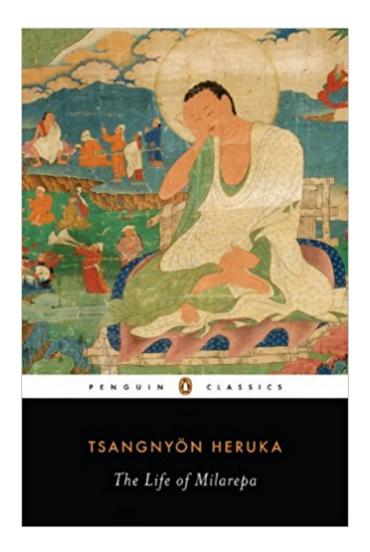


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The Life Of Milarepa (Penguin Classics)





Synopsis

One of the most beloved stories of the Tibetan people and a great literary example of the contemplative lifeThe Life of Milarepa, a biography and a dramatic tale from a culture now in crisis, can be read on several levels. A personal and moving introduction to Tibetan Buddhism, it is also a detailed guide to the search for liberation. It presents a quest for purification and buddhahood in a single lifetime, tracing the path of a great sinner who became a great saint. It is also a powerfully evocative narrative, full of magic, miracles, suspense, and humor, while reflecting the religious and social life of medieval Tibet.For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700ŠŠtitles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust theà Å series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-dateà Â translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Tsangny $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\P$ n Heruka (Gtsang smyon Heruka, 1452-1507), the self-proclaimed "madman of Central Tibet," was both an iconoclastic tantric master and a celebrated author, best known for his versions of The Life of Milarepa and The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa. Andrew Quintman is an assistant professor of religious studies at Yale. He served as the academic director of the

School of International Training's Tibetan studies program based in Katmandu for seven years. Donald S. Lopez, Jr., specializes in late Indian Mahayana Buddhism and in Tibetan Buddhism. He is Arthur E. Link Distinguished Professor and department chair at the University of Michigan, and was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2000.

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PageDedicationIntroductionTranslator's IntroductionAcknowledgmentsà Â PART ICHAPTER ONECHAPTER TWOCHAPTER THREEÄ Å PART IICHAPTER FOURCHAPTER FIVECHAPTER SIXCHAPTER SEVENCHAPTER EIGHTCHAPTER NINECHAPTER TENCHAPTER ELEVENCHAPTER TWELVEÄ Ä MILAREPAÄ¢ä ¬â,,¢S DISCIPLESCOLOPHONAppendix -Tibetan TermsNotesGlossary of Buddhist TerminologyPENGUIN CLASSICSTHE LIFE OF MILAREPATSANGNYÃfâ "N HERUKA (Gtsang Smyon Heruka, 1452ââ ¬â ∞ 1507), the self-proclaimed ââ ¬Å"Madman of Central Tibet,â⠬• was both an iconoclastic tantric master and a celebrated author, best known for his versions of The Life of Milarepa and The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa. A ANDREW QUINTMAN is assistant professor of religious studies at Yale University. He specializes in the Buddhist traditions of Tibet and the Himalayas, with his teaching and research focusing on Buddhist doctrinal literature and sacred biography, visual and ritual cultures of the wider Himalayan region, and the esoteric Buddhist traditions of tantra in Tibet and South Asia. He served as the academic director of the School of International Trainingââ ¬â"¢s Tibetan Studies program based in Kathmandu for seven years and also held the Cotsen-Melon Fellowship in the History of the Book through Princeton University Açâ ¬â,, cs Society of Fellows. He currently serves as the co-chair of the Tibetan and Himalayan Religions Group of the American Academy of Religion and is leading a five-year seminar at the AAR on A¢â ¬Å"Religion and the Literary in Tibet. â⠬•Ã Â DONALD S. LOPEZ JR. specializes in late Indian MahaÃŒâ yaÃŒâ na Buddhism and in Tibetan Buddhism. He is an Arthur E. Link Distinguished Professor and department chair at the University of Michigan and was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2000. He is the author of The Madmanââ ¬â,,¢s Middle Way: Reflections on Reality of the Tibetan Monk Gendun Chopel, and he was also the editor of Penguin Classicsââ ¬â,,¢ Buddhist Scriptures.PENGUIN BOOKSà Published by the Penguin Group Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, U.S.A. Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4P 2Y3 (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.) Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England Penguin Ireland, 25 St Stephenââ ¬â,,¢s Green, Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books

