

THE MIRROR

No. 151
March 2021



The Three Statements of Guru Garab Dorje
Thog lcags and *rlung rta*
Guruyoga Collective Practice
Changchub Dorje by Drugu Choegyal



INTERNATIONAL
DZOGCHEN
COMMUNITY

Contents

Editorial.....	3
The Three Statements of Guru Garab Dorje.....	4
<i>Thog lcags</i> and <i>rlung rta</i>	8
Guruyoga Collective Practice for Three Special Days.....	12
International Gakyil.....	13
Shang Shung Institute Austria	15
Shang Shung Publications	16
ASIA.....	17
The Potential of the Vajra Dance.....	18
Khaita	19
Dzamling Gar.....	20
Merigar West.....	23
Merigar East.....	28
Samtengar.....	30
Namgyalgar	31
Tsegyalgar East.....	32
Tsegyalgar West	33
Tashigar North.....	34
Tashigar South.....	35

Artists in the Dzogchen Community.....	36
Reflections	39
Book reviews	41
Changchub Dorje by Drugu Choegyal	43
<i>Thog Chag</i>	44
Pictures from the Past.....	46
How I Met	50

Front cover: A zoomorphic *thogchag* [cnn01742014] from the collection of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, 2021 Museo di Arte e Cultura Orientale di Arcidosso.

Back cover: An eight petalled lotus *thogchag* [cnn01732014] from the collection of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, 2021 Museo di Arte e Cultura Orientale di Arcidosso.

Right: An example from A Coloring Book by Michela Martello, see review on page 41.





Dzogchen Gars and Lings Are Not Just Dharma Centers

Dzamling Gar, February 22, 2015

We are starting Dzamling Gar and if you go around the Gar you can see how many things there are to do. For two years we have been doing retreats in this tent and still do not have a Gönpa, living a bit like gypsies. I very much hope that I will stay alive a little longer and that people in the Dzogchen Community everywhere who are interested can collaborate so that we will be successful in building this Gar.

Most importantly Dzamling Gar is not only a kind of organization. Dzamling Gar is the main point of the Dzogchen Teaching that we are preparing for future generations. We are living in time. When somebody does some good things in that moment of time everybody collaborates and everything seems wonderful and goes well. But our human condition is very much related to our dualistic condition. It does not go very much to the essence.

For example, when I was in Tibet I had no idea that I would come to Italy or even to India, but working with circumstances I arrived in India. And when I was in India, working with circumstances I arrived in Italy to work with professor Tucci, who was a famous Tibetologist. He went to Tibet seven times and had a collection of ancient Tibetan books that contained everything that existed. In particular there were many handwritten Bönpo pre-Buddhist texts. In Europe there was no Tibetan library that had such a rich collection as professor Tucci's.

Once when I was in Russia people told me about a very big collection [of Tibetan texts] and when I went to see it, it was indeed very big. There were six or seven copies of just the Kangyur and Tengyur and many collections of books of different teachers, mainly Gelugpa. But in Tibet there is not only the Gelugpa tradition but also the Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, Kagyupa, Jonangpa, and Bönpo. There are many traditions. When I went to see this collection, they understood that I belonged to the Nyingmapa and tried to show me some Nyingmapa texts. But even though they went all around the library they couldn't find any, only some volumes of Longchenpa. That is an example. It was a very famous library but compared with Prof. Tucci's collection it was not so big.

Professor Tucci was very famous and when he was alive everybody collaborated with him at the time. When I arrived there was an Institute called ISMEO (The International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies) with sections dedicated to Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Tibetan texts. It was highly developed. When professor Tucci passed away, one of his students, professor Gnoli, became director of the institute. Then another professor who worked with him, Professor Petech, who came to India to invite me to Italy, also passed away. Then Professor Gnoli passed away. After that even though Tucci was very important this ISMEO became an institute of Africa and Asia, a kind of mixture and there was no more interest in Prof. Tucci's collection of books.

This is a good example of how the condition of our society is. I know that and I don't want something similar to happen to the Dzogchen Community. We are on this globe, in the human condition, in the relative condition, and for this reason I am trying to make people understand that the Dzogchen Community is not just some kind of dharma center. It is a collection of people who are seriously applying and integrating Dzogchen Teaching. For that reason we are also trying to develop Santi Maha Sangha teachers, Santi Maha Sangha training, Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and so on, related to this principle.

Up to now, for almost forty years I have not only worked at the university but have also travelled around giving Dzogchen Teaching. You know how many places on this globe we have Dzogchen practitioners. These places where Dzogchen practitioners have organized to collaborate are called Gars and Lings. It is important that you know that the Gars and Lings are not just dharma centers. The main point of the Gars and Lings is collaboration between Dzogchen practitioners and the aim of Dzogchen practitioners is trying to go beyond limitations. This is our path and this is our way.

Photo by Mikhail Abramov



The Three Statements of Guru Garab Dorje

Atiyoga Teaching Retreat, Afternoon Day 3
Dzamling Gar, Tenerife, December 30, 2017

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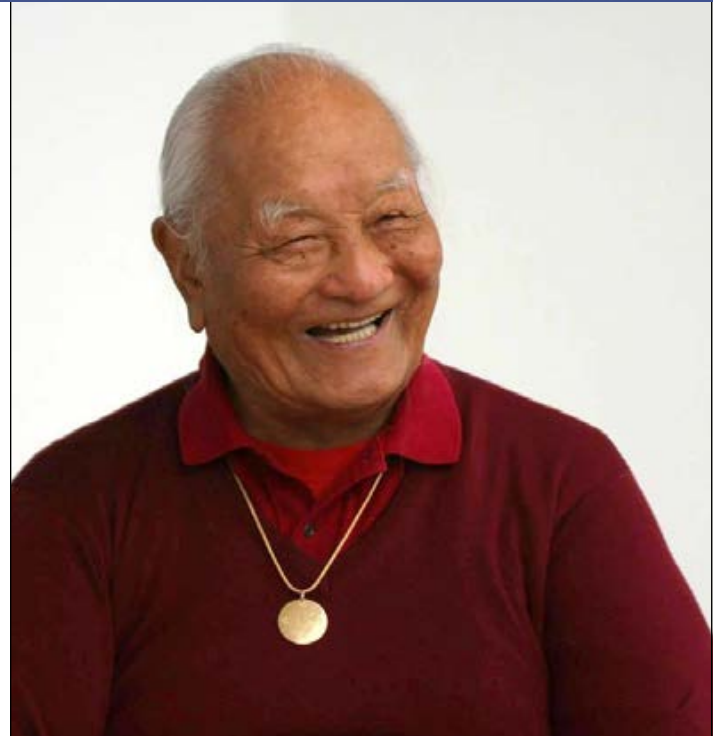


Photo by Vartan Mkhitarian

Kangyur and Tengyur

When Guru Garab Dorje taught the Dzogchen Teaching. For example, when we say the Dzogchen Teaching is the teaching of the Buddha and therefore it is Buddhist, that could be true, but Buddhist doesn't mean that Buddha Shakyamuni taught Dzogchen Teaching. It is very important that when you are following a teaching that you understand what the teaching of the Buddha is, otherwise you remain limited, like in Hinayana. In Hinayana it is said that Buddha taught Hinayana in India for a certain period, and therefore Hinayana is the only teaching of the Buddha. Buddha also taught Mahayana. But most of the Buddha's Mahayana Teachings are from different dimensions, like the dimension of *naga* or *deva*, and then later, realized beings like Nāgārjuna introduced these teachings into the human condition. We have so much Mahayana Teaching, but Hinayana does not accept it. They refuse Mahayana Teachings because they believe that the only valid Buddhist Teachings are what Buddha taught in India.

If you understand the teaching of Buddha in this way, it is not complete. In order to really learn the teaching of Buddha, we should understand different aspects. For example, today in the Tibetan language we have a collection of the Kangyur (*bka' gyur*). The Kangyur is the teachings of the Buddha translated from ancient Sanskrit into Tibetan language. The collection of the Kangyur is more than one hundred volumes. Then there is Tengyur (*bstan gyur*). The Tengyur is the commentary on the Kangyur; some scholars wrote and explained the words of the Buddha. Also these are translated from the ancient Sanskrit of India. In the collection of the Tengyur there are more than two hundred twenty to two hundred thirty volumes. All these teachings are considered as the Teachings of the Buddha.

This doesn't mean that the Hinayana way of seeing is the only teaching of the Buddha or that everything Buddha taught was

taught in India. Many of these Teachings, like the Mahayana sutras, were taught from the dimension of the *deva* and *naga*. For example, we have a very famous teaching called Lhai Ngawoche Do (*lha'i rnga bo che'i mdo*). Ngawoche. Ngawoche means drum, a big drum. This kind of teaching is not what Buddha taught orally. Hinayana texts and Mahayana sutras taught in India or also other dimensions, called Shalne Sungpai Ka (*zhal nas gsungs pa'i bka'*), means that Buddha taught them orally.

When Buddha gave oral teachings, he used different kinds of language. Sometimes the teaching of the Buddha manifested when the circumstances required it. A qualification of Buddha is that he is omniscient. Omniscience means seeing the relative condition in time and space. So, for that reason, Buddha has the quality and quantity of wisdom, Buddha can manifest and Buddha can empower. It is not necessary for Buddha to travel in the *naga* and *deva* dimensions. For example, *lha i nga ba che mdo*, when a certain kind of teaching is necessary, the teaching in the dimension of the *deva* requires a very big drum. In general someone is beating the big drum and making sound. One day it is not necessary to beat the drum to produce the sound, the sound comes naturally. The sound that naturally comes out is the teaching of the Buddha which is called a sutra, complete from the beginning until the end. There are eighty or ninety pages, I don't remember precisely, and there is an explanation of that. This is one of the very famous Mahayana sutras. Mahayana teaching also follows how it is explained in this sutra for example, that there is not only one but many kinds of teachings that Buddha empowered. This kind of teaching is called Jyinki Labpai Ka (*byin gyis rlabs pa'i bka'*), Jyinki Labpa and means Buddha empowered and introduced that teaching.

In the Kangyur, if we observe, we read many of the sayings that Buddha empowered that came from rocks, trees, some moun-



tains, and there are these related titles. All these series, all these teachings, are called Jyinki Labpai Ka. Then there is also another kind of the teaching which is called Jesu Nangwai Ka (*rje su gngang ba'i bka'*), Jesu Nangwai Ka (*rje su gngang ba'i bka'*), which means that Buddha also gave permission for his students to teach and at that moment Buddha empowered that teaching and his students' teaching manifested in a very perfect way. A good example of this teaching is called Jesu Nangwai Ka, which is called Prajnaparamita Hridaya (*prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*), and the essence of the paramita is this short sutra. So in Mahayana they consider this sutra the most important of all the sutras. This sutra is explained that when there was Buddha Shakyamuni in the state of contemplation, Śāriputra – Śāriputra was a kind of arhat with a high level realization of Hinayana and not only that, but he had such knowledge of the teaching of the Buddha – Śāriputra asked Buddha, "Buddha, how can we explain the principle of the total *shunyata* in the Mahayana principle?" Then Buddha said, "You ask the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara." At that moment Avalokiteshvara was also present. Śāriputra asked Avalokiteshvara and Buddha was in the state of contemplation.

When Buddha was in the state of contemplation in that moment, there was no difference between the state of Avalokiteshvara and Buddha. Avalokiteshvara explained all the Prajnaparamita Hridaya (*prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*) Sutra. You remember, when we watched the film "Little Buddha", there is a monk chanting a kind of sutra that says, "There are no eyes, there are no ears" etc.; repeating that. Nothing exists because all is emptiness and there are basically eighteen kinds of emptiness. So, this sutra is the sutra of the Prajnaparamita Hridaya (*prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*). At the end of this sutra, the conclusion says lammed, yeshemed, thobpamed mathobpayangmed (*lam med/ ye shes med/ thob pa med/ ma thob pa med*). Then there is the mantra of the TADYATHĀ OM GATE GATE PĀRAGATE PĀRASAMGATE BODHI SVĀHĀ. This mantra is the real sense of the Prajnaparamita. What does lammed, yeshemed thobpamed mathobpayangmed mean? Lammed (*lam med*) means there is no path, yeshemed (*ye shes med*) means there is no wisdom. Thobpamed (*thob pa med*) means there is nothing to obtain and there is no attainment. Mathobpayangmed (*ma thob pa yang med*) also means there is nothing remaining to obtain. So, in that way, this sutra finishes with totally emptiness. This kind of teaching, this Prajnaparamita Hridaya, is very short and many Tibetan practitioners in the monastery and of all traditions have this sutra in memory. In the same way, in the Chinese and Japanese Mahayana tradition, they are reading this Prajnaparamita Hridaya. They consider it the most important sutra of Mahayana.

This is just an example of Jesu Nangwai Ka, and there are many other Jesu Nangwai Ka in the Kangyur. You see then there exists Shalne Sungpai Ka, those that the Buddha taught directly; those the Buddha empowered (Jyinki Labpai Ka) and those he gave permission to be taught (Jesu Nangwai Ka), they also became the teaching of Buddha. There is also Lungdu Tenpai Ka (*lung du bstan pa'i bka'*), Lungdu Tenpa means that Buddha says, "This kind of teaching will one day appear."

For example, someone is asking Buddha Shakyamuni, "How can we go beyond time and space?" Buddha says, "This kind of teaching will be taught by a teacher just like me one day." That teacher was

Garab Dorje. That teaching is the Dzogchen Teaching; beyond time and space.

Buddha, in time of the Buddha, started with the cause of suffering. What are the cause and effect of suffering. This cause and effect relationship is called karma. Buddha's teaching is basically related to that. In the time of the Buddha it was necessary to have that kind of teaching. Later when there were positive circumstances, Dzogchen appears. For example, when Garab Dorje was a very small boy, he was not a normal being. From the beginning he was an emanation of the Buddha.

Dorje Sempa Namkha Che

Garab Dorje manifested in a very special way. When Garab Dorje was very small he was always chanting an important Dzogchen root text called *Dorje Sempa Namkha Che*. We have this *Dorje Sempa Namkha Che* translation in English, Italian, etc. Also I prepared a kind of calendar of *Dorje Sempa Namkha Che* for our practitioners to study the text step by step. People are not really studying this text because *Dorje Sempa Namkha Che* is not easy to study; there is a root text and commentary of Shri Singha and Vairocana, and we have translated both. So, reading one verse of that you can go more deeply into the knowledge. Through the commentary of Sri Singha and Vairocana you can understand and develop. In this case, you should work just a little more. People don't like this kind of effort.

In any case, so, this is how Guru Garab Dorje's teaching how came out. Guru Garab Dorje was chanting *Dorje Sempa Namkha Che* when he was very small. It doesn't mean that he learned it from someone and was chanting. When Garab Dorje asked, "I want to discuss with the teacher of the royal teachers of the king of the Oddiyana". His mother said, "Oh, you cannot discuss with the royal teachers because you are small boy and you have not even changed your teeth."

Garab Dorje was around six or seven years old; very young. His fame arrived in India in this way, "There is a very special boy in Oddiyana who is chanting some teachings called *Dorje Sempa Namkha Che*. *Dorje Sempa Namkha Che* explains how we should go beyond cause and effect. We must be careful because the teaching of Buddha is about cause and effect. What should we do?", and then they said, "We need to go in Oddiyana to discuss this with Garab Dorje." Then Manjushrimitra, one of the most famous from the Yogachara School at Nalanda University together with a group of the pandits, traveled to Oddiyana. It took a long time, not like today, there was not even a road. At the end, somehow they arrived in Oddiyana and there they met Guru Garab Dorje. Then Manjushrimitra started to ask some questions of this small boy, Garab Dorje. Garab Dorje immediately explained. When Garab Dorje explained to Manjushrimitra, Manjushrimitra realized that Garab Dorje was a very high level scholar and he understood that this is really the essence of the teaching of the Buddha. Then Manjushrimitra had faith and he said, "I am sorry, I was wrong to discuss with you. How can I purify all these bad actions that I accumulated?" Guru Garab Dorje said, "What you understood now, you must write down and introduce to the Buddhists."

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The Three Statements of Guru Garab Dorje

Then Manjushrimitra wrote a text called *Chang-chub-gi sem Dola Sershün*, which is one of the very important texts of Dzogchen. They sent these books to Nalanda University so all the scholars could understand that Garab Dorje was an emanation of Buddha. Then Manjushrimitra became the number one student of Guru Garab Dorje. Also later Manjushrimitra made a collection of the all teachings of Guru Garab Dorje. When Garab Dorje manifested the rainbow body, in that moment Manjushrimitra received the Three Statements from Guru Garab Dorje. The Three Statements represent the essence of the all the Dzogchen Teachings. The Three Statements of Garab Dorje are considered a key to how we start to learn the Dzogchen Teaching, how teachers teach to the student, how we can have realization and what realization is. Everything is related with these three statements. In Garab Dorje's three statements, what is the first one? The first statement is direct introduction. The Teacher directly introduces from the beginning, but if we are not able to do a high level direct introduction in a Dzogchen way, then we introduce with Ati Guruyoga. That way we can understand the essence of the practice of Dzogchen, and in which direction we should go. So, for that reason, first we have this introduction. There is no need for an initiation, a vow, and no need for training in something. But we should do direct introduction.

When you are following the teachings today, all traditions say, "First you should do preliminary practice or *ngöndro*." Preliminary practice means preparation. The ordinary idea is that if you do not have at least a little preparation, you cannot understand. This idea is very much diffused in the traditional schools. When I started to teach Dzogchen Teaching in Italy, I started direct introduction in a very simple way, with Ati Guruyoga. I never taught Dzogchen Teaching without that principle. I am not asking anyone to do *ngöndro* practice. *Ngöndro* is not indispensable in all Teachings. Sometimes it can be useful. When I am giving Dzogchen Teaching to people who didn't do *ngöndro*, many Tibetan lamas criticized Namkhai Norbu and said, "Namkhai Norbu is giving Dzogchen Teaching, a high level teaching, to people who did not do *ngöndro*." This is not my fault because I am following the Dzogchen Teaching taught by Garab Dorje. If *ngöndro* is indispensable, then why are there not four statements of Garab Dorje instead of three? Maybe the first statement should be *ngöndro*, and then direct introduction. Sometimes I reply a little, because they are not thinking in the correct way. So, I say, "If you want to criticize, please criticize Garab Dorje, not me." Garab Dorje is not presented in that way, therefore, direct introduction means knowing what Dzogchen is.

Dzogchen is not book, a tradition, or a religion etc. Dzogchen is our real nature, so we need to discover that and be in that state. For that reason then there is the first statement of Garab Dorje. The second statement of Garab Dorje is not remaining in doubt. Even if we received something formal, like an inner teaching of Dzogchen, sometimes we know, "Now I discovered that my real nature is Dzogchen." But it is very difficult that we are one hundred percent sure, and then we remain in doubt. If you have remained in doubt about any kind of practice it doesn't work, and the same

is true for a practice like the Dzogchen Teaching. I will give you an example. When we are first learning the Vajrayana teaching people say, "We are receiving many negative actions and someone is doing black magic directed at us and then we have problems." In this case, in the Vajrayana teaching, if you are afraid of the some black magic you should do the practice of the Simhamukha. There are fourteen syllables in the mantra A KA SA MA RA TSA SHA DA RA SA MA RA YA PHAT, and you are chanting this with the visualization, etc., and in that way you can overcome black magic. The potentiality of the mantra is called *cyema bumthub* (*byad ma 'bum thub*). *Cyema* means black magic. Not only one black magic or two black magics, but *bum, bum* means one hundred thousand or something like that.

When we receive this provocation and we chant the mantra of the Simhamukha, and we do the visualization, we can also eliminate negativity or we can send it back. You remember that the manifestation of the Guru Padmasambhava has eight different aspects, and one of these aspects is Guru Padmasambhava, who had many problems with Indian traditions. They were judging and having debates and, of course, Guru Padmasambhava did not lose those debates. Even if he did not lose, the others did not accept. They said, "Now we do a black magic directed at you and in one week we will destroy you completely." And then Guru Padmasambhava waited for one week; Guru Padmasambhava did the practice of Simhamukha, her manifestation with the lion's face, which is called called Sengge Dradrog (*seng ge sgra sgrogs*). Instead of receiving those negativities that they sent, Guru Padmasambhava sent back those negativities and when the negativities arrived back, those who prepared them were destroyed. So, they produced that karma and also the effect matured. This is the value of Simhamukha. Therefore I say that you should do the practice of the Simhamukha mantra. Some people say they did Simhamukha mantra but it didn't work. Then I say that it is not working because of how you do the practice, you do not have sufficient faith and devotion for this teaching. If you have no doubt and you do it in a perfect way, it always works.

I have done personal retreats of Simhamukha, not only for eliminating negativity but for many actions, and when I applied these actions they manifested one hundred percent. If it works for me, why doesn't it work for you? It is very important to understand that we must not remain in doubt regarding any kind of practice. Particularly in Dzogchen Teaching, this is very important. It is not sufficient to go to the teacher, and say you did practice and you discovered how you feel. You can explain for one, two or three hours, but the teacher cannot decide if you have really discovered anything or not. You should discover by yourself. For that reason, in the Dzogchen Teaching, we have the series of Dzogchen Longde. Dzogchen Longde is not the principle of direct introduction; direct introduction is used in Dzogchen Semde. In all of Dzogchen Semde sometimes there is direct introduction, and sometimes it works in a very precise way, step by step, and then we can discover. This teaching called Dzogchen Semde, *sem* means mind and and *semnyi* means nature of the mind. De means a series of this kind of teaching; many different kinds of tantras. This is for direct introduction, for discovering our real nature. If you are following the Dzogchen Teaching, it is indispensable to discover your real nature.



Otherwise if you are only doing a formal practice with the *thun* book, and you are thinking that every day you are doing a practice from the *thun* book, it is only becoming valuable when you understand how to get into your real nature. If you are only going after words and mantra, mudra, visualization, etc. – that is not the most important point. This is Dzogchen Semde. When I began to teach Dzogchen Teaching, I began with Dzogchen Upadesha. Upadesha is the last series. Traditionally, in Tibet, most teachers who give Dzogchen Teaching always teach Upadesha. In Upadesha there is no direct introduction. Upadesha is very detailed and works very basically. For that reason, Dzogchen Semde became very important. When I taught my students, at first the students were very happy because for one or two years I taught Upadesha and they said this teaching was very profound and very nice. But this idea was only an idea, in the mind, but they were not manifesting something concrete. After almost two years I discovered that. Then I thought I should start with the Dzogchen Semde and work more concretely with direct introduction. When we started to learn Dzogchen Semde, after a few months I already saw my students' way of being and doing was more concrete.

After, there is Manjushrimitra, who basically worked with the second statement of Guru Garab Dorje, not remaining in doubt and becoming one hundred percent certain. In this method there is tantra and also many instructions of the series called Longde. What does *long* mean? *Long* means dimension. The dimension of space where everything can manifest. So, when we use the series of Dzogchen Longde with our chakras, channels, visualization, and we do everything in a perfect way – then we can also have visions. When we are talking about visions, we can understand that we only see something with our eyes. But when we are learning about the sense of the visions, we must understand that all our senses function with objects when there is that understanding, then it is an experience. The use of methods of visions and integration, that is the base of what is called the realization of the rainbow body. Most teachers of Dzogchen Longde have a history of the how they realized the rainbow body. This is the second series of the Dzogchen Teaching related with the second statement of Garab Dorje. After we are trained very well in the Dzogchen Semde teachings, then sometimes I give the teaching of the Dzogchen Longde and we do this practice. Then, at the end, we have Dzogchen Upadesha. Upadesha means something secret.

