A Biography of the *Secret Biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama*

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Although according to standard Tibetan and Chinese biographical and historical sources, Tsangyang Gyatso, the Sixth Dalai Lama, is said to have died on his way to Beijing to meet Kangxi Emperor in 1706, a Tibetan-language hagiographic text written in Alashan in 1757 by a Mongolian monk Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye provides an alternative account saying that he actually lived an extra forty-year. According to it, in 1706, Tsangyang Gyatso escaped his escorts on his way to Beijing and spent ten years on pilgrimage roaming around central China, Tibet, Nepal, and India, finally being settled down in Alashan until he died in 1746. The credibility of the Secret Biography as a record of real historical events is still unclear, but it is certain that the Secret Biography serves as the founding myth of Buddhist institutions in the settlement of Alashan. The remaining questions that I will study in the thesis are why Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye chose to portray this image of Tsangyang Gyatso as it is in the Secret Biography, how did he achieve his purpose, and what future influences it had within Alashan and outside of Alashan on the relationship among Mongols, Tibet, and Qing court.
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**Introduction**

Although according to standard Tibetan and Chinese biographical and historical sources, Tsangyang Gyatso, the Sixth Dalai Lama, is said to have died on his way to Beijing to meet Kangxi Emperor in 1706, a Tibetan-language hagiographic text written in Alashan in 1757 by a Mongolian monk Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye provides an alternative account saying that he actually lived an extra forty-year. According to the narrative of Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye’s *Secret Biography*, in 1706, Tsangyang Gyatso in deed escaped his escorts on his way to Beijing, and then he spent ten years on
pilgrimage roaming around central China, Tibet, Nepal, and India and finally settled down in Alashan in today Inner Mongolia to teach dharma until he died in 1746.\(^1\)

In both accounts, in 1706, Tsangyang Gyatso was put in audience with Manchu Emperor Kangxi by Lha-bzang Khan of Mongolian Khoshut Khanate, a political rival of the Dalai Lama lineage in Tibet, because his identity as a true Dalai Lama was suspected. Tsangyang Gyatso was controversial due to his foreign origin and alleged involvement in heterodox activities. His career is also something of an enigma, since certain practices attributed to him—for example, his sexual exploits—are not

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1 The monastery that Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé established in Alashan, dGa’-lDan-bsTan-rGyas-gLing / 广宗寺, produced woodblock prints of the text. I am trying to locate a copy of this original xylography, but haven’t been successful. According to the lama Bukezhaya / 布克扎雅, the supervisor of the Grand Dharma Temple / Chos-Chen-sDud-Khang / 大经堂 in Gadan Tangya Ling, whom I met when I conduct fieldwork in Alashan, there were two sets of the printing woodblocks in the monastery when he was young, but one was burned in the Cultural Revolution, and the other one was brought to Beijing. Bukezhaya said his master owned a manuscript copy of the original text, and had also translated it into Chinese, but it was unpublished. This is now in the Gadan Tangya Ling monastery. In the nineteenth century, the fifth reincarnation of Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé presented the text to the thirteenth Dalai Lama, who then produced another version of the woodblock print in Lhasa. One Lhasa xylography is available on TBRC (https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=W30154), published in New Delhi in 1970. The text became famous since the Lhasa edition, and the name Secret Biography also came from it, as on the side of each page it writes Tshang-dByangs-rGya-mTsho’i-gSang-eNam (the Secret Biography of Tsangyang Gyatso). The sixth reincarnation of Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé, Jalsan, disagrees with calling the text “secret” (“On the so-called the Secret Biography of Tsangyang Gyatso / 关于所谓的《仓央嘉措秘传》,” Hohhot: Journal of Inner Mongolia University, Vol 37, No.1, 2005). For the convenience, I will still call the text the Secret Biography. There are two published Chinese translation (Zhuang Jing, The Love Songs and the Secret Biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama / 六世达赖喇嘛情歌及秘史, Lhasa: the Tibet People’s Publishing House, 2003; and Awang Lhunzhí Dajie (au.), Jialasen (ed.), Huarui Luosangjiacuo (tr.), The Biography of Tsangyang Gyatso / 仓央嘉措传, Hohhot: the Inner Mongolian People’s Publishing House, 2015) and one published English translation (Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé (au.) Simon Wickhamsmith (tr.), Kurtis R. Schaeffer (foreword), The Hidden Life of the Sixth Dalai Lama, Lanham, Md: Lexington. 2011). The text was published in Tibetan several times (e.g. Rig-'Dzin-Tshangs-dByangs-rGya-mTsho’i-gSung-mGur-Dang-gSang-ba’i-rNam-Thar; Beijing: the Nationalities Publishing House, 1981.) The edition I cite in this chapter is Lha-bTsun-Ngag-dBang-rDo-rJe, O-rGyan-Chos-'Phel (ed.), The Secret Biography of Tsangyang Gyatso / Tshangs-dByangs-rGya-mTsho’i-gSang-eNam (Lhasa: the Tibet People’s Publishing House, Edition: 1981.11, 1st. Printing: 2008.9, 4th.).
corroborated by historical sources. The account of Tsangyang Gyatso’s early life written by his regent Desi Sangye Gyatso refers to his antinomian character only in vague languages, and the main source on this aspect of his character is the corpus of poems that were attributed to him, although this attribution is disputed. Nonetheless, these representations were, and continue to be, part of the reception of the figure of the Sixth Dalai Lama in Tibetan Buddhist history and culture.

The Secret Biography, the text that I will focus on in my thesis, was written by Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye in 1757, eleven years after the death of Tsangyang Gyatso in his account in 1746. Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye was a nephew of the Alashan Mongol Prince Aboo, thus he was a member of the noble family in Alashan. Later, during the time of the reincarnation of Tsangyang Gyatso in Alashan, it was said that the two-year-old Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye was recognized by Tsangyang Gyatso at their first meeting in 1716 as the reincarnation of Desi Sangye Gyatso, who was the regent of both the Fifth and the Sixth Dalai Lama, one of the disciples of the Fifth Dalai Lama, and one of the teachers of the Sixth Dalai Lama. In this way, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye was adopted by Tsangyang Gyatso as his principal disciple and became the first reincarnating Tulku in Alashan. Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye established monasteries following Tsangyang Gyatso’s direction, which still exist as the main temples in Alashan today. It is my central argument that in this work we witness the author Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye mobilize and “(re)invent” hagiographical legends involving Tsangyang Gyatso, a figure of both religious and political significance, for the purpose of justifying the foundation and authority of his
monasteries in Alashan as potent sites for preaching the dharma in a time of political instability.

The previous scholarship on the Secret Biography is limited. There is only one English language scholarship relevant to the topic, *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives: A Study of Pemalingpa (1450–1521) and the Sixth Dalai Lama (1683–1706)* by Michael Aris in 1989. Aris spent approximately a quarter of his book discussing the Secret Biography; besides paraphrasing the stories in the text, his main argument was that the Tsangyang Gyatso in the Secret Biography was a impersonator instead of the real historical sixth Dalai Lama but lack of any reason. A Chinese phd dissertation was devoted on the history of the monastery established by Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye, but little was discussed about the Secret Biography. The lack of contextualized study of the Secret Biography leaves room for my research.

The first chapter of my thesis will establish the historical figure of the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso in the context of Tibet, Mongolia, and Qing political and religious history in the 17th and 18th century. To examine him as the Sixth Dalai Lama, I will survey the history of the institution of the Dalai Lama in relation to the Tibetans, the Mongols, and the Qing court. To examine him as Tsangyang Gyatso, I will offer a critical account of his life up to 1706 (the year in which he died according to official testimony), based on Tibetan and Chinese historical sources. To do so, I will compare variant representations of the life and career of Tsangyang Gyatso across different genres of historical and literary evidence, including his alleged poetic output and his Monpa Nyingma origin.
The second chapter will introduce the text of the *Secret Biography* and focus on its account of Tsangyang Gyatso’s life between 1706 and 1746. In the *Secret Biography*, Tsangyang Gyatso did not consort with women but was seriously devoted to Buddhist teachings and practice. Here I will examine a series of representations of Tsangyang Gyatso in comparison with other historical accounts in Chinese and Tibetan to demonstrate how the figure of the Sixth Dalai Lama was ‘reformed’ by Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye and ‘translated’ into the context of Alashan. The way that Tsangyang Gyatso was represented by Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye tells us arguably the author’s perspective. The pilgrimage chapter of the *Secret Biography* was composed of short slots of stories from the first person perspective of Tsangyang Gyatso followed by a commentary in verse by Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye. The commentary elaborates on the dharmic meanings of Tsangyang Gyatso’s experience. It plays an important role both in reforming Tsangyang Gyatso’s character and in informing us Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye’s understanding from a Mongolian Buddhist perspective on Tibetan Buddhist figure under the Qing administration. I will also pay close attention to the ways in which the narrative of Tsangyang Gyatso serves to legitimate the authority of Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye and his relationship with Inner Mongolian Buddhism more generally in the eighteenth century.

Chapter three will establish my central argument by looking more closely at the complex historical context of religion and politics in and around Alashan in the eighteenth century, the venue of the *Secret Biography*, to explore why the figure of Tsangyang Gyatso was instrumental in advancing Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye’s aims
and what further influence it had. Between late 17th century and early 18th century, Qing court gradually gained more control over the Tibetans and the Mongols. The Alashan settlement was assigned by Kangxi Emperor to one lineage of Khoshut Khanate whose head submitted to Qing court and thereafter was entitled as Alashan Prince. The second Alashan Prince married two daughters from the Qing imperial family and played an important role in the Secret Biography after Tsangyang Gyatso arrived in Alashan.

Moreover, when explaining the eleven years’ delay of composing the Secret Biography in 1757, the year of the death of the Seventh Dalai Lama and the final end of Dzungar Khanate, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye declared that it was only for the welfare of sentient beings and not because of anything against the will of the emperor, indicating his sensitive political awareness. I will also discuss the impact of Tsangyang Gyatso in the Secret Biography beyond the geopolitical site of Alashan.

The credibility of the Secret Biography as a record of real historical events is still unclear, but it is certain that the Secret Biography serves as the founding myth of Buddhist institutions in the settlement of Alashan. The remaining questions that I will study in the thesis are why Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye chose to portray this image of Tsangyang Gyatso as it is in the Secret Biography, how did he achieve his purpose, and what future influences it had within Alashan and outside of Alashan on the relationship among Mongols, Tibet, and Qing court.
Chapter 1

A memorial from Lifan Yuan: “the Xining stationed lama Shangnan Duoerji reported that the fake Dalai Lama sent by Lhabzang died of illness when he had proceeded to the outside of the Xining Pass. The fake Dalai Lama was abnormal and disordered in his behavior. Since now he died of illness on his way, (we) should inform Shangnan Duoerji to cast away his corpse.” The emperor took the suggestion.²

Above is an entry in the Veritable Records of Qing in Kangxi reign. The “fake Dalai Lama” in Lifan Yuan’s report refers to the sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso, the controversial but recognized Dalai Lama, as accepted by both the Tibetans and the Mongolians, and later tacitly admitted by the Qing court. In the official historical resources of both China and Tibet, the figure of Tsangyang Gyatso seems to be important for no reason other than his identity of the Dalai Lama, which could support and stabilize the political power of his regent Sangye Gyatso. In other words, the political agency of Tsangyang Gyatso was very limited. The information about him, other than several administrative documents, was only limited to a biography of him from Sangye Gyatso’s biased perspective.

² The Veritable Record of Qing/清实录, the twenty-sixth of the twelfth month of the forty-fifth year of Kangxi (Jan. 29th, 1707), accessed April 10, 2019, http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/mqlc/hanjishilu/@8^452699244^802^^^8021101100060230000100030022@@848168984. All translation in the thesis are my own unless otherwise noted.
Albeit being a puppet, Tsangyang Gyatso appealed great attention from the Qing court. In this chapter, I will first explain in detail the formation of the reputation of the Dalai Lama for the Tibetans, the Mongols, and the Qing court which was inherited by Tsangyang Gyatso as the reincarnation of the former Dalai Lamas. After that, I will present the story of Tsangyang Gyatso according to the major historical resources to demonstrate how Tsangyang Gyatso was, as Lifan Yuan reported, abnormal and disordered. By doing that, I argue that this complex figure of Tsangyang Gyatso generates serious problems for Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye in his writing of the Secret Biography.

The Competition: The Early Dalai Lamas

Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism, also known as the yellow sect, was founded by Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) following his reformatory movement based on the teachings of Kadampa school. The posthumously recognized first Dalai Lama Gedun Drupa (1391–1474) was one of the major disciples of Tsongkhapa. The second Dalai Lama Gedun Gyatso (1475-1542) was also posthumously recognized. Tsongkhapa, Gedun Drupa, and Gedun Gyatso lived in a period of political division when Tibet was separated by Phagmodrupa power (1354–1618) based in Eastern Tibet Ü and the newly rose Rinpungpa power (1435–1565) based in Western Tibet Tsang area.

According to DiValerio, the division between Phagmodrupa and Rinpungpa was not a mere political division, but also a competition between different Buddhist sects
and localisms. Phagmodrupa, although founded upon the monastic power of Phagmodru of Kagyupa school, was open to different sects, and was very supportive to Gelugpa school, especially when compared to Rinpungpa. Rinpungpa, on the other hand, most favored the Karma sect of Kagyupa school. Rinpungpa family had been the ministers of Phagmodrupa in the beginning and revolted partly for the religious reasons. DiValerio’s analysis of this period is from the Karma Kagyupa’s perspective through the “madmen” phenomenon but also sheds light on the situation that the Gelugpa masters faced as the competitors of the Karma Kagyu madmen. Furthermore, by giving the readers an overview of the Kagyupa teachings, I want to introduce the major disputing points in Tibetan Buddhism which helps to prepare for the later analysis of the *Secret Biography*.

The Kagyupa school was founded by the famous translator Marpa and carried forward by his disciple Milarepa. Marpa was the first person to introduce the tantric teachings from India to the snow-land of Tibet. The name “Kagyu” literally means the transmission of words in Tibetan. For this reason, the typical statue of Milarepa has his right hand on the side of his ear, meaning to listen. One of the madmen addressed by DiValerio, Tsangnyön Heruka (madman from Tsang, the Heruka; 1452-1507), was famous for being the biographer of Milarepa. Tsangnyön Heruka was approximately the contemporary of the second Dalai Lama Gedun Gyatso, thus they were living under

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4 Ibid, 129.

similar political and religious environment. Also lived in this era were the other two
major madmen addressed by DiValerio, Ünyön Künga Zangpo (madman from Ü,
Künga Zangpo; 1458-1532) and Drukpa Kunley (1455–1529), and their many disciples
all living in the style following their masters, namely as madmen.

As madmen, they wore human remains—skins, intestines, and ashes—as
clothes and ornaments. They carry religious utensils made from human bones, such as
skull cup, thigh-bone horn, and skin drum. Both the madmen from Ü and Tsang had at
least once eaten the brain from a human corpse died of smallpox according to their
respective biographies. They would sexually assault women and prostrate to an old
man’s impotent member. They would do these abnormal activities in the marketplace in
front of the crowd or in the palace in front of the king to shock them. Unlike most
Buddhist monks in the world who observe celibacy, they would get married or have
disciple-concubines. Although Tibetan medicine acknowledges the disease of being
mentally disordered with the same word nyön, these madmen were actually
traditionally not only not considered ill but even conceived as saints. DiValerio defines
their behavior as religious performative.6

As DiValerio explains, the standard traditional explanation for the madmen’s
behavior was from the doctrinal perspective, that these mad saints were able to pierce
through the illusory appearance of the world to see the empty nature of things.
Although there were minor disagreements about whether the mad behaviors were the
natural and inevitable side-effect of the ultimate understanding, the teaching for people

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6 Ibid, 223.
to see that there is no difference between the two polar opposites, or their self-training to experience the ultimate truth, it was generally agreed that these madmen had attained or were on the way to the attainment of the high spiritual achievement. For this reason, people regard them as highly achieved masters.7

Still, it is amazing that the simple (or not) Buddhist principle of the emptiness could generate such horrible yet justifiable behaviors of the madmen. Surely, as DiValerio discovers, different from the traditional ones, there were also reasons existing on the conventional levels that directed the madmen onto this particular way of performing. As explained above, the time that the madmen and the first Dalai Lamas lived was comparatively unstable both politically and religiously. The newly risen popular Gelugpa set considerably challenge to the Kagyupa masters in their preaching and attracting patrons. Forced by both outer and inner, social and psychological pressure, the Kagyupa master started to strictly stick to their own doctrine to emphasize their identity in a purist way. It is the tantric practice that in the meditative visualization, the practitioners should identify themselves with their personal tantric deity. However, the madmen, for example, Tsangnyön Heruka, as his name presents, brought the mental practice into the real life and decorated himself according to Heruka, the wrathful tantric deity known as “the blood-drinker” in Tibetan.8

What the madmen emphasized by their behavior was not simply the tantric practice, since tantra was a common practice among all sects of Tibetan Buddhism thus

7 Ibid, 66-7.
8 Ibid, 56.
could not distinguish their Kagyu identity from other sects, especially the Gelugpa. The major difference between Kagyupa and Gelugpa is whether they prioritize the scholarly learning of the doctrines or the tantric practice. According to the Gelugpa teaching, student-monks should first learn the doctrines, while tantric practice can only be very carefully conducted after the monk achieves a high level of learning. Nevertheless, the tantric practice was only limited to the spiritual sphere through meditation and visualization. For example, Tsongkhapa resolved the conflict between the tantric sexual practice and the monastic law of celibacy by explaining that the real sexual practice was to be conducted during meditation with a visualized dakini. By contrast, Kagyupa, especially the madmen, disregarded monastic and scholarly training but values practice. There is a similar scenario in the biographies of both madmen of Ü and Tsang that they started their training in a certain monastery, only finding what they learned not helpful, and finally threw themselves into the tantric practice outside of the monastery. Also, there are several cases that the madmen encountered the Gelug scholars, where the madmen were described as highly achieved, the Gelug scholars ignorant.⁹ The teachings of Kagyupa, as its name demonstrates, was mainly transmitted orally instead of through written books. In a word, the Karma Kagyu madmen, by prioritizing and strictly sticking to the tantric practice, highlights their sectarian identity to differentiate from the Gelugpa.

Through this overview from the opposite perspective, we can get a taste of the gravity of the situation under which the first Dalai Lamas had lived. The general picture

⁹ Ibid, 22-38.
was that the Gelugpa was from the east and the Kagyupa was from the west.
Tsongkhapa came from Tsongkha in Amdo area according to the traditional Tibetan
geography and was mainly active in Eastern Tibet Ü and Amdo. The biggest patron for
Gelugpa in this period was Phagmodrupa in Ü. The teachings of Kagyupa, on the other
hand, came from India in the west. Their patrons included the Rinpungpa in Tsang and
the Guge Kingdom in Ngari on the far west. The joint influence of politics and localism
complicated the competition between Kagyupa and Gelugpa.¹⁰

What also needs to be mentioned is that, although there was fierce competition
between the political and religious powers, the two sides were not like enemy countries
that completely block the entrance of each other. As introduced above, one of the
madmen, Ünyön, or the madman of Ü, obviously had great influence, popularity, and
reputation in Gelugpa's sphere. The first Dalai Lama Gedun Drupa established the Tashi
Lhunpo Monastery in the city of Shigatse in Tsang with the patronage of the local
nobles. The second Dalai Lama was born and found out in Tsang, and following the
first also became the abbot of that monastery. Under these masters, there were
numerous disciples of both schools being active in the sphere of each other. In this
period of time there was no obvious priority of the Gelugpa in Tibet compared to other
schools, the Dalai Lamas had also not yet enjoyed the supremacy in the school, not to
say the whole Tibet.

The Foundation: The Third Dalai Lama

¹⁰ Ibid, 121.
It was into this severe competition that the Third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso (1543-1588) was born. Different from his two pre-incarnations who were born and raised in Tsang, Sonam Gyatso was born near Lhasa in Ü. Sonam Gyatso was not brought to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery but was enthroned in Drepung Monastery in Lhasa, one of the three great Gelug monastic universities established by some other disciples of Tsongkhapa.