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those occasions when AAΉ nanda was absent. AAŒâ nanda was also renowned for his prodigious memory. At this first assembly, AÃŒâ nanda was called upon to recite everything he had heard the Buddha teach. He began the recitation of each discourse with his personal testimony, \tilde{A} ¢â $\neg \tilde{A}$ "Thus did I hear. \tilde{A} ¢â $\neg \hat{A}$ • All texts that purport to be the word of the Buddha begin with this famous phrase. A consideration of the Buddhism of Milarepa, as presented in the biography translated here, might begin by noting that the first chapter of the text starts with the phrase ââ ¬Å"Thus did I hear,â⠬• and that it ends with a dispute over Milarepaââ ¬â"¢s relics. These are clear signs that Milarepa was regarded as a buddha by his lineage, and that the author of the biography, Tsangny $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}$ n Heruka, made effective use of the tropes of Buddhist literature in the composition of the biography; the story of the distribution of the Buddhaââ ¬â,,¢s relics and the opening formula of a sutra are renowned among all the Buddhist traditions of Asia. A Buddhist sutra begins with $\tilde{A}\phi\hat{a}$ $\neg \mathring{A}$ "Thus did I hear, $\tilde{A}\phi\hat{a}$ $\neg \hat{A}$ • and then names the place where the Buddha was residing and who was seated in the audience at the time of the discourse. But here the Buddha is absent, or perhaps more precisely, Milarepa is the Buddha. The scene is not Vulture Peak in India but Belly Cave in Tibet, and the members of the audience are not the famous monks and bodhisattvas of Indian Buddhism, but Milarepaââ ¬â,,¢s Tibetan disciples, joined by some local Tibetan deities. The implication of the scene is that there was the Indian Buddha, Sakyamuni; there was Padmasambhava, the Indian tantric master who brought Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century, sometimes referred to by Tibetans as ââ ¬Å"the second Buddhaâ⠬•; and there is Milarepa, a Tibetan buddha, born and enlightened in Tibet, without going to India or receiving the direct instructions of an Indian master. One of the standard elements of the MahaÃŒâ yaÃŒâ na sutras is for S̕aÃŒâ kyamuni Buddha to praise a buddha who resides in another universe, telling stories of his former lives as a bodhisattva, describing the glories of the buddha field or pure land that he inhabits. In the biography of Milarepa, his disciple Rechungpa (Ras chung pa, 1084-1161) has a dream in which he finds himself in what seems like a pure land, with buildings made of precious stones and inhabitants dressed in fine brocades. The place is called \tilde{A} ¢â $\neg \tilde{A}$ "Oddiya \tilde{A} Ή na, Garden of Dakinis, \tilde{A} ¢â $\neg \hat{A}$ • indicating that it is a special place for tantric practice: OddiyaÃŒâ na in northwest India was considered by Tibetans to be the birthplace of Padmasambhava and the place of origin of many important tantric texts and lineages. In this sacred place, Rechungpa is invited to attend the teachings of Aksobhya ($\tilde{A}\phi\hat{a} - \tilde{A}$ "Imperturbable $\tilde{A}\phi\hat{a} - \hat{A}$.) the buddha of the East. As S̕aÃŒâ kyamuni so often did, the buddha Aksobhya recounts the lives of other buddhas and bodhisattvas. He concludes his discourse by saying, ââ ¬Å"Tomorrow I shall narrate the life story of Milarepa, which is even more excellent than those I have just