All practitioners need to have a base of something concrete. When they have a concrete base ie: you have learned that teaching, you have received that transmission, and you are applying, then you can have realization more quickly. This is what is called in Dzogchen, *thögal* and *yangti* etc. And this is what is related to the third statement of Garab Dorje. The third statement of Garab Dorje is when you are not remaining in doubt, you have discovered your real nature, you have automatic confidence in that knowledge, and you integrate your aspects of body, speech, and mind, everything, in that. So, in this case, how the explanation is developed one by one is called *nangwa zhi*, Nangwa zhi, which means the four visions. When we arrive at the fourth level and we are dying, for example, then we have realization of the rainbow body, the body does not remain, it disappears. If we not only arrive at

the fourth level, but complete all with fourth level, then we have accomplished the Great Transference. The protagonists of this realization are Guru Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra. The Great Transference means that death does not manifest. If they achieve the Great Transference, ordinary people cannot see them because our physical body has dualistic vision. That is how we have our body, speech, and mind.

When we are doing practice like *thögal*, we can have also visions of the pure dimension. That pure dimension, which is our potentiality, appears like an object. We are integrated with our potentiality of the practice. When we succeed to integrate totally, the physical body disappears. Ordinary people cannot see this, and this is called the Great Transference. This Upadesha is the last statement of Garab Dorje. It is very important that you always remember Guru Garab Dorje's three statements because this is something like a key for the Dzogchen Teaching. How you start, how you learn Dzogchen Teaching, how you apply, and everything is dealing with these three statements. Sometimes people are studying and learning in a very intellectual way and they are not getting the real sense. ❀

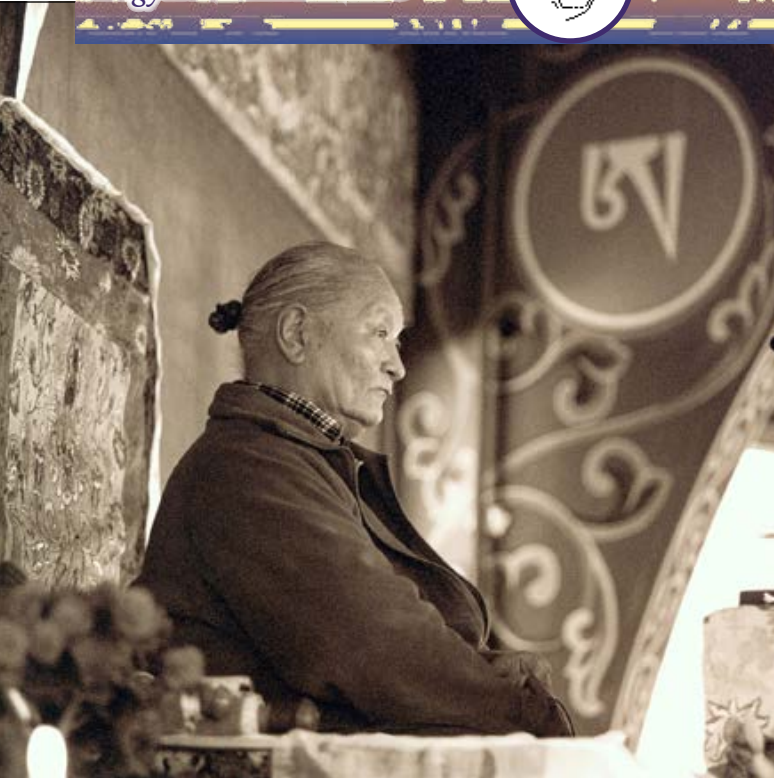


Photo by Jiri Rys.

Thog lcags and *rlung rta*

From A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet, Volume 1

In this issue of The Mirror, in addition to an article on *thog lcags* (Tibetan talismans) and another on the history of *rlung rta* (prayer flags) at Merigar, we are very happy to present an excerpt on those same aspects of ancient Tibetan history from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's historical magnum opus "The Light of Kailash, Volume One, The Early Period, A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet", translated from the Tibetan and edited by Prof. Donatella Rossi, English editing by Nancy Simmons, North Atlantic Books and Shang Shung Publications. The three volumes of "The Light of Kailash" are available at <https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/>

Thog lcags and gnam lcags are skillful creations of people of very ancient times. They were used daily in many different ways: as supports *lrten chas* for the Wer-ma and protector deities, as tools for eating and drinking, female and male ornaments, tools to cure diseases, amulets to repel evil spirits, ritual implements for gShen priests, tools for astrological calculations, diagnosis and divination, hunting or fighting weapons, and so on. It is difficult for us to discern the forms or fathom the way in which those implements were utilized by ancient people, on the basis of the fragments that we are given to observe now. Such objects have the appearance of antiques, because they exist from ancient times. Thus we consider them just as amazing objects, without thinking about the way in which they are related to ancient history.

Many Tibetans identify *thog lcags* as objects originating with the fall of thunderbolts; and they usually consider *gnam lcags* as objects originating in space, belonging to nonhuman beings such as the lHa of the Sky, the gNyen of the Middle Sphere, the Klu of the Underworld. It is not impossible that objects belonging to nonhuman beings may fall into human hands; quite a few of such marvelous objects do exist, but for Tibetans in general these kinds of *thog lcags* are simply special objects created by people in very ancient times. Since that era began with the Stone Age, it would not be conceivable that at that time human beings could have the capacity of manufacturing *thog lcags*, because, as many histories relate, ancient peoples originated and developed from the gNyen and the Ma-sangs, and the technical knowledge of the The'u-rang, a type of Ma-sangs, was much higher and more sophisticated than those of human beings. In ancient times, the syllable *zhung* of the word Zhang Zhung was rendered in Tibetan with *khyung*. The reason is that among the ancient populations that developed from the Six Family Lines of the

Early Human Generation [*mi'u gdung drug*] those of Zhang Zhung originated from the Khyung and sBra tribal families. The most important among the Wer-ma deities, protectors of the *sgra-bla* of the Zhang Zhung people, was called sGra-bla bSe'u-ru-gcig [Unicorn]. The form of this sGra-bla is like that of a khyung. The *sNang gsal sgron me* describes him as follows (sDe, 418,209,3):

Among the troops of the mighty Wer-ma, many are able to travel, but [only] a few are able to fight. [Among those who are] able to fight, there is bSe'u-ru-gcig. His skin is red, and, like that of a rhinoceros [*bse*], looks like a suit of armor: this is a sign that his father is gSer-sbal [Golden Frog]. Like a rhinoceros, [his body] is wrinkled [*lri mo yod pal*], and rays of light shine forth from [his] horn: this is a sign that his mother is mTsho-sman [Nymph of the Lake]. The mighty bSe'u Ru-gcig received charisma [*dbang*] [as a] gift from the king of the Klu. From the king of the Sa-bdag, he received magic powers [*lmthul*]. The upper part of his body is formed by three superimposed Khyung. As a sign that he is a Khyung, he has bird feathers. As a sign that he is a frog, he has wave-like designs [*chu ris*] all over his body.

The fact that Khyung-chen bSe'u, protector and chief of the Wer-ma deities, was already popular prior to the advent of gShen-rab Mi-bo-che can be inferred through the connection that this deity has with the name of the country, Zhang Zhung. Below we can see reproductions of *thog lcags* recalling the shape of the sGra-bla Khyung-chen bSe'u, which are among the oldest of their kind found in Tibet. The characteristics, forms, and so on, show that these four artifacts are very old indeed.

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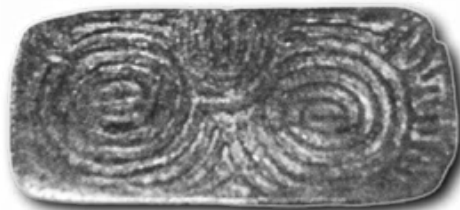
The first *thog lcags* is a khyung head with two wings connected by a wave design. I think it must have been used mostly on the crowns of kings or the headgear of high-ranking civil or military officers as a symbol of power.



The second is called "Khyung-chen 'Gying-ba' (great khyung poised with a majestic air). It appears like a khyung with a firm stance, gazing at the sky. As the *sNang gsal sgron me* quoted above says, "there are wave-like designs (*chu ris*) all over his body", and also a pattern indicating the uninterrupted energy of the elements.



This third image clearly shows two horns pointing upwards, and two eyes and a face. The *sNang gsal sgron me* says, "Rays of light shine forth from [his] horn: this is a sign that his mother is mTsho-sman (Nymph of the Lake)".



As in the second image, the fourth *thog lcags* shows a rippling water design all over the body; in this case the pattern indicates that the two eyes of the Khyung can see both good and evil. I think that the last three objects could have been bodily ornaments, symbols of bravery, protection, and so on, depending on the circumstances.

Also among the ancient artifacts of Peruvian Incas, who looked a bit like Tibetans, there are objects similar to these *thog lcags*. That implicitly shows the great value of this type of cultural relic, which appeared about ten thousand years ago, or even much earlier.



Above we see examples of *thog lcags* in the shape of the Khyung-chen which were created after the advent of gShen-rab Mi-bo-che. Those in the first group are precious khyung images which predate the Early Period or date back to the Early and the Intermediate Periods; they belong to the private collection of Mr. Rongdge rNam-rgyal mGon-po, a Tibetan resident in Germany, who is greatly interested in ancient Tibetan culture.



The *thog lcags* in the second group belong to the personal collection of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

» continued from previous page

Rock Carvings

Needless to say, there are many vestiges left by people of ancient times that have emerged, or still remain unearthed, in most parts of the Zhang Zhung/Tibetan territory. When the great Western scholar and Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci [1894-1984] went to Ladakh, he discovered many rock carvings. Pictures of these carvings are now preserved at the ISMEO Museum² in Rome, Italy. They show images of Buddhist stupas, of sentient beings, drawings, and phrases written in Tibetan capital letters containing quite a few names of Tibetan ministers and generals. Judging by their look and the Tibetan scripts, I think most of those images belong to the Later Period, although some among them clearly belong to the Intermediate or the Early Period. I came to the conclusion that one image in particular predates even the Early Period. The image was discovered by Tucci on a rock on the southern side of the Kanzam Pass [Kan-dzam-la, Himachal Pradesh, India], and shows a wild goat and a human figure making offerings; it is not clear to me whether the human figure is holding a wooden staff in the hand, or is mounting a horse. Professor Tucci told me that in his opinion this image, like other similar ones, did not seem at all to have been carved from a Buddhist perspective. The image is visible in Tucci's "On some bronze³ objects discovered in Western Tibet".⁴ During the summer months of the Earth Male Dragon Year (3905-1988), with a group of Western friends, I travelled to Western Tibet in what is now known as the mNga'-ris Province, once the center of Zhang Zhung, in order both to make a pilgrimage, and to carry out historical research. One day, on a rock in the proximity of the road situated in the Zhang-zhung Ru-thog area, we found many carved images that looked very, very old. In Australia quite a few rock drawings of that type exist, created by the Aboriginal people. Some experts have examined those rock drawings by checking them against ancient English artifacts, and have come to the conclusion that the ancient history of the indigenous populations of Australia can be more than forty thousand years old; for that reason, its cul-

ture has been recognized as one of the oldest in the world. It is clearly visible that also the rock drawings of Zhang-zhung Ru-thog have a distinctly ancient character; therefore, even if we cannot say whether they date back to forty thousand years ago, we can venture to affirm that they are much older than the Early Period. Judging from the style of those drawings, which depict deer, tigers, and other sentient beings, I do not think that they primarily refer to hunting scenes. If we consider that among them are also images of the Khyung-chen, and of athletes or warriors, it is quite possible that the depiction of animals, in particular, was used by ancient people to symbolize aspects of the power of nature that were better rendered through those animals and their characteristics. Why? Because in the ancient Bonpo tradition the images of certain animals were used to symbolize the specific realms of the elements: thus, the lion symbolized earth, the dragon represented water, the khyung, fire, and the tiger, wind. That system was incorporated in several Bonpo rituals starting from the Early Period, and it not only continued to flourish during the Intermediate and the Later Period, but it also evolved into the so-called Wind Horse flags [*rlung rta*] utilized by Tibetans in modern times. At the four corners of a *rlung rta* we find the images of a tiger, a lion, a khyung, and a dragon; they indicate the realms of the elements, respectively wind, earth, fire and water. At the center of the flag, a fine, preciously caparisoned horse carries a jewel on its back, which represents the individual endowed with the power of the elements. While the realms of the elements are symbolized by the four animals in a well-known manner, they are also directly identified with the power of each element; in that respect the ancient Bonpos distinguished between the four elements proper and their dimensions, namely, the specific vibrant energies existing within each elemental sphere. ❁

1 For the meaning of *sgra bla* see Namkhai Norbu, 1995, pp. 60-62.

2 Presently known as the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale 'G. Tucci.'

3 *li-ma*, bronze or bell metal.

4 *Artibus Asiae*, V, 1935, pp. 105-116.



According to the astrology of the elements (*byung rtsil*), the realm of wind is symbolized by wood; here wood also represents wind, and since the animal that dominated forests in the Trans-Himalayan region was the tiger, the tiger came to be associated with, and to symbolize, the element wind itself. Similarly, as the intrinsic characteristics of the element earth are firmness and solidity, snowy mountain peaks have come to represent this natural aspect, while the lion, believed to inhabit those places, has come to represent the power of the element earth. The essence of fire is heat, with flames which have the capacity to burn. Since a dimension of blazing, ardent tongues of fire was considered to be the space inhabited by the deity Wer-ma Khyung-chen bSe'u, a khyung has consequently become the symbol of this element. Moisture or humidity is the characteristic of the water element, which is exemplified by the ocean; dragons, which were thought to inhabit and dominate that dimension, have consequently become the icon for water. The galloping horse at the center of the flag symbolizes the uninterrupted potential of the individual; the ornaments and the jewel indicate that the power of the individual is adorned with a plethora of favorable and positive aspects, and that all his or her aspirations can be realized when the power of each element is perfect.

Of the ancient images appearing on rock surfaces some, such as those of tigers and khyung, are intrinsically related to the basic understanding of the elements of primeval Bonpos; in some cases these images of birds and animals are quite similar to those discovered by the renowned scholar Giuseppe Tucci in Ladakh and other places in Western Tibet.

Editor's note:

In *The Light of Kailash*, the translator, Prof. Donatella Rossi, chose to use what is known as Wylie transliteration for the Tibetan terms. This is a method for transliterating Tibetan script using only the letters available on a typical English-language keyboard and faithfully reproduces the way that the Tibetan term is written. However there are other methods of transliterating Tibetan terms. Some writers prefer to use systems that express the words phonetically in English or other languages.

The editors would like to point this out so that readers are not confused by the different English spellings for the same Tibetan word in several articles in this issue, namely *lungta* [Wylie: *rlung rta*] and *thog chag* [Wylie: *thogs lcags*].

Guruyoga Collective Practice for Three Special Days

An explanation given by Steven Landsberg on Saturday, February 27, 2021, before the Worldwide Guruyoga practice that took place the following morning.

On three occasions during the year Chögyal Namkhai Norbu would do a special collective practice connected with direct transmission and introduction. On two of those days the practices were connected with Padmasambhava and on one of them with the anniversary of Guru Garab Dorje. On all three occasions Rinpoche would give the transmission or direct introduction to the nature of mind.

It is very likely that Rinpoche's students still feel his presence while being in the state of contemplation especially when they are doing practice alone or together.

Although Rinpoche is not here physically with us, we still have the possibility to experience his presence as well as the presence of all the masters while engaging in this Guruyoga of Garab Dorje and relaxing in the state of contemplation.

This practice is always associated with direct introduction. But what do we mean by "introduction"? Generally, when we use that term we are referring to introducing ourselves with our names, our identities, our profession, or our position. For example, I am so and so, I am a teacher, I am an artist, I am a musician, I am a writer or farmer or whatever. But what is being introduced here has nothing to do with any kind of identity; who we are in terms of our history, and where we come from is not relevant because all of those classifications and all of our attachment to those associations are the source of our suffering, our grasping, our acceptance and rejection. Even the Buddhist sutra indicates that we are neither the body, nor sensation, nor mind and all its labeling, nor any aspect of consciousness.

Introduction to our real nature refers to who we really are and not to who we seem to be based on historical or psychological conditioning. Who we really are has nothing to do with our religious or spiritual affiliation, with our meditation practices, our visualizations, or any kind of focused



Garab Dorje as depicted in the Temple of the Great Contemplation at Merigar West.

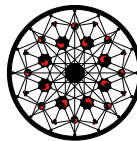
fabrication. It is related to our primordial condition, which means a condition that is neither born nor dies, a condition that we cannot lose and that always remains pure regardless of temporary changes occurring in time. Therefore it is not a result such as the result of doing meditation or following a path.

It is quite normal that we may ask how we can know this condition as it is beyond investigation, logical analysis, or observation. It has never been and never will be an object of consciousness. And although we cannot know it in this way, we can never be without it. It is not something that, for example, appears when we are in a calm state and disappears when we are agitated.

In any case, since we cannot know it as an object, it must be introduced to us or pointed out to us, and the one who introduces us to that condition we call the "root teacher". He or she must have knowledge of the base or primordial potentiality of the individual. Furthermore, he must know the path, the view which recognizes the ultimate condition, the path which leads to that total recognition, and the behavior which integrates all vision and circumstances into that state. It is not enough just to have some intellectual knowledge of the view, some meditational experiences, and some experience of one's instant presence. That knowledge and experience has to shine through all circumstances in all of our relative vision. If we just have some experience but we don't know well how to bridge that to our relative condition, then we don't have the qualification to give this introduction.

A qualified master points it out to us through a particular experience, and somehow reflexively, rather than actively, we intuitively recognize that condition through a non-conceptual presence that neither looks forward nor backward, but arises instantly in the immediacy of every moment. This presence is not limited by any partiality, focus, or boundary. It is totally open on all sides and does not seek to establish anything. At the same time it is totally bright and luminous. There is a natural radiant glow to this unborn condition. And furthermore, it accommodates all our relative experience without exception as integrated enlightened possibilities. Our relative experience manifests as the energy of this instant presence. All objects of the senses as well as their consciousnesses, all of our experience is integrated and comes back or returns to its original source.

This introduction was communicated to us when our Rinpoche was with us. Now although he is no longer physically manifesting himself, somehow we still feel his presence especially when we are practicing together. Now that we are doing the practice perhaps because we have had that experience of being in that state with Rinpoche, we can refresh ourselves through this practice together. For those new people perhaps through your interest and devotion and the secondary cause of practicing all together you can also have some kind of experience. ©



Membership Appeal 2021

Dear Global Vajra Family,
2020 has now come to a close, and the Year of the Metal Ox has arrived. We hope it brings good health and prosperity for all!

There were many challenges in 2020, but although the pandemic made it difficult to meet in person, through technology and a commitment by our sangha to create opportunities for online practice, our global community was able to practice together

daily. Our Gars and Lings collaborated with our marvelous instructors and infinitely kind practice leaders, uniting us in innumerable practices so generously given to us by our precious Rinpoche.

We are writing today to express our thanks to you, our Vajra Brothers and Sisters for your unwavering commitment to the teachings and your high level of participation in the International Dzogchen Community's online offerings. The harmonious results of practicing together and the sense of purpose we shared were also reflected in the relative stability of our worldwide membership numbers.

With 5,414 members in 2020, our total global membership numbers were mostly unchanged compared to 2019. You will find details on membership trends on the following page.

Membership is one of the most important ways we demonstrate our commitment to the teachings and to supporting the International Dzogchen Community and its Gars and Lings. The Year of the Metal Ox brings a new opportunity to renew your membership in 2021, and it is easier than ever to do so. Visit Dzogchen.net to view and choose the payment methods for your local Gar or Ling. Many of them offer the opportunity to renew the membership directly online through your personal profile at dzogchen.net/profile/membership/

Thank you for being members in 2020, and we look forward to your joining again in 2021! ©

New Blue International Gakyil Assistants

Dear members of the Dzogchen Community,
We are happy to inform you about the new Blue International Gakyil Assistants that have joined our team!

We have prepared some brief information about the new Gakyil Assistants to share with you.



Miranda Shannon

A student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu from the time she attended Rinpoche's first retreat in Subiaco, Italy in 1976, Miranda has since remained actively engaged in the Dzogchen Community. She passed her SMS Base exam in 2017, and served on the Tsegvalgar East Blue Gakyil from 2017–2020.

Miranda earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in literature and music from Bennington College in 1984. Her professional experience includes event and program planning and management, communications, fundraising, and social media programs for educational and performing arts organizations.

She homeschooled her five children who are all either currently enrolled in college or college graduates. Miranda designed a curriculum and has taught workshops in the homeschooling community for 20 years. She continues to manage a regional homeschool support group and provide college guidance to graduating homeschoolers.



Gabriella Schneider

Rinpoche's student since 1998, blue and red Gakyil in Merigar East from 2007 to 2010, blue Gakyil in Dargyaling, Cologne from 2012 to 2015.

In 2016 Rinpoche authorized Gabriella as an instructor for SMS Base. She passed her SMS Base Exam in 2007 and the SMS Level I Exam in 2010.

She is a member of the International Publishing Committee for Romania and a member of the Scientific Committee of the Atiyoga Foundation.

She graduated as Doctor for Internal Medicine and Angiology.

You can find more information about other International Gakyil members on our website – <http://dzogchencommunity.org/about-the-international-gakyil/> ©

Dear Vajra Brothers and Sisters of the International Dzogchen Community,

We wish to thank you for your membership support in 2020, a year of many challenges and a pandemic that made it difficult for us to practice together in person. Through the commitment of our Sangha to create opportunities for online practice, and the technology available to us, our Global Community was nevertheless able to practice together daily.

Your unwavering dedication to the Precious Teachings entrusted to us by our Precious Master, and your high level of participation in the International Dzogchen Community's (IDC) online offerings were reflected in a very palpable way through our worldwide IDC membership numbers as shown below.

With 5,414 members on December 31st, 2020, our total Global IDC membership numbers were mostly unchanged, as we only had 67 less than in 2019, and this number continues to evolve as members renew their past memberships still now in 2021.

According to 2020 numbers, Ordinary IDC membership represents a total of 91.2%, whereas Local plus Global Sustaining 8.3% and Global Meritorious 0.6%.

Merigar West remains the Gar with the greatest number of members (1,431), followed by Kunsangar North and South (1,294), Samtengar (866), Merigar East (738), Dzamling Gar (306), Tsegvalgar East (242), Tashigar Sur (179), Namgyalgar (143), Tsegvalgar West (90), Munselling (50), Gepheiling (48) and Tashigar North (27).

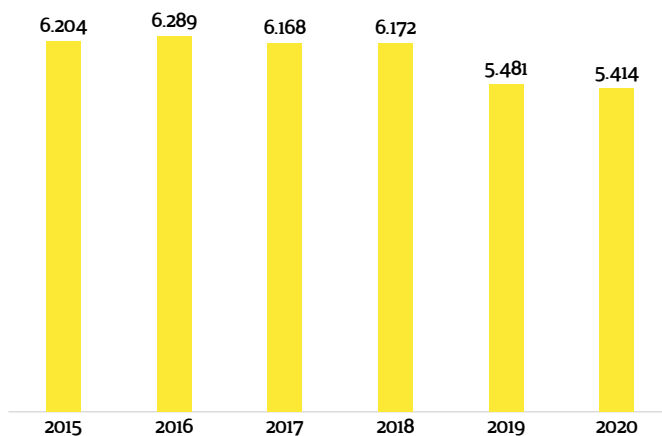
Membership is one of the most important ways we demonstrate our commitment to the Teachings and to support the International Dzogchen Community and its Gars and Lings.

The Year of the Metal Ox brings a new opportunity to renew your membership in 2021, and it is easier than ever to do so.

