

## 4 The Role the Tenth Shamarpa Lama, Chödrup Gyatsho

Lobsang Palden Yeshe (Tib. Blo bzang dPal ldan Ye shes) was the sixth Panchen Lama (also known as Tashi Lama or Teshu Lama and abbot of the Tashilhunpo Monastery, one of Tibet's most important Geluk monasteries, that was founded in Shigatse in 1447 by the First Dalai Lama, Gendun Drub (Tib. dGe 'dun Grub pa). Lobsang Palden Yeshe was the elder stepbrother of the tenth Shamarpa, Mipam Chödrup Gyatsho (Tib. Chos grub rGya mtsho, 1733–1792). The Panchen Lama was also the younger brother of Drungpa Hutuktu (Tib. Drung pa sPrul sku, Chin. Zhong-ba Hu-tuk-tu), who also accompanied him to Jehol and Peking in 1780 and served as the treasurer of Tashilhunpo. The three were uterine brothers. When Lobsang Palden Yeshe died in November 1780 of smallpox in Peking after the celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Emperor, there were severe inheritance disputes between his brothers, Drungpa Trülku and Chödrup Gyatsho (Shamarpa Lama) (Figure 7). These disputes caused turbulences in the relationship between Nepal, Tibet and China.

During this conflict, Shamarpa Lama came to Nepal. The reasons for this have been reported differently. He fled to Kathmandu either in 1784 or 1786,<sup>257</sup> or, according to a document of 9 June 1788, took refuge there,<sup>258</sup> together with fifteen “influential men of Tibet.”<sup>259</sup> According to the *Nepālikabhūpavaṃśāvalī* (20.90),<sup>260</sup> Shamarpa fled to Kathmandu as he did not receive any share or benefit in the division of the treasures following the passing of his elder brother.<sup>261</sup> So was the

257 Ehrhard 2007, 119 and 121; Erhard 2020a; according to Shakabpa 1967, this took place in 1786; see Stiller 1975, 195–96; according to Li 2002, 142, he went on a pilgrimage in 1784. Ohüi reported that Shamarpa went on a pilgrimage to the stupas in 1783 (QL 48) (BLBJL, vol. 14, QL 53/12/6).

258 See Part II, 2.1.1; Boulnois 1989, 86, Li 2002, 142.

259 Regmi 1975, 430.

260 Misleadingly known as the Wright Chronicle.

261 Cammann 1951, 112.



*Figure 7:* Chödrup Gyatso, the Tenth Shamarpa Lama (1742–1792), painting on cloth, 63,5 × 40,6 cm (source: Wikimedia Commons/Rubin Museum of Art)

understanding of the Chinese sources.<sup>262</sup> Another possible reason for Shamarpa's flight to Kathmandu could have been his fear stemming from rumours that the Panchen Lama was poisoned or committed suicide in Beijing.<sup>263</sup>

It is also said that he went there on a semi-official pilgrimage<sup>264</sup> to whitewash the two stupas of Svayambhunath<sup>265</sup> and Bodhnath together with “a monk official, dGa' ldan bKa' bcu[ pa] and a ‘doctor’ (Tib. *em chi*) from the private treasury of the [Eighth] Dalai Bla ma [...], as was the custom.”<sup>266</sup> Shamarpa's cousin,<sup>267</sup> the cabinet minister, Tenzin Peljor's report suggests that Shamarpa Lama was on an official mission to deal with the coinage problem.<sup>268</sup>

After Shamarpa Lama reached Kathmandu ruled by “the evil king of Gorkha, possessed by the chief of demons and cursed with the thought and deeds of a jealousy that could not bear the wealth and prosperity of others”,<sup>269</sup> he is said to have gained significant influence within the Rana administration.

However, after some time, Shamarpa fell ill and called in 1786 the “doctor and medical practitioner”<sup>270</sup> Men Gompa Künga Penden (sMan bsGom pa Kun dga' dpal ldan, 1735–1804), from Yol mo to treat him. In the genealogy, *Brag dkar rta so sPrul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug*, it is stated that from then on Men Gompa Künga Penden treated Chödrup Gyatsho “for a long time.”

While the entourage of Shamarpa Lama, the monk and the doctor, returned to Tibet, though without having been able to fulfil their wish to whitewash Buddhist receptacles for the Tibetan government, he himself remained in the Kathmandu Valley.