described, so come and listen. â⠬• The members of the audience leave the discourse wondering where this buddha Milarepa might reside. Perhaps it is Abhirati, the eastern buddha field of Aksobhya himself, perhaps it is Akanistha, the heaven that is the eighth and highest level of the Realm of Form (rupadhatu) and, according to many MahaÃŒâ yaÃŒâ na texts, the abode of the enjoyment body (sambhogakaÂŒâ ya) of the Buddha. Rechungpa knows, however, that Milarepa is in neither place, but is rather in Belly Cave, just a few feet away from where he is sleeping. Rechungpa A¢â ¬â,,¢s dream introduces a theme that runs throughout The Life of Milarepa: that there are two parallel universes, one profane and one sacred. In one, Milarepa is an impoverished beggar living on nettles in a cold and barren cave; in the other, he is a highly advanced yogin, practicing blissful sexual yoga with beautiful goddesses; in one, Marpa is a cruel and greedy drunk, demanding payment in exchange for his teachings; in the other, he is a compassionate buddha capable of purging the sin of multiple murder from his disciple; in one, Milarepa is a dangerous sorcerer to be avoided at all costs; in the other, he is a kind teacher willing to teach all who approach, even his evil aunt; in one, Milarepa is a murderer, in the other, he is a buddha. Much of the story is concerned with the failure of those in the first world, beginning with Milarepa himself, to perceive the second. After he becomes aware of the sacred world. Milarepa碉 ¬â,,¢s compelling songs are often intended to shift his listenerÁ¢â ¬â,,¢s perceptions from one world to the other. As Rechungpaââ ¬â,,¢s dream intimates, Milarepa occupies both worlds, suggesting that ultimately the two domains are one. Buddhism arrived late in Tibet. The Buddha lived and taught during the fifth century BCE, and in the centuries after his death his teachings were carried by his monks over most of the Indian subcontinent and north into what is today Kashmir, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In the third century BCE, Buddhism spread to the island of Sri Lanka, then to China in the first century CE, to Southeast Asia in the third century CE, to Korea in the fourth century, to Japan in the sixth century. Buddhism did not enter Tibet until the seventh century, its influence initially limited to the royal court. The first monastery was not established and the first Tibetan monks were not ordained until the late eighth century. A brief period of generous royal patronage for Buddhist institutions and for the translation of Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Tibetan followed, but this was cut short by the death of a pious king in 838 and the succession of his brother, who persecuted Buddhism. This began the so-called dark period in which Buddhism, and especially monastic Buddhism, declined across the Tibetan domain, remaining in the shadows for more than a century and a half. Buddhism returned in the eleventh century, its renaissance sometimes marked retrospectively by three events. The first was the return to Tibet of Rinchen Sangpo (Rin chen bzang po, 958-1055), a monk dispatched to India by the king

