping with women, can be a very instructive experience!'

HORTSANG JIGME (tib), writer

Actually, the Kamasutra isn't something obscene and vulgar. But if we consider the conservative society in Tibet, it took a lot of courage, to translate the Kamasutra - 'the book of love'.

8. KALIMPONG (POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT)

Duration: 1:09:00 - 1:17:38 (9 mins.)

Images from: Kalimpong: the market; a Tibetan school; Tibetan refugees; a game of dice (2002)

Biographical dates of GC: 1945-46

Archival footage & photos: an Indian train (1930's); photos of Babu Tharchin, the editor of the *Tibet Mirror* (1940's); Tibetan dissidents (1940's); the British files on GC (1940's)

Historical events: India, Tibet and China after the Second World War (1945/46); the Tibetan Revolutionary Party (1945/46); the Tibetan guerilla warfare against the Chinese (1960's)

Intended content: Tibetan refugees in India; language and identity in exile; the (nationalistic) relevance of 'Melong' [*The Tibet Mirror*]; GC's involvement in politics; the role of the British

COMMENTARY

After living for over ten years in a foreign land - always curious, apparently without fear - Gendun Choephel now comes to a turning point.

VOICE OF GC

Having wandered like a beast from the land of six mountains, I arrived in the distant and unknown world of men. Even if I have enough agreeable things, such as food, drinks and possessions inside myself I'm not serene. Giving it to the fire I have burnt the root of the hope for greatness. I have thrown into the ditch of ashes the forced duty of monastic obligations. Behaving like a madman, who follows whatever comes to mind, I have traveled from land to land in complete freedom.

COMMENTARY

Everything that he has seen and experienced in this foreign place, - his work in the libraries, his publications - it all comes to nothing in India, for what matters is Tibet. In the autumn of 1945 he sets off north, in the direction of the border with Tibet. In his luggage he carries great quantities of notes, the initial ideas and sketches for a political history of Tibet.

It is after the Second World War: India is on the verge of independence. The Chinese civil war is edging toward victory for the Communists. And with the defeat of the British Empire the once isolated Tibet is sliding ever closer to the turmoil of postcolonial conflict. In the middle of all this is the Indian border town of Kalimpong: at the time of GC's arrival, this gateway to Tibet is a political hotspot. It is an asylum for refugees, political adventurers and intellectuals.

The once vibrant market town today lies in a dead corner of world history. Since the arrival of the Chinese in Tibet the border crossing has been closed. The trade that once flourished here has shut down. What has remained is a small Tibetan exile community, as in so many other parts of the world. They fled in 1959 with the Dalai Lama to India. Some have settled here in Kalimpong, living in the hope that one day they will be able to return.

Like the letters written in the sand at the village school of Gendun Choephel's birthplace, the Tibetan language in exile, too, is a bond to one's own culture. From the schoolhouse to the Tibetan border it's only a few kilometers, and yet these pupils have never seen their occupied homeland.

SUBTITLE

Release all political prisoners in Tibet!

COMMENTARY

In the streets of Kalimpong the old Tibetans play the traditional game of dice. Amongst them are also ex-partisans, who fought until the 1970s against the Chinese people's liberation army.

On his arrival in Kalimpong Gendun Choephel heads to the Tibet Mirror, for which he has been writing during all those years in India. Here, in what was once the printing house, Gendun Choephel meets the founder and publisher: Babu Tharchin.

Led by this committed missionary, the Mirror in the 1930s has developed into a forum for critical Tibetan intellectuals. And into a display site for various visions of a Tibet that would be open to the world.

TSERING SHAKYA (engl), historian

What you see in that newspaper is, that Tharchin tries to place all the Tibetan speaking population, the Tibetan world in one place through the newspaper. So you have in the newspaper, news from Southern Tibet, news from Sikkim, news from Western Tibet, Eastern Tibet and Central Tibet... So you have all the Tibetan-speaking people being presented as one in that newspaper. That is very significant in Tibetan formation of identities later. That this whole territory is one people through this newspaper.

