



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

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Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: The Golden Chronicle: Translation of a 20th Century Tibetan Text

Institution: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Project Director: Donald S. Lopez, Jr.

Grant Program: Scholarly Editions and Translations

Statement of Significance and Impact

Gendün Chöpel (Dge 'dun chos 'phel, 1903-1951) is widely regarded as the most important Tibetan intellectual of the twentieth century, renowned as a poet, an essayist, a philosopher, a painter, a linguist, a translator, a geographer, an historian, a social critic, a lexicographer, a sexologist, a botanist, a journalist, an ethnographer, and a sometime tantric yogin.

Born in the far northeastern region of the Tibetan cultural domain, he was ordained as a Buddhist monk and trained in the traditional monastic curriculum, before leaving Tibet in 1934. He spent the next twelve years in India and Sri Lanka, returning to Lhasa in 1946. Shortly after his return, he was imprisoned by the Tibetan government on fabricated charges. He emerged from prison three years later a broken man, dying in 1951 as troops of the Peoples Liberation Army entered the capital.

His collected works were published in three volumes for the first time in 1990 (with newly discovered works appearing in 2002). Some 40% of the pages of these volumes comprise a single work, entitled *The Golden Chronicle, the Story of a Cosmopolitan's Pilgrimage* (*Rgyal khams rig pas bskor ba'i gtam rgyud gser gyi thang ma*). Composed and illustrated between 1936 and 1941, this work is often described as Gendün Chöpel's "travel journals." In fact, it is much more than that, representing his encounter, and conversation, with classical Indian culture, and with modernity, as they appeared to him in colonial South Asia. It is also his urgent call to his compatriots to recognize and engage that modernity. He regarded *The Golden Chronicle* to be his most lasting contribution to Tibetan letters. Written in a mixture of conversational prose and elegant poetry, it is indeed Gendün Chöpel's masterpiece, the most significant work of Tibetan scholarship of the twentieth-century.

The purpose of this project is to make this important work available to a broad audience in the humanities by producing the first English translation of *The Golden Chronicle*.

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NARRATIVE

Substance and Context

Over the past century, the valuation of Tibetan literature has fluctuated wildly. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Buddhism of Tibet was referred to as “Lamaism,” with the implication that the religious practices of Tibet were a degeneration of the original Buddhism of India, so much so that they did not merit the name “Buddhism.” Tibet was valued instead as a repository of Indian Buddhist literature, an archive of accurate translations of many of the major works of Indian Buddhism, long lost in the original Sanskrit, with the Tibetans serving as custodians of a textual treasury not of their own making. The Tibetans’ own vast tradition of interpretation and commentary on Indian literature was largely dismissed as arid repetition.

These characterizations of Tibetan literature changed radically in the decades following the Tibetan diaspora (which began in 1959). The study of Tibetan religion and philosophy emerged as a legitimate field of scholarship in its own right, rather than as a mere appendix to the Buddhism of India or China. At the same time, the teachings of the Dalai Lama (and other Tibetan lamas) generated a large popular following for Tibetan Buddhism. In this period of new interest in Tibetan Buddhism, scholarship tended to focus on two periods: that of the dissemination of Buddhism to Tibet from India (which occurred in two waves, from the seventh to ninth centuries and beginning again in the eleventh century) and that of the “classical period,” generally seen to run from the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. Relatively little attention has been paid to period from the sixteenth to late nineteenth century, a period that has been characterized as one of hermetic scholasticism. To the extent that a modern period is recognized, it is generally limited to what is called the “unbounded” (*ris med*) movement, which occurred in eastern Tibet in the last half of the nineteenth century.

Regardless of the negative valuation of Tibetan culture of a century ago, or the more positive valuation of more recent years, two assumptions are shared: (1) Tibetan literature is Buddhist literature

and (2) nothing of lasting literary significance occurred in Tibet in the twentieth century. The first assumption derives in part from an admittedly vast Tibetan Buddhist literature. But it derives as well from what has been called “the myth of Shangri-La,” which sees Tibet as an otherworldly society, devoted exclusively to spiritual pursuits. The second assumption derives in large part from Tibet’s unhappy history in the early twentieth century. The century began with the thirteenth Dalai Lama forced to flee to China to escape British troops in 1904 and forced to flee to British India to escape Chinese troops in 1910. His death in 1933 was followed by a regency marked by political intrigue and corruption. The first half of the century ended with the Chinese invasion of 1950. It is therefore assumed that in the first decades of the twentieth century, Tibet was entirely occupied in the unsuccessful attempt to resist the colonial modernity that surrounded it.

But not all Tibetan literature is Buddhist, and important works of Tibetan literature, works that confronted this colonial modernity, were in fact composed in the twentieth century. By far the most important of these is *The Golden Chronicle, the Story of a Cosmopolitan’s Pilgrimage* (*Rgyal khams rig pas bskor ba’i gtam rgyud gser gyi thang ma*), by Gendün Chöpel. Before turning to this work, it is useful to provide a biographical sketch of its author.

He was born in A mdo (modern Qinghai Province) in 1903. His father was a lama of the Rnying ma pa or “Ancient” sect of Tibetan Buddhism, which traces its roots to the mythically potent but historically problematic visit to Tibet by the tantric yogin Padmasambhava in the late eighth century. Gendün Chöpel was identified as an incarnate lama (*sprul sku*) of that sect as a young boy. His intellectual gifts led him to enter the local Dge lugs monastery, before moving in 1920 to the great regional monastery of Bla brang bkra shis ’khyil, where he quickly gained notoriety as a skilled debater. He was eventually invited to leave the monastery under uncertain, but clearly unfavorable, circumstances. In 1927 he set off on the four-month trek to the capital of Tibet, Lhasa, where he enrolled at ’Bras spung, the largest monastery in the world, with over 10,000 monks. Supporting himself as a painter, he completed the scholastic curriculum, before abandoning his formal studies in

1934 to accompany the Indian pundit Rahul Sankrityayan (1893-1963) in his search for Sanskrit manuscripts in the monasteries of southern Tibet. Gendün Chöpel ended up accompanying him to Nepal and then on to India, where he was to spend the next twelve years.