The meeting between the third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso and Altan Khan in 1577 was deemed to be particularly important for its profound influence on the later times. Altan Khan bestowed on Sonam Gyatso the title “the All-Knowing Saint Vajradhara Dalai Lama,” which was only retrospectively and posthumously given to his two pre-incarnations Gedun Drupa and Gedun Gyatso.\(^1\) In this respect, Sonam Gyatso was indeed the *de facto* “first” Dalai Lama. In return, Sonam Gyatso bestowed on Altan Khan the title of “the Thousand Gold Dharma-Wheel Turner Chakravarti Sechen Khan.”\(^2\) By this meeting and exchange of title, the Gelugpa order was formally established, and the third Dalai Lama personally well respected, in the land of Mongols.

It was the third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso who initiated the wide influence of the reputation of the Dalai Lama which was inherited by his successors.

The story between Sonam Gyatso and Altan Khan was recorded in *the History of Ming Dynasty* under the entry “the Great Treasurable Dharma Kings of Tibet:”

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\(^2\) Ibid, 33.
In the Middle of Jiajing (1522-1566), numerous dharma kings paid tributes, which did not end even in the reign of Shenzong (1563-1620). At that time there was a monk Sonam Gyatso who knew the affairs of the past and the future and was called a living Buddha. Shunyi King Altan Khan also worshiped and believed in him. In the seventh year of Wanli (the reign of Shenzong, 1579), in the name of receiving the living Buddha, (Altan Khan) westwardly attacked the Oirat and was defeated. This monk (Sonam Gyatso) accused him of violating the Buddhist law and being bloodthirsty and advised him to go back east. Altan Khan also advised this monk to connect with China. ……This monk had some exceptional techniques to tame people, and no one of the various foreign tribes did not follow his teaching. Even the great treasurable dharma kings and the various Chanhua Kings (rulers of Phagmodrupa) also prostrated to him and proclaim to be his disciples. From then on, the West only knows to obey this monk; the various foreign kings only had their empty thrown but were no longer able to carry out their order.13

*The History of Ming Dynasty* presents a similar portrait of the third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso to that reflected from the Origins of the Mongols. Sonam Gyatso was all-knowing, well aware of the affairs of the past and the future, including the past lives of his own and others’. He was apparently a good monk, always stopping people from killing, no matter it was to kill a horse or to start a war. He had exceptional techniques.

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13 *The History of Ming* (明史), “the Great Treasurable Dharma Kings of Tibet,” [https://zh.m.wikisource.org/wiki/明史/卷331](https://zh.m.wikisource.org/wiki/明史/卷331).
to tame people. He would miraculously know that Altan Khan was making demerit and appear in front of him to teach. He had high reverence, worshiped by Altan Khan and other foreign tribes. Both the third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso and Altan Khan was benefited in the meeting and the exchange of titles. Since the time of Genghis Khan, only the descendants of the royal family were legitimated to be the rulers of the Mongolian people; the closer the blood tie was, the more legitimated the descendant was. Altan Khan was not advanced in this respect, thus the title bestowed by the third Dalai Lama empowered him through the legitimation of the dharma.

However, the devil is in the detail. The third Dalai Lama was put above Altan Khan on their status in both resources. In the Origin of Mongols, every time when Sonam Gyatso and Altan Khan was put side by side, Sonam Gyatso occupies the first and Altan Khan being the second. The History of Ming Dynasty clearly states that Sonam Gyatso had everyone’s worship and obedience, leaving the khans with empty thrown, which supposedly includes Altan Khan. This judgement is problematic when more information is taken into consideration. Phagpa Lama was the fifth patriarch of Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism, also the imperial preceptor of the first emperor of Yuan dynasty China and fifth Khagan of the Mongol Empire, Kubilai. The title that Sonam Gyatso bestowed on Altan Khan, the “Thousand Gold Dharma-Wheel Turner Chakravarti Sechen Khan,” was the same one that Phagpa Lama bestowed on Kubilai Khan, further equalizing the two Khans. The relationship between Phagpa Lama and Kubilai Khan was not an equal one, but Kubilai Khan was the ruler and Phagpa Lama the server. All the power that Phagpa had enjoyed was given to him from the authority
of Kubilai Khan. Although in exchange Phagpa provided Kubilai Khan religious power, the two powers were not considered on a par in practice. In the same way, Altan Khan was the ruler and Sonam Gyatso the server. Altan Khan remitted Sonam Gyatso from tax, but the presumption, at least ideally, was that Altan Khan was legitimated to collect tax from Sonam Gyatso, which confirms their ruler-server relationship.

Not only the interpretation of Sonam Gyatso’s being higher than Altan Khan was problematic, but the power of Sonam Gyatso over Tibet and even the importance of the meeting itself was questionable. Altan Khan granted Sonam Gyatso the power and priority in Tibet, but since he did not have control over Tibet, his words were just words. At that time, Tibet was in the hands of Phagmodrupa and Rinpungpa; none of them offered the ruling power to Sonam Gyatso. Moreover, Sonam Gyatso never had a chance to practice the power from Altan Khan, because he did not go back to Tibet after the meeting and preached dharma in the land of Mongolia until his death.

Sonam Gyatso did establish a strong relationship with Altan Khan, so that his reincarnation, the fourth Dalai Lama Yonten Gyatso (1589–1617) was found within Mongolian royal family who happened to be Altan Khan’s great-grandson. While Gelugpa was strong among the Mongols, it was not the case in Tibet. Yonten Gyatso went “back” to Tibet with a crowd of Tibetan and Mongolian attendants. Later, he was forced to leave by the attack of the Kagyupa and their supporters and finally died on the age of mere twenty-seven.14 After the forth’s death, the situation became worse. The newly rose power Tsangpa from Tsang area supported Kagyupa, banned the

14 Schwieger, The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China, 36.
reincarnation succession of Dalai Lama lineage.\textsuperscript{15} The power of Gelugpa was so weak in Tibet that they could not even protect their own Dalai Lama, and Tibet seems to be too faraway for the Tümed Mongols to interfere.

The meeting between Sonam Gyatso and Altan Khan was regarded as the second introduction of Buddhism to the Mongols, the importance of which was only secondary to that of Phagpa Lama and Kubilai Khan, the first introduction of Buddhism to the Mongols. The influence of the prior Dalai Lamas, either the real influence or the portrayed influence, was relative to the problem of the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso. Especially, when at his time the portrait of the Dalai Lama was already established, it did not matter whether the portrait was historically accurate or not.

**The Great Fifth**

Finally, it was the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617-1682) who, on top of the effort of his pre-incarnations, ended the turmoil and reunited Tibet into his one hand of both highest religious and highest political authority. He was not born to advanced conditions for his victory, but to a more severe sectarian conflict than his pre-incarnations. Unlike the time of the early Dalai Lamas when the competition was mostly on the local level inside of Tibet, at Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso’s time, while Gelugpa had earned considerable ally power from the Mongols, Kagyupa arrived at their highest of the inner-Tibet power. In 1618, Tsangpa King defeated Phagmodrupa and gained the control of most of Ü. As mentioned above, the reincarnation succession of the forth Dalai Lama, which is to say the search of the Fifth Dalai Lama, was banned

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 38-45.
by the Tsangpa ruler. Nonetheless, the Gelug lamas still secretly did the search and located several candidates.\textsuperscript{16}

According to the autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, in 1621, the Mongols and the Tsangpa army fight in Lhasa, and several Gelug lamas negotiated between them. The result was that Sera monastery and Drepung monastery, the major Gelug monastery occupied by Tsangpa around Lhasa was returned to Gelugpa, and the Gelug monasteries in both Ü and Tsang that were forced to change sect were returned. After this incident, the Gelug lamas decided the true reincarnation of the fourth by drawing lots in front of a statue of Manjushri. They reported the result to the Tsangpa government. The Tsangpa officials tried to persuade the Gelug lamas to bring the reincarnation to Tashi Lhunpo monastery, and promised to provide all the supply and to give grand welcome to the reincarnation. The Gelug lamas declined the suggestion and hinted with the Mongol threat. The Tsangpa officials finally gave in.\textsuperscript{17}

It is not explained in the autobiography, but clearly the Mongols who sided with Gelugpa had slightly upper hand in the Lhasa fight, but not too much. In Tibet, it was still the Tsangpa government, the Kagyupa support, who had decisive power. Phagmodrupa had gone, and there was no local power protecting Gelugpa. The Gelugpa monks had to report the results of their lama’s reincarnation to the Tsangpa ruler.\textsuperscript{18} Fortunately, Gelugpa had the support of the Mongols. They had not yet fully controlled Tibet, but their influence was strong enough to give Gelugpa proper protection. The


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
Mongols were the final strength of Gelugpa and their only bargaining chip in their interaction with the Tsangpa government.

The support from the Mongols for Gelugpa had never suspended since the third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso. If we do not want to take the charisma of the reincarnating Dalai Lama as the only explanation, some other people must have been significantly involved. One of them was Sonam Chophel (1595-1658). As Karmay puts it, “Sonam Chophel, treasurer of the Ganden Palace, was the prime architect of the Gelug’s rise to political power.” Sonam Chophel had been the the chief attendant of the fourth Dalai Lama, thus familiar with the Mongols. He also participated in the search for the fifth Dalai Lama. Sonam Chophel adopted the strategy of advising the Mongol tribes sided with them to attack the Mongol and Tibetan tribes that supported the Tsangpa government. The most outstanding Mongol leader was Gushri Khan (1582-1655), the head of Khoshut tribe. In 1637, Gushri Khan visited Lhasa as a pilgrim and received an audience with the fifth Dalai Lama.

In 1640, several Mongol leaders from Khalkha and Oirat assembled together and came up with the Great Code. Gushri Khan as the head of Khoshut tribe was one of the four Oirats, thus was also involved. The Mongolian word used to describe the order established by this Great Code was törö, the same expression that was used in the alliance between Southern Mongols and Manchus, the later Qing.

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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Qi Guang, *Mongolian Politics and Society During the Qing: with a focus on the Alashan Khoshut Tribe* (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2013), 28.
Another event happened in the paralleling timeline to the 1640 alliance was the conquering of Tsangpa power by Gushri Khan. It was likely that both events working together established the supremacy of the Dalai Lama within and outside Tibet and changed the Mongols’ activity in Tibet. In responding to the invitation of Sonam Chophel, in 1641, Gushri Khan made a surprise attack on Tsangpa army and defeated them. In 1642, Gushri Khan gave the entire Tibet as offering to Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso following the pattern established by Kubilai Khan and Phagpa Lama. By this offering, the Dalai Lama officially became the leader of Tibet, having both religious and political power in his hand. In the same year, the twenty-five years old Dalai Lama wrote a revisionist history of the Tibetan Kings and Ministers, establishing Gushri Khan as the destined King. Gushri Khan assigned Sonam Chophel as Desi, the regent for the Dalai Lama. In the political structure, the Dalai Lama was on the top, assisted by regent Sonam Chophel; Gushri Khan, though not involved directly, had considerable influence by appointing the Desi. Therefore, although the Dalai Lama had higher status, Gushri Khan relying on his military power and his jurisdiction of assigning the Desi had more control over Tibetan affairs.

The old residence of Ganden podrang in Drepung Monastery no longer fit the change of Dalai Lama’s identity from the mere sectarian religious leader to a leader with both religious and political authority of the whole Tibet. In 1645, a new palace started to be built on Potala hill. The construction of the new palace had more

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22 Karmay, "The Great Fifth."

23 Ibid.
meaning than a mere formal residence. The Potala hill was the location that Songtsen Gampo had built his palace. Songtsen Gampo was considered the first king who united the whole Tibetan plateau. By building upon the remains of Songtsen Gampo’s palace, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso assumed the same political status as Songtsen Gampo and inherited his legacy. In this way, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso’s political authority was reinforced. In another respect, Potala Hill was the mystical residence of Avalokiteśvara. Songtsen Gampo was considered to be the reincarnation of Avalokiteśvara. As it is well known, the Dalai Lamas were also considered to be the reincarnation of Avalokiteśvara. In addition, Phagpa Lama was also considered the reincarnation of Avalokiteśvara. As a result, both Songtsen Gampo and Phagpa Lama were the pre-incarnations of Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, though untraceable. Therefore, the holiness of Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso was emphasized. By the construction of the new Potala Palace, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso underlined both the political and religious qualification and supremacy of the Dalai Lama lineage.

In 1653, by the invitation of the Qing emperor Shunzhi, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso visited Beijing. According to the autobiography of Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, the emperor gave Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso a grand reception at his arrival. During his staying, regularly, various princes, officials, and monks visited him, gave him offering, and received teaching from him. The Emperor asked the Dalai Lama to resolve a religious conflict. At that time there was a Mongolian monk Neichi Toin self-claimed to

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be the reincarnation of Tsongkhapa who taught unprecedented tantra and gave out money to people. He had became famous among the Mongols very soon, and was envied by a Nomonqan who reported bad things about him to the emperor. Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso commented that Neichi Toin had a pure heart not enough religious achievement, on which respect the Nomonqan was right, but unfortunately it was out of envy but not for the goodness of dharma. He resolved the conflict accordingly, and both sides accepted the judgement. From his activities in Beijing, it seems that at this point the Dalai Lama was treated more of a figure of religion and seldom a figure of politics. Apart from the emperor asking him about the news in Ü and Tsang in the welcome reception—a general question that is proper for any guest coming from a faraway place—all the activities of Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso were religious related. In addition, in the religious activities involving him, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso always assumed a high status. The religious authority of Dalai Lama was then reconfirmed by his activities in Beijing.

The Dalai Lama ended his visit in Beijing in two month. The leaving of the Dalai Lama generated a dispute in the Qing court and the final decision did not come out until several months. According to the Veritable Records of Qing:

On the twenty-first day of the first month, the Dalai Lama reported that he was not acclimatized to Beijing and he and his attendants were all ill, so he asked to leave. The emperor ordered the princes and the officials to discuss. One side argues: “since the lama was specially invited, the emperor should ask about his

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condition. If his words are proper, his requests should be accepted; if not, stop there. If the lama is ignored and caused to leave angrily, the Khalkhas and the Oirats will certainly revolt.” Another side argues: “if the lama is asked but his request was not accepted, he must be angry. Our dynasty is protected by the heaven. When we conquered the various places and achieved the great cause, there was no lama. Since the lama was specially invited, we should gave him gold, silver, and silk, and grant him a title with the seal and book. It is proper not to ask him.”

First of all, the emperor showed his concern for the issue related to the Dalai Lama to the extent that he need the court to discuss such a detail as whether to show their care on the health condition about the Dalai Lama. That is to say, the emperor (probably also the officials, since the emperor was just a fourteen years old teenager at that time) acknowledged that the issues related to the Dalai Lama had the potentiality to generate sever influence. While there was disagreement on how to respond to the report of the Dalai Lama, both sides knew that they should make the Dalai Lama happy, and the reason for that was to make the Khalkhas and the Oirats satisfied. Tibet was too faraway and still out of the control of Qing at this time. Although the Dalai Lama was just established as the head of Tibet both politically and religiously, Qing did not care too much about his influence in Tibet. What had been concerned was the Dalai Lama’s

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26 The Veritable History of Qing, 21th day of the first month of the tenth year of Shunzhi, http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/mqlc/hanjishilu/?@6^1786162582^807^~~702110110005007400010020^41@@1610248827.
influence on the Mongols who had direct contact with Qing. It was for political reasons that Qing valued the Dalai Lama.

While in Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso’s autobiography it was his religious authority that prioritized him in Beijing, Qing did not buy it. For the Qing, what had been concerned was not the Dalai Lama’s religious authority, but the Dalai Lama’s religious influence. The Dalai Lama did not have much religious authority over the Qing, but only over the Mongols, which became his religious influence on the Mongols, especially the Khalkhas and Oirats, that was concerned by Qing. One side of the court stated that they were protected by the heaven, another religious system not in the cosmology of Buddhism, meaning that Buddhism was not pervasively accepted by the officials, not to say Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism. They generalized the Dalai Lama to “lama” in their argument, thus at this time the Dalai Lama was not specialized from the group of lamas. He was just a lama, probably a more important one because of his religious influence on the Mongols, but still a mere lama.

Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso saw his visit to Beijing as of religious importance of increasing his authority while Qing saw it as of political importance of stabilizing the Khalkhas and Oirats, but both perspectives agreed that it was through his religious activities as a religious figure that these purposes were realized. When talking about the cause of Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, the offerings of Gushri Khan is always taken as the decisive help. But certainly, the Great Code of the Khalkhas and Oirats should have some roles in propagating Gelugpa and promoting the state of the Dalai Lama. If Gushri Khan, a leader of Oirat Mongols, was the only help, it is hard to explain why the
Qing saw the Dalai Lama as having equal influence on both the Khalkhas and the Oirats. Still, from Dalai Lama’s visit in Beijing, Qi’s argument of the Dalai Lama being the Khan of the Khalkha-Oirat alliance might take it too far. Since he was seen as a pure religious figure, the direct political role of the Dalai Lama was either not realized or not been aware by the Qing at this point.

According to Ngawang Lobson Gyatso’s autobiography, he set off from Beijing on the twentieth of the second month. It was as late as in the fifth month that the final decision from the court reached him when he was half way back and out of the Great Wall pass. The Dalai Lama seemed to have a different mindset from the Qing people—he had already met many Mongol princes or their envoys on his way, but he did not mention a single word of unsatisfaction as predicted by Qing. When the granted title with the golden seal and golden book reached him, the Dalai Lama complained nothing but that the Tibetan on the seal by a Mongolian and was ill translated.27

In his 1653 visit to Beijing, the Dalai Lama played rare political role, but things had changed since then. In the end, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso took away the jurisdiction to assign the Desi from the Khoshut Khan into his own hand. According to Oyunbilig, the significant turning point for Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso was the gap between the death of Gushri Khan’s son Dayan Khan in 1668 and the enthronement of his another son Dalai Khan in 1671.28 The Desi at that time, Thrinley Gyatso, died as well in 1668 after Dayan Khan. The position of the Khan being empty, there was no


assignment for the new Desi. In 1669, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso took the chance and assigned Lobsang Thutop as his Desi. When Dalai Khan was enthroned in 1671, he had no choice but to accept the fait accompli.

Since 1671, there had been confirmed evidence for the Dalai Lama playing a political role in the Mongolian society in the Mongol House Archive of the Palace Archive (宮中档蒙古堂档). For example, in the sixth month of 1671, the Khoshut taijis responded to the Qing court that they refused to move out from the grassland because there was no order from the Dalai Lama. The nomadic area of the Mongols was not a religious related affair, but the taijis now felt comfortable to use Dalai Lama as an excuse directly interfering this issue. In the third month of 1672, Dalai Khan reported to Shunzhi emperor that Dalai Lama enthroned him as the Khan and asked for Qing’s recognition. At this point, the Dalai Lama had the power not only to grant a decorative title to the Mongol princes, but to decide whom to be the Khan. Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso in his autobiography, in accordance to Dalai Khan’s report, recorded that he sent an envoy to Amdo Kokonor to discuss how to decide the new Khoshut Khan. Therefore, the 1670s was not, as Oyunbilig argues, the beginning of the Dalai Lama competing with the Khoshut Khan for political power of Tibet, but the time that the Dalai Lama had already gained considerable political authority even among the Mongols.

29 Qi Guang, *Mongolian Politics and Society During the Qing*, 55-63.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
The Interspace and the Fraud: Sangye Gyatso

Sangye Gyatso (1653-1705) was a disciple of the fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso and was raised up in the Potala Palace by the Dalai Lama himself since eight years old. Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso assigned Sangye Gyatso as Desi in 1679. Sangye Gyatso was outstanding and exceptionally satisfied Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso. In his autobiography, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso commented that Sangye Gyatso was “different from other Desis in dealing with the two kinds of affairs of politics and religion; his execution is the same as myself dealing with the affairs.”

In 1682, three years after the assignment of Sangye Gyatso, the fifth Dalai Lama passed away. The young and ambitious Desi concealed the death of the Dalai Lama. Instead, he announced that the Dalai Lama was in retreat, avoiding meeting anyone other than himself. The concealment was as long as fifteen years, during which Sangye Gyatso acted in the name of the Dalai Lama. Therefore, although Sangye Gyatso was not one of the Dalai Lamas, what he did in his reign actually added to the figuration and reputation of the Dalai Lama. While the Dalai Lama directly before Tsangyang Gyatso was Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, it was the Dalai Lama played by Sangye Gyatso who directly influenced the potency of Tsangyang Gyatso when he became the Dalai Lama. It turned out that Sangye Gyatso’s execution was not the same as the old Dalai Lama, at least from Kangxi emperor’s perspective.

