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## Holy Dogs of Tibet

### Chapter Two

by Gerald D'Aoust

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#### *The legendary Buddha Dogs the Badges of the Holy Office*

Very few outsiders had the opportunity of visiting Tibet, prior to the Invasion by Chinese people and even rarer those who had a direct contact with the High Lamas' Holy Dogs.

Nevertheless, there is in this regard a revealing treasure in the following texts extracted from "Lhasa Lore," a fairly recent book on Lhasa Apsos, on pages 251 & 252, which tells only a little but yet a lot.

It is the story of Gordon Enders who got to see the Pan-chen Lama's "Holy Dogs," one century ago or so. In order to fully realize the seriousness and importance of this unusual article, we shall analyze individually the most significant statements found inside this text.

"Among the treasures was 'Nowhere Else in the World,' the story of Gordon Enders who possessed the 'Passport to Heaven.'"

Gordon Enders spent his youth in India, where his father taught, and it was then that his interest in and knowledge of Tibet was nurtured. It was this that subsequently led to his friendship with the Panchan Lama. It was at his first appointment with the Panchan Lama that he observed the following:<sup>1</sup>

"There was a straight-backed Grand Rapids chair in a corner beside the bookcase, which had struck my eye as soon as I entered the room. On it was resting a yellow-silk affair, which looked like a mammoth tea cozy - a fur-lined hood, open in the front, on top of a padded cushion. Under the hood were two tiny 'lion dogs,' of a Tibetan breed which is much like the well-known Pekingese.

"These dogs have an important religious significance in Lamaism and are always kept in personal attendance upon the great incarnations. They are the rarest breed in the world, being exclusively a palace dog in their native Tibet.

"As the living symbols of a legend, they recall the occasion when Buddha was befriended by lions when lost in a forest. Tibetan monks, never having seen a lion, had tried by breeding and cross-breeding several types of small dogs to create an animal which would look like a miniature of their conception of the King of Beasts. After hundreds of years of experimentation, they produced this diminutive 'Fu-kao' (Buddha Dog). Having created the breed, they reserved it for the Grand Lamas as one of the badges of the holy office.

"The Panchan's pair of lion dogs accompanied him everywhere. The supervision of their care was one of the principal duties of Lo, religious prime minister and high priest. Each of the two dogs had its own retinue of servants.

"At Lo's invitation - which was a most unusual one - I went over to the chair and tried to make friends with the little canine royalties. The male dog, a white and tan, consented to let me scratch his ears and indicated his pleasure by wagging a feathered tail, which fluttered amusingly in its tight little backward curl. But the female, which was jet black, gave me an experimental sniff and then retreated with unfriendly scowls into the shadow of her hooded refuge. She would have none of me - one smell was enough."

However, before we attempt to analyze this text, we should, as in any logic reconstitution discover, if possible...

...firstly, where and when this scene actually occurred?

...and secondly, who is or was the Panchen Lama?

For your kind information, this event definitely happened, in a special room of the La-Brang, a very well-known building inside the large Monastery of Tashi-Lhunpo, located just outside Shigatse, roughly 10 days "horse riding" from Lhasa... most likely sometimes around the turn of the 20th century.

The following text contains extracts from "Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet" by A. Waddell (1895), which will briefly describe the Panchen Lama's Monastery in Old Tibet:

"Tashi-Lhunpo or the 'Heap of Glory,' the headquarters of the Panchen Grand Lama, who to some extent shares with the Lhasa Grand Lama (Dalai Lama) the headship of the church. The monastery forms quite a small town, and not even Lamas other than established church can stay there over-night. It is situated near the south bank of the Tsang-po, at the junction of the Nying river, and altitude of 11,800 feet. This celebrated establishment has been long known to European geographers as 'Teeshoo Loombo.'"

Mr.Bogle describes it as being built on the lower slope of a steep hill (Dolma Ri, or hill of the Goddess Tara). The houses rise one over another; four churches with gilt ornaments are mixed with them, and altogether it presents a princely appearance. Many of the courts are flagged with stone, and with galleries running round them. The alleys, which are likewise paved, are narrow.

There are four conventional colleges attached to Tashi-Lhunpo. Each of these institutions has an abbot, who is the tul-wa, or avatar of some bygone saint; and the four abbots have much to do with the discovery of the infant successor to a deceased Pan-ch'en, or head of the monastery. From these abbots, also, one is selected to act as the prime minister, (Lo) or chief ecclesiastical adviser in the government of Tsang.