262 KRKJL, *Poems by the Emepror*, part 1, 18–20; Zhang 1988, 465–66. See also Part II, 2.2.8, 2.

263 Cammann 1951, 112; Regmi 1975, 429; Stiller 1975, 196 and 203. It was likely that these rumours were spread by Shamarpa himself (Yongdan 2021, 76).

264 Stein 1972, 99; cp. *Nepālikabhūpavaṃśāvalī* 20.90.

265 Kunwar 1962, 291.

266 Ehrhard 2007, 119.

267 KRKD QL 57/11, 214.

268 Ehrhard 2007, 120.

269 Tenzin Peljor in Ehrhard 2007, 119. According to Tenzin Peljor's autobiography, he did not have a favorable view of Nepal. Tenzin Peljor described it as “a land of foreigners” (Tib. *phyi rol pa*), in contrast to a land of insiders, which are Buddhists (*nang pa*). He referred to the country in this way due to the prevalence of practices like animal sacrifices (*dmar mchod*) and suttee (*bud med gson bsergs*), which he found troubling. He also disliked the food made of rice flour in the region (see Part II, 2.3.2c).

270 Ehrhard 2007, 125.

According to Tibetan and Chinese sources, he apparently more and more stirred up unrest, betrayed the immensely valuable treasures of the Tashilhunpo monastery<sup>271</sup> (Figures 8–9) and incited the Gorkhals to rob the monastery after Tibet had failed to meet its payment obligations.<sup>272</sup> Leo Rose calls this an “obvious fabrication”, because the huge wealth of the monasteries was “no mystery to Kathmandu due to the thousands of Nepali traders and pilgrims who had travelled in Tibet.”<sup>273</sup> However, his influence could be seen by the fact that he presided over the negotiations in Kyirong as part of the Gorkhali delegation.

According to the Report of VS 1850 (5<sup>r-v</sup>), the high official and Dalai Lama’s treasurer named Cin Devuka (rTsis bDe sbug [pa]) visited Kathmandu in 1791 to renegotiate tribute payments as arranged in the addendum to the agreement of Kerung and to request forgiveness for not being able to pay the annual payment. He asked the Gorkha officials to first arrest Shamarpa Lama and bring him to Lhasa, accusing him of causing disturbances. Devuka, described in the Report as “friendly on the surface but treacherous within”, blamed Shamarpa Lama for the ongoing troubles and demanded his return to Lhasa.

Bahadur Shah, however, remained adamant on the long-overdue payment of 100,000 rupees. According to the Rajput code of honour,<sup>274</sup> they were obliged not to hand over the refugee Shamarpa Lama to

271 Markham 1876, lxxvi; Kunwar 1962, 288; Rose 1971, 37. The wealth of the Monastery has been described by Zhao Yi (2.2.2) as follows: “The residencies of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen all have gold-casted tiles on the halls. All the precious seats, girders, columns, and rails were embedded with pearls, jades, and gems. Their colours gleam so brightly that one cannot look at them closely. They are indeed well-decorated (*avataṃsaka*) storeyed pavilions furnished with seven jewels (*sapta-ratna*) [as mentioned in the Buddhist *sūtras*].” The Tashilhunpo monastery was restored after the cultural revolution with huge amount of state investment, see Namgyal 1988 Tanjun 1993; Phun tshogs rnam rgyal 2010.

272 Kunwar 1962, 288; Shakabpa 1967, 158, Erschbamer 2018, 128. Bootai reported that he had the intention to abduct his stepbrother from Tashilhunpo (KRRJL, vol. 4, QL 56/10/6).

273 Rose 1971, 37; Li (2002, 142) casts doubt in this “puzzle” as well. However, the huge donation from Manchu and Mongolian rulers to the Tashilhunpo monastery reached there only in the 1780s. Even though the wealth of Tashilhunpo was known to many, the newly acquired wealth might have not been known to Nepal. During the invasion, the major robbery also occurred to these new donations instead of the old wealth. Therefore, Shamarpa might indeed have informed the Gorkhals of the new acquisition of the Tashilhunpo monastery. He might have complained that he was excluded from the distribution of the new donation.

274 CPC X, no. 851, 179 (letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Gajarāja Miśra).



Figure 8: Tashilhunpo Monastery, Shigatse, between 1844–1862 (from the Wise collection, British Library, © British Library Board, shelfmark: Add.Or.3016 f.2)



Figure 9: Burial chorten of the tenth Panchen Lama (constructed in 1993), Tashilhunpo Monastery, Shigatse, 2018 (source: Wikimedia Commons)

his adversaries.<sup>275</sup> Such protection might have resulted in rumours that Bahadur Shah had an affair with Shamarpa's consort, which was certainly not true.<sup>276</sup> However, Bahadur Shah did have a good relationship with Shamarpa.

