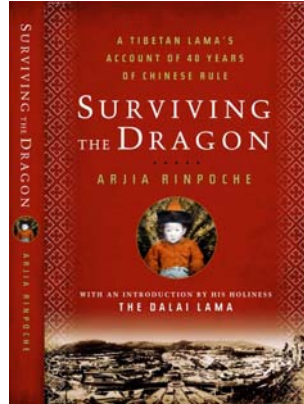


***Surviving the Dragon* by Arjia Rinpoche**

(Rodale: 262 pages; \$24.95)

An intimate account of one man's struggle for freedom tells the larger story of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and Tibet's ongoing fight for independence



Surviving the Dragon is the memoirs of Arjia Rinpoche—a Tibetan high lama who escaped from Tibet in 1998. His decision to go into exile echoes the flight of His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet to India in 1959 when Tibetans rose in protest against the Communist invaders. His Holiness has since set up a Tibetan Government-in-Exile in Dharamsala, India. More than 80,000 Tibetans fled Tibet at the time that His Holiness left. Presently, there are more than 120,000 displaced Tibetans living throughout the world.

Surviving the Dragon is the story of Arjia Rinpoche's growing up as the reincarnated abbot in Kumbum, one of Tibet's major monasteries. Unlike many stories from Tibet, his memories are not those of torture and suffering under the Chinese but of suffering and fame. As a child, he was treated like a living Buddha; as a young man he emptied latrines, but after the death of Mao Tse Tung, he rose to prominence within the Chinese Buddhist bureaucracy. He became Vice-chairman of the Buddhist Association of China and was slated to become its Chairman.

At the time of his escape to the USA, his life was one of ease, which would have continued if he had agreed to become tutor to the boy whom the Communist Chinese had unconscionably named the 11th Panchen Lama. It was a political move against the Dalai Lama and his Buddhist faith. His conscience would not allow him to be disloyal to the values of his mentor the 10th Panchen Lama or His Holiness the Dalai Lama. As a result, he fled Tibet rather than betray his Buddhist religion and his Tibetan and Mongolian heritage.

Surviving the Dragon opens a window to events from inside Tibetan-Chinese history during the final half of the twentieth century, a conflict that continues today between China and its ethnic minorities. For more information go to its web page at

www.tmbcc.net/info/book/book.html

About the Author



Arjia Rinpoche is one of the most prominent Buddhist teachers and lamas to have left Tibet. At age two, he was recognized by the Panchen Lama as the 20th Arjia Danpei Gyaltzen, the reincarnation of Lama Tsong Khapa's father, Lumbum Ghe, and the throne holder and abbot of Kumbum Monastery. He has trained with lineage teachers, such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His Holiness the Panchen Lama, and Gyayak Rinpoche--from whom he received many sacred teachings and ritual instructions.

During the Cultural Revolution in Chinese controlled Tibet, Arjia Rinpoche was forced to attend Chinese schools, yet secretly continued to practice and study with his tutors. In addition, he was required to work in a forced Labor Camp for 16 years. Following the Cultural Revolution, Rinpoche continued serving as Abbot of Kumbum--overseeing the renovations in the monastery and reestablishing monastic studies. In 1991 he launched several projects including the following:

- Red Cross Organization in Kumbum
- Disaster Relief Project for local villages
- Clinic for villagers run by monks of the Tibetan Medical Institute and
- School for local village children

In 1998, due to the strained political climate in Tibet, Arjia Rinpoche went into exile because he would not compromise his spiritual beliefs and practices. He escaped to the United States and started the Tibetan Center for Compassion and Wisdom (TCCW) in Mill Valley, California. In 2005, he was appointed Director of the Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center (TMBCC) in Bloomington, Indiana by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet. Presently, he directs both TCCW and TMBCC. Both centers are dedicated to the preservation of Buddhist teachings, art and culture within and outside of Tibet and Mongolia.

Arjia Rinpoche is the only Tibetan high lama of Mongolian descent. Throughout his life, Arjia Rinpoche was tutored by specialized teachers in the area of Buddhist philosophy, sutra and tantra teachings, as well as in Buddhist art and architectural design.

Suggest Format for Book Talk

- Location:

A book talk can be held at a bookstore, university, museum, church, or any interested organization. If it is held at a university, it is suggested that the professor make the book assigned reading for his students. Churches that have been most receptive are Unitarian Universalist and Methodist churches. Seating should be available for 50 to 100 persons.

- Time of Talk:

Typically, a book talk takes 45 minutes with the last 15 minutes devoted to questions and answers.

- Book Signing

The author signs and sells his book after his book talk and includes the name of the book buyer with his signature.

