

45 The Fifth Dalai Lama: *The Pearl Rosary: Advice on Combining the Two Traditions* (undated, ca. 1645)

Translated and introduced by Matthew W. King

Introduction

The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngakwang Lozang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617–1682), was one of the most influential leaders of seventeenth-century Asia.¹ By means of political, economic, military, and religious networks spanning Inner and East Asia, the “Great Fifth” (Tib. *lnga pa chen po*), as he became known, was the first Dalai Lama to hold transregional political power. Prior to the conclusion of the Tsang-Mongol War in 1642, the Dalai Lama incarnation lineage had been just one of hundreds of such lineages populating monastic networks, in uneasy and ever-shifting political relationships with non-monastic authorities. However, in military and political partnership with the Khoshot Mongol forces of Güüši Qan and the newly established Qing Empire (after 1644), the Fifth Dalai Lama and his associates – including such figures as his famous layman regent, or “*dési*” (Tib. *sde srid*), Sanggyé Gyatso (Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, 1653–c. 1705) – embarked on a trans-Inner Asian campaign to centralise and systematise religious and political life, all resting upon the Central Tibetan institution of the Dalai Lama.

This centralisation campaign took many forms, including the violent erasure of rival religious and secular powers (such as the king of Béri in Kham, and the Jonang Buddhist lineage), an Indophilic literary and scholastic revitalisation campaign, vast visual and literary projects to synthesise South, Inner, and East Asian history into a moral narrative culminating in the ascension of the Dalai Lamas, and the political consolidation of local and transregional patrons (including the Manchu Shunzhi emperor and a great many Mongolian aristocrats). Though the Great Fifth shared power with secular Mongolian leaders, and brokered longstanding patronage networks with the Qing emperors themselves, one of his (and Sanggyé Gyatso’s) major legacies was

¹ For accessible surveys of the Great Fifth’s life and influence, see Samten G. Karmay, *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals, and Beliefs in Tibet* (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998); Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) Dalai Lama 05, *The Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama*, trans. Samten G. Karmay (Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2014); Françoise Pommaret, ed., *Lhasa in the 17th Century: The Capital of the Dalai Lamas* (Brill: Leiden, Netherlands, 2003); Zahiruddin Ahmad and Sangs-rGyas rGya-mTsho, *Life of the Fifth Dalai Lama* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture & Aditya Prakashan, 1999); Kurtis Schaeffer, “The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso,” in *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, ed. Martin Brauen (London: Serindia, 2005), 65–91.

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synthesising the territories of Dharmic and temporal power, knowledge, ethics, and soteriological possibility into the institution of the Dalai Lama.

In the centuries following the Great Fifth's death in 1682, the impact of his efforts continued, in the expansion of what has been called the 'religious empire' of his Géluk school across eastern Tibet, north China, all Mongolian societies, the Manchu courts, and Siberia. By the collapse of the Qing Empire in 1911, this vast network of polyethnic Géluk monasteries – housing tens of thousands of monks, and great reserves of wealth, labour, and livestock – was a major institutional base for education, medicine, printing, and religion in Asia's heartland. In the ruins of empire, and at the dawn of the secular nationalist movements and revolutionary politics that grew into Asia's earliest experiments with socialist state building, Géluk monastic cultures represented complex administrative bureaucracies that both facilitated and challenged revolutionary modernity (and revolutionary erasure). Across much of Inner Asia, it is impossible to understand local mediations of secularism, or local incorporations of secular institutions and social forms, without understanding the models of history, moral and political authority, or trans-regional institutionalism rooted in Buddhist monasticism. In all of this, the shadow of the Great Fifth usually looms large.

