



## **Previous Lives and Present Lives: The Spiritual Life of 16-17th cent. Tibetan Hierarch**

David Templeman

Taranatha (1575-1634) knew exactly who he had been in his previous incarnations and who he was going to be in future births. In his incarnation as Taranatha he was placed in a difficult position, caught between his need for a reflective life and the vicissitudes of his gradual involvement in Tibetan realpolitik.

I examine Taranatha's life from his previously untranslated Autobiographies and propose that the sum of his past lives, his visionary experiences of his future and a certain degree of discomfort in the real world helped him to reorient his vision of himself into something approaching that of a "virtual" Indian. The degree to which he was able to exist as an independent person in the maelstrom of Civil War Tibet depended to a marked degree on this developed ability to both re-create himself successfully and to view the political events he became involved in through the reducing lens of Buddhist teaching.