He was extremely active during this period, both in his scholarly and personal pursuits. He traveled extensively, often alone, throughout South Asia, he studied Sanskrit, Pāli, and English, gaining considerable facility in each, translating several Sanskrit classics into Tibetan. He assisted the Russian Tibetologist, George Roerich, in the translation of an important fifteenth-century history of Tibetan Buddhism, the *Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sngon po*). In Kalimpong in 1938, he helped the French scholar Jacques Bacot decipher several Dunhuang manuscripts on the Tibetan dynastic period. He also read English translations of Tang historical records. The Dunhuang and Tang materials eventually served as the basis for his unfinished history of early Tibet, the *Deb ther dkar po*, the *White Annals*. He visited and made studies of most of the important Buddhist archaeological sites in India, publishing a pilgrimage guide to India that is still used today. And he studied Sanskrit erotica and frequented Calcutta brothels, producing his famous sex manual, the *'Dod pa'i bstan bcos* (*Treatise on Passion*).

He spent the last two years of his travel abroad, 1944 and 1945, in West Bengal and Sikkim, where he became involved in discussions with a small group of Tibetans who would become the ill-fated Tibetan Progressive Party, which sought democratic reforms in Tibet. He returned to Tibet in 1946. In Lhasa in late July, the government placed him under arrest, informing him only that charges had been brought against him for distributing counterfeit currency. He maintained his innocence throughout his interrogation but was incarcerated, eventually in the prison at the foot of the Potala, the palace of the young Dalai Lama.

He was released in 1949, just a year before the Chinese invasion. By most accounts, he emerged from prison a broken man and became increasingly addicted to alcohol and opium. His writings had been confiscated and he showed no interest in reviving his many projects, although he dictated his

controversial work of Buddhist philosophy, the *Adornment for Nāgārjuna's Thought* (*Klu sgrub dgongs rgyan*). He died of undetermined causes in October, 1951, at the age of 48.

The Golden Chronicle, the Story of a Cosmopolitan's Pilgrimage (*Rgyal khams rig pas bskor ba'i gtam rgyud gser gyi thang ma*) is his longest work, in seventeen chapters, its 607 pages constituting some 40% of his surviving writings. It was composed between 1936 and 1941. In 1941, Gendün Chöpel sent the manuscript from Sri Lanka back to Tibet, where it would remain largely unread until its publication in 1990. Gendün Chöpel also made numerous illustrations for the work, in both pen and ink and watercolor, the majority of which have been lost. Some thirty works were recently located and exhibited at the Latse Modern Tibetan Cultural Library in New York. Each work was numbered in Gendün Chöpel's own hand, with the highest number being 272, giving some sense of how richly illustrated he intended the work to be.

Although completed when he was only thirty-seven years old, he considered *The Golden Chronicle* to be his life's work. The book ends with a note to an unidentified Rnying ma lama in his home region of A mdo, to whom GC entrusts the manuscript. He writes, in part:

In any case, from now on, I am entrusting this little book of mine to you, beseeching your kindness to be its lord of refuge, so that it does not die as soon as it is born. It is very important that whatever misspellings be corrected as much as possible and that the words be corrected without damaging the meaning, etc. Therefore, I beseech you from my heart not to forget. All the people who are born in this world are given, through their past actions, the work appropriate for them. This is the work set for me. Thus, I have wandered through the realm, expending my human life on learning. Its fruit is left in the form of a book. Apart from that, I think it would be difficult for me to either hope or expect to benefit others in this life through such things as teaching [the dharma]. In your place, the tradition of the earlier translation remains like butter on hot sand; because of the presence of a glorious protector like you,

regardless of what happens, its future is assured. If the conclusion is also complete, I offer it to you. If any part of my work is lost, please attach this conclusion to whatever part you may receive. This will make clear my personal concerns and worries. I ask that it be brought entirely into accordance with propriety through making it free from contradiction by correcting whatever errors there are in its length and changing words without damaging the meaning, This was sent by Gendün Chöpel while he was in a sandy Sinhalese monastery. (11: 187-88)

Before turning more closely to the contents of *The Golden Chronicle*, Gendün Chöpel's account of his time in South Asia, it is important to discuss briefly the importance of India in Tibetan history, Tibetan culture, and the Tibetan imagination. Although Tibet was surrounded by Buddhist cultures for centuries, according to traditional histories the first contacts did not occur until the seventh century, when the king Srong btsan sgam po sent a delegation to India to learn Sanskrit and devise a script for the Tibetan language (which, at least according to legend) did not have an alphabet. The script, modeled on a Gupta period form of *devanāgarī*, was duly invented and a grammar, based on the eight cases of Sanskrit, was devised. This script was invented, according to tradition, to provide the medium for the translation of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan, a process that began in earnest in the next century and continued until the thirteenth century, by which time Tibet possessed the largest translated corpus of Indian Buddhist literature. This prodigious collection was made possible by the presence of Indian masters who made their way to Tibet and Tibetan scholars who made their way to India, especially during the period from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. The sometimes harrowing accounts of Tibetan pilgrims in their travels across the Himalayas and to the Indian plains, braving bandits, poisonous snakes, and oppressive heat, portray India as a place of both sanctity and danger, the site of Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and passage into nirvana, but also a strange and perilous land. Tibetan pilgrimage to India continued until much of northern India came under Muslim

control. The Tibetan scholar and translator Chag lo tsa ba (1197-1264) arrived in India in 1234 to find the major monasteries and places of pilgrimage either destroyed by Muslim armies or barely under Buddhist control. Direct Tibetan contact with India decreased sharply from this point, and was curtailed even further after 1792, when the Qing emperor declared Tibet “closed.” The mystique of India only increased during this period, revered as the source of Tibet’s written language, Tibet’s religion, and much of Tibetan culture. India was called the “Land of the Noble Ones” (*’phags yul*, a translation of the Sanskrit *āryavarta*) or the “White Realm” (*rgya gar*).