At the core of the Great Fifth's state-building project – which impacted not only Tibetans, but also Mongols, Han Chinese, Manchus, Buryats, Kalmyks, Nepalese, and other Himalayan societies – were models of knowledge, authority, ethics, and social harmony embodied in two related, and complementary, concepts: the "Two Systems" model of sovereignty (Tib. *lugs gnyis*; Mo. *qoyar yosu*) and the "Two Dharmas" model of human and supra-human ethics and knowledge (Tib. *mi chos* and *lha chos*). The Fifth Dalai Lama did not invent these categories – they had Indian precedents in the Buddha's recorded teachings (fifth century BCE), in the record of King Aśoka's Mauryan Empire (third century BCE), then in the Tibetan Yarlung Empire (seventh to ninth centuries CE), and especially the great thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Mongol Empire of Činggis Qan and his descendants. By strategically organising Eurasian history as culminating in his own seventeenth-century institution-building efforts, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama relied upon these concepts to organise the appropriate territories of the Dharma (Tib. *chos*) and mundane affairs (Tib. *srid pa*). Though generally prioritising the Dharmic over the mundane, he always recognised the combination and co-dependence of both spheres, as required for the kind of political stability, social harmony, material abundance, and emancipatory possibility he prioritised in his state-building project.

The Fifth Dalai Lama's letter translated below – entitled *The Pearl Rosary* – reflects these concerns, which came to shape trans-Eurasian diplomacy, monastic historiography, aesthetic culture, and ritual traditions for centuries thereafter. Though the letter is undated, it seems that it was written in or soon after January 1645, which, according to the Great Fifth's autobiography, is when he had a personal audience with the powerful Qalqa Mongolian leader Tüšiyetü Qan Gombodorji (r. 1636–1655), who requested its composition. Given their power, and their Činggisid blood, Gombodorji and his fellow

Qalqa noblemen were vital partners in the Dalai Lama's project. They patronised and helped direct the extension of the Géluk school into Mongolian territory. They also helped fund and sustain Géluk institutionalism across Central and Eastern Tibet. Indeed, Tüšiyetü Qan's son had already been identified as the incarnation of a great Tibetan religious leader in 1639, an embodied form of synthetic Inner Asian power, combining Činggisid nobility with Tibetan monastic authority.^{II}

Though the Dalai Lama made heavy use of ornate instructional letters in his trans-Asian statecraft, the present work is remarkable. It distils the Two Systems and the Two Dharmas into pragmatic advice for managing complimentary spheres of interest and authority between the Dharma and non-Dharma, between Buddhist aspiration and the grimmer requirements of realpolitik, and between an individual's interests in the goals of this life and in those of future lives.

Bibliographical Information

Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho. *Lugs zung gi bslab bya mu thi la'i 'phreng ba* [The Pearl Rosary: Advice on Combining the Two Traditions]. Dharmasala: India, 1982; 4–16.

Page numbers given in square brackets refer to this edition.

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[. . .]

Nowadays, in India, China, Mongolia, Tibet, and so forth,
The ancient tradition of the two systems of noble behaviour
Has mostly disappeared, and bad conduct is lauded as good.

[. . .]

If even the success of the human Dharma (*mi chos*) is dependent upon merit,
What need is there to mention that the same is true of the supramundane Dharma (*lha chos*)?
It is important to gather a great accumulation of merit from good kinds of conduct,
Such as by making offerings to the Triple Gem, practising giving to the poor, and so forth.
Because we do not have clairvoyance, it is very difficult
For discussions and decisions to come to fruition.
As such, we need to carefully investigate the time, conditions,
And enemies, friends, and strangers.
Based on this situation, we may pursue some appropriate course of action.
This is the best way forward (*pho tshod yang rtse yin*).

^{II} Tüšiyetü Qan's son became known in Qalqa as Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar, the first of the Jebtsundamba Qutuytu. For an illuminating study on the evolving investment of both religious and secular power in the Jebtsundambas, see: Tsultemin Uranchimeg, *A Monastery on the Move: Art and Politics in Later Buddhist Mongolia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2021).

