

The Contemporary

Yogis of the Drukpa Lineage

Drubwang Shakya Shri and Kyabje Apho Rinpoche

by Khandro Thrinlay Chodon

Drubwang Shakya Shri

The renowned Drubwang Shakya Shri was born into a humble nomadic family in the Kham region of Tibet. He began his spiritual life at Dugu monastery, as an ordinary monk who specialized in cooking. Yet he was never distracted by his mundane activities, and in the evening after his daily tasks were done, he would sit beside the stove and, tying his hair to the ceiling, single-pointedly practice the whole night.

Shakya Shri's yogic abilities remained unnoticed at the monastery for many years. Once he was offering tea during a high teaching session given by the great yogi Drubwang Tsoknyi (1828-1904), who was the First Tsoknyi Rinpoche and a reincarnation of both Milarepa's disciple Rechungpa and of Tertön Ratna Lingpa. The other tulkus and monks noticed that Shakya Shri was at the same time eavesdropping on the teaching itself, and they mocked him saying "Petsa Naring (*i.e.*, Pema's nephew with a long nose), you will get nothing out of these teachings so it's better that you go back to your cooking!" Drubwang Tsoknyi immediately stopped them in their tracks, saying, "Stop ridiculing him! In the future you will be longing for a mere drop of his pee." The words

of this great master became a reality.

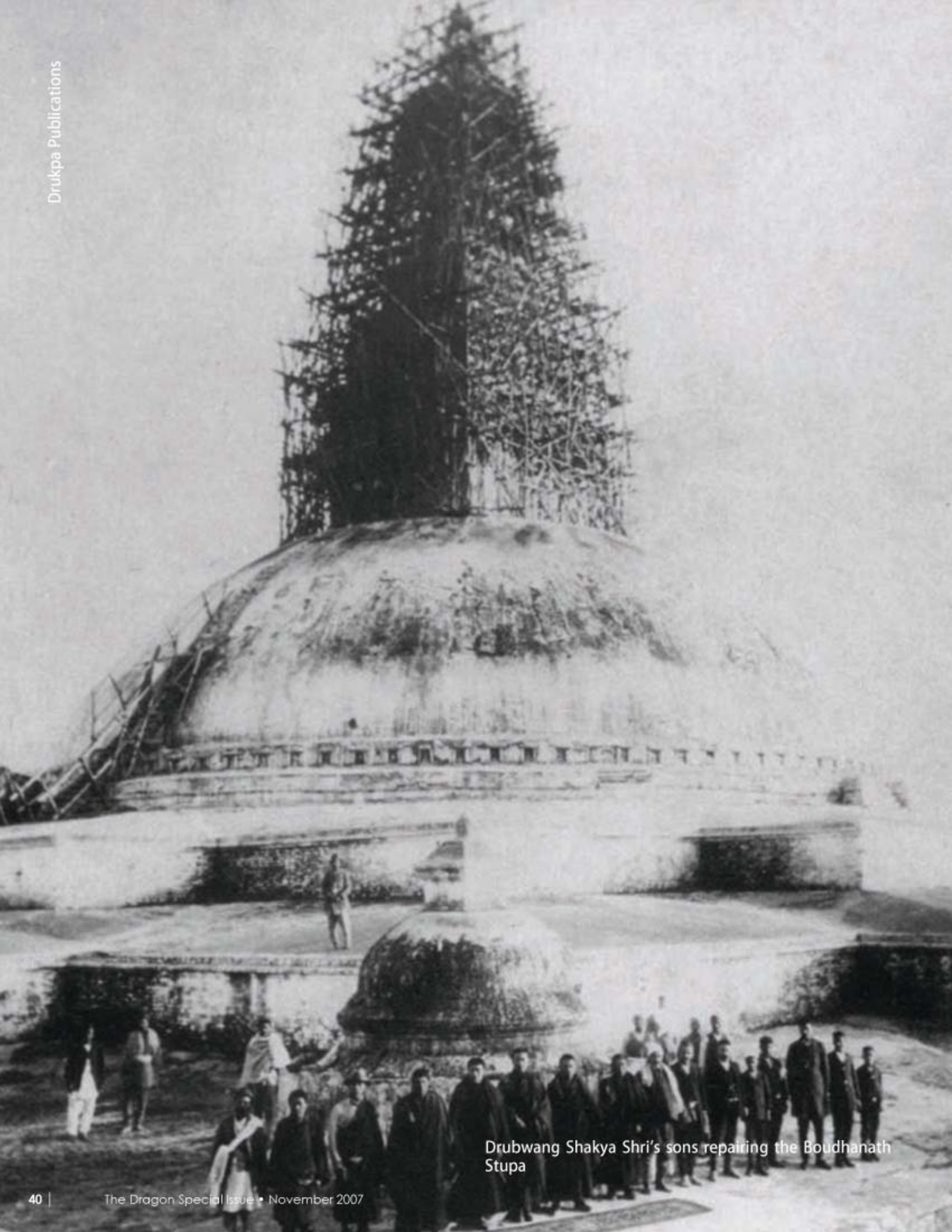
Shakya Shri practiced with great diligence under the guidance of the Sixth Khamtrul Rinpoche Tenpai Nyima (1849-1907) who became his root guru, and from whom he received all the higher teachings of Mahamudra. Shakya Shri was also a contemporary of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820-1892), and it was from him that he received all the Nyingma transmissions and teachings, thus accomplishing mastery of Dzogchen.