Galdan Boshugtu Khan had been the biggest trouble for the Shunzhi emperor in those years. In 1696, Shunzhi emperor went to Ningxia personally to conduct the war against Galdan. From the Oirat captives, Kangxi emperor learned the interactions between the “Dalai Lama” and Galdan. On June eleventh, the vice colonel (fudutong, 副都统) Ananda reported to the emperor the details about the triumph against Galdan:

“according to the captives, when Galdan was escaping, his people complained a lot. Galdan said, ‘in the beginning I did not want to come to the place of Kelulun. I was incited by the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama wronged me, and I in turn wronged you people.’”33 Indeed, it was the Desi acting in the name of the Dalai Lama and informed Galdan that “it was auspicious to go eastward.” In addition, during the 1690 Battle of Ulan Butung, Desi Sangye Gyatso dispatched Jilong Hutuktu to recite sūtras for Galdan and to choose the date to start the battle. When Galdan was defeated, he pretended to negotiate between Qing and Dzungar but actually won time for Galdan to escape. Later when Desi was killed by Lhabzang Khan, Kangxi emperor was reminded of the deeds of him and summed:

In the past, when the fifth Dalai Lama was still alive, for sixty years there had been not a single issue outside the Great Wall passes; everyone was peaceful. From this it is known that he was always outstanding in his deeds. Later when the Dalai Lama died, although the Desi kept it quiet, it was visible that his words of report was not the mood of the Dalai Lama. Thus I knew that the Dalai

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33 Veritable Records of Qing, eighteenth of the fifth month, the thirty-fifth year of Kangxi (康熙三十五年丙子五月十八日癸酉), http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/mqlc/hanjishilu?@6^1786162582^802^^^70211011006017600010018@@2075740851.
Lama was died, and dispatched envoys to detect, by which I learned his fraud.

Since the Dalai Lama was died, the Desi thereupon incited Galdan to make trouble in various places.\textsuperscript{34}

We know from the palace archives that Kangxi emperor heard of the death of the Dalai Lama from the captive in the war against Galdan, which he did not fully confirm until the Desi sent Nyima Thang Hutuktu to explain the issue, thus, a part of the summary could well be the emperor’s boast.\textsuperscript{35} Still, from the summary, we can see that although the emperor allowed Sangye Gyatso to be the Desi for another ten years during Tsangyang Gyatso’s reign, the emperor did hate him for his incitement of Galdan during the fifteen years without Dalai Lama. On the other hand,

On September sixth, Kangxi Emperor dispatched envoy Baozhu to send his edicts to Dalai Lama, Dalai Khan, Panchen Lama, Desi Sangye Gyatso, and Tsewang Arabtan.\textsuperscript{36} The edicts were meant to acknowledge them about the triumph against Galdan Boshugtu Khan and to ask for assistance. While there were five receivers, the principal target of the Kangxi Emperor was the Desi. At this time, the Kangxi Emperor had been almost sure about the death of the fifth Dalai Lama. Although there was an edict to the Dalai Lama, it was likely to be a performance. In the edict to Desi, Kangxi

\textsuperscript{34} Veritable Records of Qing, twenty-second of the tenth month, the forty-fifth year of Kangxi (康熙四十五年丙戌十月二十二日丙午), http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/mlc/hanjishilu?@6^1786162582^802^8021101100060230000100010020@1680162411.

\textsuperscript{35} Veritable Records of Qing, twenty-ninth of the sixth month, the thirty-fifth year of Kangxi (康熙三十五年丙子六月二十九日癸丑), http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/mlc/hanjishilu?@6^1786162582^802^8021101100060177000100010026@2008112458.

\textsuperscript{36} Tsewang Arabtan was the son of Sengge and nephew of Galdan. He helped Kangxi emperor in the war against Galdan.
emperor did point out the death of the Dalai Lama in a confirmative mood and scolded
the Desi of causing instability in the northeast in the name of the Dalai Lama. The
emperor required the Desi to explain in detail the death of the Dalai Lama, to send the
Panchen Lama to meet him, to seize Jilong Hutuktu who helped Galdan, and to send the
daughter of Galdan who married another Mongolian prince, otherwise he wold send
troops to attack the Desi. In the oral order to the envoy Baozhu, Kangxi emperor
centered on how to respond to various reactions of the Desi and did not care about other
receivers.

Due to the long distance, the oral respond of the Desi did not reach the emperor
until February twentieth, 1697, through the letter of Baozhu, and the formal written
respond reached the emperor as late as March sixteenth, half year after the edict.
According to Baozhu, Desi Sangye Gyatso’s oral respond was very humble:

I am extreme little and lowly. Thanks to the promotion of the Holy Manjushri
Emperor, I became the King of Tibet. I was just about to consider how to repay
the gratitude and to offer service. How dare I to violate the order of the
Manjushri Emperor and the Dalai Lama and to be partial to Galdan? Since you
the holy lord are bodhisattva Manjushri, please consider my situation and
pardon me. The reason for me enjoying the glory and comfort is the gratitude of
the Manjushri Emperor and the Dalai Lama. If I betray the Manjushri Emperor
and prefer other people, I will not live long; if I conceive a second thought
toward the Manjushri Emperor and the Dalai Lama, I will not die a natural
death. In a word, I have nothing to say other than following your edict sincerely.\(^3^7\)

Seeing this, Kangxi emperor was content and said:

The Desi was threatened and scared. He completely followed my order. The words of his report is polite. He stated the situation of himself and asked for pity.\(^3^8\)

The Desi’s words as reported by Baozhu was in fact pitiful, but he refused all the orders of the emperor with various reasons. Sangye Gyatso might felt the death of the Dalai Lama impossible to be further concealed, thus sent Nyima Thang Hutuktu to explain it secretly in person, but in both the oral and written responds he still insisted that the Dalai Lama was alive and would quit his retreat within the year. He did not admit that it was him preventing the Panchen Lama from going to meet the emperor, but said that the Panchen Lama himself did not want to go to China because he had not yet had smallpox. He explained that Jilong Hutuktu was out of town, and hinted that the husband of Galdan’s daughter was out of the control of him. Indeed, at this time Qing had not yet have direct control over Tibet. Kangxi emperor could only press them diplomatically, and the press could not be too much because they still need the Dalai Lama to stabilize the Mongols.

\(^3^7\) The First Historical Archive of China (ed.). The Comprehensive Translation of the Manchu Imperial Memorials with Cinnabar Comments in Kangxi Period / 康熙朝滿文朱批奏折全译 (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1996), 136-37.

\(^3^8\) Ibid.
Since the time of the establishment, Gelugpa was always related to the east. The religious revolution came from Tsongkha joined the competition in Tibet in fourteenth century, adding more layers to the already disintegrated land of snow. By the support of Phagmodrupa, Gelugpa gradually became more and more powerful. When the Tsangpa Kings sided with Kagyupa gained power, Phagmodrupa was weakened, Gelugpa as well. The third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso who went to the Mongol Altan Khan won new support. By the recognition of the great-grandson of Altan Khan as the fourth Dalai Lama, the relationship between Gelugpa and the Mongols was strengthened. Thanks to the Mongol military power, the Panchen Lama was able to negotiate with the Tsangpa King to lift the ban on searching for the fifth Dalai Lama. Thanks to Gushri Khan, the fifth Dalai Lama gained the supremacy in Tibet both religiously and politically. It is fair to say that if it was not the help of the Mongols, the story of the Gelugpa would have been very different, or even there might be no story of Gelugpa. Therefore, from the Gelugpa’s perspective, the Mongols were an inseparable part of their history.

For Qing, at the time when they started to contact Tibet, the fifth Dalai Lama was already enthroned. In other words, the Tibet known to Qing emperor was led by the Gelug order. During the reign of Shunzhi emperor and Kangxi emperor, Tibet was out of their reach and the Mongols were their immediate concern. The situation of the northeast that the Qing emperors walked in was that all the Mongols revered and followed the order of the Dalai Lama. As it was openly stated, the reason for the Qing to invite the fifth Dalai Lama to Beijing was for the Mongols, and the expected reactions of the Mongols were decisive in the Qing treatment of the Dalai Lama.
Religiously, there was no worship from the Qing to the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama—as well as the Gelug order behind him—was valued as a person who had great religious influence over the Mongols which could generate considerable political consequence, instead of a person of religious authority. Thus, for Qing, Gelugpa and the Mongols was also inseparable from the very beginning.

Probably the only side that did not see Gelugpa and the Mongols as necessarily combined was the Mongols themselves. Elverskog, after researching the Mongolian intellectual history, concludes that the exclusiveness of Gelugpa among the Mongols was a later Qing construction instead of a natural formation. He points out that Altan Khan simultaneously interacted with both the Gelugpa third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso and lamas from Kagyupa. While the Mongols did have multiple contact with different Buddhist sects, his conclusion that the exclusivity of Gelugpa was formed by Qing might be restricted by his limited focus on the “Inner Mongolia.” There is no reason to doubt the role played by Gushri Khan and the Oirats in promoting state of the Dalai Lama and the influence of the Dalai Lama on the Mongols before Qing’s extensive interference. From all three perspective, the importance of the Dalai Lama was not only locally rooted in Tibet, but was deeply related to the Mongols.

**The “Abnormal and Disordered” Sixth Dalai Lama**

While in the middle seventeenth century with the end of Tsangpa government, Gelugpa suppressed all other sects in Tibet, in Bhutan a successor of Kagyupa

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established a Buddhist theocracy. In 1683, a year after the death of the fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, his reincarnation was born to the descendant of the youngest brother of the Bhutanese master Pema Lingpa of Nyingmapa school. In Bhutan, Pema Lingpa was revered as the second important figure, the first being Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism. Pema Lingpa’s brother married into a Mönpa family, a minority group living in the borderline between Bhutan and Tibet. Because of his paternal lineage, Tsangyang Gyatso had a high level Nyingmapa background.

Tsangyang Gyatso was not most famous for his being a Dalai Lama, but for his being a poet. The first translation of Tsangyang Gyatso’s poems was published in 1931 by Yu Daoquan (chn. 于道泉) in both Chinese and English in Beijing. He obtained the Lhasa version woodblock print from Yonghe Palace Temple in Beijing from the three lama-officials dispatched by the thirteenth Dalai Lama to reside in Beijing. According to Yu, the collection of poems was attributed to the sixth Dalai Lama, although he doubted the attribution. This collection was so famous that all the Tibetan friends of Yu knew some lines of the poems. Yu also mentioned that one of his Tibetan friend said that the best biography of Tsangyang Gyatso was in Alashan, which is obviously the Secret Biography. However, it seemed that Yu was not aware of the content of the Secret Biography at that time.

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The woodblock print was arranged by two lines, and there was no separation between different poems. In total, it contained 237 lines. In his publication, Yu separated the lines according to the meaning into 54 sections. The major topic of the poems attributed to Tsangyang Gyatso was romantic love. More specifically, it mainly describes the poet’s love of various stages with various girls:

From the peak of the eastern mountain/ arises the bright white moon/

The face of the unborn mother/ in my heart, it appears.

……

If the person that entered my heart/ becomes my partner forever/

It is as if the treasure from the bottom of the sea/ was found.

……

The daughter of the high official/ if looking at her beautiful appearance/

It is like from the top of the high tree/ the ripen fruit.

……

Since I lost my heart thither/ my sleep in night was severed/

I did not hold her in the day/ my heart was tired.

……

The flower season disappeared/ the turquoise bee was not sorrow/

When my causal link with my love was cut/ I have no reason to be sad.

……

The task of the frost on grass/ was to be the envoy of the frosty wind/

Of the two of the bee and the flower/ the separator must be it.
Besides the apparent expression of love and emotion, these poems are also explained from other aspects. There are two major aspects, one religion and the other politics. While Gelugpa opposed the sexual tantra, there were many other sects supported it, and Nyingmapa was one of them. There was the custom that when doing the tantric practice, the lama should conceal their identity of a renouncer. Probably such was what Tsangyang Gyatso did and reflected through the poems. I will discuss more details supporting the Nyingma interpretation in the trace of Tsangyang Gyatso’s life. On the other hand, as Wickhamsmith argues, the poems could be Tsangyang Gyatso’s comment on his political life and the relationship among the Desi, Lhabzang Khan, and himself. Probably his environment prevented from talking about these issue openly, thus, to have a way of expression, Tsangyang Gyatso wrote these poems. Finally, it was of course also possible that these poems were simply expression of love. While Tsangyang Gyatso was controlled by Desi Sangye Gyatso, he was not a weak easy prey. He had his own strong character. In addition, as Chen Liming (陈立明) argues, the love topic of Tsangyang Gyatso could well come from the influence of Monpa folk song. According to the research of Chen, the style of Monpa folk song is very similar to the poems of Tsangyang Gyatso.

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The only record of Tsangyang Gyatso’s early life was composed by Sangye Gyatso. In this record, Tsangyang Gyatso had no speciality from a typical reincarnation before his enthronement. His birth was accompanied by several miracles, indicating the extraordinariness of the newborn boy. He proclaimed that he was the Great Fifth several times. He played with religious objects as his toys. He made models of the Potala Palace with mud and stone. He recognized every belonging of the Great Fifth showed to him and claimed that those were his. After the identity of the young boy in Mön was confirmed, the Desi dispatched two tutors to teach everything that the boy had to know to prepare for his enthronement. Indeed, as Aris comments, Sangye Gyatso “did all he could to mould his image of the Sixth in the form of the Fifth, not only in his writing but certainly also in those circumstances of the lama’s life over which he had direct control.”43

The boy’s link to Nyingmapa and tantric studies was not limited to his family background. It was recorded that several batches of spies from Bhutan had tried to approach and steal the boy. When he was four years old, the examiners who confirmed his identity as the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama started to conduce his learning. While other tutors were appointed later, it was the examiners who initiated him in his study. The two examiners were known not for their scholarly learning but was skilled in their tantric knowledge.44 Before the time of his enthronement, the Desi introduced to him people who was known to his pre-incarnation. According to Aris, “foremost among


these were the text-discoverer of Terdaklingpa of Mindröl Ling and the abbot Pema Thrinley of Dorjedrak, both of whom had been deeply involved in stimulating the Nyingmapa interests of the Great Fifth.” They had good communications and interactions on both religious and other issues. When the boy’s father died, two Nyingmapa lamas who had initiated the boy performed the father’s funeral. Different from the Gelugpa and similar to the Kagyupa, Nyingmapa prioritized tantric practice to scholarly learning. Nyingmapa, literally meaning the “old sect,” based their teaching on the scriptures excavated by the treasure-discoverers. Because of Pemalingpa who was one of the famous treasure-discoverers, the sects in Bhutan preferred Nyingmapa over Gelugpa, who was the leader of their enemy country, Tibet.

Due to the need of secrecy, the local governors who was in charge of the daily supply of the boy was only told that he was the reincarnation of the Shalu abbot. The personal enemy of the boy’s mother bribed the governors to treat them very bad. In the twelve years before the boy’s enthronement, the family lived their life in “a form of imprisonment. It was probably because of such kind of bad living environment and the heavy studying pressure put on him by the Desi that he later formed the character of rebellion and became, as Lifàn Yuan commented, an “abnormal and disordered” person. However, the norm and order that he broke was not likely the norm and order of Buddhism, but only the norm and order of Gelugpa. His behavior was explainable, if not reasonable, according to the tantra theories, as argued by many scholars.

46 Ibid, 134.
In 1697, after being ordained by the Panchen Lama and given the name of Tsangyang Gyatso, he was finally enthroned. Since then, the Desi composed the last four years of his recording in obstacle and mythical words according to the standard religious ritual while refrained from revealing any subjective reactions from Tsangyang Gyatso to the endless affairs arranged for him.\textsuperscript{47} However, since the enthronement, Tsangyang Gyatso was no longer hidden as a prisoner but lived under the public gaze. He would meet many other people, and his circumstance, as well as his reactions to the circumstance, would no longer be always under the control of the Desi. Since 1701, the Desi stopped to record the life of Tsangyang Gyatso, probably because he acted too excessive to be properly interpreted into a Gelugpa lama’s behavior. Some other people who had met Tsangyang Gyatso had some fragile record of several episodes of the abnormal life of the Dalai Lama.

In 1702, Tsangyang Gyatso visited the Panchen Lama in Shigatse, returned his novice vow and disrobed.\textsuperscript{48} Since then, Tsangyang Gyatso lived a quite freestyle life. According to Aris, there was at least one contemporary record of Tsangyang Gyatso’s abnormal life, which was the autobiography of Lelung Jedrung Lobsang Thrinley. There were three episodes related to the Dalai Lama in the book. In their first meeting, Lelung received his monastic name from Tsangyang Gyatso.

When the Dalai Lama finally turned up for the appointment he was in a hurry to be off and play archery behind the Potala with his friends, who were wearing all

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, 151.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, 155.
manners of strange clothes. With real mischief he told his major-domo jokingly that he was going to give the young Lelung incarnation the humorous name of “The Nun Tingting Drölma.”

In their second meeting, Tsangyang Gyatso was on his travel when he was encountered by Lelung. Tsangyang Gyatso was in a house at a village called Tsatingkha, together with Sangye Gyatso’s son Ngawang Rinchen, the Demo incarnation, and other attendants who were all drunk. Only the Dalai Lama himself was not drunk. The Dalai Lama “gave counsels, wrote compositions and sang songs without error, being not in the least bit altered [by the effect of alcohol].” The third episode had no direct presence of the Dalai Lama since he was already dead (or disappeared according to the Secret Biography). In this occasion Lelung met Lhabzang Khan at the hot springs of Ölkha and Lhabzang Khan talked about Tsangyang Gyatso, thoroughly remorseful for causing his downfall:

That Gongsa Tsangyang Gyatso had a wonderful charm, quite unlike ordinary people. He was tremendously bold, very different from the present Dalai Lama. He knew he was destined not to live beyond the age of twenty-five.”

Aris does not specify the time of these occasions, but he does mention that at the time of the second meeting, Ngawang Rinchen already succeeded his father Sangye Gyatso to be the Desi. The fact that the Desi Ngawang Rinchen still hanged out with Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso confirmed Aris’s judgement that in 1703 Sangye Gyatso

49 Ibid, 159.
50 Ibid, 159-60.
retained all power in his hand after handed over his position to his son. Since 1679 the appointment of the Desi to 1705 his own death, for twenty-six years, the highest power of Tibet was always in the hand of Desi.

Finally it was Lhabzang Khan who ended both the reign and the life of Desi Sangye Gyatso. Unlike his father Dalai Khan who lived in Lhasa but was fooled by the Desi all the time and was not aware of the death of the Great fifth for fifteen years, Lhabzang Khan was a thoughtful person with considerable potency. In the end of 1700, when Lhabzang was still a taiji, he moved westward from Kokonor without imperial order. The vice colonel Ananda sent secretary (ch. bitieshi, 笔帖式; manchu. bithesi) Changzai to trace him and to ask for his reason. According to Changzai, Lhabzang taiji had only several hundreds of people who were extremely poor due to the severe cold weather. Lhabzang taiji entrusted Changzai to bring Ananda his memorial to the emperor and his tribute of a bird gun, and explained that his moving westward was for no reason other than the force of Lama Shangnan Duoerji, otherwise known as Chakna lama. Baozhu impeached Chakna lama for forcing Lhabzang to move westward, being overbearing to Ananda, and many other issues.

Chakna lama and Ananda both were granted audience with the emperor in Beijing, during which they were asked about the details of Baozhu’s impeachment. They presented a similar account of what happened. The Kangxi emperor continued his effort of inviting the Panchen Lama to meet him. The Mongol prince Tashi Baturu (chn.

51 Ibid, 162.

52 The First Historical Archive of China (ed.). The Comprehensive Translation of the Manchu Imperial Memorials with Cinnabar Comments in Kangxi Period, 252-260, no.457.
supported the suggestion because “Lhabzang was always oversensitive, suspicious, and unstable, thus might spoil the plan.” Instead, Chakna lama suggested Lhabzang to have an audience with the emperor. Ananda and Chakna did have disagreement on whether Lhabzang should go to Beijing, but they had pretty good relationship otherwise. They would deal with all the administrative affairs together and play chess on their spare time. Lhabzang’s wrong accuse against Chakna lama was because the latter prevented him from moving westward. From the conversation, it was also known that the relationship between the Kokonor Mongol tajis and the Desi was in tense and they had several attempt to attack the Desi, though none was actually carried out.53

Desi Sangye Gyatso’s relationship with Tsangyang Gyatso was, as Wickhamsmith pointed out, complex, confused, and confusing—“We can only wonder at how, as he grew to manhood, the Dalai Lama might have come to perceive his mentor: it seems most likely to me that he would have seen his Regent as that most irritating of people, someone he could neither live with nor without.”54 To some extent, Sangye Gyatso was like his father who educated him and brought to him the high position and great wealth that he enjoyed. Also, Sangye Gyatso was like his enemy—without him, Tsangyang Gyatso probably could live a normal life with his parents and did not need to endure such great pressure both on his study and on his life.

