



L H U N D R U B
CHIME GATSAL LING

WINTER 2009







RINPOCHE

IN LATE OCTOBER, GARJE KHAMTRUL RINPOCHE FLEW to Taiwan at the invitation of his long-time student Sonam Rinpoche and the Taipei Drukpa Kagyu Center.

After a summer of ill health, Rinpoche had regained much of his strength, a development which Rinpoche did not hesitate to attribute to your prayers. When informed his students had dedicated 1,245,354 recitations of Guru Rinpoche's *Seven-Line Prayer* to his wellbeing, Rinpoche remarked with great pleasure that it was no doubt the reason he was feeling so good.

As in years past, Taiwanese hospitality agreed with Rinpoche as he quickly put on weight and regained the lustre in his complexion. Before long, Rinpoche began to receive students and perform ceremonies.

(L-R) SONAM RINPOCHE, GARJE KHAMTRUL RINPOCHE, ABHAN TULKU AND WANGCHUK AT SONAM RINPOCHE'S MONASTERY IN CHAIYI, TAIWAN

While in Taiwan, Rinpoche inaugurated our first branch center, located in Hsinchu, and attended the Chinese language launch of his autobiography, *Memories of Lost and Hidden Lands*, ably translated into Chinese by Mr. Yih Shing.

Rinpoche returned to Lhundrub Chime Gatsal Ling on February 5, just in time for the start of our annual *Gutor* ceremony. Rinpoche hopes to travel to North America later this year but for the moment is simply enjoying his time back here at home.

Everyone at LCGL was touched by the outpouring of support that greeted news of Rinpoche's poor health this summer. Prayers and well wishes came from all over the world; Taiwan, Canada, Japan, the US, Europe, India, Singapore and beyond.

We hope that this collaboration and harmony acts as a cause for Rinpoche's continued well-being and the unhindered spread of his dharma activities. Let us all hope that in the future we may all gather at Lhundrub Chime Gatsal Ling where Rinpoche may turn the wheel of dharma for us and all beings!





GUTOR

TWO DAYS BEFORE THE TIBETAN NEW YEAR, A FIERCE-looking effigy is shot with arrows and burned in a huge pyre to exorcise the harm of the past year and clear the way for the year to come. This ceremony, known as *Gutor* in Tibetan, brings the year to a close in a spectacular fashion.

Though the Gutor rite may have its roots in the Bon traditions that predate Buddhism's arrival in Tibet, over the centuries it has been thoroughly assimilated into the Buddhist tradition and is still a vital part in preparing for the new year.

While certainly the most striking part of the rite, the burning of the effigy is, in fact, only the culmination of the year-end ceremony. It is preceded by seven days of pujas during which the monks invoke a tantric deity, such as Vajrakilaya, who is then enjoined to summon and bind harmful forces to the effigy.

TULKU URGYEN PERFORMING A VAJRA DANCE AT THE CULMINATION OF THE ANNUAL GUTOR CEREMONY. HIS TUTOR, PALCHEN LHUNDRUB, IS ON THE RIGHT

Lasting from early morning to evening, the elaborate ceremonies offer the monks a chance to practice all they've learned through the year about Tantric ritual. And while the long hours seated cross-legged can take their toll and try one's patience, the monks clearly relish the chance to take part in this venerated tradition.

This year, Rinpoche's grandson, Tulku Urgyen, returned early from Mindroling Monastery to serve as vajra master for the ceremonies. Tulku Urgyen may only be twelve years old but he displayed remarkable poise and a firm command of the ritual's intricacies. And though he is by nature a little shy in large crowds, he executed the steps of the final vajra dance (seen at left) with remarkable composure. Many people were surprised to hear he only received two hours of dance lessons but those who know him well will know he's been doing his version of ritual dances for nearly as long as he's been walking. Needless to say, we're all overjoyed to see him realizing his potential.



