
1 Introduction

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Tibet is the most mysterious place. In the modern world, no country or nation – except for Tibet’s own authorities – has achieved a complete understanding of its internal organization. It remains a country both secluded and ancient. The Han people used to move freely in and out in the past, but explorers from the East and the West, out of curiosity, poured immense efforts and resources into probing Tibet’s secrets. Some even sacrificed their lives. Yet, even after such efforts, they found nothing but scattered details about frontier provinces such as Xikang 西康 and Qinghai 青海.¹ The secrets of Tibet’s heartland remained unrevealed to them. I once came across a Westerner’s account in which he claimed to have reached

1 On the terms employed by Fazun to denote the various regions of Tibet, see Chapter 2. See also *A Note to the Reader* by the translator.



Lhasa, the very heart of Tibet.² Among all those who sought to explore Tibet, he could be considered the most prominent. Yet, when one examines the actual achievements of his time in Lhasa, what were they? He merely secluded himself in the home of a Tibetan family for several [2] days, not even daring to set foot on the streets. How, then, could he possibly speak about the internal structure and workings of the Tibetan Government? When the Han troops were driven out at the beginning of the Republican period, the influence of the British started to creep inside. Later, when the British were staying in Lhasa, Tibetan officials designated escorts to be with them. Therefore, at times, British writings on the internal affairs of Tibet bore some traces of authenticity.

Still, their insight into the religious institutions of Tibet and the mindset of its leaders was, at best, rather obscure. Hosts who acted out of fear and caution were probably not going to unveil Tibet's innermost secrets. What many previous explorers and travelers could not uncover about the mysteries of Tibet, I was fortunate enough to glimpse during my eight or nine years of stay in Kham and Ü-Tsang.³ From a reflective and objective standpoint, I was able to formulate a comprehensive idea. Now that I am back in the Inner Lands, I am sharing this insight with my fellow citizens who have spent centuries trying to unveil the secrets of Tibet.

The breadth of subjects related to Tibet appears remarkably extensive. Its vastness encompasses both its geography and its history, which has unfolded over more than a thousand years. A full examination of its politics, scholarship, customs, and ethos throughout this lengthy timeframe demands

2 In this passage, Fazun is referring to William Montgomery McGovern (1897-1964), the American scholar and adventurer renowned for both academic achievements and remarkable explorations. Educated at the Sorbonne, Oxford, and the University of Berlin, McGovern graduated in Asian studies and held teaching positions at London's School of Oriental Studies and later at Northwestern University. His journey to Lhasa in 1922-23 involved disguising himself as a Tibetan caravan porter to enter Tibet unnoticed. In Tibet, he faced severe hardships, such as resting in barns filled with lice, living on uncooked dried meat, and battling through thick snowdrifts. His initial secrecy collapsed when illness forced him to reveal himself to authorities in Lhasa. In Tibet's capital, a violent mob reaction to his presence nearly ended in tragedy. Eventually, McGovern managed a narrow escape into hiding with a Tibetan family. Later, he received protection by Tibetan authorities under house arrest, during which he recovered from dysentery and pneumonia. After an audience with the thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876-1933), having obtained the Dalai Lama's official pardon, he left Tibet with an armed escort towards India. In 1924, with the publication of his *To Lhasa in Disguise*, McGovern's compelling account of his journey gained international attention. Fazun may have read a copy of the first edition of *To Lhasa in Disguise* between late 1924 and early 1925 while he was in Beijing. Here, Dayong's mission to Tibet involved gathering knowledge about Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism before their departure in the spring of 1925. If not before his departure from Beijing, Fazun would have come across McGovern's account at the College in Chongqing after his first return to China in 1934, or just as he wrote *Modern Tibet* in early 1937. As Fazun points out, McGovern's brief period of concealment in Lhasa restricted his firsthand insights into Tibetan governance and culture. McGovern's publications in Asian studies included works such as *Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism* (1922), *Manual of Buddhist Philosophy* (1923), and extensive studies on East Asian politics and culture. In addition to his Tibetan expedition, McGovern's adventures led him to Japan, where he disguised himself as a Buddhist monk, as well as to the Amazon region, where he found traces of the Inca civilization. My gratitude goes to Donald Lopez for identifying the reference to McGovern in Fazun's text. For a short, informative account of McGovern's travels in Tibet, including a comparison of his adventure with the similar journey undertaken by the French author Alexandra David-Néel, see the classic work by Hopkirk 1982, 227-8.

3 Fazun consistently employs the sinograph Kangzang 康藏 to refer to the regions of Tibet where he lived and studied and which he also describes in most detail. Conversely, he employs the sinograph Xizang 西藏 as the name of Tibet as a country. I render the sinograph Kangzang as Kham (C. Kang 康; T. Khams) and Ü-Tsang (C. Zang 藏; T. Dbus-Gtsang).

a detailed scrutiny of old writings, which amounts to tracing the shape of a gourd with a ladle. This particular approach does not work well for me. Other than engaging in the translation of scriptures, I lack any desire to mimic the sparse and questionable reports from others. Because I have a profound dislike for emulating others, I remain largely indifferent to the descriptions of Tibet's past.

[3] Tibet, although situated within China's territory, has been estranged from us for many years.⁴ Its future trajectory – whether it will belong to another nation, or whether it will continue as it has – will depend on the strength of our nation, the competence of our leadership, and the quality of our relations. I lack prophetic abilities, therefore I choose to refrain from making predictions regarding these matters. I characterize Tibet as 'modern', yet my use of 'modern' does not imply a connotation of fashionable or progressive. I simply designate it as associated with the present. Is the meaning of 'modern' unchanging? I argue that this is not the case. Every generation characterizes the time of their lives as the 'modern age', viewing all events and conditions within that timeframe as modern phenomena. Over time, spanning decades or centuries, subsequent generations might regard our language as outdated and our actions as no longer relevant. They will interpret the concept of 'modernity' based on the characteristics of their own times, viewing their particular present time as the quintessential modern

4 In Fazun's Chinese, "Xizang suiran shi Zhongguo de bantu, danshi ta yu women gehe le duonian. Ta de jianglai, jiuqing shi ruhe, huoshi guishu qita de guojia, huoshi lao zheyang de jixu xiaqu, zhe xuyao kan women guojia de shili ruhe he banshiren de shouduan ruhe ji lianluo de ganqing ruhe er ding. 西藏雖然是中國的版圖，但是他與我們隔閡了多年，他的將來，究竟是如何，或是歸屬其他的國家，或是老這樣的繼續下去，這需要看我們國家的實力如何和辦事人的手段如何及聯絡的感情如何而定" (1937a, 3). In the 1943 edition of *Xiandai Xizang*, the same statement appears in a revised form: "Xizang suiran shi Zhongguo de bantu, danshi women gehe le duonian, ta de jianglai, jieguo ruhe, hai yao kan women de shili ruhe, dangshirende shouwan ruhe, yiji ganqing de lianluo ruhe er ding. 西藏雖然是中國的版圖，但是我們隔閡了多年，他的將來，結果如何，還要看我們的實力如何，當事人的手腕如何，以及感情的聯絡如何而定" (1943a, 2-3); in English, "Although Tibet is part of China's territory, we have been estranged for many years. Its future trajectory – what that outcome will be – will depend on our strength, the competence of our leadership, and the quality of our relations". The 1937 edition depicts Tibet's future in terms of a binary: *huoshi guishu qita de guojia*, *huoshi lao zheyang de jixu xiaqu* 或是歸屬其他的國家，或是老這樣的繼續下去 'either it will belong to another country, or it will continue as it has'. The phrase *guishu qita de guojia* 歸屬其他的國家 'belong to another country' evokes the real possibility of British Raj control – a concern grounded in the geopolitical anxieties of the Republican era, when Tibet's position relative to British India was the subject of both diplomatic and popular debate. The inclusion of *jiuqing* 究竟 'ultimately' intensifies this sense of uncertainty, framing Tibet's trajectory as unresolved and potentially irreversible. The 1943 edition removes this binary structure. The expression *ta de jianglai, jiuqing shi ruhe* 他的將來，究竟是如何 'what that outcome will be' eliminates any explicit reference to foreign powers. Instead of an external threat, the revised sentence offers a conditional formula rooted in China's internal capacity. In both sentences, Tibet's future is said to depend on three domestic factors: *shili* 實力, 'strength', *shouwan* 手腕 'competence', and *ganqing de lianluo* 感情的聯絡, 'the quality of relations'. Still, in the 1943 edition, the tone shifts from existential risk to administrative reasoning. What was once imagined as a territorial crisis becomes a question of effective governance. Equally telling is the shift in rhetorical voice. The 1937 version attributes the responsibility of governing Tibet to *women guojia* 我們國家, 'our country', directly invoking the State. In the 1943 revision, this is replaced with *women* 我們, 'we', a pronoun that disperses the accountability of the State. Whether this shift reflects rhetorical restraint, editorial caution, or evolving political sensitivities is difficult to determine. Still, the result is a softer, more introspective discourse of sovereignty – less about defending borders, and more about managing relationships. This revision, made in the context of wartime Chongqing and under the joint leadership of Fazun and Taixu at the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine, reflects a broader transition in Fazun's political language. The dramatization of Tibet as a site of imperial fragility appears to give way to the bureaucratic language of planning and reform. Where the 1937 text presents the stakes, the 1943 version renders them manageable. See Chapter 10 for Fazun's more concerted discussion regarding China's sovereignty over Tibet.

age. However, following the same reasoning, their ‘modern’ mindset will eventually be consigned to the annals of history. Indeed, the concept of an everlasting present, or a sustained ‘modernity’, proves to be fundamentally inconceivable. When every lived moment is framed as ‘modern’, it logically implies that all earlier moments can also be interpreted as ‘modern’ from the perspective of the experiences that characterize those periods.

As a citizen of the Republic of China, I propose that the essence of ‘modern’ is rooted in the observations and experiences I have gathered since I became aware of the world. When I discuss modern Tibet, I refer specifically to the time I have lived there. My firsthand observations establish the essential framework for my [4] discussion of modern Tibet, which I have supplemented with perspectives from others. In this work, I will, from time to time, bring up notable incidents from history. By incorporating such references, I aim to provide my compatriots with a wider view of the subject matter. Even though these [incidents] are not the principal subject, they are nonetheless critical for supplying important context, however brief it might be. And so, why did I go to Tibet? How long did I stay? Did I return? What prompted my return? And what am I going to do now? A dear friend, who knows me inside out, demanded that I should write this.⁵ He implored me with such intensity that, although I feel a sense of shame – particularly when I realize I must tell my own story, which makes me turn red – I could not hold out against his demands for very long. And so, I have written a little, in hope that it will amuse you.

1.1 Objectives of the Journey to Tibet⁶

In the summer of the ninth year of the Republic [1920], I encountered Master Dayong⁷ for the first time as he explained the *Ba daren jue jing* 八大人覺經.⁸ It was at that point that I understood my need, having left secular life,⁹ to engage in a purpose that was truly meaningful as a monk. Casually participating in ceremonies and daily routines would lead me away from my original aim. Nevertheless, what were exactly the duties that a monk ought to perform? I frequently heard seniors say, “To liberate oneself from samsāra, the ocean of suffering, is the duty of a monk”. But I was left

5 Fazun’s friend who invited him to write *Modern Tibet* is Fafang. See the Introduction.

6 A selection of passages from Chapter 1 were translated by Brenton Sullivan (2007; 2014) based on the content of *Zhuzhe ru zang de jingguo* 著者入藏的經過 (The Author’s Experiences “Entering Tibet”), published as an appendix of the 1943 edition of *Modern Tibet*.

