**RGYAL RABS GSAL BA'I ME LONG** 

The Mirror of the Royal Genealogies

**INTRODUCTION** 

The rGyal rabs qsal ba'i me long is also referred to as the Chos 'byung qsal ba'i me long, The Mirror

of the Origin of Religion, in its own colophon.

The text is thought to have been composed by Lama Dampa Sonam Gyaltsen (bLa ma dam pa

bsod rnam rgyal mtshan, 1312-1375) and completed shortly before his death. Lama Dampa was a

Sakyapa (Sa skya pa) religious scholar and abbot of Sakya monastery from 1343 to 1347. He was the

religious teacher of the Pagmodrupa (Phag mo gru pa) Ta'i Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen (Byang chub rgyal

mtshan) in his early years and the two remained close. There is, however, some debate about this

attribution (van der Kuijp 1993).

The early fourteenth century was a period of conflict between the Sakya and the Pagmodru,

among others, and in 1353 Samye (bSam yas) monastery was badly damaged. The text of the royal

genealogies seems to have been compiled concurrently with its reconstruction. It was supposedly

written at the behest of a Rinchen pel (Rin chen dpal), but Sørensen (1994: 35) suggests that the

original motivation probably came from Jangchub Gyaltsen.

The author drew on many different sources and the text is presented as a compilation (bsgrigs).

The text, often referred to as Me long ma, became very popular among both historians and Tibetans

in general, and was frequently cited by later writers. Certain sections correspond closely to parts of

the Khrims gnyis Ita ba'i me long.

Tuttle (2013: 204) states that the narrative reinforced the Pagmodru efforts to revive imperial

Tibetan traditions by emphasizing the association of Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po),

founding figure of the Tibetan empire, with the Buddhist deity Avalokiteśvara

Sources

*Xylographs:* 

rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long. 1750-60. Edited by bLa ma chen po kun dga' 'phrin las rgya mtsho.

[This is generally known as the sDe dge edition. There is a copy in the British Museum

(19999b.9)]

TBRC: W00CHZ0103341

There are eight other xylograph versions of the text on the TBRC website.

Printed version:

rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long. 1981 [2002]. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

[This is a modern version of the sDe dge edition]

TBRC: W00KG09730

For other versions and secondary literature, see:

Martin, Dan. 1997. Tibetan Histories: A Bibliography of Tibetan-language Historical Works. London:

Serindia, pp. 60–61.

References

**Translations:** 

Sørensen, Per. 1994. Tibetan Buddhist Historiography: The Mirror Illuminating the Royal

Genealogies. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

Sakyapa Sonam Gyaltsen. (T. McComas and Lama Choedak Yuthok, trans.) 1996. The Clear Mirror: A

Traditional Account of Tibet's Golden Age. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications.

Other References:

van der Kuijp, Leonard. 1993. Fourteenth Century Tibetan Cultural History III: The Oeuvre of Bla ma

dam pa Bsod nam rgyal mtshan (1312–1375), Berliner Indologische Studien 7: 109–47.

Tuttle, Gray. 2013. The Clear Mirror's Account of Songtsen Gampo. In K. Schaeffer et al. (eds),

Sources of Tibetan Tradition. New York: Columbia University Press.

**OUTLINE** 

The following outline and extracts follow the 2002 Beijing edition. They omit the glosses, which were

probably added to the text published in the century following its composition (Sørensen 1994: 32).

The first six chapters concern the birth of Buddhism in India, its spread into China and Mongolia, and

the birth and activities of Avalokiteśvāra.

Chapters seven and eight concern the early Tibetan kings.

Chapters nine to seventeen concern the emperor Songtsen Gampo, his queens, and their

activities.

Chapter ten describes Tonmi Sambhota's (Thon mi sam bho ta) mission to India, the invention of

the Tibetan script, and the making of the laws.

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Chapters twelve and thirteen concern the mission of minister Gar (mGar) to Nepal and China and the invitation of a princess from each to become a wife for Songtsen Gampo.

Chapters fourteen and fifteen concern the erection of Buddhist temples.