(L) ABHAN TULKU RECITING MANTRAS
(R) MONKS IN RITUAL DRESS AT THE GUTOR CEREMONY



FOLLOWING PAGES: (L) LOBPON SAMTEN
GYATSO OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE (C) THE GUTOR
EFFIGY ABOUT TO BE CAST ONTO THE PYRE (R)
LUNGTOK GYATSO WATCHING AS TULKU URGYEN
PERFORMS THE VAJRA DANCE



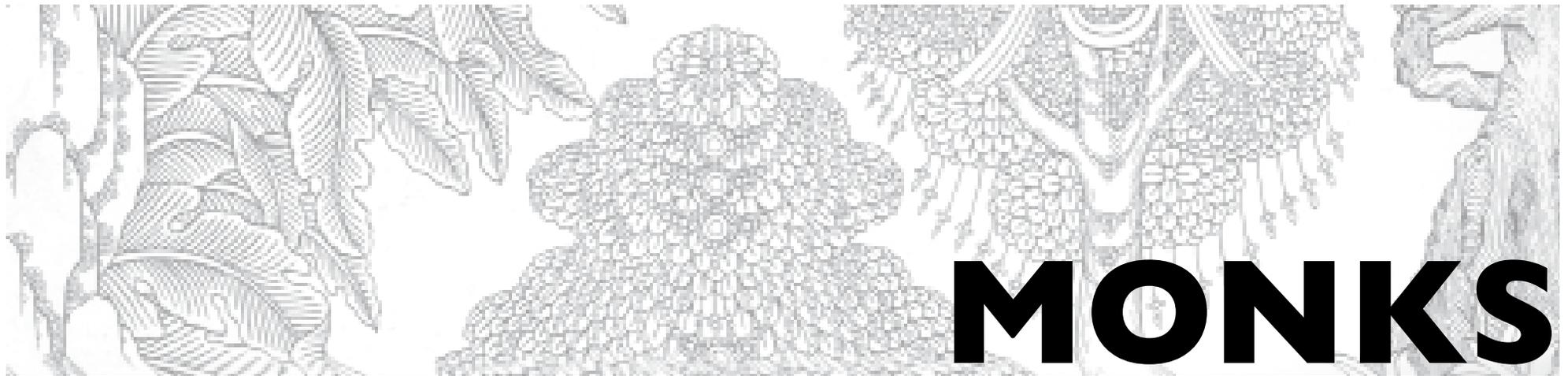




THE LAMAS & MONKS OF LHUNDRUB CHIME GATSAL LING



LOSAR 2010



IN DECEMBER THE MONKS wrapped up the school year with their year-end exams. The monks were given ten days to prepare for all five exams, and two days in between each exam to prepare for the next one. The exams covered philosophy, calligraphy, ritual and memorization of the liturgy.

After exams, ten of our monks left for Bodh Gaya, where they attended the annual Nyingma prayer festival with over ten thousand other monks who came from all over India, Nepal, Bhutan and, of course, Tibet. With pujas and prayer from morning to night, they arrived back in Dharamsala tired to the bone and sick with colds they wryly refer to as their 'Bodh Gaya blessing.'

Exhausted though they were, they had only a night to rest before starting preparations for the annual *Gutor* ceremony.

Thankfully, for even young people need a vacation now and then, the *Gutor* ceremony finished two days before the Tibetan New Year. Compared to Western New Year celebrations, the Tibetan New

Year, or Losar, is celebrated in extravagant and prolonged fashion. Festivities traditionally begin with an early morning prayer session on the first day of the year. Afterwards, everyone retreats to the family residence, where an elaborate altar is festooned with fried *kapse* bread and other goodies. There, a sumptuous breakfast is served with special dishes, like Tibetan sweet potatoes dripping with a sugary paste, rarely seen through the year. Tibetans usually spend the first day of the New Year visiting lamas and end the day with a special soup prepared with dough balls that contain a drawing said to predict your fortune for the year ahead. The feasting continues in that vein for the next five to seven days, before the annual *Vajrasattva drubchen* begins. You might say the Tibetan New Year is one long feast bookended with pujas.

This year several of our monks will go home for their six-week holiday, many of them for the first time in four years! Join us in wishing them a safe journey and swift return!