- Book availability

Book stores need to have books ordered and available for patrons. Universities typically have bookstores that can order books. Rinpoche can bring a supply of books to other locations.

- Content of Book Talk

Arjia Rinpoche briefly talks about his life story. He goes in to detail about one or more happenings in his book that will be of interest to his audience. During his talk he explains his purpose in writing his book and his desire to inform the public about the story of Tibet. Rinpoche has a slide show available about his life that can illustrate his talk.

Suggested Interview Questions

- 1. How did they find you as a reincarnation? Please explain the tulku (reincarnation) system.**
- 2. What was life like growing up in a Tibetan monastery?**
- 3. What ever happened to the Panchen Lama that was chosen by the Dalai Lama?**
- 4. You have had many persons influence your life. Who has been your best teacher?**
- 5. In your opinion, what are some of the greatest changes that occurred in during your life in Tibet.**
- 6. Do you think you can ever go back to Tibet?**
- 7. What has your life been like since you moved to the United States?**
- 8. The present Chinese government claims that they liberated the Tibetan people from a medieval system of serfdom. What are you ideas about this?**
- 9. The Communist authorities insist that the Dalai Lama is a “splittist” who seeks to create disharmony among China’s ethnic cultures. How do you respond to their accusations?**
- 10. What do you think is the best solution to the China/Tibet issue?**
- 11. How has the Chinese Communist government changed during the past 60 years?**
- 12. What are your hopes for the future?**

Segment Topics for Radio and TV

Chief Historical Events in Tibet and China from 1950 to 1998

- Invasion of Tibet by Mao's People's Liberation Army
- Great Leap Forward
- Religious Reform Movement
- Great Famine
- Death of Mao
- Opening up to the West
- Changes under Deng Shao Peng
- Tiananman Square
- China under Jiang Jemin
- China under Hu Jintao

Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet

- Brief history of Tibetan Buddhism
- The Dalai Lamas
- The Panchen Lamas
- Tibetan Monasteries: in the past and in the present

Incarnation or *Tulku* System

- Origin and description of system
- Description of a selection process
- Control of Tulkus by the present Communist regime

Future of Tibet and China

- Influence of technical changes in recent decades on ancient cultures
- Influence of "Skytrain" on Tibetan Culture
- Economic considerations
- Solution to Tibet/China Issue

What the Reviewers Say

But the unique power of *Surviving the Dragon* – deeply engaging account of the last sixty years of Tibetan history—is that its author spent most of those decades at the heart (and sometimes near the head) of Communist China, working to protect the dharma from within. . Beyond the invaluable historical testimony he offers, he launches a much more universal inquiry into what right action and right view really mean and how we might begin to work with *samsara* (cyclic existence) without becoming its captive.

--Pico Iyer, *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, Spring 2010

Arjia Rinpoche's life has taken him on an amazing journey— from his identification as a reincarnate lama in Tibet at the age of two to his being named Director of The Tibetan Mongolian Cultural Center and Kumbum Chamste Ling in Bloomington, Indiana. His presence and, indeed, this book are an acknowledgement of the unique connection between the small, rural community of Bloomington and the people of Tibet and Mongolia. I believe Hoosiers lives have been greatly enriched by the presence of the center, its activities, and the cultures that it represents.

--Darcee Thoren, Sangha Member- TMBCC, Review on [Amazon.com](#)

The trials of his life, Rinpoche writes, taught him valuable lessons about "the workings of karma, impermanence, ignorance and discontent." Yet he writes that Tibet, once free like a fish in the sea, is now "broiled and on the table, already half devoured."

--Robert King, *Indianapolis Star*, March 10, 2010

Rinpoche's account offers valuable details of this absurd era, and he writes poignantly that he could no longer tolerate collaboration with the criminal regime once he had assumed his birthright at Kumbum. A bold work that underscores Rinpoche's cultural and political—rather than spiritual—journey.

--Kirkus Reviews, Spring 2010

One need not be a Buddhist to appreciate this absolutely fascinating, candid and heartfelt autobiographical account of Tibet and the Chinese takeover over during the past decades. This book shows how the best intended people can lose their focus and how people who are truly victims can grow from tragedy, betrayal, loss and forgiveness.

As a Buddhist practitioner, this book gave me a deeper understanding of many of the Buddhist teachings from a Tibetan perspective. The lives these monks led, while for many years were devastating, laid the foundation for many of their incredibly intuitive and compassionate teachings.

I highly recommend this book for anyone who wants to appreciate the wonderful life we live here in America and learn how to be a more compassionate and forgiving person.

--Sally J. Hartshorn, Review on [Amazon.com](#)