7 Throughout *Modern Tibet*, Fazun refers to Dayong and Taixu as Yongshi 勇師 and Xushi 虛師. The term *shi* 師 in this context is an abbreviation of *fashi* 法師, ‘dharma master’, when referred to Dayong, and *dashi* 大師, ‘great master’, when indicating Taixu. For clarity in English, I render these compounds simply as Dayong and Taixu, or Master Dayong and Master Taixu throughout the translation.

8 The *Ba daren jue jing* 八大人覺經, or “Sūtra of the Awakening of the Eight Great Beings”, was translated into Chinese by the Parthian monk An Shigao 安世高. According to tradition, An Shigao was among the earliest translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese. He resided in China for approximately twenty years during the Later Han dynasty (Hou Han 後漢, second century CE), dedicating himself to the translation of a considerable number of sūtras.

9 The Sanskrit term *pravrajita* (C. *chujia* 出家, T. *rab tu byung ba*), commonly translated in the present book as ‘monastic’, denotes ‘one who has left home’, hence the secular life, to embrace the Buddhist order.

pondering the meaning behind “saṃsāra, the ocean of suffering”. How could one ever escape it? Back then, I was so naïve that I did not even think to challenge those basic concepts. Others remarked, “To chant the name of the Buddha in order to be reborn in Sukhāvātī is the duty of a monk”.¹⁰ [5] I took these statements to heart without question. But in moments of stillness and reflection, I listened to Master Dayong as he recounted the life stories of eminent monks from earlier times. I recognized that the duties of a monk go beyond just chanting to attain rebirth in Sukhāvātī or trying to escape the cycle of saṃsāra. Even in this cycle of birth and death, there is a great deal to accomplish – translating the scriptures, upholding the Saddharma,¹¹ and fulfilling other duties.

In the seasons of spring, summer, and autumn of the tenth year of the Republic [1922], I gained extensive instruction from Master Dayong. That winter, I received my full ordination from Master Daojie 道階¹² at Fayuan Temple 法源寺 in Beiping.¹³ Meanwhile, Master Dayong went to Japan to train in the Secret Mantra Tradition.¹⁴ Around the middle of the twelfth lunar month, with the compassionate assistance of my preceptor¹⁵ and eight respected teachers from Mount Baohua 寶華山,¹⁶ the three of us, candidates from the north, traveled to Mount Baohua to study the monastic code. The following summer [of 1923], I was given the opportunity to attend lectures by the senior ordination instructor¹⁷ and the fifth-ordination instructor¹⁸

10 The term that Fazun uses here, *jile* 極樂, refers to the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī (C. Jilēshijie 極樂世界; T. Bde ba can), depicted, alongside the practices necessary to take rebirth there after death, in the *Sukhāvativyūhasūtra* (C. *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經, T. *Bde ba can gyi bkod pa'i mdo*). According to the *Sukhāvativyūha*, this Pure Land is presided by the Amitābha ‘Infinite Light’ or Amitāyus ‘Infinite Life’ Buddha, who teaches the practice of *buddhānsmṛti* (C. *nianfo guan* 念佛觀), involving the contemplation of the characteristics, marks, and virtues of the Buddha to the fortunate ones reborn there.

11 Fazun often employs the term *zhengfa* 正法, corresponding to the Sanskrit term *saddharma*, the ‘Good Teaching’, as an alternative to *fojiao* 佛教, corresponding to *buddhaśāsana*, the ‘Buddha’s Teaching’, or *fofa* 佛法, *buddhadharma*, the ‘Buddha’s Dharma’.

12 Daojie *fashi* 道階法師 (1870-1934), a master from Hunan 湖南, served as a witness at Taixu’s monastic ordination ceremony in 1904 and became the abbot of Fayuan Temple 法源寺 in Beijing from 1911. From 1912, he also served as the president of the Beijing branch of the Chinese Buddhist Society (C. Zhongguo Fojiao Zonghui 中國佛教總會). On Daojie, see Welch 1967, 397.

13 The Fayuan Temple 法源寺 is a monastery in Beijing dating from the Tang dynasty. In 1734, during the reign of the Qing Emperor Yongzheng, the temple was dedicated to the Lüzong 律宗 ‘Vinaya Sect’. In modern times, the temple remains an important center for the training of young monks, housing the Chinese Institute of Buddhist Studies (C. Zhongguo foxue yuan 中國佛學院) and the Museum-Library of Chinese Buddhism (C. Zhongguo fojiao tushu wenwu guan 中國佛教圖書文物館).

14 C. Mizong; corresponding in Japanese to the term *Misshū*.

15 The term *jie heshang* 戒和尚, translated here as ‘preceptor teacher’, refers to a member of the monastic community from whom (1) laypeople receive the five precepts, (2) novices receive the ten precepts, and future (3) monks and (4) nuns receive full ordination. These four categories of individuals begin their training with the preceptor teacher by studying the rules of monastic discipline (S. *vinaya*; C. *jielü* 戒律; T. ‘dul ba).

16 Mount Baohua 寶華山, located near Nanjing, is the main center of activity of the Lü zong.

17 C. *kaitang shifu* 開堂師父; ‘senior ordination instructor’. Typically, when a monk refers to a teacher as *shifu* 師父, it signifies that this individual is his ‘tonsure master’ (C. *tidu enshi* 剃度恩師), but he might also be his ‘Dharma master’ (C. *fashi* 法師), or his ‘ordination master’ (C. *jieshi* 戒師). See Welch 1967, fn. 112; Sullivan 2007, 29.

18 C. *wu shifu* 五師父; ‘fifth ordination instructor’. Sullivan 2007, 29.

focused on the *Tiantai sijiao yi* 天台四教儀.¹⁹ This experience reignited my long-held appreciation for scripture, which I found to be much more meaningful than just learning the rituals of chanting and conducting the ceremonies of Water and Land²⁰ and of the Burning Mouths.²¹ During that time, the renowned Master Taixu had founded the Buddhist Academy in Wuchang.²² A fellow student from the academy reached out to share details about their daily routine: they attended six hours of lectures on the scriptures and spent two to three hours on personal study. Upon reading the letter, I felt like a young kid excited for the arrival of the New Year, filled with joy beyond what I could express. I decided that I would go. Still, what options were available to me for gaining access without any introductions or a person to endorse my entry?

It was during that time, purely by coincidence, that something surprising happened.²³ The time had come for the disciples of Mount Baohua, who had taken their vows the previous year, to register for ceremonial roles. As a rule, the three of us from Beiping were seen as outsiders who were not eligible to conduct the ceremonial events in the ritual hall at Mount Baohua. But our credentials happened to be unique: the great abbot of Mount Baohua served as our [6] teacher, while their teacher was our own abbot, and the leaders of the eastern and western chambers acted as our ceremonial leaders. As a result, we entered the ceremonial space six months ahead of the local disciples. Indeed, the local disciples were displeased, as they had hoped to outshine us in obtaining the ceremonial roles. They were utterly taken aback when I emerged as the first in line. This sparked a fierce jealousy, as though their resentment had set the heavens on fire. I could not contain my amusement, laughing both silently and vocally at the very sight of what they were doing. “While my name may be at the top of the list”, I

19 The *Tiantai sijiao yi* is a text composed by Chegwan 諦觀 (d. 970), a monk of the Goryeo period. Here, Chegwan offers further elaborations on the systematization of teachings carried out by Zhiyi 智顛 (538-579), the founder of the Tiantai Sect 天台宗. For an English translation of the *Tiantai sijiao yi*, see Chappell 1983.

20 The term *shuilu* 水陸 refers to a ritual for the spirits and the dead. Welch (1967, 190) describes this ritual in the following manner: “The *tour de force* among rites for the dead was the ‘plenary mass’ (*shui-lu fa-hui*), common in central China, rare in Peking. It was very large, very long, and very expensive. Lasting seven days and nights, it included different kinds of services at seven different altars, often going on simultaneously: recitation of buddha’s name, chanting of various sūtras, offering of penances, and the release of burning mouths. Each had to be performed by the number of monks prescribed in the missal, while all the monks in the monastery turned out to march in the serpentine processions reciting buddha’s name (*p’u-fo*). The purpose of the plenary mass was to save all the souls of the dead on land and sea (hence the term *shui-lu*), but as usual the merit arising therefrom was credited to the account of the deceased relatives of the family that was paying for it”.

21 The term *yankou* 焰口, which I translated here as ‘burning mouths’, refers not only to a particular kind of hungry ghosts (S. *preta*, C. *egui* 餓鬼), but also to the ritual designed to feed and liberate these beings by reciting a specific *dhāraṇī sūtra* (C. *Yankou egui tuoluoni jing* 焰口餓鬼陀羅尼經). The main recipients of the ritual are both hungry ghosts and the deceased, who are to be freed from their unfortunate rebirths through food offerings. This type of *dhāraṇī sūtra* was first introduced into China during the Tang dynasty through Sanskrit translations by Śikṣānanda and Amoghavajra. This particular ritual was among the few that survived the Tang dynasty to the present day. See Strickmann 1996, 392 ff.

22 C. Wuchang Foxue Yuan 武昌佛學院. The Wuchang Institute of Buddhist Studies was founded in 1922 by Taixu with the aim of reorganizing the Chinese monastic system and providing it with a standard. See the *Introduction*.

23 The anecdote recounted in this paragraph was removed in the 1943 edition of *Modern Tibet*.

thought, “I will not remain in this place for long. Why humiliate yourselves over something so trivial?”

Shortly after, in less than ten days, I received a letter from Master Dayong in Japan. He showed great kindness and compassion towards me, and he consented to support me by writing a letter of recommendation. After bidding a temporary farewell to my teachers at Mount Baohua, I proceeded west to Wuchang to meet the distinguished Master Taixu and to join the Buddhist Academy. During that winter, Master Dayong made his way back to Wuchang to share the teachings of the *Shiba dao* 十八道.²⁴ At the time, there was a notable trend among both laypeople and monastics to elevate tantra²⁵ above all else. I had the honor of spending several days with Dayong, during which he instructed me in both the *Shiba dao* and the *Yizun gongyang* 一尊供養.²⁶ Even though I missed the two major empowerment rites that he had brought back from Japan, I still experienced the profound intensity of tantra. However, I realized that only individuals with a strong grounding in the doctrinal teachings could truly comprehend its essential principles. Without a fundamental grasp of the core doctrinal principles, one’s practice is likely to result in distorted perceptions and false appearances. Some individuals attain temporary visions of meditative trance²⁷ or feel the favors of a chosen deity²⁸ and, misjudging these experiences, take them as signs of having achieved the supreme realization in the present body.²⁹ Hardly anyone is willing to criticize them. Others may lapse into a state of stupor or [7] delusion, combining hallucinations of demonic or ghostly powers with religious practice, and later claim to have attained enlightenment.

My own foundations were weak. I failed to enter a meditative state or obtain any blessings from a deity. I likewise did not experience any supernatural feats related to demons or ghosts. My own connection to tantric practice³⁰ remained distant. In my view, learning required total

24 C. *shiba dao* 十八道; J. *jūhachi dō*; “The Eighteen Paths” are preliminary practices leading to the Fire Offering (S. *homa*; C. *humo* 護摩; T. *sbyin sregs*; J. *goma*). In the Shingon tradition, four principal fire rituals are distinguished: (1) *sāntika* (pacification), (2) *pauṣṭika* (augmentation), (3) *ābhicāruka* (subjugation), and (4) *vaśīkaraṇa* (attracting or subordinating others). Each is subdivided into a sequence that includes the Eighteen Paths, the Diamond Realm (*Vajradhātu*), the Womb Realm (*Garbhadhātu*), and the actual Fire Offering. The Eighteen Paths serve as an initiation in foundational mudrās and visualizations, forming the basis for deity yoga. As Michael Saso (1991, 66) explains, “Four rituals form the central practice of the Shido Kegyo training. These four are the Juhachi Do, the Kongo Kai, the Taizo Kai, and the Goma. The first two of these, the Juhachi Do and the Kongo Kai, relate the practitioner to the Thunderbolt Realm, while the third relates to the Matrix Realm. In the first two rituals the practitioner is said to go to the Buddha, while in the third the Buddha comes to the practitioner. [...] The title Juhachi Do refers to the eighteen different mudras which are employed in the course of the ritual. It is the simplest of the four rituals and its connection with the Thunderbolt Realm is shown by the mantras recited at the close of the ritual”. See also Strickmann 1996, 337-68; Saso 1990, 88-94; Saso 1991, 49-56; Chandra and Rani 1978, 57-61.

