

READING CHINA:
TIBETAN STORIES

· 阅读中国 ·
藏族青年作家丛书

བུལ་ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་མཛེས་པ་

THE
SECLUDED
FACE

隐蔽的脸

格绒追美 著
Andrew Stevenson 董锐 译

中国出版集团
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Gerong Gyurmey once worked in rural education, tourism and culture. He has published the novel *The Secluded Face*, the novella and story collection *A Village Losing Time* and the prose and essay collections *Raising the Curtain of the Khams-pa*, *A Garden of Gods*, *Walking on the Edge of Snow Mountain and City* and *Time in Qinghai and Tibet*. His works have won multiple literature awards.

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Khams-pa

The Oath of Polungde

The Secluded Face

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Main Characters

Jigme, The narrator of this novel is a spirit able to transform into various shapes and travel through the tunnel of time. Later, he is reincarnated into a man named Jigme, who eventually returns to the sky after death.

The Hachaw Family

Ronten, Jigme's great grandfather.

Droma, Jigme's great grandmother.

Langzhong, Jigme's grandmother, daughter of Ronten and Droma.

Tinley Hachaw, Jigme's grandfather, son-in-law of Ronten and Droma.

Gerong Quzhen, Jigme's mother, daughter of Langzhong and Tinley Hachaw.

Geleg Zhimey, Jigme's father, husband of Gerong Quzhen.

Yungdron, Jigme's eldest aunt, mother of Metok.

Ze Tashi, Jigme's uncle, husband of Yungdron, father of Metok.

Metok, Jigme's sister, daughter of Yungdron and Ze Tashi.

Phultok, Jigme's brother-in-law, husband of Metok.

Yungchen, Jigme's youngest aunt.

The Jaco Family

Tsingque Tenbejan, a hutukhtu, named “Gyana” by Emperor Kangxi.

Jaco, an old lama.

Karyung, Jigme’s grandfather.

Yungqing, Jigme’s grandmother.

Lhaser, Jigme’s grandmother, sister of Yungqing.

Dawa, the eldest son of Karyung and Yungqing, father of Phultok.

Neeb, wife of Dawa, mother of Phultok.

Phultok, son of Dawa and Neeb.

Geleg Zhimey, second of son of Karyung and Yungqing, father of Jigme.

Gerong Quzhen, wife of Geleg Zhimey, mother of Jigme.

Ze Tashi, third son of Karyung and Yungqing, father of Metok, nicknamed “Luoga”.

Yungdron, wife of Ze Tashi aunt of Jigme, mother of Metok.

Kardou, youngest son of Karyung and Yungqing, nicknamed “Pepi”.

Dawa became a policeman and abandoned his wife and daughter. After Luoga’s wife Yungdron passed away, Luoga married Neeb. Phultok married Metok and gave birth to a deformed son.

The reincarnation system of Phuntok Hutukhtu

The 1st reincarnation: Pema Wongchen

...

The 13th reincarnation: Wongchen, killed by the Angvont Family.

The 14th reincarnation (including the reincarnation of body, the reincarnation of language, and the reincarnation of spirit):

Phuntok Pema (identified before birth), Phuntok Rongden, and Phuntok Genten.

Dorji, touren of Dingmu.

Lhaktse, sister of Dorji the touren.

Wongmo, wife of Dorji the touren.

Paten, a relative of Dorji the touren.

Danba, touren of Shuoqu River Valley, and the instigator of the plot to kill the high touren Bugen. When his plot was exposed, he fled from Dingmu to Lhasa and in the end committed suicide.

Ahba, the first leper in Dingmu, expelled from the village.

Gerong Chakrin, an old monk of Donggong Temple, nicknamed “quick-tongued lama”, resumed secular life and eventually died having attained enlightenment.

Ahni Aungtti, an old monk of Donggong Temple, having some Tibetan medical skills, resumed secular life but later returned to teach Phuntok Pema Buddha sutras.

Angvont, one of the killers of Phuntok Hutukhtu, returned to Dingmu to deal in mushrooms after making his own fortune in the outside world.

Karma, secretary of the commune and owner of a warhorse.

Yang Luosang, a teacher and cadre of the commune, led the working team that destroyed statues of the Buddha.

Bujiao, second son of Shangda Family and a businessman, moved to Ronggong Village after getting married. He returned to his own hometown after his wife contracted leprosy. Eventually, he and Gakar dealt in medicines together.