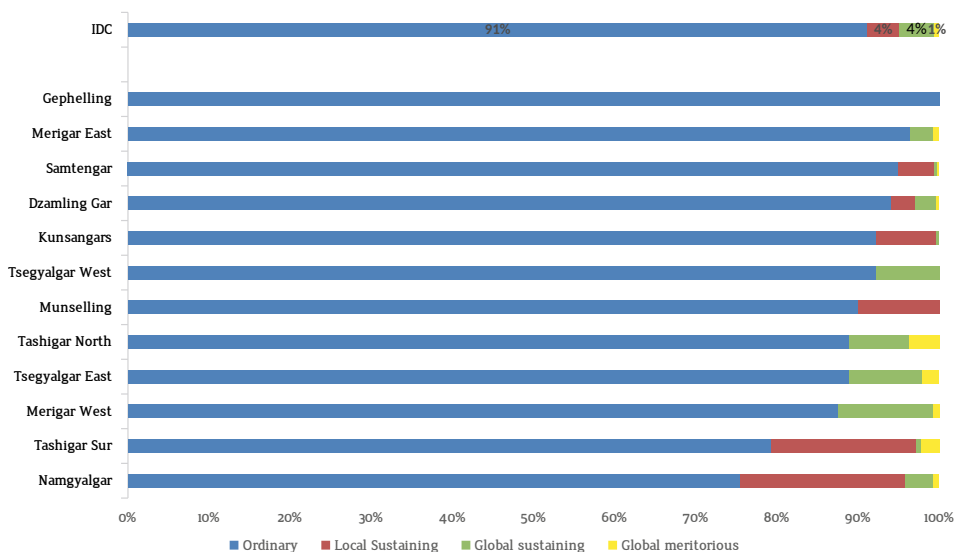
Visit Dzogchen.net to view and choose the payment methods for your local Gar or Ling. Many of them offer the opportunity to renew the membership directly online through your personal profile at Dzogchen.net/profile/membership/

We look forward to your joining again in 2021!

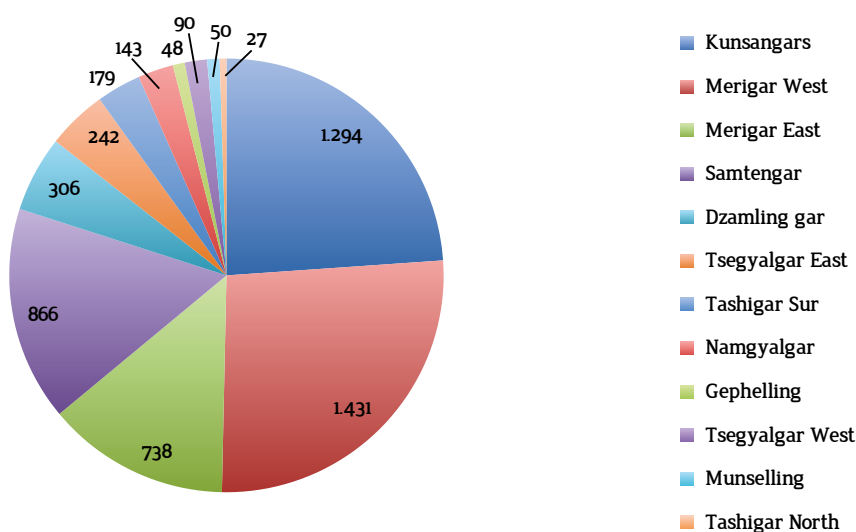
Tashi deleg,
The International Gakyil



Total IDC Members on December 31 of each year.



Total Gar Members by Membership Type on December 31, 2020.



Total Number of Members by Gar on December 31, 2020.



Ka-Ter Translation Project: Collaboration

Dearest friends and supporters of the Ka-Ter Translation of the Shang Shung Institute Austria,

On many occasions and over many years our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu spoke about the importance of collaboration and communication.

Today I want to communicate to you about a marvelous example of collaboration, dedication, and generosity.

In 2002 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu asked me to be responsible for finding funds for the Ka-Ter Translation Project, so that our translators could focus on their very demanding and tiring job to translate wisdom-texts from Tibetan into English.

In October 2006 I took out life insurance for Adriano Clemente and for Elio Guarisco. It was decided that the translators would get the funds from the insurance company when they become 68 years old or when they pass away earlier. For several reasons I could not do the same for Jim Valby, but with Jim I made another arrangement. From that moment on, I have sent a fixed amount to the insurance company every month from the account of the Shang Shung Institute Austria.

As we all know, in November 2020 our beloved Vajra brother Elio Guarisco passed away, two years before he would have received the funds from the insurance company. But recently I received some fantastic news. Finally, after several months and a lot of bureaucratic paper work, the insurance company has sent the money from the life insurance to the family of Elio – to his wife, his son and his daughter. I am so happy about that!

On behalf of Elio's family I would like to thank all the donors and sponsors of the Ka-Ter Translation Project for their collaboration, for their generosity, and for their support. Because you continuously offered funds, you assured the future of this unique project founded by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and the Shang Shung Institute Austria could not only assist the translators with monthly donations, but also pay for their life insurance every month.

Due to your contributions, Elio's family could now receive these funds from the insurance company. How wonderful! So, thank you for all your caring and for all your contributions.

After Elio's passing, we continue with the Ka-Ter Translation Project.

Based on suggestions from Adriano Clemente we are collaborating with some very qualified translators in order to go ahead with the translation of the great number of untranslated texts.

In 2021 some new books in the Ka-Ter series will be published by Shang Shung Publications.

You can find more information about the Ka-Ter Translation Project on our website.

Please continue to support our various activities. Here are the bank details for your donations:

Account holder: Shang Shung Institute Austria

IBAN: AT19 3815 1000 0003 0387

BIC: RZSTAT2G151

Address of the bank: Hauptstr. 39, 8262 Ilz, Austria or send your donation via Paypal: just use this link: PAYPAL

You can also contribute and send your donation on a monthly basis.

Very best wishes and once more THANK YOU,

Oliver Leick

Director of the Shang Shung Institute Austria

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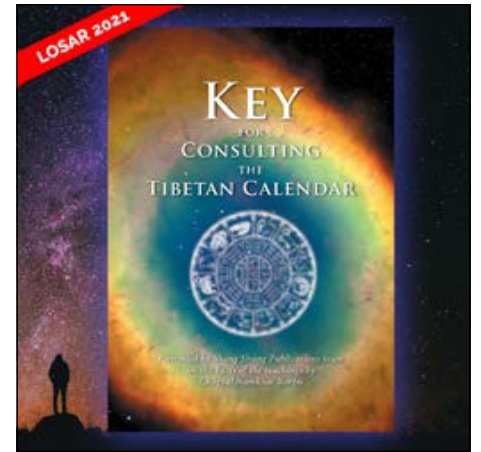
Dear readers, Losar Tashi Delek!
We wish you a healthy, joyful, and prosperous New Year of Metal Ox!

Let your inner discoveries bring clarity and wisdom, let each moment be full of presence and awareness, and let your practice bring healing for your body, energy, and mind.

To help you find more harmony in the movement of days, we offer you the gift of Tibetan Astrology through these two books.



"Tibetan Calendar" – published annually, this calendar shows each day through the lens of Tibetan Astrology and its thousand-year-old wisdom. The calendar helps understand, which days are favorable for specific activities.



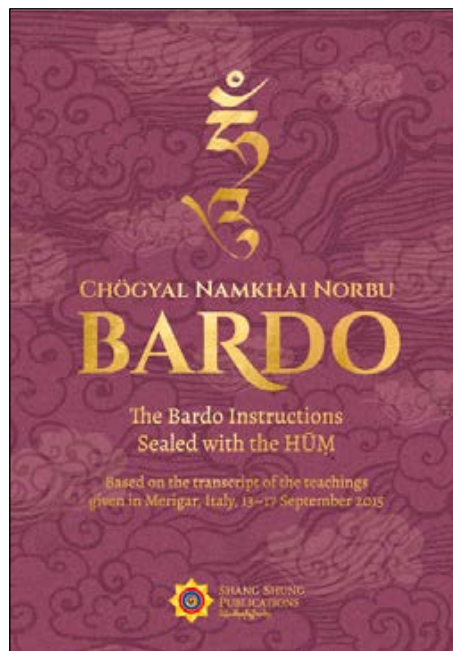
"Key for Consulting the Tibetan Calendar" – based on the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, this book is the introduction to the wisdom of Tibetan Astrology that help us understand how our lives are connected with the movements of the universe and recognize the flavor, color, and cadence of each day. ©

The Bardo Instructions Sealed with the HŪM

The *Bardo Instructions Sealed with the HŪM* is an extraordinary teaching belonging to the cycle of The Luminous Clarity of the Universe, Heart Essence of the Dakinis rediscovered by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. It contains experiential instructions related to different types of intermediate states (bardo), including explanations of the moment of death and the states afterwards as well as various ways of attaining liberation in these special moments. *The Bardo Instructions Sealed with the HŪM: An Oral Commentary* is based on the teachings given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Merigar West, Italy, 13–17 September 2015, accompanied by notes from the retreat on the same topic in Kyoto, Japan, 15–18 October 2015.

Shang Shung Publications published this book thanks to the support of the Ka-ter translation project.

More information about the Ka-ter Translation Project can be found on <https://ka-ter.org>.



This book is available from <https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en> ©

Seeds of Awareness

From Tibet to Italy. Our journey continues from East to West, from the peaks of the Himalayas to the streets of our cities, to spread the values and principles that Tibetan culture offers us to create a more harmonious and inclusive society, starting from a greater awareness of each other.

This time we are making the journey together with Merigar, with the project "Seeds of awareness: starting from self-knowledge to rediscover the deep bonds that exist between human beings and to cultivate empathic relationships", funded by the Italian Buddhist Union.

The goal of the project is to help improve the socio-emotional skills of young people and to create a more inclusive and welcoming society by spreading knowledge of the principles of awareness and interdependence.

The underlying principle is that today more than ever, also due to the pandemic that has hit our country so hard, it is important to know one's inner world and be in contact with what is happening within oneself, in order to relate to others in an empathic way and not lose awareness of that sense of interdependence that binds us to all living beings.

The project is geared toward children in particular. Given increasing juvenile anxiety reported by the WHO and confirmed in Italy by the Italian Society of Pediatrics, which has detected widespread emotional distress (80%), a series of activities were devised aimed at developing the socio-emotional skills of primary school children: workshops with fairy tales from around the world and drawing, courses of awareness and empathy and Yantra Yoga - Kumar Kumari.

Conferences will also be held to deepen values such as awareness and interdependence and there will be an exhibition of Enrico Dell'Angelo's photos with images and stories of spiritual masters and sacred places in Tibet, but also of ordinary people, in order to create a bridge with a distant culture and make the "different" known,



thus increasing the sense of belonging to the same human race.

The one-year project started in September 2020 and takes place in Rome and in the municipalities of Mt. Amiata.

For info and updates follow us on our FB page www.facebook.com/ASIAOnlus/ ©

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The Potential of the Vajra Dance

Adriana Dal Borgo

At this time, lacking the nirmanakaya form of our precious Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, the source of transmission that awakens the understanding of one's own real nature, many doubts, questions and reflections arise in our minds.

Which of the Vajra Dances can be openly taught to those without transmission?

What is the purpose of bringing the Vajra Dance outside the Dzogchen Community?

What is the function of opening the Vajra Dance to the public? What are the benefits and could it create problems in doing so?

At the very beginning the Vajra Dances were kept secret, which meant that in order to practice them, it was necessary to receive transmission of the Dzogchen Teaching. At that time we could not even use the image of the Mandala on flyers about the Dances.

As time passed, by applying one of the essential points of his teaching, 'working with circumstances', the indications from Rinpoche changed a little. Also, we instructors developed a more profound understanding from our practice and experience.

The five-coloured mandala itself, a symbol of the real mandala that is our whole dimension, works as a *thong-drol* or "liberation through seeing". In the same way, simply by watching the Vajra Dances and listening to the sound and melody of the mantras can become a cause of liberation (*thö-drol* or "liberation through hearing").

In 2012 Rinpoche said that the Vajra Dance of the Six Spaces could be taught openly: "Why can we do that? Because the six syllables are also the six liberations. In particular they are connected with the six *lokas*. We are in the human condition – there are different dimensions such as animals and so on. This is the characteristic of our *samsara*. Liberation from *samsara* is the function of this dance, so of course, we can use it. Hearing it makes a cause for liberation. Seeing it also makes a cause for liberation."

At a later stage, someone who was really interested could learn the Dance of the Three Vajras. Since there is a reference to this mantra in Sutra, we could use it openly.



"Om A Hum is to make a connection and people also gradually enter into knowledge and understanding." (2012, Special retreat for instructors, Tenerife).

In these open courses instructors do not talk about the deeper meanings of the six syllables of Samantabhadra, or the essence and source of the Teaching, but explain about the benefits on a relative level.

With experience we have discovered that it might be easier for beginners to start with the Dance of the Three Vajras in which they can already complete a round of the outer or inner circle of the mandala in just a few steps. The easy and repetitive sequences allow, in a short time, relaxation in the sound and movement and a deep experience of the practice.

Therefore, the Dance of the Six Spaces and the Dance of the Three Vajras can be taught openly.

In spite of this being very clear, it is almost with a sense of regret that people sometimes ask why the Dance of the Song of the Vajra cannot also be opened up, as if the other two Dances were not enough. There is a strange idea that one Vajra Dance is 'more' than the others. But ... 'more' important? 'More' special? Maybe the value lies in the number and variety of steps? Or is it proportional to the effort put into learning it? Or perhaps it allows us to show off our confidence better? Already the idea of 'more' and 'less' does not correspond with the principle of Dzogchen teaching, since it implies comparison and judgement.

As for me, I am constantly discovering, always with wonder and infinite gratitude, how deep and direct the Dance of the Three Vajras is, so simple and powerful.

The Vajra Dance of Space of the Unborn, the so-called Dance of the 12A, deserves a different kind of attention. The correct name of this dance should be the Dance of the Unborn or Dance of the A. This dance is divided into twelve parts, hence it is commonly known as the Dance of the 12A. It was taught by Prima Mai for the first time during a retreat in Moscow in 1994.

Apparently, it is a very simple dance in its application both for the steps and because it can be practiced in a small space and alone. Nevertheless, for many years when we asked if it was appropriate to show it openly, Rinpoche's answer was always, "Not yet", almost as if the apparent simplicity made it a profoundly more secret method.

Secrecy in this case does not consist in hiding the method but is its intrinsic feature, which is not so simple or immediate, and can only be understood through experiencing and revealing our real nature.

Before going on to learn more essential dances such as the Vajra Dance of Space, to which the Dance of the Unborn (Dance of 12 A) belongs, Rinpoche was waiting to see some fruit of the ripening of the practice.

Finally, in 2011, while he was considering that we were now dancing more smoothly and harmoniously on the mandala, Rinpoche announced, "It's the moment to open to the Vajra Dance of Space". I asked explicitly if we could now study the Dance of the 12A and the reply was positive!

To me, a crucial point not only related to Vajra Dance is not to confuse the apparent simplicity (of the movements in this case) with immediacy in understanding it.

For example, let's consider Ati Guruyoga. It is our main practice, the only one that Rinpoche recommended that we always do. It is the essence that corresponds to our primordial potentiality. We can apply it easily in all circumstances. It doesn't require much time, space, or effort to 'just' sound A and relax. It's so simple and subtle ... but that doesn't make it ordinary! In order to function, Ati Guruyoga requires understanding.

In later years we taught and practiced the Dance of the 12A, although it was still strictly linked to Dzogchen transmission. Only occasionally did we practice it openly and always after the Maestro's approval while participating in some public event.

Later, during the summer of 2018, Rinpoche considered the possibility of teaching the Dance of the 12A combined with meditation. At that time a group of instructors was working intensely on the creation of an open meditation programme. That programme would include, in addition to the classical 'seated' sessions, the movement-related practices which very specifically characterize Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's teaching: Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga and Khaita Joyful Dances. In that circumstance, I asked Rinpoche if we could include the movements of the Dance of the 12A and he replied affirmatively.

So, from our experience and reflections, we now consider that opening the Dance of the 12A outside the Dzogchen Community can bring benefits only if done in a certain way (the way of presenting it) and in particular contexts such as during retreats in which people have some understanding and intention to enter a spiritual path, or as part of a guided path that includes other meditation sessions. If these circumstances are lacking, people may not benefit from the practice.

After clarifying which Vajra Dances can be taught openly without transmission, let's now consider the benefits of teaching Vajra Dances in an open way. Once, many years ago, Rinpoche told us that in the future, we would bring and practice the Vajra Dance on the stages of some world famous theatres such as La Scala, Bolshoi and so on. It would not be an artistic or aesthetic exhibition but twelve dancers would practice on the mandala, activating the function of liberation through seeing, listening, and through their own presence and dwelling in contemplation. Up to now we have brought the Vajra Dance to many different places, even to one of the oldest the-

Message from Tibet Special Edition

Adriana Dal Borgo

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu had expressed his wish to offer His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso the 14th Dalai Lama a corrected and updated version of *Message from Tibet through Song and Dances*, the first compilation of 108 songs, the collection that marked the first chapter of Khaita Joyful Dances.

I'm very happy to inform you that we finally managed to fulfil this wish and have printed a few copies of the latest 2020 edition with the intention to use it as a present/offering for Masters and special guests. We have couriered a copy to His Holiness and two more copies will be delivered to H.E.

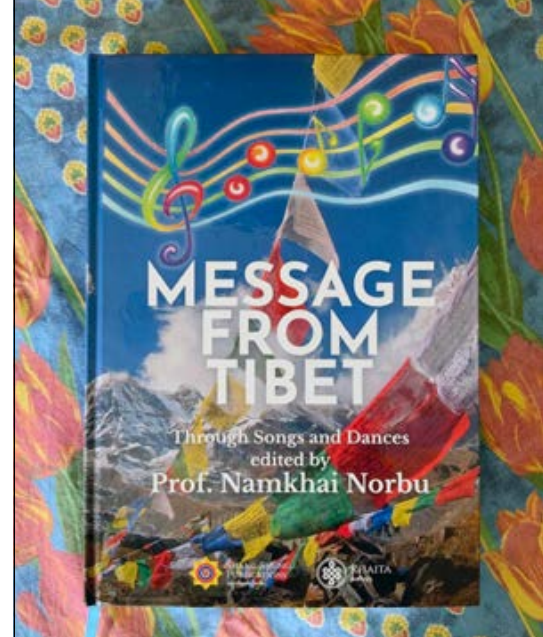
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atres in the world, the San Carlo Theatre in Naples. More humbly, we have also danced in town squares, in different cultural centers and at festivals.

A few years ago, we opened the mandala in a retirement home in Venice. After our practice of the Dance of the Three Vajras, I invited the guests to join us in a very simple movement of the Vajra Dance of the Unborn, sounding a single long A. Imagine the scene: tears streamed down our faces as we saw the commitment of the new dancers, their smiles, their emotion at the sound and the movements they were able to make. A 97-year-old gentleman, the first person who manoeuvred his wheelchair and approached us to dance in the first row, told us, "While you were dancing, I was there dancing with you". The staff had never seen them so happy. Rinpoche commented on the event, "The potential of the Vajra Dance must truly work like this."

The relative benefits are therefore a link, a seed for the future, a connection with the Teaching and also a possibility to relax by coordinating body, voice and mind. This will lead to the discovery of a harmony within oneself and also in everyday life, allowing one to face the challenges of everyday in a more relaxed way.

Throughout the world, particularly in this moment in which we are facing so many obstacles and challenging situations on the relative level, this possibility is really a gift.

January 27, 2021



Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak and H.E. the VIII Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche, Masters who have our Community at heart and have given us precious words and teachings.

All books are accompanied by a special introduction written in Tibetan by Rinpoche in 2013 and a letter signed by the director of Merigar, on behalf of all students of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

The printing was sponsored by the Khaita fund, Merigar is supporting the mailing, while Shang Shung Publications worked on communications and preparing the text for the printer.

I'd like to thank all those who supported this project in many ways and helped it materialize! It's impossible to name everybody but I'd like just to mention Rita Bizzotto who worked so much on editing *Message from Tibet* according to Rinpoche's advice. You may have already seen the PDF version available at Shang Shung Publications (<https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/ebooks/491-e-book-message-from-tibet-through-songs-and-dances-pdf-200000008424.html>). The 2020 edition presents all three texts (Tibetan, Drayig, English) in a combination that is different from the previous one.

The process took a long time but ...we did it! Thank you all from the bottom of my heart!

With the wish and aspiration that Khaita brings infinite benefits to all beings and spreads harmony in the universe.

If you would like more information, please directly contact Harmony in the Space Atiyoga Foundation harmonyinthespace@atiyogafoundation.org

January 21, 2021



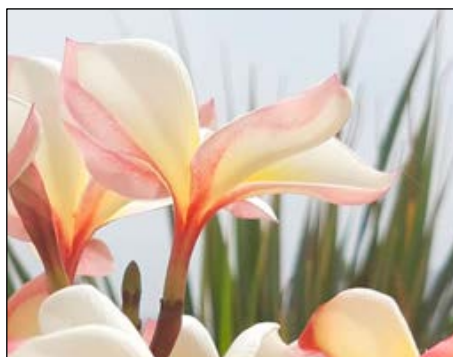
Dzamling Gar in the Times of COVID

Naomi Zeitz

Dzamling Gar has the great fortune to have a very large Gönpa that has helped us maintain some activity during these COVID times, always following the protocols established by the Spanish government. We are also very lucky to be able to share a good percentage of our activity around the world through Webcast and Zoom, as well as collaborating with Merigar West on shared webcast programs. We have a very dedicated webcast and Zoom team, consisting of Sébastien Remy, Vince Li and Justin Hudgins, who have been working pretty much non-stop since last March.

We have also been fortunate that the numbers of COVID cases have been relatively low on the island and so we've been able to spend time carefully together outside when there is no severe lockdown. As well, our wonderful Cafeteria opened up after lockdown, at first only making home deliveries and then opening up outdoors with socially distanced dining. We are always checking the most current COVID numbers and regulations to ensure the activities on the Gar are as safe for participants as possible.

Since last March, with the first lockdown, we have been offering Yantra Yoga sessions online that are still continuing. We've also organized many online courses with Fabio Andrico and Elio Guarisco, as well as collective practices and Ganapujas this past year. In January 2021, as the situation improved, we began to open the Gönpa for socially-distanced Vajra Dance and Khaita practice with masks, opening all the doors of the Gönpa for safety. We also opened up webcast and Zoom courses to live attendance, ensuring strict compliance with COVID protocol. There were and continue to be numerous courses with Elias Capriles, Steven Landsberg, Julia Lawless, Stoffelina Verdonk, Jakob Winkler, Alessandra Policreti, and Valeria Spasskaia, as well as weekend programs of "Meditation in Daily Life" run by a group of SMS instructors, and our Gekö Thubten Rabgyi running meditation sessions on the weekend. We are ever grateful to our dedicated group of Karmayogis, including our many amazing translators, who offer their time and skill so that we can offer so many courses and practices to the Community.



Despite the lockdowns and restrictions, our accommodation has been operating nearly at capacity as people able to get here and observe our COVID restrictions found a refuge in Dzamling Gar. That situation has had its share of challenges, but everyone does their best to collaborate and work together. (see Accommodations article by Anca Rusu)

Some highlights post lockdown were our Losar celebration, which despite being very limited this year was still a welcome change; we had an early morning Mandarava practice webcast from Dzamling Gar, a Fire Puja, and a marvelous Khaita Dance performance. Directly after Losar we held our annual Mandarava Retreat, with both in-person attendance and webcast around the world, led by Fabio Andrico and Nina



Fire Puja.

