

3 An Overview of Tibetan History

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3.1 Primary Historical Sketch

The history of Tibet prior to the Tang Dynasty 唐朝 is largely unverifiable. The reason for this is that Tibet did not possess a written script back then. Numerous myths and legends from that era still exist, but their ambiguous and imaginative nature complicates historical validation. Evidence suggests that Tibetans had organized approaches for clothing and food, as well as weapons like armor, bows, arrows, knives, and spears, well before the Tang period. Historians are best left to determine whether these were invented locally or introduced from other nations. According to the records in Tibet's *Depter Ngönpo*,¹ before the reign of King Songtsen Gampo,² there

1 C. *Qingshi* 青史; T. *Deb ther sngon po*. The 'Blue Annals' is a historical text that chronicles the history of Buddhism in Tibet. Authored by Gö Lotsāwa Shönu Pal (T. 'Gos lo tsā ba gzhon nu dpal, 1392-1481) between 1476 and 1478, the work is divided into sections that outline different historical periods and the transmission of Buddhist teachings. It is renowned for its detailed account of how specific texts and practices were introduced from India to Tibet. For a translation of the *Blue Annals*, cf. Roerich 1949. For a general presentation of the early history of the Tibetan Empire, cf. Dotson 2009.

2 C. Songzan gangbo 松贊崗薄 (d. 650); T. Srong btsan sgam po.



existed a total of thirty-one kings who ruled before him. Nyatri Tsenpo Ati,³ recognized as the first king, is said to have hailed from India. When he came down from the mountains, the people of Tibet viewed him as a god and made him their leader. The genealogical records of these early rulers are not reliably documented. The thirty-second generation marks the point where historical clarity begins to take shape, particularly with the figure of Songtsen [32] Gampo. He dispatched Thönmi Sambhota⁴ to India for the purpose of researching and creating a writing system. He also developed extensive relations with the Inner Lands⁵ and is regarded as the founder of Tibetan Buddhism.⁶ After his time in power, historical events become partially verifiable. Following this period, five kings took the throne one after another before the rise of King Trisong Détsen,⁷ who was a significant advocate for Buddhism. According to legend, his power exceeded that of Songtsen Gampo. He rose to power in the fourteenth year of Emperor Xuanzong's 玄宗 Tianbao 天寶 era during the Tang Dynasty [755 CE].⁸ His attempts to advance Buddhism unfolded during the rule of Emperors Suzong 肅宗 and Daizong 代宗.⁹ Following Trisong Détsen, three kings, that is, Muné Tsenpo,¹⁰ Tridé Songtsen,¹¹ and Tri Ralpacan,¹² persisted in shaping the

3 C. Niangchi zanbo adei 娘墾讚薄阿得; T. Gnya' khri btsan po ati.

4 C. Tunmi sanbuzha 屯彌三補札; T. Thon mi sam+b+ho Ta.

5 C. Neidi 內地. In Fazun's *Modern Tibet*, the term "Inner Lands" refers to what, between the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, was known in English as 'China Proper'. This concept emerged under the Manchu-led Qing dynasty, which succeeded the Ming. The Qing retained the Ming's administrative structure for China's heartland while excluding its other territories - Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang, Taiwan, and Tibet - from this system. The fifteen administrative divisions of the Ming were reorganized into the *neidi shiba sheng* 內地十八省, 'Eighteen Inner Provinces', or simply Neidi. In contrast, regions outside this core - such as Manchuria, Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet - were designated as *waifan* 外藩, 'outer feudatories'. This distinction shaped Euro-American understandings of 'China Proper' into the mid-twentieth century. By the 1920s, when Fazun embarked on his mission to Tibet, the term Handi 漢地, 'Han Lands', also began to be used in the Republic of China to refer to the Qing's 'Inner Lands'. For a critical assessment on the relationship between the terms Neidi, Handi, Han, and Hua 華, cf. Elliot 2012, 173-90.

6 C. Xizang fojiao 西藏佛教. This passage contains the first occurrence of the term 'Tibetan Buddhism' in Fazun's book. Unlike Chinese scholars of his time, Fazun attributes the establishment of Tibetan Buddhism to Songtsen Gampo.

7 C. Chisong dezan 赤松得讚; T. Khri srong lde btsan (r. 755/56-97).

8 Fazun likely calculated the fourteenth year of Emperor Xuanzong's Tianbao era by noting its start in 742 CE and adding 13 years, arriving at 755 CE. He would have verified this date against major historical events, particularly the outbreak of the An Lushan 安祿山 Rebellion that same year. To confirm accuracy, Fazun would have correlated this with Xuanzong's reign, which began in 712 CE. He would have ensured that 755 CE aligned with the emperor's 43rd regnal year and the penultimate year of the Tianbao era. This approach illustrates Fazun's technique for determining precise dates in Tibetan history using Chinese imperial calendars.

9 Like above, to calculate the duration of Trisong Détsen's reign, Fazun matched the king's efforts to establish Buddhism in Tibet with the reigns of the Suzong (756-762 CE) and Daizong (762-779 CE) emperors. Fazun concluded that Trisong Détsen's reign overlapped with this period and that his promotion of Buddhism continued during these Tang emperors. Although his method of calculation is correct, Fazun failed to mention that Trisong Détsen's reign continued into the reign of Tang Emperor Dezong 德宗 (779-805 CE).

10 C. Mouni zangpo 牟尼讚薄; T. Mu ne btsan po (r. 797-804).

11 C. Chide songzan 赤得松讚; T. Khri lde srong btsan (r. 804-15).

12 C. Chi ruoba qin 墀惹巴瑾; T. Khri Ral pa can (r. 815-38).

realm with their devotion to Buddhism. All made meaningful contributions to the advancement of the Buddha's teachings.

Subsequently, Langdarma¹³ took the life of his brother and claimed the crown for himself. In the first year of Emperor Wuzong's 武宗 reign,¹⁴ he initiated a large-scale suppression of the Buddhadharmas. His rule was short, lasting just three years until he was assassinated.¹⁵ Following his assassination, his son Namdé Ösung¹⁶ took over the throne, but was later succeeded by Pelkhor Tsen.¹⁷ However, Pelkhor Tsen met a similar fate, as he was killed during a rebellion instigated by his own subjects, which caused the downfall of the royal dynasty. Pelkhor Tsen had two sons: the firstborn, Tri Tashi Tsépa Pel,¹⁸ fled to Posterior Tibet where he became the ruler, while the younger son, Kyidé Nyimagön,¹⁹ escaped to Ngari.²⁰ Eventually, their descendants split into various factions, which led to a fragmented governance that persisted for seventy-eight years. This phase marked the beginning of a renewed movement to restore the Buddhadharmas in Anterior Tibet and Lhasa. Sixty-five years later, in the seventh year of Emperor Taizong's 太宗 reign during the Song 宋 Dynasty,²¹ the noble Atiśa²² made his journey to Tibet. He worked extensively to restore the Saddharma, correcting the errors that had emerged in the approximately one hundred and forty years after its suppression in Tibet. He put in every possible effort to identify the practices that needed to be abandoned and those that should be revived. Atiśa occupies the highest and most crucial position in the revival of the Buddhadharmas in Tibet. Around the same time, other Buddhist sects also began to arise. By the early Ming 明 Dynasty, Tsongkhapa the Great implemented a wide-ranging reform of these. The histories of these sects will now be discussed in further detail.