25 In the phrase *you wei mi shi shang de fengqi* 有唯密是尚的風氣, by the term *Mi* 密, Fazun refers to Japan’s Mikkyō. An expanded translation is, “there was a prevailing trend of exalting Mikkyō [tantra] above all else”.

26 C. *yizun gongyang* 一尊供養; “Single Yidam Offering”.

27 C. *sanmodi* 三摩地; S. *samādhi*; T. *ting nge ’dzin*.

28 C. *benzun* 本尊; S. *iṣṭadevatā*; T. *yi dam*.

29 C. *jishen chengfo* 即身成佛; this expression conveys a core doctrine of the Vajrayāna: the possibility of “attaining buddhahood in this very body”, within a single human lifetime.

30 C. *Mifa* 密法.

commitment, while practice demanded consistent effort. I made a choice to not take shortcuts, skip necessary steps, or entertain grand delusions that could mislead myself or others. Causing harm to others was never my desire. And I undertook every action with heartfelt intention: I immersed myself in my studies, practiced with perseverance, taught as best as I could, and promoted the Dharma with sincerity. I expressed myself clearly and truthfully, without the desire for praise or the fear of criticism. I felt no obligation to protect my friends' emotions, nor was I concerned about provoking their anger. Those who were satisfied with my message engaged, while those who did not were free to walk away. Still, some people began to blame me for showing indifference towards Secret Mantra. I could not help but offer them a frosty grin.

In the spring of the thirteenth year of the Republic [1924], Master Dayong and the honorable Bai Puren 白普仁³¹ entered a period of retreat at Shan Yuan Temple 善緣庵 in Beijing to perform a fire offering ritual.³² During this retreat, Master Dayong became aware that the range of Tibetan tantric practices was far greater than that of Eastern tantra,³³ which intensified his wish to seek the Dharma in Tibet. At first, Master Dayong aimed to make this pilgrimage alone or with one or two attendants. Yet, under the urging of Bai Puren and other prominent Dharma protectors, he began to create the Tibetan Buddhist Language Institute.³⁴ As summer approached, the Wuchang Buddhist Academy conducted graduation ceremonies, while Dayong was bestowing the *Shiba dao* in Beijing. He wrote me a letter, imploring that I come and see him for the journey to Tibet. From the day I met Dayong at Mount Wutai,³⁵ he had taken me under his wing as if I were his own tonsure disciple, always prepared to provide advice and care in every circumstance, great or small. After his return from Japan, he intended to retreat on Mount Lu 廬山 to accomplish the attainment [8] methods.³⁶ I was his primary choice to accompany him in the role of an attendant. Dayong's decision in Beijing took a different turn, which, of

31 C. Bai Puren 白普仁 (1870-1927). Venerable Bai Puren was a lama from Mongolia active at the Yonghegong between the late Qing dynasty and the early years of the Republic of China. It is said that during a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai, he had a vision of Mañjuśrī, after which he worked for the benefit of his disciples. His reputation soon spread widely throughout Mongolia. Stories of miracles and marvels circulated not only among his disciples but also among laypeople, due to his reputed expertise in *sāntika* rituals for the protection of the state (C. huguo xizai 護國息災). These rituals - often involving the recitation of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama Sūtra* (C. *Jingguangming zuishengwang jing* 金光明最勝王經) [T. 665] - were often said to be successful. In 1924, upon the arrival of the ninth Panchen Lama in Beijing, the two met, and the Panchen Lama bestowed upon Bai Puren the title of *khenpo*. That same year, Dayong, who had just returned from Japan, visited the Yonghe Gong to study Tibetan tantric rituals with Bai Puren, particularly the *homa* ritual. On Bai Puren, see the *Introduction* to the translation. On the ninth Panchen Lama, see Jagou 2011.

32 C. humo 護摩; S. homa; T. sbyin sregs; J. goma; from the Sanskrit *homa*, 'fire offering'.

33 C. Dongmin 東密; the expression 'Eastern tantra' here refers to Japan's tantra.

34 The Tibetan Buddhist Language Institute (C. Fojiao zangwen xueyuan 佛教藏文學院) was founded in 1924 by Dayong at the Ciyin Temple 慈因寺 in Beijing. Dayong's primary aim was to train a group of his students in the Tibetan language so that, once they reached Tibet, they would be better equipped to read Buddhist texts. In 1925, Taixu and Dayong changed the name of the institute to "Group for Learning the Dharma in Tibet" (C. Liu zang xuefa tuan 留藏學法團).

35 C. Wutai shan 五台山; T. Ri bo rtse lnga. Cf. Tuttle 2006a, 2, 6-8.

36 C. chengjiu fa 成就法; in tantric materials, *chengjiu* is one of the Chinese translations of *siddhi* (T. dngos grub), conveying the meaning of 'attainment' or 'success'. The Chinese phonetic transcription of *siddhi* is *xidi* 悉地.

course, called for a reevaluation of the plans he had for me. He wrote me a letter, requesting my presence in Beijing for a personal discussion. At that time, I was staying in Wuchang, engrossed in the study of the commentaries on *Sanlun* 三論³⁷ and *Weishi* 唯識.³⁸ I greatly admired and longed to emulate the achievements of such luminaries as Kumārajīva, Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing.³⁹ When I received an invitation letter from Dayong to join the Tibet expedition, I was ecstatic and jumped for joy, worried that I might miss this valuable chance.

I had not seen my parents in six long years. With each passing year, I received a growing stack of letters from them urging me to come home. My replies, always postponing my return – this year to the next, and then the next to the year after – matched the quantity of letters they had sent. Upon my arrival in Beijing that year, I planned to take a brief diversion back home to ease my parents’ concerns. But Dayong was in such haste to go to Hangzhou to deliver his lectures that I had to forego this plan.

When I reached Beijing, I had a meeting with Dayong, and we confirmed our travel details for the expedition to Tibet to study the Dharma. During Dayong’s southern journey, I, along with Masters Dagang 大剛, Master Miyan 密嚴, and the layman Shanzhe 善哲, stayed in Beijing to make preparations for the upcoming expedition. When Dayong returned to Beijing in the eighth month to begin the new academic term, he was with Master Langchan 朗禪, Master Hengyan 恆演, and a number of lay practitioners. The Tibetan Language Institute⁴⁰ was opened and Mr. Chong 充⁴¹ began his formal instruction. Gradually, our Tibetan alphabet⁴² moved steadily onto the right track. After the inauguration, masters like Zhaoyi 超一, Guankong 觀空, and Fafang 法航, joined us as well. As late spring approached in the next year [1925], our group had everything in place to set off. While on the road, we took turns imparting Dharma teachings, bestowing ritual empowerments, and granting precepts, which resulted in a vibrant experience. We always traveled on private trains, and when coming by ship, we would always arrange for the entire cabin to be reserved.

When we arrived in Hankou 漢口, we were joined by several masters, including Yanding 嚴定 and Huizhong 會中. A few old classmates tried to dissuade us. They pointed out the likelihood of the monastery facing a lack

37 C. Sanlun 三論. The term Sanlun 三論 ‘Three Treatises’ refers to the three *sāstras* that were elevated to canonical status by the Chinese Sanlun Sect 三論宗. These texts, all translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva (C. Jiumoluoshi 鳩摩羅什), are: the *Madhyamakaśāstra* (C. *Zhong lun* 中論) and the *Dvādaśanikāya śāstra* (C. *Shiermen lun* 十二門論) by Nāgārjuna, and the *Sataśāstra* (C. *Bai lun* 百論) by his main disciple, Āryadeva.

38 C. *Weishi* 唯識; “Consciousness Only”.

39 C. Shi Xuan Zang Jing 什顯奘淨; Fazun employs this compound of four sinographs to name the four great Chinese Buddhist translators: “Shi 什” for Kumārajīva (C. Jiumoluoshi 鳩摩羅什, (344-413 CE), “Xian 顯” for Faxian 法顯 (ca. 337-422 CE), “Zang 奘” for Xuanzang 玄奘 (600-664 CE), and “Jing 淨” for Yijing 義淨 (635-713 CE).

40 C. Zangwen xueyuan 藏文學院.

41 Fazun refers to his first Tibetan language teacher in Beijing as Chong xiansheng 充先生 (d.u.).

42 C. jia ke 迦喀; T. ka kha. The Tibetan alphabet has been named *ka kha*, after its first two letters, *ka* and *kha*. It thus follows other traditions: for example, the Greek *alpha* and *beta*, or the Latin-derived Italian *alfabeto*. Fazun, in transliterating Tibetan into Chinese, replaces, respectively, *ka* and *kha* with the Chinese phonetic transliterations *jia* and *ke*, as these sinographs phonetically come very close to the pronunciation of the Tibetan letters.

of personnel and the difficulties involved in traveling to Tibet. I could not help but smile quietly at their ignorance and inflexibility, for they could not understand my [9] long-standing resolve to sacrifice myself to the Dharma. The hardships of Tibet were much less intimidating than Xuanzang's dangerous journey to the Kingdom of Khotan,⁴³ or Faxian's crossings through treacherous mountain passes. Even though the mother monastery faced a shortage of personnel, Master Taixu was in charge, and other classmates carried on with their studies. Tibet had a flawless Buddhadharmā - ripe for study, translation, and dissemination. So they should have been there to support and encourage us. What prompted them to seek to dissuade and alarm us instead? As they were dear friends following their personal ambitions, I expressed myself in a calm and polite way, avoiding any direct disagreement. They have been gone for many years and will never know my persistent dedication.

During that summer, I found refuge from the sweltering heat at Mount Emei 峨嵋山, where I also engaged in a five-week *sāntika* ritual to pacify adversities.⁴⁴ In the fall, I took residence at Wulong Temple 烏龍寺 in Jiading 嘉定, immersing myself in Master Yijing's 義淨⁴⁵ *Nanhai jigui zhuan* 南海寄歸傳. This experience deepened my heartfelt appreciation for Trepitaka Yijing.⁴⁶ I realized that the Chinese Buddhist sūtras and śāstras we have today were passed down to us through the immeasurable sacrifices made by our forebears. They gave up their lives, fortunes, sweat, and blood, enduring immeasurable pain, distress, sorrow, and tears of despair to ensure the passing down of these invaluable gifts. Every single character and brushstroke in these scriptures is tinged with blood and tears. The scriptures were acquired and translated through the boundless compassion, fearless resolution, and unshakeable vows of those individuals who were willing to sacrifice everything. When we take up these teachings as their heirs, we must pause and contemplate the vast expectations, monumental efforts, and unselfish sacrifices of those who have laid the groundwork for us. It is hard to fathom that we could, in arrogance or ingratitude, speak negatively or defame their contributions. Even though we may not contribute to the merit and wisdom established by the relentless labors of

43 C. Gaochang 高昌.

44 C. wuqi zizai fahui 五七息災法會; 'wuqi', in English, 'five times seven'.

45 Yijing (635-713) was a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim and translator who traveled to India and Southeast Asia between 671 and 695 CE. He embarked on this journey to collect Buddhist scriptures and to study monastic practices firsthand. Yijing is credited with translating numerous Buddhist texts into Chinese. He wrote two major works: the *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳 (T. 2125) (Record of the Inner Dharma Dispatched from the Southern Sea) and the *Datang qiufa gaoseng zhuan* 大唐求法高僧傳 (T. 2066) (Biographies of Eminent Monks Who Went in Search of the Dharma during the Great Tang). Several translations exist of Yijing's works in European languages. For the *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* (Taishō 2125), see: Takakusu 1896; and Li 2000. For Yijing's *Datang qiufa gaoseng zhuan* (Taishō 2066), see: Chavannes 1894; and Lahiri 1986.