Robinson. Our retreat finished with a very successful lottery and auction. We thank everyone who generously participated.

The Gar has also seen some necessary improvements and maintenance done, including a new road on the left side of the Gar, a new entrance at the front side of the Gar, more lights in the steps leading to the front entrance of the Gönpa, the removal of the old Gönpa (the White Tent), treatment of the wood in the Gönpa, and repairs of the cafeteria floor, a massive effort carried out by the Red Gakyil, Gekö and a small army of Karmayogis. The Gönpa garden was completed by Alix de Fermor and her dedicat-



Nina Robinson.



Fabio Andrico and Elena Dumcheva showing the dadars Fabio made.

ed crew of gardeners. Alix de Fermor, our master gardener, received an offering of a mulch machine, a piece of machinery very much necessary to the continued health of our beautiful gardens, from several incredibly generous Community members.



Alix de Fermor with her glorious new mulch machine.

Dzamling Gar, which has traditionally been a winter refuge for many in Europe, is now also a kind of particular refuge from COVID in these very stressful times. Those of us here, either by choice or because we are unable to move, understand that we are lucky. The time here has not been without its challenges and difficulties, but our Master trained us well to weather obstacles, to overcome our limitations and to collaborate and care for each other in our Dzogchen Community. We hope you can all join us in Dzamling Gar in the future, during happier and healthier times, enjoying the Gar's unique beauty. We await you!!! ©

From the Desk of the Accommodations Manager

Anca Rusu

We are very happy to announce that 2020 was a very good year for the accommodation program at Dzamling Gar! Despite the difficulties faced this last year, we were able to host Vajra siblings from all over the world who came to the Gar searching for a place of refuge.

No matter the challenges and hardships we faced, the accommodation team worked



with a sense of joy and determination to realize our Master's vision of the Gar as a place for practitioners to practice and enjoy live together. We are also very grateful to everyone who collaborated with us regard-

ing Dzamling Gar's COVID protocols, following the rules that are meant to protect our Community.

So far 2021 is also looking up for us. We have a considerable number of people coming to Dzamling Gar, to the point that accommodation operates at full capacity most of the time. For this, we are very thankful to all practitioners who come here and entrust us with their safety.

Last but not least, we would like to invite everyone to offer us feedback on their stay in Dzamling Gar so we can further improve our accommodation system. Please write to accommodation.manager@dzamlinggar.net and feel free to share your thoughts. Your opinion would help us greatly! ☺

My Dzamling Gar Diary

October 2020 – March 2021

Julia Lawless

I arrived in Dzamling Gar from London in mid October 2020. Apart from enjoying the daily Dzamling Gar program, I wanted to participate onsite in a Santi Maha Sangha practice retreat that was due to take place in mid November for ten days as well as to attend an international meeting and discussion between SMS instructors which was scheduled in December, soon after Rinpoche's birthday celebrations. My idea was to stay a couple of months in Tenerife and then return to the UK before Christmas: but that is not how things worked out! In retrospect, these last five months have been a teaching for me about letting go of expectations and adapting to the flow of an ever-changing tide of events ...

The 4th level SMS practice retreat in November was really wonderful! It was organized on a collaborative basis and that is how it actually worked out. Over fifteen people participated from all over the world, including Japan, America and from different locations in Europe: some in person and some on zoom. The large meeting room on the top floor of the IG house was made available and it was very inspiring to be able to look out over the ocean while practicing together in an intimate manner. At the end of our 'retreat', we all agreed that it was so valuable that we wanted to con-



tinue meeting with each other online, and have already scheduled another weekend to get together at the start of April. Apart from the benefit of doing practice together as well as exchanging views and insights, these ten days were also a nice way of simply getting to know one another better on the level of collaboration.

Elio's passing on November 27th came as a massive shock! He had always said that if he caught covid he thought he wouldn't survive. I felt very sad for some time afterwards, as his death represented not just a personal loss but also a loss for the whole Dzogchen Community. Shitro practice became a regular part of the Dzamling Gar programming ... which continued as other deaths followed, including the passing of Silvia Sergio, a long time resident of Dzamling Gar. But there was also a birth too with the coming into the world of the beautiful baby Gabriel. He is a magical reminder that life always continues despite all set backs and difficulties and that it is always changing.

In the lead up to Rinpoche's birthday on the 8th December, I led a weekend of Tara practice and explanation. There is very strong and natural association between

Rinpoche and Tara, not only because he received the name 'Namkhai Norbu' as a direct blessing from Tara, but also because his whole life exemplified kindness towards others, whoever they might be. For me, the high point of Rinpoche's birthday celebrations were the new Khaita dances, performed in beautiful costumes. To be able to perform just a few dances in a professional way takes months of dedicated practice, and all the people present in the Gönpa were tangibly moved and lifted up by watching them. It was also good to be able to enjoy some kind of social gathering in honor of Rinpoche's birthday, although brief, especially due to the fact that it had not been possible to hold Ganapujas on site in the Gönpa for months.

The covid situation has not been easy for anyone and managing the on-going activities of the Gar in light of the ever-changing regulations of the Spanish government is a credit to the Dzamling Gar Gakyil and all those who hold administrative positions here. For over a year now, most events have taken place via zoom or webcast with only a handful of people attending events live in

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the Gönpa. Nevertheless, a constant stream of practice and teaching activities go ahead seamlessly on a daily basis, as does the physical work involved in keeping the 'show on the road' on a day-to-day basis: gardening, cleaning, paperwork, emails, building and maintenance to name but a few. The cafeteria has also continued to provide a valuable social focus throughout a difficult time, even taking into account the covid regulations. The regular Friday night feasts gradually turned into a festive scene over the winter with delicious food, fairy lights and upbeat music adding to a joyful atmosphere.

After the international SMS meeting towards the end of December, I was ready to return to the UK and had already booked onto my return flight to London in time for Christmas. Then I received the news that my daughter's family had been in touch with a woman who had tested covid positive. I had been planning to spend Christmas and New Year with my family, but now my daughter too had to take a covid test and wait for the results, while self-isolating. But because it was just before Christmas the results of her test were delayed ... and delayed ... so I had to put my flight on hold while I waited to hear the results of her test. It was past New Year by the time she heard that everything was all clear! In the meantime, I had fortunately been offered an apartment on the Gar itself, although I myself had no idea how long I would be staying...

Then in early January, the covid situation in London took a dramatic turn for the worse with the emergence of the so-called 'Kent variant' which was 50% more transmissible than the former version of the virus. All countries and nations immediately blocked all flights to and from the UK in an attempt to stop the spread of the new variant. Although I had a return ticket to London there were no flights! I began to experience very vividly how everything was beyond my control, especially regarding my ability to make any kind of plan: something that I had taken for granted in the past.

I had never spent much time living on the Gar before. I have stayed in many places nearby over the past years, and always just for a few weeks at a time. As January turned into February, I started to feel like I was living here in Tenerife, rather than just visiting. I began to discover other parts of the island that I never knew existed before: picnic spots in the mountains and beautiful wild places on the island, especially

Dying Supported by Our Vajra Family

Ilaria Faccioli

I would like to share with you some reflections about the importance of supporting someone who is passing away since that was my experience with Silvia Sergio at Dzamling Gar, Tenerife, Spain.

..... around Santiago del Teide, that presented a completely different naturalistic side to the island, as opposed to the more tourist-orientated coastal towns and beaches with which I was already familiar. At first I thought I would return to London directly after Losar, but then the Mandarava retreat started, and there seemed little reason to leave. In fact, Dzamling Gar was emerging as a 'place of refuge' during this period, quite unexpectedly!

Over the past few months, I have been involved in launching a new open SMS project called 'Meditation for Daily Life', a 6 part modular course, which is a collaboration between Dzamling Gar and Shang Shung UK. It is very interesting, but not always so easy, to work with a number of other instructors in formulating and running a new program, as everyone has different ideas of what they think is important: but so far at least it has been a very inspiring experience. I have also been really happy to have had the opportunity to get to know other members of the sangha here on the Gar a little better, not necessarily always by talking with them that much, but just by being around them on a daily basis. I have also appreciated being able to meet my friends here with such ease, as opposed to in London, for example, which still remains in strict lockdown. Even now at the end March, no contact is allowed with anyone apart from members of your own household and no travel is permitted beyond your immediate neighborhood.

Since Brexit and due to having a UK passport, I am required to leave Tenerife before March 31st, when my three month travel allowance in Europe runs out. So I booked a new flight to London at the end of March ... yet within just a few days, my rescheduled flight to the UK was again cancelled! Now I have another last minute flight booked ... but who knows what will happen next? My only certainty is that nothing is certain! ☺



Silvia was able to make her final voyage in her bed, in the N9 house at Dzamling Gar, the house that the Master had assigned to people with special needs.

She is the first person to die at Dzamling Gar. This is a vital step not only for her but also for our Vajra sisters and brothers because we were able to assure Silvia that she would be lovingly cared for and pass away in the place she considered to be her physical and spiritual home.

In doing so, we took an important step towards realizing a mandate left to us by our precious Master: that in Dzamling Gar there is a space dedicated to older practitioners and those most in need of care. More importantly, we have experienced the fact that cooperation, love, and kindness are powerful tools to guarantee us practitioners a serene and peaceful passage.

Silvia opened a path and I am infinitely grateful to her for showing us that this is possible. I am grateful to the sisters and brothers who accompanied me in taking care of her, for their dedication, tenacity, and love that allowed this to happen.

I hope that this experience can offer more collective food for thought, since we are a community that is aging and dying and as a family we can mutually support each other so that this transition is serene and dignified.

Finally, I hope that we can look at this event as a manifestation of the potential of Dzamling Gar as the Master used to remind us: Dzamling Gar is not just a physical place, but a dimension in which cooperation manifests its precious fruits. What fruit is more beneficial for us practitioners at the end of life than dying in Guruyoga accompanied by our Vajra family, as Silvia had the good fortune to do?

EMA HO





H.H. 14th Dalai Lama approaching the Temple of Great Liberation on his visit to Merigar in May, 1990.

The Merigar Prayer Flags

As usual, on the third day after the Tibetan New Year we put up the new prayer flags at Merigar, braving the wind, the cold and the last (perhaps) traces of snow of the year. Many people contributed with their work and financially so that this year, too, the colors, good wishes and invocations inscribed on the flags filled the sky and the wind of Merigar. Thank you to all those involved!

In Merigar there are two different types of "prayer flags": the *lungta* (*rlung rta*) and the *tarchog* (*dar lcog*). The *lungta* are the five-colored flags that we hang horizontally between high poles at Merigar, while the *tarchog* hang along those same poles but vertically.

The Master explained several times about the meaning and function of the *lungta* and described the symbols related to the images that are represented on them. Among his books, he wrote in particular about this in *Drung Deu and Bon* and in the first volume of *Light of Kailash*. There is also a specific booklet on *lungta* dedicated to practitioners that you can consult. Furthermore, in a study published in Tibetan in 1966 as an appendix to the second edition of *Tibetan Folk Songs* by Giuseppe Tucci, the Master described various Tibetan traditions and customs among which he also indicated some uses and functions of the *lungta* and *tarchog*.

On the *lungta* we use at Merigar there is a horse in the center facing left with

the wish-fulfilling gem on his saddle. In the corners there are four other animals: a tiger, a lion, a dragon and the Garuda. In *Drung Deu and Bon* the Master explains that the tiger represents the element of wood or air, the lion represents earth, the dragon water, and the Garuda the element of fire. He also explains that the animals are used as symbols and the elements are not represented directly to indicate the active, living function of the latter. (See the extract from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's *Light of Kailash* in this issue!)

The term *lungta* also refers to vital energy, the most important protective force of the individual. On an astrological level, this aspect is often translated as fortune and is influenced (i.e. harmonized and favored) precisely by the practice of helping to create and hang prayer flags.

The *tarchog*, or vertical flags, can be of various types and have different functions. They can, for example, influence long life, promote purification, become an omen for future lives or other. Printed on the *tarchog* of Merigar is an invocation written specifically by the Master in 1990, surrounded by a tiger, a lion, a dragon and a Garuda. The translation of the invocation can be found next to the photo.

How the prayer flags are made at Merigar

Periodically, the new prayer flags are printed on cotton by specialized companies in the Como area of Italy, then arrive at Merigar in large rolls to be cut up. Once cut, the flags are sewn by hand on site using cotton thread, without making knots in the thread, as Rinpoche taught. The order in which they are arranged is what in *jung-*



tsi astrology is defined as the mother-child sequence, that is, wood-fire-earth-metal-water, which correspond to the color sequence of green-red-yellow-white-blue. These five elements and their correspondence with the colors indicated are characteristic of the *jung-tsi* astrological system and are not the same as those used in other astrological systems or in Buddhist philosophy, but correspond to those used in Tibetan medicine. The Master had already given several courses on Tibetan astrology in the late 70's and early 80's, dealing with these themes that you can also find in Namkhai Norbu, *Key for Consulting the Tibetan Calendar*.

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Chogyal Namkhai Norbu, Tibetan translator Luca Corona, H.H. 14th Dalai Lama, and the mayor of Arcidosso, Marino Marini, on the balcony of the Arcidosso Town Hall during His Holiness's visit to inaugurate the Shang Shung Institute and the Merigar Gónpa in May 1990.

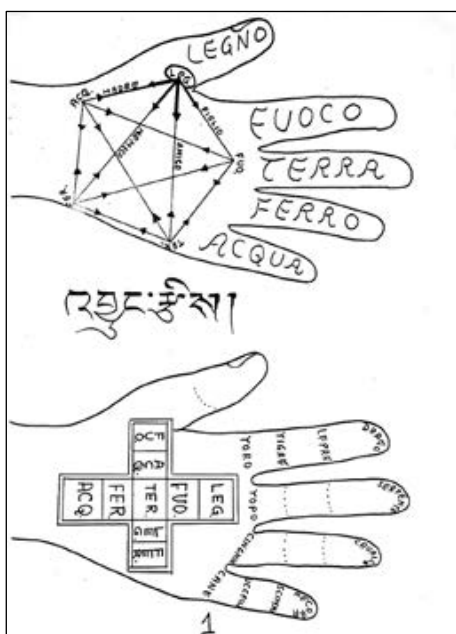


Image from the Astrology booklet prepared by the Master.

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Before the end of the Tibetan year, the old flags are taken down, removed from the ropes and burned during a fire puja on the twenty-ninth day of the last month of the Tibetan year. Every year the old flags must therefore be removed before the New Year and new ones put back only after Losar. This has the purpose of harmonizing the elements of the new year. Since the flags of the previous year are burned, it is of fundamental importance that they are made of pure cotton, as burning synthetic fi-

bers creates dark polluting and unpleasant smoke. Even the fragments of the flags that come off during the year should, if possible, be collected and burned. The ropes, on the other hand, are reused, so they can be made of non-natural fibers.

Once ready, at Merigar the new prayer flags are traditionally authenticated during the Ganapuja on Losar, the first day after the change of the animal and of the elements relating to the year. Then they are hung in the morning starting from the third day of the first lunar month, after the Sang, until the full moon. They then continue to be authenticated for the rest of the year, always on the waxing moon, and hung at the same time, usually in the morning.

Rinpoche's instructions regarding the location of the prayer flags were not to hang them on buildings. To respect this indication at Merigar they hang the flags between poles specially placed along the paths that connect the various buildings.

History of a tradition

The tradition of preparing, sewing and hanging flags at Merigar probably dates back to 1985: as far as we were able to reconstruct, at the time the Master was teaching at the University of Naples, a student returning from a trip to the East brought him a gift of wooden blocks for printing prayer flags.

On that and subsequent occasions the Master explained that preparing *lungta* is an excellent way to harmonize the elements related to one's birth year with those of the current year, in particular when there are unfavorable conditions for one's energy, such as when the animal of one's year of birth occurs or the year of the opposite animal (*dunsur*). In that case, the person is advised to arrange and sew the flags starting from the color relating to his/her element of life and then proceed according to the order of the mother-child elements explained above. Then the person should continue by sewing the number of flags corresponding to his or her age counted in Tibetan style, that is, counting both the year of birth and the current year. The number of flags will thus be greater than one's age as calculated in the West by one or even two.

The group immediately got to work and in the same year created the first printing and sewing workshop for these flags at Merigar, inside and outside the yellow house. From then on, it has always been like this in Merigar: no ready-made flags have ever been bought, but every year they are carefully prepared by hand.

The first years the flags were printed at Merigar using wood blocks. An important change took place starting from 1990, when, for the imminent arrival of the Dalai Lama and the inauguration of the Gönpa, a great number of flags were needed that had

to be hung not only in Merigar, but on the road leading to Merigar and also in Arcidosso as well as Grosseto. On that occasion, the *tarchog*, the long flags that hang vertically along the poles, were also prepared for the first time, and the Master personally wrote the mantras and the invocation that is inscribed there. *Tarchog* were placed along the road going down to the Gônpa and *lungta* were hung horizontally.

In order to achieve the required number of flags, for the first time companies in the Como area specialized in printing on fabric were used. Since then, these companies have taken care of this first step and the flags arrive at Merigar in large rolls to be cut and then sewn on site.

At the beginning there was no particular collective ritual to burn the old flags; the fire puja of the twenty-ninth day of the last month of the lunar year was introduced in February 2017, before the start of the Fire Bird year, when the Master indicated it among the practices for the end of the year in an email to the Gars and Lings.

Help us remember more! If you have information, memories, photos and stories related to the prayer flags of Merigar please write to library@dzogchen.it

Text of the invocation on the *tarchog*

ཨོཾ ཨུཾ ཧུཾ

འུ་ ཨུ་ ཧུ་ ཤུ་ སུ་ མུ་

ཁྱ་གསུམ་བསྟན་སྒྲོང་རྒྱལ་ལྟེ།

ཁྱུགས་དམ་དབྱིངས་ནས་བསྐྱལ་ལོ།

རིན་ཆེན་ཐང་བོད་ཤེས་རིགས།

ཁྱུགས་དུས་ཀྱན་ཏུ་རྒྱས་མཛོད།

ཀི་བསྐྱེད་ཆའོ་ལྷ་རྒྱལ་ལོ།

ཀྱན་འདུས་སྐབ་འདུ་འདུ་རྟོ།

ཞི་རྒྱ་རེ་རྒྱ་རེ་རྒྱ་རེ་སྐྱ་རྒྱ།

OM AH HUM

'A A HA SHA SA MA

The three roots, protectors of the teaching, divinities of fortune
From space I urge you to keep your promise!

The precious culture of Shang Shung and Tibet

May it spread in all times and directions!

ki bswo cha'o! May the deities triumph!

May all [positive forces and prosperity] unite!

OM DHARE DHARE BANDHARE SVĀHĀ

©

Other News from Merigar West

Work in progress

Work on the Yellow House has begun! The wooden floor in the room before the kitchen has been removed in order to be restored; the carpenters will do their best to salvage it. Furthermore, the wall that separated the dining room from the windows overlooking the valley and Mount Labbro has been taken down and the windows will be enlarged. These works are related to the Path of Awareness project.



Our wild friends

We are also starting to receive images related to a camera-trapping project, a camera system installed at Merigar that helps to observe and understand the behavior of animals and their movements, and we are happy to be able to share them with you.

To see photos of the wild animals living in Merigar visit the website www.merigar.it/en/wildlife-in-merigar/

©



Restoration of the MACO Building

On the first of February 2021, work began on the restoration of the building of the former chancellery of Arcidosso, in Tuscany, Italy, home of the MACO (Museo di Arte e Cultura Orientale) and the Namkhai Collection. The project, which was financed by the Tuscan Region with contributions from the municipality of Arcidosso, will be completed by the end of May 2021.

www.macomuseum.org



The Base of Santi Maha Sangha

Preparing oneself and practicing with a new, original and unprecedented formula

Luca Villa, Sonia Cilingot, Donatella Negri, Chiara Carraro, Dario Gaspardo, Francesca Geminiani, Davide Busin, and Alba Papini.
Editorial coordination by Sabina Ragaini.



Paolo Roberti di Sarsina.



Alfredo Colitto.

Twenty-seven lessons of fifty minutes each on Tuesdays starting at 6pm, from 7 April 2020 until the end of the year, online. A course on the Base of the Santi Maha Sangha structured in an extremely innovative way, arising from a simple question that Paolo Roberti di Sarsina, blue Gakyil of the Dzogchen Community of Bologna, asked Alfredo Colitto, SMS teacher, "Alfredo, do you feel like teaching a course on the complete Base of the Santi Maha Sangha via Zoom?". Alfredo generously accepted and had a free hand on course planning. The result, in such a difficult and strange year for the whole world, was amazing: 99 participants, a number that has never been reached for a cycle of lessons held in Italian via online.

Alfredo explained, "I took the Precious Vase in hand and organized by dividing the topics according to the subject and the time ... I started with the first chapter of the book, which is short, and did some tests to see if it worked ... During the sessions I spoke spontaneously but based on a framework that I had prepared each time".

Although an hour passes quickly, there is always the risk of being distracted and for this Alfredo tried to include a practice phase in order to develop experience. Each week there was also "homework" and practices to do, obviously optional, which allowed the most diligent to maintain continuity. The result was exciting for all the participants who connected from different places in Italy and even from abroad and repeatedly expressed a deep and sincere appreciation.

Certainly it would not have been possible to organize such an activity without the constant presence of an incredibly attentive, precise and punctual coordinator such as Paolo Roberti di Sarsina, who provided a lot of visual and textual material that was so precious for practitioners, giving us from time to time some real treasures. Furthermore, at the end of each lesson, Paolo, who was always there to welcome latecomers or solve connection problems, sent each of us the recording of the session so that we could prepare our own

archives to consult whenever we wished in the days to come.

It is difficult to summarize the experiences of each of us in an article. For such an innovative course, Paolo also decided to propose an innovative article, encouraging us to collaborate in the drafting. As editorial coordinator I chose to let those who wished to express their experience directly in a few lines focus on the topic that was most meaningful for them. Here are some contributions that I hope you will enjoy reading.

Homage to our precious Master!
Sabina Ragaini

Refuge and Bodhicitta by Luca Villa
Refuge and Bodhicitta were the topics addressed in the eighth to the twelfth meetings of the course. Alfredo followed the text of the Precious Vase for both subjects, which were illustrated with careful attention to the teachings of the Master, distinguishing between external, internal and secret Refuge, as well as between Bodhicitta of intention and action. He often clar-

ified the most difficult points of the text with some very effective examples. During the seventh lesson Alfredo had already emphasized the importance of Bodhicitta for Dzogchen practitioners - "As practitioners on the Path we must always act with compassion and never with selfishness" - especially because we are unable to remain in the state of rigpa all the time and for this it is good to examine our intention each time we take Refuge during the practice. The five lessons focused on the purposes and methods of the different Buddhist traditions in relation to Refuge and Bodhicitta. In this way Alfredo introduced the Six Paramitas and the Semdzin, to develop the union of calm and movement.

The first six of the Seven Lojong by Sonia Cilingot

The seven mind trainings or Lojong included in the base level of Santi Maha Sangha as preliminary practices are taken from the textual cycle of the Chetsun Nyingthig and belong to the Dzogchen Upadesha tradition.

The mind trainings allow us to integrate the essential points of Dzogchen and guide us towards the experiential discovery that dualistic life has no meaning. This awareness gives us the motivation to go beyond the experience of samsara during our lives and is the premise for transforming every moment of our existence into an experience of practice. The course gave me the impetus to practice the Lojong and led me to a greater awareness of the mental mechanisms in which I was trapped and, as a consequence, to be more present.

