



King of the Empty Plain: The Tibetan Iron-Bridge Builder Tangtong Gyalpo

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King of the Empty Plain is familiar to every Tibetan yet nearly unknown in the rest of the world. Tangtong Gyalpo's incredible lifespan, profound teachings, unprecedented engineering feats, eccentric deeds, and creation of Tibetan opera have earned this fascinating figure a unique status in Tibetan culture. Believed to be the great Indian master Padmasambhava appearing again in the world to benefit living beings, he discovered techniques for achieving longevity that are still held in highest esteem and are frequently taught six hundred years later. His construction of fifty-eight iron suspension bridges, sixty wooden bridges, 118 ferries, 111 stupa monuments, and countless temples and monasteries in Tibet and Bhutan remains an awe-inspiring accomplishment.

This book is a detailed study of the life and legacy of this great master. An extensive introduction discusses Tangtong Gyalpo's Dharma traditions, the question of his amazing longevity, his "crazy" activities manifested to enhance his own realization and to benefit others, and his astonishing engineering and architectural achievements. The book includes a complete translation of the most famous Tibetan biography of Tangtong Gyalpo, as well as the Tibetan text and English translation of a unique early manuscript describing his miraculous death. The text is further enriched with ten color plates and seventy-seven black-and-white illustrations.

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