[I. Human Dharma]

Though the arising of mental fantasies is endless,
 Not acting upon them in speech and action: such a one is wise.
 Not hurrying to speak against our most bitter enemy,
 But warmly welcoming them instead with a fake smile: such a one is intelligent.
 Whatsoever speech or appearances arises for us that we dislike,
 Hiding [p. 3/4] our feelings in our heart: such a one is profound.
 Although one desires food and clothes, using slick language and deceitful methods
 To indirectly acquire what you like, without appearing to do so: such a one is smart.
 Do not be too spiteful against bad people; it is possible that in the future they will change.
 Do not praise good people too much; it is difficult to know whether they will change in the
 future.
 We have no idea what the future may hold.
 And so, it is unsuitable for you to pass judgement simply by following what others say.
 We will always be uncertain whether a course of action will be successful.
 And so, before it has been successful, we should not speak about it or broadcast it to others.
 Being overly protective (*byams skyong*) of your relatives, such as of your son, brings about bad
 habits in them.
 Being too hateful of your enemies will cause them to hate you in equal measure.
 If you are too close to your relatives, in the future you will be malicious to each other.
 If you use too many threatening words with your servants, it will be very rare that anyone will
 draw near to you.
 If you are too harsh with your retinue, this will invite a tumour into your heart.
 If you are too disdainful in the company of friends, they will become vindictive.
 If you set a bad example for your companions, it will come back to haunt you.
 Do not make an enemy with your words; hold your malice in your mind.
 Do not overly praise your relatives, but hold them with loving kindness in your mind.
 Though [p. 4/5] you may have an angry mind, keep a calm exterior and use sweet words.
 Since it is difficult to tame your enemies through face-to-face conflict,
 Instead try and destroy their future (*'dun ma*) using a variety of other methods.
 Open with a welcoming smile, and continue your conversation to the end at a leisurely pace.
 Get to your point using concise words appropriate for your audience.
 Since by stinginess alone, it is impossible to collect food and wealth,
 You must generate an open and loving intellect,
 Willing to destroy the hundred to summon the thousand.
 If you explain crime and punishment (*nyes skyon*) to your son, it will benefit him later.
 If you abandon praising yourself, in the future people will value you.
 Keep your own interests hidden and display concern for others, people will respect you.
 Do not give the power to make decisions to a woman; decide for yourself.
 Do not hold discussions with the foolish, and do not give power to the ignoble.
 Involve others in discussion, but do not let them make decisions on your behalf.
 Do not involve provocative instigators in group discussions.
 Instead, invite knowledgeable elders with experience, who truly care about you.
 Do not immediately share news about a decision; it is possible you will change your mind.
 Dwell upon your decision for a while and you will make fewer mistakes.
 Put yourself in another's shoes. and investigate carefully.
 You will ruin your future by making decisions based upon a trivial [p. 5/6] reward (*phran
 bu'i khe*)