of western Tibet at the age of seventeen. He would spend the next seventeen years abroad, most of them in Kashmir, returning as a skilled translator of sutras, tantras, and their commentaries. The second event was the arrival of the great Bengali monk AtisAŒÂ•a (982-1054), who came to western Tibet in 1042 at the invitation of the local king. He spent the remainder of his life in Tibet, composing his most influential work there. The third were the journeys of Marpa the Translator (1012-1097) from his home in southern Tibet to Nepal and India, where he received the initiations and instructions that he would pass on to Milarepa. There were other important figures, but these three, two monks and one layman, two Tibetans and one Bengali, each contributed to different elements that were central to what Tibetan historians call the ââ ¬Å"later disseminationâ⠬• (phyi dar). Among the one hundred and fifty-seven text translations credited to Rinchen Sangpo, there are many tantras and tantric commentaries, works that set forth the elaborate world of the mandala, the initiations required to enter it, and the practices meant to transform the aspirant into the fully enlightened buddha who sits on the throne at the center of the mandala palace. Atisa, although an accomplished tantric practitioner and exegete, focused his teachings on the practices of the bodhisattva, especially the cultivation of the aspiration to enlightenment (bodhicitta) and the perfection of wisdom (prainaparamita) through insight into emptiness (sunyata) as set forth by the Madhyamaka philosophers of India. Marpa returned from his journeys to India with tantric texts to be translated but also with oral instructions of the siddha or $\tilde{A}\phi = -\tilde{A}$ adept $\tilde{A}\phi = -\tilde{A} \cdot \text{tradition}$ of Bengal, where enlightenment could be triggered by a spontaneous song or, as in the case of NaÃŒâ ropa, by being slapped on the head with the guruââ ¬â,,¢s shoe. These three streams of late Indian Buddhism were just beginning to flow freely into Tibet during the eleventh century and the lifetime of Milarepa (1028/40â⠬⠜1111/23). But they were flourishing by the lifetime of his biographer, Tsangny $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}$ ¶n Heruka (Gtsang Smyon Heruka, 1452 \tilde{A} ¢â ¬â œ1507). Thus when we consider the Buddhism of Milarepa, at least as represented in his famous biography, we are considering Buddhism as it was understood and practiced in Tibet in the fifteenth century, projected back in time. Nineteenth-century scholars of Buddhism in Europe tended to evaluate the various Buddhist traditions of Asia based on their temporal proximity to the founder. The TheravaACEâ da tradition of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asiaâ⠬⠕whose canonical language of PaÃŒâ li was linguistically related to the language that the Buddha likely spoke, which was transmitted to Sri Lanka in the centuries immediately following the Buddhaââ ¬â,,¢s passing, and which rejected the MahaÃŒâ yaÃŒâ na sutras as spuriousâ⠬⠕was sometimes dubbed â⠬œoriginal Buddhism. â⠬• Chinese Buddhism, with its translations of early scriptures lost in Sanskrit, and its sober dedication to the MahaÃŒâ yaÃŒâ na sutras, just as they were being composed in the

first centuries of the Common Era, was considered an exemplar of what was then called â⠬œNorthern Buddhism.â⠬• Tibetan Buddhism was denigrated as the most distant from the pure source, as adulterated with all manner of magical elements from the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet. Indeed, for some it did not merit the name Buddhism and instead was called \tilde{A} ¢â ¬Å"Lamaism. \tilde{A} ¢â ¬Â• It is likely the case that the black magic that figures so heavily in the life of Milarepa, first made available to an anglophone audience in the 1928 edition of Walter Evans-Wentz, Tibetââ ¬â,¢s Great Yogi Milarepa, did little to dispel this view.But an alternative view is also possible, not one in which Tibetan Buddhism is suspect because it is not sufficiently early, but one in which it is particularly important because it is so late. TheravaÂŒâ da Buddhism was not unaware of the MahaAΉ yaAŒâ na sutras; it simply rejected them as the word of the Buddha and generally deemed them unworthy of study. Chinese Buddhism developed as the MahaĀŒâ yaĀŒâ na sutras were being composed. It is thus very much a \tilde{A} ¢â ¬Å"sutra-based \tilde{A} ¢â ¬Â• Buddhism, one in which a particular sutra, the Lotus Sutra or the Avatamsaka Sutra or the three pure land sutras, provided the focus for an entire school or regimen of practice. By the time that the period of the composition of the major sutras was over, Chinese Buddhism had already developed its own forms. The Chinese monk Xuanzang (602Ţ⠬â œ664) departed from the Tang capital in 629 and traveled overland to India to retrieve Buddhist texts, returning sixteen years later to make some of the most accurate translations from Sanskrit into Chinese ever rendered. But the works that he translated were of limited influence because Chinese monks had already developed their own tradition of exegesis of earlier translations of many of the same texts. It was during the period of Xuanzang $\tilde{A}\phi\hat{a}$ $\neg\hat{a},\phi$ s sojourn in India that Buddhism was being introduced into Tibet for the first time. Tibet received its Buddhism, especially in the second wave, just as Buddhism was about to disappear from the Indian subcontinent. Indeed, one of the reasons that Atis̕a came to Tibet in 1042 was the specter of Muslim invasions and the fear that Buddhist monastic universities would be destroyed, a fear that turned out to be justified. Thus Tibet received and made accurate translations of the sutras that were so important in China, Korea, and Japan. But it also received and made accurate translations of the treatises on Buddhist logic and philosophy, including the major works of the Madhyamaka and YogaÃŒâ caÃŒâ ra schools as well as the late YogaÃŒâ caÃŒâ ra and Madhyamaka synthesis, largely unknown in East Asia. It received and made accurate translations of the extensive literature on the buddha nature, the tathaAΉ gatagarbha, as well as important commentaries on the Perfection of Wisdom sutras, setting forth in great detail the structure of the bodhisattva \tilde{A} ¢ \hat{a} $\neg \hat{a}$,¢s path to buddhahood, commentaries that had little influence in China. And Tibet received the transmission of the tantras,