Chapter sixteen describes the conversion of Tibetan subjects to Buddhism and includes the tale of two Khotanese monks.

Chapter seventeen concerns the departure of Songtsen Gampo and his queens, who merge into a statue.

Chapters eighteen to thirty-three<sup>1</sup> concern events that took place after the death of Songtsen Gampo. It lists subsequent emperors, including Tri Song Detsen (Khri srong Ide btsan), and describes the building of Samye, the debate held there, and the activities of Padmasambhava. It continues with events that occurred after the fall of the empire, up to and including the activities of Atiśa in the eleventh century.

#### **EXTRACTS**

[p. 66]

Chapter 10: How Minister Tonmi modified the Indian script and how the laws of the ten virtues were established by the king.

पङ्ग्य| र्त्तेव र्धे र्वेव सेथा कु ग्राम्य वया भी ग्राम्य कुराय क्षेत्र प्राप्त के स्वाप्त के स्वाप्त के स्वाप

Then, because there was no written language in Tibet with which to create royal laws based on the ten religious virtues, in order to propagate the five desirable objects, to distribute gifts to everyone, and to impart religious precepts to his subjects, [Songtsen Gampo] dispatched seven

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In other editions, chapter eighteen is the final chapter, combining what is contained in chapters eighteen to thirty-three in the 2002 edition.

clever ministers to India to learn the script. However, they returned, having encountered three kinds of demons at the border. Next, the son of Thon mi a nu, Thon mi Sambho ta, who was perceptive, clever, and had many good qualities, was sent to India, carrying a quantity of gold with him, in order to learn the script. There, having gone to the south of India, the minister heard about an expert in the written language, the brahmin Li byin. He went to meet the brahmin and reverently offered his respects to him and said:

विवायाङ्गारमा मुकारम्या त्र्याया स्वाया स्वया स्वाया स्वाया स्वाया स्वाया स्वाया स्वाया स्वया स्वाया स्वाया स्वया क्रु.क्र्य.ल्य.५४.क्रैटश.त.ब्र्ट.यपु.शर्बशी अप्यशःश्च्याः देवाः दिवः चुरुः <u>चेत्रः चेतः चेत्रः चेत्रा</u> द्धरः बर् पर्मा त्या दर्गे रस्य विरामस्य दुः मर्थे वा नन्गाने अधार प्रतिन चेंन् ग्री त्र्रें न में प्रतिन नन्यायी कुथार्थे ह्याबाहे केदार्थे त्याबा पञ्जाम्बुराः वेदान्त्र वात्र वा रेव.क्रव.ख्रि.लु.क्षेट.ये.चर्षेयश्रत्यं रेगी तर्ष्र-तयरका इसका या केंका ग्रीका केंका भारती र्गे'न'नडु'भे'कुथ'विस्रम'नडद'न'भा नन्गामी सुवान संभी मेरि र्सेवा सेन्यमा नन्गायाञ्चमाहेवाक्काळेवानश्चरावयावी। खेर् ग्री सुवारु स्थे मे र्श्वेन हु नहरा। અવ્યવ્યાય છે દુ: જી અ સ્ત્રુ: ર્હ દુ: પ્રાથે જે જે જે જો

## अ.रीय.चर्वा.ज.वायर.चर.अह्रे.री.वार्ज्जा

Of the class of gods, being the most miraculous and abounding in compassion,

Since you are endowed with qualities, you have been born as a brahmin.

By virtue of these endowments, which have been refined in previous lives,

Accomplished in scripture, logic, and written language,

You, great Brahmin, knowledgeable and learned,

Please be considerate and listen to me.

I am a minister from Tibet, a barbarous borderland,

My king is Thugs rje chen po,

Who assumed the throne at the age of thirteen.

When he was sitting on his bejewelled throne,

In order to satisfy his subjects with religious doctrine,

And to create the royal law of the ten virtues,

Since the custom of writing was absent in my country,

He entrusted a large quantity of personal gifts to me,

And sent me to your country to learn the written language.

So, learned one, please teach me grammar and letters,

Without holding anything back.

The narrative continues with a description of the new Tibetan script.