Understanding and energy by Donatella Negri

I believe I can say on behalf of all of us taking part in this course how precious and special it was. The way and the generosity with which so much material was made available for study, thanks to Paolo, were truly incredible. We were able to understand more deeply and clearly that there is no hierarchy or separation between the different vehicles that the Buddha taught, which are equally as valuable as the path of Dzogchen, the essence of all. And on the online platform that we used, thanks to Alfredo, a beautiful energy was created, beyond space and limits, that has been a precious support in this period of world crisis.

The Four Awareness and the Seven Mind Trainings by Chiara Carraro

After a concise and detailed introduction, over the course of several lessons Alfredo led individual short meditation sessions on the Four Awarenesses and the Seven Mind Trainings relating to the third of the six preliminary points to enter the teaching: "Calming body, voice, and mind and re-educating oneself" (chap. 2). The many useful examples he used, that could be easily linked to our lives, helped us create a path of profound reflection that brought to life the words of the teachings contained in the text and made more concrete and less intellectual the understanding that "...practicing the Dharma is the only thing that has the power to free us from all the problems of Samsara" (quoting his words).

The absence of an independent entity in the person and the absence of an independent entity in phenomena by Dario Gaspardo

Alfredo Colitto's course was very in-depth and detailed and I appreciated the fact that he offered us the opportunity to practice whenever a section of the text required it. Thanks to the practice on *prajna* that comes from meditation I was able to better realize the absence of an independent entity.

In instant presence it is self-evident that there is no separation. Practicing on the absence of an independent entity in the person and on the absence of an independent entity in phenomena makes one more aware of the fact that there is no separation, even when one believes and it seems that there is. In fact, it is impossible to find an entity that is not in relation to another object. Realizing this understanding inevitably leads to relaxation and greater clarity, consequently developing equanimity, patience and compassion.

A course on the Base of the precious SMS by Francesca Geminiani

With this course Alfredo and Paolo were able to look to the "future", promoting an innovative model of meetings and training. During an emergency situation, such as the one experienced during the lockdown, online meetings quickly turned into real weekly appointments. Although it was in a virtual space, the reflection of every face helped me to feel a strong sense of a community sailing on the same boat. We set out on the path of knowledge of the SMS through the kindness of Alfredo who introduced us very clearly to the theoretical

part and, at the same time, made us experience what was explained at each meeting. He always encouraged us to continue our individual practice between lessons and precisely this allowed us to delve into the deep knowledge of the Dzogchen teachings based on our personal experience. My gratitude goes to our compassionate Master for the precious teachings of the SMS, and, of course, to Alfredo and to Paolo who, like a true conductor of an orchestra, coordinated the entire organizational apparatus.

The practice of separating body, voice and mind by David Busin

The most significant lesson for me was on the Longsal Nyingthig, specifically the practice of developing the capacity of the intuitive mind when it manifests. This was my practice session: following the instructions given during the lesson, I took the position of the Yantra Yoga dagger to form a human Dorje to practice the "separation of the body". After thirty seconds, however, I realized that I could not hold the position for the duration of a meal so I dropped down sounding the syllable HA and then resumed the position after a few seconds. I repeated these very short sessions several times and on the seventh repetition I felt a particular sensation, as if something was coming out of my fontanel.

Although I am aware that I applied this practice in a somewhat "personalized" way, the feeling I had was predicted in the practice, even though I had forgotten the stages of the practice itself.

This was a very significant little episode, an experience that I was able to experience thanks to this wonderful course.

The method by Alba Papini

A special aspect of this long SMS course on the Precious Vase with Alfredo Colitto, organized by the Community of Bologna, was the method. One hour a week of explanations and moments of practice, every week for months. And what months! Bit by bit applying patience and perseverance and using the rest of the week to practice.

All generously, adequately and promptly presented by the Alfredo Colitto-Paolo Roberti di Sarsina duo, with all useful support, videos, books, articles and invitations to other instructors to facilitate study, alone and in a group. SMS means precisely this, the Dzogchen Community. In the language of Oddiyana it is the same as the Tibetan *Dzogpa Chenpo*, which not only designates the Fruit, but also the Path. ☺

The Lungta Lab at Merigar East

Oana Marcu

Merigar East is situated near the Black Sea, where the wind element is at its peak throughout the year. The typical wind of the Dobrogea region is called „Crivăț”, bringing frost in winter and dryness during the tropical, sunny summers. It is a region with little altitude variation: this is what gives it the typical scenery of vast, infinite space with plenty of light. Thus, it is the perfect place for hanging Lung-tas, with all the elements manifesting in a strong way. Some people from the area told us they recognize our grounds as „the place with many flags”.

The Merigar East Lungta project started with a Lungta Workshop in 2018, when we printed 3000 prayer flags and continued with intensive printing and sewing at least twice a year. This year, in the beginning of 2021, it has been a success: we are very happy to have prepared 565 sets of Lungtas (2825 flags) for 128 practitioners and their family members around the world.

In terms of Lungta, every year our skill and capacity improved. With the help of knowledgeable practitioners from the Czech community we gradually acquired four screens for serigraphy. One is that of Avalokiteshvara, a simple, small, flower-like mandala; another one is Simhamuka: a strong, flaming protection Lungta surrounded by mantras. The traditional horse accompanied by other animals, bringing fortune and prosperity could not be missed. This year we have announced a new design: the 12 Primordial Masters, circled innerly and outwardly by their Invocation, the Invocation of Garab Dorje, the Song of Vajra and the 100 syllable mantra. This design has a *thongdrol* function (liberating through seeing) and will decorate our entrance gates.

Preparing the Lungtas is a profound practice of the elements. Every day, for two weeks, we touched the fabric, one colour after another, while cutting, printing and sewing, keeping in our minds the mantra of the five elements. While sewing, we knew already to whom each set was destined and this helped putting positive intentions in the work and creating contact, sending good wishes to all of these people. Moreover, all the steps of the preparation



process require repetition and a high level of attention, the perfect ground for a calm state to manifest next to the intense focus.

Approaching Losar, the time came to shift the balance from work to enjoyment. The group grew bigger thanks to the practitioners who came to help, from Targu Mures and Bucharest. We enjoyed common lunches and dinners with Transylvanian poultry, Italian pizza, Tibetan *Guthuk* soup and *tsampa* balls, a wonderful selection of local wines and the irreplaceable *palincă* (Romanian home brewed spirit).

All this was just building stamina for our heroes to face the hard part that was about to come: hanging the Lung-tas with the Crivăț, the king of the winds, according to Romanian mythology. With the temperatures going from 13° to -4° over one night, it accomplished what only a professional

Connecting and Developing Dzogchen Community Skills

Two Seminars in Collaboration with Dynamic Space of the Elements

Erika Motýlová

We are living in challenging times. One piece of advice from our Master Namkhai Norbu was to work with circumstances. This also means to grow and develop new skills, to create direct and immediate spaces where the Dzogchen Community has the opportunity to manifest, to meet, to grow and create.

Such a space were the two webinars that Merigar East hosted in collaboration with Dynamic Space of Elements, one on the 10th of January, 2021, the other on the 8th of February. Both seminars were led by Migmar Tsering who continued developing the various aspects of traditional Tibetan art and related sciences.

Dynamic Space of Elements, part of the **Ati Yoga Foundation** is a non-profit organization with the mission to create new work opportunities for enabling young people to live close to the Dzogchen community by organizing courses, events, exhibitions, cultural exchange and promotion of new talented individuals.

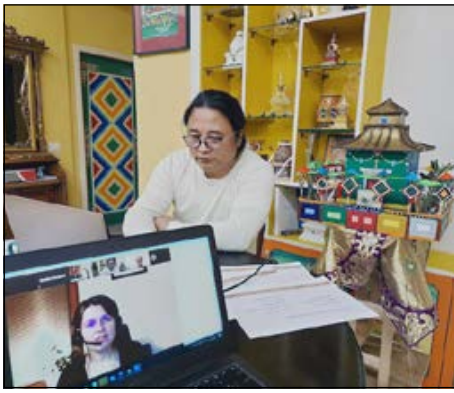
Seminar about the Stupa of the Terma of Changchub Dorje

The *stupa* is the oldest Buddhist monument. As a symbolic representation of the enlightened mind of the Buddha, *stupas* are of great significance for Buddhist practitioners. Building a *stupa* is considered extremely beneficial, leaving very positive karmic imprints in the minds of those involved in it and bringing great benefit to the area where they are placed.

.....

flash-freezer could accomplish: instantly freezing the soil, the hands, the feet, the cars and whatever else it encountered.

With this we really hope to have arisen the enthusiasm of some Wim Hof fans for joining us next year! Don't worry, spring is already coming and thanks to our Merigar East oasis project it will be a blooming season. ©



Migmar has been helping to build many *stupas* on the Dzogchen Community grounds. Two of them can be found in Merigar East, supported by practitioners' generous donations.

The Dynamic Space of the Elements is currently working on the construction of the Changchub Dorje *terma*. In this *terma*, there are several *stupas*, each one different from the other in shape and mantras in-

side. When Rigdzin Changchub Dorje presented this *terma* he explained that constructing and placing these stupas in different locations in the world would benefit all beings and is aimed at eliminating obstacles, realizing the teachings, and eliminating conflict, poverty and disease.

Seminar About Lungta

The Tibetan term "Lungta" is used to define the development of the element of fortune. Each individual has a sog (life), lus (body), wang (capacity-charisma), lung (luck) and la (protection of life), and to get maximum functionality from each of them the five elements must be balanced.

During the seminar, we learned what Lungta is from the perspective of Tibetan astrology, how it is connected to our life, and how we can develop it. Dynamic Space of the Elements is now working on the construction of the "lungta castle", used in an ancient kind of practice to develop our Lungta.

In all Buddhist tantras, all religions and all spiritual paths, we speak of relative reality, and absolute reality. In absolute reality there is no concept of good and evil, help and damage, but in relative reality we are subject to the law of interdependence, and in different circumstances infinite positive or negative things manifest themselves.

Participating in Stupa projects, hanging Lungtas for the New Year can bring benefit into our lives and we can manifest positive circumstances for our practice too!

We would like to thank Migmar and Cecilia for giving us the possibility to connect through those webinars with the worldwide community. More than 100 participants joined the webinars! It was really great to see all of you interconnected. We wish all the best of luck for the Metal Ox year.

Dynamic Space of the Elements. Everything is already possible, just let us meet! ☺

News from Wangdenling, Slovakia

We wish you all an excellent and prosperous new year of the metal ox! Let's take a short walk down memory lane to look back at the previous year and, more importantly, plans and realities for the near future of Wangdenling, the Slovak Dzogchen Community center.

For those of you who have never had a chance to visit, let us make a brief introduction first. Wangdenling as a center came to be in early 2006, when our sangha – with great help from Libor Maly from Czechia - managed to buy a remote piece of land from a local farmer and then its name, in Tibetan "*place of power*", was kindly given by Rinpoche shortly after. The property at that time consisted of meadows overlooking the picturesque Bosaca valley and a single old abandoned clay house. Still, it quickly grew on its visitors and became a true home for sangha members from near and far, to meet, practice and enjoy. Conditions were very simple, with no water, a leaking roof and somewhat difficult accessibility, but there was also a sense of joy and excitement, for the plan was to make use of the great location and build a gōnpa there as soon as possible.



It took some time for conditions and capacities to mature, and finally work on the new meditation hall began in summer 2012: a big project that presented several challenges, but also brought people together and drew a lot of almost unanimously positive attention. The bulk of the construction work was finished by 2014, but it was probably only in 2016, having the great honor of hosting Rinpoche and receiving his blessing that we considered the gōnpa truly completed.

The new gorgeous building vastly changed the experience of the center. Now we had an amazing, safe space to meet and practice, a "permanent" mandala floor to dance on, and a comfortable place to sleep whenever needed. Along with the construction works several improvements were made to the old house as well, bring-

ing in drinking water and a stronger power line, building sanitary facilities and some landscaping. The heart of Wangdenling began to beat even stronger, with an outburst of activity, both individual and collective.

Last year alone, despite the pandemic situation and its implications, was fairly rich. To name just a few events, we were happy to organize Yantra Yoga courses with Jan Dolensky, Vajra Dance courses with Elisha Koppensteiner, collective practices – Guru Dragphur mantra chain retreat, Green Tara retreat, Amitayus retreat, Purification of the Six Lokas retreat, a meditation course with venerable Dhammadipa on the topic of Awakening of Faith in Mahayana and the teachings on the **37 practices of bodhisattvas with Lama Stephane**. All along, a number of individ-

» continued on the following page

News from Samtengar

Yichun, Jiangxi Province, PRC

At this moment the whole world is sharing a hard time. During Losar of 2021, Samtengar kept Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's new year routine of a fifteen-day Mandarava retreat, with a deep wish to benefit the situation. More than ten people managed to be present at the Gar, with around a hundred others following online.

Just before the retreat, we had courses of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra, Yantra Yoga and Kumbhaka. There will also be a series of courses covering the whole coming year. Samtengar would like to dedicate all merits to the eternal peace of all sentient beings.

So far this year we have held the following courses:



Online Yantra Yoga Course: Series I & II with Tracy Ni, January 26–30.



Online Inedia, a supplementary course of Chulen of the Three Kayas with Yuangang, February 4–10.

» continued from previous page

ual retreats also took place in either the gönpa or our new cabin on wheels, offering space for both light and dark retreats. The sangha has been connecting online through weekly practices, too. Last but not least, while organizing the necessary maintenance of the buildings and property, our kitchen in the old house underwent yet another successful reconstruction.

Looking ahead, we aspire to maintain the high level of engagement, with the precious support of community instructors and our supporters and based on the vivid demand from our members and affiliates. In terms of infrastructure, we are making plans for two projects. One, much needed in the long run, is the construction of a dormitory. The second, imminent, is the reconstruction of the foundation of the gönpa. Since the latter relies on our ability to raise funds rather promptly, we would like to present you with a short overview of the situation and ask for your help.

Since the beginning, the gönpa building was created as a unique and ecological structure. From that perspective, it seemed to be the best solution to build it on massive oak trunks. Unfortunately, after only a few years we realized that this approach was,

for its level of difficulty, unsuitable for local conditions. A professional pillar sample analysis from 2019 confirmed that there was an advanced attack by fungi and white rot.

Despite repeated and intense chemical treatment, we have failed to stop the spread of the decay. At this point, based on a structural evaluation, the only solution for saving this beautiful place is a complete replacement of all the pillars. After carefully examining possible ways to do so, we believe that gradually replacing the pillars with pre-formed concrete ones is the most viable one. We aim at adding many decades to the lifespan of the gönpa, while keeping its unique design, surrounding countryside and the local environment at heart.

We are currently working on finishing the paperwork for the project and getting all necessary formal approvals.

But since the replacement is urgent and we need to commence the works as soon as financially possible, we are already launching a support call to reach our target on time. Our campaign coordinator and blue gakyil Veronika from the Czech Republic has created a nice fundraiser that you can find under www.dzogchen.sk/fundraising/gompa.php. It is based on the symbol of the Earth mandala, used for

Vajra Dance, one of our gönpa's main visual "trademarks", and invites you to buy your own piece of the mandala to support the reconstruction and thus become a part of the mandala of Wangdenling. On our fundraising website, you will also find further information and updates as well as instructions on how to make donations.

Thank you for taking the time to read about yet another wonderful community place. We hope our message finds all of you in good health and high spirits. And thank you for your enthusiasm, support and generosity, both past and future. May all be auspicious!

For more information write to:

yellow@dzogchen.sk
www.dzogchen.sk
<https://www.facebook.com/Wangdenling-119835018042793>

You can support us directly via bank transfer:

IBAN: SK6783300000002701904108

SWIFT code/BIC: FIOZSKBAXXX

Account Number: 2701904108/8330

Bank Transfer Account Name:

Gompa – repair (Medzinárodná komunita Dzogčenu – Wangdenling)

Bank details: FIO banka a.s., Nam. SNP 21, 811 01 Bratislava, Slovakia





Vajra Dance of the Song of Vajra with Tracy Ni, February 1–7.



Kumbhaka with Tracy Ni at the Yichun center and online, February 8–10.



Retreat of Mandarava and Chulen of the Three Kayas with Wes Guo at the Yichun center and online, February 12–26.

News from Namgyalgar in Australia

Namgyalgar Retreat Program

After some easing of Covid restrictions, retreats and courses at Namgyalgar have recommenced kicking off with a 'Green Tara and Vajra Dance' retreat with Cosimo DiMaggio from 17–21 February 2021. The next event will be a Vajra Dance Intensive weekend on 6–8 March coinciding with Worldwide Vajra Dance. This will be followed by a course of 'The Dance of the Vajra That Benefits Beings' with Thuy Nguyen on 21–22 March. Other events are scheduled for the remainder of the year including a Yantra Yoga Winter Camp, Santi Maha Sangha retreat, Khaita workshops and a Sangha retreat.

Online activities such as collective practice, open and restricted Yantra Yoga and Breathe and Santi Maha Sangha study are also continuing via Zoom.

Gar Development

It is anticipated that the new retreat cabin will be installed at Namgyalgar in March.



A new aspect that has arisen is the Council requirement to landscape the boundary of the Gar with trees and shrubs so the cabin is not in view of the surrounding neighbours, which will also provide privacy for retreatants.

To make a donation towards the cabin please contact Sean:

read.sean62@gmail.com

Gar Air BnB

A lot of land and property maintenance has been undertaken by the new Caretakers in recent months and the Air BnB will soon be ready to open and accept guests. ©

Tsegyalgar East Update

John LaFrance

2021 began at Tsegyalgar with the installation of a new five member gakyil giving heartfelt thanks to the departing three members who sustained the gar during the pandemic year, maintaining a strong membership level while developing a reliable and comprehensive online practice and training program.

The past year created many challenges. At the start of 2020 there was excitement about the gathering of Vajra Dance teachers from around the world to meet on the Universal Mandala at the sacred land of Khandroling to practice together and to expand their knowledge. Sadly, the event along with many others was cancelled to prevent the spread of the virus. The schoolhouse Gönpa and retreat cabins were also closed. However, out of adversity came strength. Members continued to gather online to practice together and to participate in teachings offered by senior students throughout the International Dzogchen Community. Symbolic of the community's commitment to the future, a small group gathered over the summer months to rebuild and restore the Stupa on Khandroling.

Looking forward to this year and beyond, Tsegyalgar is preparing its programs and facilities for face-to-face gatherings. In 2020 a new air filtration system was installed in the schoolhouse gompa making it safer for small groups to gather and im-



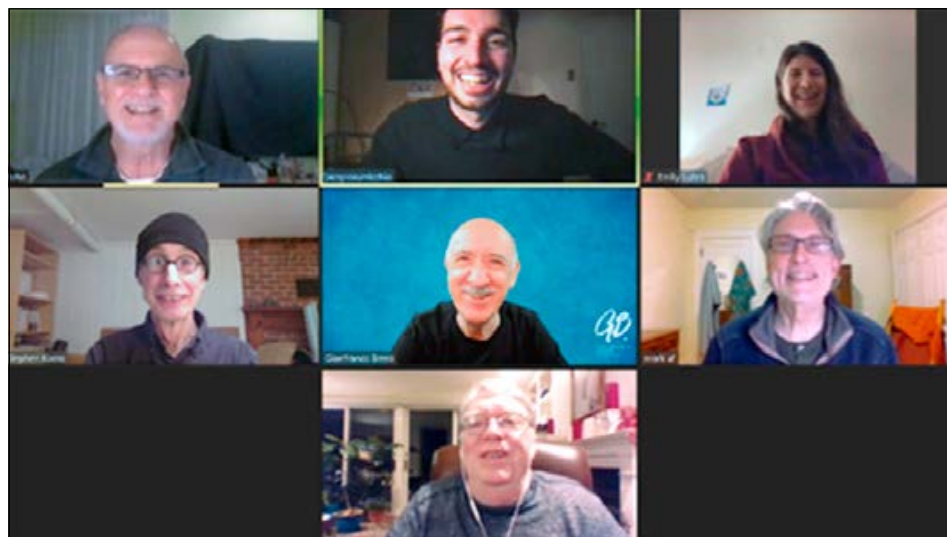
proving the overall health/maintenance of the 100+ year old Gönpa.

A number of other important projects are planned. The new gakyil has approved the resurfacing of the Universal Mandala in the Vajra Hall. The original protective surface was applied over the cement-impregnated colors seven years ago. Now the surface has become scratched and worn threatening the colors beneath. Protecting the very large surface will require professional contractors who will surround the area with a plastic shield, scour the surface and apply two coats of urethane. Since the Universal Mandala was constructed through a worldwide effort, we're hopeful that dancers around the globe will assist in accomplishing this important project.

It was 30 years ago, when Rinpoche first taught the Vajra Dance of 6 Spaces or Vajra Dance that Benefit Beings on Khandroling. Hopes are high for a 30 year anniversary in 2022 with a program to include intense practice gatherings over some weeks where people can come and go with periods of ongoing repeated and specified programs. And some practices being online connecting with other mandalas.

Many other projects will also need attention including the installation of a new furnace for the schoolhouse Gönpa, the repair of the bathhouse on Khandroling, upgrading the schoolhouse dormitory, beautifying the Gönpa and clearing and maintaining the land and roadways on Khandroling. All this while maintaining a vibrant and inclusive online program of practice and teachings.

It's exciting to anticipate gathering again with our Vajra sisters and brothers. ©



Tsegyalgar East and Kundrolling Gakyils at February Communications Course with Gianfranco Brero, hosted by Kundrolling.

Discover Your True Nature (Reserve)!

Jan Böhm

Tsegyalgar West is located about 500 meters above sea level in the southern extension of the Sierra La Laguna in Baja California Sur and while it feels quite remote when you are here (maybe due to the 14 km of dirt road that can get rough to impassable during hurricane season), it is actually only about a 45 minute drive away from Los Cabos International Airport in San José del Cabo and not much further from Cabo San Lucas where the Gulf of California meets the Pacific Ocean. Of course it's also possible to drive here directly from the U.S., but don't underestimate the size of the peninsula, as the border in Tijuana/San Diego is more than 1600 km away.

Since the land was donated to Rinpoche and the Community in the early 2000s the Gar has evolved quite a bit. While in the beginning there was only the possibility to camp, there are now also 15 casitas equipped with bathrooms and solar heated showers which can be rented by single or shared by two practitioners each for personal or group retreats, a big communal kitchen, the Gönpa and covered outdoor area for the vajra dance mandala. (One of the future projects being a permanent Earth Mandala as anything plastic does not last long due to the strong sun and other elements.) Since the beginning the Gar has had its own natural spring that makes it an actual oasis in the desert with many fruit trees (Mango! Papaya!), which in the very hot summer give so many fruits that for the few people that stay here during that season it's absolutely impossible to eat them all. Now there also exists a steadily growing vegetable garden, a working solar power system (lots of sun) and satellite internet (no cell service) and as one of the newest developments, the Gar is also very close to becoming a certified nature reserve.

The first steps in that direction were taken in 2020 due to the initiative of the former Gakyil headed by Monica and Giorgio who entrusted Lazuli, a professional biologist, with the project of doing all the necessary research in order to get certified by the Mexican government as a voluntary nature reserve. Although she limited her research of Flora and Fauna only to the



From left to right: Jan Böhm (Blue), Lazuli Piceno (Gekö), Jimena Garcia (Red) and Rodrigo Villalobos (Yellow).

part of the land that comprises the very heart of the Gar, in the course of the last year Lazuli (who in 2021 also became the new Gekö) was able to identify 274 different species (141 Flora, 133 Fauna) of which quite a few are endemic, various threatened and some even in danger of extinction, the Gar consequently being a literal refuge for countless sentient beings.