13 C. Langdama 朗達瑪; T. Glang dar ma (r. 836).

14 Fazun correctly calculated this date by noting that Emperor Wuzong of the Tang dynasty began his reign on February 20, 840 CE, with his first year ending on February 3, 841 CE. Around the same time, after assassinating his brother, King Ralpacan, Langdarma became the ruler of Tibet in 836 CE. Fazun aligned these timelines to identify 840-841 CE as the "first year of Emperor Wuzong's reign" and matched it with Tibetan accounts of Langdarma's suppression of Buddhism.

15 Langdarma's reign ended when he was assassinated by the Buddhist monk Lhalung Palgyi Dorje (T. Lha lung Dpal gyi rdo rje), a deed that is memorialized in the famous Black Hat Dance. According to traditional accounts, Langdarma's death marked the fall of the Tibetan Empire and the beginning of a period of civil and cultural chaos, after which Tibet is said to have entered its 'Dark Ages'. See Dalton 2011.

16 C. Nangde yingguang 囊得飲光; T. Gnam lde 'od srungs.

17 C. Bakuangzan 拔匡讚; T. Dpal 'khor btsan.

18 C. Jixiangji 吉祥積; T. Khri bkra shis rtsegs pa dpal.

19 C. Rihu 日怙; T. Skyid lde nyi ma mgon.

20 C. Ori 哦日; T. Mnga' ris.

21 Fazun appears to have miscalculated Atiśa's year of arrival in Tibet. Atiśa traveled to Tibet during the reign of Emperor Renzong 仁宗 of the Song dynasty, not in the seventh year of Emperor Taizong's reign as stated. Emperor Renzong reigned from 1022 to 1063 CE, and historical records place Atiśa's arrival in Tibet in 1042 CE, which corresponds to the twenty-first year of Emperor Renzong's reign.

22 C. Adixia 阿底峽; T. A ti sha (982-1054). Atiśa's ordination name is Dipamkaraśrījñāna (T. Mar me mdzad dpal ye shes).

3.2 A Brief Account of the Early Sects of Tibetan Buddhism

[33] According to tradition, Tibet had a divine teaching²³ known as ‘Bönpo’,²⁴ which was transmitted from the Shangshung kingdom²⁵ prior to the advent of Buddhism. Its teachings and doctrines mainly concentrated on spells, rituals, and invocations to various spirits and deities, with little in the way of profound principles. Eventually, under the sway of Buddhism, adherents of Bön started to mimic and integrate Buddhist doctrines, resulting in the creation of many original writings modeled on Buddhist texts. This phenomenon is similar to the way the Daoists in China appropriated Buddhist concepts, particularly those from the *Nirvāṇa sūtra*,²⁶ to develop their own texts like the *Lingbao Jing* 靈寶經.²⁷ During the Tang dynasty under Emperor Taizong 太宗,²⁸ Princess Wencheng 文成²⁹ and Princes Bhṛkūti³⁰ were wed to the Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo. The fervor they showed for the Buddhadharmā inspired the Tibetan king, his ministers, and the local community to seek out the teachings of the Dharma. The creation of the Tibetan script is said to have been created during this time, during which there were also a handful of isolated efforts to translate Buddhist scriptures. Yet, the earlier proponents of the divine teaching had a substantial influence, which impeded the widespread establishment of the Saddharma.

Later on, during the reign of Emperor Ruizong 睿宗,³¹ a Tang princess named Jincheng 金城³² – whose precise name remains unconfirmed – entered into matrimony with a member of the Tibetan royal family. She gave birth to Prince Trisong Détsen,³³ a child endowed with deep karmic connections

23 C. Shenjiao 神教; literally, ‘divine teaching’, ‘spiritual teaching’.

24 C. Bengbo 崩薄; T. Bon po.

25 C. Yangrong guo 漾絨國; T. Zhang zhung.

26 C. Niepan 涅槃; read *Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經 (S. *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra*); ‘Discourse on the Great Decease’.

27 *Lingbao Jing* 靈寶經. The *Lingbao Jing* (Scripture of the Numinous Treasure) is a Daoist scripture central to the Lingbao 靈寶 (Numinous Treasure) tradition, which emerged in China between the fourth and fifth centuries CE, integrating elements of Daoist cosmology, Buddhist doctrine, and ritual practice.

28 Tang Emperor Taizong, born Li Shimin 李世民, ruled from 626 to 649 CE. As the second emperor of the Tang dynasty, he is renowned for his skillful governance and the cultural achievements of his reign. His era, known as Zhenguan 貞觀, is remembered as a time of stability and prosperity.

29 C. Wencheng gongzhu 文成公主; T. Rgya bza’ kong jo (623?-680).

30 C. Niboer gongzhu 尼帕爾公主; T. Bal bza’ khri btsun.

31 C. Ruizong 睿宗. Tang Emperor Ruizong, born Li Dan 李旦, ruled twice during the Tang dynasty. His first reign, from 684 to 690, was overshadowed by the dominance of his mother, Empress Wu Zetian 武則天. In 690, Wu, formally titled “Tiance Jinlun Shengshen Huangdi” 天冊金輪聖神皇帝 (Heavenly Mandate Golden Wheel Holy, Divine Emperor), declared herself emperor and established the Zhou dynasty 周朝, deposing Ruizong in the process. She reigned as the sole female emperor in Chinese history until her abdication in 705. Ruizong reclaimed the throne in 710 following the brief reign of his son, Emperor Shang 唐殇帝, but abdicated in 712 in favor of his younger brother, Emperor Xuanzong 唐玄宗. Although his political authority was limited, Ruizong’s reigns marked key transitional periods in Tang history. Here, Fazun correctly reconstructed the second reign of Ruizong as the date of Princess Jincheng’s arrival in Tibet.

32 Jincheng 金城. Princess Jincheng was a Tang dynasty royal who, in 710, married the Tibetan Emperor Tri Detsuktzen (T. Thri Lde gtsug btsan, 704-755), who was only six or seven at the time. This marriage was part of a strategic alliance between the Tang dynasty and the Tibetan Empire.

33 C. Chisong dezan 赤松得讚; T. Khri srong lde btsan.

and high ambitions. Since his days as a royal heir, he cultivated a deep faith in the Saddharma and aimed to spread its teachings far and wide. Still, during his formative years, powerful ministers at the palace endorsed heterodox views and curtailed orthodoxy. Despite his lofty aspirations, he refrained from voicing them openly. After he took the crown and secured full authority, he cleverly implemented strategies to sideline the disloyal faction. He dispatched repeated missions to India to recruit more than one hundred distinguished craftsmen of the Dharma,³⁴ including Bodhisattva Śāntarakṣita³⁵ and Guru Padmasambhava.³⁶ United in their mission, they founded Samye Monastery,³⁷ where they engaged in teaching and translation work. The entire Tripiṭaka was completely established within a few short years. This illustrates the crucial influence that imperial power can have in disseminating the teachings of the Dharma. Nevertheless, the presence of scriptures and images alone cannot sustain the Saddharma if the saṅgha is absent; even if the Dharma is flourishing today, it will inevitably decline in the coming generations. Temples are still found in present-day Nepal, but the Saddharma has waned as there is no saṅgha present.