46 C. sanzang 三藏. The Sanskrit term Trepitaka (C. Sanzang 三藏/Sanzang fashi 法師; T. Sde snod gsum pa) is a honorific title for Buddhist scholars celebrated for their mastery of the Tripitaka, or 'Three Baskets'. These refer to the Buddhist canon's three divisions: the Vinayapitaka (Basket of Monastic Regulations), the Sūtrapitaka (Basket of Discourses), and the Abhidharmapitaka (Basket of Treatises). The title conveys expertise in Buddhist literature and is especially linked to translator-monks who played crucial roles in bringing Buddhist texts from India and Central Asia to East Asia. Among its most renowned bearers are Kumārajīva, Paramārtha, Xuanzang, and Yijing.

our forebears, we should refrain from undermining their achievements and kindness through any careless or impulsive behavior.

In his poem *Gaoseng qiufa shi* 高僧求法詩,⁴⁷ Master Yijing laments, “[10] Hundreds leave, yet less than ten return; how can those who come after grasp the trials of those who went before?” Each time I read these lines, my eyes turn red and fill with tears as large as grapes. Elsewhere he cautions, stating, “If later generations fail to grasp this meaning, they will often read the scriptures too casually!” It appears to me that he was foreseeing our current tendencies with these remarks. His advice resonated deeply within me, serving as both a source of inspiration and a lesson in humility. I was careful not to undermine the achievements of our forebears or to regard their efforts as insignificant. Their great compassion and fearlessness filled me with admiration. I yearned to imitate their path, even if it called for sacrificing everything to learn from their example. With a firm intention, I set out to study and translate the Buddhist classics of Tibet, which were not present in our Inner Lands, to help close the gaps in knowledge. In particular, I wished to supplement the *Vinayapīṭaka* translated by Master Yijing. The tantric methods of Tibet were, of course, included in this aim. I was also determined to expand my knowledge into worldly domains like geography, history, crafts, medicine, politics, and the arts. However, a person’s energy and lifespan are limited. It was hard to foretell whether I would be able to accomplish my goals.

1.2 Nine Years of Study in Kham and Ü-Tsang

In the late fall of the fourteenth year of the Republic [1925], our cohort of students embarked on a journey from Jiading to Ya’an 雅安. The trip involved navigating through several regions infested by bandits.⁴⁸ Our group split into two separate routes, both utilizing waterways. West of Hongya 洪雅, there were no military forces available to ensure our safety. At that moment, Dayong [11] along with others considered going back to Jiading until the bandit situation improved. The students, however, excited to get to Tibet, were so restless that they longed to arrive in just one stride. Having no firsthand experience with the dangers of banditry, we were united in our determination to head on. Having observed our determination, Dayong conceded with some hesitation. He sought help from the local government and communicated with Commander Sun 孫 in Ya’an via telegraph, asking for assistance. Fortunately, the bandits in the region, hoping to be granted an amnesty, saw their opportunity to escort us as a way to gain merit and earn favor. Acting as brokers of our safety between the bandits and us, they smoothly and safely escorted all thirty-plus members of our group to Ya’an. Thanks to heaven and earth, we managed to break free from the bandits’ stronghold – a place as dangerous a dragon’s lair or a tiger’s den. We spent approximately a week in Ya’an before moving onward to the west.

⁴⁷ C. *Gaoseng qiufa shi* 高僧求法詩; “Verses on Eminent Monks in Search of the Dharma”. Here, Fazun refers to Yijing’s verses in the *Datang qiufa gaoseng zhuan* as *Gaoseng qiufa shi*.

⁴⁸ C. *tufei* 土匪. On the term *tufei*, ‘bandit’, and its usage during the Republican period, see Graefe 2009, 12-15.

The route connecting Ya'an to Dartsédo⁴⁹ was still filled with bandit-infested areas. One [12] particular morning when we were leaving Rongjing 榮經,⁵⁰ we stumbled upon a military unit returning from a hunt for bandits, and they had with them some decapitated heads - it was an incredibly startling sight, those horrific remains. Only later did we learn that all these efforts had been made specially to clear the way for us. The next morning, during our passage across the Daxiang Ridge 大相嶺,⁵¹ we faced another attack from bandits. They let us move through without harm while they robbed a number of textile traders who were behind us. Finally, we realized that the officials had negotiated with the bandits to keep us safe, allowing us to move about without any risk.

After more than ten days of travel, we finally made it to Dartsédo, which looked quite like Rddhinagara.⁵² We settled in at the Ngachö Temple.⁵³ As the chill of winter faded, we recruited a local Tibetan language tutor who was of mixed Tibetan and Han descent. To be frank, his spoken Tibetan was a little more advanced than ours, but in terms of literacy in Tibetan, he was actually not as skilled as some of us. With the transition into the New Year and the arrival of spring, the students' boredom began to grow more evident. Together with Master Langchan, I felt a powerful urge building within me, and in a moment of carelessness that bordered on recklessness, I made a firm decision, without seeking advice from my fellow students, to climb up Mount Paoma 跑馬山⁵⁴ to study the scriptures, even if it meant breaking all

49 C. Dajianlu 打箭鑪; T. Dar rtse mdo. For Dartsédo, Fazun employs both the phonetic transliteration from Tibetan, Dajianlu, and its Republican-era Chinese name, Kangding 康定, which indicated the capital of Xikang.

50 C. Rongjing 榮經. Rongjing County 榮經縣, the name of a county on the western border of Republican-era Xikang, corresponds to present-day Yingjing 榮經, Sichuan Province.

51 C. Daxiang Ling 大相嶺. Located south of Ya'an, the Daxiang Ling is the mountain range that marks the geographic boundary between northern and southern Sichuan. With peaks over 3,500 meters, its terrain contrasts lush, rainy northern slopes with dry southern slopes.

52 C. Huacheng 化城. The reference is to the "City of Illusions" (S. Rddhinagara) described in the parable of Chapter VII of the *Lotus Sūtra* (C. *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經; S. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra*; T. *Dam chos pad dkar'i mdo*). In this parable, the Buddha explains the doctrine of the three vehicles and the one vehicle (S. ekayāna). He states that the vehicle of hearers (S. śrāvaka) is merely a skillful means (C. fangbian; S. upāya; T. thabs) - a temporary path to guide beings into the vehicle of the bodhisattvas and, ultimately, to attain complete and perfect buddhahood (S. anuttarasamyaksambodhi). In the parable, the Buddha tells of a group of travelers making their way on a long, wild, and dangerous road - saṃsāra - in search of a place where priceless treasures - buddhahood - are kept. Their guide, who knows the terrain intimately and is fully prepared for hardship, is the Buddha himself. He alone can lead them to that final destination. Halfway through the journey, the group grows weary and discouraged. Some wish to turn back. Seeing this, the guide, skillful and compassionate, fears they may abandon the path and lose the treasure. To give them hope, he conjures an illusory city - a place of rest and safety, which he presents as their temporary destination: the nirvāṇa of the śrāvaka. He tells them they may stay there, or, if they choose, they may continue on to the treasure. The travelers reach the city and rest, believing they have arrived. Once they regain their strength, the guide dissolves the illusion. He reveals that the city was never real. Ultimately, it was a mere device to give them comfort and courage. With the treasure of buddhahood now close at hand, he urges them to continue the journey. Fazun likely compared Dartsédo to this "City of Illusions" because, although he and his companions had not yet reached Lhasa, they had overcome the danger and hardship of entering Tibet through Kham. In Dartsédo, they could finally rest and feel safe.

53 C. Anque si 安却寺; T. Lnga mchod.

54 C. Paoma shan 跑馬山. In Chapter 4, Fazun offers the name of the monastery on Paoma Shan as Lamo 拉摩 (T. Lha mo rtse). See the translator's *Introduction*.

bonds with our group. When this matter was brought up in a formal setting, both Dayong and Dagang, as well as most of our classmates, did not raise any objections. Some of them had concerns, but given that Dayong supported my stance rather than opposing it, there was no foundation for their objections, so they allowed me to proceed as planned.

On Mount Paoma, I took refuge under the guidance of Master Jampa Mönlam⁵⁵ and lived there for a year. During this period, I studied Tibetan grammar and engaged with the works of Tsongkhapa, such as the *Gelong gi Lapja Namtse Dengmar Drakpa*,⁵⁶ the *Jangchub Shunglam*,⁵⁷ and the *Lamrim Düdön*.⁵⁸ This year of study filled me with a profound sense of contentment. I made considerable progress in my proficiency in the Tibetan language and cultivated a unique faith in the Buddhadharma of Tibet. The complexity and conceptual depth of the *Gelong gi Lapja Namtse Dengmar Drakpa* and the *Jangchub Shunglam* were unlike anything I had previously come across in our Inner Lands. The layout and framework of the *Lamrim Chenmo*⁵⁹ [13] were an extraordinary gem that I could never have envisioned, even in my wildest dreams. I felt that my journey in search for the Dharma had finally yielded a slight reward. If I were to meet my fate in Xikang, I would not feel any sorrow or regret. Over the course of that year, I became familiar with the lifeways of Tibet. My meals were exclusively made of tsampa,⁶⁰ the classic barley staple, as I removed rice and noodles entirely from my diet. This change was relatively successful.

Our planned timeline for leaving commenced in the spring of the sixteenth year of the Republic [1927]. I teamed up with Master Langchan to join the mule caravans operated by the Lawa 拉瓦 family, setting off from Karze⁶¹ under the guise of ordinary monks. The journey was tough and spartan. Upon arriving in Karze, we secured lodging with the families of local traders. In contrast, Dayong undertook his journey with an official mandate and was escorted by troops. His expedition was majestic and imposing and radiated a sense of authority. Local officials actively sought religious initiation, learned sacred mantras, and competed to host grand

55 C. Ciyuan dashi 慈願大師; T. Byams pa smon lam (d.u.).

56 C. *Bichujie shi* 必芻戒釋. The *Bichujie shi* 必芻戒釋, also known in Chinese as *Bichuxue chu* 必芻學處 (T. *Dge slong gi bslab bya gnam lce ldeng mar grags pa*), is based on an oral commentary given by Lama Tsongkhapa in 1401 at Namche Deng Monastery. The text explains the vows of fully ordained *bhikṣus*. It is especially important to understand Tsongkhapa's sustained efforts to reform and renew the study and practice of monastic discipline (C. jie 戒; S. śīla; T. tshul khriims), which he saw as having declined in Tibet during his time.

57 C. *Pusajie shi* 菩薩戒釋; T. *Byang chub gzhung lam*; 'Highway for Bodhisattvas'. This text records the oral commentary given by Lama Tsongkhapa in 1399 on the section dealing with bodhisattva discipline (Skt. Bodhisattvaśīlaparivarta) in the "Stages of the Bodhisattva" chapter (C. Pusa di 菩薩地; S. Bodhisattva bhūmi; T. Byang chub sems dpa'i sa) of Asaṅga's *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* (C. *Yuqieshidi lun* 瑜伽師地論). Tsongkhapa titled his own work *Byang chub gzhung lam*, meaning "Highway for Bodhisattvas".

58 C. *Putidao cidī lüe lun* 菩提道次第略論; T. *Lam rim bsdus don*; "Concise Meaning of the Stages of the Path". The *Lam rim bsdus don* is also known as *Lam rim chung ngu*, "Brief Stages of the Path".

59 C. *Putidao cidī guanglun* 菩提道次第廣論; T. *Lam rim chen mo*; "Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path".