53 According to the Secret Biography, it was Chakna lama and Ananda who escorted Tsangyang Gyatso to Beijing and released him on the way.

54 Wickhamsmith, "Ban de skyi snor ser min," 206.
Although most of the available information about Tsangyang Gyatso was left over by the Desi, his writing was too religious that we could not grasp the emotion of either the Desi or the Dalai Lama. Fortunately, after the Desi was killed by Lhabzang in 1705, there was a Chinese envoy scholar (shiduxueshi, 侍读学士) Jianliang dispatched to Tibet to meet the Khan and Panchen Lama (the Dalai Lama was ignored), and reported the details of all he learned about what was happening.55

On the first day of the seventh month of 1705, Jianliang arrived at Damu where Lhabzang’s army stationed. One of Lhabzang’s subordinate told him about the conflict between Lhabzang and Desi Sangye Gyatso since the fifteenth of the first month. Sangye Gyatso exiled Lhabzang in the name of the Dalai Lama, asking him to go wherever he wanted, just out of Lhasa. Lhabzang was weak at that time thus he had no choice but to move to Kharus (chn. 哈喇乌苏), but the Desi was still not content. Therefore Lhabzang was forced to lead the subjects of Dalai Lama at Kharus to fight with Desi three times and finally defeated him. Desi was scared and fled to Shigatse by boat. After explaining what happened, Lhabzang’s subordinate changed their riding animals and escorted them to Lhasa.

Jianliang arrived in Lhasa on the ninth. Although it was late in the day, Lhabzang insisted to invite Jianliang to meet him. Lhabzang explained basically the same thing that his subordinate had explained and blamed the Desi:

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55 The First Historical Archive of China, archive no. 04-02-002-000017-0061.
56 Kharus, Qing place name, meaning “black water” in Mongolian, is current day Nagchu (chn. 那曲), meaning “black water” in Tibetan. This is not the lack in current day Mongolia.
The Desi is a person of extreme evilness. He had failed the great emperor several times, not to mention that he ruined the dharma of Tsongkhapa, worshiped the red-hat sect, incited the Dalai Lama, etc. It was only because the the most benevolent and tolerant great emperor was afraid of the suffering of the beings that the Desi was kept alive for several years. Now he tried to kill me but failed, so he expelled me.

Lhabzang said that the affairs between him and the Desi was not finished, and promised to explain the full story after Jianliang come back from the Panchen Lama’s when it might be ended. After saying that, Lhabzang Khan had a reception for Jianliang. On the next day, Lhabzang Khan had another reception for Jianliang during which he said that he would ask the Dalai Lama to prepare the supply for Jianliang to go to the Panchen’s place, which had been the work of the Desi in the past. The Dalai Lama responded on the next day that he would provide everything same as what had been done in the past.

On the fourteenth, Lhabzang claimed that he was going back to his house. Jianliang set off to meet the Panchen Lama after having an audience with the Dalai Lama. Later, it was said that Lhabzang Khan did not go back to his house but led the army to seize the Desi. On the twenty-first, the Dalai Lama led his own army to the north, and all his Tibetan subjects followed him. On the next day, Dzunthar (chn. 樽塔尔), the son-in-law of prince Tashi Baturu reported to Jianliang what happened. Lhabzang seized Desi Sangye Gyatso and his wife and entrusted taiji Dalizhabu and Gedun to escort them to Lhasa. On the way, they killed the Desi. Dzunthar seized

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^57 Nyingmapa.
Desi’s son Ngawang Rinchen and his wife who had escaped. When Dzunthar was sending Ngawang Rinchen to Lhabzang, the Dalai Lama led hundreds of people chased him and took away Ngawang Rinchen and his wife. Another Mongolian chief also came to Jianliang and reported the same thing, saying that he witnessed the death of the Desi.

After this interlude, Jianliang arrived at the Panchen Lama’s monastery. Jianliang read the emperor’s edict to the Panchen Lama, in which the emperor comforted the Panchen by saying that he understood that since the death of the fifth Dalai Lama everything was controlled by the evil Desi, including what the Panchen had to act and say, thus he did not blame the Panchen Lama. The emperor’s edict was in accordance with the words of Lhabzang Khan on the judgement on the Desi. The Panchen Lama, after thanking the care of the emperor, said that the sixth Dalai Lama’s behavior was like a common people but not a lama. The Panchen Lama gave Jianliang a memorial to the emperor and his tribute. In the memorial, the Panchen Lama explained the incident among the Dalai Lama, the Desi and Lhabzang Khan from his perspective:

Lhabzang Khan personally did not get on well with the Dalai Lama and the Desi. For the reason that the Desi ruined the dharma of Tsongkhapa and various other issues, Lhabzang extremely hated him. Therefore Lhabzang became hostile toward the Desi. I was about to negotiate between them, persuading them with kindness, but the Desi was fated to die, so he died. Presumably the envoys of the emperor should also have known the affair.
The Panchen Lama also confirmed the evil deeds of the Desi. He did not explain what role the Dalai Lama had played in the incident, but he clearly pointed out that the Dalai Lama sided with the Desi against Lhabzang Khan in the first sentence of the memorial.

When Jianliang came back to Lhasa, the Dalai Lama sent envoys to him explaining the affair. According to the Dalai Lama, it was Lhabzang Khan’s misunderstanding that the Desi poisoned him, but in actual fact the Desi did not. It was for this understanding that them two had conflict which harmed everybody. The Dalai Lama negotiated between them, suggested to temporarily remove the Desi from Lhasa and to report what happened to the great emperor for an solution. Thus the Dalai Lama kept the seal of the Desi in the Potala Palace and sent the Desi to Shigatse. At that time, both the Desi and the Khan followed the Dalai Lama’s order. However, the Khan deceived the Dalai Lama and killed the Desi. The Dalai Lama was very disappointed, but the Tibetan people conversely thought that the Dalai Lama conspired with the Khan to murder the Desi. Therefore the Dalai Lama called the lamas together to recite the sutra for the Desi. In the end, the Dalai Lama’s envoys pleaded Jianliang to pass on the Dalai Lama’s request to the emperor for his instruction on how to care the Tibetan people. The Dalai Lama’s envoys was silent on the Dalai Lama’s military action of saving the Desi’s son from the hand of the Khan. Jianliang, while in his report included the words of the Dalai Lama’s envoys, told them that it was not his task to contact with the Dalai Lama in this mission thus he could neither pass on the words to the emperor nor accept the gift from the Dalai Lama. Interestingly, the gift from the Dalai Lama was just several woolen blankets. It was not clear whether it was because the gifts were just
for the envoy and did not need to be expensive or because the Dalai Lama was in fact in a poor condition.

Jianliang then collected the information about the Dalai Lama. He heard that the Dalai Lama had illicit sexual relationship with the daughter of Desi Sangye Gyatso, and also with his own male attendant Lhawang. For this reason, the Desi plotted with five people to kill Lhawang. However, the assassinator killed Lhawang’s attendant by mistake and only hurt Lhawang’s shoulder. The Dalai Lama was irritated and investigated for the assassination for several months. Finally, he seized the five people who plotted with the Desi and passed them the Lhabzang Khan for death penalty. Although the Desi plead on their behalf, they were still killed by Lhabzang. Since then, they became enemies. It was a fact that the Desi poisoned the Khan.

Jianliang also heard that the Dzungar taiji Tsewang Arabtan, the nephew of Galdan, sent envoys to give regards to the Panchen Lama, Lhabzang Khan, and the Dalai Lama to pry into what happened between them. Lhabzang Khan sent people together with Tsewang Arabtan’s envoys back to Dzungar. From common people of Tibet, Jianliang heard of their complaint. They said that their Tibetan people were either killed or ruined because of the incident between the Desi and Lhabzang Khan; in addition, their Dalai Lama was addicted to alcohol, indulged in women, and do whatever he wanted without any restraint, and he would not listen the advise and persuasion of other lamas. Therefore, it was their destination that Tibet would be ruined to such a degree. It was visible to Jianliang that Tibetan people were very afraid of Lhabzang Khan.
By the time that Jianliang was about to set off back to Beijing, Lhabzang Khan had a last reception for Jianliang during which he had a conversation with him. Lhabzang Khan confirmed the rumor between the Dalai Lama and the Desi’s daughter. According to Lhabzang, the Desi planed to establish Lhabzang as the Khan and to enthrone the Dalai Lama as the Chakravarti Khan, thus the Desi betrothed his daughter to the Dalai Lama to control him and was kind to Lhabzang. Lhabzang also confirmed that his conflict with the Desi started with the assassination of Lhawang and that the Desi did poisoned him. Lhabzang shirked the responsibility of killing the Desi to his subordinator. He explained that he was originally going to leave the decision on how to treat the Desi to the emperor, but his subordinator Gedun hated the Desi for the poisoning and killed the Desi. Currently, the Lhabzang had in his hand the Desi’s two wives, three sons, and a daughter (who might be the lover of the Dalai Lama). The Desi’s first son escaped, and the second don Ngawang Rinchen was in the Potala Palace together with the Dalai Lama. Lhabzang said the same thing as the Panchen Lama regarding the Dalai Lama that he acted in the way of a common people, but he also explained that it was because the Dalai Lama was young and was incited by the Desi, thus he asked for the emperor’s understanding and pardon. Furthermore, he asked the emperor to grant the Dalai Lama his proper title because otherwise the Tibetan people would never have peace. Finally, Lhabzang explained that the envoy that he sent to Dzungar was just to tell Tsewang Arabtan that both of them should obey the emperor since he was the lord of both.
Later, Chakna lama who was in charge of the various affairs related to the Mongols and Tibet sent a secret memorial to the emperor in which he attached two letters from the Dalai Lama to the Mongol prince Tashi Baturu and all Mongol princes respectively. In the letter to prince Tashi Baturu, Tsangyang Gyatso explained “the reason for Lhabzang Khan’s attack of Tibet this year”:

To prince Tashi Baturu. The Desi expelled Lhabzang Khan from Lhasa, since then they became enemies. I had never have any animosity with Lhabzang Khan. Lhabzang Khan did not harm me when he attacked Lhasa. However, I and the Desi are of one mind. How is it possible that he sows discord between us? The reason that I and Lhabzang became enemies was that he picked fights and would not listen to my words. Furthermore, he said bad words against us and portrayed us as extremely evil persons. Since he killed the Desi, he have become my enemy for all following generations. Lhabzang robbed the livestock of mine and, most importantly, ruined the good-doings of his elder generations. Wherever Lhabzang is, he does no good and only harms us. Therefore, you should do proper prepare. Regarding these hows and whys, please pass it on to Chakna lama and report it to the emperor. Remember it firmly with you heart!

With regards.

In the letter to all Mongol princes, Tsangyang Gyatso asked for help:

To all the greater and lesser patrons. The reason for allowing Lhabzang to success Dalai Khan’s position was the consideration that it would be beneficial to Tibet, thus he was enthroned. Lhabzang used the Desi’s crime as an excuse to
attack Tibet, causing the common people to be killed or to become beggars. Obviously it was because, since the Desi ordered Lhabzang to success the Khan’s position, he had all the prestige and power and became a dictator. He would not let me to intervene and killed the Desi. Now he proclaimed that he would conquer Tibet. If he was left unrestrained, Tibet will not be peaceful. If you are strong-willed, now is the right time for you to offer service. Remember it firmly with your heart!

In Chakna lama’s memorial, he included the Dalai Lama’s second message to all the Mongol princes transmitted through an envoy orally:

Lhabzang has never done a single good deed since he arrived in Tibet. He and the Desi was hostile against each other, thus he attacked Tibet and robed the wealths and livestock. Further, he deceived me and killed the Desi. Now, he still conceives the plan of not allowing us to live peacefully and trapping us in a fix. Regarding this issue, if you princes do not report it to the emperor of the high court, our Tibetan tribes will never have peace. If you have a mind to help me, you should act immediately. Otherwise, I cannot be protected here and will have to take refuge in another place. You princes, please pass it on to Chakna lama and report it to the emperor.

Since at this time Desi Sangye Gyatso was already killed, it was improbable that these letters were not written by the Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso personally. From the mouth of the Dalai Lama, his relationship with the Desi turned out to be clear: they were one-minded and inseparable. Maybe they had minor quarrels against each other,
and maybe their relationship reduced to the ice-point when the Desi plotted the assassination of Lhawang. But when the time came to be the death of the Desi, Tsangyang Gytso openly and firmly sided with him and did not mention a word of their conflict. Probably Tsangyang Gytso finally persuaded himself to blame the five five accessories for the assassination of Lhawang and excused Desi Sangye Gytso. As for Lhabzang Khan, Tsangyang Gytso had no direct conflict with him. All the problem rooted in the the conflict between Lhabzang and the Desi, where Tsangyang Gytso chose to side with the Desi. Lhabzang Khan also did not have direct hostility towards Tsangyang Gytso. He helped to explain on Tsangyang Gytso’s behalf in front of the Qing envoy Jianliang and asked the emperor to grant proper title to the Dalai Lama. Even years after Tsangyang Gytso was gone, Lhabzang Khan had good comment on him when he talked with Lelung lama.

The accusation of Desi Sangye Gytso, other than his personal issues with Lhabzang Khan, was mainly that he ruined the dharma. Sangye Gytso left behind a tons of both religious and nonreligious works which denoted his high scholarly achievement. Although those works could not prove his virtue, it was at least visible that he had deep understanding of and belief in the dharma, which contradicted with the accusation. Another accusation explained the paradox. Sangye Gytso was accused of worshiping the red-hat sect, Nyingmapa. The incident finally turned out to be partially a sectarian conflict. Tsangyang Gytso was probably chosen by Sangye Gytso because of his Nyingmapa background, and received further Nyingmapa influence from the Desi. For this reason, the Panchen Lama and Lhabzang Khan accused the Desi of
misleading the Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso, who might be a mere young boy in their eyes.

The reign of Tsangyang Gyatso since 1697 and the period of concealment of the death of the fifth Dalai Lama, although both controlled by the Desi, were different. Before 1697, it is agreed that the Desi was the only one who had power. After Tsangyang Gyatso was enthroned, he did not become a mere puppet in the hand of the Desi, but had agency on both politics and religion. When the Desi and Lhabzang fight against each other, Tsangyang Gyatso was able to negotiate between them and was obeyed at least in the beginning or on the surface. When the Desi was killed, he could call up an army of hundreds of people under his control and save Ngawang Rinchen from the hands of Lhabzang Khan’s subordinators. He was able to defend the Potala Palace from being force into by the Khan. He had his channel to pass on messages to the Mongol princes and the Qing emperor. The lamas in Lhasa would listen to his command to recite sutra for the Desi, someone who was regarded as an evil person who ruined the dharma.

All of these happened after the Desi lost his power and died, but it was also true that the administrations since 1697 in the name of the Dalai Lama was apparently dealt by the Desi. From the fragile informations available, the reason for the Dalai Lama showing basically none agency was most likely to be that he was not willing to, but not that he was not able to. What he did in 1705 already proved his potency. Before that, he lived with a playful attitude, preferring doing archery to giving religious name to a reincarnation of a deceased lama. He enjoyed drinking alcohol and singing songs,
rather than sitting in the Potala to do what the Desi had to do. As the Desi commented, he would listen to no one, not even the Desi and his own mother. As Lhabzang Khan commented, he was tremendously bold and had a wonderful charm. Such could be the reason why Tsangyang Gyatso, at the most dangerous time of the coup, had good control on the various aspects of military, politics, and religion.

The final conclusion of Tsangyang Gyatso in Qing’s official history, the *Veritable Records of Qing*, was in the last month of 1706, a year after the detailed memorial from Lifan Yuan. In the records of 1705, there was not a single trace of the incident. It was not clear what happened in the Qing court during the year regarding the Dalai Lama. On November 25th, the emperor, without an explanation of the conditions of the speech, suddenly brought up the topic of the officials’ previous problem of why the emperor paid great attention on a fake Dalai Lama. According to Kangxi emperor, all the Mongols worshiped the Dalai Lama. Although Tsangyang Gyatso was a fake Dalai Lama, the fact that he had the title of Dalai Lama made him important. If the court did not send people to seize him and Tsangyang Gyatso was to be received by Tsewang Arabtan, all the western Mongols would side with Dzungar. Thus the emperor sent general Xizhu to seize Tsangyang Gyatso. Indeed, general Xizhu found Tsewang Arabtan trying to take Tsangyang Gyatso. Therefore, if the emperor did not sent people, Tsangyang Gyatso would already have been received by the Dzungar. But general

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59 *Veritable Records of Qing*, twenty-first of the tenth month, the forty-fifth year of Kangxi (康熙四十五年丙戌十月二十一日乙巳), http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/mqlc/hanjishilu/?@6^1786162582^802^^^802110110060230000100010019@@368992396.
Xizhu did not seize Tsangyang Gyatso on that trip. The emperor stopped here and moved on to talking that the land of the western Mongols was not tillable and the peoples were not usable, thus he did not want to conquer them at that time. On the next day, Kangxi emperor told the officials that the former Dalai Lama was great and the Desi was evil, and that he had long been aware of the death of the fifth, also without an explanation of the conditions of the speech.  

A month later, on January sixth, 1707, *the Veritable Records of Qing* finally wrote about the incident in 1705:

In the beginning, the Dalai Lama died, and the Desi concealed it, plotted the hostile war between Khalkhas and the Oirats, and disturbed and harmed the living beings. In addition, the Desi enthroned a fake Dalai Lama to confuse people. Furthermore, the Desi had poisoned Lhabzang; because he did not die, the Desi expelled him. Therefore, Lhabzang Khan collected the army with great hatred to seize the Desi and killed him. Lhabzang also reported the affairs about the fake Dalai Lama. The emperor dispatched general Xizhu and scholar Shulan as envoys to grant Lhabzang the title of the “Dharma Auxiliary Obedient Khan” and ordered them to escort the fake Dalai Lama to Beijing. Lhabzang insisted that escorting the fake Dalai Lama would cause the lamas to be at odds, thus he opposed. Xizhu reported it, and the emperor told the officials that, although Lhabzang did not follow the order now, he would seize and escort the

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60 Veritable Records of Qing, twenty-second of the tenth month, the forty-fifth year of Kangxi (康熙四十五年丙戌十月二十二日丙午), http://hanchi.iohp.sinica.edu.tw/mqle/hanjishilu? @6^1786162582^803^^^8021101100060230000100010020^N@@326595528.
fake Dalai Lama by himself in the future. At this time, the Xining stationed lama Shanggan Duoerji (Chakna lama) reported that Lhabzang Khan set off the escort the fake Dalai Lama to Beijing as expected. It is the same as the emperor said, and everyone was astonished.\textsuperscript{61}

It is well known that the Veritable Records of Qing aims to portrait the holy image of the Qing emperor, thus the words are not a hundred percent reliable. The Qing did wanted to conquer Dzungar, but at this time point they might not have enough power. General Xizhu might stopped the Dalai Lama from being received by Tsewang Arabtan to Dzungar, but he was not able to take away the Dalai Lama forcefully. Finally when the Dalai Lama was escorted to Beijing, there was no guardian from the Qing’s side. If Lhabzang Khan wanted to get rid of the Dalai Lama by the hand of the Qing emperor, why he, in the beginning, asked the emperor to grant the Dalai Lama his proper title, and why he would not let the Dalai Lama go when the Qing envoys came? Was it because the lamas would not be at odds a year later? Didn’t the Dalai Lama do anything to get himself out of the trouble? After all, the Dalai Lama did not seem to be an obedient puppet. The ending of Tsangyang Gyatso according to the Qing history was as the citation in the beginning of this chapter—he died of illness and his corpse was ordered to throw away.