With the decline and fall of the Qing, Tibetan travel to India became easier, although few made extensive visits, or left accounts of their travels. The Pan chen Lama spent six weeks in India in the winter of 1905-06. The Dalai Lama spent 1910-1912 in India, but remained for the most part in the Himalayan border region, making a one-month pilgrimage to the Buddhist holy sites in February 1911.¹

But among the many Tibetan travelers to India over the past five hundred years, none spent as long a period of time, learned the languages as well, or left such a detailed account as Gendün Chöpel. Some sense of the sweep of his magnum opus can be gained from the chapter titles, although, as described below, each chapter contains the unexpected. The titles of the chapters, with their page-length, are:

1. Initial departure from Lhasa (*Thog mar lha sa nas phebs thon mdzad pa’i tshul*) 37 pages
2. General formation of the land of India and how it acquired its name (*Rgya gar gyi yul spyi’i chags tshul dang ming btags tshul*) 16 pages
3. How countries were named [in the past] (*Yul gyi ming btags tshul*) 26 pages
4. The northern mountains and some critical analysis concerning them (*Byang phyogs kyi gangs ri dang de las ’phros pa’i dogs dpyod*) 8 pages

¹. There were also other, although perhaps less luminary, visitors. For one example, see Per Kvaerne, “Khyung-sprul ’Jigs-med nam-mkha’i rdo-rje (1897-1955): An Early Twentieth-century Tibetan Pilgrim in India” in Alex McKay, ed., *Pilgrimage in Tibet* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press), 1998, pp. 71-84.

5. What the famous regions of the past were like (*Sngon gyi gnas yul grags can rnam ji ltar yod tshul*) 59 pages
6. Concerning the men, women, food, drink, and possessions (*Skyes pa bud med bza' btung yo byad sogs kyi skor*) 76 pages
7. Identification of various species of flowers and trees and how to recognize them (*Shing dang me tog sogs kyi ngos 'dzin dang ngos ji ltar 'phrod tshul*) 21 pages
8. The orthography of various regions from ancient times to the present (*Sngon dang da lta'i bar yul so so'i yig rigs*) 30 pages
9. Concerning the linguistic rules of the Tibetan alphabet (*Bod yig gi sgra sbyor skor*) 16 pages
10. The edicts of the dharma king Aśoka inscribed on the stone surface of Mount Nagare (*Chos rgyal mya ngan med kyi yi ge ri na ga re'i brag ngos la brkos pa*) 12 pages
11. The Gupta Dynasty (*Gupta'i rgyal brgyud*) 49 pages
12. The period of the Pāla Dynasty (*Pā la'i rgyal brgyud skabs*) 32 pages
13. From 1600 years after the passing of the Buddha to the present (*Sangs rgyas 'das rjes kyi lo brgya phrag bcu drug nas da bar*) 41 pages
14. Concerning the history of Sri Lanka (*Singgala'i lo rgyus skor*) 73 pages
15. Concerning the conditions and customs of Tibetans in ancient times (*Sngon dus bod pa rnam kyi gnas skabs dang tshul lugs ci ltar yod lugs skor*) 21 pages
16. The religions of non-Buddhists (*Mu stegs kyi chos lugs*) 57 pages
17. Conclusion (*Mjug rtsom*) 33 pages

These prosaic titles do not adequately describe the often unexpected contents of the chapters. The first chapter is the only one that fits the genre of the travelogue, describing the route that Gendün Chöpel and Rahul Sankrityayana followed through southern Tibet and then Nepal to reach India. However, much of the discussion centers on what Sanskrit manuscripts, and fragments of Sanskrit

manuscripts they were able to locate in their travels. The third chapter, ostensibly on the meanings of various Indian place names, contains the first discussion in Tibetan literature of the apparent aniconism of early Indian Buddhism, in which images of monks and deities are common, but the Buddha himself is never depicted. He writes, “In summary, innumerable stone carvings of the life of the Buddha, which can be determined to date from the time of the emperor Aśoka and so forth, are seen in various regions; what would be the space for the Buddha is either left empty or else two footprints are carved on the throne.” (10: 75).

The chapter entitled “Concerning the men, women, food, drink, and possessions [of India],” contains the first Tibetan-language discussion of nineteenth-century race theory. It begins:

In general, one can group the humans of the world into just two main types, from the perspective of their body and physical appearance. The type with a small face and a broad forehead, a prominent nose and round eyes, who are tall with much hair growing on the body are called “Aryan.” Those with a large face and whose eye sockets are filled with skin, with flat nostrils and smooth flesh with little body hair are called “Mongol.” (10: 149)

He goes on to describe the Āryan language family (providing cognates from Russian and Sanskrit), and also provides comparisons of Tibetan and Burmese, presumably the first instance of a Tibetan scholar discussing what linguists have called the Tibeto-Burmese language family.