With this understanding, the Tibetan king invited Bodhisattva Śāntarakṣita, [34] who subsequently ordained seven individuals endowed with merit and wisdom. This event initiated the participation of Tibetans in the saṅgha. Later, king Tri Ralpacan took the initiative to sort the translated scriptures from the reigns of his predecessors, classifying them into categories and compiling their titles and sections. He valued the ordained saṅgha highly, and so he gave it the temples as estates and provided it with commoners for support. This made it possible for them to practice on the path without disturbance, serving as models for both humans and gods. This era marked the peak of the earlier dissemination of the Buddha's teachings³⁸ in Tibet. However, the king's reverence led to discontent among his officials and subjects. A group of conspirators came together and assassinated him, placing his younger brother, Langdarma, on the throne. Langdarma, notorious for his savage behavior and lack of piety, launched a campaign against the Saddharma, destroying temples, setting scriptures on fire, and targeting the saṅgha. This event took place during the first year of the Huichang 會昌 era³⁹ of Tang Emperor Wuzong,

34 C. fajiang 法匠. This term refers to a teacher skilled in shaping and guiding their students, akin to a master craftsman molding raw material.

35 C. Jingming pusa 靜命菩薩; T. Zhi ba'tsho (725-788).

36 C. Lianhuasheng dashi 蓮華生大師; T. Padma 'byung gnas (fl. eighth century).

37 C. Sanye si 桑耶寺; T. Bsam yas.

38 C. xianqi de fojiao 先期的佛教; T. Bstan pa'i snga dar.

39 The Huichang Persecution of the Dharma (C. Huichang fanan 會昌法難) was one of the most severe persecutions in the history of Buddhism in China. It occurred during the Huichang era (843-844) under the reign of Tang Emperor Wuzong (r. 840-846). The persecution arose from political factionalism, economic pressures, and opposition from Confucian officials and Daoist priests. The government also sought to curb the illicit trade of ordination certificates, which had become a means of tax evasion. Wuzong's reforms targeted the Buddhist monastic community with sweeping measures. Over 260,000 monks and nuns were defrocked and returned to lay life, hundreds of monasteries were destroyed, and temple assets were confiscated. Thousands of Buddhist statues were melted down and recast as coinage. New ordinands were restricted to individuals over the age of forty. Despite these devastating losses, Chinese Buddhists demonstrated remarkable resilience, recovering and flourishing after Wuzong's death in 846.

a time when the Buddhist saṅgha in the Inner Lands suffered analogous hardships – an interesting alignment of fates.

The rule of Langdarma did not last long, as he was soon taken out by an assassin. The kingdom collapsed into turmoil, the Dharma was forgotten, and the people faced immense suffering. In the wake of sustained upheaval, a wish for the restoration of order surfaced. Those who had encountered the Saddharma in the past noticed a chance arising from the population's eagerness for the teachings. This resulted in the forgery of scriptures and treatises. Later on, based on such circumstances, advocates of the newer schools denounced the texts of the older tradition as unreliable. The older tradition, commonly known as the Red Teaching stands in contrast to the more recent schools like the Sakyapa,⁴⁰ the Kagyüpa,⁴¹ the Kadampa,⁴² and the Gandenpa.⁴³ Before Langdarma's suppression of the Dharma, the Buddhist teachings in Tibet were originally referred to as the "Followers of the Ancient",⁴⁴ and were often referred to by Han people as the Red Teaching.⁴⁵ By contrast, the form of Buddhism restored after the suppression was originally called the "Followers of the New"⁴⁶ in Tibet and were commonly referred to as the Yellow Teaching⁴⁷ by the Han, a term that fails to encompass its true meaning. Certain individuals identify Tsongkhapa's sect as the Yellow Teaching, while they classify all the remaining sects as either Red or White Teachings.⁴⁸ This method of naming traditions, based only on the color of robes, is comparable to a blind person trying to feel an elephant.

3.3 A Short History of Tibetan Buddhism and its Relationship with the Kadam Sect

[35] Following Langdarma's devastation of Tibetan Buddhism, there were no remnants of the saṅgha left in either Anterior or Posterior Tibet. In the aftermath of his assassination, the quest for power intensified among various political factions. His young sons fled to To⁴⁹ in Ngari, located in Posterior Tibet, where they established their rule. While subsequent generations upheld their faith in the Saddharma, the prolonged disappearance of the Dharma, together with the widespread proliferation of false teachings,

40 C. Sajia pai 薩迦派; T. Sa skya pa.

41 C. Jiaju pai 迦舉派; T. Bka' brgyud pa.

42 C. Jiadang pai 迦當派; T. Bka' gdams pa.

43 C. Gedeng pai 格登派; T. Dga' ldan pa.

44 C. Jiu pai 舊派; T. Rnying ma pa; literally, Nyingma (T. rnying ma) means 'ancient'. The term refers to the schools of Tibetan Buddhism that continued to rely on the earlier translations of the scriptures undertaken during the period of early dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, completed before the return of Rinchen Sangpo (T. Rin chen bzang po) from India. With Rinchen Sangpo and others came a new wave of translations. Those who adopted the new translations came to be identified as the followers of Sarmapa (T. Gsar ma pa), or followers of the New Translations.

45 C. Hong jiao 紅教.

46 C. Xin pai 新派; T. Gsar ma pa. See the term *Jiu pai*, or Nyingma above.

47 C. Huang jiao 黃教.

48 C. Bai jiao 白教.

49 C. Duo 朵; T. Tho.

hindered progress. In spite of several efforts to invite Indian craftsmen of the Dharma to Tibet to for the purpose of disseminating the teachings, these efforts achieved little success. By the Zhao Song 趙宋 Dynasty,⁵⁰ a king named Yeshe Ö⁵¹ became aware of Atiśa's esteemed character and fame. He understood that the revival of the Buddhadharmā in Tibet would be unattainable without Atiśa's arrival to restore order. He dedicated every possible effort and financial resource to arrange for a delegation to invite the revered master. Atiśa was ultimately brought to Tibet only after King Jangchup Ö⁵² ascended the throne. At the king's request, Atiśa wrote the *Bodhipathapradīpa*,⁵³ a treatise that ascertained the essential tenets of both sūtra and tantra and established clear distinctions between proper and improper practices. This marked a significant revival of the Buddha's teaching in Tibet.