Hard by the last premises, is to be observed a lofty building of rubble-stone, reared to the amazing height of nine stories. This edifice, which forms a remarkable object on the hill-side, was sketched by Turner one hundred years ago (~1795)... It is called Gö-Ku-pea, or "The Stored Silken Pictures," as it is used to exhibit at certain festivals the gigantic pictures of Maitreya (The Coming Buddha) and other Buddhist deities, which are brought out and hung high up as great sheets outside the wall of the great building. By the vulgar it is styled Kiku Tamsa. It is used as a store house for the dried goods, which are kept in stock to feed the inmates of the Monastery. A wide- walled yard fronts the Kiku Tamsa, and this space is thronged by a motley crowd when (as it is the custom in June and November) the pictures are exhibited.

The number of monks generally in residence at Tashi-Lhunpo is said to be 3,800.

The Head of the whole monastic establishment resides in the building called La-brang, or "The Lama's Palace"." <sup>2</sup>

In Old Tibet, as well as in a recent past elsewhere, the Panchen Lama always enjoyed a strong and Most Holy Reputation based on his High Spiritual Knowledge (derived from his many incarnations), unequalled all over Tibet, except possibly by the State Sorcerer of the Nechung Monastery.

"The Tashi-Lhunpo Grand Lamas are considered to be, if possible, holier even than those of Lhasa, as they are less contaminated with temporal government and worldly politics, and more famous for their learning, hence they are entitled 'the precious great doctor, or Great gem of learning' (Pan-ch'en Rin-po-che), or Gyal-gan Rin-po-che, or 'the precious lordly victor.'" <sup>3</sup>

Having demonstrated the fact that the Panchen Lama was a very intelligent person, we can now proceed clearly into the analysis of the text in regards to the Holy Dogs. If what Mr. Enders says is true, there is no doubt the little dogs were very precious.

"These dogs have an important religious significance in Lamaism and are always kept in personal attendance upon the great incarnations." <sup>4</sup>

Important religious significance! Why? We don't know yet.

"They are the rarest breed in the world, being exclusively a palace dog in their native Tibet." <sup>5</sup>

They are the rarest breed in the world! It was like that prior to 1923, and the real Holy Dogs are still like that. To find or receive one is a great privilege or Honor. See in this regard the expression in the face of the person on this photocopy of this picture taken in Gyantse on which can be read these words...

"Compliments of the Lamas X-MAS 1911, Gyantse, Tibet.  
Yours Sincerely W. Johnes"



"Gyan-tse, on the Painom river, east of Tashi-Lhunpo. Its monastery is named Palk'or Ch'oide. Its hall is reported by Lama Ugyan Gya-ts'o to be lit by 1,000 lamps. In lofty niches on the three sides, N., E., and W.(Implying evidently that the entrance is on the S.), are placed "three huge images of Buddha-Jam-yang, Chanrassig, and Maitreya, "copper-gilt. Here also he notes 'stone images like those at Buddha Gaya. In the lobby is a collection of stuffed animals, including tigers.'" <sup>6</sup>

"As the living symbols of a legend, they recall the occasion when Buddha was befriended by lions when lost in a forest. Tibetan monks, never having seen a lion, had tried by breeding and cross-breeding several types of small dogs to create an animal which would look like a miniature of their conception of the King of Beasts. After hundreds of years of experimentation, they produced this diminutive 'Fu-kao' (Buddha dog). <sup>7</sup>

They are the living symbols of a legend which has to do with the Buddha himself. There is no doubt that the little dogs look like lions and I agree that there might be some affinity between the Buddha and the King of Beast... but I disagree on the theory exposed on the creation of the breed.

It is stated that the breed was created through hundreds of years of experimental breeding and cross-

breeding of several types of small dogs in order to produce a small lion dog. This is false simply because the Lamas taking jealous care of their dogs through centuries would not mix their canine royalties with anything else. All they did during all this time has been the preservation of the breed believed to be the oldest ancestor of the *canis familiaris* specie.