While the true extension of the Gar is quite difficult to grasp, just to illustrate its unfathomable vastness and incredible diversity and for those of you who like to play with numbers, you can try to get your head around the fact that the entire researched area comprises less than 1% of the total area of Tsegyalgar West (1240 hectares) and does not even yet include many of the huge variety of birds, from hummingbirds to vultures (both of which you can see every day respectively buzzing around flowers and circling in the sky). Without a doubt, every day here there exists the possibility of discovering something new by just observing nature all around you.

Although in a place like this it is easy to feel that there is no need to change anything, it does not mean that here there is nothing to do; quite the contrary. Apart from short or long-term personal retreats that are definitely possible (Outer Rushen and Longde being among the practices for which the land is considered particularly suitable by our Teachers.), our hope is of course that the global situation will allow

us soon to again also offer longer collective retreats here on the land.

Meanwhile to give you an idea of the many possibilities in which you can collaborate with us, here are some of our current projects:

- the aforementioned earth mandala for the Vajra Dance (the possibility of a tiled/mosaic version being explored by us at the moment)
- the already long existing plan to build a stupa on the land
- an update of the Gars website
- an outdoor bread-oven/cocina de humo made from natural materials is being built as you read this
- the creation of an additional herb and vegetable garden (lovingly tended by our new local chef/gardener/general force of nature Luis Shankar)

Wishing you all Happiness!

We are looking forward to welcome you here!

With all the best from your new Gakyil and Gekö of Tsegyalgar West!

Rodrigo Villalobos (Yellow)
Jimena Garcia (Red)
Jan Böhm (Blue)
Lazuli Piceno (Gekö)

Contact us anytime at:
tsegyalgarwestsecretary@gmail.com ☺

Losar at Tashigar Norte 2021

Welcoming the New Year and saying goodbye to our dear Dmitri and family

Manuel Eduardo Teruel

This year, in extraordinary harmony, the arrival of the Tibetan New Year was celebrated in Tashigar Norte, welcoming the year of the Metal Ox, hoping that it will be very auspicious for us. It coincided with the farewell of the Kalmikov family, who traveled to Russia. In a cordial and fraternal atmosphere, the members of the community, their friends and workers gathered for the celebration of Losar with the traditional "end of the year divination soup." The ingredients were brought in the morning and the call for the preparation of the soup and the momos was for 2 in the afternoon so that at 7 in the evening we would all have dinner together. Kala, time, was our ally. There was no need to speak, there was no rush. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon, Maura Marin was ready to receive us.

She already had the work done, the vegetables were chopped, as well as some dressings. The hands were not lacking, Berta put hers, they were all at the service of the event, among the first to arrive, the rest were cut and picked. The big pot was set on the fire by Marina, the aromas came out of it everywhere flooding the space, Fanny and Steve's house, whom we thank for having lent it to ring in the new year. The water was boiling, it was necessary to prepare the flour for the momos.

Manuel was in charge of making the dough, and Rolo made and stretched what was necessary and then cut the dough with the glass to make the pieces where the momos filling would go. Operating as a great machinery that assembles the parts, the momos came out one by one. More hands, more friends of Tashigar, arrived just in time "the Russian women of



Above: Lada, Dmitri and Olga in the forefront.

Left: Gloris, current blue Gakyil



the mountain" and Roberto, with Ala at the head who in perfect Spanish entered greeting everyone. In their hands they brought the liquor and some delicious pickles made with the flower of a local cactus.

Their Spirit, always in joy, contagion those present and with their collaboration we began to make the momos and prepare the "Gu Thuk", only the Fennel and Eucalyptus were missing (representative of care and well-being). The music was present, which made some of those present dance, motivated by Lada's joy. Ready, the momos were ready, the only thing missing was the pot to steam them, it appeared from the hands of Douglas immediately upon request. The momos were delicately placed inside. Luis, one of our local collaborators, with his wife had already arrived carrying a pearl in their hands. Practically everyone was present.

At 7 o'clock everything was ready, moments before Dmitri arrived with his family, on time. Rinpoche is always present in our minds and in our hearts, as well as others, members that are part of this International Dzogchen Community who are not physically present, but who are present in voice and mind. Memories came to our minds. The past became present. The empty vessels were filled with what we all expected, silence was present, the comments about the taste of the soup and the momos were not lacking, all were favorable, we were all satisfied, there was no need for more.

The questions and answers about the meaning of the elements that we had when opening the "surprises on the soup" appeared as always. Happy all after a while we said goodbye, long before midnight. This is how our celebration of Losar was celebrated and concluded in the Dzogchen Community of Tashigar North, leaving behind the 2020. May this New Year be of well-being for everyone, and may we always keep our attention on the path and practice of the Dharma. Om A Hum. ©



THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the
International

Dzogchen Community of
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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Detrás de los Cristales, Llueve Y Llueve...

Behind the Crystals, It Rains And Rains...

Summer 2021, Tashigar South

Griselda Gálmez

The title of this article is taken from a tango of the 1940's. And it suits exactly to what we feel at Tashigar, mainly the few of us that have traveled from other places of the country up to here, filling out applications to be able to change province and with the fear always present of catching the threatening and omnipresent Covid during the trip.

That is why, due to this present pandemic and the protocols required to the organizations, our dear Gar looks lonely and thoughtful, guarded by the silent hills in the horizon and the dark storm clouds that presage rain like threatening travelers. Till the sky roars and the rain pours in the middle of the night, or in the morning or sometime in the afternoon and, suddenly, it rumbles in the roofs as it the sky would have gone mad. Good to stay in our little bed, bad to be caught in the middle of a walk.

So, those of us who come from the confinement of the big cities and of the omnipresent chinstrap, suffer. We wished the open air so much, the pure and energizing air of Córdoba that also in the 1940's took over, by itself, to cure the tuberculous patients. Because the climate of this place is semi-dry, it is not supposed to rain and rain during two months in a row behind the crystals.

At this point it is evident that the complaining and weeping tone of the tango has invaded these lines. And there is something more, an early morning we woke up with a thunderous noise. A clap of thunder, I thought, and how strong it was that the bed trembled, everything trembled! Later we learned that it was rightly so, an earthquake, a seism and that the noise had come from the depths of the Earth, not the sky. "Crazy weather!", my mum would say.

Of course there is also the other side of the rain: the greenery and seclusion. The gradation of greens is so intense, so abun-

dant the pulse of the trees, the thickening of the little pine forests, the variety and height of herbs, the profusion of fruits: blackberries, apples, tangerines, oranges, pears, walnuts, that make us feel a blend of admiration and wonder. Just the diversity of little wild flowers that peep everywhere after each rain, so delicate, so perfect, with nothing to take away or add, they are an entrance to the space of contemplation. And even more when we pass by the places where Rinpoche was so many times. Before full of faces and voices eager to listen to His voice, now solitary, so deserted that His absence is felt even more. And it seems incredible that once we had Him sitting by our side, showing us, orienting us, laughing and being always the perfect example of the Presence.

At these moments, one feels that, under the same whispering eucalyptus, one can ask from the depth of silence: Master, how do we go on with this sacred place? What do we have to do?

Since the beginning of January, and due to the gakyil as well as practitioner's initiative, there are zoom meetings being held to pave the way for the advent of a new gakyil in April. Also, to foster the communication among everyone, the overcoming of conflicts and differences that accumulate with the passing of time and the discussion of problems that are always present in an or-

ganization. From these meetings a group of collaborators was formed to help with the transition, share information about the handling of the Gar and to lighten the work of the gakyil members. Due to the time of the year, the first task that came out was to organize Losar in the middle of the several pandemic restrictions.

With this aim, to start with we came up with the initiative that has benefited us so much throughout 2020. The practices organized from the Gar by the blue Gakyil and shared via zoom. We have already said that rains invite to seclusion, both for practical reason as well as for the mood it promotes. So it was ideal to participate in the preparatory schedule for Losar from the intimacy of our homes in Tashigar Mandala.

This program included: a Dorje Trolod retreat held by Rinpoche at Tashigar in 2012 to free us from obstacles and negativities and protect us in these difficult times; a week of practice of Purification of the 6 Lokas directed by practitioners of different countries of the South of our globe and the detailed and entertaining suggestions of Adriana Dal Borge to prepare the Guthuk soup.

The problem was that this media, the zoom, was not the ideal one for something so concrete as the preparation and hanging of Lungtas in this place. Fortunately there was a bag full of Lungtas in the Gar,

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Artists in the Dzogchen Community

Living Music

Oleg Troyanovsky, composer

The Mirror: Could you tell us about your childhood and background.

Oleg Troyanovsky: I was born in Geneva, Switzerland, and lived there the first years of my life because my parents worked there. My father served as demographist at the UN. I went to kindergarten there and then to school. When I was 13 years old, my parents moved from one flat to another, and in the new apartment there was a piano. That's how I accidentally met music for the first time and I liked playing music and composing very much. I had an idea to become precisely a composer and asked my parents to find me a tutor, and eventually enrolled at a music school.

Later my family returned to Moscow, Russia, and I was very curious to find myself there because of its rich musical life, the Conservatory, and the history of the Russian composers. In Switzerland there is not such a great history of music like we have here. Gradually I started to prepare myself to enter the Moscow Conservatory and graduated from it as a composer at the age of 24.



M: How did your studies go at the Conservatory?

OT: I have always been composing because it fascinated me. Then I needed to do it in my course of studies and of course I did it for pleasure. I started with the modern Russian and Soviet composers but with time my preferences changed as I began to learn more about music at the Conservatory. I cannot say that there was the most progressive approach to composition there but it gave me profound knowledge of traditions, classical and 20th century music. As for the rest, I had to learn by myself and

search for practicing composers and try to train with them.

M: Were you influenced by any particular composers or musical genre?

OT: When I started to study I was keen on the music from the end of 70s and 80s. I was not interested in Shostakovich and Prokofiev much as they already belonged to the past. I began with Alfred Schnittke, Sofia Gubaidulina, Arvo Pärt, as well as John Cage, György Ligeti, and Iannis Xenakis. Then I started to move forward as this music was already becoming classic. I

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but they had to be sorted out, form the different sets and sew them.

Up to then, the Gönpa was only enabled to dance on the mandalas, on this occasion the geköd let us use it, following the right protocols, to get together to sew the Lungtas. It was a special occasion, not only because the karma yoga has a joyous and purifying effect in those who practice it, but also because we took advantage and celebrated Tashigar South's 31st anniversary. We sang the happy birthday song, we shared a fruit cake made by a practitioner and each one of the people present expressed a wish for the Gar aloud. We were eight, the number of the eightfold path, the infinite number, so we felt that all the Sangha was participating in that celebra-

tion. We have to add, that the wishes expressed aloud were only seven. Alila, the youngest seamstress (four years old) said she wanted her wish to be invisible. We keep on asking ourselves what the future will yield when it is fulfilled.

The good experience of this meeting, inspired the idea of gathering again outside the Gönpa for the Fire Puja the last day of the metal rat year, but again the threatening black clouds left us at home and we had to feel satisfied with the zoom. Just the weather accompanied us on February 14th for the Sang, that we celebrated under the trees and it was also transmitted. Then we hung the Lungtas.

Now we are in the last week of the Mandarava Retreat, short version, with Chudlen and Sothig, that started the day

after Losar with the explanations of our Yantra Yoga instructor, Marisa Alonso, and was guided by practitioners from Costa Rica, Mexico, Perú, and Chile. When it is over, there will be the world Practice of the Guru Yoga of the White A, led by Steven Landsberg, the explanation of the Ganapuja of Mandarava by Nina Robinson and the Dance of the 12 A's, getting together for a global practice guided here by Nélida Saporiti.

At this time that I finish these news it is sunny and just some graceful little white clouds running through the sky, but the extended weather forecast says that we will go on with rains. I guess that, now that there are water stock bones, maybe it is not such a bad idea for the future maintenance of the Gar in which Alila will grow up. ☺

became interested in electronic and modern orchestral music, as well as Moscow conceptualism in a wider sense. Today I compose and produce music for my albums, art installations, music for cinema, video games, animations, musicals, etc. Today orchestral music continues to live mostly in the sphere of cinema and video games.

M: How did you meet Chögyal Namkhai Norbu?

OT: In 2002, when I was 22 years old, my friends and I happened to attend a Buddhist lecture in Moscow. It left me curious. At that time students had a longer vacation so I decided to spend half of the summer in Buryatia to get to know more about Buddhism, as I knew that in Russia it is present mainly in Buryatia, Kalmykia, and Tuva. At that moment a great Tibetan lama, Bogdo Gegen, came to Buryatia to visit and I participated in his seminars, where he taught a lot of Buddhist philosophy and practice and gave commentaries. Among his students there were some people who already knew Namkhai Norbu. They told me about him and gave me his book *The Mirror: advice on presence and awareness*. I remember reading it although it did not impress me much, but I remembered the name – Namkhai Norbu.

Half a year passed and I continued to study Buddhism. In particular, I came across the Dalai Lama's book on Dzogchen. Then one of my acquaintances recommended another of Namkhai Norbu's works and at that time it impressed me a lot and I lit up with interest. I suppose that in my case without preliminary preparation more advanced topics did not have an effect. But when I already had some minimal idea about Buddhism in general then Dzogchen seemed much more interesting and timely. Especially precious was that Rinpoche, being a University professor, understood very well how to teach meditation to westerners beyond Tibetan cultural and religious conventionalities.

Six months later Namkhai Norbu came to Russia. And it was surprising that Kunsangar – the place where he gave the seminar – was a twenty minute walk from my parents' summer house. My father had bought a house in Pavlovsky Posad, and Kunsangar was located right opposite the river. It was very convenient. I met Namkhai Norbu when he conducted a Santi Maha Sangha training. I did not participate, but at some point I came up to him



Oleg Troyanovsky with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Kunsangar North, 2013.

to introduce myself. Later there was a lecture in Moscow and my trip to Merigar, Italy, where I had a chance to get to know Rinpoche more closely. I mainly asked him stupid questions on Buddhist philosophy, and he, answering me, tried to give me some practical understanding, for which I am very grateful to him now.

Later, in 2010 I became a Santi Maha Sangha instructor. At that period I coordinated practices in Moscow and often attended them. People would say that there was no instructor in Moscow and would ask me if I wanted to prepare for the exam. At some point I decided to do it. I cannot say that I enjoy it when I teach and there are people in front of me listening. My motivation was quite straightforward: I just wanted to get to know Rinpoche more closely and have the possibility to communicate with him.

Now I understand that it's quite a naive idea, because it does not really contribute to successful mastering of meditation. It's not necessary to know the teacher well, ask many questions and be in touch with him. But as a result I understood that, thanks to my being an instructor, I think I have learned Santi Maha Sangha material really well. My understanding of Dzogchen practice became 10 times better than it was before, although it's still not precise enough.

M: Did your meeting with Rinpoche and the teaching influence your creative work?

OT: In 2004 I flew to Margarita Island in Venezuela, where Rinpoche had been spending a lot of time, so I spent a lot of time there, too. As Rinpoche was also a musician, he used to constantly play music and sing. Rinpoche exuded Tibetan music, he talked about it and sang, so these absolutely peculiar Tibetan melodies based on a pentatonic scale assimilated in me and I feel their presence in my musical style. On another level, general ideas related to Buddhism and Dzogchen somehow also assimilated in me and began to manifest in my music. Of course, the practice of presence and awareness helps me to focus on my work and to work more effectively.

Not long ago I produced a musical album called *Protomusic*, which I made as a creative experiment. It is available on Spotify, Apple Music, iTunes, etc. I tried to imagine a general, even primitive sound base which could serve as a prototype for more complicated musical pieces, and which listeners can think up themselves in their imagination. Probably this idea was inspired by a Buddhist concept of the existence of mind and nature of mind or relative and absolute truths.

Another project I am working on now is a musical album for a mobile app called *Andante: living music*. It's a new type of clas-

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sical music that is improvised the moment a person launches the app. As a composer I have made special musical themes and an algorithm, artificial intelligence, creates new, unique improvisations each time.

These creations are personified and correspond to the time of the day, your mood, your occupation – whether you are working, resting or going to bed. I think this idea of instant spontaneous manifestation of music was also inspired by Buddhist principles, although I did not intend to do it.

M: How do you compose music and which tools do you use?

OT: People often have a magical idea of how music is created. Music is remotely reminiscent of language. We pronounce words, express ourselves, we can speak quietly, loudly, softly, sharply. The same applies to music. When some language becomes native to you, when you've learned it very well, it's easy to compose a poem or begin to write a text, an article, a story on a specific topic, and in the same way you can sit and compose music.

I mainly play keyboard instruments, then there are others that I use in special cases – percussion, violin, guitar, hand-made instruments for creating ingenious original sounds. But in general I create music on a computer, even orchestral music. In the 19th century the composer's job consisted of writing a musical score, a text of notes, which later musicians would perform on a stage. Nowadays they do not expect a musical score from a composer but a completed musical recording, with or without orchestra. That's why a modern composer's job includes composing music, writing a musical score, and recording and preparing a completed audio-file.

Today the whole work is totally performed on a computer which gives a composer a wider range of opportunities: on software synthesizers one can create an infinite quantity of tones, sounds, etc. In general I use Logic Pro X software and many additional apps. If I need to record live instruments, live orchestra, I prepare a special musical score, then record and at the end process it on the computer and create an electronic file, be it music for a movie, video game, installation, museum, or modern art gallery where music is a part of exhibition.

M: What other projects do you participate in and who have you been working with?

OT: In 2015 they asked me to write a radio symphony, a kind of musical play in a free manner for Russian radio (soundcloud.com/olegelo/radiosymph). I decided to give a new meaning to the old genre – a symphony where actors read texts between musical performances. I made a hybrid of a symphony and a radio program: at the beginning listeners perceive it as a radio program about five totally different composers who seemingly participate in a music festival. They show their 'own' distinct music pieces and at some point even argue. But then it becomes obvious that these are all fictional heroes and in reality it is a musical composition in five parts. I wrote all the music and the composers were played by actors. I called this piece *Radio Symphony*. Later it was selected for a prestigious Berlin festival *Prix Europa* in the nomination Musical Radio Project of the Year and I received a special prize, taking 2nd place.

Very recently, during the pandemic, I took part in a composer's competition organized by the HBO company that produces the famous series *Westworld*. It was called *Westworld Scoring Competition*. They wanted a musical composition to a five minute scene from the series. It was April, everybody was still in lockdown, I had nothing to do and decided to work on that. I did partly electronic, partly symphonic orchestral music entirely on the computer (<https://youtu.be/AVrv6oiM82Y>). To my surprise 11,000 composers around the world participated in this competition. Finally six winners were chosen, including me. In fact it was the biggest composer's competition of recent years.

M: Do you have any plans for the future?

OT: I would like to continue the work I started with the app *Andante: living music* – to create a musical album, not in the old format where all music is recorded and does not change, but to create a musical album in the form of a mobile app, as it gives more opportunities for interaction and creation of a more alive music which can change each time it comes into relationship with listeners, sounding differently depending on circumstances, time of day, routine, and so on. In general I think that there is much that is new and unknown in music that can manifest, in particular thanks to new technologies.

M: Thank you for the interview, Oleg!

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©



Radio Symphony cover.

Breathing and Stress Reduction

Sergio Quaranta

Sergio is a teacher authorized by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for the Second Level of Yantra Yoga and holds the Diploma of "Breathe" instructor having followed the Teacher Training conducted by Fabio Andrico.



Recently I was asked to meet separately, for one hour each, three eighth grade classes of an international school in Rome, in order to work on breathing as a means for managing stress and emotions. These meetings were part of a larger program aimed at giving boys and girls tools to understand their anxieties, worries, emotions and fears, and manage them without being overwhelmed. I had done something similar in the previous two years, close to the exam that these thirteen-year-olds have to take in order to go to high school, to prepare themselves for a step that (many of us remember) generates a certain anxiety ... an exam is always an exam!

It goes without saying that this year was a little different from previous years, given the situation that the pandemic has created in general, and which has been very much felt in schools. We had use of a very large and well-ventilated gym, so with the necessary distancing, we could work even without masks. Some of the young people preferred not to take their masks off. I didn't know if it was out of an acquired habit, from fear, or just following the rules. The question remains open.

We sat on chairs, rather than on the ground as in previous times, to ensure greater respect for distancing, and this proved to be very useful, because having to stay in their assigned places meant that they distracted each other much less and therefore followed the work in a better way.

I used the techniques that I know: some of those that are used in "Breathe", the nine purification breathings, the rhythmic breathing of Yantra Yoga, and some simple exercises of attention to the breath.

An hour is a very short time, all the more reason to get in touch with these teenagers I was seeing for the first time. During the lesson, different phases of attention were observed, and various reactions to the proposed exercises; these could be used to recall simple concepts related to their concrete experience, and it was even possible to exchange some questions and answers.

The classes, even though they belong to the same age group, can be very different, according to the individuals within the classes. During the year a "group" forms with particular internal relationships. Then the time in which the meeting takes place is important: the energy is very different in the early morning, rather than close to lunchtime. What they did before the meeting and what they already plan to do afterwards is another factor. The type of day in general and the mood that goes with it also carries its own weight. These factors can change the setting of the lesson in order to adapt it to the specific situation.

In general, I observed that some students are very attentive, especially girls, who are also the most receptive and open to new things. Some students are deliberately and stubbornly inattentive and decide not to get involved and keep to that until the end, while others slowly begin to take an interest and follow.

The element that stands out most of all is that, except in some cases, young people in general really lack awareness of their posture; they do not have any idea of the importance of being "aligned" and "with a straight back". Even when it comes to breathing they are generally surprised that there can be so much to talk about, and that there are so many implications, physical, mental, and emotional, related to the way we breathe. When these things are introduced, they start to think a little about them and this is perhaps the most positive thing about these short meetings.

I have no way to know whether or not there remains even a small trace, a seed, of what we have done. At least they seem to politely appreciate these short exchanges. My hope is that at least they have received the idea that there can be an opening to a different dimension.

It is important that a greater awareness of the aspects related to one's physical body, breathing, and mind is introduced from an early age, in the phase in which one is growing and developing, when the foundations can be laid for harmony between these aspects. For this reason, the work of our teachers of Yantra Yoga and Kumar Kumari in the schools is precious, and will, I hope, be more and more extensive and fruitful in the future. ©

My Experience with Tibetan Medicine

A Story from Mariela Dominguez Leandro

On this important day, on World Cancer Day (February 4, 2021), I would like to share my experience with you. My name is Mariela and I am part of the Tibetan Medicine School Tenerife Team. But on this occasion, I am writing as a patient.

In 2019, I started to have some symptoms that were affecting my daily life: dizziness, general weakness, strong pain in the bones, physical and cognitive fatigue, it was not easy for me to focus, to work, to function normally. My Western doctor conducted all kinds of tests, and finally it was discovered that I had an abnormal level of a certain protein in my blood. So that's how the journey started.

At that time I was living in Dzamling Gar, and Ilaria Faccioli, a very dear friend and the executive manager of the Shang Shung School of Tibetan Medicine Tenerife, invited me to work with her. Soon after that, she also suggested booking a consultation with Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo, who was in the gar for the season.

Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo saw me in November and December that year, and after evaluating my general condition, she arrived at the conclusion that I had a condition caused by an excess of the fire element in my body, and I had a general weak state. So Menpa. Phuntsog, along with her junior doctors Irina Pankevich and Medegma Budaeva, started treating me: the objective was to strengthen my body and balance the excess of the fire element.

I've been studying Tibetan Medicine since 2015, when I met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who is the founder of the Shang Shung School of Tibetan Medicine and a renowned Tibetan scholar and Buddhist teacher. But it was only then that I really started to understand its principles and how to apply them in daily life, especially when you have a condition due to an imbalance of the elements.

I continued seeing Western doctors for more tests, and after being transferred to an haematologist, in January 2020 I had a bone marrow puncture done and I was diagnosed with lymphoma, a disease which corresponds to an excess of the fire element in Tibetan Medicine.