60 C. zangba 糌粑; T. rtsam pa; 'barley'.

61 C. Ganzi 甘孜; T. Dkar mdzes.

welcoming and farewell celebrations. The savages of the Sichuan frontier,⁶² unfamiliar with such spectacles, all gazed in wonder. The striking demeanor of Dayong led the Tibetans to mistake him for a prominent delegate of the Chinese Government. As a consequence, the Tibetan Government announced a formal suspension of his expedition. Traders in Karze were given two official warnings, which prohibited them from supporting Han individuals in their attempts to reach Tibet. In light of this difficulty, we had to take a moment to regroup.

In the months of April and May, Master Langchan went back to the village of Minyak⁶³ to pursue the study of religious scriptures. Together with Dayong, I made my way across the river from Karze to Drakar Gönpa⁶⁴ to learn from the honored Drakar Lama,⁶⁵ who was elderly at the time and showed symptoms of illness. Although we were designated his disciples, our main teachers were his senior students. I turned to Master Erangba 俄讓巴⁶⁶ for guidance and immersed myself in the *Lamrim Chenmo*, particularly the section that discusses *vipaśyanā*.⁶⁷ Later, with the assistance of Getrül Tulku,⁶⁸ I studied an overview of *Dü Dra*,⁶⁹ the *Abhisamayālamkāra*,⁷⁰ and the *Drangné Lekshe Nyingpo*.⁷¹ This master [14], who was only a year my elder,

62 This phrase reads, “Chuanbian de manzimen 川邊的蠻子們”, “The tribespeople at the borders of Sichuan”.

63 C. Muniang 木孃; T. Mi nyag.

64 C. Zhajia si 札迦寺; T. Brag dkar dgon pa.

65 C. Zhajia dashi 札加大師; T. Brag dkar bla ma.

66 C. Erang ba 俄讓巴.

67 C. piboshena 毗鉢舍那; P. vipassanā; T. lhag mthong; in English, “insight”. While *piboshena* is a phonetic rendering of the Indic term, the Chinese translation of *vipaśyanā* is *guan* 觀, which is often found in the compound *zhiguan* 止觀 (S. *samathavipaśyanā*; P. *samathavipassanā*; T. *zhi gas lhag mthong*), meaning “serenity and insight”. In this passage, Fazun references the final section of the *Lamrim Chenmo*, which is sometimes considered an independent text. This section explores *samatha* and *vipaśyanā* in detail. Tsongkhapa’s treatment of insight here represents one of his most significant expositions of the doctrine of *sūnyatā* (C. *kongxing* 空性; T. *stong pa nyid*), ‘emptiness’.

68 C. Getuo Zhugu 格陀諸古; T. Dge sprul sprul sku (d.u.).

69 C. *Yinming chuji rumen* 因明初機入門; T. *Bsdus grwa*; in English, “Collected Topics”. It is uncertain whether *Yinming chuji rumen*, “Primer on Logic”, refers to a specific text or the broader genre of *Dü Dra* (C. *zongyi* 總義; T. *bsdus grwa*). The introductory stages of the *Dü Dra* curriculum in the Geluk tradition establish the foundation of Buddhist philosophy, focusing on ontology, epistemology, and logic. The course begins with a phase called *kha dog dkar dmar*, “white and red colors”. This stage teaches fundamental distinctions, such as pervasion and entailment (T. *khyab pa*), illustrated by examples like, “whatever is red must be a color”. Students learn general propositions (T. *chos yul*), specific topics (T. *chos can*), and frameworks for analyzing objects and their attributes. The curriculum relies on Dharmakīrti’s epistemology. The second phase, called *gzhi grub*, “established bases”, introduces ontological models drawn from the Indian Sautrāntika system. Here, students examine conceptual inclusions and differentiations. The third phase advances to abstract reasoning, covering logical relationships like cause and effect (T. *rgyu dang ’bras bu*), general and specific (T. *spyi dang bye brag*), and definitions (T. *mtshan nyid*). This stage culminates in argumentation training, including *reductio ad absurdum* (T. *thal ’gyur*) and the study of negations. Together, these stages provide a theoretical foundation and sharpen debate skills, both of which are essential steps for progression in the Geluk curriculum. For further discussion, see Onoda 1996.

70 C. *Xianguan zhuangyan lun* 現觀莊嚴論; T. *Mngon par rtogs pa’i rgyan*; “Ornament for Realization”, attributed to Maitreyanātha (ca. 350CE).

71 C. *Bian liaoyi buliaoyi lun* 辨了義不了義論; T. *Drang nges legs bshad snying po*; “Essence of Eloquence on the Definitive and Provisional”, completed by Tsongkhapa in Lhasa in 1408.

embodied erudition, practice, morality, and compassion. The more respect he garnered, the higher he appeared to rise; the deeper one probed into his teachings, the more they unfolded as profound and limitless. For four years,⁷² I learned alongside him, reaping immense benefits. The teachings he shared on bodhicitta⁷³ were a pure gift of compassion. It was his kindness that led me to discover an entryway into the deeper meanings of Secret Mantra.⁷⁴ I hold unrivaled respect and trust in him. The calming expression on his face and the comforting tone of his voice have created such a lasting memory that it will be difficult to erase in my mind, even over many lifetimes. In the autumn of the seventeenth year of the Republic [1928], I had the privilege of meeting the illustrious Venerable Amdo,⁷⁵ someone I had admired for many years. He embarked on a journey from Golok to Karze to honor Drakar Rinpoché and to discuss the creation of a *bodhimanda*⁷⁶ in Chamdo.⁷⁷ Getrül Tulku facilitated my introduction to the Venerable Amdo, which allowed me to raise questions that had been perplexing me for years. His vast knowledge and sharp insight allowed him to effortlessly clarify even the most difficult points. After receiving his teachings, I prostrated in reverence. This was my first meeting with the Venerable Amdo, and it motivated me to seek his guidance for an extended period.

On the fourth day of the eighth month in the eighteenth year of the Republic [1929], Drakar Rinpoché left this life; it was as if the sight of humans and gods had been snuffed out. On the morning of the tenth day, Dayong also took his last breath. Since Dagang was still in Chengdu, only Hengzhao, Miyan, Mihui, and I were still there. We found ourselves facing this tragic loss, and we lacked the knowledge to cope with it effectively. What could we do? Panic set in, but we could not just sit idly by and do nothing. Feeling lost, I reached out for support in all directions and invited the noble Getrül Tulku, who had earlier overseen the aftermath of the Venerable Drakar's demise. Having turned to him for Dayong's memorial [15], we witnessed firsthand the true magnitude of his cultivation. Calm and deliberate, he illuminated a clear path forward. With his advice guiding us at every step, we were able to perform the cremation rites for Dayong with great efficiency and ease. Later on, my companion Mihui went back to Tonggu,⁷⁸ Miyan proceeded to Kangding,⁷⁹ and Hengzhao joined him in his journey. Thus, I was left to take care of the affairs in Karze all by myself. In the springtime, Dagang along with Miyan set out from Dartsédo to obtain the holy relics of Dayong for the purpose of building a stūpa in Kangding. I went along with them and spent a month in the company of Master Jangpa

72 C. *sige niantou* 四個年頭, "a period of four years", indicates from 1927 to 1931.

73 C. *putixin* 菩提心; T. *byang chub kyi sems*; in English, 'aspiration for enlightenment', 'mind of enlightenment'.

74 C. *Mizong*; In English, "Secret Mantra". Like earlier in the translation, where Fazun recounts Dayong's encounter with Misshū, Japan's "Secret Mantra Tradition", I translate *Mizong* here as "Secret Mantra". In this passage, Fazun uses the term specifically to discuss tantra within the Indian and Tibetan context.

75 C. *Andong enshi* 安東恩師; T. *A mdo dge bshes 'jam dpal rol pa'i blo gros* (1888-1936).

76 C. *daochang* 道場.

77 C. *Changdu* 昌都; T. *Chab mdo*.

78 C. *Donggu* 東古; T. *Stong dgu*.

79 Kangding is the Chinese name of Dartsédo.

Mönlam. During this time, our honored elder Zhisan 智三 took rebirth in the West.⁸⁰ After his cremation, I made my way back to Karze, where I took shelter with Getrül Tulku and received the full transmission of all of Master Drakar's works.

In the spring of the twentieth year of the Republic [1931], the four of us - Langchan, Changguang, Huishen, and I - traveled to Chamdo. After spending several days there, Langchan and Changguang [16] moved on to Lhasa. With the aim of studying closely under our honored teacher, Amdo, Huishen and I remained in Chamdo. During that year, we received more than forty great initiations⁸¹ and gained insights into the outlines of various treatises within the sūtra teachings.⁸² During the eighth month, as we traveled with our teacher to Tibet, we passed by Nakchu⁸³ and sought instruction from Master Dakpo.⁸⁴ He imparted to us several uncommon practices, including the body maṇḍala of Green Tārā.⁸⁵

By the end of the tenth month, we had successfully reached Lhasa. After following my teacher's advice, I was enrolled at Drépung Monastery⁸⁶ and became the *chödze*⁸⁷ of the *dratsang*⁸⁸ during the winter season. However, despite my official enrollment at the monastery, I stayed in Lhasa and continued my studies with my teacher. In the twenty-first year of the

80 C. guile xi 歸了西; the phrase "returned to the West", indicating rebirth in the Western Pure Land of Sukhāvati, is an idiomatic expression in Buddhist Chinese for dying, especially when referred to a member of the saṅgha.

81 C. da guanding 大灌頂.

82 C. xianjiao 顯教. Fazun employs the term *xianjiao*, 'manifest teachings', as a hermeneutical tool for his Chinese audience, creating a binary with *mijiao*, 'secret teachings'. In Republican China, as I have shown elsewhere, *mijiao* was understood through the lens of *mikkyō* in Japanese exegesis. This binary, rooted in the Chinese Buddhist Canon - particularly the Mahāyāna exegesis of Tiantai and Huayan thought - creates the impression that all Tibetan Buddhist teachings fit neatly into these two categories. Yet, this reflects a Chinese classification method rather than the doctrinal categories that define Buddhist thought in India or Tibet, or the divisions of the Tibetan Canon itself. Tibetan scholarship classifies Mahāyāna teachings into two main modes: Pāramitānaya 'Mode of the Perfections', which follows the path of perfections outlined in the Mahāyāna sūtras, and Mantranaya 'Mode of the Mantras', which pertains to scriptures bearing both the title of sūtra and tantra. Exegetes of the tantras often equate these with Sūtrayāna 'Vehicle of the Sūtras' and Tantrayāna 'Vehicle of the Tantras' respectively. By using *xianjiao*, Fazun suggests that the texts he studied in Kham belong solely to the Sūtrayāna, as understood in Mahāyāna polemics in China and tantric exegesis in Tibet. However, as he himself notes, these texts also address topics such as logic and dialectics, subjects which a Mahāyānist would associate with Hīnayāna sources. In translation, I have preserved the original Chinese term Fazun used to address his readers in Republican China. For more on Xianjiao and Mijiao in this period, cf. Dibeltulo Concu 2021, 172-4, fn. 5.