Or by not considering a bad reputation, and desiring only the possessions of others.
 During auspicious occasions (*ya rabs du bstus*), you shouldn't put others down.
 When among people engaged in negative behaviour, you should treat others as your equal.
 It is very rare for a scholar to be knowledgeable in every field.
 Do not turn the public (*mi mang*) into your enemy, make them instead into your friend.
 Do not promise to undertake something you cannot complete.
 Do not even start, if you know you cannot complete the task.
 Do not reveal your riches to those with strong desires;
 Keep it a secret, and do not even discuss it with those who are untrustworthy and evil-minded.
 Keep your most personal affairs (*snying gtam*) secret from those who are chatty.
 Do not fool around with those who have a short temper, and who cannot take a joke.
 Do not believe that falsities are true.
 Do not give the order "Fetch this for me!" to those who are not listening,
 Or to those with whom you have not made plans.
 Do not anger others by charging them with a task they cannot carry out.
 If you are too kind to someone, then they will lose joy [when you are good to them].
 If you take too much advantage of them (*gyong chen*), even your relatives will be revolted
 by you!
 When others are suffering, do not be gladdened by it; it will come back to bite you.
 Do not be flashy with your own happiness; others will respond in kind.
 Do not regret unsuccessful decisions; in the future, simply learn from your mistake.
 While in general it is unnecessary, [p. 6/7] tame enemies by using hurtful language (*phog
 tu gtam*).
 Think for a long time to understand the intentions of others.
 It is wise to accomplish one's aims using various methods.
 When you achieve status, you should avoid pride and arrogance.
 When everyone honours you, you should take a humble position.
 Do not do everything within your power; carefully consider what would or would not be advan-
 tageous.
 When you become a leader, be content and think about the public interest.
 Offer protection discreetly to those who rely upon you in your inner circle.
 Do not act upon whatever comes to your mind.
 After you have acted, whether it is peaceful or wrathful, be sure to see it through.
 Do not take whatever people say to be true; instead, investigate carefully for yourself.
 Give delicious food to others, keep prosperous wealth (*nor bzang*) for yourself.
 Hold language that can cut at the heart of others at the tip of your tongue.
 Do not consider the wealth of your bitter enemies; remember who they are instead.
 Do not become greedy for what only smells pleasant but is not delicious.
 Avoid immediately curling your lips or rolling your eyes when you are displeased.
 Putting strong effort into meaningless pursuits only makes you tired.
 When it is necessary [p. 7/8] to kill or beat someone, be fearless (*snying ma chung*).
 Do not reduce what is necessary to extract as tax and repayment.
 Do not do something unnecessary that will bring suffering upon your subjects.
 It is childish to consider someone a friend after just meeting them,
 Or to trust someone you have only just come to know,
 Or to show a happy smile as soon as you feel some nice emotion,
 Or to make an angry face as soon as some negative feeling arises in you.
 Violent people lacking knowledge of how to be violent will ruin their future.
 Friends lacking knowledge of how to maintain friendship will, in the future, become malicious.

Scholars lacking knowledge of how to maintain knowledge will, in the future, become foolish.
Noble monastics lacking knowledge of how to maintain their discipline will, in the future, lose control.

A person with a high position lacking knowledge of how to maintain their status will, in the future, fall from grace.

Because their speech may be reasonable, consider (*myul*) [what] others [say].

You can fool (*bri*) the minds of others by using relaxed and smooth words,

And then you can bring about their downfall by unearthing their faults.

If it is not explained, even a father will not understand – so speak gently!

If you are not stern, even a son will not listen – so argue suitably!

If you do not study, no one [p. 8/9] will understand you – so study well!

If you are stingy, even close relatives will not draw near to you – so give just a little!

By always returning again and again to the place of giving, generosity will be exhausted.

Do not annoy those who show you kindness; this is strategic (*mdzangs*).

Do not allow an enemy who is standing over you to become unyielding (*rengs*)!

Not knowing who will help you, do not look down upon the humble (*nyams chung*s).

Those who can accomplish whatever is asked of them are the best servants.

Their not recognising [your] lying and deceit will, in the end, be profitable [to you].

Speaking less and keeping your hands clean¹ are supremely good qualities.

Others will not appreciate your accomplishments if you brag about them too much.

You will be ruined if you become associated with those who always complain and are stingy.

Do not expose the faults of those who are very powerful and arrogant.

Do not enter into discussion with those of evil mind that are short-sighted.

Beware those with anger and a sweet tongue.

Do not repeat meaningless speech again and again.

The rich who know how to use their wealth will, in the future, become even richer.

Even if we are not hungry now, if we eat a little, we will not suffer later.

Though you may be poor, accept your difficulties like a man.

If you are rich, do not pretend you are poor; everyone will know.

Do not go on [p. 9/10] about how bad something is, since others will ridicule you.

It is better to make requests of enemies with shame

Than of relatives who are shameless!

Intelligent and trustworthy friends and neighbours are better

Than one's untrustworthy relatives and partners.

Being an intelligent monk and student is more fulfilling

Than a group of leaders who are not knowledgeable.

A noble, well-behaved servant is more joyful

Than a leader ruling over those who don't listen and argue.

A habitual thief (*lang shor rkun po*) is soon excluded from the community of humans.