The central thesis of Atiśa's teachings emphasized that the scope of the Dharma, regardless of whether it pertains to the Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna, is determined by the capacities of each individual. For example, when someone with a Hīnayāna motivation engages in an act of generosity like giving, the act remains within the scope of the Hīnayāna. This principle pertains equally to morality, patience, effort, concentration, wisdom, and even the cultivation of the four immeasurables.⁵⁴ In contrast, for a person motivated by Mahāyāna ideals, even the simple act of offering a morsel of food to an ant or a pigeon is transformed into an act of Mahāyāna generosity, which serves as a provision for attaining buddhahood.⁵⁵ Likewise, other virtues like morality and patience similarly reflect the practitioner's motivation. In turn, a person's capacities, whether great or small, are nurtured by means of practice. But these qualities are not fixed, natural traits that have been carried over since beginningless time. This cultivation, Atiśa clarifies, must adhere to a systematic and sequential progression that cannot be bypassed. Failing to follow the proper stages and aiming for advanced goals too quickly can prevent one from attaining higher virtues. The reason? This is due to the fact that the practices do not align with a person's present abilities. Moreover, when foundational practices are neglected, the advantages of these lower stages are also lost. Why? Because a person may be unwilling to

50 In his statement, "By the time of the Zhao Song", referring to the Song dynasty (960-1279), Fazun anchors Tibetan historical events to Chinese timelines. Among these is the reign of Yeshe Ö (947-1024), the king of the western Tibetan kingdom of Gugé (T. Gu ge), who is credited with reviving Buddhism and initiating its latter dissemination (T. phyi dar) in Tibet. Fazun connects these events to the Song dynasty. In so doing, he makes Atiśa's arrival in Tibet comprehensible within a shared historical context.

51 C. Zhi guang 智光; T. Ye shes 'od.

52 C. Puti guang 菩提光; T. Byang chub 'od (late tenth century). Jangchup Ö, the grandnephew of Yeshe Ö, was instrumental in facilitating the arrival of Atiśa Dipamkaraśrījñāna to Tibet.

53 C. *Putidao ju lun* 菩提道炬論; T. *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*; Atiśa wrote his "Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment" at the Toling Tsuklakang (T. Tho ling gtsug lag khang) soon after he arrived in Tibet in 1040.

54 S. caturapramāṇa; C. si wuliang 四無量; T. tshad med bzhi. The four immeasurables or boundless states, also known as the four divine abidings (S. brahmavihāra; C. fanzhu 梵住; T. tshang pa'i gnas) are used as tools in the cultivation of serenity meditation (S. śamatha): 1) loving-kindness (S. maitrī; C. ci 慈; T. byams pa); 2) compassion (S. karuṇā; C. bei 悲; T. snying rje); 3) empathetic joy (S. muditā; C. xi 喜; T. dga' ba); 4) equanimity (S. upekṣā; C. she 捨; T. btang snyoms).

55 Fazun's expression *chengfo zhi ziliang* 成佛之資糧 can be otherwise rendered as "an accumulation for becoming a buddha".

commit to the required practices of cultivation. Thus, the treatise starts by elucidating the traits of the practices and the sequential stages associated with three distinct types of persons.⁵⁶

Moreover, the text also asserts: Without fostering a sincere discontent with the current state of existence, individuals will lack the motivation to seek the future rewards of the Dharma. Those who concentrate entirely on seeking worldly gains – such as food, clothing, [36] shelter, fame, and respect – are not even regarded as true followers of the Buddha's teachings. In what manner can they claim to pursue a path that extends beyond the limits of our world? If a person does not cultivate a real aversion to the Three Realms, they will struggle to make the choice and give them up. Without a heartfelt determination to let go, one tends to be absorbed in the pursuit of future security within the Three Realms. A person like this cannot be considered someone who is willing to transcend the world – how much less can they be regarded as a bodhisattva?

Additionally, if a person is unwilling to sacrifice all personal comforts and put in the effort to benefit all sentient beings, they will inevitably fail to generate *mahābodhicitta*.⁵⁷ Without the ability to generate *mahābodhicitta*, they certainly cannot be a bodhisattva. And if someone is not a bodhisattva, any virtuous practices in which they engage will not contribute to their provisions for attaining buddhahood, nor will these actions reflect the proper conduct of a bodhisattva. For this reason, this treatise thoroughly elucidates and ascertains the techniques for generating bodhicitta as outlined in the path of a person of great capacity.⁵⁸ Furthermore, even with the generation of bodhicitta, if one does not commit to the proper conduct of a bodhisattva – or indulges in mistaken practices – they will certainly fail to accumulate the provisions required for attaining full awakening, rendering the direct realization of the truth of *bodhi* unobtainable.

This is because the right conduct for accumulating these provisions focuses on benefiting sentient beings. Persons of great capacity who wish to benefit sentient beings must first understand the innate tendencies of those they aim to support. In the absence of such penetrating insight,⁵⁹ even if one were to burn one's own body and mind to ashes for the sake of others, that alone may not guarantee that such sacrifices are ultimately beneficial or harmful. This is comparable to releasing arrows into the darkness, where there is no certainty of hitting the target. Therefore, once the text has expounded the generation of bodhicitta, it proceeds to thoroughly discuss the correct path of practice, focusing on the essential techniques of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*. Moreover, while the sūtra teachings⁶⁰ may lead to buddhahood, they fall short of the quick results offered by tantric techniques.⁶¹

Despite the variety of tantric techniques that exist, they are certainly not meant for ordinary individuals, and some are deemed inappropriate

⁵⁶ C. san shi 三士; T. skyes bu gsum; in English, 'three types of persons', 'three types of individuals'.

⁵⁷ C. da putixin 大菩提心; T. byang chub kyi sems chen po; the 'aspiration for the great enlightenment'.

⁵⁸ C. shangshi 上士.

⁵⁹ C. tongli 通力.

⁶⁰ C. Xianjiao 顯教.

⁶¹ C. Mifa 密法.

even for ordained *bhikṣus*⁶² as well. Engaging in these methods without the right mindset is akin to a rabbit trying to imitate a lion's leap – an act that only invites one's own demise. It is crucial to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages for individuals who are new to tantric methods. The most remarkable feature of this treatise, then, is its careful evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages for newcomers who train in tantric methods, combined with the eradication of their mentality focused on seeking easy gains or opportunistic shortcuts. Furthermore, all teachings of the Tathāgata are spoken for the benefit sentient beings.

Due to [37] the diverse capacities and dispositions of each person, the Tathāgata's teachings also vary in depth and scope. In summary, every teaching is meant to progressively guide beings, even those with the lowest faculties, towards the great path to buddhahood. Therefore, all words spoken by the Buddha are teachings that can and must be practiced. Thus, there is no teaching that should be disregarded or thought of as superfluous. This tradition is called Kadam,⁶³ wherein *ka* translates to “the Buddha's Word” and *dam* denotes “instructions”.⁶⁴ Thus, Kadam means “Instructions on the Buddha's Word”. This sect was considered the most flourishing tradition during the revival of the Buddhadharmā in Tibet in the Song and Yuan 元 dynasties.⁶⁵

3.4 A Short History of Tibetan Buddhism and its Relationship with the Sakya Sect

The founder of this sect is said to be Dharmapāla,⁶⁶ a scholar from Nālandā Monastery⁶⁷ in India. Externally, he propagated Consciousness Only,⁶⁸ while internally he cultivated the two stages of Hevajra.⁶⁹ Upon achieving alignment with the practices described in the tantra sets,⁷⁰ he faced criticism for consuming alcohol. Yearning for solitude, he abandoned the monastery and retreated to the mountains, where he devoted himself to practice. He ultimately attained supreme buddhahood in this very body. He conveyed these teachings to the Pamthingpa brothers⁷¹ in Nepal. In turn,

62 C. *biqiu* 比丘; P. *bhikṣu*; T. *dge slong*; In Sanskrit, *bhikṣu* means ‘beggar’; The term refers to a male ‘religious mendicant’. It is commonly translated in English as ‘monk’.

