

**The First Throne Holder
Vidhyadhara Kunzang Sherab
(1636 - 1699)**



Kunzang Sherab was born in the province of Do-Kham in the region of Bubor on the eleventh rabjung year of the Fire Rat (1636 A.D.). He showed great capacity of compassion as a small child and would not cause harm to even the smallest creature under any circumstances. His connection to Dharma was so strong that he could memorize a great score of prayers at a tender age. With enthusiastic effort, he applied himself diligently in his practice and in the process actualized realization of the instruction he received and showed signs of accomplishment in his practice.

A new monastery was built by King Lhachen Jampa Phuntsog (King of Dege Kingdom) and Trichen Sangye Tanpa near the ruins of a previously existing monastery. They invited Kunzang Sherab to serve as the Head of the new Palyul Monastery and later it was named Palyul Namgyal Chanchub Chöling. Encouraged by his guru, Tertön Migyur Dorje to fulfill prophecies by Guru Padmasambhava, Kunzang Sherab, at the age of thirty, assumed the position as Head of the Palyul Monastery on the eleventh rabjung year of the Wood Snake (1665 A.D.).

Through skilful means and compassion, he guided many sentient beings towards the path of Dharma and nurtured a great number of disciples who displayed signs of success in their practices. Several even attained the rainbow body.

On the fifth day of the first month of the year of Earth Rabbit (1699 A.D.), Kunzang Sherab dissolved his body into the pure realm of ultimate truth at the age of sixty-four. Although it was the coldest month of the year at the time of his passing, the weather suddenly became very warm and spring-like. Shoots sprouted and buds flowered out of season. When his disciples and monks from the monastery performed offering prayers in his honor, many experienced an extended period of clear light awareness. During the subsequent cremation ceremony, clouds of auspicious signs and rainbows filled the sky. The bone relics at the completion of the cremation included the skull embossed with the syllable AH. These relics together with the Longsal Terma of Avalokiteshvara were placed inside a Stupa erected in honor of the Great Vidhyadhara.

Reference: Pathgate Institute of Buddhist Studies



Kunzang Sherab's current incarnation is **Ven. Gyatrul Rinpoche**.



Genyenma Ahkön Lhamo, sister of Kunzang Sherab, while not a throne-holder, was a great practitioner, who accomplished her practice to completion. She was instrumental in helping her brother stabilize the Palyul Lineage. She was also a heart student of Tertön Migyur Dorje and it is said that there were so many nuns who followed her that the hills of that region still bear the name of “Drongmar Teng” (the red knoll village). At the time of her death her entire kapala (skull) flew out of the funeral pyre and landed on the seat of the throne of Kunzang Sherab. Emblazoned in the kapala were the Tibetan symbols of the sublime original nature – and there was an “AH” at the very crown. This kapala was kept in the monastery and used during special ceremonies, like Drubchen, by the successive throne holders. It was considered one of the most sacred relics. While still in Tibet, H.H. Penor Rinpoche used to meditate on the kapala, making prayers to meet this Dakini if she were in the world today. He later found her in America. A piece of this skull relic resides at KPC, a gift of H.H. Penor Rinpoche to Jetsunma Ahkön Lhamo, who His Holiness recognized, and enthroned as a Palyul Lineage holder, as the reincarnation of Genyenma Ahkön Lhamo.