It is possible to mistake befuddlement (*mgo 'thoms*) for profound intelligence.

It is possible to mistake a thoughtful man for a coward.

It is possible to mistake a powerless, good nun for a big liar.

It is possible to mistake a bad memory for a silly and brief misunderstanding (*do thung nor sa*).

It is possible to mistake one who is emotionless (*'do med*) for one who is naturally kind.

It is possible to mistake the honest for the stupid.

It is possible to mistake the refined (*btsun pa*) for the pretentious (*tshul 'chos*).

I MWK: That is, by not stealing.

It is possible to mistake renunciants for phonies (*zog po*).
 It is possible to mistake a scholar for a liar.
 In this way, to accomplish one's goals [p. 10/11] in this life,
 One must understand the good qualities of what is to be accepted
 And the bad qualities of what is to be rejected.
 Then, combining courage and skill, as well as cunning,
 It is vital to ensure the means to victory.
 All this, however, has been advice for only this life.

[II. Divine Dharma]

Indra, Brahmā, and the cakravartin kings enjoy all the wealth of gods and humans,
 Yet is there any question that their situation is unstable?
 They could become firewood on the ground of burning iron in the Burning Hell!
 When the throwing karma accumulated in their previous lives is exhausted,
 Even the sun and the moon gods^{II} that illuminate the world
 Will find themselves in such darkness that they will be unable to tell even whether their arm is
 extended.
 How heartbreakingly sad (*nyal 'byung mchi ma dku*)!
 Though we were once draped in clothing as smooth as the petals of a lotus flower,
 In the end we will be immolated in the cremation house (*sreg Khang*)
 And experience unendurable feelings in our body.
 Who can bear to be burnt in this way?
 Even a merchant who has visited the Island of Jewels,
 Whose goods rival those of the son Vaiśravaṇa,
 Is eventually reborn in the realm of hungry ghosts, [p. 11/12] and suffers from hunger and thirst:
 How sad a situation is this?
 Taming one's enemy, protecting one's relatives, and acquiring power, wealth, and so forth,
 Increasing one's affluence more and more, one becomes courageous and intelligent,
 But this life is like a lightning flash in the sky, and like enjoyment in a dream:
 What use is any of it?
 Thinking in this way, our teacher [the Buddha] Gautama, who never told a lie,
 Has said that, as long as one is in *samsāra*,^{III} one will suffer.
 Contemplating this, my terror-filled heart falls to pieces!
 The method for never returning to suffering, so difficult to bear,
 And for entering the house of liberation, is to consider black and white karma,
 And then to accept or reject whatever is appropriate, and to practice the Three Trainings.^{IV}
 This is the activity of the intelligent!
 It is difficult to perceive the actual Buddha and his spiritual sons.
 Still, one should present [p. 12/13] clouds of offerings: flowers, incense, butter lamps,
 Tormas (*gtor ma*), music, banners, umbrellas, offering cloths, fragrant powder (*phyé phur*), etc.

II MWK: According to the Indian Abhidharma corpus, the world is said to have once been dark. The sun and moon, considered here to be sentient beings, later appeared to illuminate the world, because of their great virtuous karma.

III MWK: The suffering-filled rounds of cyclical existence, propelled by delusions and karma.

IV MWK: May refer to either "renunciation, altruism (*bodhicitta*), and the wisdom realising the emptiness of all phenomena", or to "hearing, contemplation, and meditation."