COMMENTARY

In the Mirror circles, Gendun Choephel comes across a group of young Tibetan rebels - and nationalists - in 1945. They, too, have turned their backs on old Tibet in disappointment, or have been chased out of the country when their battle against the government ran aground. In Kalimpong they establish the 'Tibetan Revolutionary Party', which aims for nothing less than the overthrow of the antiquated regime in Lhasa. The task of designing the party's emblem falls to Gendun Choephel.

TSERING SHAKYA (engl), historian

Gendun Choephel was an ordinary monk, who came to India and saw the changes that were taking place in the outside world. And he reflects on the stagnation of Tibet and this you can see in his writings, in his poems, that he reflects on this change and the need for change in Tibet. His motivation for involvement in this political party, would have been purely intellectual and as social reformer, rather than based on a political quest for power or personal grievances against the Lhasa government.

COMMENTARY

The activists of the 'Tibetan Revolutionary Party' have never really had any political influence. In spite of that, the group soon comes to the notice of the British secret police - a sword-and-sickle emblem being reason enough at the beginning of the Cold War for sounding a red alert. The agents pass their detailed reports on to the British envoy in Lhasa.

HUGH RICHARDSON (engl), British diplomat

...because they were producing these curious broadsheets, with hammer and sickle on them. That kind of things. Pretty childish, really. I can't think why this intelligent man, why he got drawn into that kind of rather pointless propaganda. And consequently my duty is - representing the Indian government in Tibet - to tell them what was going on.

9. RETURN TO LHASA

Duration: 1:17:38 - 1:32: 49 (15 mins.)

Images from: Lhasa: Potala; Chinese market; Jokhang Temple; Tibetan printing press (2002)

Biographical dates of GC: 1946 until 1951 (death)

Archival footage & photos: Tibet and Lhasa (1940's); Shol prison (and prisoners) in Lhasa (1952); Chinese revolution (1949); Chinese invasion of Tibet (1950/51); Tibetan guerilla (1960's);

Historical events: lack of reform in Tibet 2 (1940's); Revolution in China (1949); Chinese invasion of Tibet (195/51); Tibetan resistance (1950 until 1970's)

Intended content: GC's 'Political History of Tibet; relating GC's arrest to the tragic fate of Tibet (loss of independence in 1951); immigration of Chinese settlers in Tibet; a sense of sadness and loss; (guerilla-) resistance against the occupation

COMMENTARY

In the meantime Gendun Choephel has left Kalimpong. He is on his way back to Lhasa. He knows nothing of the secret British reports, which have led the Tibetan government to denounce him as a spy.

In the summer of 1946 the prodigal traveler arrives in the capital. While the past 12 years have left Gendun Choephel a changed man, in old Lhasa nothing has changed. The old governing clique, concerned above all with tending its own needs and privileges, is incapable of reacting either to the changing world or to the growing threat from China.

VOICE OF GC

In Tibet, religion and politics are completely mixed up. That is the problem! If you mix sugar and salt, can you really eat that?

COMMENTARY

In Lhasa Gendun Choephel immediately begins work on drafting his Tibetan history. With a nearly prophetic will he summons up what had once been the breadth of influence and cultural independence of his country.

VOICE OF GC

One thousand years ago it was believed that no kingdom in Central Asia was more powerful than Tibet. Even the great Emperor of China failed to withstand the might and power of the Tibetan forces. In those days we reached unknown boundaries!

TASHI TSERING (tib), scholar

No Tibetan before him had ever written a political history of Tibet. Choephel writes in his book, that Tibet and China were two separate entities. Sometimes China attacked Tibet; sometimes Tibet made war against China. Once, Tibetans even conquered the Chinese capital. He describes in detail, how the Tibetans besieged the Chinese. He praises the former power of Tibet. Gendun Choephel found new evidence in the ancient documents that had been discovered in Dunhuang.

COMMENTARY

He is supported in his historical research by a young scholar. But hardly have the two begun their work together before Gendun Choephel is arrested by the Tibetan police.