सम्मान्त्री स्वत्त्र स्वत्त्त

At that time, among the three hundred very famous ministers, there were sixteen ministers of high reputation; four indispensable great ministers; those who served the king's body, speech and mind; those who conducted exterior, interior, and intermediate affairs; they were headed by sixteen ministers of the lineage of the Bodhisattvas. There were also six powerful ministers of the exterior, six excellent ministers of the interior, and four ministers of wise counsel.

As regards the six excellent interior ministers, they were 'Phrul gyi sna chen rigs bzang, Zhang po rgyal gyi khram bzang, Cog ro rig pa'i skad bzang, IHar gzigs shog po bstan bzang, Ka'i gnyags ston 'phel bzang, and sBas lcang dpal gyi legs bzang. In all, one hundred ministers served the king's person and conducted internal affairs.

As regards the six powerful ministers of the exterior, they were Khyung po sbu na bzang tsan, Lam khri bde Ihag khri btsan, Mu khri rdo rje gnam btsan, mThing gi byang chub mchog btsan, Thar pa klu'i dpal btsan, and Rong po phrul gyi sde ba tsan. In all, one hundred ministers conducted external affairs.

ह्या स्वाप्त स्वाप्त

To the east, from China and Xi-xia (*mi nyag*) were taken the examples of handicrafts and arithmetic; to the south, from India, religious texts were translated; in the west, from Swog po and Nepal, were created treasuries of food, wealth, and possessions; to the north, from Mongolia and Uighur, laws and the organization of labour were taken. In this way, by dominating and profiting from what lay in all four directions, the king ruled over half the world.

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Ton mi Sambho ta, mGar srang btsan yul bzung, 'Bri se ru gong ston, and Nyang khri bzang yang ston, and others—amounting to one hundred ministers, in all—levelled differences and, in accordance with the king's orders, made the laws of the ten virtues.

Rewards to be given to the good; punishment to be inflicted on the bad; the high to be subdued by laws; the low to be protected by various means; the bodyguards to be divided into four; the highland water to be collected in reservoirs; the lowland water to be conducted into channels; weights and measurements to be established; fields to be divided into plots; men to be taught to write; horses to be marked; exemplary customs to be established; those who instigate quarrels to be punished; proportionate compensation to be paid by those who kill; thieves to pay back eight-fold, making nine with the object itself; those guilty of sexual misconduct to be banished, having had limbs cut off; liars to have their tongues cut.

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## क्ट्न चुह्न ती तील से नर्षेष सैट्रिन ही नर्शेष मार्थ मार्य मार्थ मार्य मार्थ म

Further: to seek refuge in the Three Jewels, to have faith and show them devotion; to repay the kindness of one's parents by treating them with respect; not to reject gracious people (benefactors), older male relatives, and elders, but to repay them well; not to quarrel with nobles and members of the upper classes, but to yield (du len pa), and to follow their noble works and deeds; to concentrate on religion and its texts, so as to understand their meaning; to have faith in the law of karma; to avoid completely the non-virtues; to help friends and neighbours and not to harbour malicious thoughts towards them; to be honest and bear witness to one's thoughts; to consume food and chang appropriately and to act modestly; to repay debts on time; not to be dishonest with weights and measures; not to enter into reflection on matters to which one has not been appointed or commissioned; to not listen to advice given by women, but to act independently; if a case is incomplete, because the facts are not certain, to take the local and protector deities as witnesses and swear an oath.

२को.च.चञ्चरण.८नु.चेश्वर्थ.चर्थ.थर्थ। त्र्ट्रे.खेशर्थाःश्वे.सी श्वेटःस्ट्री क्.ज.च.दे.बोध्य.ज.त.हो ह.स्थ्रिय.बी.क्.व.क्. नहनःश्लेष केञ्चदेःर्देनःश्लेप्यःखनःसरः अर्हनःर्ने॥

Using the ten virtues as examples, the twenty Tibetan laws were establised at Sho ma ra, the seals of the kings and ministers were affixed, and they were promoted widely, like the light of the sun and the moon.