\textbf{Conclusion}

\textsuperscript{61}Veritable Records of Qing, third of the twelfth month, the forty-fifth year of Kangxi (康熙四十五年丙戌十二月三日丁亥), http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/mqlc/hanjishilu?@6^1786162582^802^^^8021101100060230000100030003@@641378768.
In this chapter, I introduced the historical portrayal of Tsangyang Gyatso up to his alleged death in 1706 in Qinghai. This image was composed of two parts: the preincarnations of Tsangyang Gyatso, namely the first through fifth Dalai Lamas, and Tsangyang Gyatso himself. I showed how the Dalai Lama turned more and more political from a fairly pure religious figure through time. During the time of the early Dalai Lamas, I introduced a major rival of the Gelugpa—Kagyupa—and the "madmen" practice of them. These madmen in Tibetan history were related to the Indian Mahasiddha. They act transgressively, typically having sexual misconduct and disrobing in an early age. These characteristics resembles Tsangyang Gyatso's actions. Moreover, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye in the Secret Biography also used Mahasiddha to describe Tsangyang Gyatso in many instances. An overview of what Mahasiddha culturally means in Tibet helps the later understanding of its usage in the Secret Biography. The accusation to Tsangyang Gyasto of ruining Tsongkhapa's doctrine does not need to refer to his actions against monastic discipline, but can also refer to his intimacy to a tradition that was historically hostel to the Gelugpa. Nevertheless, when the sectarian conflicts were pacified, the same accusation can be used by Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye to justify Tsangyang Gyatso's behavior.

By introducing the third, the fourth, and the fifth Dalai Lama, I meant to show the Mongols' role that was inbuilt in the Gelugpa's history of raising to power. The title of Dalai Lama was granted by a Mongol. The Gelugpa was supported by the Mongols when they did not have enough power to fight against the Tsangpa Khan together with the Kagyupa. The fourth Dalai Lama himself was a Mongol noble. He fight back with
the aid of the Mongol army. Ultimately, it was during the fifth Dalai Lama's time when the Mongol Gushri Khan conquered the Tsangpa Khan and devoted the entire Tibet as Buddhist offering to the fifth Dalai Lama that the Dalai Lama held the highest religious and political power of Tibet in his one hand. In a word, without the Mongols there was no succeed of the Gelug Dalai Lama. Such a relationship between the Dalai Lama and the Mongols explains why Tsangyang Gaytso finally settled in Alashan Mongolia, instead of in somewhere Nepal, India, or other parts of Qing.

The raise to power of the fifth Dalai Lama and sequently Desi Sangye Gyatso's management put the Dalai Lama on a crucial diplomatic position. The Qing was in battle of conquering the Mongol tribes one by one, during which the Kangxi Emperor realized the significance of the Dalai Lama to the Mongols. The Emperor tried to turn the Dalai Lama into a tool to manage the Mongols. Politically significant as such, it was not possible for the emperor to simply allow the rumor of a dead Dalai Lama being alive in a Mongol tribe to spread. As Kangxi Emperor pointed out, the Mongol prince who held the Dalai Lama in hand would be able to make many other Mongol princes follow him. Under such a situation, the reason why this Secret Biography survived was a real problem to be addressed.

Another problem about the Secret Biography to be addressed is the bad fame of Tsangyang Gyatso as a Buddhist monk. The Tibetan version of Tsangyang Gyasto's biography was that of a rebellious playboy. He would not obey the instruction of his masters on study and finally even returned his novice vow and disrobed in front of the Panchen Lama; afterwords, he would hang out with young beautiful girls and boys, get
drunk, sing songs, and so on. Putting his identity of the Dalai Lama aside, it seems not wise for anyone to claim such a person as his own master who provides Buddhist authority. Putting the identity in consideration may not help too much either, as many people, including the Panchen Lama, denied Tsangyang Gyatso's identity of the Dalai Lama based on his transgressive behaviors.

In the next two chapters, I will first display how Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye addressed these two crucial problems in his text, namely the political danger and religious crisis that might be involved in utilizing the figure of Tsangyang Gyasto. And then, I will show how Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye took advantage in the circumstance of his time and made the *Secret Biography* beneficial both to the establishment of the Alashan Buddhism and the Alashan Prince's house.
Chapter 2

In the first chapter, I examined the institution of Dalai Lama in Qing administration and the historical representation of the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso aside from the *Secret Biography of Tsangyang Gyatso* in Alashan\(^\text{62}\) and before 1706 C.E. when he died of illness according to the Qing official record and the biography of the Seventh Dalai Lama. The institution of Dalai Lama was both Mongol-related and political. On the one hand, the rise of the reincarnation lineage of the Dalai Lamas cannot be separated from the continuous support of the Mongol princes. The Third Dalai Lama gained patronage from the Altan Khan, whose great-grandson turned out to be the reincarnation of the former, the Fourth Dalai Lama; the Fifth Dalai Lama could hardly obtain the religious and political authority without the Gushri Khan giving the entire Tibet as offering to him. Before them, the first and second Dalai Lamas did not enjoy such a prominence. On the other hand, the Qing court saw the Dalai Lamas important either in their direct political influence or in their religious significance which brought about indirect political influence. This point is also closely related to the Mongol tribes. The Qing officials cared about the Fifth Dalai Lama’s attitude during his visit in Beijing because of the possible consequent reaction of the Mongol princes. The Kangxi Emperor insisted on taking control over the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso for the worry that if Tsangyang Gyatso had fallen into the hands of the

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\(^{62}\) Alashan is in current day Inner Mongolia, PRC (内蒙古自治区阿拉善旗).
Dzungar’s, they would be able to claim the authority over other Mongol tribes and would have the power to revolt.

The Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso was well-known in the popular culture for being a romantic poet who would indulge himself in alcohol and women. Aside from the famous poems alleged to be composed by him which portrait such a picture, several memorials sent to the Kangxi emperor and some fragile pieces of information contemporary to him also confirms the image. Lha-bzang Khan, the Mongol Prince in charge of Tibet since 1705 C.E. reported to the emperor that Tsangyang Gyatso committed illicit intercourse with the daughter of the Regent of Tibet, Desi Sangye Gyatso. Lelung Lama in his autobiography recorded that he encountered the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso singing songs in a village house, surrounded by his drunken friends and attendants. Another major character of the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso was his political incapability. Tsangyang Gyatso was concealed by the Regent Desi Sangye Gyatso in a small town for fifteen years who meanwhile pretended that the Fifth Dalai Lama did not die and acted behind his name. Even after enthronement, the young Dalai Lama seemed neither to be able nor to want to challenge the authority and power of the Regent. According to a report of an imperial envoy,

63 The First Chinese Historical Archive (ed.). The Comprehensive Translation of the Manchu Imperial Memorials with Red Comments in Kangxi Period / 康熙朝满文朱批奏折全译 (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1996). 399-404. At this point, the original Manchu document is not available to me.


however, Tsangyang Gyatso was not entirely non-influential over the Mongol princes whatsoever. After the Mongol Prince Lha-bzang Khan killed the Regent Desi Sangye Gyatso, Tsangyang Gyatso sent messages to other Mongol princes in Amdo to seek for help either to remove Lha-bzang Khan from Tibet or to get out of Tibet himself. Unfortunately, these messages did not save him. In 1706 C.E., Tsangyang Gyatso was escorted to Beijing by order of Lha-bzang Khan and died of illness on his way, at least according to the official records.

Half a century later, in 1757 C.E., a Mongolian monk Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé (1715-1780 C.E.) composed a biography for Tsangyang Gyatso, which was later named as the Secret Biography of Tsangyang Gyatso (hereafter the Secret Biography). In the text, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé makes two bold claims with the narrative. First, he claimed that Tsangyang Gyatso was a highly achieved lama, different from the popular image of the transgressive libertine. Second, he claimed that Tsangyang Gyatso survived in 1706 C.E. and escaped his escorts for a ten-year pilgrimage and finally arrived in Alashan in 1716 C.E. where he spent the rest of his life spreading Buddhism with the patronage of the Alashan Prince Aboo. Accordingly, most of the previous scholarship paid much attention to the alternative endings of Tsangyang Gyatso, namely whether he died or escaped in 1706 C.E. However, the limited resources provide no confirmative evidence on this controversial point for either side. Moreover, other information contained in the Secret Biography worth more attention both for the portion

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it occupies in the text and for its historical significance. Regarding the study of the text, what matters the most is not to determine what happened to the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso, but that the text has served as the foundational myth of Alashan Buddhism since the eighteenth century.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate the ways in which Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé represents, thus reforms, Tsangyang Gyatso’s image through the Secret Biography. On the basis of the structure I established in the first chapter, I will explain why such a representation is proper and instrumental for Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé. I argue that Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé creates a colorful image of Tsangyang Gyatso through multiple layers of representations as well as affiliating him with different sects of Tibetan Buddhism to eliminate or explain away his improper fame and to elevate him to the object of worship in Alashan; by claiming that Tsangyang Gyatso is his own teacher and portraying their intimate relationship, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé makes the authority of Tsangyang Gyatso in Alashan inheritable to himself.67

To be clear, when I say “Tsangyang Gyatso” or “the Sixth Dalai Lama” in this chapter, without special clarification, I mean the hero in the Secret Biography and the lama in Alashan people’s belief, instead of the historical figure who was enthroned as the Dalai Lama, had lived in the Potala Palace in Lhasa under the control of the Regent Desi Sangye Gyatso, and was believed to have died in 1706 C.E.. This doesn’t mean that I deny the possibility that these two could be the same person either. I would rather

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67 In Gadan Tangya Ling, the monastery Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé established in Alashan, Tsangyang Gyatso and Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye both reincarnated six times up to now as the two abbots of the monastery. Their relationship resembles that between the Dalai Lamas and the Panchen Lamas in the way that they become the teachers and students of each others.
refrain from taking sides on the relationship between these two “Tsangyang Gyatso(s),” as it is both undeterminable and unrelated to the problem at hand. The only reason that I call the character Tsangyang Gyatso is that the author Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé assigns this identity to him. By this assignment, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé brings the advantages and disadvantages associated with the name “the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso” in history discussed in chapter 1 to the hero in the text in Alashan.

**The Layout of the Secret Biography**

The original title of the *Secret Biography* is *The Biography of the Omniscient Ngawang Chödrak Gyatso Pelzangpo and the Beautiful Speech on the Perfectly Appeared Virtuous Actions which is known as the Tantric Melody from the Divine Tamboura.* Ngawang Chödrak Gyatso Pelzangpo was an alternative name used by Tsangyang Gyatso due to his real name/identity not revealable at that time. The *Secret Biography* has a prologue, three episodes, and an epilogue. The prologue contains the prayers to Tsangyang Gyatso, an introduction of Tsangyang Gyatso’s metaphysical origination as an already achieved buddha and his reasons to be in the human realm, and the author’s vow for honesty. The first episode tells the birthplace of Tsangyang Gyatso and his enthronement. Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé emphasizes the particular

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68 *Secret Biography* (https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=W30154) folio 1, “thams cad mkhyen pa ngag dbang chos grags dpal bzang po’i rnam par thar pa phul du byung ba’i mdzad pa bzang po’i gtam snyan lha’i tam bu ra’i rgyud kyi sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs so.” This translation and other translations in the chapter are my own.

69 Transcendentally, the real name/identity refers to him being the manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Worldly, the real name/identity refers to him being the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso. These two identities are, in some sense, one because the Dalai Lamas are believed to be the reincarnations of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The hiddenness of Tsangyang Gyatso and the identities of Tsangyang Gyatso are addressed later in the chapter.
Nyingma features of the environment into which Tsangyang Gyatso was born until he took novice vow in front of a group of lamas with mixed sectarian affiliations and finally became the highest authority of Gelugpa.

The second episode, “The Hardship and Achievement He Did for the Benefit of Others,” briefly mentions Tsangyang Gyatso’s study in his teenage years, and, after the dramatic interlude in 1706 C.E., goes on to narrate Tsangyang Gyatso’s colorful experiences in the ten-year pilgrimage. During the pilgrimage, he continuously did retreats in meditation caves or monasteries with various sectarian associations which occupied about more than half of his ten years. After escaping his escorts in Qinghai, Tsangyang Gyatso went up north to Arik, down to Mt. Emei in Sichuan, and then all the way west back to Lhasa. Afterward, through Lokha and Nepal, Tsangyang Gyatso went to India. On his way back, he passed by his hometown Mön and Lhamo Lha-tso where he received omens about Alashan and the two-year-old Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé.

The third episode, “His Beneficial Activities for the Dharma and All Beings after Arrived in Dome and His Passing Beyond Suffering,” starts with Tsangyang Gyatso’s arrival in Alashan at the end of 1715 C.E. and praises the tremendous amount of auspicious merit he brought about until his death in 1746 C.E.. Following the omen from Lhamo Lha-tso, Tsangyang Gyatso stayed with Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé’s family for the New Year festival and established the patron-priest relationship with the Alashan Prince Aboo. His death was ornamented with various felicitous signs,

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71 For Tsangyang Gyatso’s trip map, see Appendix.
indicating him being unusual and consequently his body should be preserved. In fact, the body was kept in Guangzong Monastery in Alashan in good condition until it was burned in the cultural revolution not long ago.

The epilogue names the significant local disciples of Tsangyang Gyatso in Alashan and, afterward, argues for the metaphysical reasonability of multiple manifestations of a buddha, a bodhisattva, or a renowned lama. The purpose of the argument is, again, not explicit in the biography. But if one has in mind the problem of the simultaneous existence of Tsangyang Gyatso in Alashan and the Seventh Dalai Lama in Lhasa, the last part of the text is an obvious direct answer.

**Tsangyang Gyatso’s Hiddenness and Revelation**

Indeed, it is a feature of the biography that it never directly point to the hero and say from the mouth of the author or the hero that this person is the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso. The hiddenness of the hero is from all the layers, up to his cosmological identity as a buddha and down to his worldly identity of the disenfranchised Dalai Lama. Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé since the very beginning of the text insisted on the unspoken-ness of Tsangyang Gyatso’s identity. In the meanwhile, both the divine identity and the worldly identity of the hero are constantly being revealed by other people’s recognition. For example, On the first day of going on the pilgrimage alone, Tsangyang Gyatso was noticed by some Tibetan merchants as being extraordinary in his appearance; thus he had to exchange clothes with a lama he
encountered, and was consequently polluted by the lama’s “abomination of lowly.”

Also, the local lama at Alashan dreamed his coming at the previous night and persuaded
the family of his host taiji’s, who was also Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé’s father, to
welcome him. As a result, contrary to what Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé emphasizes,
neither Tsangyang Gyatso’s divine identity and his worldly identity was kept well
unspoken.

The hiddenness and revelation are not meaningless in the text. Ngawang
Lhundrup Dargyé uses the hiddenness to create a distance between Tsangyang Gyatso
and ordinary people to demonstrate the former’s high achievement. Even if Tsangyang
Gyatso is in front of someone, one will still find him detached for not being able to
grasp his real identity behind the body. By the constant revelation, however, Ngawang
Lhundrup Dargyé hints the accessibility for ordinary people to Tsangyang Gyatso, since
his extraordinariness is so apparent. The switch between hiddenness and revelation
casts the extremely divine yet very approachable figure of Tsangyang Gyatso.

**Tsangyang Gyatso’s Multi-sectarianism**

Tsangyang Gyatso is related to multiple sects in the narrative. His childhood
is described as immersed in a particular Nyingmapa environment and Nyingmapa

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72 Lha-bTsun-Ngag-dBang-rDo-rJe, O-rGyan-Chos-‘Phel (ed.), *The Secret Biography of
Tsangyang Gyatso* / *Tshangs-dByangs-rGya-mTsho’i-gSang-eNam* (Lhasa: the Tibet People’s

73 Lha-bTsun-Ngag-dBang-rDo-rJe, O-rGyan-Chos-‘Phel (ed.), *The Secret Biography of
Tsangyang Gyatso* / *Tshangs-dByangs-rGya-mTsho’i-gSang-eNam* (Lhasa: the Tibet People’s
His teenage study involves the available teachings from all sects on the snow land of Tibet. His meditative retreats and practices done during the ten-year pilgrimage is a good mix of different doctrines, but with a particular emphasis on the Cakrasaṃvara Tantra.

In the seventh month of 1708 C.E., Tsangyang Gyatso was infected by smallpox and almost died. At the very last moment, Tsangyang Gyatso was too weak and fall unconscious. He had a dream, where an invisible being recited a poem to him:

Ha Ha!

Although the fruit appears to be a poison for no matter whom/
it is actually food of nectar (bdud rtsi) with the best taste/
Now that the body has been purified and blazes blissfully/
go and hold the festival for creatures!

The idea of turning poison into medicine and nectar which purify the body rings a bell of the medical tantra tradition which originated in India and became popular within Nyingmapa. According to Gu ru chos dbang, one of the most significant Nyingmapa treasure discoverer, the nectar can subdue the poison thus is a medicine that heals illness, and the poison itself can become medicine. “Nectar” is a special tantric term.

The common reference of the five nectars are in fact human feces, urine, menstrual

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74 Lha-bTsun-Ngag-dBang-rDo-rJe, O-rGyan-Chos-'Phel (ed.), The Secret Biography of Tsangyang Gyatso / Tshangs-dByangs-rGya-mTsho'i-gSang-eNam (Lhasa: the Tibet People's Publishing House, Edition: 1981.11, 1st. Printing: 2008.9, 4th.), 15-16. It is noteworthy that the text uses ten-times the length of the description of his father for the description of his mother, modifying his mother into a perfect mother of buddha.

75 Ibid, 23.

76 Ibid, 37.
blood, semen, and flesh or marrow. Solely through the consumption of different kinds and levels of the nectar elixir, the practitioner can get one’s body and moral purified, thus to achieve buddhahood.\textsuperscript{77}

The episode in the \textit{Secret Biography} shows a high similarity by the coinciding keywords and key ideas. However, the major gap is the lack of ritual. The tantric practice of turning poisonous substances into medicine that purifies the body requires a set of complex performance of ritual, such as a certain specific way of cooking, while in the \textit{Secret Biography} nothing was conducted before Tsangyang Gyatso’s recovery. Furthermore, the transformation from poison to medicine did not happen outside the body, but within the body—the invisible being said that the red fruit that had already caused Tsangyang Gyatso severe stomachache was fine since it for him is the nectar, and then he was cured. It is not clear who initiated the transformation from the text, Tsangyang Gyatso or the invisible being.

In the fourth month of 1709 C.E., Tsangyang Gyatso was wondering through a valley at around the borderline between Sichuan and Tibet, when he encountered a mantrika wearing a black hat and a tantrik cloak and carrying a thigh-bone trumpet who came to invite Tsangyang Gyatso to his cave at the upper end of the valley. There, the mantrika was preparing for a grand tantric feast (tshogs ‘khor). Tsangyang Gyatso was invited to participate in the feast, where he had several marvelous visions of

Cakrasaṃvara.\textsuperscript{78} The tantric feast had an origination in India as well where it was called \emph{ganacakra} and was also adopted and majorly practiced within Nyingmapa. As a part of the medical tantric tradition, the tantric feast also involves the use and consumption of the impure substances, which are coded with more beautiful words in the description.\textsuperscript{79} In other words, the tantric feast to some extent can be seen as a collective practice of the impure food transformation ritual.

According to Ronald M. Davidson, the tantric feast in India was held among the members who are required to commit “to a permanent liminal status in which the individual will never be reintegrated into any village anywhere, even though he must observe his fellow ritualists as his immutable brothers and sisters in religion.” It is not open to the public. The ritual would be relatively egalitarian under a teacher who conducts the ritual.\textsuperscript{80} It is not clear from Tsangyang Gyatso’s first perspective narrative what kind of relationship did he build with the “fellow ritualists,” but obviously he did not stay long but moved on immediately after the feast. Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye in the following poem identified the relationship between the mantrika and Tsangyang Gyatso as host and guest, saying that the mantrika who is a brahman and the other ritualists who are dakas/dakinis offer Tsangyang Gyatso with the hospitality of the tantric feast. In such a way, Tsangyang Gyatso occupied a role that did not fit into the

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traditional norm, by which the purpose of the tantric feast was partially altered from the group practice to a reception. In both cases, Tsangyang Gyatso’s stories were slightly divergent from the “common” Nyingma practice in some significant ways. Nevertheless, there was still strong Nyingma flavor to both of them.

