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Events (Tibetan Calendar Date)

17 Dec 1933 - Thirteenth Dalai Lama Passes Away in Lhasa at the age of 57 (Water-Bird Year, 10th month, 30th day)

6 July 1935 - Future 14th DL born in Taktser, Amdo, Tibet (Wood-Pig Year, 5th month, 5th day)

17 Nov 1950 - Assumes full temporal (political) power after China's invasion of Tibet in 1949 (Iron-Tiger Year, 10th month, 11th day)

23 May 1951 - 17-Point Agreement signed by Tibetan delegation in Peking under duress
1954 Confers 1st Kalachakra Initiation in Norbulingka Palace, Lhasa

July 1954 to June 1955 - Visits China for peace talks, meets with Mao Zedong and other Chinese leaders, including Chou En-Lai and Deng Xiaoping

10 March 1959 - Tens of thousands of Tibetans gathered in front of Norbulingka Palace, Lhasa, to prevent His Holiness from going to a performance at the Chinese Army Camp in Lhasa. Tibetan People's Uprising begins in Lhasa

March 1959 - Tibetan Government formally reestablished at Lhudup Dzong. 17-Point Agreement formally repudiated by Tibetan Government

17 March 1959 - DL escapes at night from Norbulingka Palace in Lhasa

30 March 1959 - Enters India from Tibet after a harrowing 14-day escape

1963 - Presents a draft democratic constitution for Tibet. First exile Tibetan Parliament (assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies) established in Dharamsala.

21 Sept 1987 - Delivers historic Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet in Washington, D.C. to members of the U.S. Congress

10 Dec 1989 - Awarded Nobel Prize for Peace in Oslo, Norway

1992 - Initiates a number of additional major democratic steps, including direct election of Kalons (Ministers) by the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies and establishment of a judiciary branch. Previously Kalons appointed directly by His Holiness

2001 - First direct democratic elections held by the Tibetan people for the post of Kalon Tripa (senior minister) in the history of Tibet.

Chronology of Tibet

[Be aware that the following dates, at least in the early centuries, are somewhat tentative since different interpretations can be given to the evidence currently available.]

Mythological origins

In the Maṇi bka' 'bum, the Tibetan people are the progeny of the union of the monkey Pha Tre-gen Jang-chub Sempa and rock ogress Ma Drag Sinmo. But the monkey is in fact a manifestation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Tib. Spyan-ras-gzigs) and the ogress in fact the goddess Tara (Tib. 'Grol-ma).

Early History

1063 BC - Bon religion established by Shen-rab according to tradition in the area of Zhangzhung in Central Asia near Tibet.

641 - King Srong Tsan Gampo/Song Tsen Gampo ascends to the Tibetan throne at age 13. He marries Nepalese Princess Bhṛkuti and Princess Wencheng of China. These wives bring Buddha images with them, thus Buddhism is formally introduced into Tibet. He authorizes construction the Jokang and Ramoche temples to house Buddha images.

755 - King Khri srong lde btsan/Trisong Detsen is a fervent exponent of Buddhism as well as a formidable military leader. He officially patronizes Buddhism at the expense of the Bon religion.

760 - He invites the great Indian Buddhist scholar, Shantirakshita, to teach Buddhism, to facilitate translation of Sanskrit texts into Tibetan and also to supervise ordination of monks. Shantirakshita faces opposition from the Bon both politically and spiritually. The king was left to deal with the former but for the latter, Shantirakshita called on his brother-in-law, Padmasambhava, a great Tantric master from the Swat Valley in northwestern India. As a Tantrika, Padma-Sambhava was attributed great magical power, which he used to subdue the Bon “demons” and made them pledge that they would become protectors of the Dharma. Padmasambhava, usually simply referred to as Guru Rinpoche ("Precious Master"). He is also considered the founder of the Nying-ma School.

763 - Trisong Detsen leads an army of some 200,000 into China, culminating in the capture of the Chinese capital at Chang-an (the present day Xian). The Chinese emperor is forced to pay tribute to get rid of them.

787 - Sam-yas/Samye is the first Tibetan Buddhist monastery, located outside of Lhasa, is founded by Shantirakshita and Padma Sambhava.

792 - The “Debate at Sam-yas,” sometimes called “the Council of Lhasa.” The Indian teacher Kamalashila, a disciple of Shantirakshita, defeats the Chinese Ch’an (Jap. Zen) monk Hua-shang Mahayana. The Tibetans reject the Chinese interpretation of Buddhism in favor of the Indian model. The degree to which Ch’an has influenced certain schools of

Tibetan Buddhism is a matter debated by scholars. Certainly, elements of the rDzog-chen (Great Perfection teachings) are very much like Zen.

836 - Ralpacan an enthusiastic patron of Buddhism, dies and is succeeded by his brother Lang Darma as committed to Bon as Ralpacan was to Buddhism. He begins a savage persecution of Buddhism, destroying monasteries, burying Buddhist materials and humiliating monks.