In the chapter on the Gupta dynasty, he pauses from a narration of royal succession to observe that during this period, Hindu caste divisions became more rigid and that it was also the time that saw the rise of the practice of *sati* or widow burning, which he describes in horrified detail. The chapter on the Pāla dynasty covers the eighth through the twelfth centuries of Indian history. Because this period saw the rise of Islam in South Asia, Gendün Chöpel offers a lengthy description of Islam. There was a small community of Muslim butchers in Lhasa, and Uighur and Kashmiri Muslim were known in the far

eastern and western regions of Tibet respectively, but the history and doctrines of Islam were unknown to Tibetans, who referred to Muslims with one of two terms: *kha che* (“Kashmiri”) or, simply as *kla klo* (“barbarian”). Here is how Gendün Chöpel begins his discussion:

Now, in accordance with what appears in the chronicles, I will write, accurately and without slipping into the least criticism, about the origin and history of the barbarians who ruled the land of India for a long period in the recent age. The Indians call them *mleccha*, that is, “barbarian” or “bandit”; this is slanderous. Their real name is Musulman, their religion is Islam, and their kings who lately ruled India are called the Moghul kings. The religion of those called Jew or Yehuda, which appeared prior to Jesus, and the system of the Musulmans both have the same root. Thus, the religion of Jesus and Islam have the same original source. (10: 368-69)

Although the focus of the work is South Asia, as this quotation suggests, Gendün Chöpel considers a wide range of cultures that played central roles in the cultural and political history of the region. Thus, he devotes extended sections to the Parthian Dynasty, which extended into Afghanistan, the emperor Kaniška of the Kušan Dynasty, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni of the Ghaznavid Dynasty of Afghanistan, and Mughal king Humayun’s capture of Kandahar and Kabul. His description of Islam, almost sixty pages in length, was the most extensive ever to appear in Tibetan literature. And in addition to Islam, Gendün Chopel examines the doctrines and practices of the Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism, as well as those of the modern Hindu saint Sri Ramakrishna and Madame Blavatsky (founder of the Theosophical Society), all through the lens of Tibetan Buddhism, providing perspectives on these religions not encountered elsewhere.

The chapter on Sri Lanka, the second longest in the text, could be a freestanding work (and was published as such in 1996). Gendün Chöpel spent sixteen months in Sri Lanka in 1940-41. According to

his own reckoning, which there is no reason to dispute, he was the first Tibetan to visit the island, at that time, the British colony of Ceylon. His description of Sri Lankan culture and history is particularly interesting because, unlike India, Buddhism remained active on the island. Thus, Gendün Chöpel had his first encounter with co-religionists outside Tibet. As an accomplished Buddhist scholar, Gendün Chöpel was well acquainted with the doctrines of the “Hīnayāna,” yet he had never met one of its adherents; Tibetan Buddhism was Mahāyāna in affiliation. His views of Theravāda Buddhism are ambivalent. On the one hand, he is frustrated by the refusal of the Sri Lankan monks to accept the Mahāyāna sūtras and the tantras as canonical Buddhist texts. He writes, “The minds of the Sinhalese monks are more narrow than the eye of a needle.” On the other hand, he is deeply moved by the purity of their monastic discipline; when accompanying them on their alms rounds, he feels that he has been transported back to the time of the Buddha. Taken together, his impressions of the Buddhism, and the Buddhists, of Sri Lanka provide a fascinating insight into what occurs when a scholastic category comes to life.

The final chapter contains Gendün Chöpel’s most direct discussion of various facets of the colonial modernity he encountered in India. It opens with a powerful condemnation of European colonialism. He writes, in part:

And thus they came to many lands, large and small, accompanied by their armies. Their hearts were filled only with self-interest, in their sexual behavior their lust was greater than even a donkey. Sponsored by kings and ministers who disregarded others’ welfare, they trod upon the happiness of others like a turnip on the ground, sending out a great army of bandits, calling them “traders.” The timid peoples who subsisted in the forests of the small countries, terrified to hear even the braying of donkeys, were caught like sheep and taken to the [foreigners’] own countries. With feet and hands shackled in irons and given only enough food to wet their mouths, they were made to perform the most difficult work until they died. It is said that due

to this severe hardship, even the young were unable to last more than five years. Young women were captured, and to arouse the desires of the gathered customers were displayed naked in the middle of the marketplace and then sold. If thoughtful people heard how they treated the bodies of humans like cattle, their hearts would bleed. It is in this way that the foundations were laid for all the wonders of the world, railroads stretching from coast to coast and multi-storied buildings whose summits cannot be seen from below. From Africa alone the people thus captured numbered more than one million, and uncountable numbers of unusable ones were put in huge boats and abandoned in the ocean. (11, 156-157)

The greater part of the chapter is devoted to a brief history of the British in India, Gendün Chöpel's observations on the "new religions" he encountered in India (including Theosophy), his views of western science, and his wishful claims that active Buddhist communities were still to be found in India.

These examples give some sense of the contents of *The Golden Chronicle*; they also suggest how difficult it is to describe the book in a few sentences. However, three major themes might be identified. The first is the classical Indian past. As noted above, Tibet has long revered India, but generally only from afar. The names of the kingdoms of ancient India were well known to learned Tibetans. Gendün Chöpel visited the ruins of many of these sites, recently excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India, and he describes what he finds to his compatriots. The chapter on the Aśokan inscriptions is but one example of this element of the work. The second theme is the modern Indian present. As he writes, "[D]ue to the gradual destruction of the [Buddhist] teachings, until just recently, we [Tibetans] have had no familiarity with whatever was happening in India. Moreover, because the histories of the past seven hundred years were hardly heard at all in Tibet, I have persistently urged myself to write [about this]." (11, 175) That is, since the fall of Indian Buddhism in the thirteenth century, cultural commerce between India and Tibet had been severely curtailed, such that Tibetans knew very little

about the events of the subsequent centuries, despite their long association with and geographical proximity to India. He seeks to remedy the situation with *The Golden Chronicle*, with chapters eleven, twelve, and thirteen providing a chronological survey of the rise and fall of dynasties, the period of Mughal rule, and the coming of the British. The third theme is early Tibetan history. The period that Gendün Chöpel spent in India (1934-1946) was one of strong anti-colonial and nationalist sentiment in India; his friend Rahul Sankrityayan was a prominent leader of the independence movement and was incarcerated by the British. While in India, Gendün Chöpel learned of the Dunhuang manuscripts, the oldest records of the Tibetan state, which showed that Tibet had been a great military power of Inner Asia in the seventh and eighth centuries. He wrote about life in ancient Tibet in chapter fifteen (and subsequently in his unfinished history, *The White Annals*). It was also while in India that he was able to study the ancient Sanskrit scripts that had served as the basis of the Tibetan alphabet, the topic of chapter nine.