INTERVIEW engl

Well, because he had been plotting against his government, been working, been writing subversive material and he must have know that is was being passed on to the government. They did beat him when he came back. They arrested him and put him in prison and beat him, didn't they?

TASHI TSERING (tib), scholar

At the time, when the Brits denounced Choephel, there was a great anxiety in Tibet. We feared that the Chinese would attack and would destroy our monasteries. In this climate of fear the Brits reported to Lhasa, that Gendun Choephel was a communist! Well, that sealed his destiny.

COMMENTARY

Directly underneath the Potala Gendun Choephel is thrown into prison. His entire collection of textual material is confiscated, including his historical writings.

AMDO CHAMPA (tib), friend of Choephel

He vehemently denied being a spy. But he didn't have any proof. He was very afraid, that they would cut off his hand, or pluck out his eyes. That's what he feared. That's why he prayed, when he was arrested.

VOICE OF GC

Fire Dog Year: 30th day of the 11th month. I received the cheese and the bag of tsampa. During the interrogations I told the ministers that my history book is enough evidence, that I hold no malice against Tibet. How grave my crime is, it will be decided in the future by wiser people. Here in prison, I do not have anyone to save me.

AMDO CHAMPA (tib), friend of GC

'The government destroyed me', he once told me. 'Let me die.' 'I'm going to die anyway.'
'So, let me smoke and drink.' 'Maybe they will kill me!' 'I'm cracking up, I lost my
mind!'

COMMENTARY

While Gendun Choephel sits in prison below the governmental palace, the political situation for Tibet is becoming more pressing. In China the Communist troops have won the civil war, and in 1949 the revolutionary forces march triumphantly into Beijing. Mao proclaims the 'liberation' of the border regions. Tibet, still independent at this time, is also to be incorporated into the Chinese motherland.

The 14th Dalai Lama is just 15 years old. He has not yet been inducted into office as the head of the Tibetan state. After three years of detention, Gendun Choephel is suddenly freed. He is now 46 years old.

GOLOK JIGME (tib), travel companion

I visited him after his release from prison. His hair was long and unkempt. I asked him, how he was doing. 'I have suffered in prison', he said. 'I don't mind suffering in this life, 'but it would be hard, to also suffer in my next one.'

COMMENTARY

A portion of his written materials is returned to the prisoner on his release. Only now is the Tibetan government beginning to recognize the significance of his historical work. It even demands that he continue, but Gendun Choephel refuses.

THUPTEN WANGPO (tib), teacher

He spent a long time in prison, although he was such a great scholar. His knowledge was vast and society was too stupid to respect him. He wasted away in prison, depressed and ignored by everyone. That's how I see it.

TSETEN YUDRON, wife of Choephel

After his release we lived together for two years. Not much time for us. He died shortly afterwards. If he hadn't drunk so much, he would have lived longer. He got crazier and crazier. At the end, he was barely a human being.

AMDO CHAMPA (tib), friend of GC

Sometimes, I tried to convince him to visit the main temple with me. But mostly he refused. 'What's happening in the temple?' 'Why should I go there?' I told him again and again, that everybody in Lhasa goes there: 'Why not you?' In the end he only agreed under one condition, that we wouldn't visit too many statues and that we wouldn't pray for too long.

COMMENTARY

In Lhasa the rumors soon begin to make the rounds: That, while in India, Gendun Choephel lost his faith. One day a delegation of high-ranking monks from Drepung appear at his lodgings and engage him in conversation. Amongst them is a scholar whom he had years before easily defeated in debate - and humiliated.

AMDO CHAMPA (tib), friend of GC

The great scholars came, to put him to a test. There were these rumors, that during the talk, he blew smoke from a cigarette into the face of a holy Buddha statue. Gendun Choephel said: 'For Buddha, I would even sacrifice beer!' 'Today, there isn't any!' 'But sometimes, when I have beer at home, I even bathe Buddha in the beer!' One of the scholars shouted: 'How dare you, Gendun Choephel?' But he only laughed mockingly: 'You, you were my classmate in the monastery of Drepung.' 'Already then you were a poser, even though you didn't know anything.' 'Today you still don't know a thing!'