The treasurer Devuka summoned Lhasa's ministers Tenzin Peljor and g.Yu thog (玉托) bKra shis don 'grub to the border near Nyalam and Sindhupalchok in 1791, where he met his demise. Once again, Shamarpa Lama took on the role of mediator. Bahadur Shah despatched officials to negotiate with Lhasa's representatives in Nyalam, but upon suspecting their intentions to seize Shamarpa Lama, they abducted the officials from Lhasa, including Tenzin Peljor and g.Yu thog. Chinese military officers Wang Gang (王剛) and Feng Da-cheng (馮大成) were also among the abducted group. They were sent as captives to the Kathmandu Valley.<sup>277</sup>

The "doctor and medical practitioner," Men Gompa Künga Penden, provides the following account of the events:

In that very year, during [the negotiations of] a peace treaty between Tibet [and] Gorkha at gNya'-nang [Nyalam], [the treaty] fell through because of the false and deceitful Tibetan ways, so that a host of manipulating Gorkhas, [who were] ungentle and deceitful, overthrew most of the Tibetans. And when many influential persons, including the ruling pair of Tibetan ministers (=rDo-ring bsTan-'dzin dpal-'byor [Tenzin Peljor] and g.Yu-thog-pa bKra-shis don-grub [Yuthok Tashi Dhondup, G.Yu-thog]) and representatives of the members of the two main monasteries (=bKra-shis lhun-po [Tashilhunpo] and dGa'-ldan [Ganden]) were guided [as hostages] to Bal-yul [Nepāla = Kathmandu Valley], [and when] in addition manifold suffering [occurred owing to] the disturbance of the elements, including the fever of the gorges, [the effects of drinking] turbid water and so forth, Kun-dga' dpal-'byor [Kunga Peljor] provided a variety of medical remedies. In particular, when the great steward of the All-Knowing [Third] Panchen [Bla-ma] slipped, with extremely great clarity [Kun-dga' dpal-'ldan] bowed down in service [to him] and by calming the pain of many distressing diseases, [he

275 Kunwar 1962, 290.

276 KRKD QL 57/6, 134.

277 Cp. Theobald 2020, 126; KRKD QL 57/11, 229–31.

succeeded in getting the steward to] recover his breath and rest [again] in [a state of] happiness.<sup>278</sup>

According to the autobiography of Tenzin Peljor,<sup>279</sup> Bahadur Shah was worried that the Tibetan captives might be connected with the Tibetan population around Betravati and Kyirong and that they would not be accustomed to the warm climate in Kathmandu. The Tibetan captives were first brought to a mountain around the Kathmandu Valley and then to Changu Narayan (Tib. gTsang kun ṅa raṅ = Khyung rong byon), an ancient Vaishnava site on a hilltop near Bhaktapur in the Valley, while Wang Gang and Feng Da-cheng were brought to a dark room in Kathmandu.<sup>280</sup> Later, they were moved near Bodhnath (Tib. Bya rung kha shor)<sup>281</sup> apparently under the supervision of the Shamarpa Lama. They were placed under a small hut, watched by people from the newly annexed Jumla (Tib. Jum lang),<sup>282</sup> and visited by King Rana Bahadur and Regent Bahadur Shah. The Shamarpa Lama was accused by Tenzin Peljor of inciting the Gorkhalis to invade Tibet, having sexual relation of low moral standard, and converting his portion of the Tashilhunpo loot into jewellery for his consort and clothes for himself.<sup>283</sup> Tenzin Peljor also suggested that the Shamarpa Lama might have poisoned himself in his house in Bodhnath when Qing armies approached the Gorkha Kingdom. Later, when Tenzin Peljor was summoned to the Kathmandu Palace by Regent Bahadur Shah, the Regent blamed the deceased Shamarpa for his earlier provocative words and his *dharma*-*mapatra* of loyalty in front of the two stupas (2.3.2d).<sup>284</sup> In the end, the then-defunct Shamarpa took all the blame and became the culprit for the Chinese, Gorkhalis, and Tibetans.

Regardless of the blame on Shamarpa from three sides, he might not have played such an essential role in causing the war. In Kathmandu, tensions flared as Rana Bahadur Shah reached adulthood, becoming increasingly opposed to the regent under the influence of the Shamarpa Lama. The regent, in turn, deemed it necessary to assert power by taking renewed action against Tibet, which had failed to fulfil the terms

278 Ehrhard 2007, 126.

279 The following narrative follows Erhard 2020a and his talk at Heidelberg University on 30 November 2023. Checked against TP 785–86, 813.