63 C. *Jiadang* 迦當; T. *Bka' gdams*.

64 Fazun transliterates the Tibetan *bka'* with *jia* 迦, and *gdams* with *dang* 當.

65 Fazun aligns Tibetan and Chinese timelines by situating the revival of the Buddhadharmā in Tibet within the period spanning the Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties.

66 C. *Hufa pusa* 護法菩薩; T. *Chos skyong* (530-561). One of the ten great Yogācāra philosophers in Buddhist India.

67 C. *Nalantuo si* 那爛陀寺; T. *Na len dra*.

68 C. *weishi* 唯識; S. *vijñaptimātratā*; T. *rnam par rig pa tsam nyid*; translated as “consciousness only”, “mere-representation”, or “mere-designation”. Consciousness Only is the central tenet is the central tenet of the Yogācāra system of Indian Buddhism. It posits that all objects of experience are merely projections of consciousness (S. *vijñāna*).

69 C. *Huanxi jingang* 歡喜金剛; T. *Kye rdo rje*.

70 C. *mibu* 密部; T. *rgyud sde*; ‘tantra’, ‘tantra division’ of the Buddhist canon.

71 C. *Pangting* 龐亭; T. *Pham thing pa*.

they passed the teachings on to Drokmi,⁷² a distinguished translator from Tibet. While Drokmi the translator played a significant role in disseminating the teachings throughout Posterior Tibet, the essential instructions were eventually entrusted to Könchok Gyalpo,⁷³ who is regarded as the founding patriarch of the Sakya tradition. This prominent master, who was born during the Song Dynasty, came to Tibet not long after the noble Atiśa. After three generations, the distinguished master Künga Gyaltsen,⁷⁴ who was the fourth patriarch of the Sakya lineage, received an invitation from Qubilai Khan,⁷⁵ the founder of the Yuan Dynasty, to propagate the Dharma in Hua.⁷⁶ He spent several years there before he passed away. The Yuan emperor later recognized him by designating his nephew, the esteemed master Lodrö Gyaltsen,⁷⁷ as the National Preceptor,⁷⁸ thereby confirming him as the fifth patriarch of the Sakya lineage. – In Chinese historical records, he is frequently called Great Master Pakpa.⁷⁹

The teachings of this sect are extensive and encompass both sūtra and tantra. Still, while it incorporates all tantric techniques, the Hevajra rituals occupy a uniquely central position within this sect. In addition, this sect has developed the sūtra teachings by refining Abhidharma, Vinaya, [38] Hetuvidyā, Vijñaptimātra, and Madhyamaka to a remarkable degree of thoroughness. Master Künga Gyaltsen, the fourth patriarch, made significant contributions with his extensive treatises. His powerful arguments against the inaccuracies and shortcomings of older sects, as well as the erroneous practices of his era, were instrumental in preserving the Tathāgata's Saddharma. This sect was the central pillar of Tibetan Buddhism until the rise of the great master Tsongkhapa. In this sect, the stages of practice begin with sūtra and then progress to tantra, with a particular emphasis on the distinct precepts for personal liberation as its foundation. This sequence mirrors the structure found in the *Jangchup lamkyi rimpa*.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, in subsequent generations, certain scholars, driven by a desire for easier paths, neglected sūtra teachings and relied exclusively on tantric teachings. By doing so, they diminished the importance of the rules of monastic discipline. This decline led to issues that reflected the pitfalls of older sects.

72 C. Zhuomo 綽摩; T. 'Brog mi Lo tsā ba Shā kya Ye shes.

73 C. Xiqing zang 喜慶藏; T. Dkon mchog rgyal po (1034-1102).

74 C. Xiqing tong 慶喜幢; T. Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182-1251).

75 C. Yuan Shizu 元世祖, (1215-1294).

76 *Hua* is an ancient ethnonym for 'China'. On *Hua*, see Elliot 2012, 179-85.

77 C. Hui tong 慧幢; T. Blo gros rgyal mtshan (ca. 1235-80).

78 C. *guoshi* 國師.

79 C. Basiba 發思巴; T. 'Phags pa.

80 C. *puti dao cidī* 菩提道次第; T. *byang chub lam gyi rim pa*; S. **bodhipathakrama*.

3.5 A Short History of Tibetan Buddhism and its Relationship with the Kagyü Sect

This sect emerged in the Song Dynasty and is linked to the renowned translator Marpa.⁸¹ From an early age, he demonstrated a strong personality and noble aspirations. At first, Marpa aimed to gain a concise grasp of the essential teachings from Drokmi the translator, with whom he studied Sanskrit. However, he concluded that studying in Tibet lacked the depth of fulfillment that came from directly visiting the holy lands of India and engaging with its enlightened masters. Thus, he gathered one or two companions who shared his interests and embarked on the journey alongside them. Their first stop was a short stay in Nepal, where Marpa adjusted to the tropical climate and learned about the ways of life prevalent in that region. Later on, they made their way to India, where Marpa actively sought the guidance of respected sages. He received instructions from Nāropa,⁸² the abbot of Vikramaśīla Monastery,⁸³ where he absorbed the essential teachings from a range of scriptures and became proficient in the Yoganiruttaratantra practices of Hevajra. Under the mentorship of his teacher Nāropa, Marpa studied the profound *Guhyasamājatantra*⁸⁴ methods associated with the Yoganiruttara father class, guided by the great paṇḍita Jñānagarbha.⁸⁵ He further studied the *Mahāmāyātantra*⁸⁶ from the mother class through Kukkuripa.⁸⁷ In addition, he turned to Nāro⁸⁸ and Maitrīpa⁸⁹ for help in deepening his insight into the stages of meditation practice. Upon his return to Tibet, Marpa extensively propagated the tantric techniques, yet he did not actively promote the sūtra teachings. After a brief period of teaching, he traveled to India again. This was the time when the noble Atiśa [39] was heading towards Tibet, and, according to tradition, they met during their travels.

