

The 8th Terchen Taksham Rinpoche

Biography of Tenzin Gyurme Trinley Dorjee



Orgyen Samten Lingpa Taksham Nüden Dorje



Taksham Tulku Tenzin Gyurme Trinley Dorjee (Rigon Tashi Choeling)

Foremost amongst the many scholars and masters who brought the sutric and tantric teachings of Buddhism to Tibet was Padmasambhava.

Knowing that certain teachings would benefit future generations of practitioners, Padmasambhava and his spiritual consort, Yeshe Tsogyal, hid collections of spiritual teachings called *terma* in the earth and in the minds of disciples knowing that these would be revealed at the appropriate time by treasure revealers called *tertöns*.

There were one hundred main tertöns. Amongst these, Taksham Nüden Dorje discovered the most important terma related to the wrathful deity Hayagrīva. His tertön title was Samten Lingpa.

Padmasambhava prophesized that the tertön who would reveal the main practice of Hayagrīva would have a tiger skin birthmark—*taksham* means *tiger skin skirt*—and that this tertön would be the emanation of both Padmasambhava and Hayagrīva.

The incarnations of Taksham Nüden Dorje are considered the emanations of Acharya Salé, who was one of the spiritual consorts of Yeshe Tsogyal. Taksham Nüden Dorje revealed the spiritual biography of Yeshe Tsogyal as terma.

Taksham Nüden Dorje was born in 1655, in the Pato Yamalung region of Kham in Tibet. It is said that he instantly recognized the emptiness of his own mind upon hearing the recitation of the 100,000-verse Prajñāpāramitā Sutra at the age of seven.

When he was nine years old, he had vision of Green Tara who gave him blessings and prophecies about his future activities to benefit the Dharma. When he was eleven years old, he had a profound encounter with Padmasambhava who blessed him with his wisdom mind and gave him direct teachings. After these teachings from Padmasambhava, his meditation practice of luminosity caused him to no longer differentiate between day and night. He also had many visions of dakinis and left footprints in rock when he was dancing with them. These footprints can still be seen today in Gawalung in Tibet. At this time, he also found earth terma treasures, but they were not made public.

When he was eighteen years old, Taksham Nüden Dorje revealed many terma that were made public. Of these, one of the most important is the Vajrasattva Nyingtik that he revealed in the secret practice cave of the dakinis. When he was nineteen years old, he revealed the terma of Vajrakilaya from the practice cave of Vairotsana. He revealed seventeen main terma of which the most famous is the terma cycle of Hayagrīva called *Yidam Gongdu—The Quintessence of the Deity*. He revealed this at Gawalung-La, the rock slope shaped like a pig, a scorpion, and a garuda. His seventeen main treasure texts fill thirty-two volumes of Tibetan text.

In addition to revealing important terma, he also built monasteries and retreat centers in Gawalung, Pato Samtenling, and Dodong Gon in Tibet. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution most of these practice centers were destroyed.

Taksham Nüden Dorje conveyed his teachings to the Tibetan Buddhist lineages of the Nyingma, the Kagyu, and the Gelug. His students included His Holiness the Karmapa, Shamar Rinpoche, Choeje Lingpa, and the great 5th Dalai Lama. Taksham's termas are practiced in these lineages still today.

At the age of fifty-three, he passed away in 1708. To this day, there has been a successive line of reincarnations of Taksham Nüden Dorje—the current incarnation is the 8th Taksham Tulku.

The 2nd Taksham Rinpoche, Pema Rabje Yeshe Rolpa, was born in 1709, and was recognized by the 12th Karmapa Changchub Dorje. He received all of the Taksham treasures from Chöje Lingpa who was the prior Taksham Rinpoche's heart student. In 1730, when he was twenty-one years old he passed away.

The 3rd Taksham Rinpoche, Pema Tenzin Wangchuk, was recognized by the 13th Karmapa Dudul Dorje from whom he received the treasure teachings and his monastic and bodhisattva vows. He passed away in 1792, at the age of sixty.

The 4th Taksham Rinpoche was born in 1795, and was named Pema Gyepe Dorje. He was recognized by the 13th Karmapa Düddul Dorje from whom he received the Taksham treasures and many teachings. He was known for his many activities to benefit the Dharma including building the monastery Samten Chöling. In 1843, he merged his illusory body with the dharmakaya.

The 5th Taksham Rinpoche was Sangnak Tenpe Dorje and he was born in 1844. He was recognized by the 14th Karmapa Thekchok Dorje. He spent his entire life in retreat. He left many hand- and footprints in rock. In 1897, his illusory body dissolved into Hayagrīva's heart.