When these three themes are considered together, the purpose, and importance, of *The Golden Chronicle* become clear. It is a work that engages modernity, in its complex forms, more fully than any work in Tibetan literature. Tibet's encounter with modernity occurred much later than the other nations of Asia, due in large part to the fact that Tibet never became a European colony. Christian missionaries never became a significant presence, Buddhist monks were not educated in European languages, European educational institutions were not established, the printing press was not introduced. Gendün Chöpel arrived in India with Tibet's reverence for India's classical past but little knowledge of its colonial present. He quickly adapted, however, learning Sanskrit and English and making immediate use of the fruits of Orientalist scholarship. Indeed, in a sense he followed its research agenda, translating such classics as *Śakuntalā*, the *Dhammapada*, and portions of the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Tibetan, works that been translated into English and German in the previous century. He also drew upon the insights of British excavations of ancient Buddhist sites. He thus developed a kind of modern classicism, using the tools and the methods of modern scholarship to

recover and document the Buddhist heritage of India, a heritage that had been lost to Tibetans since the thirteenth century. He marveled at the wonders of science and technology, providing Tibet's first sustained discussion of science in the final chapter of *The Golden Chronicle* (see Translation Sample 3). And he recoiled at the racism, greed, and mendacity that he saw at the heart of the colonial project. He was the first Tibetan to observe colonialism firsthand over a period of more than a decade, and he described it to his compatriots as a warning.

The Golden Chronicle is therefore not merely a work of antiquarian history, although it contains much ancient history. It is a highly motivated work, one that seeks to incorporate modernity into the classical Tibetan worldview. Gendün Chöpel was witness to what had happened when a traditional culture encountered modernity in the form of colonialism, as India had done, and sought a different model for Tibet, a way for Tibet to adapt to modernity without suffering as India had. Thus, a full translation of *The Golden Chronicle* will have a large and varied audience. The importance of the largest and most significant work by Tibet's great modern writer is obvious for the growing field of Tibetan Studies. Scholars of Indian Buddhism will find his detailed discussion of monastic life in India during the Gupta and Pala periods to provide a previously unknown perspective. Given its significant focus on the development of languages and their scripts, the translation should also be of interest to historical linguists. South Asian historians will find Gendün Chöpel's account of Indian history and geography fascinating. It draws on traditional sources as well as on his own observations and conversations; many of things he describes are well known, but much is new. Scholars of Sri Lanka will be intrigued by the first Tibetan description of the history and culture of the island. In addition, the translation will take its place alongside other important works of Asian modernity in which the tensions between tradition and modernity are explored.

Finally, the translation of *The Golden Chronicle* offers a fascinating example of historiography. Gendün Chöpel was familiar with the Tibetan genre of royal annals (*rgyal rabs*) and was widely read in the large genre of Buddhist history (*chos 'byung*). Although he draws on each of them for content, he

eschews their style and their assumptions. For example, Buddhist histories, regardless of their primary subject, traditionally begin with an account of the life of the Buddha, or of previous Buddhas, or of the creation of the present universe, before moving to the subject at hand. Although a learned and devout Buddhist himself, Gendün Chöpel adopts a more modern approach to historiography here, rarely accounting for events through appeals to divine intervention, as both Tibetan chronicles and Buddhist histories so often do. Instead, a traditionally trained Tibetan scholar comes to India and learns Sanskrit and English, giving him access to a vast array of traditional and modern scholarship. From this he crafts this massive work, written in Tibetan in a new and conversational prose style, and sends it back to Tibet.

In one sense, *The Golden Chronicle* is a tragic work, the product of years of study and privation, written with such care by Gendün Chöpel for his compatriots, sent by sea with a certain urgency in 1941 from Sri Lanka to a distant destination in Tibet, intended to delight its readers with stories of an ancient Indian and Tibetan past, and to alert its readers of the wonders and dangers of a most modern present abutting Tibet's southern border. Yet it would remain unread for fifty years, long after its author was dead. By that time, the modern colonialism and imperialism that Gendün Chöpel described had already struck Tibet. *The Golden Chronicle* is thus the product of a tragic figure in Tibetan history, whose life spanned Tibet's brutal encounter with modernity. He was born in 1903, a year before the British invasion of 1904. He died in 1951, as the Peoples Liberation Army entered Lhasa. He wrote for a people who would read his work too late. In this sense, it is one of the many markers of the tragedy of Tibet. At the same time, it remains a compelling work, vibrant with a sense of discovery of both a distant past and a strange present, not content to merely catalogue but to enter into conversation with its many subjects. *The Golden Chronicle* is a unique compendium of South Asian and Tibetan humanities, composed by Tibet's greatest modern humanist.