Among the four main disciples of this master, each of whom distinguished themselves in their own right, Milarepa⁹⁰ is clearly the one who most fully and perfectly embodied the essence of his teacher's instructions. He is celebrated as the most famous master in Tibet to have attained buddhahood within a single lifetime. Mila, who came from the region of Ngari in Posterior Tibet, suffered the death of his father when he was still a young boy. His uncle and aunt took control of the family inheritance, forcing him to endure a life marked by isolation and unspeakable suffering. Acting on his mother's urging, he ventured into Anterior Tibet, where he learned methods to summon hail and unleash storms as a means of revenge. In

81 C. Maba 嘛巴; T. Mar pa lo tsā ba chos kyi blo gros (1012-97).

82 C. Naluoba 拏嚩巴; T. Nā ro pa (1016-1100).

83 C. Zhijiamoluoxiluo 止迦摩羅希羅; T. Rnam gnon ngang tshul. A monastery located in present-day Bihar.

84 C. *Miji* 集密; T. *Gsang ba 'dus pa'i rgyud*; the 'Secret Assembly Tantra'.

85 C. Zhizu 智足; T. Ye shes snying po (eleventh century).

86 C. Dahuangang fa 大幻網法; T. Sgyu 'phrul chen mo'i rgyud; the 'Great Illusion Tantra'.

87 C. Guguriba 姑姑日巴; T. Ku kku ri pa (eleventh century).

88 C. Naluo 拏嚩; T. Nā ro. Short for Nāropa.

89 C. Mile 彌勒; T. Mai tri pa (1012-85).

90 C. Milariba 彌拉日巴; T. Mi la ras pa (1028/40-1111/23). On Milarepa, see Quintman 2014.

one instance, he brought about the deaths of more than twenty people and summoned hailstorms that obliterated the autumn crops, leaving the fields barren. Later, overwhelmed by remorse and fearing karmic retribution, he reflected on life's impermanence. Eager to escape saṃsāra and quickly attain perfect buddhahood, Milarepa sought refuge under the guidance of the great master Marpa. Having recognized Milarepa's vast potential, Marpa enforced a series of nine grueling trials aimed at purifying his past wrongdoings. Only at that point did Marpa grant him the complete instructions of Hevajra, Guhyasamāja, and Cakrasaṃvara,⁹¹ advising him to retreat into the mountains for deep practice. After more than ten years of living in seclusion, Milarepa achieved the supreme attainment.⁹² Milarepa often relied on lyrical compositions to convey the meaning of the Dharma to his audience. Upon listening to his teachings, they would immediately practice what they had learned. The number of disciples he transformed is beyond measure. Even during this age of Final Dharma,⁹³ Tibetan Buddhism maintains a strong emphasis on the necessity of relying on a master and committing to genuine practice. This strong emphasis is largely a result of the influence exerted by this particular sect. Still, intense focus on the teacher's instructions led to a tendency to undervalue the significance of scriptural teachings. In addition, the narrow focus on tantric practices often resulted in a lack of appreciation for and a neglect of monastic precepts. Later critiques from the four patriarchs of the Sakya sect and Tsongkhapa the Great mainly focused on the later deviations of this sect, along with the shortcomings of older traditions.

3.6 A Short History of the Later Revival of Tibetan Buddhism and the New Kadam Sect

Over the centuries, from the Tang to the Yuan Dynasty, Tibetan Buddhism experienced numerous cycles of rise and decline, with its fortunes shifting more than once. Many commentators lacked genuine [40] practice, and practitioners frequently lacked the wisdom that comes from hearing. Those who pursued the sūtra teachings dedicated themselves exclusively to the unrestrained practices of the Mahāyāna, while those who were drawn to tantric rituals, such as those involving wax offerings, treated pure vows and monastic precepts as trivial, and so they discarded them like chaff. Knowledge of and adherence to the procedural norms⁹⁴ of the saṅgha were entirely absent. In this period, Tsongkhapa the Great emerged. Renowned for both his vast erudition and authentic practice, he placed great emphasis on monastic discipline. Drawing on the instructions of the noble Atiśa, he established a systematic approach to practice, encompassing both sūtra and

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

92 C. da xidi 大悉地 (a synonym of: zuishang daxidi 最上大悉地; S. uttamāsiddhi; T. mchog gi dngos grub); in a tantric context, the 'supreme attainment' refers to Buddhahood, as opposed to the 'common attainments' (C. gongtong xidi 共同悉地; S. sādharmaśiddhi; T. thun mong gi dngos grub), the worldly *siddhis* that can be obtained through mantra recitation and deity yoga.

93 C. mofa 末法; S. saddharmavipralopa; J. mappō; T. dam pa'i chos rab tu rnam par 'jig pa.

94 C. jiemo 羯摩; S. karman; T. las; from the Sanskrit, all procedural norms such as full ordination of monks and nuns, confession ceremonies, the closing of the rain's retreat, and the administration of moral transgressions.

tantra, while discouraging the opportunistic tendencies of scholars seeking shortcuts. As a result, Tibetan Buddhism experienced another resurgence. In turn, this gave rise to the renowned and prestigious “Yellow Hat” sect that continues to this day.

In establishing the practices of the sūtra teachings,⁹⁵ all scriptures and treatises strive to fulfill two main goals: first, to help sentient beings to discard faults; and second, to cause sentient beings to achieve virtues. Faults can be classified into three types: (1) nonvirtuous actions that lead one to fall into the lower realms; (2) meritorious actions that are contaminated and are not conducive to attaining nirvāṇa; and (3) self-centered tendencies that hinder the expansive mind of a bodhisattva. Avoiding these three faults enables a person to steer clear of the lower realms, remain unbound by the cycle of transmigration, and prevent stagnation in the Hīnayāna approach respectively. The virtues to be developed fall into two main types: (A) the mundane virtues, known as *dharmas* that lead to exalted rebirths, and (B) the supramundane virtues, called *dharmas* that ensure the unsurpassed⁹⁶ attainment. This latter category is subdivided into two aspects: (a) achieving personal liberation from the cycle of saṃsāra; and (b) helping all sentient beings to reach *mahābodhi*.⁹⁷ Guiding sentient beings to avoid lower realms and attain favorable rebirths through practices such as the ten virtues and the five precepts only fulfills the aims of the vehicles of humans and gods. However, this is not the Buddha’s ultimate intent. His ultimate goal is to guide sentient beings towards a permanent exit from saṃsāra and the realization of buddhahood. In order to achieve this goal, three essential practices are outlined: developing renunciation, cultivating bodhicitta, and gaining insight into emptiness.

Without renunciation, a person remains bound to the perpetual cycle of birth and death, as they lack a sincere longing to escape it. Without bodhicitta, buddhahood is unattainable, as it shows that a person has not yet entered the ranks of the bodhisattvas. Without insight into emptiness, it is impossible to overcome the two obstructions and realize the two types of emptiness, since one would lack a true antidote for ignorance concerning ultimate truth.⁹⁸ In addition, generating *mahābodhicitta* cannot be achieved without [41] engaging in renunciation. Why? Without a genuine aversion for the cycle of rebirth within the Three Realms, it is impossible to develop the aspiration to liberate others. Moreover, if a person fails to grasp the nature of suffering, authentic renunciation cannot take place either. Without an understanding of suffering, there can be no aversion to the afflictions. And without aversion towards the afflictions, there will be no commitment to release them.

