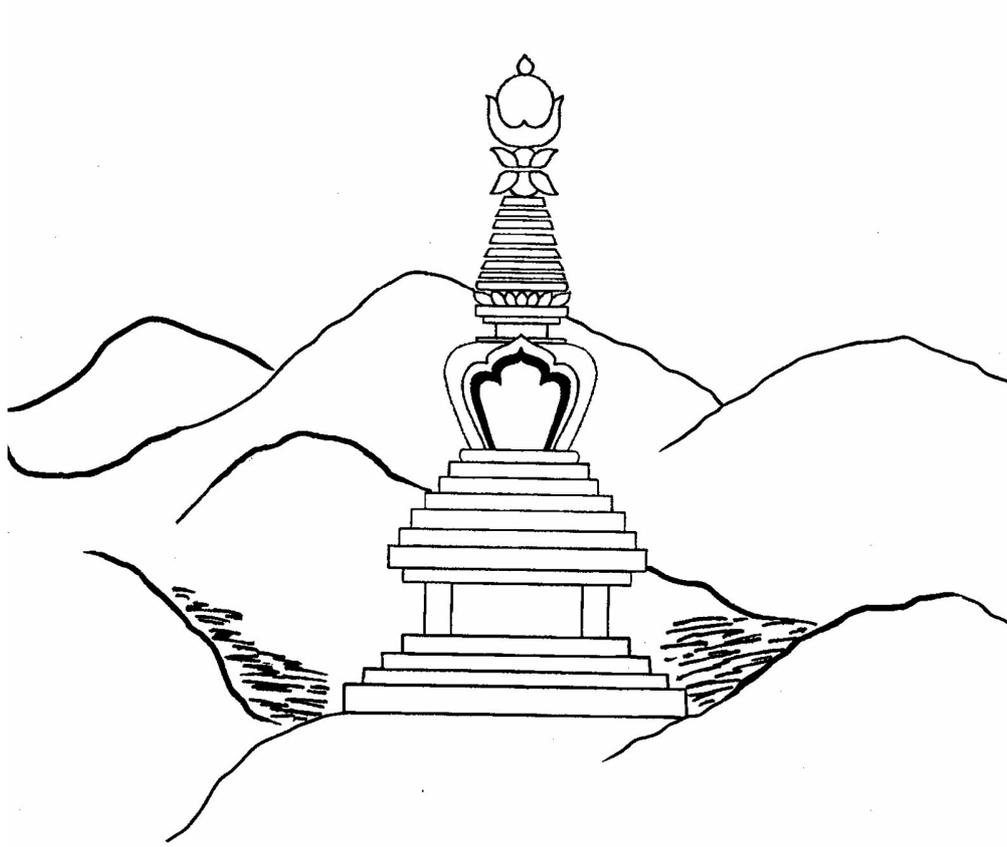


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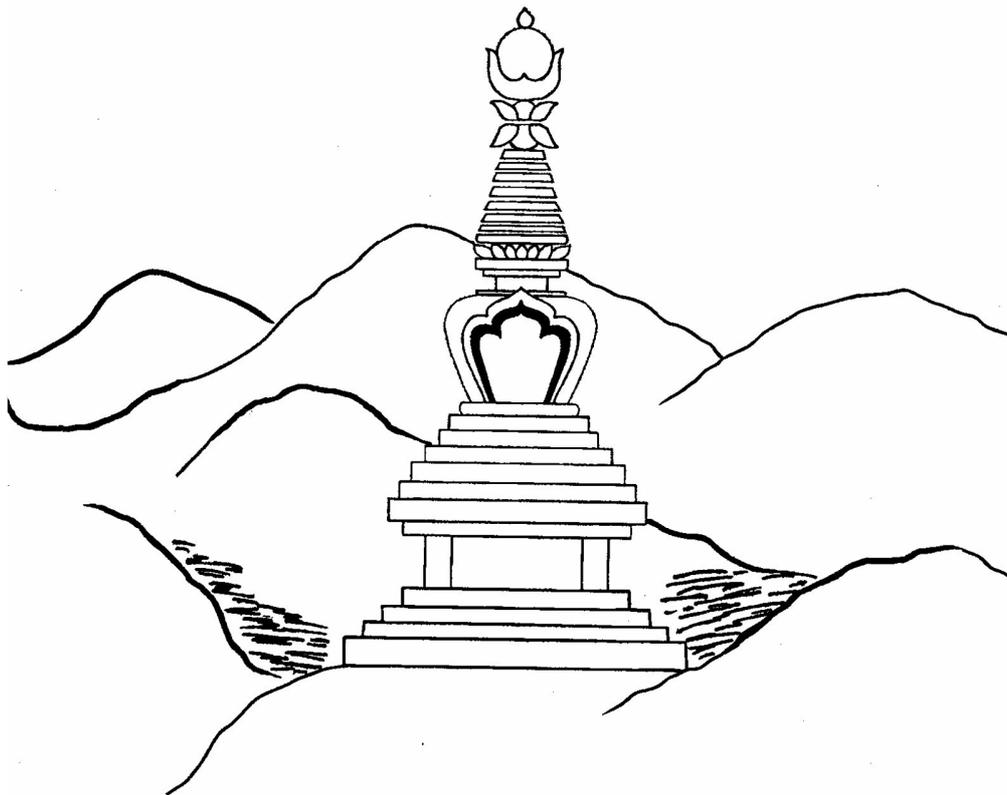
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GANGTOK, SIKKIM

The Bulletin of Tibetology seeks to serve the specialist as well as the general reader with an interest in the field of study. The motif portraying the Stupa on the mountains suggests the dimensions of the field.