The 6th Taksham Rinpoche was called Karma Sangnak Tenzin. He was recognized by His Holiness Riwoche Kyabgon Jampa Chonyi. After his monastery was destroyed by the Uyghur, he rebuilt it before passing away in 1948.

The 7th Taksham Rinpoche called Karma Yongdu Chokyi Nyima was recognized by the 16th Karma Rangjung Rigpé Dorje. He established a monastery in southern India. In 2005, he passed away.

On December 20, 2006, a boy by the name of Jalue Dorjee was born in Columbia Heights, Minnesota. His father Dorje Tsegyal is from Kham Derge Dhenma from the family called Sidmed Namgyal Shongchentsang. He is a former monk of Shechen Monastery in Nepal and was a direct disciple of Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche Rabsel Dawa and Kyabje Rabjam Rinpoche. His mother, Dechen Wangmo from Nangchen Dzatod, noticed many wondrous omens just prior to his birth.

On April 8, 2007, The 5th Head of the Nyingma lineage Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche recognized the young boy as the 8th Terchen Taksham Rinpoche, and it was reported by the media in different countries that he was the first Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation born in Minnesota. That same year, when Jalue Dorjee's parents heard that Garje Khamtrul Rinpoche was coming to give teachings in Minneapolis, they invited him to their home. Upon meeting Jalue Dorjee, Garje Khamtrul Rinpoche recognized the essence of body, speech, and mind to be that of the Terchen Taksham Rinpoche. He conveyed blessings and made aspirations for the 8th Taksham's long life and for his dharma activities to benefit all beings.

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin recognized the young boy as the 8th Terchen Taksham Rinpoche and sent their official letters of support. The Dalai Lama gave the young Taksham Rinpoche his name Tenzin Gyurme Trinley Dorjee as well as a Guru Rinpoche statue and made aspirations for his long life and dharma activities. He also gave advice on how the young tulku should be educated.

On May 17, 2010, the young Taksham Rinpoche's parents took him to meet the Dalai Lama in Madison, Wisconsin, at which time His Holiness conferred blessings, the Manjushri transmission, and performed the traditional hair-cutting ceremony.



Hair-cutting ceremony with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama (Madison, Wisconsin)

The incarnations of the Terchen Taksham Rinpoche and of the Dalai Lama have historically been closely connected, beginning with the first Terchen Taksham, who entrusted his terma to the 5th Dalai Lama. Because of the strong lineage connection, the Dalai Lama's recognition of the 8th incarnation is considered particularly reliable.

“The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of all Tibetans and Buddhists as well as the traditional Tibetan lineages. Although every sect recognizes their own leaders and lamas, once the Dalai Lama has his say, there is no going against it. He is a Nobel Prize winner and has many different awards like the Congressional Gold Medal and so on—and not only that he is respected by the whole world. I have deep faith and trust that the Dalai Lama is the real Buddha. That is why I am so happy that he recognized my son to be the Terchen Taksham Rinpoche,” said Dorje Tsegial, the boy's father.

“Although he is my son, I don't consider him just to be my son. I have great respect for him as the Terchen Taksham Rinpoche, and I'm doing my best to help him with his education and serving him however I can.”



From left to right: Taksham Tulku with His Holiness the 17th Karmapa, Kyabje Ngor Luding Khenchen Rinpoche, and His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin.

In 2009, His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin recognized the 8th Terchen Taksham Rinpoche and His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya Rinpoche came to Minnesota and gave an Orange Manjushri Empowerment as well as writing a long-life prayer for Taksham Tulku Rinpoche.

In that year, Kyabje Palyul Karma Kuchen Rinpoche, head of the Palyul lineage, came to Minneapolis and gave a *Nyingtik Rigdzin* long life empowerment. Karma Kuchen Rinpoche along with Khenpo Norgay and their attendants went to Taksham Tulku Rinpoche's home and auspiciously gave the young boy his first Tibetan reading lesson.



From left to right: Taksham Tulku with Kyabje Playful Karma Kuchen Rinpoche and Kyabje Taklung Matul Rinpoche.



From top left to right: Taksham Tulku with Kyabgön Phakchok Rinpoche and Tsikey Chokling Rinpoche in Nepal. Taksham Tulku receives teachings from Tertön Kyabje Lama Namkha Drimed Rabjam Rinpoche. From bottom left to right: Taksham Tulku with Tulku Rigdzin Pema Rinpoche. Kyabje Trulshik Yangsi Rinpoche Tenzin Chökyi Lodrö with Taksham Tulku at Orgyen Mindrolling.