COMMENTARY

Then, October 1950 comes the long-feared invasion by the People's Liberation Army. From the east thousands of Mao's soldiers push into Tibet and begin their long march to Lhasa. For the first time in Tibetan-Chinese history it is not just a matter of territorial disputes. This time it is an attack on their culture, their religion, their economy - on Tibetan society as a whole. In the capital little can yet be felt of the terrible events. Life goes on in its usual way. In the meantime Gendun Choephel's health has taken a drastic turn for the worse. He is now restricted to his room.

GOLOK JIGME (tib), travel companion

I told him that the Red Chinese had arrived. 'All right, it has happened. Now we are fucked!' 'Things have happened as they needed to.'

COMMENTARY

The unstoppable Chinese troops are advancing on the capital. After a few more months the last Tibetan garrison east of Lhasa falls. Only in the border regions are rebels still making a stand. Out of these groups arise the Tibetan guerillas, who will continue to fight the Chinese occupiers for years to come. But they cannot stop the Chinese troops from marching into the capital in 1951.

TSETEN YUDRON (tib), wife of GC

That was 1951, when the Red Chinese marched into Lhasa. Gendun Choephel wanted to watch them, from the roof. I couldn't carry him. But a Mongolian monk carried him to the window. From the window, he saw the Chinese marching in. 'Now they are here', he said.

COMMENTARY

Since the troops' arrival 50 years ago more and more Chinese have settled in Tibet. Alongside the soldiers and police, it is mostly migrants from the poor provinces who have come. Beijing forbids them from moving to the big Chinese cities, so they try their luck in Tibet. Many have been here now for two generations, and they consider this occupied country to be their natural homeland.

GOLOK JIGME (tib), travel companion

Choephel was sad and cried. All monks will be chased away and religion will disappear. Darkness will close in upon Tibet. If we both live, until our beards turn white, we will witness all of this happening.

AMDO CHAMPA (tib), friend of GC

'Are you afraid of death?' I asked. 'No, not of death', he answered. 'But I have failed in life.' All my knowledge, will fade into oblivion.'

VOICE OF GC

At time of youth I had not taken a beloved bride. At old age, I had not accumulated needed wealth. A beggar's life lived with just a pen. Nearing the end, sadness fills my mind.

COMMENTARY

In 1951, shortly after the arrival of the Chinese troops, Gendun Choephel died. He was 49 years old. He did not live to see the publication of his historical opus.

10. EPILOGUE

Duration: 1:32:49 - 1:35:11 (2 mins.)

Images from: (modern) Lhasa, old Tibetan printing press (2002)

Biographical dates of GC: 1951

Archival footage & photos: one photo of GC (1950); Electrolux commercial with 'flying' monks (1993)

Historical events: none

Intended content: the legacy of GC; discussing the 'Myth of Tibet' 2; subtle forms of Tibetan survival (and resistance); (Chinese) modernity vs. tradition; prospects of the future

COMMENTARY

After Gendun Choephel's death his young collaborator succeeded in getting the first edition of his political history published. It was the last of his writings to appear. After that all was quiet, for decades.

In Tibet modernity has finally taken root - under foreign control. The Tibetans have not given up after all these decades. While in the West we will not be swayed from our romantic image of Tibet. This myth is as far away from the reality of Tibet as China's visions of political domination.

More has been destroyed in Tibet than one can possibly imagine. At the same time, much more has survived - With the cautious reawakening of Tibetan culture, Gendun Choephel's texts are once again appearing in public. Slowly the rebellious monk is finding the readers he did not have while he was alive.

TITLE

The viewpoints put forward in this film are solely those of 'angry monk productions'.

They don't necessarily reflect the views of the interviewees.

11. CREDITS

Duration: 1:35:11 - 1:37:00 (2 mins.)