far more than were translated into Chinese, as well as the teachings of the great adepts of medieval India, the mahaÃŒâ siddhas. From this perspective, then, Tibet received the final flower of Indian Buddhism, the culmination of a tradition that stretched back more than a millennium to the time of the Buddha. The Life of Milarepa is rich in its imagery, woven into the biography by Tsangny $\hat{A}f\hat{A}\P$ n Heruka, beginning with the introductory verses, where so many of the key terms and doctrines of Buddhism碉 ¬â •mainstream, MahaÁŒâ yaÁŒâ na, and VajrayaÁŒâ naÁ¢â ¬â •are so skillfully evoked. Some of these elements, although familiar throughout Buddhist literature, have a particular motivation here. One such element is lineage, so central to Buddhist histories, where authenticity and authority are measured by the unbroken succession of teacher and student, how this student received this instruction from his teacher, who received it from his teacher, eventually extending back across spaceâ⠬⠕whether it be from Japan back to China or from Tibet back to India¢â ¬â •and back across the centuries, ending at the beginning, with the Buddha (or, in the case of the tantras, a buddha) himself. In The Life of Milarepa, lineage is manifest in two ways, one retrospective, one prospective. The author is concerned here, as he is in another of his important works, The Life of Marpa, to establish a direct connection between Marpa and the Indian siddha tradition, especially with the mahaÃŒâ siddha NaÃŒâ ropa. Thus he recounts Marpaââ ¬â,,¢s meetings with NaAΉ ropa at several points in the text, and there are constant references to the teachings that Marpa received from NaÃŒâ ropa. Marpa did indeed make three trips to India to retrieve tantric teachings. But by the time he made his first trip to India, NaÃŒâ ropa had already died; Marpa studied instead with some of NaÃŒâ ropaââ ¬â,,¢s direct disciples. Works by Marpa $\hat{A}\phi\hat{a} - \hat{a}_{,,\phi}$ s contemporaries make it clear that he never pretended to have studied with NaÃŒâ ropa. Yet by the time that TsangnyÃf¶n Heruka wrote his biographies of Milarepa and Marpa, the lineage of the Kagyu sect $\tilde{A}\phi\hat{a} - \hat{a}$ •beginning from the buddha Vajradhara, then to Tilopa, NaÂŒâ ropa, Marpa, and Milarepa¢â ¬â •was well known, and it was necessary that it be reflected in their life stories. Whether Tsangny $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}$ n was himself aware of the lacuna in the lineage is not known. Lineage figures prospectively in the form of prophecy. Prophecies are important elements of Buddhist literature, with prophecy (vyakaranna) listed as one of the nine (or twelve) traditional branches of scripture. Thus, in the sutras and legends (avadaÃŒâ na), the Buddha will often make a prophecy or prediction, usually of the future enlightenment of a member of his audience. Scholars find a different meaning in the Buddhaââ ¬â,¢s prophecies, using them to date Buddhist texts. Therefore, if the Buddha makes a prophecy about the emperor AsAŒÂ•oka, this is proof that the text was composed after AsAŒÂ•oka. If the Buddha makes a prophecy about the great Madhyamaka master NaÃŒâ gaÃŒâ rjuna, this is proof that the text was composed