83 C. Naxu 攀墟; T. Nag chu.

84 C. Dapu 達樸; T. Dwags po (d.u.); Dakpo is a region in southwestern Tibet.

85 C. lü dumu shen mantuoluo 綠度母身曼陀羅.

86 C. Biebang si 別邦寺; T. 'Bras spungs dgon pa.

87 C. junze 郡則; T. chos mdzad; 'monk-sponsor'.

88 C. zhacang 札倉; T. grwa tshang; 'monastic college'.

Republic [1932], I studied the general treatises on *Tséma, Dū Dra*,⁸⁹ and the *Lamrim Chenmo*. The following year [1933], I immersed myself in the *Lekshe Sertreng*,⁹⁰ the *Ngakrim Chenmo*,⁹¹ and the *Rimnga Rabtu Salwé Drönmé*.⁹² I was bestowed the general initiation of more than three hundred deities, received teachings on the *Two Stages*⁹³ of Yamāntaka,⁹⁴ along with the *Great Commentary on the Fire Offering*,⁹⁵ and instructions on the *sādhana* of Vajrayoginī.⁹⁶ Additionally, I studied the Abhidharma⁹⁷ with the Ganden Tripa,⁹⁸ the Vinaya with the Jangtsé Chöjé,⁹⁹ and obtained the Great Initiation of Heruka¹⁰⁰ from Pabongka Rinpoché,¹⁰¹ among other teachings. Looking back on my time spent studying in Kham and Ü-Tsang, I view those years as the most intellectually stimulating and personally rewarding chapter of my life.

What were the circumstances of my life during those years? Allow me to offer a brief account. During my first year in Karze, I had the privilege of dining with Dayong, and those meals were truly satisfying. The following year, after we parted ways, I used a large earthen pot. I carefully filled it with cold water and placed it on a basin full of yak¹⁰² dung, leaving it overnight. I wrapped it in worn, frayed felt cloths to provide insulation. The

89 C. *Yinming zongyi lun* 因明總義論. Here, Fazun is referring to a monastic textbook in the *Dū Dra* genre, which introduce beginners to the foundations of *pramāṇa* (C. yinming 因明; T. tshad ma). This is likely the *Ratō Dū Dra* (T. *Rwa stod bsdus grwa*), a renowned introductory manual to logic and epistemology used at Ratō Monastery (T. Rwa stod), situated just outside Lhasa. A foundational text in Tibetan scholasticism, it serves as the precursor to many later treatises on Buddhist logic. The text outlines twenty basic philosophical topics that are nonetheless essential for engaging with the major Indian and Tibetan commentarial traditions. For more details on the *Dū Dra* curriculum, see Chapter 7 of Fazun's *Modern Tibet*.

90 C. *Xianguan zhuangyan lun jinman lun* 現觀莊嚴論金鬘論; T. *Legs bshad gser phreng*; 'Golden Garland of Eloquence'.

91 C. *Mizong dao cidī guanglun* 密宗道次第廣論; T. *Sngags rim chen mo*; 'Great Exposition of the Stages of Mantra'.

92 C. *Wu cidī guanglun* 五次第廣論; T. *Rim lnga rab tu gsal ba'i sgron me*; 'Brilliantly Illuminating Lamp of the Five Stages', in English translation from Fazun's Chinese, 'Great Treatise on the Five Stages'.

93 C. *Erzhong cidī* 二種次第.

94 C. Daweide 大威德; T. Gshin rje gshed; the 'Destroyer of Death' tantra. For an English annotated translation, see Siklós 1996.

95 C. *Humo dashu* 護摩大疏.

96 C. Kongxing fomu 空行佛母; T. Rdo rje rnal 'byor ma.

97 C. Jushe 俱舍; T. Chos mngon pa.

98 C. Gedeng chiba 格登持巴; T. Dga' ldan khri pa. It remains unclear whether Fazun studied with the ninety-first or the ninety-second Ganden Tripa. The ninety-first Ganden Tripa was Losang Gyaltzen (T. Blo bzang rgyal mtshan, d. 1932), who held the position from 1927 to 1932. He was succeeded by Thupten Nyinje (T. Thub bstan nyin byed, d. 1933?), the ninety-second Ganden Tripa.

99 C. Jiangze fawang 絳則法王; T. Byang rtse chos rje. By the title Jangtsé Chöjé 'Dharma King of Byang rtse', Fazun is referring to the ninetieth Ganden Tripa, Jampa Chödrak (T. Byams pa chos grags; 1876-1937). Jangtsé is one of the monastic colleges at Ganden Monastery.

100 C. Shengle jingang 勝樂金剛; T. 'Khor lo bde mchog; the 'Binding of the Wheel' tantra.

101 C. Pozhangka dashi 頗章喀大師; T. Pha bong ka Byams pa bstan'dzin 'phrin las gyia mtsho (1878-1941), also known as Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo (T. Pha bong kha bde chen snying po).

102 C. niu 牛; T. g.yag. Whereas here Fazun uses *niu* to denote bovines in general, he later distinguishes between male and female gender, introducing specific words in Chinese.

pot would slowly heat up as the burning dung increased in temperature, which eventually caused the water to reach a boiling point. At first light, I would use warm water [17] to refresh my face. I then mixed in some coarse tea and a dash of Tibetan salt¹⁰³ to make what is known as savage tea.¹⁰⁴ After saying my morning prayers while still in bed, I poured the tea into a wooden bowl, then added some tsampa, yak butter, and a few slices of radish for my breakfast. After that, I would go to my teacher's place for tutoring sessions. At noon, I would sip some leftover tea and mix a bowl of tsampa to eat before I returned to my classes later in the day. In the evening, I had whatever was accessible to me. In this manner, a day would end, and the following day would unfold just like the one before it. This routine continued consistently throughout the entire year. Even though the material conditions were harsh, my enthusiasm remained high. There were moments when I was so absorbed in reading and writing that I lost track of time and neglected to sleep - an experience that still baffles me! The conditions I lived in while in Lhasa were very much alike to those in Kham. My daily routine revolved around studying and chanting, often stretching from the first light of day [18] to the last rays of evening, which made having meals quite difficult. During these eight or nine years, I gained a foundational understanding of Tibetan doctrinal principles of sūtra and tantra.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps, these insights arose from my minimal reliance on clothing, food, and shelter.

1.3 First Return

In the 22nd year of the Republic [1933], Master Taixu sent me several letters, urging me to come back quickly to take charge of the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine.¹⁰⁶ I, however, believed that my learning was not yet complete, and I had much more to explore. After surviving endless trials to reach Tibet, how could I so casually leave this place of treasures and go back? Despite my reluctance, three compelling reasons forced me to do so. First and foremost, Master Taixu was an unmatched teacher for me in the Inner Lands. Any knowledge I had of Buddhist studies in Chinese stemmed entirely from his teachings. This esteemed man, a true bodhisattva, devoted his days to organizing the saṅgha, nurturing talents, reviving Buddhism, and preserving the Dharma. For more than two decades, he faced countless hardships and worked tirelessly to promote the Saddharma and create institutions. Now, I was given the mission to establish the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine, and part of that mission included teaching the Tibetan language. If I chose not to comply with his request, would that not inflict a major blow on Taixu? Could I, in good conscience, live with the idea of failing to repay my debt of gratitude? Secondly, upon my first arrival in Chamdo, my plan was to ask Amdo Géshé to take charge of the Tibetan Department at the World Buddhist Academy. Still, at that time, he was carrying out

103 C. manyan 蠻鹽.

104 C. mancha 蠻茶.

105 C. Xian Mi jiaoli 顯密教理.

106 C. Han Zang jiaoli yuan 漢藏教理院.

the directives of the [thirteenth] Dalai Lama,¹⁰⁷ which made it temporarily unfeasible for him to exit Tibet. When I respectfully delivered Master Taixu's letters to him, the Venerable Amdo [19] advised me to return first in order to lay the necessary groundwork, promising that he would join me later. With such a directive from my teacher, how could I disobey? Thirdly, in order to extend an invitation to the Venerable Amdo to come to China, I submitted a formal petition to the Dalai Lama. In his response, the Dalai Lama indicated that the moment was not right for Amdo Géshé to exit the country and suggested that I should take the lead first. This response reinforced my firm choice to make my own return a priority above all else.

I began my first return journey on the twenty-seventh day of the tenth month of that year. Six days ahead of my departure, I commemorated the anniversary of my cherished friend, Langchan, who died due to a feverish ailment. During the ninth month, he fell sick twice, but the remarkable capabilities of the Dalai Lama's chief physician helped him recover on both occasions. In the midst of his third relapse, he fell ill while at the monastery, which was too far away from Lhasa to get any medical assistance. As a result, he tragically lost his life. I had great expectations for his future. In my efforts to return to the Inner Lands for the necessary preparations, I had hoped he would often advocate for me with our kind teacher. His unexpected death meant that I was left without any support during my absence. I was deeply saddened by the departure of Langchan. Still, even while I was mourning, I forced myself to handle his funeral rites before departing. At that moment, I realized that lives are too impermanent, too fragile. Just a small adversity can define the threshold between this existence and what lies beyond. As I bid farewell to Tibet, this Pure Land,¹⁰⁸ I found myself questioning if I would ever make my way back.

Passing through India, the land where Śākyamuni Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, taught the Dharma, and entered nirvāṇa,¹⁰⁹ I reflected that, if I did not adequately venerate these holy sites, there is no certainty that I would ever have another opportunity to return. Fueled by a heightened sense of impermanence, I traveled straight from Kalimpong¹¹⁰ to the Diamond Seat,¹¹¹ where I spent a week performing *pūjās*.¹¹² After that [20], I visited Deer Park,¹¹³ dedicating a day and a night to honoring the stūpa that marks the Buddha's first turning of the Wheel of Dharma.¹¹⁴ My travels then led me to the grove of śāla trees in Kuśinagarī,¹¹⁵ where I paid my respects to the site of the Buddha's nirvāṇa. Finally, I made my way to Nepal to honor the holy site where, in a past lifetime, the Buddha offered his body in sacrifice to a starving tigress. I was on the road for

107 C. Dalai lama 達賴喇嘛; T. Ta la'i bla ma. Here, Fazun is referring to the thirteenth Dalai Lama, Thupten Gyatso (T. Thub bstan rgya mtsho; 1876-1933).

108 C. Jingtū 淨土, 'Pure Land'.

109 C. niepan 涅槃; P. nibbāna; T. mya ngan las 'das pa; 'extinction'.

110 C. Galunbao 戈倫堡; T. Ka lon sbug.

111 C. jingang chang 金剛場; S. vajrāsana; 'Diamond Seat'.

112 C. gongyang 供養, 'offering'.

113 C. Luye yuan 鹿野苑; S. Mṛgadāva; 'Deer Park'. The modern Sārnāth near Benares.

114 C. Zhuan falun ta 轉法輪塔, 'Stūpa of the Turning of the Wheel of Dharma'.

115 C. Jushina shuanglin 拘尸那雙林.

more than a month, and I eventually arrived in Kolkata¹¹⁶ in the first lunar month of the twenty-third year [1934]. I made a diversion to reconnect with an old acquaintance at the International University, where I spent three days. Upon leaving, I bought a boat ticket traveling east to Yangon, where I honored the impressive stūpa of Shwe Dagon.¹¹⁷ In Yangon, I stumbled upon the Chinese Buddhist Association,¹¹⁸ established by Venerable Cihang 慈航.¹¹⁹ The members were fervent and dedicated to the cause of spreading the Dharma and benefiting others. I was a guest at Fushan Temple 福山寺,¹²⁰ where I enjoyed a retreat in isolation until the end of March. Following that, I delighted in attending various open lectures at the Buddhist Association.