The text never directly posts potential problems brought by Tsangyang Gyatso’s identity, such as his heterodox behavior that served as the excuse for Lha-bzang Khan to accuse him and for Kangxi emperor to deny him as the real Dalai Lama. But if the readers have the problem in mind, they could see that Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé also bears it in mind when writing. The way that Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé characterized Tsangyang Gyatso’s sectarian affiliation, or more specifically, his preference over tantric practice rather than doctrine learning, reduces the impropriety of his well-known transgressive behavior. After all, there had been a whole “madmen” tradition in Tibetan Buddhism that celebrates the transgressive-ness as the sign of high achievement. As I discussed in chapter 1, there are many similarities between the madmen’s featured behaviors and Tsangyang Gyatso’s alleged behavior, which made Tsangyang Gyatso’s reputation culturally much less unacceptable in Tibet.

**Tsangyang Gyatso as a Growing Practitioner, a Bodhisattva, and a Buddha**

The body of the *Secret Biography* is arranged as blocks of narratives followed by poems summarizing and praising the previous story. In the entire second episode, the

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narratives are from the first-person perspective of Tsangyang Gyatso telling his own history while the poems are from the author Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé’s perspective. The poems are not a tautology as they reveal the author’s interpretation of what he heard of Tsangyang Gyatso’s past experience. It is not completely impossible that there was never a person, whether he was genuinely the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso or an impersonator as Michael Aris proposes, arrived in Alashan, and the entire Secret Biography was all fabrication of Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé. However, since the alternative explanations remain possible, the narratives are not as reliable in understanding the intentionality and understandings of Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé as the poems. I will demonstrate the major ways that Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé interprets Tsangyang Gyatso’s activities, namely understanding him as a bodhisattva and an already achieved buddha, while the first-person narratives tend more to tell the growth of a young practitioner.

In 1706 C.E., our hero Tsangyang Gyatso escaped his escorts at midnight. For the first time, the Dalai Lama left behind all his teachers, friends, and attendants and threw himself into the wilderness. Tsangyang Gyatso told Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé his realizations after a several-hour walking in the darkness.

And then at the dawn time, I arrived in between of two high grass mountain. I had never experienced walking on foot alone before. My mouth was extremely parched, and blisters appeared on the soles of my feet. I stopped on the plain field for a short rest, while I thought, “the superior would finally be downgraded; the assembled would finally be
separated; the accumulated would finally be exhausted....” The feeling of impermanence in the thought brought me sorrow. However, having self-determination on each of whatever I will do is granted by the compassion of the Triple Jewels. As one with freedom, I shall go on pilgrimages, to do meditation practice and something else in order to purify my misdeeds and obstructions. Thinking of this, I felt delightful.\(^\text{83}\)

His mind was also softened by the bodily exhaustion, and he sighed about the dramatic change in life. He had been the superior Dalai Lama, but now he was downgraded to a lonely monk; a large retinue used to surround him, but now they were separated from him; he probably had accumulated a great amount of wealth, but now everything was gone. He very likely missed his previous comfortable life. Probably finding himself too passive, Tsangyang Gyatso comforted himself by taking spiritual shelter under the Triple Jewels. Instead of focusing on the difficulty of life, he filled his mind with the focus on religious practice. These look like typical reaction a twenty-five-year-old young man would have in front of the difficulty of life. He was afraid of the unknown future and hesitated about what to do next.

Several lines above this, however, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé tells a different story when he introduces Tsangyang Gyatso’s ten-year pilgrimage. There is a transition after Tsangyang Gyatso’s escape from his escort in the way to Beijing, i.e., the end of the record of Tsangyang Gyatso in all other sources, and before the beginning of his Lha-bTsun-Ngag-dBang-rDo-rJe, O-rGyan-Chos-‘Phel (ed.), The Secret Biography of Tsangyang Gyatso / Tshangs-dByangs-rGya-mTsho’i-gSang-eNam (Lhasa: the Tibet People's Publishing House, Edition: 1981.11, 1st. Printing: 2008.9, 4th.), 30.
ten-year pilgrimage. In the transition, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé cites the Book of ‘Ösung, Kāśyapa-parivarta Sūtra,⁸⁴ which uses the bravery of the lion as an analogy to demonstrate the virtue the bodhisattva:

The Lion, the king of herbivores, has a mane /
Wherever he wants to go, he has no fear /
Like that, the bodhisattva happily goes /
With morality, learning, and wisdom.

The citation comes from the Buddha’s explanation of the characteristics of the bodhisattvas with various metaphor. And then Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé continues.

In accordance with the citation, the venerable master, at that time, tossed away the great monasteries⁸⁵ and the worldly affairs of the thirteen throne holders⁸⁶ as if they were the weed by the roadside, and then, fearlessly following the conduct of the deeds of the Indian Mahāsiddhas, he departed without hesitation for the benefits of those to be tamed.⁸⁷

Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé draws the connection between Tsangyang Gyatso and the

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⁸⁴ See Ratnakūṭa and Watai Ko (ed.). 1926. The Kāśyapa-parivarta: a Mahāyānasūtra of the Ratnakūṭa class / 大寶積經迦葉品梵藏漢六種合刊 (Shanghai: Commercial Press), 65. The book contains six versions of the sutra in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese (Han, Jin, Qin, Song).

⁸⁵ i.e. Sera, Ganden, and Drepung monasteries; the religious authority of Tibet.

⁸⁶ i.e. the power over the thirteen provinces of Tibet; the political authority of Tibet.

lion and the bodhisattva, emphasizing on the fearlessness, unhesitation, and selflessness of his master. The way Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé characterizes Tsangyang Gyatso’s attitude towards his previous enjoyable life is that he “tossed” them away, very different from Tsangyang Gyatso’s soft feelings. Regarding the ten-year pilgrimage, Tsangyang Gyatso was telling his experience of standing at the beginning and looking forward, while Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé was summarizing by standing at the end and looking backward. From Tsangyang Gyatso’s perspective, when he taught Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé about his own experience, he was recalling all that he had experienced—the sense of loss, helpless, loneliness, misery, hope, compassion, etc.

Two years after in Tsangyang Gyatso’s pilgrimage, he arrived in a beautiful empty valley where he was unfortunately infected by smallpox. It was a near-death experience with extreme suffering.

The fierceness of the disease was so immeasurable that I couldn’t even open my eyes or merely move a little bit. Furthermore, I was tormented by the starvation and thirst from the shortage of food and drink, the burning of the sun during the daytime, and the freezing wind during the nighttime. It was as if to directly experience the unbearable suffering of the hellish beings. I lost consciousness from time to time and had no idea of whether it was the day or the night going on.88

The disease was so painful. Tsangyang first sought refuge from the three jewels by praying, but the situation only went worse. And then, he thought of committing suicide,

88 Ibid 35-37.
but he hesitated because he realized that the karmic link, therefore the suffering, is uncuttable with the end of merely this life.

Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé’s following commentary poem, irregularly, mentions nothing about the suffering brought about by the disease. It is his statistical normality that Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé would in his poems at least mention some key terms of, if not summarizing, the preceding stories. The poem following Tsangyang Gyatso’s near-death experience has not at all reference to any events in the story. Instead, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé says:

Teacher, the son of Śākya clan/

Although he had perfected the benefits of himself and others/

On the banks of the Nairañjana river/

Made efforts for six years/

You, although before immeasurable eons/

Had attained buddhahood in the realm of king dpal brtsegs/

For the sake of the beings who are hard to tame/

Also make use of innumerable ways in activities/…

And then Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé goes on saying that whoever saw Tsangyang Gyatso shall have firm faith in him, who was so precious and rare in the world. Again, there is an obvious gap between the narratives on the two perspectives. Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé in his poem is making a parallel between the Buddha and Tsangyang Gyatso, by which the passiveness of Tsangyang Gyatso’s getting attacked by the

89 Ibid 39-40.
disease is changed into a subjective choice of his holiness of condescending to the ordinary people in an accessible way in order to tame them. Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé deliberately omits the suffering component of Tsangyang Gyatso’s experience and reforms the miserable young practitioner into a buddha, citing a myth he told in his prologue:

The biographies of the bodhisattvas and the buddhas of the ten directions as such exceeds the realm of the ordinary minds too far. Especially, the holy lord of the transient world who manifests in human form to help us to follow behind him, his name is hard to utter. In order to render this, he is known to all by the compromised name Jikme Dorje, while a later form of address is Ngawang Chödrak Gyatso Pelzangpo. It was inquired whether his real name is Lobsang Rinchen Tsangyang Gyatso. Regarding this, according to the absolute truth, although before innumerable eons, in the densely adorned highest buddha-field Akaniṣṭa of the king ‘od zer kun ‘phags dpal brtsegs, he already achieved buddhahood, he, by taking the form of the chief student of Buddha Amitābha, the Lotus in Hand, and so forth, in the uncountable pure and impure realms, has limitless activities of teaching whoever to be tamed whatever they need through whatever physical manifestation that benefits. Not only that this is far passing the realm of

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90 Avalokiteśvara

91 Avalokiteśvara
utterance, imagination, and investigation of children like me who are constrained in the cottage of extreme stupidity, but the utmost venerable lama kept all his great attainments hidden in his inner world.\textsuperscript{92}

Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé has three levels of understanding of Tsangyang Gyatso’s state of being. First, Tsangyang Gyatso was an already achieved buddha. Secondly, Tsangyang Gyatso became the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara to benefit people. Thirdly, Tsangyang Gyatso was the venerable lama in Alashan, Ngawang Chödrak Gyatso Pelzangpo. If there was a person who experienced what is told in the *Secret Biography*, whether he was the Sixth Dalai Lama or not, he would see the life of himself from a perspective distinctive from the three. As it is evident in the first-person narrative, the self-recognition changed over time from an undetermined beginner to a self-esteemed and highly-achieved practitioner. Such distinctive viewpoints made different the representations of the same figure of Tsangyang Gyatso in the same stages of his life between the narratives and the poems. The divineness and the humanness thus coexist in the same figure of Tsangyang Gyatso.

Towards almost the end of his ten-year pilgrimage, Tsangyang Gyatso visited the Vulture Peak in India. A great change happened here to him. He revealed his own specialness and divineness through his first-person perspective language and took or retook his Bodhisattva Vow. Tsangyang Gyatso arrived at the Vulture Peak spontaneously but right at the auspicious date of the Saga Dawa, the date when the

Shakyamuni Buddha attained nirvana and parinirvana. He reported that, through his divine eyes (lha mig), he saw that the Vulture Peak was in fact a pile of scriptures of dharma. He did not dare to step on it, so he prostrated at the root of the mountain. However, the ordinary people, not understand what they were doing, just walked straight over the precious scriptures, not prostrating until they finally arrived at the top. Unrestrainably, he sang a song which ended like this:

…/

In order to help the entire sentient beings who have been my mothers/
I experienced alternatively joyfulness and suffering in this life/
From now on I will not acquire the great purification/
But rather would be a lion follower of the protector Shakyamuni/
No matter which land to go/
No matter which dwelling to stay/
No matter what action to undertake, just for others’ benefit/
I dedicate to all beings’ attainment of Buddhahood.\(^93\)

It is easy to see that Tsangyang Gyatso was taking the Bodhisattva vow in the song, sacrificing, or at least deferring, his own nirvana in exchange for the chance to save the beings and to help the beings to achieve nirvana. But it still remains a question whether he was taking the vow for the first time, or retaking the vow. In Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye’s framework, of course, there is nothing more than retaking the Bodhisattva vow and emphasizing the superiority of Tsangyang Gyatso the master who already

\(^93\) Ibid, 75-9.
achieved Buddhahood long long ago. Examining solely the first-person narratives, however, it did seem to be a huge change in the hero’s personalities. In the previous experience, Tsangyang Gyatso was very self-centered in his practice. Different from Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye’s gorgeous introduction to the fantastic personalities of Tsangyang Gyatso, he himself had seldom conducted any altruistic action for an altruistic purpose. Although he had looked after two orphans from the disaster of smallpox and helped his friend Lhogya when the Yetis were chasing them, these actions were more likely to be explained as Tsangyang Gyatso happened to be in such a situation that it was appropriate for him to help people who also happened to be around him from real life troubles to real life better state, instead of as Tsangyang Gyatso purposefully saving people from the suffering of samsara to the pure joyfulness of nirvana. Generally, before the song, Tsangyang Gyatso did not do much obvious altruistic action.

This is also one of the only poems in the text claimed to be produced by Tsangyang Gyatso but not Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye. The poem was very beautifully composed. Especially, the sentence of “No matter which land to go/ No matter which dwelling to stay/ No matter what action to undertake, just for others’ benefit/…” was very delicately formulated and no one other poem of Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye was comparable to it. The poem song, as an indication for the ending of the ten-year pilgrimage, resonates with the poem in the sutra Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye cited as

94 Ibid, 43-5.
95 Ibid, 66-8.
introduction of the ten-year pilgrimage: “Lion the king of herbivores has a mane/ To wherever he wants to go, he has no fear/ Like that, the Bodhisattva happily goes/ With morality, learning, and wisdom.” In some sense, at this point, Tsangyang Gyatso finally reached Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye’s estimation for him. His image after was never an easily achievable friend but a venerable master.

**Conclusion**

Any study of the institution of the Dalai Lamas can hardly overlook the political dimension of it. The *Secret Biography* seems to be minimalist on political activities, the hero having contact with political authorities only when it is necessary for the propagation of Buddhism. Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé portrays Tsangyang Gyatso from different dimensions, up to the cosmological level that he is a buddha and a bodhisattva who manifested in the human realm to benefit people and down to the worldly level that Tsangyang Gyatso was a young man being cast out of his original environment and, after a rich and colorful experience, finally grows up to a venerable lama. He devoted his entire life to the religion and had quite a big amount of followers and disciples in Alashan. The text just lacks any of Tsangyang Gyatso’s politics-related activities in Alashan. The hero’s little political interest seems to coincide with the Sixth Dalai Lama’s representation in Lhasa when he was young. If the *Secret Biography* were true, would it be a real escape of a Dalai Lama from the inescapable net of the politics?

Not necessary, if we consider the noble identity of the author Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé. Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé was a *taiji* and the nephew of the Alashan Prince Aboo. Toward the end of the third episode of the *Secret Biography*,
Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé reveals the close relationship between Tsangyang Gyatso and him. After writing Tsangyang Gyatso’s death, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé states that every clue pointed to the direction that his master will initiate a new reincarnation lineage in Alashan. Tsangyang Gyatso’s reincarnation, as it turns out, was a boy also in Alashan Prince Aboo’s family. The Alashan Prince Aboo was also a crucial figure in history. Aboo was the grandson of the fourth son of Gushri Khan. He was one of the earliest Mongol princes who was brought up in the palace as Yuqian Xingzou (御前行走, walker in front of the emperor), and he married an imperial daughter. Aboo was involved in the mission of escorting the Seventh Dalai Lama back to Lhasa as Qing’s representative. In other words, the Alashan Prince Aboo received fairly great attention of the Qing emperor.

In the early Qing among the Mongol tribes, there was a pervasive “phenomenon” that some male descendants of the noble family would be recognized as the reincarnation of a previous renowned lama. An early example would be the great-grandson of Altan Khan being the Fourth Dalai Lama. In this way, the noble family holds both the political and religious power in their hands which stabilized their authority. After the death of Tsangyang Gyatso in Alashan (whoever he was), the two

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96 For thoughts on Tsangyang Gyatso’s existence in Alashan in relation to the Seventh Dalai Lama and the two distinctive lineages after these two Dalai Lamas, see Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé (au.) Simon Wickhamsmith (tr.), Kurtis R. Schaeffer (foreword), The Hidden Life of the Sixth Dalai Lama, Lanham, Md: Lexington. 2011. During my fieldwork in Alashan, when I asked the lama who a portrait was, his answer was “the sixth reincarnation of the sixth Dalai Lama,” which invokes interesting metaphysical understanding of the two lineages.

97 For more information about Alashan Mongol tribe, see Qi Guang, Mongolian Politics and Society During the Qing: with a focus on the Alashan Khoshut Tribe/大清帝国时期蒙古的政治与社会—以阿拉善和硕特部研究为中心 (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2013).
most prominent lamas in Alashan, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargyé and the reincarnation of Tsangyang Gyatso, were both nobilities and relatives of Prince Aboo. In chapter 3, I will examine the Alashan Buddhism and society that sprouted around the myth of Tsangyang Gyatso and the role that the *Secret Biography* played in the later development.
Appendix

The following is Tsangyang Gyatso’s approximate trip map before arriving in Alashan in 1716 C.E. according to the Secret Biography. Some details are left out.98

Mön (1683 C.E.) —> Lhasa (1697 C.E.) —> Qinghai (1706 C.E.) —> Mt. Emei (1708 C.E.)

—> Lhasa (1709 C.E.) —> Mön (1711/2 C.E.) —> Katmandu, Neple (1712 C.E.)

—> Vulture Peak, India (1713 C.E.) —> Neple (1714 C.E.) —> Mön (1714 C.E.)

—> Lhasa (1715 C.E.) —> Alashan, Mongolia (1715/6 C.E.)

Chapter 3

The first episode of the *Secret Biography*, talking about Tsangyang Gyatso’s childhood, was not significantly different from the records of other historical resources. The second episode, telling the story of Tsangyang Gyatso’s lonely pilgrimage between his escape in 1706 until his arrival in Alashan in 1716, is in all means not falsifiable as historical events. Therefore, I mainly use these two episodes to textually analyze the author Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye’s purpose and strategy in reforming Tsangyang Gyatso’s image into a Buddha-, Bodhisattva-, and highly-revered-practitioner-like figure. That is, using these two episodes not as records of the objective events but as expression of subjective attitudes.

The third episode, however, is different from the first two in the sense that it not only adds new information to the main historical discourse outside this book, but is directly or indirectly historically corroboratable. Roaming into the third episode, Tsangyang Gyatso left the identity of the lonely pilgrim behind and, being broadly recognized, started to interact with the upper class people—in other words, those whose activities can be traced in other historical resources. The overall portrait of Tsangyang Gyatso in this chapter is also dramatically different from the previous two. Instead of trying his best to conceal his previous identity of the sixth Dalai Lama, it was as if everybody, at least every important figures, knew that he was the sixth Dalai Lama. For the commoners, Tsangyang Gyatso was no longer an anonymous pilgrim, but was at least more than obvious a highly achieved lama to be sincerely revered.
In this chapter, I will first compare the record in the *Secret Biography* and other historical resources to argue that such a locally revered lama in Alashan, regardless of his original identity, has most possibly existed rather than merely be a fiction created by Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye. Secondly, by addressing the broader political and religious context of his contemporary time, I will make the argument that the biography directly benefited the author Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye and the house of the Alashan Prince. I will explain this in two parts—how the circumstance was preferable and fit for such a biography to function, and what the beneficial results turned out to be. In explaining these, I will focus on not only what the text says, but also what the text doesn’t say.

**The Domé Monasteries and so on**

The *Secret Biography* records that Tsangyang Gyatso was active in Domé areas, approximately including areas of modern day Qinghai and Gansu. In 1720, He visited the gSer Khog monastery and was received by the Chu bZang Rinpoche and other significant figures of that area. He stayed for a few months and had many disciples there, including Zhwa Lu Blo bZang dPal lDan as his chief vajra student. During his next visit to gSer Khog monastery the following year, the elders of Jag Rung monastery, an affiliated monastery (tib: *ma lag*) the gSer Khog monastery, came to gSer Khog monastery to ask Tsangyang Gyatso to be their abbot. Although Tsangyang Gyatso refused at the beginning, the *Secret Biography* says, he did not concentrate on the conversation but was attracted by his visualization of a thang ka in the Jag Rung monastery at afar and accidentally promised to be their abbot. The Jag Rung monastery
was destroyed in the 1723 Revolt of Lobsang Danzin. Tsangyang Gyatso built a new
*Jag Rung* monastery at a new location, keeping being the abbot until right before his
death.

*gSer Khog* monastery is one of the biggest monastery in Domé area, also known as Guang Hui Si (广惠寺) in Chinese. The abbot of the monastery, Mindröl Hutuktu, was the third of the eight Hutuktus who reside in Beijing. *Zhwa Lu Blo bZang dPal lDan*, the chief student of Tsangyang Gyatso in the *Secret Biography*, was also known from other sources. He initiated a reincarnation lineage, which was kept until nowadays in the *gSer Khog* monastery. Thus he was known as the first Zhaluwa Hutuktu. Mindröl Hutuktu used to entrust him the *gSer Khog* when the former left for Beijing. The myth for the making of Zhaluwa Hutuktu was that he was recognized by Lobsang Rinchen Chödrak Gytaso as the reincarnation of Zhaluba Lekpa Gyaltsan, a disciple of Tsongkhapa. Lobsang Rinchen Chödrak Gytaso, as introduced in the previous chapter, is the name Tsangyang Gytaso used when it was improper for him to tell his real identity.