In order to grasp the subtle forms of suffering present in the Three Realms, it is essential to first recognize the coarse and heavy suffering associated with the three lower destinies. In order to develop a fear of the suffering associated with the three lower destinies, it is essential to recognize that upon death, human beings can indeed fall into those realms. And to develop fear of such a downfall, it is essential to understand the

95 C. xianjiao.

96 C. sheng 勝; S. anuttara; T. bla na med pa.

97 C. da puti 大菩提; T. byang chub chen po; ‘Great Enlightenment’.

98 C. zhenshiyiyu 真實義愚; S. tattvārthasāmmoha; T. de kho na’i don la rmongs pa.

impermanence of human life and the uncertainty of the moment of death. This insight leads a person to cherish each fleeting moment. Meanwhile, to cultivate fear of death, it is essential to grasp the immense value and rarity of human existence. To effectively practice the Saddharma and attain its beneficial results, a person must first acknowledge that any minor alleviation of faults and the generation of little merits is entirely contingent upon the guidance provided by a *kalyāṇamitra*. Even basic worldly tasks cannot be accomplished without the knowledge shared by earlier sages. How much more relevant is this for supramundane teachings that go beyond ordinary understanding? Therefore, the foundation of all meritorious endeavors begins with reliance on a *kalyāṇamitra*.

By reflecting on the value, rarity, and impermanence of the human body, as well as the suffering experienced in the three lower destinies, one develops an initial fear of suffering. This fear inherently leads to a desire for methods to achieve liberation and protection. Still, these methods are beyond the power of both humans and gods to provide. For, in order to attain liberation, one must rely on one's own efforts to avoid nonvirtue and cultivate virtue. However, who is qualified to teach these methods? And who has the ability to guide others in following them? It is only the Tathāgata who has fully realized and taught these methods, and only the Buddha's followers, by relying on the Buddha's teachings, can effectively put them into practice. Hence, the Three Jewels⁹⁹ are the true refuge that is capable of offering protection to sentient beings.

Next, one contemplates the Three Realms as a burning house, where afflictions and actions are the root causes of suffering. These two forces lead sentient beings to perpetually wander in the great wheel of suffering without any relief. The only way out is through the cessation of the origin of suffering, which ultimately brings peace and comfort. Achieving cessation involves the practice of the three trainings.¹⁰⁰ By committing to the practice of the three trainings, one can escape from the cycle of birth and death and permanently eradicate the seeds of suffering. Furthermore, one contemplates that all sentient beings, from time without beginning, have been caught in an unbroken stream of thoughts driven [42] by ignorance and karma, causing them to endlessly wander through the Three Realms. In their countless births – be it from a womb or an egg – all beings have unquestionably relied on the compassion and care of their parents to survive and thrive. Thus, all sentient being have been our parents in countless past lives, and their kindness is remarkable.

In order to honor this immense debt of gratitude we owe to our mothers and fathers, it is essential that we strive to alleviate their suffering and enhance their happiness. There is no alternative to attaining buddhahood in order to fulfill such a vast vow and duty. By establishing compassion as our foundation, we generate *mahābodhicitta*, the grand altruistic aspiration to benefit all sentient beings. With this aspiration in mind, then, we consistently nurture all virtuous practices, completing the two accumulations of merit

⁹⁹ C. sanbao 三寶; S. ratnatraya; T. dkon mchog gsum; The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha.

¹⁰⁰ C. sanxue 三學; T. bslab pa gsum. In Sanskrit, the *trīśikṣā*, that is, the 'three trainings' of the bodhisattva, comprising higher morality (S. adhiśīlaśikṣā), higher concentration (S. adhisamādhiśikṣā), and higher wisdom (S. adhiprajñāśikṣā), are said to include all of the elements of the *āryaṣṭāṅgamārga*, 'eightfold noble path'.

and wisdom. By means of these two accumulations, we ultimately attain *samyaksambodhi*.¹⁰¹

Hence, this sequence thoroughly summarizes all the meanings elucidated in the scriptures and treatises of both the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna, ensuring that every aspect is explained. For instance, the Vinaya discusses in detail the circumstances in which *bhikṣus* can observe or transgress the precepts, offering methods to break free from the Three Realms. The Abhidharma provides comprehensive explanations of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*,¹⁰² including both general and specific aspects of cause and effect, which collectively outline the key features of the path of the person of intermediate capacity. Texts like the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*,¹⁰³ the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*,¹⁰⁴ and the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*¹⁰⁵ illuminate the practices of the bodhisattva and the correct view of emptiness. Additional scriptures and treatises that elaborate on the virtues and deeds of buddhas and bodhisattvas provide insights into the circumstances for taking refuge in the Three Jewels and generating bodhicitta. Therefore, all scriptures of the Tripiṭaka, whether they belong to the Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna, are entirely integrated into this great progression of the path to *bodhi*. This indicates that all teachings and treatises are authentic pathways for attaining buddhahood. This sequence prevents uninformed or superficial learners from bypassing stages, randomly choosing or discarding teachings, clinging to one while dismissing others.

In delineating the sequential stages of tantric practice, it is vital to understand that anyone who wishes to train in tantra must first cultivate the merits described earlier – these preliminary practices are essential for the generation of bodhicitta. There is no foundation for engaging in tantra without these merits. The next step requires relying on a fully qualified and virtuous *ācārya*¹⁰⁶ to receive a complete empowerment. Engaging in the meditative practices of tantra or even hearing [43] the teachings is impossible without prior empowerment. During the ceremony of empowerment, individuals take on the *samaya*¹⁰⁷ vows and the vows of individual liberation, both of which must be honored with utmost care. How can someone expect to obtain a fortunate rebirth as a human or a god, let alone attaining buddhahood, if they are unable to keep these vows? For individuals who are capable of strictly observing these pledges, it becomes vital to thoroughly investigating the true meaning of tantra. Failing this, the *vidhi*¹⁰⁸ becomes an empty performance, and the direct realization of absolute reality remains ultimately out of reach. After the true meaning is understood, one must continue with courage and perseverance, practicing with diligence the techniques of the stage

101 C. *zhengdengjue* 正等覺; T. yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub. 'Complete enlightenment', 'full enlightenment'.

102 C. *shengsi huanmie* 生死還滅.

103 C. *Dabore jing* 大般若經.

104 C. *Zhongguan lun* 中觀論.

105 C. *Xianguan zhuangyan lun* 現觀莊嚴論.

106 C. *asheli* 大阿闍黎; T. slob dpon; 'teacher', 'master'. By the term *ācārya*, Fazun refers specifically to a master qualified in the tantric ritual.

107 C. *sanmeiye* 三昧耶; T. dam tshig; 'vows', in this context, 'tantric vows'.

108 C. *yigui* 儀軌; S. *vidhi*; T. cho ga; 'rite', in this context, 'tantric practice' in its various aspects.

of generation.¹⁰⁹ Without attaining the superior *samādhi* that corresponds with the meditational deity,¹¹⁰ engaging in meditative absorptions related to channels and energies,¹¹¹ drops,¹¹² and clear light¹¹³ will ultimately fail to produce proper generation. Following the skillful completion of the stage of generation, the next step is to engage in the stage of completion.¹¹⁴ It is crucial to attain meditative stabilization on the illusory body¹¹⁵ and clear light. Without this, the two resultant bodies of Buddhahood – the form body and the truth body – cannot be realized, even if one enters the *samādhi* of becoming the deity. Within the tantra sets, the scriptures, commentaries, and ritual manuals focus exclusively on this principle, adhering strictly to it without any exceptions. Therefore, all tantric techniques need to follow definite principles and progress through established stages. Teachings that stray from the correct order or do not have clear guidelines are not pure tantric methods. This much is certain. Tsongkhapa arranged the teachings of both sūtra and tantra into systematic and coherent stages. Nonetheless, the enduring clarity and vitality of the Buddhadharma are primarily a result of his emphasis on the strict observance of moral discipline and the integration of learning with practice.