To the three supports of their body, speech, and mind.^V
 One should also pay homage to the *saṅgha*, who is endowed with the Three Trainings.
 One should ask them to recite the [scriptures of] the Buddha's speech,
 Increase the ten virtuous activities, engage in the three spheres of activities,^{VI}
 And, importantly, increase the two accumulations of merit and wisdom.
 Practise generosity towards the impoverished,
 Protect the vulnerable and sick with clothing, food, and medicine.
 Protect by means of material generosity, to save the lives
 Of those who, if we did nothing, would surely die,
 As well as those destined to be killed, such as criminals.
 In this way, you should practise the generosity of giving fearlessness.
 The eight-limbed *nyén-né* (*bsnyen gnas*) practice^{VII} is the principal cause
 For obtaining the support of a wonderful godly or human body, and is easy to practice.
 Take these precepts on the eighth, fifteenth, and thirtieth of each month, and correctly keep
 your vows.
 If one wears the armour of refraining from wielding the weapon of harsh words,
 You will not agitate your mind,
 By this, you will not sever yourself from a virtuous life.
 Put effort into this method, which increases the merit you have accumulated!
 If one is overpowered by discouragement and laziness,
 It is difficult to obtain any good qualities.
 Therefore, if one expends great effort, and truly strives,
 One will easily succeed in even a very difficult endeavour.
 Continually focus single-pointedly upon a visualisation support,
 Such as a statue of a Tathāgata [i.e. a Buddha] [p. 13/14], without allowing your mind to wander.
 Then one will be able to outshine any superficial afflictive emotions,
 Acquire a pliancy of body and mind, and gain meditative insight.^{VIII}
 All phenomena are produced by the mind labelling the object of designation.
 Other than that, in reality, they cannot be found.
 Wisdom is the weapon which cuts the root of *samsāra*: this is the path of the middle way.
 Vajrapāṇi, who completely destroys the demon of an agitated mind;
 The inseparable Lama and Protector, who acts swiftly with six arms [ie. Mahākāla]:
 These are the protectors of this life, the *bardo*, and the next life: Rely upon them!
 Just recalling the buddhas of long life destroys the hordes of the Lord of Death.
 Furthermore, all powerful cakravartin kings, with sovereignty over the sky and the whole earth,
 Who perform rituals for sentient beings and for the teachings of the Buddha,
 Are praised more highly than those who do so just for their own benefit.
 Build trusting and strong connections with rulers neighbouring you below the sun.
 With a kind mind, and understanding the needs of your followers,
 Establish peace among them, so that they become contented.
 [p. 14/15] The Buddha compassionately reaches out to all beings in every direction,

V MWK: That is, to statues and paintings, to Dharma texts, and to *stūpas*.

VI MWK: "Renunciation, study, and work," or, alternatively, "hearing, contemplating, and meditating," as above.

VII MWK: These precepts are to refrain from killing, stealing, lying, intoxicants, sexual activity, sitting on high thrones, eating at the wrong times, wearing adornments, or enjoying frivolous activities.

VIII MWK: This describes the training in *śamatha* meditation.

And, so, the good Dharma is non-sectarian.
 Still, it is important to practice the tenet system of your forefathers from long ago.
 The Dalai Lama holding the name “Sonam”
 Went to the Ti shi ri of Altan Dharmarāja,
 In the great northerly kingdom of Hor.^{IX}
 Up until now, that place has been pervaded by the Yellow Hat tradition.
 For that reason, if you show respect to the jewel-like teachings
 Of Mañjughoṣa Tsongkhapa and Six-Armed Mahākāla,
 And other Dharma Protectors like Yama, and Dōkham (*’Dod kham ma*), and so forth,
 They will always protect you, and your wealth, power, and happiness will forever increase.
 Praise the throne of your forefather kings who unified the Two Systems.
 In this way, protect the whole world peacefully, as if wrapped in a piece of soft silk.
 Practicing the Six Perfections will help you accomplish the goals of this life and the next.

In this I am simply like a parrot, advising on what should be accepted or rejected
 In the spheres of the Dharma and politics; as such, it is quite possible that scholars ridicule me.
 But my caring motivation is clear, like an autumn moon, and so there are no faults from my side.
 Because of this, and by the example of its virtue,
 May the sky-appointed [p. 15/16] lord of humans, his wife, son, and ministers
 Have stable, long lives!
 May their power and wealth become like that of Vaiśravaṇa!

IX MWK: Referring to the sixteenth-century meeting between the Third Dalai Lama and Altan Khan of the Tümed Mongols.