*Jag Rung* monastery is in Tianzhu county, Gansu province (甘肃天祝), known in Chinese as Shimen Si (石门寺). It can also been found in other source that, in the beginning of eighteenth century, the *Jag Rung* monastery was affiliated to *gSer Khog*

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monastery. The transfer of its affiliation certainly happened, as it currently affiliates with Guangzong monastery in Alashan, the monastery where the reincarnations of Tsangyang Gyatso and the reincarnations of Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye reside. The myth in both Guangzong Si in Alashan and Shimen Si in Domé indicated that Tsangyang Gyatso was involved in the transfer of the affiliation. The Secret Biography then records that Tsangyang Gyatso wrote the Panchen Lama to compose the monastic discipline (cha yig) for Jag Rung monastery, and the Panchen Lama did cooperate. The monastic discipline is still kept in the Jag Rung monastery.

As for the myth of Tsangyang Gyatso in Domé, one possibility is that the monks in the two monasteries passed down the story since Tsangyang Gyatso’s time. Another possibility, of course, is that the monks received the information that Tsangyang Gyatso was their lama from the Secret Biography. For example, the Religious History of Domé, composed in nineteenth century cited the Secret Biography among its sources. The author listed the Secret Biography between the Biography of the sixth Dalai Lama by Sangye Gyatso and the Biography of the Seventh Dalai Lama, in a way acknowledging

101 Michael Aris, Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives: A Study of Pemalingpa (1450-1521) and the Sixth Dalai Lama (1683-1706), (New York: Routledge, 2016), 203


104 Bai Hongyang, "A Study of the History and Current Situation of dPa' Ris Yar Lung Thobs bSam Dar rGyas gLing/华锐石门寺历史与现状研究" (M.A. Thesis, Central Ethnicity University, 2011), 12.

the authenticity of the *Secret Biography*. To be clear, the first possibility doesn’t mean that the lama was the sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso, as they could be deceived by a impersonator, as Aris argues.\textsuperscript{106} Also, the second possibility doesn’t necessarily falsify the *Secret Biography*’s claim—the monks and scholars in nineteenth century could have their reasons to approve of the shocking claim.

The *Secret Biography* tells that in 1732 the first Jebtsundamba Khutuktu sent Tsangyang Gyatso a letter through an Indian monk to keep it secret. Because of Tsangyang Gyatso’s previous visit to India during his pilgrimage, he was fluent in the Indian language to communicate with the monk. Jebtsundamba Khutuktu offered Tsangyang Gyatso his own position, the highest religious leader in the outer Mongolia Khalkha, saying that he already reported the situation to the Emperor. Tsangyang Gyatso declined the offer. Later the year, Jebtsundamba Khutuktu passed away. Tsangyang Gyatso together with Aboo went to Khalkha to visit Jebtsundamba Khutuktu’s stupa. He stayed there for quite a while and undertook various religious activities.\textsuperscript{107} In accordance with this, Aris mentions that Damdingsureng reports that the biography of the third Jebtsundamba Khutuktu records the activities of Tsangyang Gyatso in Khalkha during the time of the second Jebtsundamba Khutuktu.\textsuperscript{108}


These evidence are not to show that the *Secret Biography* was true, that the sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso survived his documented death in 1706 and lived in Alashan until 1746. Conservatively, they are to show that there was at least some noticeable one active in Domé around that time, and probably in name of the sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso among some elite monks, who caused those changes.

The hero’s interaction with the various personages around his time, while making some of his activities to some extent corroboratable, generates problem. Elliot Sperling, commenting on this issue, says that “if the historical and biographical materials relating to such personages make no mention of this Sixth Dalai Lama, that fact is of great significance.”\(^\text{109}\) However, consider the *Secret Biography*’s rendering of the lama, more likely he did not act openly in the name of the sixth Dalai Lama. Although he was recognized by multiple people, they were a limited people and all high-ranked religious figures, who surely knew (if it were true) that it wasn’t proper to tell other people or to write down that the sixth Dalai Lama was alive. Tsangyang Gyatso himself also never claim his identity through his own mouth, nor did he act like a survived Dalai Lama. His picture was more like a mere well-revered lama. That is to say, that the personages had no related material indicating the existence of this sixth Dalai Lama cannot add weight to either side of argument.

In addition, in the cognition of the personages around our hero who thought him to be Tsangyang Gyatso, there was no difference between whether in fact he was the real Dalai Lama or a mere impersonator. Aris supports the view that while the

impersonator was not the sixth Dalai Lama, he acted in the name of him. Therefore Sperling cannot in the same time consistently using the absent of any record of this sixth Dalai Lama in the materials relating to the personages to falsify the *Secret Biography* and agreeing with Aris’s argument—“Put simply, Micheal Aris was correct.”\(^{110}\) Indeed, their non-mentioning of this Tsangyang Gyatso adds credibility to the possibility of someone acting in the name of Tsangyang Gyatso around that time. Otherwise, if everyone talked about him openly, the impersonator probably failed his job and everyone recognized him as a fraud.

**The Alashan Prince Aboo**

According to the *Secret Biography*, the Alashan Prince Aboo and his wife Gege were the biggest patrons of Tsangyang Gyatso since he arrived in Alashan. Tsangyang Gyatso started to show various kinds of miracles in this third episode. Tsangyang Gyatso was introduced to the Alashan Prince Aboo by a Mongolian old man jakhiragci(*Tsa Khi Rug Chi*) who had generated great belief in him based on miracles. Upon hearing the miracles Tsangyang Gyatso had shown, Aboo was extremely joyful, and upon meeting Tsangyang Gyatso in person, he immediately generated great happiness and belief; it was said to be caused by the accumulated karma in the *Secret Biography*. Gege, on the other hand, challenged Tsangyang Gyatso’s legitimacy at the beginning. Tsangyang Gyatso showed a miracle of transforming a porcelain water cup into a ball, and then into a string, throwing it into the sky, and finally back into its

\(^{110}\) Ibid.
original shape with not even a drop of water spilled. Gege started to have firm faith since then.\footnote{Lha-bTsun-Ngag-dBang-rDo-rJe, O-rGyan-Chos-’Phel (ed.), \textit{The Secret Biography of Tsangyang Gyatso / Tshangs-dByangs-rGya-mTsho’i-gSang-eNam} (Lhasa: the Tibet People's Publishing House, Edition: 1981.11, 1st. Printing: 2008.9, 4th.), 106-110}

The story seems to suggest a simple minded picture of Prince Aboo and Gege. It generates questions. Who are these people? What was their state of mind when believing in an anonymous monk from nowhere who played shamanistic magic? What was the situation of Alashan? How updated Aboo was to be aware of the affairs happening in Beijing and Lhasa? The text itself suggests that Aboo was not ignorant, and more outside resources supports it.

The \textit{Secret Biography} records that, in the autumn of 1717, the fifty-sixth year of Kangxi, Tsangyang Gyatso went to Beijing with Gege and stayed in the Alashan Prince’s residence at Beijing. A sort of things happened at that time. It seems that he did not reveal his identity to Prince Aboo and Gege before. One day, Prince Aboo came at midnight and explicitly said that he knew who Tsangyang Gyatso was. He lured Tsangyang Gyatso with great power and high status, either going back to his own throne or taking over the place of the seal holder lama in Beijing. But Tsangyang Gyatso refused, showing no political interest at all. Aboo further threatened him that the affairs was not in the latter’s control once it was reported to the emperor. Tsangyang Gyatso, again, refused that, even they controlled his body, they could no get his heart. Hearing this, Aboo laughed and explained that his master Demo Hutuktu instructed him that King Tsangyang would come and asked him to serve him. Aboo advised that it was
best that Tsangyang Gyetso leave Beijing as soon as possible, otherwise he would better not to go out during daytime. Thus Tsangyang Gyetso stayed mostly indoor for a month, during which the second Thukwan Hutuktu visited him frequently to receive teaching.\textsuperscript{112}

A private conversation as it was, other evidence could hardly be found about it. From the story itself, it could be inferred that the author might want to express the lama’s aspiration and pure focus on religion and total non-interest in politics. Indeed, such an interpretation corresponds to the major theme of the text. Here and there in the \textit{Secret Biography}, the author creates the same characteristics in different way. For example, in the song Tsangyang Gyetso sang in the first Tshogs ‘Khor feast of Cakrasaṃvara he held in Alashan, he said that people’s chasing after political power in Tibet was horrible.\textsuperscript{113} However, considering Prince Aboo’s background, the conversation doesn’t seem so simple. I will explain this after introducing who Aboo was in history.

The Alashan Mongol was a branch of the Khoshut Mongol of the Oriats. Gushri Khan’s fourth son Ayushi was adopted by his elder brother Baibagasi who had no son at that time. The fourth son of Ayushi was Heluoli, who moved to Alashan because Galdan killed his uncle and head of the tribe Ochirtu Khan. Aboo was Heluoli’s third son. In other words, Aboo, as the direct descendant of Gushri Khan, was the cousin of

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, 120-22.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, 100.
the so-called Kokonor Taijis, or Qinghai Taijis. In 1704, Kangxi Emperor assigned Aboo as attaché to the emperor's suite (yuqian xingzou), allowing him to walk in front of the Emperor, and married a Heshuo Gege named Dogsin, the emperor’s niece to him. This was the Gege in the previous story. Since then, Aboo was brought to Beijing and grew up in the palace. Heluoli died in 1707, and Kangxi Emperor ordered Aboo to go back to Alashan to succeed his father’s Beile title in 1709. The birth year of Aboo was not certain, but it was known that he spent most of his childhood in Beijing around the emperor and succeeded the Alashan Prince at a rather young age. As Qi Guang puts it, Aboo’s age was proper for the emperor to establish the “master-subject relationship.” For this reason, Aboo was trusted by the Kangxi Emperor and had a special status among the Kokonor Taijis.

In 1720, Aboo was a major force in the mission of escorting the seventh Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso from Kokonor to Lhasa and expelling the Dzungars. According to the seventh Dalai Lama’s biography, in the his enthronement ceremony, Aboo was listed as the first among the Kokonor Taijis. When persuading the Kokonor Taijis to help in this mission, Kangxi Emperor said in the edict that “the Yellow Order (Gelugpa) was established by your ancestors. You of course should be joint together and strive.”

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114 Kokonor was the traditional domain of the Khoshut Khanate established by Gushri Khan. Thus Kokonor Taijis was a common word referring to Gushri Khan’s descendants at that time.


116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.
For the Khoshuts, taking control over Tibet meant their autonomy and power to balance with Qing. The initial intention of Qing Kangxi Emperor was still to keep the old system and to assign a Tibetan King among the Kokonor Taijis. However, the decision was delayed both for the difficulty of decision and for the death of the Kangxi Emperor. The Kokonor Taijis started to lose patience and became unsatisfied with the Kangxi Emperor’s not letting one of them to succeed the title of the Tibetan King. Especially, Prince Lobsang Tendzin was too angry that he revolted in 1723.

That said, Aboo was not one of the angry Kokonor Taijis. Nor did Kangxi Emperor thought him to be. After the conquest, Kangxi Emperor ordered all army a withdraw except stationed Aboo’s and Kalka Gung Tsewang Norbu’s army in Tibet for more than two years. Aboo’s stay was legitimate for the Tibetans and Mongols since he was the direct descendant of Gushri Khan; his stay was also desired by the emperor since he was loyal to Qing. During the discussion of the candidate for the Tibetan King, Aboo was proposed by different people. General Yanxin, for example, in his memorial to Kangxi Emperor, after analyzing the disadvantages of the possible taijis, favored Aboo. Yanxin designated Aboo with the phrase “on our side.” That is to say, it was a common awareness, at least between Yanxin and Kangxi Emperor that Aboo, while not being further than any Kokonor Taijis in blood relation to each other, was actually on

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119 Qi Guang, The Mongol Politics and Society during the Great Qing Empire: Centered on the study of the Alashan Khoshut Tribe (大清帝国时期蒙古的政治与社会—以阿拉善和硕特部研究为中心), (Shanghai: the Fudan University Press, 2013), 177.
the Qing’s side instead of on the Khoshut’s side. Yanxin was an imperial relative. Writing back to Yanxin, Kangxi Emperor put Yanxin and Aboo side by side, categorizing them as his lower-generation kins.120

Similarly, in his message reported by Prince Injeng to Emperor Kangxi, Efu Dondob Dorji commented the situation in Kokonor:

As for the successor of Lha-bzang Khan’s position in Lhasa, there is not a single person who fits among the Kokonor Taijis. In terms of the state of affairs for this time, not only (did they) ignore the tremendously heavy kindness of the lord my father,121 but they uttered excessively transgressive and evil words. Therefore, as far as I am concerned, among the descendants of Gushri Khan, Efu Aboo was the only proper one.122

Efu Dondob Dorji was a Khalkha Mongol who married an imperial daughter. His son was the future second Jebtsundamba Hutuktu. Dondob Dorji cognized Aboo as one of the descendants of Gushri Khan, but not one of the Kokonor Taijis, drawing a boundary between them. Morally, they were also distinctive—namely Aboo was good and the other ones were bad.

In a later time, Aboo had a similar judgment from himself. When the revolt of Lobsang Tenzin was pacified, Aboo proposed that he would move from Alashan to the Kokonor areas to watch his Kokonor brothers. While addressing them as elder and younger brothers, Aboo did not treat the Kokonor taijis and himself as the same kind:

120 Ibid, 131.
121 Dondob Dorji is a son-in-law of the Kangxi Emperor.
122 The First Historical Archive of China, Archive #: 04-02-002-000063-0060.
(My family) since my ancestor Gushri Khan to myself have been enjoying the
tremendously heavy kindness of the Shengzu Lord (Kangxi Emperor) for almost
a hundred of years. The fortune and virtue of my Kokonor brothers were exulted so that they cannot afford the great kindness of my lord and initiated such
inevitable affair. My lord sent army and pacified them immediately. None the Kokonor people should be excused from execution, but my lord payed special
care and let them live in their own place. Now they are unable to make trouble under the might of my lord, but their hearts still are not at all trustworthy. I have enjoyed such kindness of my lord for generations—so heavy! My humbleness was promoted to an imperial son-in-law, and even a second order prince (junwang). I have completely no means to repay such great kindness. If at all possible that I could be assigned an empty space in Kokonor area to live, the Kokonor people would not generate rebellious idea recklessly. Moreover, I can collect the intelligence to report.\textsuperscript{123}

The context of this message will be discussed later. But intra-textually, Aboo draws clear distinction between himself and his cousins, presenting himself as standing entirely in the shoes of the Qing. He discusses the affairs in Kokonor not in relation to the Dalai Lama but from the perspective of the Qing court. In this regard, Aboo was to some extent less religious and more political.

\textsuperscript{123} The First Historical Archive of China, \textit{The Comprehensive Translation of the Manchu Imperial Memorials with Cinnabar Comments in Yongzheng Period/雍正朝满文朱批奏折全译} (Hefei: Huangshan Shushe, 1998), 960.
In a word, Aboo was a very active political figure in late Kangxi period. He had very close relationship with Kangxi Emperor, and, with personal experience, was more than familiar with the affairs going on with the transmission between the two generations of the Dalai Lamas. He was acknowledged both by the Mongols and the Qing court as well as himself to be a special figure among the Kokonor taijis, being completely different from them in political aspiration. Aris comments that, the fact that Aboo was the escort of the seventh Dalai Lama “by itself makes it very difficult to believe he was simultaneously supporting someone claiming to be the Sixth.”\textsuperscript{124}

However, considering the total number of four sixth Dalai Lamas, recognizing one of them barely express anything more than a political aspiration. It was not implausible, in terms of his religious mindset, for Aboo to simultaneously interact with two alleged Dalai Lamas.

Going back to the aforementioned conversation between Aboo and Tsangyang Gyatso in Beijing—this happened in autumn 1717, three years before the seventh Dalai Lama was enthroned. At this point, the battle between the Dzungar and Lha-bzang Khan was on going in Lhasa. The one on the throne of the Dalai Lama was Yeshe Gyatso, enthroned by Lha-bzang Khan to replace Tsangyang Gyatso as the sixth Dalai Lama and reincarnation of the fifth. In other words, the story has not yet end and Tsangyang Gyatso has not yet officially reincarnated (which happened when the seventh Dalai Lama Kelzang Gyatso was enthroned). Such a condition opened the

\textsuperscript{124} Michael Aris, \textit{Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives: A Study of Pemalingpa (1450-1521) and the Sixth Dalai Lama (1683-1706)}, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 200
possibility for Aboo to propose the opportunity to go back to his original throne as he said in the conversation—whether this was realistic or not.

In fact, the author Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye more likely intended the audience to interpret this conversation as Aboo’s sounding out Tsangyang Gyatso’s reaction. The text obviously omitted some important political-related information regarding Tsangyang Gytso’s trip to Beijing, as well as the political aspects in his other activities. It takes merely an unnoticeable stroke saying that Tsangyang Gyatso visited the heaven-of-the-three-realms-like Chinese Palace in his entertaining spare time. What happened about the Palace was completely a blank. Aboo’s intention in asking the questions was also left unexplained. Still, from the text it is quite clear that Aboo’s real intention was not to support Tsangyang Gytso to a higher political position, either to go back the Dalai Lama’s throne or to take over the position of the seal holder lama. He was not disappointed at Tsangyang Gytso’s reaction, but was satisfied and laughed. Seeing Tsangyang Gytso rejecting the political offering, Aboo changed his attitude and treated Tsangyang Gytso as a purely religious figure by talking about his lama and giving Tsangyang Gytso some religious gifts.

Considering the likelihood that this person acted in the name of the sixth Dalai Lama, whether he was the real one or not, if this passage was true, probably Aboo heard of some rumors about this lama. As a Qing official in Kangxi Emperor’s close relationships, reasonably Aboo could have, for the emperor’s benefit, checked into this

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lama or reported it to the emperor. In Aboo and Tsangyang Gyatso’s conversation, the
implication appears to be that Aboo spoke as a representative of the emperor. Aboo’s
threaten that if he reports to the emperor Tsangyang Gyatso could not act according to
his own will implies the presumption that the emperor would definitely act as he said,
as if they already had a discussion of it. Tsangyang Gyatso’s respond that the emperor
and Prince Aboo could only control his body but not his mind shows that he
understands the implication that Aboo stands for both himself and the emperor. If this is
ture, Aboo’s satisfaction reflects the emperor’s satisfaction. A lama who, though said to
be the sixth Dalai Lama, was under Aboo’s observation and expressed absolute no
political aspiration, was relative safe.

The death of Kangxi emperor disrupted the affairs. Yongzheng emperor appears
to have barely no knowledge about Aboo besides the superficial information such as
him being a Alashan Mongol leader. During the revolt of Lobsang Danzin, Yongzheng
Emperor called back Aboo from Lhasa in 1732 and planed to order him to intercept
Lobsang Danzin in case the latter escape to his way to Alashan. Nian Gengyao, the
general in charge of pacifying Lobsang Danzin disagreed with this plan because “Aboo
was a great-grandson of Gushri Khan and a cousin of the Kokonor taijis, thus will, by
no means, have conflict with Lobsang Danzin.” Yongzheng Emperor’s respond was
that, “very appropriate! I really did not consider this.” It indicates that either Yongzheng

126 Qi Guang, The Mongol Politics and Society during the Great Qing Empire: Centered on the
Emperor was not familiar with the relationship between Aboo and the Kokonor Taijis, or he did not realize that this relationship would influence Aboo’s accommodation of his order.

Instead of sending Aboo into the mission against Lobsang Danzin, Yongzheng Emperor summoned Aboo to Beijing to get information of the Kokonor Taijis from him, probably also to control him.\textsuperscript{127} It was after this trip when Aboo get back from Beijing that in the \textit{Secret Biography} he and Tsangyang Gyatso went to Khalkha to visit the stupa of Jebtsundamba Hutuktu. Another purpose of this trip to Khalkha for Aboo was to take Prince Tsering’s daughter as his son’s wife as they had agreed back in their meeting in Beijing. This piece of information can be traced through Aboo’s imperial memorials submitted through Lifanyuan where he mentioned this marriage.\textsuperscript{128}

After Lobsang Danzin’s revolt had been pacified, as mentioned above, Aboo proposed himself to move to the Kokonor area to watch his Kokonor Taiji brothers. Yongzheng Emperor approved his suggestion. Just as he said, he worked hard on trying to keep the regional harmony at Kokonor. In early 1726, Aboo submitted a message to the Yongzheng Emperor discussing the religious circumstance in Kokonor region:

\begin{quote}
I, little Aboo, strived hard without concerning my own life for my lord’s affairs.