3.7 An Addendum on the Causes of the Rise and Fall of Tibetan Buddhism

A summary of the brief history outlined above indicates that, aside from the efforts taken by kings and others to either promote or suppress [Buddhism], its rise and fall can generally be attributed to three primary factors: (1) whether the precepts are upheld or neglected; (2) whether the teachings are earnestly and joyfully put into practice; and (3) whether the practice is approached methodically by means of stages. Every sect must establish a solid foundation built on strict compliance [44] with the monastic code. Next, students are required to adhere to their teacher's instructions and strive to achieve a direct realization through genuine effort. To end, it is essential to ensure that no stages are bypassed in pursuit of quick results. Meaningful benefits can be attained only through consistent, step-by-step practice that adheres to the appropriate sequence. When such benefits become tangible, the teachings of the Buddhadharma can be propagated, established, and preserved for the long term. The decline of any religious sect can generally be ascribed to a variety of factors: treating the precepts with a careless attitude and dismissing them as simply part of the Hīnayāna; engaging in teaching or discussions without actual practice; or engaging in methods

109 C. shengqi cidi 生起次第; S. utpattikrama; T. bskyed rim.

110 C. benzun 本尊; S. iṣṭadevatā; T. yi dam; also, 'tutelary deity', 'chosen deity'.

111 C. ximai 息脈; T. rtsa rlung. Specifically, the sinograph xi 息, meaning 'wind', 'breath', translates the Sanskrit *prāṇā*, 'energy'. On the other hand, *mai* 脈 renders the Sanskrit *nāḍī*, 'channel', hence my translation "channels and their energies", reflecting the Tibetan *rtsa* (S. *nāḍī*) *rlung* (S. *prāṇā*).

112 C. kongdian 空點; S. bindu; T. thig le.

113 C. guangming 光明; S. prabhāsvara; T. 'od gsal.

114 C. yuanman cidi 圓滿次第; S. niṣpannakrama; T. rdzogs rim.

115 C. huanshen 幻身; S. māyākāyayoga; T. sgyu lus.

that aim for quick fixes, straying from the correct path. Over time, these tendencies lead to a lack of completeness in the teachings. As a result, the path loses its perfection. Whether it is omitting the beginning, cutting off the end, focusing on a single mantra, or clinging to a single name, such fragmented practices become mere substitutes for the Great Teaching. In this way, the holy books of the Tripiṭaka are reduced to nothing but waste paper, and the two trainings in meditation and wisdom are turned into hollow words. Consequently, the banner of the Dharma collapses, and the lamp of wisdom is extinguished. Could such a decline be caused by flaws in the original setup? Or might it stem from later generations neglecting to uphold the teachings? Those of us dedicated to establishing, preserving, and defending the Buddha's teachings need to ponder these questions with care. When it comes to matters like the size of temples, the count of individuals who have taken the vows, the red or yellow color of their robes, or even their economic status, I believe these factors are less important compared to the rise and fall of the Buddha's teachings. Likewise, I believe that the integration of religion and governance is even less important.

3.8 A Brief History of China-Tibet Relations

Historical records indicate that Tibet's King Songtsen Gampo launched multiple invasions into the border regions of China, while the emperors of the Sui 隋 and Tang 唐 dynasties were unable to bring him under control. Later, during the fifteenth year of Tang Emperor Taizong's reign, in the year known as Xin Chou 辛丑,¹¹⁶ a diplomatic resolution was reached, leading to Princess Wencheng's marriage into Tufan 吐蕃.¹¹⁷ The exact age of Songtsen Gampo during this time is still a matter of inquiry. Eventually, King Tri Detsuktsen¹¹⁸ likewise continued the pattern of aggression, launching forays into neighboring territories. During the third year of Tang Emperor Ruizong's 睿宗 reign, in the Ding Hai 丁亥 period,¹¹⁹ [45] Princess Jincheng was married to him, which led to a conciliatory outcome. Shortly thereafter, Tibet fell into significant internal turmoil. Since they struggled to maintain their own stability, how could they possibly threaten our frontier regions? Consequently, after the Tang dynasty, the chronicles no longer recorded the fierce conflicts between the Han and the Tibetans.¹²⁰ It was not until Kublai Khan assumed control of the Central Plains [of China] that Künga Gyaltsen, the fourth patriarch of the Sakya lineage, received an invitation to Hua to disseminate the Dharma. Later on, Kublai Khan recognized the fifth Sakya patriarch as the National Preceptor, obtaining numerous tantric initiations and instructions. In exchange, he progressively surrendered portions of

116 Fazun places what he calls a 'diplomatic solution' between Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo and Tang Emperor Taizong in the fifteenth year of Taizong's reign, corresponding to 641. This year aligns with the Xin Chou 辛丑 designation in the Chinese 60-year cyclical calendar.

117 T. Bod chen po, the Tibetan Empire, 618-842. For a study on the term "Tufan" (often still mistakenly rendered as "Tubo" in phonetic transcription), see the study by Pelliot 1915.

118 C. Chide zhudun 赤得諸頓; T. Thri Lde gtsug btsan (704-755).

119 The third year of Tang Emperor Ruizong's reign corresponds to 684, during his first tenure as emperor (684-690). This year is also marked as the Ding Hai (丁亥) year in the Chinese 60-year cyclical calendar.

120 Literally, *hanzang zhanzheng* 漢藏戰爭, 'Han-Zang wars'.

Tibetan territory as a token of gratitude to the fifth Sakya patriarch. In this manner, the Sakya sect took charge of both the religious and political spheres in Tibet while the Yuan were in power. But their rule did not last long before it was seized by the descendants of the Kagyü sect. Under the Yuan, the Kagyü patriarchs also acted as National Preceptors. As the Ming 明 dynasty took hold, the Kagyü descendants had already lost their political dominance, and the leadership of Tibet transitioned to the third Dalai Lama.¹²¹ The Dalai Lama retained full authority over Tibet spanning from the Ming dynasty, through the Qing 清 dynasty, and into the early phase of the Republic of China. In the Ming and Qing eras, China-Tibet relations strengthened significantly compared to the connections established during the Yuan dynasty. Especially after the reign of Qianlong 乾隆, the Chinese emperor was regarded as the emperor of Tibet as well. This relationship endured until the early days of the Republic, when Tibetan troops ousted Chinese forces, thus ending the China-Tibet alliance. Nevertheless, a detailed account of these events exceeds the scope of this summary.

121 C. Disan dai Dalai 第三代達賴; literally, 'Third-Generation Dalai'.