## Chapter 12: Concerning the invitation of the Nepalese Princess, Khri btsun নঅর্থানরের্ন্ত্রের্নান্র্র্ব্রেম্মন্র্র্

Tibetan minister Gar (mGar) visits Nepal to invite the Princess, Tritsun (Khri btsun), to Tibet as Songtsen Gampo's wife. He has an audience with the Nepalese king. Gar hands over a bejewelled helmet and promises that it will protect the kingdom and make the king victorious.

The king talks of his Buddhist heritage and tells the minister to return and ask the Tibetan king if he is capable of enacting laws in accordance with the ten virtues:

[p. 88]

क्रिंश-द्रामे प्याप्त प्रत्याप्त क्षेत्र प्रति क्षेत्र प्रति क्षेत्र प्रति क्षेत्र प्रति क्षेत्र प्रति क्षेत्र श्रेर'गशुर'र्दे।

'Ask if he is capable of enacting laws in accordance with the ten religious virtues. If he is, I will give the princess. If not, I will not give her', he said.

The minister then hands the king a letter from Songtsen Gampo, in which he praises the king for possessing the law of the ten virtues, acknowledges that Tibet is a barbarous borderland, which does not have such laws, and promises that if the king grants him the princess, he will enact laws based on the ten virtues. The letter continues:

[p.88]

I will create five thousand bodily emanations and I will be able to create laws endowed with the ten virtues in one morning.

Later, the king tells the princess to go to Tibet and she asks how she should behave. He talks of the qualities of Tibet, its natural resources, its statues, the fact that the king is a god, and says that although the *dharma* is lacking, the king possesses a code of law.

[p.92]

The king is a god and his retinue are Bodhisattvas.

Although he does not have the holy doctrine (dam chos), the king has laws (bka' khrims).

## Chapter 13: Chapter thirteen, concerning the invitation of the Princess Kong jo ক্রু'ঝ্'ন্র্ব্'স্ন্র্ব্'হ্র্ম্ব্র্র্র্র্র্র্ম্ব্র্

The minister Gar then travels to China to ask the king to give his daughter, then princess Kong jo, to Songtsen Gampo in marriage. The king asks Gar whether Songtsen Gampo is capable of enacting royal law based on the ten virtues.

'Ask your king whether he is capable of creating royal laws endowed with the ten virtues. If he is, I will give my daughter. If not, I will not give her', he said.

Gar opens a letter from Songtsen Gampo in which he promises to enact such laws in a single day. It concludes with:

I will create five thousand emanations from my body, and I will be able to create laws of the ten virtues in a single day.

The king then sends the princess to Tibet, telling her of the great qualities of Tibet and of its king.

[p. 113]

He rejects the non-virtues and observes the laws of the ten virtues.

Chapter 16: The concealment of treasures and the conversion of all Tibetan subjects to Buddhism, in order to give rise to benefit and happiness

ধর'ম'ব্দ'বব্'ব'রেল্ফুদ'বরি'শ্ভীম। শাদ্দিম'শ্রুঝ'ম'ব্দ'র্বি'রেবদঝ'রয়য়য়য়'ঠব্'র্টিঝ'য়'বর্ণাব্দম'য়য়র্বি'র্ম্নমা [p.159]

वयमः मह्तः वर्षा न्योः पर्वेदेः विभवः यः प्राप्तः प्राप्तः प्राप्तः वर्षः विभवः यः प्राप्तः वर्षः वर

Then the king, in order to make his subjects observe the laws of the ten virtues, created a law court of fear and horror. He proclaimed that those harming the Buddhist doctrine or disobeying the Tibetan law would be punished. Then he created apparitions, non-humans who were bound, beaten, had their eyes removed and limbs cut off, and so on. Although these things were not real, it terrified the people. [In this way] he established the laws of the ten virtues.