"Mrs. Beard's article, 'A brief History of the Tibetan Apso' tells of frescoes found of two sizes of Tibetan dogs; one the size of a donkey and the other, a mere 10 inches high thought to be those of the mastiff and the Apsos. These would be dated prior to 322 B.C. The dog genealogy chart shows the Apso as the first descendant from the first domesticated wild dog. With this much as evidence, we have proof that the Tibetan Lhasa Apso or Lhasa Terrier as it was originally called and spelled is a very old breed.(sic)" <sup>8</sup>

There is no doubt, the breed which is the ancestor of domesticated dogkind is a very old breed!! Older than the times of Buddha? Of course.

Surprisingly, the Holy Dog is not the only ancestral breed or specie originating from Tibet. Indeed, the Yak or wooly beefs, the Tibetan wooly wolf, the angora goats, the sheep and the Horses lately observed by Michel Peissel are all ancestral specimens testifying that in this area things have basically remained the same, since the last Glaciation Age, at least.

Actually, in Tibet, you will find secluded areas which are remnants of a vast and stone age possibly even earlier system(s). The following paragraphs are extracted from an article by Julie K.L. Dam, entitled "Ancient Hoofbeats," published in the "Time" magazine of November 27, 1995:

"Trekking through remote North-Eastern Tibet last September on a field study of the region's distinctive wild horses, French anthropologist Michel Peissel and his colleagues were raked by icy winds and hailstorms as they followed precarious trails through the mountains. Unusually deep snowdrifts blocked many passes, forcing the expedition to detour through the isolated terrain of the Riwoche region. In early October, they reached the rim of a secluded, steep-sided valley.

"There they saw, grazing between the trees, a herd of 20 to 25 horses like none Peissel, a leading expert in the species, had ever seen. 'The angular shape of the body, and the head in particular, is like that of the horses found in the Stone Age Cave Paintings!' says Piessel.

"In the 27 km long valley where the horses roam, the team also spotted rare white-lipped deer. 'The fact that this forest is in such a secluded area and harbors such rare species of animals makes me think that it may be a remnant of what was once a large ecosystem,' Peissel says. He theorizes that the roughly 5,000 meters altitude of the passes leading into the valley created a 'lost world' that has sealed the Riwoche breed from other breeds for thousands of years and has therefore allowed the horse to remain unevolved from its relatively primitive form. 'The creation and continuation of breeds arises from isolation,' Peissel says, 'and this may well be the most secluded area in the world.'"

*A perfect forest to get lost in!*

For your kind information, the dog is animal of the *canis* genus which, except a few exceptions in the *familiaris* varieties, possesses a normal canine structure responsible for a normal canine movement reflected by the trot and gallop. While the true Holy Dogs do trot and gallop effortlessly, the registered facsimiles, now declared to be a word-wide disaster, don't. The awful fraud consisted of registering a large number of registered Shih-Tzus from England and China as Lhasa Apsos in the United States and Canada.

By the way, it has been proven hardly impossible, by the odds to mix at random different types of animals and finally obtain the ancestor of a specie.

"After hundreds of years of experimentation, they produced this diminutive 'Fu-kao' (Buddha dog). Having created the breed, they reserved it for the Grand Lamas as one of the badges of the holy office." <sup>9</sup>

So, the Lamas who never recorded any of their "experimental breedings," did not evidently cross-breed several types of dogs... but during many centuries, it is correct, they had to do a selection of the best results to retain the ideal or closest to ideal specimens reflecting the original and ancestral type... just like the ones living at the time of Gautama Buddha.

Anyhow, due to the fact that a fair number of these "Sacred Dogs" appeared in the Western World, during the last Century or so, it appears evident that many of the Great Monasteries of Tibet, such as Tashi-Lhunpo, Drepung, Gyantse, Sakya, Galdhan, Sera and even in others in Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepa, Ladakh... very often possessed little dogs which displayed a normal canine type, clean of any foreign influence is a proof or another indication which tends to prove this.

It is also quite interesting to acknowledge that religious Lamas have managed to keep for over a millenary the same original type, while our Supposedly "sophisticated" clubs have not been able to keep it for even 50 years.

Also interesting is the name "Fu-Kao" or "Buddha Dog". Does it mean that the dogs were Buddha's dogs?

"Having created the breed, they reserved it for the Grand Lamas as one of the badges of the holy office." <sup>10</sup>

Also interesting, is the mention that the Lamas were reserving the breed for the Grand Lamas as one of the Badges of the Holy Office. Does it mean that breed is the badge of a Grand Lama's Holy Office or is it preciously kept by the Lamas as a badge, a recognizable part, a vesture of the Holy Holy Office, Buddha's Office?