*From top left to right: Taksham Tulku with Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche
Taksham Tulku with Garje Khamtrul Rinpoche.*

From bottom left to right: Kyabje Khochhen Rinpoche with Taksham Tulku. Taksham Tulku with Khenchen Pema Sherab.

In 2010, Taksham Tulku Rinpoche attended the 100th year anniversary of the birth of Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche in New York. At this time, he met Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse Yangsi Rinpoche and received blessings and empowerments for the *Pema Tseye Nyingtik*, a terma of Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

In that same year, Kyabje Taklung Matul Rinpoche, Garchen Rinpoche, and Kyabje Ling Rinpoche came to the United States and the young Taksham Tulku Rinpoche received further blessings.

In 2011, his parents took him to Nepal and India for a pilgrimage to the Buddha's sacred sites and in this period he met many rinpoches and high lamas and received many blessings and empowerments.

While in Nepal in 2011, he attended the Dorje Sempa Drubchen at Shechen Monastery. At that time, he met with Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse Yangsi Rinpoche and Kyabje Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche. During the trip, he also met with Benchen Tenga Rinpoche, Tsikey Chokling Rinpoche, Tulku Rigdzin Pema Rinpoche, the 7th Kyabje Karma Chakmé Rinpoche, Tertön Kyabje Lama Namkha Drimed Rabjam Rinpoche, Sangnak Tulku Rinpoche, Shugsep Tulku Urgyen Tenpe Rinpoche, and Dakpo Tulku Rinpoche.

While in India in 2011, he met with Gyalwang Karmapa Orgyen Trinley Dorje and Kyabje Khamtrul Rinpoche in Dharamsala, Kyabje Ngor Luding Khenchen Rinpoche and Kyabje Minling Khenchen in Dehradun, and in Bodhgaya, Ngagyur Nyingma Khenchen Pema Sherab gave the Taksham Yidam Gongdü Hayagrīva transmission.

He also visited Ogyen Mindrolling Monastery, an important Nyingma monastery. On February 28, 2011, Kyabje Khochhen Rinpoche, conferred the Upāsaka (male lay person) vows and made aspirations that Taksham Tulku Rinpoche's dharma activities benefit all beings.



From top left to right: Khenchen Tsewang Gyatso with Taksham Tulku. Taksham Tulku with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

Kyabje Khochhen Rinpoche is one of the most influential and important Buddhist masters for the Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, especially as he was the founder and builder of Orgyen Mindrol Ngedon Gatsal Ling, Orgyen Mindrol Samten Ling, and Denjong Mindrolling Monastery in India. He and the 7th Taksham Tulku Rinpoche had a close dharma relationship. Therefore, we are very grateful that he is taking an active interest in guiding the spiritual development of the 8th Taksham Tulku Rinpoche.

In July 2011, he traveled to Washington DC to receive the Kalachakra empowerment from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. He also received a Yamantaka empowerment and transmission in Long Beach California by His Holiness. He has been blessed to receive all of the empowerments and advice that His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave to Minneapolis for many years.

Also while on his trip to Washington DC in 2011, he met with the Gyalwang Karmapa Orgyen Trinley Dorje.

In 2012, Khenchen Pema Sherab bestowed empowerments related to the Longchen Nyingtik, Tamdrin with Garuda, and Rigdzin Düpa.

In addition, in July 2013, he received the Sakya Kalachakra from His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin in Minneapolis and has also received all of the empowerments and advice that he has given for many years.

In 2015, he received blessings from the Gyalwang Karmapa Orgyen Trinley Dorje in Minnesota.

In 2016, Khenchen Tsewang Gyatso offered Jampalyang and Tertön Kyabje Lama Namkha Drimed Rabjam Rinpoche offered Gesar, Guru Rinpoche, and other empowerments in Columbia Heights at the home of Taksham Tulku Rinpoche.

In 2018, the family traveled to Taiwan to meet with Tulku Kuenga Rinpoche, the former secretary of Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and a long time family friend. Tulku Kuenga provided great hospitality at his Dharma center, Thekchö Choling, as well as traveled around Taipei with Taksham Tulku Rinpoche and his family.



From top left to right: Taksham Tulku Rinpoche was enthroned at Orgyen Mindrol Samtenling in India in 2019. The monastic community performs a Guru Rinpoche Bhum Tsok in Columbia Heights at the home of Taksham Tulku.

