

The Rise of the Yellow Order

The First Dalai Lamas



Drontonpa, one of the founders of the Kadampa School



Lama Tsongkhapa (1357-1419)



Gedun Drupa (1391-1474)
the 1st Dalai Lama

Lama Tsongkhapa founded the Gelug order. Born in Amdo province in 1357, he travelled extensively and studied under different masters. Integrating the lineages of the Kadampas with other traditions, his teachings became known as the New Kadampa school or Gelug. While he founded the Ganden monastery, his disciple Gedun Drupa, known retrospectively as the First Dalai Lama, built the Drepung and Tashilhunpo monasteries.



The Tashilhunpo monastery
seat of the Panchen Lamas



Gedun Gyatso
(1475-1542) the
2nd Dalai Lama

Gedun Gyatso was proclaimed the reincarnation of Gedun Drupa. A renowned scholar, he traveled widely to extend the Gelugpa influence. In 1512, he became abbot of the Tashilhunpo and a few years later of Drepung. Like Gedun Drupa, he wielded no political power.

Sonam Gyatso was the first to bear the title of 'Dalai Lama'. Visiting the Lake Kokonor area, he met Altan Khan, the Mongol chieftain in 1578. The Khan bestowed on Sonam Gyatso the title 'Ocean of Wisdom' or 'Dalai'. The Dalai Lama died later preaching in Mongolia.



Sonam Gyatso
(1543-1588), the
3rd Dalai Lama



The Mongol chieftain
Altan Khan

The birth of Yonten Gyatso in Mongolia as the grandson of Altan Khan, helped to firm up the connection between Mongolia and Tibet. On his return to Tibet, he became a disciple of the Panchen Lama Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltzen who ordained him. However, till his death in 1617, the Drukpa School was still prominent in Tibet.



Yonten Gyatso (1589-1617)
the 4th Dalai Lama



Debate in a Gelug
monastery