On the fourth day of the fourth month, I bought a ticket for a steamship to head back home, and I reached in Shanghai 上海 early in the fifth month. I then traveled to Fenghua 奉化 to have a formal audience with Taixu. Once I completed a week at Xuedou Temple, I returned to Shanghai and then traveled onward to Nanjing 南京. There, I held discussions with a few old friends, including Deputy Minister Xie 謝, Director Zhou 周, Deng Mengxian 鄧夢先, Chen Jibo 陳濟博, and others from our circle. In answer to a letter of invitation from Miyan, I journeyed once more to Mount Baohua. By that time, Kaitang 開堂 had become a monk, and Micheng had received his Dharma scroll.¹²¹

116 C. Jiaerjiada 加爾加大。

117 C. Da jinta 大金塔。

118 C. Yangguang Zhongguo foxuehui 仰光中國佛學會。

119 C. Cihang 慈航 (1895-1954). Cihang was a renowned Chinese Buddhist monk and a leading disciple of Taixu during Republican period. Before fully committing to Taixu's modernist ideas in 1927, he first engaged with the teachings of Chan, Tiantai, and Pure Land. Focused on the education and training of Buddhist ministers, he rose to prominence as a major champion of Renjian fojiao 人間佛教 'Buddhism for the Human Realm', a movement that rejected superstition and aimed at restoring the integrity of Buddhism in its original form. As a missionary, he journeyed throughout Southeast Asia, visiting countries such as the Philippines, Singapore, Burma, and Malaysia, where he advocated for what would later be termed "socially engaged Buddhism". He established the Buddhist publication *Renjian*, meaning "Human Realm", and held the position of abbot in multiple monasteries. In Taiwan, he created the Mile Neiyuan 彌勒內院 'Maitreya Inner Institute', a Buddhist school dedicated to the training of young religious leaders from mainland China. Cihang was the pioneer among Buddhist monks in Taiwan who sought and successfully managed to keep his body intact after he died. Today, his gilded relic-body is enshrined and venerated in Xizhi, Taipei County, where he is revered as one of the *roushen pusa* 肉身菩薩 'flesh-body bodhisattva' in the history of Chinese Buddhism. His mummified remains continue to inspire both devotion and controversy. On Cihang, cf. Travagnin 2006; see also Welch 1967, 343-4.

120 C. Fushan si 福山寺。

121 C. fajuan 法卷; literally, 'dharma scroll'. In China, the term *fajuan* refers to a religious lineage record that traces the direct transmission of Śākyamuni's teachings from master to disciple. For a detailed study, see Welch 1963.

Afterward, I went to Beiping to escape the sweltering summer and spent the season engaged in voluntary translation work for Ngakchen Hotoktu.¹²²

I later returned to my hometown to visit my parents, which was my second trip back since I left. I returned for the first time in the fourth month of the fourteenth year [1925], just before I was about to leave for Tibet. My parents were both still alive then. My mother, heartbroken by the lasting divide created when I chose to become a monk, cried day and night until she lost sight in her right eye. I understood the deep-rooted affection of my parents and the considerable weight of their caring nature. Yet, the idea of being stuck at home, restricted like a prisoner to cater to my parents, was something I could never bring myself to accept. If I were to abandon monastic life, neglecting the proper obligations toward the Tathāgata and wasting precious time, I would not only let down the Buddha and my mentors, but I would also struggle [21] to face my beloved mother. This was a seemingly trivial yet crucial factor that solidified my resolute intention to study the Dharma. During my second return to my hometown, I learned that my dear father had been gone for five years, and I realized I had not met yet many of the younger members of my extended family. I spent a total of ten days during this trip.

By the end of the seventh month, I found myself in Wuchang 武昌, and in the eighth month, I proceeded to the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine to begin the new term. The daunting task of representing Taixu felt like a heavy burden that was carefully placed on my shoulders. I spent three hours every day giving lectures and carefully worked on the translation, editing, and revision of works such as the *Lamrim Chenmo*, the *Gyüde Chiyi Nampar Zhakpa Gyapar Jöpa*,¹²³ and the *Jangchub Shunglam*. After two terms of arduous work, the opportunity for my second trip to Tibet had finally ripened.

1.4 A Second Journey to Tibet

Upon my return, I sought to prepare for the arrival of my teacher, the Venerable Amdo, as stated earlier. I wanted to welcome my teacher because I was convinced that committing one's entire life to studying does not necessarily lead to mastering the material or achieving excellence. This is notably true for anyone who endeavors to provide translations of the scriptures. It is

122 C. Anqin dashi 安欽大師; T. Sngags chen rin po che (1884-1947). Losang Tenzin Jikmé Wangchuk (T. Blo bzang bstan 'dzin 'jigs med dbang phyug), known as Ngakchen Rinpoché, was a lama of the Geluk school and a prominent figure at Tashilhünpo Monastery (T. Bkra shis lhun po). Identified in childhood as an incarnate lama (T. sprul sku), he was granted the title Darba Hothokthu (T. Bdar pa ho thog thu). He was renowned for his vast learning. In 1923, Ngakchen Rinpoché fled to China with the ninth Panchen Lama (1883-1937). He returned to Tibet in 1931 to negotiate the Panchen Lama's return. In 1933, the Panchen Lama sent him again to Lhasa for further negotiations. By 1936, he had left Tibet for China, where he stayed in Beijing, Nanjing, and Shanghai. Despite his dedication to resolving disputes between the Panchen Lama and the Tibetan government, he faced opposition from within the Panchen Lama's entourage and was relieved of his duties in 1937. During World War II, he lived in Japanese-occupied China. In 1939, Ngakchen Rinpoché returned to Tibet and settled in Shigatsé, where he lived until his passing in 1947. On Ngakchen Rinpoché, cf. Miao Zhou 妙舟 1993, 214-18; cf. also Tuttle 2009; on Ngakchen Rinpoché's role as a mediator between the ninth Panchen Lama and the government of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, cf. Jagou 2011; see also Chen, Deng 2000, 357; Bianchi 2004, 41 fn. 25.

123 C. *Mizong dao cidi lue lun* 密宗道次第略論; T. *Rgyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzah pa rgyas par brjod pa*; "Extensive Expression of the Presentation of the General Tantra Sets", by Khedrup Jé, a close disciple of Tsongkhapa and First Panchen Lama.

essential to build a strong base in Chinese literary works as well as in the study of Buddhism before proceeding further. Formal translation efforts can begin only after one has achieved proficiency in Tibetan Buddhist studies. Even if one attains the prestigious title of *géshe lharampa*¹²⁴ in Tibetan Buddhist scholarship, without further accomplishments, they would still remain simply a *géshe* in the study of Tibetan Buddhism. Faced with the challenge of authentic translation, a person would likely find themselves at a loss for words. How does the act of translating holy scriptures compare in benefits to the translation of worldly books? If I committed my life to studying Tibetan Buddhist scholarship, I am certain I could achieve the highest level of *géshe lharampa*. But would I have enough time? Would Taixu permit it? Would [22] my revered teacher approve? No, no. They would not allow me to walk down that path.

The former Ganden Tripa, now a retired senior, offered me some advice. He said, “You could undergo the lengthy process of becoming a *géshe lharampa* at the three great monasteries, and in time, earn the title of Ganden Tripa, carrying a yellow parasol like the one I have. But this would be a hollow and superficial title, one that would bring little benefit to the Buddhadharmā. Your first step should be to head back to your homeland and undertake the translation of Master Tsongkhapa’s *Lamrim Chenmo*. Establish a banner of the Saddharma in your Han lands. This is how you can bring genuine and meaningful benefit to the Buddha’s teachings and benefit all living beings. Should you find a means to invite Jampel Rölpai Lodrö Rinpoché – Amdo Géshe –,¹²⁵ and establish Tsongkhapa’s teachings of sūtra and tantra, the merit from this deed alone would far surpass the honor of being a *géshe* or Ganden Tripa”.

His words were meant to provide me with a skillful means to ease my distress about not finishing my education. Nevertheless, they also inflicted a serious wound on my vanity. This ultimately resulted in my second journey into Tibet. I was committed to pursuing a path in translation, regardless of my unfinished education. It dawned on me that my work in translation would be flawed without the continuous assistance of a remarkable *kalyāṇamitra*,¹²⁶ a teacher skilled in both sūtra and tantra, as well as in knowledge and virtue. My second journey into Tibet, then, aimed to call upon my revered teacher, Amdo Géshe, who was celebrated across Kham and Ü-Tsang and held the status of a royal preceptor, to come forth and spread the Dharma.

During the summer of the twenty-fourth year of the Republic [1935], I was honored with an official invitation from Khenpo Ngawang¹²⁷ and other

124 C. diyi ming gexi 第一名格什; T. dge bshes lha ram pa. For Fazun’s discussion of the four types of *géshe* degree within the Geluk curriculum, see Chapter 7 of the translation.

125 C. Jiangre renboqie 絳熱仁波脚; T. ‘Jam dpal rol ba’i blo gros rin po che.

126 C. shanzhishi 善知識; T. dge ba’i bshes gnyen.

127 C. Awang kanbu 阿旺堪布; T. Mkhan po Ngag dbang (1894-1968). Ngawang Namgyal (T. Ngag dbang rnam rgyal), a disciple of Pabongkha Rinpoché, was a *khenpo* from Sera Monastery in Lhasa.

Buddhist scholars in Rong 蓉¹²⁸ to present a lecture in Chengdu 成都.¹²⁹ With the generous backing of respected patrons, I managed to secure enough funds to bring my teacher to China. By the end of the eighth month, I went back to the College and completely delegated all administrative duties to Weifang 葦舫,¹³⁰ [23] who served as the Dean of Academic Affairs. On the first day of the ninth month, I left the mountains and journeyed towards the east. I made a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai in Shanxi 山西 and visited the Yungang Grottoes 雲崗 in Datong 大同. While traveling through Pingjin 平津,¹³¹ I reestablished connections with old friends and sought their assistance in the printing of the *Lamrim Chenmo*. Their generosity was vital in ensuring the text was published successfully. On the sixth day of the tenth month, I made my way to Nanjing to secure my passport. By the thirteenth, I had arrived in Shanghai to stay with Taixu. I participated in the founding event of the Bodhi Society¹³² on the fourteenth day, which left an indelible mark on my memory.

On the nineteenth day, I purchased passage on a ship and sailed south. I arrived in Hong Kong on the twenty-fourth, and I stayed at the Buddhist Society. I bought a ticket on another ship on the twenty-eighth, which was traveling south and arrived in Singapore on the third day of the twelfth month. From there, the ship sailed north to Yangon, arriving on the tenth day. I stayed for half a month in the garden residence of the elder layman, Ceng Wenyin 曾文銀, where I enjoyed some rest and took care of a few practical matters. On the twenty-sixth, I secured a ticket for a vessel bound for India, reaching Kolkata by the twenty-ninth. I lodged in Chinatown at the Tianyi Building 天益樓, courtesy of the trader De Maoyong 德茂永 and his business. That evening, Khenpo Ngawang and others also arrived in India. My luggage was held by customs agents due to the excessive amount of silk items I was transporting, and they requested payment of duties. This incident opened up my eyes about the complications that arise from having too many bags while on the road. I looked for help in every corner. Eventually, the Tibetan government issued a telegram to affirm the status of my belongings. The goods were immediately released by the British officials, who also waived any applicable taxes. The conciliatory attitude of the British toward Tibet is profoundly disturbing.

I reached Kalimpong on the eleventh day of the twelfth lunar month to gather the essential supplies for my journey into Tibet. On the eighteenth, Mr. Ye Zenglong 葉增隆 and I arranged mule teams to begin our expedition. To evade British interference, we had to stay hidden in rooms at each checkpoint. We traveled only under the cover of darkness. After a year

128 The toponym Rong 蓉 designates the city of Chengdu 成都.

129 Fazun translated the oral teachings of Khenpo Ngawang and commented on the text by Pabongka Rinpoche, "Prayer for Encountering the Teaching of the Great Tsongkhapa, King of the Dharma in the Three Realms" (T. *Khams gsum chos kyi rgyal po tsong kha pa chen po'i bstan pa dang mjal ba'i smon lam*; C. *Zhiyu sanjie fawang dazongkaba shengjiao yuanwen* 值遇三界法王大宗喀巴聖教願文).

130 C. Weifang fashi 葦舫法師 (1908-1969).

131 C. Pingjin 平津; the sinograph Pingjin refers to the historical pairing of Beiping 北平 (modern-day Beijing) and Tianjin 天津 in Republican China.