History and Duration of the Project

Lopez first encountered *The Golden Chronicle* in the process of translating Gendün Chöpel's controversial work on Madhyamaka philosophy, *The Adornment for Nāgārjuna's Thought* (subsequently published in *The Madman's Middle Way*). The Tibetan text of this work was published in the same volume of Gendün Chöpel's collected works as the final section of *The Golden Chronicle*. Distractedly leafing through the concluding chapter of *The Golden Chronicle* while in England in 1997, he paused over what appeared to be a reference to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society. Gendün Chöpel writes, "Another new religion like that has appeared. Its founder is a Russian woman named Blavatsky. I think that she is some kind of incredible self-made *yogini*." (11, 164) Intrigued by what appeared to be the first reference to Madame Blavatsky (who claimed to have spent seven years in Tibet) in a Tibetan text, he translated the passage, calling on Thupten Jinpa (then completing his doctorate at Cambridge) for assistance with several odd passages. Lopez eventually translated the entire final chapter, and published an article on the Blavatsky passage.² In the summer of 2003, Lopez completed a draft translation of the Sri Lanka chapter, as part of a larger project on international Buddhist contacts under late colonialism. He presented a paper based on that chapter at the conference "Global Flows and the Restructuring of Asian Buddhism in an Age of Empires" at Duke University in February 2004. In September 2003, he was invited to speak at a conference held at the Latse Contemporary Tibetan Cultural Library in New York, celebrating the centennial of Gendün Chöpel's birth. Scholars from all over the world attended, scenes from a forthcoming documentary about Gendün Chöpel (which premiered in 2006 at the Sundance Film Festival) were shown, and a number of illustrations, long considered lost, from the *Golden Chronicle*, were exhibited. By this time, two of Gendün Chöpel's most notorious works had been translated into English: his work on erotica, translated by Jeffrey Hopkins as *Tibetan Arts of Love* and his work on Buddhist philosophy, translated by Lopez as *The Madman's Middle Way*. His brief pilgrimage guide to the Buddhist sites of India had also been translated, by Toni Huber as

². Donald S. Lopez, "A Tibetan Description of HPB," *Theosophical History* 7.2 (April 1998).

The Guide to India. However, not even a chapter of the book that the most famous Tibetan intellectual of the twentieth century regarded as his most important work, *The Golden Chronicle*, had been translated and published. Lopez concluded that the work urgently required translation, but was daunted by the length of the text. In the meantime, he decided to translate all of GC's extant poetry, assembling over one hundred poems and completing a draft translation in the summer of 2005. Gendün Chöpel's poetry is notoriously difficult, because of his often obscure allusions, and especially because of his use of irony, difficult to discern with a non-native ear. In the fall of 2005 Lopez therefore contacted Thupten Jinpa, asking him to go over the poems with him. In his reply, Jinpa mentioned that he had been about to approach Lopez about a co-translation of *The Golden Chronicle*. They decided to undertake the project, but realized that the size of the text would require that they devote their efforts to it over a full calendar year, and thus decided to apply for a grant to support the project. The applicants are confident that they can produce a final annotated translation, with introduction, ready for submission to a press, by the end of the award period.

Staff

Before describing the staff individually, it is important to explain why *The Golden Chronicle* is an appropriate work for a collaborative project. The most obvious is the sheer length of the text. No Tibetan work of this length has been translated by a single scholar. The magnum opus of the great Buddhist scholar Tsong kha pa (1357-1419), the *Lam rim chen mo*, was recently translated by a team of thirteen. In order to produce an accurate annotated translation of *The Golden Chronicle* in a timely manner, the efforts of more than scholar are necessary. Beyond this, however, the skills of the translators must be matched to the work. Lopez and Jinpa are both experienced translators from Tibetan into English, but each brings particular strengths to the project. Lopez has recently published *The Madman's Middle Way*, a translation and study of Gendün Chöpel's final and most difficult work. He has also just completed a translation of all of Gendün Chöpel's extant poetry. As a scholar of late Indian

Buddhism, he is familiar with the Gupta and Pāla periods that are the focus of two lengthy chapters of the text. As a scholar of the history of Buddhist Studies, he is familiar with the Victorian and Edwardian scholarship from which Gendün Chöpel drew much of his material. Thupten Jinpa is among the most learned Tibetan scholars in the world, with a range of knowledge of Tibetan history and literature unmatched among English-speaking scholars of Tibetan, and far exceeding anything that a non-native speaker of Tibetan might possess. Like all Tibetan intellectuals of his generation, he knows Gendün Chöpel's works well. He is also an expert in early Tibetan history and literature, which Gendün Chöpel describes at length in *The Golden Chronicle*. Thupten Jinpa's expertise is especially crucial here, because Gendün Chöpel often employs archaic terms and phrases that appear in no dictionary or reference work. The collaborators are confident that together they can produce an accurate and interesting translation of this challenging text.

Thupten Jinpa Exemption 6 He received his early education and training as a monk at Zongkar Chöde Monastery in South India and later joined the Shartse College of Ganden monastic university in South India, where he received the Geshe Lharam degree, the highest academic degree in the monastic educational system of the Geluk sect of Tibetan Buddhism. He taught Buddhist epistemology, metaphysics, Madhyamaka philosophy, and Buddhist psychology at Ganden for five years. He subsequently left India for Britain, where he received a B.A. (with Honors) in Western Philosophy and a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Cambridge University. From 1996 to 1999, he served as the Margaret Smith Research Fellow in Eastern Religion at Girton College, Cambridge. Since 1985 he has been a principal English translator to the Dalai Lama and has traveled extensively in this capacity. He has translated and edited more than ten books by the Dalai Lama including *The World of Tibetan Buddhism* (Wisdom, 1993), *The Good Heart: The Dalai Lama Explores the Heart of Christianity* (Rider, 1996), the New York Times bestseller *Ethics for the New Millennium* (Riverhead, 1999), and *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality* (New York: Morgan Road Books, 2005). His own works

include numerous contributions to various collections and academic journals and several works in the Tibetan language. His others works include *Songs of Spiritual Experience: Tibetan Buddhist Poems of Insight and Awakening* (co-edited with Jas Elsner, Shambhala, 2000) and *Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Philosophy: Tsongkhapa's Quest for the Middle Way*, (Routledge Curzon, 2002). Between 1997-2001 Jinpa served as the Book Reviews editor for *Contemporary Buddhism*, a bi-annual journal on the interface of Buddhism and contemporary society. At present he is the president of the Institute of Tibetan Classics in Montréal, and the editor-in-chief of *The Library of Tibetan Classics*, a planned thirty-volume set of translations of classic texts of Tibetan Buddhism. The second volume in the series, *Mind Training: The Great Collection*, translated by Jinpa, appeared in 2005. He also teaches as an adjunct professor at the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University. Jinpa will serve as co-translator and will devote his efforts full-time to the project during the award period.

Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Ph. D., University of Virginia, 1982) is Arthur E. Link Distinguished University Professor of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Michigan. He is the author, editor, or translator of a number of books, including *A Study of Svātantrika* (1987), *The Heart Sūtra Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries* (1988), *Buddhism in Practice* (1995), *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism* (1995), *Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sūtra* (1996), *Religions of Tibet in Practice* (1997), *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (1998), and *The Madman's Middle Way: Reflections on Reality of the Tibetan Monk Gendun Chopel* (2005). His translation of the poetry of Gendün Chöpel is forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press. From 1993-1997, he served as editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*. From 1998-2002, he served as Chair of the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at Michigan. In 2002-2003, he served as Associate Dean of Academic Affairs in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. In 2003-2004, he was Helmut Stern Distinguished Professor of Humanities at the Institute for the Humanities at Michigan. In 2000, he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and

Sciences. In 2005, he was named Distinguished University Professor, a title reserved for no more than fifty of the over five thousand faculty at the University of Michigan. Lopez will serve as project director. He will devote fifty percent of his time to the project during the academic year and will devote his efforts to the project full-time during two summer months.

Methods

The Golden Chronicle has been published in full three times. It first appeared in the first two volumes of three-volume collection of Gendün Chöpel's collected writings edited by his former student Hor khang bsod nams dpal 'bar.³ The collection is *Dge 'dun chos 'phel gyi gsung rtsom*, 3 vols., (Gangs can rig mdzod 10-12) (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1990).

The Golden Chronicle was reprinted in India in the following year in an expanded three-volume set of Gendün Chöpel's collected writings, with the first volume comprising *The Golden Chronicle*. The collection was edited by T. G. Dhongthog and published with the same title: *Dge 'dun chos 'phel gyi gsung rtsom*, (Bir, India: Dzongsar Institute, 1991). Because of the political tensions between China and the Tibetan government-in-exile in India, it is sometimes the case that the works of an important Tibetan author will be reprinted in an Indian edition rather than use the version published in the PRC. This is what occurred with this Indian edition; *The Golden Chronicle* in the Indian edition appears to be a photocopy of the Lhasa edition.

Print runs of Tibetan book published in Tibet are typically quite small; the 1990 edition of Gendün Chöpel's collected writings (the first publication of the works of the most famous Tibetan author of the twentieth century) had a print run of only three thousand copies. The original Hor khang edition was therefore reprinted in 1992 (with a print run of five thousand); the text and pagination are identical, with the addition of a list of errata. The translators possess copies of all editions of the text

³ The first chapter of the work had been published in India in 1986. See Blo bzang nor bu, ed., *Mkhas dbang dge 'dun chos 'phel gyis mtsad pa'i gtam rgyud gser gyi thang ma* (Sarnath, India: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1986).

and will use the 1992 edition for the translation because it is the most widely available. As noted above, the three available versions of *The Golden Chronicle* are identical apart from a different pagination in the Indian edition.

The only book-length work of Tibetan scholarship related directly to *The Golden Chronicle* is the *Gser gyi sbram bu'i ming tshig mchan 'grel nor bu'i do shal*, a glossary of the key names and terms, published in 1997 by Tibetan People's Press in China. The translators are in possession of this book, as well as all available Tibetan, English, and French scholarship on Gendün Chöpel (see Bibliography in Appendix B).

Apart from brief excerpts in Lopez's *The Madman's Middle Way* (2005) and Jinpa's essay on Buddhism and science (in B. Alan Wallace, ed., *Buddhism and Science: Breaking New Ground* 2003), *The Golden Chronicle* has not been translated into English, despite its great importance. This is due largely to its daunting length, and the remarkable range of topics it encompasses. Thus, in addition to significant experience in translating from Tibetan to English, the project requires translators with a substantial background in Buddhist thought and practice, classical Indian civilization, and Tibetan history, all of which the applicants together possess.

Once one is accustomed to Gendün Chöpel's unique and somewhat conversational prose style, as the translators are, the translation of *The Golden Chronicle* is not particularly difficult. There are two areas that require special attention. The first is the author's vocabulary. He uses terms unique to his home region of A mdo, in the northeastern region of the Tibetan cultural domain (now part of Qinghai province of the PRC) and makes frequent allusion to numerous aspects of Tibetan folk culture (such as old sayings and fables). There is no dictionary of the A mdo dialect. The translators have secured the assistance of Pema Bhum, director of the Latse Modern Tibetan Cultural Library in New York for any terms that they cannot translate. He is a native of A mdo and the leading scholar of the A mdo language in North America. With regard to difficult allusions Tibetan folk culture, Jinpa is a native speaker of Tibetan with a particular interest in folklore, and both translators have access to numerous Tibetans of the older generation living in North America, Europe, and South Asia. Gendün Chöpel's

vocabulary also contains numerous archaic terms. One of these appears in the title of the work. The term *thang ma* in the A mdo dialect refers to a flat expanse of freshly threshed barley. Thus, after consulting with Pema Bhum, Lopez had previously translated the title of the text as *The Golden Surface*. It appears, however, that in fact Gendün Chöpel is using an ancient Tibetan term (which does not appear in the standard dictionary) for an historical account, hence the translation *The Golden Chronicle*. The translators will consult Gendün Chöpel's oldest living friend, the distinguished scholar Rak ra rin po che (now living in Switzerland) for his views on the title.

