



## **New discoveries in Alashan concerning the secret life of Tsangyang Gyatso (Tshangs-dbyangs rgya-mtsho)**

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My presentation concerns my visit, on September 2002, at Alashan and the monastery founded by Tsanyang Gyatso, once the Sixth Dalai Lama, during his long stay and teaching activity in Inner Mongolia. I had been working at the figure and personality of the Sixth Dalai Lama in the socio political context of his period since several years, actually since I started to translate his Secret Biography divulged by Ngawang Lhundrub Dargye in 1757. It has been published in Italian in 1999, but I hope to have soon an English version of it for its wider diffusion between scholars.

At the beginning, my research has been done only on bibliographic sources, than I started to make direct surveys on places in order to get some verifications. Once on the area I could discover a number of circumstances, even small, which lead me to review some aspects on whose basis were funded parts of the story of Tsanyang Gyatso's disappearing. It has been the case with his arriving next to the Kokonor while on his way to Beijing which allows to assess how the place he stopped and from where he could have escaped would rather correspond to the nowadays town called Gong He Xian which at that time could just be a sort of post station next to the only water point of the region (south east of the mountain range around the Kokonor).

My research brought me both to design the figure and personality of Tsanyang Gyatso, the reasons of his forced removal from Lhasa and to demonstrate the authenticity of the story as counted by the Secret Biography, a text which takes than an historical value.

At Alashan it had been possible to verify how it is still extremely vivid the devotion towards Tsanyang Gyatso, after almost 300 years, about what even Kozlow, the Russian geographer-scientist had spoken in his survey done on 1906. Kozlow was a naturalistic scientist not an historian, so that even Prof. Aris quoting his research just puts it at the margin of his study.

Surely it is extremely fascinating for the researcher to arrive at the monastery of his founder, to stop at his stupa and to speak with his last reincarnation, and also to have the opportunity to find texts and data which would not be possible to find abroad.

The survey in Inner Mongolia shown also that the Dalai Lama's personality as it is remind in Alashan Monastery is quite coincident with the one pointed out in these years of studying. It is thus confirmed the hypothesis of his escaping and the real reason of his exile, being he a man with a strong personality and a wish to reform the state rather than being a rotten and viscous man.

It is also been verified that the Secret Biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama had been divulged together with the construction of his stupa, both circumstances which happened only few months after the death of the Seventh Dalai Lama, ten years later the death of the Sixth Dalai Lama. I believe there had been a sort of agreement between the author of the Secret Biography and the Seventh Dalai Lama to divulge the text and build up the Stupa for Tsanyang Gyatso only after the death of the Seventh Dalai Lama himself.

Besides that it is also worth to point out that the language used to write the text, both in poems and in prose as it was habit for the literary genre, appears to contain several messages, even more esoteric, that my translation did not point out. This circumstance now verified casts new light on the whole story. The Secret Biography thus assumes a different meaning, it becomes like a celebrating message in the occasion of the Stupa erection. Usually secret biographies are texts written to celebrate *rinpoches* and their merits on religious basis. In this case it seems that the text could even contain strong messages for someone else. This also could be matter of a specific later study.

Finally, thanks to this survey it was possible to verify that in the concerned area of Inner Mongolia, lamaism as a religion, despite the destruction of 1896 and the Cultural Revolution, continues nowadays to have its own autonomy and expression capacity, even having to coexist with show-business and culture.

The Jurassic Park big advertisement panel with its gigantic plastic pumped up animals welcoming at the entrance of the park of the monastery, for the joy of the children and the tourists, are somehow reminding us that the show-business is cohabiting the sacred area of the monastery. Would that be a sort of compromise, here for Tsanyang Gyatso, in order to let him to continues to be reminded in the third millennium?