From bottom left to right: Taksham Tulku with his parents, Senator Amy Klobuchar, and board members celebrate the opening of the Nyingmapa Taksham Buddhist Center on April 24, 2016. Kagyu Tergar Khenpo Kunga Trinley, Taksham Tulku, Kyabje Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, and Tsangsar Tulku Rinpoche.

Taksham Tulku Rinpoche was enthroned at Orgyen Mindrol Samtenling in India in 2019. Kyabje Khochhen Rinpoche performed the elaborate enthronement using texts and commentaries of Minling Terchen Tsedrup Chime Yangnying and Shechen Gyalstab Gyurme Pema Namgyal.

Taksham Tulku Rinpoche also went to Mindrolling Monastery in Dehradun and visited Kyabje Trulshik Yangsi Tenzin Chökyi Lodrö Rinpoche for a few days.

In the summer of 2023, Taksham Tulku Rinpoche received Taksham lineage empowerments for three days from Tertön Kyabje Lama Namkha Drimed Rabjam Rinpoche, who is the main lineage holder, at Yangleshö in Nepal at Rigon Tashi Choeling.



From top left to right: Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse Yangsi Rinpoche with Dorje Tsegyal and Taksham Tulku. Lhunpo Tulku Rinpoche, Tertön Kyabje Lama Namkha Drimed Rabjam Rinpoche, and Taksham Tulku in Nepal in 2023. Dorje Tsegyal and Taksham Tulku Rinpoche in Nepal at Rigon Tashi Choeling.

In addition, he met with Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse Yangsi Rinpoche. He also met with Shechen Khenpo Jigme Tsultrim and Khenpo Yeshe Gyaltsen. For two days, he received instruction on mudra and chants from the Shechen chant master as well. He also attended the 10th birthday of Kyabje Trulshik Yangsi Tenzin Chökyi Lodrö Rinpoche and visited Khenchen Pema Sherab in France and received the transmission for the Chöying Dzo.

Taksham Tulku Rinpoche also meets with Kyabje Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche whenever he comes to Minneapolis. In addition, Kagyu Tergar Khenpo Kunga Trinley has been very helpful and has been a close family friend for many years. Khenpo Kunga Trinley has provided support for writing the book of Taksham Tulku Rinpoche, and helps with editing written texts.

At this time Taksham Tulku Rinpoche is attending public school in Minneapolis and his parents report that he is studying very well; his reading and writing skills are very good. He wakes up an hour before school and practices memorizing, scripture reading, chanting, and meditation with his father. His father is also teaching him Buddhist practices and pujas, as well as Tibetan grammar and history.

He has memorized *The 37 Practices of the Bodhisattvas*, *Sakya Lekshey*, and many traditional prayers. In addition, he receives weekly tutoring in science from Jon Gross, Tibetan grammar and style

from Lobsang Dorje, Tibetan history and writing from Thinly Worser, and Buddhist studies in English from Kate Thomas.

After he completes his high school diploma, Taksham Tulku Rinpoche will study at Mindrolling Monastery, the mother monastery of all the Nyingma monasteries, because he has a close connection to this monastery since the root guru of the 7th Taksham Rinpoche was His Holiness the 11th Mindrolling Trichen.

A nonprofit educational center called Nyingmapa Taksham Buddhist Center in Minneapolis (Columbia Heights), Minnesota has been founded in his name. The center, which is the first one in Minnesota to serve the Nyingmapa community, was officially opened on April 24, 2016, with a celebration attended by Senator Amy Klobuchar, a representative of Senator Al Franken, Carolyn Laine, former member of the Minnesota Senate, and government officials, representing Columbia Heights, Minneapolis, and Saint Paul, Minnesota—along with 800 people from the Tibetan-American community. In addition, the former Mayors of Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and Columbia Heights provided proclamations for April 24, 2016, to be Terchen Taksham Rinpoche Day.

In August 2016, National Geographic broadcasted a television episode featuring Morgan Freeman interviewing Taksham Tulku Rinpoche and his family for the *Story of God*. Taksham Tulku Rinpoche has also been featured on many news sources such as *Star Tribune* and PBS of Minnesota as well as the Associated Press.

Annual activities include performing the Bhum Tsok, a community religious celebration in honor of Padmasambhava to support world peace, along with charitable activities, such as donating food, clothing, and other necessities to the poor and needy within the community. A project is soon to be planned for the future to build a temple in Minnesota for the Nyingmapa Taksham Buddhist Center.



From left to right: Dorje Tsegyal, Taksham Tulku Rinpoche, Morgan Freeman, and Dechen Wangmo at their home in Columbia Heights Minnesota in 2016.