Screenplay 'Angry Monk' (Luc Schaedler, CH 2002)

Screenplay

The cinematic form is characterized by an interplay between movement and rest, distance and proximity. Formally, these levels will be distinguished by camera work, shot composition and montage. On the spatial axis, departure and travel alternate rhythmically with staying put and being immersed in everyday life. The scenes of travel are quiet and in long shot, using tranquil montage and shot composition to open up a space for reflection. Once we arrive at a destination, however, we dive into the everyday situation and observe people at work and play; the camera movement and montage here picks up on the hectic pace of life.

On the temporal axis, the film contrasts the images of the present with archival pictures from the past – among them Gendun Choephel's own sketches, makimomos (pictorial scrolls) and handwritten notes, as well as images of the social and political climate in which he lived. In this juxtaposition of past with present, of archival images with my own footage, I hold a visual "dialogue" with Choephel. To mark the awareness of the way the present always shapes the past, the archival pictures will be worked in some way: excerpted, detailed through close-ups, zoomed in or out, repeated on the screen, etc.

The link between past and present is to be found in 'broken' images which contain the multi-layered aspects and contradictions of everyday life; the bustling present, for instance, jars against an ancient building or rituals of the past, while in a karaoke bar in Lhasa pilgrims in traditional clothing dance under a strobe light together with modern Tibetans, Chinese and Western tourists.

Just as Gendun Choephel lived in two contrasting worlds, moving from a sleepy village in East Tibet to the colonial Indian metropole of Calcutta, so I aim to use the contrast of past with present to question the idealized image of timeless Tibet and reinvent it as a nation of people involved in the making of their own history.



A caravan in Eastern Tibet, 1928 (above); Truck on the road to Lhasa, Eastern Tibet, 1999

Outline

1. Title sequence (3 min)

Images of GC; voice-over by an actor reading poems he wrote; previews of core images of Tibet and India.

2. The Arrest (10 min)

Subject of voice-over/interviews: GC's arrest and imprisonment, mistreatment in prison and support by friends.

Places: archival footage of Lhasa in the 1940s; interviews in present-day settings.



Potala Palace, Lhasa 1999

3. Roots (1903–27) (12 min)

Subject of voice-over/interviews: GC growing up in a multicultural region and developing a strong sense of cultural identity; being sent to a monastery school, where he is simultaneously admired and accused of disrespect.

Places (present day): Zhoepang (GC's birthplace), Yama Tashi Kyil (village monastery), Labrang (monastery town), journey from eastern Tibet to Lhasa.

4. Awakening (1928–34) (10 min)

Subject of voice-over/interviews: GC's good-humored yet misunderstood rebellious behavior at the monastery Drepung; GC leaving the monastery and meeting the Indian revolutionary Rahulji.

Places (present day): contemporary Lhasa, specifically the Barkhor Bazaar (old city), Jokhang (main temple), Drepung (largest monastery in Tibet).

5. Political landscapes (1934–38) (10 min)

Subject of voice-over/interviews: GC traveling through Tibet with Rahulji and his compatriots searching for Buddhist texts; GC and Indians discussing politics and laughing at Tibetan superstitions; GC decides to travel to India.

Places (present day): journey through southern Tibet

6. India: the shock of the modern (1938–46) (20)

Subject of voice-over/interviews: GC traveling through India, amazed by what he sees yet critical of the caste system and British colonial power; GC increasingly interested in politics and writing articles; GC sinking into a double world of libraries and bordellos in Calcutta, translating the Kamasutra; GC beginning to write the first political history of Tibet.

Places: Varanasi (pilgrimage site on the Ganges); Calcutta; a fishing village on the Indian East Coast; Bodhgaya (Buddhist pilgrimage site).



India 1999

7. Downfall (1946) (10 min)

Subject of voice-over/interviews: GC in Kalimpong meeting dissident Tibetans and designing their party emblem; GC returning to Lhasa; his sudden arrest for "communist" activities

Places (present day): Kalimpong (India), journey from India to Lhasa, Lhasa.