after NaÃŒâ gaÃŒâ rjuna. That is, prophecy is regarded as a device by which Buddhist authors project present importance into the past, enhancing that importance by expressing it in the form of a prophecy by the Buddha himself. In The Life of Milarepa, it is not the Buddha who makes a prophecy but Marpa, when he interprets Milarepaââ $\neg \hat{a}, \hat{\phi}s$ famous dream of the four pillars, each surmounted by a different animal: a lion, a tigress, a garuda, and a vulture. Marpa identifies the vulture that sits atop the pillar in the north to be Milarepa, with the many small birds that fly above it his disciples. The Kagyu sect, flourishing at the time of TsangnyÃf¶n Heruka, originated from one of Milarepaââ $\neg \hat{a},\hat{\phi}s$ last disciples, the monk Gampopa (Sgam po pa, $1079Ã\hat{\phi}a$ $\neg \hat{a}$ æ1153), whose own disciples would later found the four major branches of the sect. If the date of TsangnyÃf¶n Herukaââ $\neg \hat{a},\hat{\phi}s$ works were not known, the presence of this prophecy would help to date the text at a time when the Kagyu sect was already well established, something that was not the case during Milarepaââ $\neg \hat{a},\hat{\phi}s$ lifetime.

This book can be of aid if you wish to change yourself and stay focused on divine forces, and not yourself. It is the story of a determined soul, he was tenacious in overcoming the obstacles related to karmic debt. Though he did falter at times, his spirit triumphed over the pull of dark forces. I recommend this life history to everyone I know interested in recovering the consciousness of their soul. This version is a great read, their is one other version which is a decent read and has better explained traditional Buddhist terminology which can be essential for some spiritual seekers. Enjoy!

This is the second translation I have read of this work. The first one kept more of a Tibetan flavor by including technical words and explaining them in end notes. This translator seems quite adept at keeping notes to a minimum and enabling me to read the book as a continuous text without constantly going to end notes. That means that the narrative flows more naturally and the story stands out more clearly from the mechanics of explaining Tibetan culture. Still, it's an exotic story full of twists and turns. Milarepa, its hero, twice steals from his guru and lies to him. And he doesn't finish the task that his guru sets for him and he runs away. Nevertheless the author says that Mila has complied perfectly with his guru's instructions. This is the kind of ambiguity I expect of a genuine document of this type and I enjoy the "straight" efforts to normalize it into some kind of psychic univocality. It has many meanings and my lama, for one, selects one meaning as if it was the only one. Buddhism, among other things, is radical relativism. It is interesting to see the many attempts to narrow its vast scope into one message. This book is a reminder of the interpreter's task. Our job is to revel in the richness of literature, its ambiguity, its incompleteness, and its

changing nature.

The life story of Milarepa is powerfully inspiring for modern practitioners of yoga. We can see how it true Yogin lived, practiced and achieved the goals of yoga. Suffice to say he didn't run a studio or buy expensive yoga pants, but taught renunciation, poverty, and solitary retreat as the only real path to liberation. An extraordinary story, of one of the world's greatest practitioners.

Very amazing story. After I read it, the story stuck in my mind. I will soon start my second read of the book.

Very rich and important. A truly valuable text. A little tedious to read because it was written in the XV century.

If a person can afford only one book to carry on her life mission to reach enlightenment, this book would be it. By carefully studying the situations that Milarepa had to go trough, one learns many lessons and is shown the way to buddhahood.

Very inspirational a real Yogi. Enjoyed the book recommended to all spiritual seekers.

excellent book:)

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