The second problem facing the translators has to do with Gendün Chöpel's rendering of foreign language terms. The majority of these are in Sanskrit, and he employs the standard Tibetan system (with some inconsistency) of rendering Sanskrit in Tibetan letters. However, he wrote *The Golden Chronicle* in the cursive Tibetan script and the editor and publisher of the text (who did not know Sanskrit) introduced a number of errors in the process of printing. These errors are relatively consistent and are not difficult to correct for someone with a knowledge of Sanskrit, which the translators both possess. In the cases of proper names, he would sometimes translate the name into Tibetan, rather than provide the Sanskrit transliteration; he does this also in the case of Indic names that are not Sanskrit. For example, he gives the name of the raja of the fortress of Chittorgarh, captured by Akbar the Great, as 'Char byed seng ge, which in Sanskrit would be Udayasiṃha. This must then be converted to its Rajasthani form, Udai Singh. Gendün Chöpel's versions of non-Sanskritic terms are often more difficult. As with any cursive script, unclear letters and ligatures are easily identified by context. However, in the case of Arabic names, of which there are many in *The Golden Chronicle*, it is clear that the editor often had to guess, and sometimes guessed wrong. Thus, the Tibetan *Zi tu din* is the rendering of the name of the Sultan of Delhi, Nasir ud din. Because European language names are fewer, they are easier to decipher. *E leg zan dar* is Alexander (the Great), *Wa li ko* is Vasco (da Gama), *Big to ri yi* is (Queen) Victoria, and *E rbri bar rbri* is Edward (the Seventh).

A final issue, of great interest for the study of the text but not essential to an accurate translation, is the question of Gendün Chöpel's sources for the vast amount of information in *The Golden Chronicle*. Unfortunately, he provides no footnotes and does not provide sources unless he is directly quoting a text. It is known that he read English well and possessed a small encyclopedia (printed in India). He seems, however, to have been fairly well read in the English-language scholarship that would have been available to him, especially in Calcutta and in Sri Lanka. For example, it appears unlikely that he learned to read Sinhalese well during his short sojourn in Sri Lanka. His rather detailed history of the island seems to be drawn instead from Wilhelm Geiger's 1912 translation, *The Mahāvamsa, or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*. He also makes frequent reference to the "Chinese monks," by which he means the famous Chinese Buddhist pilgrims Faxian (337-422) and Xuanzang (602-664), whose travel accounts had been translated into English by James Legge (1886) and Samuel Beal (1884) respectively. In the course of the translation, the applicants will make every effort to identify as many of Gendün Chöpel's sources as possible.

The goal of the project will be to produce a clear and readable translation of *The Golden Chronicle*, providing annotations to those terms and figures that may not be immediately recognizable to students of South Asia. These annotations will take two forms. For those figures and events that can easily glossed, the necessary information will be provided in brackets in the body of the text. For example, Gendün Chöpel provides dates in one of two ways. First, he will give a date as occurring a certain number of years after the Buddha's passage into nirvana (which he most often dates, following the Sinhalese, in 544 BCE). Rather than ask the reader to convert each of these dates, the modern date will be provided in brackets. In the second case, he will help his Tibetan readers understand when a particular event occurred by saying that it took place at the time of a particular Tibetan lama. The dates of those lamas will be provided in brackets. Placing this kind of information in the body of the text will allow the reader to move smoothly through the narrative without having to consult the notes.

The second kind of annotation will appear in footnotes. Here, more detailed information about a given figure or event will be provided, as well as information about Gendün Chöpel's possible sources. When his information differs from the historical record, as it sometimes does, this will also be noted. Both kinds of annotations appear in the translation samples.

For those readers who would like to consult the Tibetan text, the page numbers of the 1992 Hor khang edition (the most widely available) will be provided in the body of the translation.

Final Product and Dissemination

It is estimated that the translation of the approximately six hundred pages of Tibetan text will produce a manuscript of approximately four hundred pages, with perhaps an additional fifty pages of annotations. The introduction to the translation, describing *The Golden Chronicle*, its author, and the circumstances of its composition will require an additional fifty pages, resulting in a manuscript of approximately five hundred pages. Due to this length, it will not be possible to provide a detailed analysis of the text, although the translators hope to be able to do so in separate book.

There are a number of possible venues for publication, including the Buddhism and Modernity series of the University of Chicago Press (edited by Lopez).

Work Plan

By the beginning of the award period, the applicants expect to have a draft translation of approximately two hundred pages, or one third of the text. An additional four hundred pages will remain to be translated. Over the award period, the applicants will (1) produce a draft translation of the remainder of text, (2) produce a final translation of the entire text, (3) annotate the entire text, and (4) write an introduction (approximately fifty pages in length) to the translation.

For the chapters (approximately four hundred pages) that remain untranslated at the start of the award period, the applicants will seek to translate and annotate two pages per day, requiring

approximately ten months of work. At the same time, they will review the draft translations (of about one third of the text) completed prior to the award. During this period, the translators will exchange their translations weekly via attachment, with weekly conversations using internet telephony (Skype) to discuss problematic passages in the previous week's work.

More specifically, Lopez will produce a draft translation of chapters 2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 17. Jinpa will produce a draft translation of chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 15, and 16. This evenly divides the 606 pages of the text and allows each translator to provide a draft translation of chapters that are closest to his respective areas of expertise. Lopez will provide all annotations to the translation. The introduction will be co-authored by the translators.