8. Epilogue (1946–51/present) (15 min)

Subject of voice-over/interviews: GC in prison, cannot succeed in publishing *The Political History of Tibet*; GC after release falling into despair, giving himself over to alcohol; GC's death and final thoughts; reflections on GC's life in light of more recent events: the Cultural Revolution (1966–75), the opening up of Tibet (1979/80), Tiananmen Square (1989), the revolts in Lhasa (1989); reflections on GC's importance for present-day occupied Tibet.

Places (present day): Lhasa; the house in which he died; the monastery Pabongka, where he was cremated; the Jokhang (main temple), where he spent much of his time.

Total length: 90 minutes

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ARCHIVES

FILMS & ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

BBH (London, UK)

<http://www.bartleoglehegarty.com/>

—Electrolux commercial (with 'levitating' monks in a Tibetan monastery)

British Film Institute, BFI (London, UK)

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/>

—Bailey Collection (Tibet, Gyantse 1920's/1930's), b/w

—Guthrie Collection (Tibet, Lhasa, India 1940's), b/w and color

—L. D. Thomas (Tibet, Lhasa, Sikkim 1948: *The High Adventures of L. D. Thomas*), color

—Lord Linlithgow Collection (Colonial India 1930's), color

—Sherriff Collection (India, Sikkim, Tibet 1040's/1950's), b/w and color

—Sir Basil Gould Collection (Tibet, Lhasa, Drepung 1930's/1940's), b/w and color

—Sir Charles Bell Collection (Tibet, Lhasa, Drepung 1934: *Tibet 1934*), b/w

—T. Y. Shen Collection (Tibet, Lhasa, Drepung 1940's: *Tibetan Scenes*), color

—Williamson Collection (Tibet 1930's: *Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet*), b/w

Bureau du Tibet (Paris, France)

<http://www.tibet-info.net/bureau-tibet/index.html>

—Archive Tibet 13 (a compilation of archival footage of Tibet 1920-1959, including footage from the Chinese Revolution 1949)

—*Bout à Bout* (the Dalai Lama's journey to China and India 1956, the Tibetan uprising 1959, the escape of the Dalai Lama 1959, the Lhasa riots 1987/88), b/w and color

—*Kaleidoscope* (

—*La Tragédie du Tibet* (a compilation of archival footage of Tibet 1920's – 1989, including footage of the Khampa's guerilla fight against the Chinese army 1960's), b/w and color

—*Tibet Moscou* (a compilation of film footage of central Asia and Tibet, appr. 1930's, including a caravan with camels in the desert of Gobi), b/w

—Propagande Chinoise (a compilation of Chinese footage of Lhasa in the 1950's), b/w

—*Raid into Tibet* (an attack of a Tibetan guerilla group on a Chinese army convoy in the 1960's), b/w

—Schäfer footage (Tibet and Lhasa in 1938), b/w

—*The OSS Mission to Tibet* (Tibet and Lhasa in 1942), color

—*Under the Sun* (Chinese propaganda, Tibet 1950's, invasion of Tibet in 1951), b/w

—Williamson footage (Tibet, Lhasa, Gyantse, Drepung 1930's), b/w

Bundesfilmarchiv (Koblenz, Germany)

<http://www.bundesarchiv.de/>

—Ernst Schäfer footage (Tibet, India 1938: *Geheimnis Tibet, Lhasa Lo*), b/w

Deutsche Geodätische Kommission (Munich, Germany)

<http://www.bundesarchiv.de/>

—Wilhelm Filchner footage (Central Asia, Eastern Tibet, Kumbum Monastery 1920's/1930's: *Mönche, Tänzer, Soldaten*), b/w

Films Division (Bombay, India)

<http://www.filmsdivision.org/>

—Several hours of edited and unedited film footage of India's struggle for Independence (India 1930's/1940's), b/w

—Several hours of (edited and unedited) film footage of Mahatma Gandhi (1930's/1940's), b/w

Gandhi Films Foundation (Bombay, India)

—Several hours of (unedited and edited) film footage of Mahatma Gandhi (1930's/1940's), b/w

Lord Linlithgow Collection (Scotland)