According to Western Medicine, even though I have symptoms, the cancer is not aggressive at this time, so the oncologist decided to put me on "active monitoring" or "watch and wait" as they call it, which means I need to be checked every three months to see if the cancer is "at bay". But Western Medicine did not offer me a solution about my symptoms. Just to "adapt to my new life, and not think too much about it". Not easy to do when you feel weak, you cannot do as much exercise as you used to, you suffer from bone pain and your mind is foggy.

So Tibetan Medicine turned into my main treatment: following the advice of Menpa. Phuntsog, I made changes in my diet and in my daily life behaviour, and I started taking Tibetan Medicines and being treated with external therapies, like Kunye massage. Furthermore, I started training in breathwork with Fabio Andrico, completing his Respira Method training program. Both the breathing exercises and the Tibetan Medicine treatment became great tools to improve my quality of life.

It was wonderful! In about three months, I recovered my strength and started to feel better, stronger and I was able to considerably improve the quality of my life.

I also had the opportunity to study the Diet and Behavior program of the Tibetan Medicine School Tenerife. That helped me a lot to implement all the advice and changes I needed in my life. And It is not only useful for me, but with this knowledge I can also help my loved ones. It is a way to apply presence and be mindful about what you eat, how you eat, your habits in daily life, your rest, the way you relate to others. It is a way to apply presence on how you take care of your body, energy and mind in order to have a healthy life.

Nowadays, I continue doing check-ups according to Western Medicine, but also with Tibetan Medicine. Even though I live in the UK at the moment, I continue having online appointments with my dear doctors Irina and Medegma. They check on my condition, adjust the treatment with Tibetan Medicines if necessary, and always offer their warm support and advice.

My last two blood tests show a reduction of the levels of the protein. And I am sure that this is the result of the precious treatment that Tibetan Medicine offered.

So it is not about choosing Tibetan Medicine over Western medicine, or the other way round. I do believe that the integration of both can help in the treatment of any medical condition, not only cancer. And what is more, Tibetan Medicine offers a variety of tools to help maintain our health and prevent disease. In order to avoid an imbalance of the elements of your body that can lead to ill health, it is crucial to learn healthy patterns of behavior. To have an integrative approach like the one Tibetan Medicine offers helps us to eat healthy food, to breathe correctly, to rest, to take care of our body, energy and mind according to our own individual condition. I really hope that in sharing my experience I can help others to discover the precious tools we have at hand, like Tibetan Medicine, that are part of the legacy of our teacher Prof. Namkhai Norbu.

I want to thank Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo for all the compassion and generosity she dedicates to her patients and students in the Shang Shung School of Tibetan Medicine branches around the world, and to Ilaria Faccioli, whose strength and dedication help to manifest all the activities of the School in Tenerife. And of course, to my dear doctors Irina and Medegma, who hold my hand along this journey at all times.

If you would like to know more about Tibetan Medicine School Tenerife, please, visit the website <https://tenerife.tibetanmedicineschool.org>

For information on all international programs: <https://tibetanmedicineschool.org>

Be A Good Ancestor

A Coloring Book
by Michela Martello
Published by Vilcek Foundation
and Pen & Brush

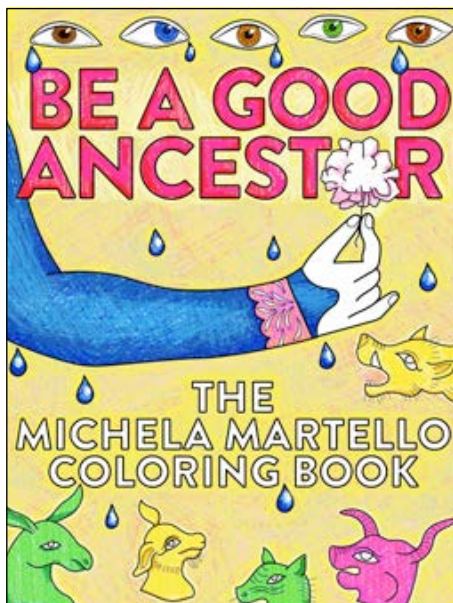
Gabriel Marder

Michela Martello, an Italian-born illustrator-turned-artist who lives and works in Brooklyn recently published an uplifting, whimsical coloring book. The book speaks directly to some of her larger works, which are portrayed at the end of book in full color images. What people will love about Michela Martello's book *Be A Good Ancestor: The Michela Martello Coloring Book* is how the drawings provoke an inner conversation.

Coloring books have become a niche in the modern book market, providing relaxation for adults and children alike. Many of these images stretch one's perception, allowing one to see something familiar in a new way. In this book each image has the resonance of a fable or folk story, such as the one of Con Edison and the Tigers which is titled "Mandala" (2013). A fierce group of tigers congregate alongside a circular sign for an energy company. This theme of the environment is present in many of the images.

Be A Good Ancestor is about upholding truths passed down from one's ancestors, teachers, and human family. With every moment in time also arises the most universal questions. What makes us human? What makes us unique among all creatures?

Martello produces a series of visual connections to some familiar images of the divine across world religions. A sitting woman in meditative posture titled "Lovely Nerves" (2020) shows the enjoyment of contemplation. There are Christian elements such as pictured in "Transmigration" (2020). In "Supreme Body" (2020) a pile of disembodied arms have landed at the feet of the female figure.¹ The chaos in this scene is mediated by the elegance of the figure overlooking. Another illustration titled "22 tears" (2019) depicts the dejected horse and dog meeting sympathetically. One sees multiple eyes and tears in the space between, the suffering of the animal dimension. The illustration titled "Kelet" (2020) also possesses several arms.²



Within the boundaries of the coloring-book genre, Martello explores images of the feminine across cultures in a whimsical and playful way. "Crazy Wisdom" (2017) portrays a larger than life female wisdom deity holding a bow and arrow while trampling a demon labelled ILLUSION. The whimsical aspect comes into play with stylized crosses, flowers, and mountains shaped like breasts. The idealized feminine form is seen almost everywhere throughout the history of art. Think of early Greek sculpture or Hindu goddesses. In contrast the drawing "Life Life" (2019) has a Biblical theme while alluding to a Buddhist deity in form.

The illustrations are drawn from Martello's other art work, comprising mixed media pieces on wood panels, burlap, and fabrics, seen in the final pages. One image in the coloring book portrays an urban/contemporary woman with a dotted line silhouette of arrows suggesting vintage paper dolls, with a bold block printed "shirt" on which the word DAKINI is printed, bordered by the block printed word DISOBEY. Here, the feminine principal of the Dakini in Tibetan Buddhism has been placed ironically on the t-shirt of a contemporary female. The self-portrait of the artist "Portrait of Michela Martello" (2020) includes miniature deer and arrows pointing upwards and towards the subject, possibly in a flow of self-knowledge.

These enjoyable images allow one to love the drawings even without knowing or attending to what the words mean. Drawing in between the lines can be a relaxing and meaningful experience or enjoyable activity. In these difficult times imagining

a better world is certainly beneficial. Martello successfully creates a set of images which allow one to imagine the world of the feminine goddess without forgetting where we come from, and how we are really very much connected to the past. The work gives our human situation a hopeful and ironic spin.

It could be interesting for teenagers especially to explore themes of gender, cultural heritage, and spirituality, in this creative format. For those who are intimidated by the idea of mark making, coloring books also provide a framework in which one does not fear making mistakes. Color inside or outside of the lines; you are free!

Be A Good Ancestor was published as a collaboration between these two non-profit institutions and the book can be downloaded for free at the Vilcek foundation website: https://vilcek.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/VilcekFoundation_Michela_Martello_ColoringBook.pdf

- 1 <http://yourworldreligions.blogspot.com/2009/10/images-of-divine-feminine-western.html>
- 2 <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=kelet> A kelet is, according to the online Urban Dictionary, slang for a slug-like being who brings joy to others, while running with the "flames of death on its shoulders."

Bio of Michela Martello:

"I met Rinpoche in 1995 at Merigar, I think it was soon after he came back from US. My friend Gino Merlini, one of his student's, took me there. Gino just told me "Let's go to visit a nice place with beautiful murals which I am sure you will love." I had read the book "Mirror, Advice On Presence and Awareness" a few months earlier. I was intrigued but I had no idea where I was going that day. We stayed at Gino's friend's house in a village near by and when we arrived I was very happy, probably because I felt close to the place where I was born, I don't know, it felt home, I mean real home, and then we walked inside the Gönpa and tears came out of my eyes, not because of the art.... I really felt miserable... I didn't know why, my friend told me we could leave, but instead I really wanted to be there, the Gönpa was empty, we came back the next day and Rinpoche was teaching, he was talking about karma..... the first time I saw him, it's still very vivid, somehow for the first time in my life I felt the earth has roots, I knew it was home, and not just the place. Il Maestro!" ©

Keeping the Dalai Lama Waiting & Other Stories

An English Woman's Journey to Becoming a Lama

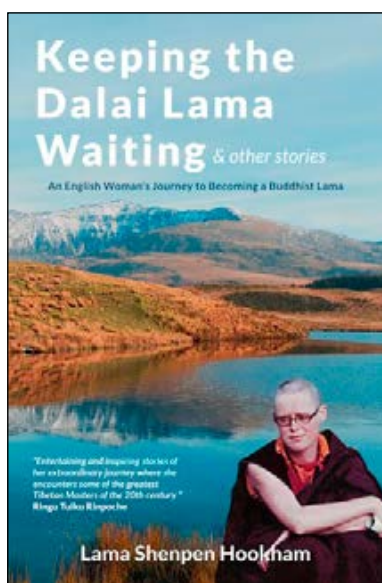
Shenpen Hookham
Shrimala Publishing 2020
pp. 337
ISBN 9798617593411

Alexander Studholme

Lama Shenpen Hookham is a member of that small, select band of adventurous western women who travelled to India in the 1960s to live with the exiled Tibetans, ordain as nuns and, eventually, become Buddhist teachers in their own right. Like Tsultrim Allione, Tenzin Palmo and one or two others, she has a remarkable tale to tell – of a life lived in complete dedication to the *dharma*, inspired by the unprecedented access she had to some of the great Tibetan lamas of that era. Her memoir is a precious record of that time, deeply insightful about Tibetan Buddhism and wonderfully entertaining. A succession of first class anecdotes – the calloused foot that breaks through the ceiling of her retreat hut one night, the story of Lama Phurtse sneezing over the breakfast tray, the Karmapa and the Japanese drum, to name but three – are all relayed with great verve and wit.

She vividly conveys the extraordinary ambience of the lamas. Karma Thinley Rinpoche is eccentric – feeding slugs and lobbying the US embassy to put a vast image of the Buddha on the moon – but no less impressive. “He could suddenly switch,” she writes, “and you got a blast of power as he took on the role of the Primordial Buddha.” Kalu Rinpoche has a haunting presence, “radiant, with a gentle but wry smile”. Dudjom Rinpoche speaks to her softly and tenderly, “as if from a different dimension of space”. She takes ordination from the Karmapa himself, who intuits her deepest wish in his first glance, declaring spontaneously: “Beyond meditation and non-meditation, then you can help everyone effortlessly.”

In the end, she becomes closest to Bokar Rinpoche, who, fresh from a long retreat, has the time to help her with translation and work through her questions. Shenpen is not a woman to take anything for granted.



ed. “This was not what I had come all the way to India to hear,” she remarks about the traditional teachings on the hell realms and her interrogation of the Tibetan worldview is often illuminating. She is very good on the emphasis on accumulating *punya* or merit, and on developing *tendrel* or auspicious connections. She describes the way a belief in karma and reincarnation creeps up on her, absorbed as if by osmosis, until she discovers one day that she has developed renunciation. And she shares with the reader her first glimpses of the nature of mind. “It is like a strong man wrestling with a weaker man,” Bokar explains, “Eventually the strong man gets weak and the weak man strong. Then it is easy.”

Her experiences in India have an exalted, providential quality. “Time stopped,” she writes of her arrival, “and didn’t speed up again till I set foot in Heathrow airport five and half years later.” A generous ex-boyfriend sponsors her financially, allowing her to feel completely free. Her prodigious appetite for solitary meditation is seen by the Tibetans as the result of a past life and almost from the start, the lamas – including the Karmapa – assume she will return to the west to teach. This sense of destiny is perhaps most sharply felt in a mysterious encounter with Thukse Rinpoche, who asks what her Tibetan name is. “No, it’s not,” he replies, when she tells him, “it’s Shenpen Zangmo.” Shenpen, meaning “benefit others”, is the name she has used ever since.

Back in the west, things do not run so smoothly. She struggles with the tension between following the advice of the lamas and discovering her own autonomy. “I had put myself under the direction of people who didn’t know what they were doing,”

she writes at one point in exasperation, “so it was up to me to work something out for myself.” She finds stability for a while as translator for Gendun Rinpoche in the south of France, but the peculiar demands of this role are sometimes overwhelming. Then, when she meets her main teacher, the yogi and scholar Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, she is told to stop being a nun and return to lay life. Her account of how she negotiates this difficult transition with her new guru is particularly candid and revealing.

Under Khenpo Tsultrim’s guidance, she completes a doctorate at Oxford, a groundbreaking study of the Kagyu philosophy of Buddha Nature, published in book form as *The Buddha Within*, at a time when Tibetan academic studies were still very much dominated by the Gelugpa view of emptiness. There, she meets and marries another western yogi, Michael Hookham, who does a three-year retreat in his semi-detached house. Initially, the two of them work together to foster a community of students called the Longchen Foundation, but the marriage founders and she strikes out on her own to create her own organization, the Awakened Heart Sangha.

When Shenpen was a little girl, the thought that she would become a nun came to her suddenly while doing a handstand in the school playground. “I am an old lady now,” she writes, “living in semi-retreat in the wilds of north-west Wales.” This is an outstanding *dharma* book, profoundly thoughtful, original and funny, a brilliant encapsulation – in one woman’s life story – of the western encounter with Tibetan Buddhism, and like any good spiritual autobiography full of inspiring and helpful teaching, not least the impressive example of unwavering diligence and enthusiasm she demonstrates throughout.

By the last chapter, Bokar Rinpoche is dead, struck down suddenly at the age of 64. Shenpen writes movingly of attending his funeral, accompanied by various miraculous phenomena, where she is given some of his relics. Khenpo Tsultrim, too, though still radiating an amazing spiritual presence, appears to have entered an advanced state of senility, his behaviour becoming ever more bizarre. Having travelled all the way to Kathmandu to see him, Shenpen is handed a big bag of apples by her guru and told to eat them all, meditatively, in his shrine room, savouring every morsel. Setting obediently about the task, she asks, “Did he somehow know I hate apples?” ☉

Changchub Dorje

by Drugu Choegyal

On December 8th, 2017 at Dzamling Gar, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's student, Mark Farrington, presented him with a portrait of his root guru, Changchub Dorje. Mark had commissioned a portrait from the Mahamudra master Drugu Choegyal, a highly gifted and well-known artist, who is the creator of the Primordial Masters panel in the Temple of the Great Contemplation at Merigar. In answer to Mark's question as to the subject our Master might most appreciate to see portrayed, Drugu Choegyal responded very quickly, "a portrait of his Master." Thus joyfully agreed upon by Mark, Drugu Choegyal created this powerful image of Changchub Dorje which was given by Mark to Rinpoche to honor his eightieth birthday in the Tibetan calendar and as part of the festivities celebrating his forty years of teaching Dzogchen.

In preparation for painting the portrait, Drugu Choegyal met with two elderly togdens who had been students of Changchub Dorje and who recounted his extraordinary qualities and the miraculous happenings in the life of that Master. Some of this story, composed in *umed* script by the artist, appears as the background of the painting and has been translated by Dzogchen Community translators, first from Tibetan into Italian by Giorgio Dallorto with an occasional suggestion from Elio Guarisco and from Italian into English by Nancy Simmons and Nicholas Simmons. We are so happy to publish this painting and the tale it tells.



Photo by W Pederson

The portrayal of Changchub Dorje presented in the words below is based on the oral testimony of two yogins of Khampa Gar, the trusted Togden Amtin and Togden A Chös who, having met the Master and received his Dharma teachings, had a samaya connection with him. We believe with confidence in what they have said.

People called him Nyagla, the Lama from Nyagrang. He was also known as Nyagla Changchub Dorje or Ratri Lama, the Lama Whom Goats Follow. He was a lama in whom trust and faith was placed by everyone in all parts of Kham. Although he possessed high qualities of attainment, he gave himself no

airs nor did he behave meekly. He was majestic and steadfast and immediately upon seeing him, one knew he was not an ordinary man. Neither proud nor self-important, he was not biased and had no attachments or aversions. He practiced continuously according to the principle of placing the Dharma above all else. Possessing great faith in his Guru, he perceived his Lama with immense devotion as a true Buddha.

Those who encountered him beheld a Master with a mass of densely matted hair who wore the lambskin outerwear of the lay Khampa with the wool inside and the hide outward. The typical garment of

Khampa nomads was made of common cloth without red-dyed borders called *tsakbub*. Since Khampas are familiar with Buddhist teachings and practitioners, these people recognize clearly who is a genuine lama and how he or she should be. They give no importance to high thrones, impressive scholarship, eloquent speech, clever minds and quick brains or to the acclaimed and splendid.

Nowadays people believe a genuine lama must have the title Rinpoche. Khampas never think in this way. A lama in whom one can feel trust should have a

» continued on the following page

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stable character, be good-natured, truthful, and play no tricks, be without a trace of self-importance, and yet have full confidence in himself. Today people sometimes expect a teacher as a Dharma practitioner ought to be self-effacing, but it is not certain that is good. In any case, a Vajrayana teacher has to have the lineage transmission, be compassionate, neither deceptive nor hypocritical, of long-standing loyalty, and be deeply knowledgeable. Benevolent and never holding resentments, he behaves justly and practices the Teachings of the Buddha perfectly. He has not even the slightest pride.

The Khampas place their faith in lamas who are flawless practitioners whether a monk, a married yogin, a great scholar, a householder either a mother or a father, or if an elder or a youth. Anything such a lama, who is pleasing to see and a good listener, says is true and whatever he or she does is in accord with the Dharma. The main point is that person be a genuine Dharma practitioner without the slightest trace of conceit, not even as tiny as a cow bristle, unlike those who vaunt themselves, thinking "I am a yogin, I am realized, I am a supreme meditator."

Nyarong Lama Changchub Dorje usually held a prayer wheel with three bands that he spun ceaselessly. At night he slept with his spouse on a wooden bed that was covered by a bearskin. On the tenth and twenty-fifth days of the lunar month and days when he gave empowerments or teachings, he donned a white yogin shawl bordered in colored stripes and a pure white shamthab. He wore large round earrings made of conch shell. His everyday existence was as the father of a family in their nomad home. He was good at recounting stories and the happenings of his life. Many anecdotes are told about him; he was like an old nomad without the least trace of pride.

When people met him, happiness became pervasive: all he said and did was appropriate and in harmony with the Teachings. The strength of the faith his disciples had in him was astounding. They fervently invoked, "Nyagla Changchub Dorje, please turn your mind to me" at the moment of death, at times of danger for protection, and for guidance in choosing the right path, certain their heartfelt supplications would be perfectly granted.

Choegyal

Drugu Choegyal

2019, Changchub Dzong

Thog Chag (Thog Lcags)

Ancient Amulets from Tibet

Giorgio Dallorto

Originally published in the Merigar Letter,
October 2005

In the summer of 1988 at Khyung Lung, not far from Mount Kailash in Eastern Tibet, Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu had a dream of clarity about the remains of a *chorten* (stupa) from the time of Trenpa Namkha.

The following day, while they were filming the ruins of an ancient Bonpo monastery called Shang Shung, he identified the remains of the *chorten* he had dreamed about in a mound of earth. Just as in the dream, he found a hole in which he found a metallic object: an ancient metal garuda, a splendid *thog chag*.

Thog chag are small metallic ornaments that have been forged in brass, in bronze, or in meteoritic metal. There are a great variety of models from different periods, starting with the Neolithic in the Bronze Age and going up to the Middle Ages. One can find similarities between *thog chag* and ornaments of various manufactures throughout the ancient cultures of the Central Asian Steppes.

Thog chag are small objects whose size varies from about 1 to 10 cm. Originally almost all of them were designed as amulets even if, in the course of time, as ancient metal handmade objects were found such as spoons, small mirrors, *melong*, arrow heads, pieces of antique armor, and so on, they also came to be considered as *thog chag*.

The old *thog chag* were distinctive for their simplicity, uniqueness, and great originality, fruit of the splendid culture of ancient Tibet. They were made of a porous metal that was soft to the touch while being oily at the same time.

The Tibetans have always associated the realization of their desires with these small bronze ornaments. There is a legend that tells how the divinities transmuted their magical power into thunder, which they hurled with all their might into the bowels of the Earth, where this energy was transformed into metallic objects. According to the legend, in suc-



2021 Museo di Arte e Cultura Orientale di Arcidosso,
cnn10022013 Garuda with snakes surmounted by
Three Jewels.

cessive eras, these objects would emerge from the earth and those who wore them would be protected from thunder and the provocations of evil spirits. In Tibetan the term "*thog chag*" is made up of two syllables ("*thog*" and "*chag*"); "*thog*" stands for "primordial" or "thunder", while "*chag*" means "iron/metal" or something metallic. This explains the widespread belief among the Tibetans that these objects are linked to thunder and lightning. Most probably the word "*thog chag*" actually means "original metal", a theory which is supported by the fact that various implements from the Stone Age were called "*thog di*" or "*thog de*" which means "primordial stone". Hence *thog chag* were considered as "primordial" or prehistoric metal.

Evidently the Tibetans readily accept as *thog chag* certain small amulets that have been forged in copper alloys using prehistoric bronze. These should be distinguished from those in meteoritic iron called *nam chag* (*gnam lcags*), which literally means "iron fallen from the sky". Iron fallen from the sky or *nam chag* is a ferrous type of metal which has been produced in the atmosphere by the power of wind and fire and is therefore a solid substance not extracted from the earth.

In the 7th century, Padmasambhava subjugated negative powers and local spirits transforming them into protectors of the Dharma. Dorje Legpa was one of these

spirits who, once he had been transformed into *damchen* and had become a protector of the Dharma, had a specific duty to re-forged from pure sky metal objects of supernatural power that Padmasambhava would conceal as *terma* (hidden teachings). Most *thog chag*, just like many



2021 Museo di Arte e Cultura Orientale di Arcidosso,
cnn10042013 Khyung or garuda *thog chag*.

statues of divinities forged in Tibet, are in brass or an alloy mainly composed of copper with zinc added.

In Tibet, *thog chag* are classified in eight categories on the basis of their color, which is the result of their metallic contents and varies according to the percentage of the different alloys. For example, the more gold there is in the alloy, the brighter the amulet will shine.

These eight categories, however, can be sub-divided into three classes according to the prevalence of bronze, brass or baitong. Baitong is an alloy composed of copper, nickel and zinc which gives a silvery hue due also to the continuous rubbing on the skin of the amulet's owner.

The Tibetan terms which indicate copper alloys are: *li mar* (composed of *li* for "copper" and *mar* for "red") and *li kar* (*li* for "copper" and *kar* for "clear"). In *li kar*, the alloy contains a good quantity of zinc for which reason it is similar to baitong.

Examining the three above-mentioned classes closely, we should consider that in order to be defined as such the bronze class must contain up to 20% tin. Tin is also used in an essential way in the fusion of bells and cymbals. Thus a great quantity of *thog chag* were created with the same metal as bells whose distinctive characteristics were a white hue and a ringing sound when they are left to fall on the ground. This sound is still often considered by Tibetans as an important criterion in verifying authenticity. The metal also gives the *thog chag* a therapeutic value because the skin absorbs the minerals that are necessary for the body's requirements.