Gakar, father of Benlao, a non-Buddhist, attempted to set up a business with Bujiao but failed. Later, he ran a shop in order to repay his debts.

Tarin, nicknamed “Heidu” (Black Belly), was stabbed while fighting with “feather” Chicun.

Benlao, wife of Tarin, an alcoholic.

Lharve, a middle-school graduate, son of the village secretary, the most intelligent young man in the village.

Padma Sambhava, an Indian monk, founder of Nyingma.

Qingbure, a divine mountain in Shuoqu River Valley, subdued by Padma Sambhava.

Tenmi Songbta, a great scholar of the Tibetan language.

Some words of the local dialect

Ahjue, father.

Ahmu, uncle.

Ahni, grandfather.

Ahsi, grandmother.

Ahsong, aunt.

Ahba, brother and sister.

Zhaba, little monk.

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Part I

Wind Wheel

1

Take Refuge

RONTEN TOOK OUT schnitz, honey, chilies and pomegranates and packed them up into a leather bag. He also clutched a wrinkled and blackish hada scarf to his chest.

He was counting on the local touren, Dorji, in order to seek a livelihood within his domain.

At that time, Dingqu Valley was relatively isolated. Most of the land belonged to Dorji, the touren, and his relatives. Many of the impoverished locals who had no land became his tenant peasants or shepherds. In addition to living and eating under the roof of the touren, they could also receive an annual payment. The touren mostly treated them as his own family members, took charge of their marriages and funerals, and in particular looked after their safety when it came to fights or vendettas. His tenants were to some extent protected because, as the saying goes: “Before beating

a dog, one should ask the name of its master.” The touren acted as ruler and protector of the whole valley, and had jurisdiction over all kinds of disputes. Sometimes, upon a whim, the touren would also act as a match-maker. The tenant households would accept this willingly, as if participating in something honorable. In addition to this, the touren also governed many other specific things. For example, when spring came, when the land became as moist as a gentle woman and cuckoos began to sing lazily, the touren would order monks in the temple to calculate the most auspicious day for seeding. He would then issue the order to begin planting through a messenger to the village head and to each household.

On the first day of planting, people were busy on both sides of the valley. Beneath the whip, pairs of panting farm cattle moved arduously forward, pushing the plowshares deeper and deeper. Waves of shiny black mud rolled up like flower petals, and finches hurried to catch the newly unearthed worms. Various sounds resounded in the air: the whistling of the cultivator, the labor chants of the field laborers, and the sound of their hammers. When the ploughing was over, the most virtuous woman of the village thus began to plant her seeds. She embraced the bamboo basket with her left hand and scattered handfuls of seeds with her right hand. While moving forward along the furrow, she rhythmically spread seeds. Plump seeds cheerfully flew into the sky and landed in the arms of the land after painting curves in the air. Comfortable and crystalline, they would gradually sprout beneath the soil. Suddenly, even exposed as the land was, it became far more pleasing, and people were itching to have a go. Then, under the guidance of the local agricultural official, the locals with wooden rakes and choric

labor chants divided the field into plots for better irrigation. Soon after bidding farewell to the spring seeding, the season for digging cordyceps fungus came around. However, nobody dared to dig for it without the approval of the touren.

The temple also relied on the protection of the touren. Without its key client, it would hardly be possible for the temple to continue its glamorous existence. It seemed that all the tourens throughout history had a preference for the temple. They painstakingly attended or led all the major Buddhist activities held by the temple and in return they also improved their image among the local public. In the oral history of the village, the relationship of the touren to Donggong Temple was said to be “like blood to freshness”. Although the touren was to the locals as powerful as the sun and moon in the sky, in the eyes of the Buddha, he was as ordinary as anyone else. Yet growing earthly authority usually generates a specific desire: Dorji the touren thought to himself, “I will be reincarnated as a Gershe, and gradually establish an inheritance system like that of hutukhtu.” Maybe for that reason, he frequently invited monks to host Buddhist rites.

Touren also levied a kind of “tax” from the peasants within his domain. The tax was usually dozens of grams (weighed with a traditional wooden bucket) of wheat, butter or highland barley, but this was sometimes substituted for compulsory labor.

Some people think that there was only the touren and no tusi in this “boundary region”. In fact, that is a misunderstanding; the valley was once governed by many tusis, but due to its backwardness and impoverishment, they failed to spare any attention to it. Actually, the touren paid annual tribute and sent gifts to the tusi. It is a pity that the people in the valley who never went on a long journey did