—See: British Film Institute

National Film Archive (Puna, India)

http://nfaipune.nic.in/main_page.htm

—*Light of Asia* (Franz Osten, India 1925), b/w; with footage from India (Ganges River, Benares, Bodhgaya)

Niedersächsische Staatsbibliothek (Göttingen, Germany)

<http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/>

—Kanwal Krishna Film (India, Tibet 1930's/1940's, partly shot by Phani Mukherjee), b/w; with footage from Sikkim, Central Tibet, Lhasa and Mt. Kailash in Western Tibet

Private Collection 'Luc Schaedler'

<http://www.angrymonkthefilm.ch/>

—Archival footage from Tibet and China (Potala, Lhasa 1930's/1950's)

Royal Geographical Society (London, UK)

<http://images.rgs.org/>

—*Climbing Mt. Everest* (Tibet, India, Darjeeling 1920's), b/w

T. Y. Shen Collection

—See: British Film Institute

WGBH (USA)

<http://www.wgbh.org/>

—*Beyond the Forbidden Frontier* (Suydam Cutting, Tibet 1930), b/w; (with footage from Central Tibet, Gyantse, Lhasa)

PHOTOS, BOOKS, PAINTINGS & (POLITICAL) FILES

Amnye Machen Institute & LTWA (Dharamshala, India)

<http://www.amnyemachen.org/>

- A selection of photographs of GC from India and Sri Lanka, appr. 1930's/1940's
- Some original manuscripts and first editions of texts of GC (among them the 'Tibetan Arts of Love', the 'Political History of Tibet' and the controversial Buddhist text 'Adornment of Nagarjuna's Thought')
- A selection of the Tibetan newspaper 'Melong' [The Tibet Mirror], including most of the articles of GC (1935-1943).
- Some letters of GC to Rahul Sankrityayan (including some postcards with Indian stamps), 1934-1938.
- Other materials related to GC

Bihar Research Society (Patna, India)

- A selection of photographs of Rahul Sankrityayan's expeditions to Tibet, 1930's
- A selection of photographs of old Buddhist (palm leaf) manuscripts and artefacts, taken during Rahul Sankrityayan's expedition to Tibet in 1938 (taken by the Indian photographer Phani Mukherjee)

British Library (London, UK)

<http://www.bl.uk/>

- The 'Younghusband Expedition' (photographs of the British invasion of Tibet in 1903-04), b/w

Griebenow Collection (New York, USA)

- See: Tibet House (New York)

Gustav Roth Collection (Göttingen, Germany)

- The 'sketchbook' of GC, originally in possession of Kanwal Krishna: Line drawings of GC, depicting Buddhist deities, ornaments and studies of a loving couple (28 drawings)
- A water color of Kanwal Krishna, depicting GC in the monastery of Sakya, Tibet 1938

Horkhang Collection (Lhasa, Tibet)

- Several unedited notes and texts of GC (See: bibliography 'Horkhang's unpublished collection of GC's works')
- A selection of photographs of Horkhang Sonam Penbar between the 1930's and 1985, b/w
- Some original manuscripts and books of GC (among them the first edition of GC's 'Political History of Tibet', appr. 1952)

India Office Library (London, UK)

- See: British Library

Kanwal Krishna Family (New Delhi, India)

—Water colors of Kanwal Krishna (Tibet, Lhasa 1938-42), color

—Line drawings of Kanwal Krishna (Tibet, Gyantse, Lhasa 1938), b/w

Latse Library of Contemporary Tibetan Culture (New York, USA)

<http://www.latse.org/>

—Pema Jam's Collection (Eastern Tibet): A selection of 21 water colors of GC, painted during GC's stay in India between 1934 and 1946. The paintings depict scenes from Indian and Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) daily life and/or studies of architectural structures and plants. Color and b/w.

LTWA, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (Dharamshala, India)

—See: Amnye Machen Institute

Niedersächsische Staatsbibliothek (Göttingen, Germany)

<http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/>

—A selection of water colors by Kanwal Krishna (Tibet, Lhasa 1938-42), acquired from the Krishna family in New Delhi.