The most antique *thog chag* come from the pre-Buddhist era and represent an animal-shaped form that was typical of the ancient art of the Central Asian Steppes, with a symbolism that is explicitly shamanic. With the first spread of Buddhism, forms and images appeared that were strongly influenced by the Indian style with figures or symbols typically Buddhist: Vajrapani, Chenresig, bodhisattvas, mantras, vajras, shells, infinite knots, and so on.

The main animal-shaped icons are the eagle (*khyung*) and the lion, regal symbols par excellence in all traditions. *Khyung* is also the ancient Tibetan name for the garuda, which is called Shung in the language of Shang Shung.

At Khyung Lung or the Valley of the Garuda, near Lake Manasarovar, in the midst of a surreal lunar landscape, lies the main residence of Ligmincha, the last king of Shang Shung. It is called Khyunglung Ngulkar, the silver castle of the Khyung eagle. In both the ancient Bon and Buddhist traditions, the garuda is one of the most important divinities, which, in brief, symbolizes the power of the energy represented by the fire element.

And it was in the area of this ancient castle that Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu found the *thog chag* in the form of a garuda, which, however, was mysteriously lost along with all his luggage during his return trip. Today all that remains of that garuda is an image in the film that was shot during those days at Khyung Lung. ©

Pictures from the Past

Subiaco – the First Retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Giuliano Angelo Casiraghi

I would like to talk about and give some details of Master Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's first retreat that took place in Subiaco, Italy, in the summer of 1976 and which I call "the mother retreat". I'll start with a photo of a retreat with Lama Gendun Rinpoche, from the Kagyudpa school, which was held in Marzio, (Varese, Italy) from 16 to 27 March, 1976. The reason for this is that a dozen of the people in that photo came to the Subiaco retreat and contributed to the birth of the "Dzogchen Community".



Back row from left to right: Laura Albini, Christina von Geispitzheim, Daniele Colajacomo, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Poupee Brunatto, Maria Campisi. Middle row left to right: Maria Simmons, Paolo Perella, Aldo Oneto, Paolo Brunatto, Muriella Colajacomo, Enrico Dell'Angelo, Nancy Simmons, Massimo Facchini, Giuliano Casiraghi. Front row: Gennaro Anziano, Mario Cumbat, Mario Maglietti, Elio Rumma, Donatella Rossi.



Retreat with Lama Gendun Rinpoche.

The Subiaco retreat formally began on 25 June 1976 with the arrival of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and ended in the first days of September of the same year.

The Master arrived in his car, a silver-gray Prinz. We were in the courtyard and garden waiting for him. When he arrived and parked the car, Laura Albini and I her

son! Costantino went to welcome him. We were all curious to see what the Lama was like. Rinpoche got out of the car looking like an ordinary man: he was wearing a nice orange t-shirt and brown jeans and was holding a bottle of red wine in his hand to offer us.

Then his wife Rosa got out of the car with their two children Yeshe and Yuchen (aged 6 and 5) and Gennaro Anziano, one of Rinpoche's first disciples, with a friendly black dog.

Forming a kind of procession we entered the house, turned to the left of the room and just before the hall where the retreat sessions would take place, there was a table on which the Master placed the bottle. The place was illuminated by a chandelier in the form of a double triangle and Rinpoche looked up and stared at it for a few moments. In the years that followed I understood that the significance of that geometric figure related to some practices.

In 1976 there were not many Buddhist schools of the Tibetan tradition in Italy. There were only two centers of the Kagyudpa school, in Rome and Milan, then a few others mainly of the Gelugpa tradition. The Kagyudpa centers were founded after the 16th Karmapa's visit to the Vatican when, on January 17, 1975, he met Pope Paolo VI. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche was present and acted as interpreter. On that occasion, after the meeting with the Pope, the Karmapa gave "Buddhist Refuge" to some of those who were present.

Thus the Kagyudpa tradition spread in Italy with the birth of the two "Ling" centers. The Karmapa gave auspicious names

to the centers for the spread of the Dharma: "Pal Karma Tashi Choling" for the center located in Milan, while the second center in Rome was called "Pal Karma Chokhyiling".

In those years, the Master received many invitations from senior people in the Dharma to give important teachings. He was already teaching yantra yoga and other related topics in Naples in the early 70's. (see article by Adriano Clemente, the Mirror N.150 December 2020)

The historical and social situation of that period encouraged the Master to officially begin to transmit his precious teachings. His first retreat was possible thanks to the commitment of Laura Albini and Costantino Albini who rented a large house with a garden and courtyard in Subiaco near Rome. We were just over 20 people

tices such as internal and external Rushen, the practice of the Six Lokas and other profound practices.

He taught the very detailed text of Jigmed Linpa's invocation, *Zhi lam drebui monlam*, on the Base or Ground, the Path and the Fruition, explaining the whole text sentence by sentence over several days, involving us in the translation into Italian.

With the same method he taught the "Mo", a divination system that is performed with the *mala*. The *mala* has 108 beads and is used to count mantras, or the Mo can be done with three cords. He also explained another divination practice with the *mel-ong*, the mirror.

The Subiaco retreat took place in three periods, one between the end of June and about mid-July, another about 15 days be-

In that year, 1976, before the Subiaco retreat, Akong Tulku Rinpoche who resided in a Kagyudpa center in Scotland, came to the Tibetan Buddhist center in Milan, Italy and gave teachings at the end of April. Then he went to Rome on 1 and 2 May, 1976, where he taught publicly and in the evening only to those who had received Kagyudpa teachings. In those days Akong Tulku was a guest of Laura Albini in Rome. She came to Subiaco for a few days at the end of June to meet the Maestro and participated in the teachings and the Ritual of the Guardians by playing the great Tibetan cymbals.

There was a rumor that the 16th Karmapa had been invited to Italy to teach and hold the important Black Crown ceremony. Akong Tulku was to evaluate whether the two centers in Italy were able, economically and at the organizational level to carry out the invitation. The event did not take place for financial reasons. ©



The XVI Karmapa and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in a private audience with Pope Paul VI in 1975.

and sometimes almost 30 [at the retreat], and so the "Dzogchen Community" officially began in the West.

Returning to the photo with Lama Gendun, many of the participants in the retreat with him came to Subiaco, to the retreat with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. The Master mainly taught direct Dzogchen teachings from the Mennagde or Upadesha series.

On the morning of June 27, 1976 he gave an initiation of Chetsun Nyinthing, a *terma* of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, with a *rig-pai tsalwang* empowerment.

He taught yantra yoga, practices on Tregchod and vision, and purification prac-

tween July and August and finally the third between August and September 1976.

Early in the morning we studied yantra yoga, then had breakfast, very often with the Master. He gave teachings in the middle of the morning and also in the afternoon, then yantra yoga in the late afternoon. In the evenings we practiced the Rite of the Guardians, sometimes staying until late in the evening and listening to him after finishing the retreat session. At the beginning of September, the Master dedicated an important Guru Yoga to the community of Subiaco.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's First Visit to Russia

Vladimir Maikov

The prehistory of this visit started in the late 80's when I read Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's book *Talks in Conway*, the so-called *Green book*, for the first time. It was in 1988 and I was really amazed. Before reading this book I had spent almost six years trying to practice Tibetan Buddhism, a teaching that I initially received from His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1982 during my first visit to Buryatia. It happened that the Dalai Lama was giving teaching exactly at this time, and I was lucky to have him as my first Buddhist teacher. I practiced a lot and, truly speaking, I had no clear understanding and also no obvious success in my practice. So I was looking for people who knew about the practice of Tibetan Buddhism.

In the Soviet Union almost everyone who really knew about Tibetan Buddhism was connected to the Buryat tantric teacher Bidia Dandaron, who was actually the first Tibetan Buddhist teacher to transmit Tibetan Buddhism to people not only from Buryatia, but also to European students from Kiev, Moscow, St. Petersburg and the Baltic States. So the real experts in Tibetan Buddhism were students of Bidia Dandaron. It was Bidia Dandaron who first translated Longchenpa's work into the Russian language. I still have this translation. It was the pinnacle of Tibetan knowledge for me.

But in 1988, when I read *Talks in Conway* for the first time, it was a kind of revelation for me as I recognized the real meaning of Tibetan Buddhist practice for the first time and it also clarified my vague knowledge about the Dzogchen tradition. First of all I made photocopies of this book and sent them to the leaders of the underground Tibetan Buddhists, to Bidia Dandaron's students. I had already met them in Buryatia and St. Petersburg. Some of them were from Kiev and some from Moscow. We were all very much amazed and I started to look for a connection with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu through a British master of voice yoga.

My first time in London, I was a guest of a very famous transpersonal psychologist and biologist, Rupert Sheldrake. He introduced me to his wife, Jill Purce, who was Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's student and



1992 Vajra Dance St. Petersburg

Courtesy of Algis

organizer of the first Dzogchen retreat in Great Britain. She gave me an Italian address for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. After returning to Moscow in April 1989 I sent a first letter to Rinpoche. Surprisingly, I received his response, and he invited me to his teaching at Merigar and also advised me to connect with Tsegylgar to ask for other books on Dzogchen.

Of course, I connected with Tsegylgar and got a lot of English translations of Rinpoche's talks and teachings, and I also got a letter of invitation to Merigar, but since all letters were checked at that time by the KGB, the letter arrived a week after the beginning of the retreat. In another letter Rinpoche told me that it would be possible for me and other people interested in Dzogchen to attend his teaching at Tsegylgar in the United States. So I was among four fortunate people from Russia to attend Rinpoche's teaching at Tsegylgar in the summer of 1990.

It was a great retreat based on Longchenpa's book. We had a personal meeting with Rinpoche and invited him to Russia. I informed him about Tibetan Buddhism in Russia, told him about the translation of Longchenpa's work and Bidia Dandaron who was a kind of root guru for many practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism there. He told us that he would come to the Soviet Union the year after his personal retreat, namely 1992. And he also said that the following year, 1991, he would send Fabio Andrico to Russia to teach Yantra Yoga.

It was great news for us, and next year Fabio came to the Soviet Union, visited Kiev, St. Petersburg, the Baltic States and,

of course, Moscow and taught basic knowledge of Yantra Yoga. The following year, early in the spring, I think it was March, Fabio called me on the home phone – there were no mobile phones at that time – and said, "Vladimir, if you are standing up, please take a seat. Also take a sheet of paper and pen and write down what I'm going to tell you". He said, "Rinpoche will come to Vilnius, Lithuania, in May, he will come to Riga, Latvia at the beginning of June, he will come to St. Petersburg in the middle of June, he will come to Moscow at the end of June – beginning of July, and he will come to Ulan-Ude, Buryatia, in the middle of July. Please prepare everything."

It was a shock. It was great excitement. After talking to Fabio I called the leaders of all the cities – Vilnius, Riga, St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Ulan-Ude – and gave them the exact dates of the retreats and asked them to prepare everything well.

We started preparations in Moscow while Vladimir Montlevich started preparations in St. Petersburg. In Ulan-Ude it was Batodalai Dugarov's team, and, as far as I remember, Nikolai Dudka and some of Dandaron's old students helped him. In Vilnius it was Antanas Danielius and the local team.

So we started preparation in Moscow. We had people who had already studied and practiced Tibetan Buddhism, and also we connected with other people from the Gurdjieff, Christian, Sufi, and Hinduism circles who were interested in spiritual development. Our organisers' committee consisted of myself (I was a kind of leader of the committee), Elena Antonova, Natalia Rochegova, Anna Rochegova, and Sergey



Riga retreat in 1992.

Photo by Irina Gavrilonoka



Rinpoche teaching at the first retreat in Moscow in 1992.

Moskalev. It was a core team, so to say. We rented a school near the Timiryazevskaya metro and made all the preparations. We were in touch with all the leaders in the different cities and traced Rinpoche's retreats in Vilnius, Jurmala (near Riga, Latvia), St. Petersburg, so we were well prepared.

We met Rinpoche at the railway station (he came from St. Petersburg to Moscow by train) with *khatag* (ceremonial scarves) and flowers. We drove him to the retreat place. He smiled and we were really very happy. He asked me to organize a telephone call with Rosa at Merigar and then generously explained to me how to pronounce the Tibetan alphabet. I still have this tape.

So the retreat started. There was an experienced translator but she was not able to follow the deep meaning of what Rinpoche transmitted. Finally I and another woman translated the whole retreat, taking turns. Up to that time I had not had any experi-

ence in translation but I was very prepared for that work. I also translated the second retreat in 1994. It was only at the following retreat in 1996 that there were much more experienced people, Grigory Mokhin and Igor Berkhin, who translated better than me. Rinpoche taught twice each day in all cities, so it was really a very intensive program. He was young, he danced on the Mandala while he was teaching Vajra Dance, so we were very lucky to receive this supreme teaching from a realized teacher. There were a lot of students from all over the world. We connected with leaders from the world Dzogchen Community and started many personal relationships. It was a very fruitful and important time for the growing of the Dzogchen community and experiences in Russia. ©

Editors note. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave his first teachings in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Buryatia in the spring/summer of 1992. If you were involved in the organization of any of these retreats or were a participant and would like to write about your experiences, or if you have photographic material, please contact The Mirror so that we can share your story in our "Pictures from the Past" section.

Contact: beawaketoday@gmail.com (Russian) or lizgranger.mirror@gmail.com (English)

Dates and contacts of these retreats taken from back issues of The Mirror:
 Poland, Lodz, May 15–18, 1992
 Lithuania, Vilnius, May 22–24, 1992, Antanas Danielius
 Latvia, Jurmala, May 29–31, June 3, June 5–7,
 Jgors Lazareus, Jelena Kovalyeova
 St. Petersburg June 12–20, 1992, Vladimir Montlevich
 Moscow June 25–July 7, 1992, Vladimir Maikov
 Buryatia, Lake Baikal, July 10–16, 1992,
 Batodalai Dugarov, Nikolai Dudka



Rinpoche with Vladimir Maikov at the first retreat in Moscow in 1992.

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Vince Li Wen Tai

I was born in Hong Kong and grew up there pretty much until I was eleven or twelve. My mom was quite a religious person and when I was a child she was a Catholic. Actually it's strange because that is how we as a family met Buddhism because when I was nine my dad had this problem with his spinal column and we were trying to find a doctor for him. Our Catholic priest told us that he knew some qigong masters in Shenzhen who might be able to help. In China qigong was recognized and studied with a very scientific approach.

In Shenzhen we met this couple of qigong masters who introduced our family to meditation and mantra recitation. My mom was so convinced that she really got into Buddhism and eventually found a center in Hong Kong where a Chinese lama was teaching Lama Tsongkhapa's Lamrim and she immersed herself in that world for a couple of years and would take me with her for teachings.

At a certain point the center invited a Tibetan geshe from Sera Jey to teach so my mom decided to follow him. This geshe was in Hong Kong on the invitation of Lama Zopa Rinpoche so we discovered Lama Zopa and the FPMT center. Later Lama Zopa Rinpoche sent another geshe to Hong Kong called Geshe Lama Konchog who I had a really strong connection with.

After we met Geshe Konchog we went to Tibet several times. The first year we made a family trip to Tibet, to Qinghai, Amdo where we visited the main Gelugpa monastery. Another time we went through Xining by bus, crossing the mountains and on to Lhasa doing a family pilgrimage. The third time we accompanied the geshe to Amdo and it was very nice although I don't remember very well from this period.

Then when I was eleven or twelve, in the early nineties, there was some talk about me going to Kopan monastery, Lama Zopa's monastery in Nepal, to study and become a monk. My mom was really convinced by Buddhism as presented by Lama Zopa and wanted me to have a more monastic style of education while she did her *nöndro* training for six months at the monastery.



When we got there Geshe Lama Konchog did the hair cutting and gave me the novice vows and I jumped right into it. I had to learn to speak and read Tibetan, study English, maths, and *thangka* drawing. Basically for the little novice monks we mainly had to memorize texts so I quickly had to learn how to read. We used to have a morning session of chanting, then breakfast and classes.

Then after a few months we had to leave because of our visas and had thought to come back, but instead I went to stay at the FPMT center in Taiwan. There the circumstances led me to end up as the attendant to the geshe for a few months.

From Taiwan I went back to Hong Kong and for about six months I didn't go back to school because I was still a monk. At the Buddhist center I would wear robes, while in other places I would wear normal clothes but in particular colors such as red, yellow, or brown. It was a period with a lot of uncertainty in my family. My mom wasn't sure what I should do because in Hong Kong it was not possible for me to continue my monastic studies without a geshe to teach me. I was a little monk without a lama, a monastery, or a sangha.

At that point, we decided to go to the US to visit my uncle who was living in Seattle and during that visit we went to Vancouver in Canada and I liked it. I had this idea that I could continue with my school studies there because I had a three-year gap difficult for me to recuperate in Hong Kong while in Canada I could. So we sent an application to a special secondary school for

foreign students and I was accepted. I spent three years there.

The first year I was still a monk although wearing lay person's clothing but then I realized that it was probably time to give back my vows which I was breaking pretty much every day. What can you do when you are 15 or 16? I finished my high school in Vancouver and did my university studies in psychology at the Nanaimo campus of Vancouver Island University.

At that point I was so turned off by the idea of religion that if anyone mentioned anything about it I would ask them not to. I had just lost faith in institutional spirituality. But I met a lot of free spirited people and we made music together, shamanistic, primitive, repetitive music that brings you into a flow during which you feel very connected to people. It was really organic and a powerful experience for me and for several years I lived in that type of community.

I was in Vancouver for about 8 years – from 1997 to 2005 – and then went back to Hong Kong and worked there for a few years still without any connection with spirituality. In HK I got this band together and in 2009 I moved with my band to Beijing and stayed there until the end of 2014. At the end of the third year I understood that I couldn't just continue in music so the last years I spent there I was working at Vice Media to help them establish a base in Beijing.

In 2009 with the move to Beijing I had suddenly started to have a lot of dreams with the Karmapa, Tai Situ, and the Dalai Lama even though there was no connection. In the dreams we would have conversations and this made me think that I should start to check out Buddhism again. But very cautiously. This time it would have to be the Buddhism that was taught by Guru Rinpoche, although I had no idea who Guru Rinpoche was. So I went online to see what was available at that time and found Larung Gar, a Buddhist college in Kham. They have several Khenpos who can speak Chinese and teach to Chinese people and have different curriculums that you can follow online also as a lay person. Eventually I took part in a five-year course "Studying the Words of My Perfect Teacher".

I finally moved to Larung Gar in October 2014, a couple of days before my birthday. The first days there were terrible because the lowest point was 3,400 metres above sea level so I had altitude sickness to the point that the owner of the hostel came to see if I had died.

Living quarters at Larung Gar basically can be made out of anything: wood, cinder blocks, mud. I visited several mud houses and they are incredibly cosy. Once after we did a job together a khenpo invited us to his tiny place with just a little stove, a pile of mantra texts and a photo of the founder of Larung Gar, Jigme Phunsok. On the floor was a little piece of sheepskin, a bag of *tsampa* and a couple of bowls for tea. There were five of us cramped into that space sharing tea and *tsampa* and we had the best time in our lives.

My space was a bit different and I had a bed, a shelf, and so on because I was house sitting for someone from Beijing, a banker, who had bought this cabin and asked me to house sit for him until he came back. It made me understand that if you are relaxed about things you will have what you need.

There are several spots in the valley with fresh water so you have to go and fetch your own water. There are two bath houses so you shower about once a month and the rest of the time boil some water and wipe yourself down. The longest time I went without washing was three months during the winter.

At Larung Gar the preliminary course is either "The Words of My Perfect Teacher" or the "Boddhisattva Way of Life". There is also the traditional *nöndro* and then on the weekends there are extra courses in which they give *luns* for the texts we were studying, like Semnyid Ngalso and the likes, while every day at noon there are local *trulkus* who are entrusted to give empowerments and *luns*.

Every morning we would start with a class from 7 to 9am then our karma yoga work for around six hours with sessions from 10 to 12 and then from 1 to 5pm. In the evening our main khenpo would give teachings and once every three months there would be a big *drubchen* that lasted 15 days. During the *drubchens* I picked up Tibetan again because we would just read and repeat.

The first few months there I was really grateful but also really anxious and I had no idea why. I was so fearful and really sensitive to all my thoughts. Searching to find out more about my anxiety problems I went to one of the *trulkus* who was clairvoyant and who said that my anxiety was probably due to a connection with some demonic being. Then I recalled that years ago, in Nepal, by chance we had met this reincarnation of Phapongka and through him had had this connection with the gyal-

po. A few months later we found out that this connection was problematic and not so easy to resolve as well as being a very powerful thing.

Then looking for this information online, I found an article that someone had posted by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu talking about the gyalpo and how to deal with them. In the article Rinpoche suggested that if people have this type of problem they could go to him for protection. So then I thought that I should try to find this practice to see if it works. I went to see a *trulku* that I used to see regularly and asked him for the transmission of Guru Dragphur but instead of that he gave me the transmission of Guru Dragpo.

Later I found out about Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's webcasts so I started to follow his teachings. The first time it was general teachings – the Atiyoga teaching retreat in Prague – and at the end of the retreat he gave the transmission of Guru Dragphur. I immediately started to recite the mantra and my nervousness and anxiety disappeared in a way that I didn't know could be like that and I understood that this was something really powerful. Before that I thought that this anxiety was the norm and this was part of the reason that I had wanted to leave Beijing and that kind of life. Once I had met Rinpoche and received that transmission over the internet and practiced what he taught then I understood that it didn't have to be like that.

I was a year and a half at Larung Gar and would have stayed longer if not for the demolition in 2016, supposedly for fire safety. Then I found out that there was a Chinese Dzogchen Community in China so I went to Samtengar to learn all these things that Rinpoche taught. Before meeting Rinpoche I didn't even know all these practices are open, because in the traditional way at Larung Gar, Vajra Dance and *tsalung* practices with yantra yoga are only for advanced practitioners. And Vajra Dance is not even for people to dance, only for realized beings. At Samtengar I tried to learn as much as I could. I had been doing the *nöndro* for some time and I really wanted to study Santi Maha Sangha.

Then at some point in 2016 during one of the webcasts I looked at Rinpoche and I understood that time was running out, that I couldn't wait to meet him. Even though people in China were sure that Rinpoche would be coming I travelled to Dzamling Gar early in 2018 for the Mandarava retreat where I finally met Rinpoche in person.

There was the lineup to see Rinpoche after the teaching and I waited there. I had brought him a gift and was really happy to finally meet him. I told him that I had this problem with the gyalpo connection and that I had been doing Guru Dragphur practice and asked him if there was something more that I could do. And he just said, "Very good". And it's true. I really just wanted to have confirmation from him.

Meeting him was just to show me that I didn't need to look for more, and to discover how it is enough. It seems that like all the teachings he ever gave were aimed at that. Nothing exists outside. You don't need to look for more initiations or connections because he has given everything you need. And the rest is just to work on the inside. That is what I understood in the brief time I spent with him.



Vince at Larung Gar with Yuan Sheng.

At the time I enjoyed my stay at Larung Gar but I didn't understand it. I understood it after and appreciated it even more because it gave me a base to understand what Rinpoche teaches. My traditional studies there helps to eliminate the chance of having wrong understanding of things because Rinpoche's Dzogchen teachings are very advanced and without a structural conceptual base then it is hard to reconcile a lot of seemingly conflicting viewpoints in the teaching. I'd like to say more regarding Rinpoche – I feel like I am just starting to discover Rinpoche.

At the moment I'm mostly translating courses and retranslating the oral translations of some of his retreats into Chinese, listening and going through them. And by repeating them there is something new to discover every time. ©



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