280 KRKD QL 57/11, 230.

281 TP 817.

282 TP 854.

283 TP 819–21.

284 TP 856–60.

laid out in the Kyirong agreement. The tension was also made known to the Emperor as he remarked in his Edict:

But Shamarpa was only in alliance with Bahādura Śāha in the realm of the enemy. Balabhadra Śāha and other Śāhas all complained about Shamarpa and had discord with Bahādura Śāha. Bahādura Śāha is the most cunning and evil. He already had the intention of seizing the throne.<sup>285</sup>

In his Jehol inscription, the Emperor finally declared to the Empire that the conflict was essentially rooted in the inheritance dispute between Shamarpa and Drungpa.<sup>286</sup> So was it accepted by Chinese and Manchu historiographers (2.2.6–8), who sometimes confused Shamarpa with Tenzin Peljor.

However, Shamarpa's instigation might have played a less important role than the economic reasons beginning with coinage.<sup>287</sup> The Chinese secretary Zhou Ai-lian, who worked on provisions in the war, understood it rather differently. Shamarpa's incitation was only the last reason for invasion, while the Gorkha internal strife and the Gorkha-Tibetan dispute on payment and money were more important, as he wrote:

Reason 1: The border of the Back of Tibet is close to Gorkha. Since the Gorkhali annexation of Balbu [the Kathmandu valley], there were continuous military affairs among themselves for years. As the Gorkhali internal strife expanded, they lacked spare time to consider the border issue. Afterwards, the border was put into order via the negotiation of the Duke of Tibet Tenzin Peljor. Three hundred ingots were given [to Gorkha] once. Gorkha mistook it for an annual regular revenue. As their demand was not satisfied, they took it as a pretext to invade.

Reason 2: The foreigners are accustomed to use silver coins. (Auto-commentary: beyond Dartsemdo, the minted [copper] coins from the [Chinese] bureau are no longer used. Only the silver and silver coins are used. One weighs 1 *qian*, 5 *fen* [approximately 5.6 grams or 4.7 grams]. The Gorkhas fussed

285 KRKD QL 577–8, 99–103.

286 KRLJL, *Poems by the Emperor*, part 1, 18–20; Zhang 1988, 465–66.

287 Satō 1986, 524, 536.

about the relative purity and intended preposterously to use one for the value of two. This did not work [for the Tibetans]. Without profit to make, the Gorkalis held despair within.

Reason 3: The Red-hat Lama Shamarpa exaggerated upon the pursuable abundance and wealth in the land of Tibet.<sup>288</sup>

Nevertheless, Shamarpa was safely dead by the end of the war. It was much easier for the Chinese Emperor to blame him and punish his associates than to accuse the Gorkha kings of any serious offence. Moreover, it accorded with Emperor Qianlong's policy and personal inclination towards the Gelukpa and against the Kagyu sect. He soon prompted a prohibition on Shamarpa's reincarnation and ordered the confiscation of Shamarpa's monastery in Yangpachen (Tib. Yangs pa can) and other properties in Tibet. The money became provisions for Tibetan soldiers, while the monastery was converted to the Gelukpa sect of Buddhism.<sup>289</sup> This restriction on the Shamarpa lineage endured until the twentieth century, when the Fourteenth Shamarpa, Mipam Chokyi Lodro (1952–2014), was recognised as an incarnation.<sup>290</sup> However, its lingering impact is having two Karmapas nowadays.

288 Zhou 1804 (1913), vol. 4, 21–22: 一因後藏邊界與廓爾喀毗連，自廓爾喀兼並巴勒布，連年兵革，內訌方張，未暇計及。既乃清厘邊界，經西藏公爵丹津班珠爾議，給元寶三百枚。廓爾喀誤為每歲地租常例，索求不獲，藉詞侵犯。一因番俗多用銀錢（自打箭鏞出口即不用局鑄銅錢，專用銀及銀錢）一枚重一錢五分。廓爾喀較量成色，妄思以一當二，而勢不能行。無利可牟，心懷失望。一因紅帽喇嘛沙瑪爾巴侈言藏地殷富可圖。

289 *Qin-ding Li-fan-bu Ze-li*, vol. 62 no. 943 西藏通制下 番兵軍器定制。

290 Erhard 2020a.