Patna Museum (Patna, India)

—A selection of photographs of Rahul Sankrityayan (India, Russia 1930's/1940's), b/w

Pema Jam's Collection (Eastern Tibet)

—See: Latse Library of Contemporary Tibetan Culture

Private Collection 'Luc Schaedler'

<http://www.angrymonkthefilm.ch/>

—Two photos of GC (India 1936, Lhasa 1946)

—Two letters from India to his mother (digital copies)

Roerich Foundation (Moscow, Russia)

—One (1) photograph of GC, together with Rakra Tethong Rinpoche, appr. 1946 in Lhasa, b/w (*A copy with the author*).

Royal Geographical Society (London, UK)

<http://images.rgs.org/>

—The 'Younghusband Expedition' (photographs of the British invasion of Tibet in 1903-04), b/w

Sankrityayan Family Collection (New Delhi, India)

—Private collection of Jaya and Jeta Sankrityayan (photographs, handwritten notes and books of the late Rahul Sankrityayan (1934-1960's), b/w

Tibet House (New York, USA)

<http://www.tibethouse.org/>

—Griegenow Collection (Labrang Monastery, Eastern Tibet 1920-1940's), b/w and color

Several hundred photographs (b/w and color) of the life in Labrang Tashi Kyil between 1923 and 1947

Yudrung Gya Collection (Zhoepang, Qinghai Province, PR of China)

—One Buddhist text adorned with drawings of GC, dating back to his stay Yama Tashi Kyil (appr. 1910)

—Two drawings from his childhood days, depicting a 'white crane' and 'Mt. Meru', appr. 1910.

—One bronze Buddha in a red 'lotus flower', with a screwing mechanism that opens and closes its leaves, when turned, appr. 1920's. (*Image 56: The 'Lotus-Buddha' in the home village of GC, Zhoepang 1999*).

—Several notebooks of GC from India (Elephant brand), appr. 1934-1946

—Original notes of GC to his 'Political History of Tibet' (3 pages), appr. 1940's

—One edition of 'The Bosat: Journal of Moral Advancement, Universal Service & Peace' (Vol. IV, No. 2/14. Colombo 1942 (62-64), with an article of GC.

Anonymous (Lhasa, Tibet)

—A thangka painting of Milarepa by Gendun Choephel, appr. 1946. Color. (*A copy with the author*)



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CURRICULUM VITAE

Luc Schaedler

Born on the 24th of April 1963 in Zurich, Switzerland.

- 1983 Graduating from high school in Zurich (Kantonsschule Hohe Promenade, Zürich).
- 1983/1986 Working as journalist for an independent Radio Station (LoRa) in Zurich. Involved in political grassroots movements. Repeated traveling to the USA and the UK.
- 1986/2002 Working for Cinema Xenix — an independent arthouse in Zurich, Switzerland. Organizing of several film programs on Asia.
- Since 1988 Extensive traveling to Asia (especially India, China and Tibet). Working as barkeeper and teacher in Japan, Hong Kong and Nepal.
- 1993/1998 Studying visual anthropology, film and history at the University of Zurich. Completing his studies with the documentary film MADE IN HONG KONG, which was accepted as his thesis (Master of Arts) in Visual Anthropology.
- Since 1998 Lecturer at the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich: *The 'Myth of Tibet' and Film; Film and Method in Anthropology; The Making of Documentaries*. Beginning with his dissertation on the Tibetan scholar and monk Gendun Choephel: the documentary film ANGRY MONK.
- 2005/2006 Promoting his film ANGRY MONK, which had been invited to several international film festivals, including the acclaimed competition of the Sundance Film Festival in January 2006.
- 2006/2007 Lecturer in visual anthropology at the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich: *The Ethnographic Interview; The Classics of Visual Anthropology; An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*. Finishing the written part of his dissertation: *Angry Monk: Reflections on Tibet (Literary, Historical, and Oral Sources for a Documentary Film)*
- 2007 Successful defense of his Ph. D. thesis.