"The Panchan's pair of lion dogs accompanied him everywhere. The supervision of their care was one of the principal duties of Lo, religious prime minister and high priest. Each of the two dogs had its own retinue of servants." <sup>11</sup>

Anyways, the royal way the little dogs are treated makes me suspect that the little dogs are... something more than just the personal fancy of a high priest.

The Panchan's pair of lion dogs accompanied him everywhere. These dogs have an important religious significance in Lamaism and are always kept in personal attendance upon the great incarnations. <sup>12</sup>

The supervision of the care of the religiously important little dogs was one of the principal duties of the religious Prime Minister!

"The supervision of their care was one of the principal duties of Lo, religious prime minister and high priest." <sup>13</sup>

The religious Prime Minister or chief ecclesiastical adviser, being a re-incarnate himself, is also a knowledgeable man. Do you remember?

"There are four conventual colleges attached to Tashi-Lhunpo. Each of these institutions has an abbot, who is the tul-wa, or avatar of some bygone saint; and the four abbots have much to do with the discovery of the infant successor to a deceased Pan-ch'en, or head of the monastery. From these abbots, also, one is selected to act as the prime minister, or chief ecclesiastical adviser in the government of Tsang." <sup>14</sup>

And finally to "top it off"...

"Each of the two dogs had its own retinue of servants." <sup>15</sup>

Each of the dogs had its own retinue of servants!!! Can you imagine that? We have to realize that we are in a theocracy... based on reincarnation... in which the High Priests are the rulers of the country. This cult of the Holy Dogs appeared to be a general trend among the High-Lamas of different Monasteries all across Tibet. Therefore, the dogs could not be considered badges of the Holy Panchen Lama's Office, but as the badge of a Higher Office... Buddha's Office! Very impressive!!

The logic is simple, very simple. The little lions or lion-dogs are the living elements of a true story and not only living symbols of an exaggerated blown-up story... or legend in which little harmless lion-dogs became big lions.

Some 2,500 years ago, the Buddha, lost in a forest... not a jungle... was befriended by little animals which looked like little Lions.

But, the tradition to breed them in the Monasteries did not begin there. It was initiated some 1250 years later when Padma-Sambhava, due to a souvenir or glimpse of his Previous Life, as the Buddha, found again the rare lion-dogs... most likely in the same forest!

Most likely guided by Divine Visions, the Guru found himself in the same prehistorical isolated forest of the Himalayas where things don't change, just like the 27 km valley visited by Mr. Peissel.

The tradition to preserve the Stone Age Dogs began then, when the spiritually guided Guru re-finding or re-discovering, kind of miraculously, his little friendly dogs, he so dearly loved in his previous life as the Buddha... he decided to keep them as a constant precious previous lives' living relics and as a personal tangible proof of his re-incarnation.

So, finally this is why:

- They are the living Badges of the Holy Office!
- They were called Buddha Dogs!
- They were so precious kept by the Lamas!
- They remained intact over a millenium!

But now, why did the Lamas keep the dogs, in this apparent important mission of keeping the precious Guru's Dogs?

The reason is again very simple, because the Guru said that just as he had come before, he would come again, and again... the Lamas were waiting upon the appearance of his Tertons... his future incarnations!

Apparently, he came many times and will come again...!

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## Notes:

1. Vervaeke-Helf, Sally Ann, "Lhasa Lore," Alpine Publications, Loveland, Colorado, 1983, pp 251-252.
- Enders, Gordon B., and Anthony, Edwards, "Nowhere else in the World " Farrad and Rinehart, New-York, USA, 1935, pp 244-245.

2. L. Austine Waddell, M.B., "Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet," Heritage Publishers, New-Delhi, India, 1979, first published in London 1895, pp 270-272. 3. Waddell, p 235. 4. Enders and Anthony, pp 244-245. 5. *Ibid.* 6. Waddell, p 278. 7. Enders and Anthony, pp 244-245. 8. Vervaeke-Helf, p 252. 9. Enders and Anthony, pp 244-245. 10. *Ibid.* 11. *Ibid.* 12. *Ibid.* 13. *Ibid.*
14. Waddell, pp 271-272.
15. Enders and Anthony, pp 244-245.

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