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Submission guidelines. We welcome submission of articles on any subject of the history, language, art, culture and religion of the people of the Tibetan cultural area although we would particularly welcome articles focusing on Sikkim, Bhutan and the Eastern Himalayas. Articles should be in English or Tibetan, submitted by email or on CD along with a hard copy and should not exceed 5000 words in length.

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TIBETAN BIOGRAPHIES

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

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THIS ISSUE

The theme for this issue of the *Bulletin of Tibetology* arrived quite naturally when each of the contributors suggested Tibetan biographical traditions as their foci. Despite such thematic coherence, their subjects prove to be quite distinct both by time and tradition, and the articles vary in their objectives as well.

Michael R. Sheehy focuses on a crucial period in the history of the Jonang lineage. These were the 23 years following the death of Tāranātha in 1635 when Jonang, already confronting complications in Tāranātha's succession, came under increasing pressure from the dGa' ldan pa who were aspiring to hegemony. To detail their tactics and the Jonang response, Sheehy presents numerous excerpts from two Jonangpa auto/biographies that he recently recovered. The autobiography of Tāranātha's consort, Phrin las dbang mo (Trinle Wangmo), recounts the master's last words as well as predictions of the challenges to come. The biographer of Tāranātha's successor, bLo gros rnam rgyal (Lodrö Namgyal), describes the young leader's impressions of a troubling audience with the Fifth Dalai Lama. It also preserves a series of visions that precipitated the Jonangpa departure from their mother monastery, rTag brtan gling in central Tibet, to establish a new haven in Amdo. The Jonang continues to flourish there to this day. As he includes excerpts from the Fifth Dalai Lama's biographies as well, Sheehy presents a more complete picture of this critical period of Tibetan history which contrasts the perspectives of the victors with those they suppressed.

The subject of Charles E. Manson's article, Karma Pakshi (1204/06-1283), is the second of the Karmapa hierarchs and thus the first to be recognized as a reincarnate successor in it. By exhaustively comparing his many complete biographies, Manson compiles a critical edition of the historical narrative for this seminal figure of the Karma bKa' rgyud school; he provides a thorough overview of the information available on the birth, education, ordination, training,

career, and death of Karmapa II Karma Pakshi. In addition to the article, two tables are included as appendixes. These list each of Karma Pakshi's pre-modern and modern biographies with the details of their origin and publication.

My article compares the earliest biographies of the first great treasure revealer, Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer (Nyang rel Nyima özer, 1124-1192). A literary maverick, he developed many of the traditions that now define Nyingma. Although variances between the two biographies renders their historicity unverifiable, a presentation of their episodes reveals two common Buddhist narrative devices that, working in concert, legitimize their protagonist. The first relies on the infallible mechanism of karmic process. Meditative accomplishment and virtuous actions in past lives produce manifestations of enlightenment such as signs, dreams and visions, thereby confirming the protagonist's status as a buddha incarnate (Tib: *sPrul sku*, Skt: *nirmāṇakāya*). The second device utilizes the multivalent potency of Tantric symbols to imbue mundane events with profound significance. These devices may be recognized as nearly ubiquitous throughout the Tibetan tradition of religious biography. In depicting the life of Nyi ma 'od zer, they drive the narrative forward by foreshadowing the life that is to come.

As is often the case in presenting any academic publication, there is a tension between the stylistic standards of the field and accessibility for a broader population to whom our work, ideally, provides some contribution. In our field, among the more problematic is the use of Wylie transcription for Tibetan, which is standard for scholars of Tibetan but illegible to everyone else, including native Tibetan speakers. This is especially challenging for this issue since all of its elements (save one book review) focus almost exclusively on Tibetan materials. In attempting a compromise, Wylie is provided throughout but a phonetic rendering of all personal names, provided in parentheses, follows their first use. As the *Bulletin of Tibetology* is an academic publication, standards from the field of Tibetan studies are given primacy. However, it is the hope of the editors that this will not dissuade non-Wylie readers from the content of the issue, and that the phonetics will prove sufficient to progress through the articles. Names and terms commonly recognized through their phonetic equivalents (Dalai Lama instead of Ta la'i bla ma) remain in that form as well.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the Director of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Tashi Densapa, for his invitation to conduct research at NIT in 2009, Drs. Anna Balikci-Denjongpa and Saul Mullard for facilitating my research during my time there (as well as their invitation

to edit this issue), and Tsultsem Gyatso Acharya for his consistent willingness and skill in deciphering the more challenging sections of Nyi ma 'od zer's biographies. I would also like to extend my thanks to the staff of NIT in general for their help. Last, I am especially grateful to Say-la Yeshe Dorje and his family, Mrs. Dorje, Pema Thobgyal, Pema Lhadon, and little Tenzin Baby-la, who were such kind hosts during my time in Gangtok.