To my view, although during the chaos of the traitor Lobsang Danzin, the monasteries of this region were destroyed, and the living beings suffered greatly, my lord was so benevolent toward all sentient beings that the \textit{niru}\textsuperscript{129}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid

\textsuperscript{128} First Historical Archive of China, Archive #: 04-02-002-000133-0032.

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Niru} is Qing military organization of three hundred people.
were kept and salvage money delivered. These being good, however, now silently the blessing reduced and people’s lives became difficult. Aboo, my little and coarse self, thanks to my sacred lord’s benevolence, could work among people. It is proper for me to report, as not reporting the affairs to my lord is to let down the heavy kindness of my lord. In my foolish mind, I am afraid that the unrestored monasteries and the growing suffering is not in accordance with my lord’s benevolent heart that wishes all beings peaceful. Now, from the people from whom the monasteries used to collect farm rent and the Tangut, Fandzi, and Hoise people from whom the Kokonor Taijis collected taxes, please equally rearrange a few back to the monasteries as well as the Kokonor Taijis, so that they could live their lives. That done, people of the monasteries will be settled and the living being’s lives will be benefited. Please my sacred lord illuminatively judge the situation and, for the monasteries and the living beings, dispatch officers to investigate it. If now the assistance to the monasteries is set out accordingly and the affair of pacifying the living beings let happen, not only it is in accordance to my lord’s benevolence, but the faraway people hearing this will be rejoiced, and the living beings are also benefited.\(^{130}\)

Although Aboo included the Kokonor Taijis in the beneficiary, the entire memorial mostly focus on the Kokonor monasteries. The destruction of the monasteries was denoted as the origin of the degeneration of the Kokonor people’s life; the restoration of the monasteries was denoted as the means to revive the Kokonor people’s life. The

\(^{130}\) First Historical Archive of China, Archive #: 04-02-002-000133-0032.
attitude shown in the memorial appears to be inconsistent with that in Aboo’s previous memorial, where Aboo doesn’t understand the circumstance in Kokonor in relation to the Dalai Lama religiously, but in relation to the Qing emperor politically. While Aboo points to the revolt of Lobsang Danzin as the reason of the degeneration of the monasteries and people’s live, he sees the non-restoration of the monasteries, the sites emanating religious influence, as the fundamental cause. In addition, the rearrangement of people to the monasteries was, for him, the ultimate way to resolve the problem.

The reasons behind Aboo’s submission of this message could be more complex than it appears to be. Aboo, in the memorial, states the reason for submitting it as repaying the heavy kindness of the emperor, so as to consider the situation in the emperor’s shoes. As the message went up, Lifanyuan attached their comment to it. They said that Aboo was “transgressive of his authority in enquiring this issue and was offensive in submitting such a message” for two reason. On one hand, from the Qing’s perspective, the relationship between the monasteries and Lobsang Danzin’s troop was not as Aboo described, that the monasteries were the victim of Lobsang Danzin’s revolt. The officers from Lifanyuan explains that the monasteries destroyed in the pacification of Losang Danzin’s revolt were those that got involved in the revolt on Lobsang Danzin’s side. The particular ones among this kind was Cgolung monastery and Cgomang monastery as they said. These two monasteries were not comparable

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131 Manchu: Aboo dabali baita be dame balai felehudeme wesimbihengge ambula acahakvbi.

132 Cgolung and Cgomang are Manchu transcribes for Tibetan dGon Lung and sGo Mang.
to Kumbum monastery.\textsuperscript{133} Simply, the former were portrayed rebellious and evil while the latter obedient and saintly. Thus, the limited salvage money currently being delivered was enough. As for the people, on the other hand, they were already being rearranged and settled after the pacification. The affiliation of the people was already fixed, and there was no need to adjust again.\textsuperscript{134}

These factors taken into account, what Aboo was doing was not simply to give suggestion on how to revive the post-war Kokonor, but to suggest giving help to the officially recognized allies of the revolter Lobsang Danzin. Although not mentioning the names of the monasteries in his message, Aboo certainly intentionally hinted to Cgolung monastery and Cgomang monastery and understood that the Qing court would get that, just as Lifanyuan uttered it out. This was a very dangerous move, and he was indeed impeached because of that. Being a central character in the Qing-Kokonor affairs thus unlikely not to be aware of this, Aboo’s motivation is intriguing.

It actually makes a lot of sense in the context of the \textit{Secret Biography}—Cgomang monastery in the memorial, a major one of the monasteries that Aboo suggested Yongzheng Emperor to assist, was the gSer Khog monastery where the \textit{Secret Biography} states that Tsangyang Gyatso was active and established the bunch of master-disciple relationships, and also the monastery that \textit{Jag Rung} monastery previously affiliated to. In addition, the \textit{Secret Biography} also records that, during the

\textsuperscript{133} Kumbum monastery is the biggest monastery in Kokonor region and the alleged origination of Tsongkapa, sKu 'Bum Byams Pa gLing (མ་མཐོང་འབྲུལ་བྱམས་པ་མོང་) in Tibetan and Ta Er Si (塔尔寺) in Chinese.

\textsuperscript{134} First Historical Archive of China, Archive #: 04-02-002-000133-0032
time that Aboo’s Alashan Mongol tribe moved to Kokonor region, Tsangyang Gyatso became the abbot (mKhan Po) of thirteen monasteries there—Ta’i Thod, ‘Bru Gu, Gyang Ring, rGyab Tshe, Sem Nyi, rGya Yag, Or Tsho, Shaw dMar, the two rGya IDog-s, Hor dGon Pa, bKan Chen, ‘Bri Gung. Among them, Ta’i Thod monastery was the most famous one. The tulku of the monastery was Lu Kya mKhan Po. According to the Religious History of Domé, Lu Kya mKhan Po and his brother the Monguor Chiefdom Lu Tusi invited the preincarnation of Kun Grol to be the abbot of Ta’i Thod monastery. Kun Grol was the title given to the reincarnation of Tsangyang Gyatso in Alashan by, interestingly, his another incarnation, the seventh Dalai Lama. The future development of Tsangyang Gyatso’s influence in Alashan will be discussed later. The Secret Biography tells more detail about Tsangyang Gyatso being the abbot of Ta’i Thod monastery—Lu Kya mKhan Po used to know Tsangyang Gyatso back in Lhasa, so that he recognized him immediately. This scenario, joining together with other instances where Tsangyang Gyatso was recognized by other people, adds credibility of the Secret Biography to its audience. From another perspective, however, Lu Kya mKhan Po’s view before meeting Tsangyang Gyatso in person might represents a major view towards him—although this Dakpo Lama was famously being said to be the sixth Dalai Lama, but how was that even possible? This monk must be a fake!136

In this context, when Tsangyang Gyatso was famous but not believed by all, if Aboo’s suggestion was approved by the Emperor, Tsangyang Gyatso as the abbot of


many benefited monasteries would become one of the biggest beneficiary with no
doubt. When Tsangyang Gyatso’s status was promoted, he became important in
Kokonor not because of his fame of being the Dalai Lama, which cannot even been
uttered openly, but because of his real power of being the abbot of those important
monasteries. And, as the patron of Tsangyang Gyatso who established such patron-
priest relationship with him the earliest after he came back from the pilgrimage, Aboo
had very close relationship with him. With the help of Tsangyang Gyatso, Aboo as a
newly joined member of the Kokonor region, could have greater influence. In this way,
Aboo and Tsangyang Gyatso reciprocally benefited each other.

Religio-political Circumstance

One of the purposes of the *Secret Biography* is to justify the tulku lineage in
Alashan. Many instances in the text directly or indirectly suggest that the master,
namely Tsangyang Gyatso, would reincarnate. Since at that time the seventh Dalai
Lama was already enthroned for many years, the text was not talking about him but
another reincarnation of the sixth Dalai Lama, in Alashan. For example, in the section
about Tsangyang Gyatso's death, the author mentions several prophetic poems, speech,
and dreams of the master and himself, concluding that "these, among many other
trustworthy and reliable omens, foresees the reincarnation in future."\(^{137}\)

Claiming a renowned lama as his master was obviously beneficial to Ngawang
Lhundrup Dargye as a monk, but it was also beneficial to him as a member of the

\(^{137}\) Ibid, 195-99
Alashan Prince's house, Or to say, it was beneficial to the Alashan Prince's house. Among the Mongols in early Qing, the lamas regularly reincarnated in the noble families. Among them, the famous examples were the fourth Dalai Lama, the first and second Jebtsundamba Hutuktu, and Galdan. As Cai Zhichun points out, "these noble lamas were respected by both the monks and the lay people... the sons and brothers of the Mongol noble family renounced to be monks, wearing the robe and becoming the noble lamas, to govern the Mongols on the spiritual level."\(^{138}\) The practice was banned by the Qing court later to prevent the Mongol noble families from abusing the power, but was still popular in Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye's time. Indeed, the reincarnation of Tsangyang Gyatso was, just as Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye himself, also from the Alashan Prince's house.\(^{139}\)

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have first introduced the traces of the hero of the *Secret Biography*, the alleged Tsangyang Gyatso, in Domé and Alashan. These contextual evidences shows at least the influence of the *Secret Biography*, if not the real figure of the hero, outside Alashan. Also shown was the probability of the existence of a real figure who had agency in the development of the Domé history, such as the rebuilt of the *Jag Rung* monastery. Second, I introduced the Alashan Prince Aboo. I argued that


he was a significantly helpful figure in the localization of Tsangyang Gyasto in Alashan due to his special status in Qing, namely his relationship with Kangxi emperor and his recognition among the Mongol princes. Finally, by introducing the practice of the Mongol noble lama in the early Qing period, I addressed the religio-political circumstance to explain how the establishment of the reincarnation lineage of Tsangyang Gyasto benefited not only the monastery but also the Prince's family.
Conclusion

The success of Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye’s Buddhist establishment in Alashan was achieved with the aid of both his proper utilization of the figure of the sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso under the contemporary circumstance and the collective effort of Alashan Prince’s house, especially Prince Aboo. The Secret Biography tactfully exhibited the destined lama of Alashan as the sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso, enjoying the benefits he could bring but also at the same time avoiding the trouble with his problematic identity. The benefit accompanying the figure of Tsangyang Gyatso was obvious—his religious authority as the Dalai Lama. As described multiple times in the Secret Biography, Tsangyang Gyatso, though left his past glory behind and took on the robe of a pilgrim, was still fairly frequently being recognized by people previously known to him and take advantage on these situations because of his previous identity of the Dalai Lama. These plots work both as confirmation of Tsangyang Gyatso’s identity from these locally well-known monks’ months and as foil of the tremendously high reverence Tsangyang Gyatso received.

The trouble brought by the figure of Tsangyang Gyatso is way more complex than the benefits. On one hand, the character of the Dalai Lama, especially at Tsangyang Gyatso’s age, was not just a religious leader, but more of a political figure. The Dalai Lama began to hold both political and religious authorities in his one hand since the fifth, the one preceding Tsangyang Gyatso. Especially, with the political competence and activeness of Desi Sangye Gyatso, the Dalai Lama became a politically very crucial person to both the Qing court and among the Mongol Princes mainly
because of the Dalai Lama’s mighty influence over the Mongol Princes. Frankly speaking, Qing emperors would not like to see the Dalai Lama in the control of any Mongol Prince, especially the hostile ones. Holding the Dalai Lama in hand, each Mongol Prince may have the potentiality to gather a bunch of other Mongol princes under him thus to have enough power to fight against the Qing.

In the Qing envoy’s memorial, we are also informed that Tsangyang Gyatso was able to gather up a army of several hundred people for his mission—not as being fully controlled by Desi and being political impotent as we thought him to be. Moreover, he sent messages to the Mongol Princes for help, likely to indicate a previous personal connection between them. These details turn Tsangyang Gyasto's image from a disabled political puppet to a rather potent political agent. It only adds the dangerousness of Tsangyang Gyatso being in a Mongol Prince'a hand from the Qing's perspective, and deepen our question.

Ngwang Lhundrup Dargye was aware of this problem in his writing. In the *Secret Biography*, he addressed it not by talking about and explaining away it, but by omitting it. Looking at the *Secret Biography* solely in itself regardless of the background informations, it was as if a story of a purely religious person. The first episode on the childhood of Tsangyang Gyatso, while telling the story of the throne-holder of the entire Tibetan plateau, contains not a single word about any political activity, or even holding a public religious event, such as the ones Tsangyang Gyasto held in the third episode, that might be related to some political figure. The story was just a religiously special child living in the palace studying. The second episode was a
very private pilgrimage where Tsangyang Gyasto only rarely interacted with a namable person, not to say being political active in any way.

When he stepped into the third episode, Tsangyang Gyatso inevitably had to interact with political figures around him—those who existed in history. In these scenarios, Tsangyang Gyatso always plays a sharply bounded religious role. For example, Tsangyang Gyatso was invited by General Yue Zhongqi to pray for the victory of the army. For another example, Tsangyang Gyatso negotiated with a not Buddhist-friendly officer for lands and permission to build the new Jagrung monastery. The most robust case Tsangyang Gyatso has encountered was Prince Aboo’s inquire whether he wanted to gain political power, and he refused straightly. Besides these, here and there in the Secret Biography Tsangyang Gyatso would unintentionally express reverence to the Qing emperor. Talking about a relics he had lost, Tsangyang Gyatso said that it was such a pity as he was going to offer it to the emperor one day.140

Reading all these through, the audience will conceive a lama who was concentrated on religious affairs and had little interest in politics whatsoever, but reserved the proper reverence to the Emperor—the typical nice monk who causes no harm to the country. Such a image, in replace to a politically active monk, can loosen Qing’s sensitive neurons. Also, a factor outside of the text was the Alashan Prince Aboo. Under the observation of him who had very close relationship with Kangxi

Emperor, the monk with rumor of being the sixth Dalai Lama became much less urgent a issue to be dealt with.

On the other hand, Tsangyang Gyatso’s personality made him controversial as a Buddhist authority in the standard view. Among the limited available sources about Tsangyang Gyatso, his personality can be coarsely delineated. First of all, Tsangyang Gyatso’s childhood through teenage biography composed by Sangye Gyatso displays him in the beginning as the destined reincarnation of the great fifth, born with various auspicious omens. He then underwent a miserable childhood almost like a prisoner. When grown up, Tsangyang Gyatso was out of the control and the designed path of Sangye Gyatso. Thus the biography had a sudden end at his eighteen years old. Secondly, from some fragmental letters between Sangye Gyatso and the major monastery aboot, we learn that Tsangyang Gyatso went to Panchen Lama to return his robe and novice vow. We also know that he was not a good student. From other people’s biography, we had a glance of Tsangyang Gyatso having party with his fallow friends, drinking and singing. And then, to the year of Sangye Gyatso’s death, Qing envoy brought back news in Lhasa in memorial. The envoy reported that Tsangyang Gyatso did not obey monastic rule but married the daughter of Desi Sangye Gyasto, and partially ignited the conflict between Lha-bzang Lhan and Desi Sangye Gyatso because of his intimate relationship with a boy. Also, Panchen Lama disproved him in the envoy’s report, saying that such a man cannot be the real reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. These being considered, the well-known love poems alleged to be Tsangyang Gyatso’s composition was not entirely unlikely, as those coincide with many
aforementioned behaviors. In a word, Tsangyang Gyatso according to these sources was a rebellious young man with very colorful private lives.

Such a relatively wholistic portrait of Tsangyang Gyasto from multiple perspectives generates problem for Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye, someone who wanted to cite Tsangyang Gyatso as the foundational figure of his place Alashan’s Buddhist establishment. To put it simple, people just wouldn’t want their guru to be a playboy in rumor. Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye dealt with this problem tacitly. In the first and third episodes, Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye did not mention a word of Tsangyang Gyatso’s alleged disobedience. In the second episode, however, he hinted several times that Tsangyang Gyatso invested more time on tantric practice than in doctrine study, different from the Gelug tradition, and that he was a \textit{mahasattva}. The mahasattva tradition in Tibet opens a window for Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye to explain Tsangyang Gyasto’s behavior justifiably Buddhist while accepting the rumors.

Just as Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye indicated at the end of the \textit{Secret Biography}, Tsangyang Gyatso reincarnated in Alashan, so did Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye himself. Up to now, they both reincarnated six times in Alashan, co-occupying the seat of abbot at dGa’ IDan bsTan rGyas gLing, the monastery established by Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye in the same year of composing the \textit{Secret Biography}. The monastery and the two Hutuktu lineages had been the most prominent ones in Alashan since the establishment. The reincarnation of Tsangyang Gyatso was granted the title Dakpo
Hutuktu by the Qing court, which can be traced back to the *Secret Biography*. The Dakpo Hutuktu was included in the *Dongli Nianban* in Beijing—only fifty eight among hundreds of Mongol reincarnating lamas were selected to participate. Later, the fifth reincarnation of Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye was also included in *Dongli Nianban* when he visited Beijing with his master, the fourth Dakpo Hutuktu. The title of the reincarnations of Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye was *Desrid* Hutuktu, the Mongolian transcribe of the Tibetan word *bDe Srid*, as in Desi Sangye Gytso, since in Alashan Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye was the alleged reincarnation of Desi Sangye Gytso.

I have very little evidence about the situation of the *Secret Biography* after it was written. The Alashan archive as far as I know has only limited information on the religious history of Alashan. Most of the documents were administrative. There are probably some information stored in the monasteries which I have not yet get access to. There are also probably some useful information in the Domé monasteries, as the Alashan Tsangyang Gyasto's influence covered there. The text itself claims that the

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141 Towards the end of the second episode of the *Secret Biography*, it tells that Tsangyang Gytso spent quite a while in Dakpo monastery, thus people from then on called him Dakpo lama.

142 Dongli Nianban is a regulatory institution during Qing dynasty that categorized these fifty eight lamas into six groups, and require them to visit Beijing in turn annually. See Zhou Wuyun, “An Attempt to Discuss the Qing Mongol Lamas’ Dongli Nianban Institution (试论清代蒙古地区喇嘛洞礼年班制度),” *The Journal of Inner Mongolia Nationality University (Social Science)*, 2010, 04.


144 This piece of information has no trace in the *Secret Biography*, but first existed, as far as we know, in the praise poem for Tsangyang Gytso composed by his reincarnation in Alashan, the second Dakpo Hutuktu. See Jalsan, Jalsan (Jialasen), *Yuanqi Nansi/缘起南寺*, (Hohhot: the Inner Mongolian University Press, Edition: 2003.8, 1st. Printing: 2003.8, 1th.), 133.
point of the text was not to be concealed, but because it was the suitable time for the
name of the master to be known by all, the author wrote it to spread the life story of the
master. If this was so, the story should had been told to people since written. Jalsan
informs us that the *Secret Biography* was in woodblock instead of in handwritten copy,
similarly indicating that the text was spread by printing. When I visited Guangzong
monastery in summer 2018, the monk Bukezhaya told me that the woodblock of the
*Secret Biography* is in Beijing (being conserved by Chinese government), and he had a
handwritten copy of it.

Nowadays, Guangzong Si openly worship Tsangyang Gyasto as their monastic
founding father. The monastery was burned during the cultural revolution, when
Tsangyang Gaysto's preserved body was burnt together. The new monastery had two
big temples standing side by side. One is the grand dharma temple, and another is the
yellow temple. The second floor of the grand dharma temple are the stupas of the
second through sixth Dakpo Hutuktus on the left (reincarnations of Tsangyang Gaysto),
the stupas of the second through sixth Desrid Hutuktus on the right (reincarnations of
Ngawang Lhundrup Dargye), and the stupa of the first Desrid Hutuktu Ngawang
Lhundrup Dargye in the middle. The stupa of Tsangyang Gyatso is alone in the yellow
temple, golden and stately. Everyday at 3 p.m., the lamas in the Guangzong monastery
recite sutras in the yellow temple in front of Tsangyang Gyatso's Golden stupa. In their
chanting, they chant the name of the venerable Tsangyang Gaytso.
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