[p.159]

चार्रेश्याम्॥

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At that time, there were two novice monks in ICang ra smug po in Li yul (Khotan). For eight years they had been trying to propitiate 'Phags pa 'jam dpal without success. A voice came from the sky, 'dge tshul (novice monks), between you two and 'Jam dbyangs there is no karmic bond, which is why it is hard for you to accomplish anything. Your deity is sPyan ras gzigs. That deity is now residing in the snow-land of Tibet, where he has emanated as the king. Go there and pay your respects to the king'. It was a disembodied prophecy. On hearing this, the novice monks' hair stood on end. Without concern for their own safety, they took provisions of flour and went to Tibet. There, they arrived at a precipitous valley at sTod lung. Along the river bank, they saw corpses without heads, many without eyes, and some that had been eaten by dogs. Then the two novice monks began to have doubts. They asked a Tibetan man where the king was staying and why the corpses were there. The man told them that the king was in Lhasa and the corpses were people who had broken the laws and who the king had punished. The two monks became sceptical. They thought that sPyan ras gzigs must be a devil, having killed all those people. They decided to turn back.

[p.161]

त्राच्याचित्राचित्राचित्राचित्राचित्राचित्राचित्राचित्राचित्राचे स्वर्णाचित्र

The king gave them both food and drink. He took off his turban and revealed the face of A mi de ba (Amitabha). He said, 'I am the king of Tibet, the great compassionate one. Ever since establishing royal power, I have cared for sentient beings by leading them to the path of liberation and enlightenment. I have not harmed any of them, even with so much as a pin prick. Since the Tibetan people are descendants of a monkey and a rock-demon, I have created powerful apparitions (*sprul pa*).' Clicking his fingers, the corpses disappeared like a fading rainbow. Then the two novice monks regained their faith and trust [in the king].

#### Chapter 17: Concerning the departure of the king and his queens.

The king, Songtsen Gampo, is giving lengthy instructions to his grand-son about the Buddhist doctrine, ritual practices, and good rulership. In a passage said to be based on the *bKa'* chems ka khol ma, he says:

[p. 181]

रेग्रायाण्ये पुरस्यादे कुत्याचिस्रयाकेंसाखेसस्य सुरम्

Son of the royal family, I have transformed the royal law into religious law.

#### Chapter 18

A description of the reign of Mangsong Mangtsen (Mang slong mang rtsan) starts with a recapitulation of the reign of Songtsen Gampo.

[p. 192]

५र्गोब्र-सर्केग्-ल्वस्य-र्हेग्-चग्वर-विस्थ-र्केश्वर-पा

Serving the Three Jewels and transforming royal law in line with the doctrine.

#### Chapter 21

During the early part of the reign of Tri Song Detsen, some ministers are against Buddhism:

The ministers who were opposed to Buddhism made laws prohibiting religious practice.

Later, after the Bönpos are defeated in a debate with Buddhist scholars, Tri Song Detsen invites the Indian master Śāntarakṣita to Tibet. When he arrives at the palace, the king rushes to meet him without doing up the belt of his robe. The master declares:

[p. 203]

क्वा-वार्यायान्यान्त्रम् सुन्-तु-वार्यायान्याः क्ष्र्न-तु-वार्यायान्याः क्ष्र्न-तु-वार्यायान्याः क्ष्र्न-तु-वार्यायान्याः क्ष्र्न-तु-वार्यायान्याः क्ष्र्न-तु-वार्यायाः क्ष्र्न-तु-वार्यायाः विषयः विवयः विवय

King, the fact that you are wearing a turban (*la thod*) on your head indicates that in the upper land of mNga' ris—like your hat (*zhwa*)—the law is established. The fact that you are wearing slippers (*chag*) on your feet indicates that in the lower land of mDo khams—like your boots (*lham*)—the law is established. The fact that you have not tightened your belt around your body means that here at the centre, the law is in danger of being quickly destroyed.

The king then embarks on an extensive programme of temple construction and things go well for the people. The chapter ends by declaring:

Then all the people observed the laws of the ten virtues, whereby they were endowed with happiness and good fortune.

#### Chapter 22: On Prince Mune Tsenpo (Mu ne btsan po)

[p. 223]

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He maintained the laws of the ten virtues.

#### **Chapter 25**

The later king, Ralpachan (Ral pa can), patronizes Buddhism, establishes temples and founds meditation colleges.

[p. 227]

<u>বৃদ্যান্য বৃদ্ধী মধ্য নর্দ্র ।</u>

He maintained the laws of the ten virtues.