842 - Lang Darma is assassinated by a Buddhist monk who, as the story goes, had compassionate pity on the king who was piling up so much bad karma. The death of Lang Darma marks the end of the Yarlung Dynasty and the end of Tibetan dominance in Central Asia

967 - The Kalachakra Tantric system is introduced into India from “Shambhala,” probably a realm or city-state in Central Asia.

1038 - The birth of Mi-la-ras-pa/Milarepa: the student of Marpa and regarded as one of Tibet’s greatest poets and one of the most beloved figures in Tibetan history. At first, he had dabbled in black magic but repented when he caused the death of a number of his family. He became a student of Marpa, achieving high spiritual estate. He wandered through Tibet, singing songs and preaching the Dharma in language that everyone could understand. Many of his songs are still sung today.

1042 - Atisha (born 982), the great Indian master, enters Tibet

1054 - Mar-pa, called Lo-tsa-ba or “the Translator” founds the Ka’-rGyud-pa school. He had gone to India to receive Tantric initiations and texts from the siddha Naropa and this established Naropa’s lineage in Tibet.

1247 - Mongols give Sa-skya Pan-di-ta (Sakya pandit), abbot of the Sa-skya monastery secular control over Tibet. Phags-pa, nephew of Sa-skya Pandita becomes spiritual advisor to Kubalai Khan. Tibetan forms of Buddhism become more widespread in China and among the Mongols.

1358 – 1419 - Life of Tsong Kha pa, one of Tibet’s greatest thinkers, the founder of the Gelugpa, the most prominent school of Tibetan Buddhism. He was born in the Tsongkha region of Amdo province. Tsongkhapa travelled extensively in search of knowledge and studied with masters of all the existing traditions from whom he received teachings on topics such as the mind of enlightenment. Excelling in debate, he became famous for his erudition.

In addition to his studies and teachings he engaged in extensive meditation retreats. The longest lasted four years during which he was accompanied by eight close disciples. He is reputed to have performed millions of prostrations, mandala offerings and other forms of purification practice. Tsongkhapa frequently had visions of meditational deities,

especially of Manjushri, with whom he could communicate to settle his questions about profound aspects of the teachings.

1438 - Ge-'Dun Grub-pa/Gedun Tuppa [1391–1474], nephew of Tsong Khapa, takes over leadership of the Gelugpa. Posthumously, he will be regarded as the 1st Dalai Lama

1475–1542 - Ge 'dun rGya mtsho/ Gedun Gyatso, considered the reincarnation of Gedun Tuppa and posthumously recognized as the 2nd Dalai Lama

1578 - The 3rd Dalai Lama, Sod-nams Gya-mtso/Sonam Gyatso [1543–1588] is given the title “Dalai Lama” or “Ocean teacher” by Mongol leader Altan Khan who helps the Gelugpa gain political ascendancy in Tibet.

1589–1617 - The fourth Dalai Lama, Yon-tan Gya-mtsho/Yontan Gyatso.

1642 - Gushri Khan, leader of Oirat Mongols, defeats the secular rulers of Tibet. The 5th Dalai Lama, Ngag-dBang Lo-bZang rgya-mtsho/Lobzang Gyatso (1617-1682) becomes ruler of Tibet. He came to be called Nga-pa Chen-po, “the Great Fifth.”

1683–1707 - Tshang Byangs Gya mtsho/ Tsang-wang Gyatso, the 6th Dalai Lama

1708–1757 - Kal-Zang Gya- mtsho/ Kelzang Gyatso, the 7th Dalai Lama

1758–1804 - Byams spel rgya mtsho/ Jampel Gyatso, the 8th Dalai Lama

1805–1815 - Lung rtogs rgya mtsho/ Lungtok Gyatso, the 9th Dalai Lama

1816–1837 - Tshul khrim rgya mtsho/Tsultrim Gyatso, the 10th Dalai Lama

1838–1856 - Khas grub rgya mtsho/Khedup Gyatso, the 11th Dalai Lama

1857–1875 - 'Phrin las rgya mtsho/Tinle Gyatso, the 12th Dalai Lama

1876–1933 - Thub bstan rgya mtsho/Tupten Gyatso, the 13th Dalai Lama

1904-06 - The British Younghusband Expedition. British forces from India invade Tibet both to remove barriers to trade from India to Tibet but also to offset any Russian influence (popularly called “the Great Game”) associated with a Russian agent named Dorjjeff.

1935 - Birth of the 14th Dalai Lama, Tan-dzin Gya-mtso/Tenzin Gyatso.

1959 - Increasing Chinese interference in Tibetan internal affairs sparks an uprising against the Chinese in Lhasa. The Dalai Lama flees to India along with 100-150K refugees. Chinese troops move into Tibet in force to crush resistance in central and

eastern provinces. They establish complete control of the government and begin a program of destroying Tibetan culture and religion.

1967 - The Red Guards in the name of “the Cultural Revolution” continue the destruction of Tibetan Buddhist religious objects and places, attempting but failing at the extinction of Buddhism in Tibet

1989 - His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, wins the Nobel Peace Prize.

2010 - The Dalai Lama visits the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls.

Source: Charles Bell, Religions of Tibet

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