132 C. Puti xuehui 菩提學會. The Bodhi Society of Shanghai must not be confused with the Bodhi Study Association established with the same name in Beijing by the ninth Panchen Lama. See the Introduction.

of minimal walking and the discomfort of my new leather boots being too tight, I realized on the afternoon of the nineteenth that my heels had been rubbed sore, with patches of skin coming off. Three toenails were pulled off completely. Each step brought unbearable agony, which forced me to clench my teeth tightly to cope with the discomfort. On that particular evening, we paused at Rongli Chu,¹³³ and I was unable [24] to move any further. This was, without a doubt, the most intense pain I had endured in my entire life. I knew that the wise ones who had preceded us and sacrificed themselves for the Dharma has also endured similar hardships. In my previous lives, compelled by greed, anger, and ignorance, I must have suffered considerably more distress in the chase for the five sensory pleasures. As a monk now, I felt that putting this minor inconvenience to aid my teacher in spreading the Dharma was entirely reasonable. In the Three Realms, countless beings endured suffering that rivaled or surpassed my own, and their plight inspired a deep sense of compassion in me. I resolved to dedicate my struggles into a gift for their benefit. I aspired to take upon myself all the suffering of sentient beings, so that none would have to ever suffer again. For a moment, these thoughts helped me to set aside the hurt in my feet and throughout my body. Gradually, I was enveloped by sleep, and I entered into a soft slumber that continued until the break of day. The next morning, I motivated myself to walk a few steps. Each day, I continued to move ahead, enduring both discomfort and sickness.

I arrived in Phakri¹³⁴ on the twenty-fourth and stayed at the Hengsheng Gong 恆盛公 facility. I was able to rest and heal for a number of days, thanks to the thoughtful hospitality of Mr. Ma Yicai 馬義才. On the twenty-eighth, Zenglong and I hired a pair of mules from Bai Yucang 白宇倉 and began our journey to Ü-Tsang. We celebrated Lunar New Year's Day amidst the biting cold of the Kharu pass.¹³⁵ Zenglong, who had been my caretaker throughout my extended sickness, cooked a simple bowl of gruel for me. I was deeply moved by his kindness, and the connection we shared as fellow countrymen seemed more powerful than that of siblings. He remarked, "When you celebrate more joyful New Years in the years to come, remember this day!"

After facing ten more difficult days, we reached Lhasa on the morning of the ninth day of the first lunar month in the twenty-fifth year of the Republic [1936]. We received a warm reception from our fellow countrymen in Tibet. In this foreign land, our connection with them felt deeper than any familial relationship. On the tenth day, I had a meeting with the attendant of my revered teacher, Amdo Rinpoché, who presented me with two letters from him. In the correspondence, the master explained that he [25] had deviated from his original plans and would not be visiting Lhasa. Instead, he directed me to gather the necessary books in Lhasa, pack them onto several mules, and head straight to Phakri to meet him there. Reading through these letters

133 'Rongli Chu' is my tentative reconstruction of Fazun's phonetic transcription from Tibetan. See § 5.3.

134 C. Pakeli 帕克里; T. Phag ri.

135 C. Kalu 卡鑪; T. Kha ru. Rising to an altitude of 5,050 meters (16,600 feet), the Kharu Pass (T. Kha ru la) is the highest point on the trade route linking Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan, situated between Sharsingma (T. Shar gsing ma) and Lhasa. The trade route takes its name from the village of Dromo (T. Gro mo) and is known by different names among Newar traders, British officials, and the Chinese. British officials referred to the region as the Chumbi Valley, while Nepalese Newar traders called it Sharsingma. In the People's Republic of China, Dromo is now officially known as Yadong 亞東. Cf. Shakya 1999, 118-19.

brought me a peaceful sense of joy. My mood improved, and it appeared that a large part of my ailment had eased.

Yet, on the morning of the fourteenth day, the attendant came rushing towards me. His face was marked by a look of fear. I quickly asked what had happened. He conveyed to me that a special messenger had arrived from Nakchu with devastating news. Our teacher had passed away on the second day of the month. Oh heavens! Alas! Woe is me! In that moment, I sensed a torrent of hot blood surging to my brain. I felt so overwhelmed that I was on the verge of blacking out, but I managed to pull myself together just in time to stay conscious. Taking a quick moment to sigh, I hurried to various shrines to light candles in his honor and sent an extensive telegram to inform the donors¹³⁶ in the Inner Lands.

I set out for Nakchu on the sixteenth day with the attendant. While we were at the fringes of Drigung,¹³⁷ we faced a heavy snowfall, more than a *chi* 尺 deep.¹³⁸ The path ahead was grueling. We had to find shelter and food in the wilderness, and my old leg cramps came back. To make matters worse, I contracted dysentery. On the thirtieth day of my journey, I reached the Rongbo Monastery,¹³⁹ the place where my respected teacher had died. After a period of rest lasting several days, I joined a group that was performing rites in his memory. The cremation was scheduled for the thirteenth day of the second lunar month. All of my fellow participants agreed to appoint me as the leader of the ceremony, and I conducted the *Yamāntaka Fire Offering Ritual*¹⁴⁰ for the purpose of the cremation. On the nineteenth day, while we were sifting through the ashes, we found several beads of *śārīra*.¹⁴¹ After the completion of the forty-nine-day ceremony, we spent several additional days performing ritual offerings dedicated to the Dharma protectors.¹⁴²

Accompanied by three friends, I started my journey back to Lhasa on the third day of the third lunar month. While traveling, we faced substantial snowfall and endured a higher number of nights exposed to the elements than we had experienced on our way there. On the journey out, we utilized government horses and sometimes took breaks in pastures situated along the route. During our journey back, we depended entirely on our horses, which required us to let them feed in the fields, collect firewood, and prepare our own food. By the time we arrived in Lhasa on the evening of the eighteenth day, we were utterly exhausted. Both the people and the horses had been pushed to their limits.

I took a five-month break in Lhasa to heal from my illness. During this phase, I advanced my learning while studying with the Jangtsé [26] Chöje. I attended his teaching sessions on several treatises like the *Lamrim Chungwa*,

136 C. tanyue 檀越; phonetic transcription from the Sanskrit *dānapati*, 'donor', 'benefactor'.

137 C. Zhigong 止公; T. 'Bri gung.

138 The equivalent of 1 Republican-period *chi* is 33,3 cm, or 13,12 inches.

139 C. Rong bo 絨波; T. Rong bo.

140 C. Daweide humo fa 大威德護摩法. For the *Yamāntaka Fire Offering Ritual*, see Perrot, Sharpa Tulku 1987, 55-73.

141 C. shelizi 舍利子; phonetic transcription from the Sanskrit *śārīra*, 'body'. The term also conveys the sense of 'the remains after cremation'. Fazun employs the expression *shelizi shu li* 舍利子數粒, where *shu li* 數粒, meaning 'several beads' or 'several grains', describes the pearl-like objects often found among the ashes of Buddhist masters.

142 C. hufashen 護法神; S. dharmapāla; T. chos skyong.

the *Gelong gi Lapja Namtse Dengmar Drakpa*, and the *Abhidharmakośa*. Every day, I dedicated time to translating small excerpts, often a full page or a half-page, from the *Lekshe Nyingpo*, ensuring that I made the most of each day. This marks the end of my second journey to Tibet.

1.5 Homecoming and Aspiration

The attempt to welcome my teacher came to nothing. During the summer, I made efforts to engage with several individuals, yet some were reluctant to travel to China, while others faced limitations due to their obligations. In the end, I found myself alone without anyone to join me. In the eighth lunar month, I received messages via telegram from Taixu and the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine, pressing me to come back without delay. I packed the collected scriptures for moving, but it was still early in the season, and the river had not yet receded. This situation indicated that no traders were traveling between India and Phakri. Eager to go back to my homeland, I entrusted Mr. Xie Yousan with the task of organizing the transportation of the scriptures to India using a mule caravan. Despite this, the high volume of texts meant that the process required more time than was initially foreseen. On the fifth day of the tenth lunar month, I reached Kalimpong, where I lodged at the Huiwen 惠文 Leather Factory and entrusted the scriptures to a shipping company for onward delivery. By the tenth day, I reached Kolkata and stayed at the Xingji 興記 facility. I signed my return passport on the eleventh, and by the eighteenth, I had made arrangements for a ship for my eastward trip. Sadly, the scriptures still had not reached me by the time I left. I could only count on friends to send them out later after they had arrived. I reached Hong Kong on the fifth day of the eleventh month of the lunar calendar. Later that evening, I boarded a train to Guangzhou 廣州. After switching to the Yue-Han 粵漢 railway,¹⁴³ I arrived in Wuchang by 2:30 a.m. on the eighth day and took up residence at the Buddhist Institute. During my half-month stay in Wuchang, I gave lectures on the *Vimśatikāvijñaptimātratāsiddhikārikā*,¹⁴⁴ the “*Sādhana of the Gradual Path to Enlightenment*”,¹⁴⁵ and the opening section of the *sāmatha* chapter from the *Lamrim Chenmo*.

On the twenty-fifth day, I set sail on the Wulin 武林 ship alongside Masters Fafang, Xuesong 雪松, and Qixing 契惺, journeying towards the west. On the twenty-ninth, we arrived in Yichang 宜昌. The following day, we obtained tickets for the Min’an 民安 vessel, which began [27] its voyage on the first day of the twelfth lunar month. On the third day, the vessel collided with a reef at Xinglong Shoals 興隆灘, almost leading to a catastrophe. Traveling during the dry season made navigating the river particularly dangerous. In a rush, the crew applied cement to repair the damage, which barely allowed us to move forward and reach Pantuo 盤沱, where we stayed overnight. On the fourth day, we arrived in Wanxian 萬縣 and moved onto the Minsu 民蘇

143 The term Yuehan 粵漢 indicates the *yuehan tielu* 粵漢鐵路, or ‘Guangzhou-Hankou railway’, connecting the Guangdong (Yue) and Hubei (Han) provinces. See Lee 1977.

144 *C. Ershi weishi lun* 二十唯識論; *T. Nyi shu pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa*; the “Twenty Stanzas Proving Representation-Only”, a work of the fourth or fifth-century Indian master Vasubandhu.

145 *C. Puti dao cidid xiufa* 菩提道次第修法.

ship. We arrived in Chongqing 重慶 by the evening of the seventh day, and on the tenth day, I made my way safely to Mount Jinyun 縉雲山.¹⁴⁶

After my return to the College, I looked forward to a few days of rest and healing. However, after committing to sacrifice myself for the Dharma, I realized that the administrative matters of the College required my urgent focus. During the year I was away, Weifang took on the extensive responsibilities of management, enduring significant hardships on my account. In the area of administrative affairs, there were various changes in staff, but I was lucky to have my companion Miyan take the helm and keep things steady, despite the considerable burden it put on him. My heartfelt thanks go to Yanding for managing the specialized courses, a responsibility he executed with exceptional dedication. I am grateful to every faculty member. They all consistently performed their duties with dedication. There was not a single individual whose efforts did not inspire my heartfelt gratitude. My journey turned out to be fruitless, which left me with over a year of wasted time - a failing for which I feel deeply ashamed. Given that the attempt to invite a teacher did not succeed, it was clear that I had to bear full responsibility. My resolve had to strengthen and my determination had to straighten. Every day, besides teaching both general and specialized courses, I also provided instruction on monastic discipline and tantric practices to monks. In the limited free moments I managed to find, I engaged in the translation projects I had always wanted to see through to completion. My responsibilities included translating texts, teaching classes, and mentoring future generations, all of which I embraced wholeheartedly as long as they truly served the Dharma.

146 Mount Jinyun (where *jinyun* 縉雲 means ‘crimson cloud’) is a sacred mountain located on the outskirts of Chongqing. It is home to Jinyun Temple 縉雲寺, which during the Republican era served as the headquarters of the College of Chinese and Tibetan Doctrine Institute.