A long passage discusses Sino-Tibetan relations, recounting hostility and battles during previous centuries. It describes the early days of the reign of Mangson Mangtsen.

[p. 230]

र्त्तुव र्पे अग्र र ग्री अर अवय प्रविते प्री अअर पशुर अ

The minister, mGar, safeguarded the law in the territories on all four sides.

Later, after considerable conflict between Tibet and China, a peace treaty is concluded between them, recorded on a pillar erected at the border.

[p. 231]

कुतैः ५: भर-५रः। वें ५: ग्रे-अर्के ५: गावशः ह्वस्य ग्रेसः चर-५रः गावतः विस्त वें ५: ५ ग्रेसः स्ति वें ५: १ ग्रेसः सिंद कें ५: १ ग्रेसः सिंद कें १: ग्रेसः सिंद कें १: १ ग्रेसः सिंद कें १: ग्रेसः सिं

[The Chinese] offered presents to please the nephew (Tibet). Henceforth, they decided, there

was to be no enmity. On the border, at rMe ru in China, each of the two, emperor uncle and nephew, erected a temple and drew a sun and a moon on a rock. [The treaty stated that] 'In the sky the sun and moon form a pair; on the earth the emperor uncle and nephew [are the same]. The Tibetan army will not be led beyond rMe ru in China; and the Chinese army will not be led to the other side. Each side will respect the border. The earth and stones shall rest in their own beds. Laws have been made ensuring that Tibetans will be content in Tibet and Chinese in China. The Three Jewels, the sun and the moon, the planets and stars, and the gods and spirits have been taken as witnesses.' The nephew and uncle bowed their heads and swore the oath (*bro bor*).

After an anti-Buddhist revolt, Ralpachan re-establishes order:

[p. 232-33]

र्केशः विस्रसः ५८। कुषः विस्रसः महिसः महतः पः स्व। ...

มีนางสพโ มีลางสะพาษัพากาฆาปาสตพาตานที่ปาปุโ พีเปะโ ยนาปะเโ นโญาฐบาลุนพาษับานามีปาปา

He re-established both the royal law and the religious law ... He established the laws of the ten virtues for the whole population, after which stealing, robbery, and fraud were eliminated, and all the ministers and subjects who were in opposition to the religion had their activities strictly curtailed.

The king also declares that those who oppose and accuse Buddhist monks shall have their eyes pulled out and their fingers cut off. Then the evil ministers decide to eliminate the religious law (*chos khrims*) by assassinating the king.

There follows an age of decline:

[p. 234]

Then the power of the rulers diminished, like a waterfall in winter. The royal law of the ten virtues fell apart, like a rope made of rotten straw. The merit of the Tibetan people became like

a lamp in which the oil is exhausted. The prosperity and well-being of the kingdom faded away, like a rainbow in the sky.

#### **Chapter 27**

After Langdarma come a number of rulers who try to revive Buddhism, but they are chased out by Yum brtan, who seizes power, with negative effects. The concluding verse declares:

When the lowly child was lovingly raised, the lord Yum brten emerged.

When [this person] of low birth was appointed as lord, there were no royal laws based on the ten virtues.

The noble flesh was diminished, and the sun of prosperity and well-being was obscured.

The royal line was exiled to the borders and the lineage of rulers ceased to exist.

### Chapters 28 to 33

The text continues by describing events under later rulers and the demise of the royal house, leading up to the revival of Buddhism with the invitation to western Tibet of the Bihari scholar Atiśa.

#### Colophon

In the concluding remarks and colophon the author looks to the future and hopes that the teaching of the Buddha will spread and flourish in Tibet.

# क्यःश्चेन्य्व,यर्युः,र्नतणःणःश्चेन्यः,यङ्गीया यक्षेषःत्रपुः,यर्यः,यर्दुः,र्नतणःणःश्चेन्यः,यङ्गीया

May their two accumulations [of merit and wisdom] be as sublime as Mount Meru is high, And, resolving to preserve the two laws (*khrims gnyis*) in accordance with the dharma, May the patrons of the teaching, the sovereign rulers,