For many years Shakya Shri lived and practiced in a remote cave above the Khampagar Monastery in Kham with his consort and children. All the family were happily living and practicing in absolute solitude and poverty. The mocking of narrow-minded monks continued and they became known as "that dirty yogi family in the cave above, who pollute the water in the valley."

It was not until the Sixth Yongdzin Rinpoche Sheja Kunkhyen traveled to teach in this area that the greatness of Shakya Shri's realization became known. Yongdzin Rinpoche was camping with his retinue in a pasture below Shakya Shri's



Drubwang Shakya Shri



Drubwang Shakya Shri's sons repairing the Boudhanath Stupa



Ripa Labdrang

H.E. Namkha Drimed Rinpoche

cave, and while meditating there had a vision of the entire mandala of thirteen Chakrasambhara manifesting exactly where Shakya Shri's cave lay. Upon asking the locals who lived there, they replied, "the dirty yogi". Yongdzin Rinpoche then invited Shakya Shri down to the monastery and tested his realization, and was amazed at what Shakya Shri had achieved. He then named him "Drubwang Shakya Shri" (*Drubwang* meaning "Great Yogi") and composed a prayer in praise of Shakya Shri's greatness, which is still recited by his students and his students' students everywhere. He was also often known as "*Shakya Shri Jnana*", a title given by Mipham Rinpoche, after recognizing his profound understanding of the Dzogchen view.

After this incident Shakya Shri became very well-known throughout Kham and his activities flourished, so that soon he had thousands of yogi students. His main center became Siddhikha in Kham. About seven years before he passed away, Shakya Shri was invited by the Tenth Gyalwang Drukpa to Druk Sangag Choeling Monastery in

Southern Tibet for personal teachings and also to propagate the Drukpa Lineage. However, because Shakya Shri preferred an ascetic lifestyle, he requested to live in a remote place nearby, and so the Gyalwang Drukpa assisted him in settling at Kyiphuk (meaning "*Happy Cave*"). Shakya Shri became the root guru of the Tenth Gyalwang Drukpa, and many students from all over the Himalayas flocked to him to study. Thus Kyiphuk became a huge yogic training center where practitioners of all kinds – monks, nuns, lay men and women – all practiced diligently under tight schedules, living in caves, dens, tents and holes, for no building was allowed. Each was trained according to their capacity in Dzogchen or Mahamudra, and there was one hill for Dzogchen practitioners and another for those of Mahamudra. Many signs and miracles of realization were displayed at that time, and people's minds were transformed just by visiting the place. Everything was imbued with the Dharma.

There are countless miracles that his students witnessed and recounted, including one where his body was totally transparent so that a butter lamp could be seen through it and he cast no shadow. Every one of his students at this time was also said to have manifested great signs at the time of death, showing their level of realization to be very high. His students and student's students are still scattered everywhere throughout the Himalayas, Tibet and Bhutan. The depth of their devotion is amazing, boundless even to this day.

Venerable Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche



Ripa Labdrang

Towards the end of his life he used all his resources to renovate the three holy stupas of Nepal – Boudhanath, Swayambhunath and Namu Buddha. Though not all renovations were completed in his lifetime, his sons finished the work soon after his passing. He had ten children – six sons and four daughters, and all were great masters and lineage holders in their own right.

The daughters were all realized yoginis and emanations of Wisdom Dakinis, and they displayed many miraculous powers.

The eldest daughter, Ashi Lhuncho, was the spiritual consort of the Sixth Khamtrul Rinpoche Tenpai Nyima and had a son called Setrul Dondrup, who became very well-known in Kham.

The second daughter, Ashi Drolkar, was married to a Nyingma master and her descendants are Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, and Azin Rinpoche and family.

The third daughter, Ashi Apay, became the spiritual consort of the Seventh Dugu Choegyal and was a great yogini.

The youngest daughter, Ashi Phurla, was the spiritual consort of the Tenth Gyalwang Drukpa and their son was the First Thuksey Rinpoche, without whom the Drukpa Lineage would have fallen apart at the critical time of the Cultural Revolution. Thuksey Rinpoche selflessly raised the current Gyalwang Drukpa and re-established Druk Sangag Choeling Monastery in Darjeeling, India.

All of these women and many other female descendants showed infinite dakini qualities in their lives and at the time of their deaths. Many stories of these great women of wisdom are yet to be revealed.

The contribution of Drubwang Shakya Shri's life and teaching makes him indispensable to the Drukpa Lineage, in particular to its yogic tradition. He inspired people to continue and deepen the practice at a very critical time, and thus the lineage of Togden (Yogi) and Togdenma (Yogini), whether in Bhutan, Tibet, the Himalayas or Nepal, can always be traced back to him.

Many of his students were ordinary beings



H.E. the First Thuksey Rinpoche

who, like himself, attained a high level of realization and practice in one lifetime. He also had silk-robed high lamas as students, including Taktasang Rinpoche from Ladakh, the Seventh Drukpa Yongdzin Rinpoche Ngagkyi Wangpo and the Eighth Drukpa Choegon Rinpoche Thutob Choe-kyi Gyatso, as well as royalty and scholars. Yet his down-to-earth, simple and diligent practice inspired thousands of ordinary beings to attain the highest levels of practice.



H.E. the late Apho Rinpoche

