The Katang De Nga is a treasure (terma, gter ma) text discovered by Urgyen Lingpa (O rgyan gling pa, born c. 1323). It was revealed in stages in the mid-fourteenth century, in last few decades of the Mongols’ Yuan dynasty, which then dominated Tibet. This was also the time at which the Pakmodru (Phag mo gru), under their leader Ta’i Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen (Byang chub rgyal mtshan, 1302–1364) were gaining political power in central Tibet, at the expense of the Sakyapa (Sa skya pa), and with opposition from the Tselpa (Tshal pa), among others.

Urgyen Lingpa is said to have been the seventh incarnation of a Lhase Muruk Tsenpo (lHa sras mu rug btsan po), a son of King Tri Song Detsen (Khri Srong lde btsan). At the age of twenty-three he discovered an extensive treasure inventory at Samye (bSam yas) Monastery. He revealed twenty-eight different treasure troves, amounting to over one hundred volumes. He is said to have fallen out later with Jangchub Gyaltsen and gone into exile in Dakpo (Dwags po), where he passed away.

The Chronicles focus on the events surrounding Padmasambhava, but also contains other material. They recount the ancient history of Tibetan gods and demons, kings, queens, scholars, saints, and ministers.

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Chapter headings and page numbers are based on the 1997 Lhasa edition with occasional alternatives from the dGa’ Idan phun tshogs gling xylograph.

OUTLINE

The chronicle of the gods (Lha ’dre bka’i thang yig)
Concerns different deities, both good and evil, and their activities for the benefit, or to the detriment, of worldly beings, and their conversion to Buddhism.

The chronicle of the kings (rGyal po bka’i thang yig)
Concerns the origins of the world, the Cakravartin (Buddhist king), the Buddha, and their spiritual paths. It recounts the emergence of the Cakravartin in Tibet, the establishment of religious doctrine, tantric practices, temple, tombs, castles, decrees, pillars, and subsequent lineages.

The chronicle of the queens (bTsun mo bka’i thang yig)
Largely concerns the activities of Vairocana in Tibet at the time of Tri Song Detsen (Khri srong lde btsan), and his encounters with the queen.

The chronicle of the scholars and translators (Lo paN bka’i thang yig)
Concerns the activities of different scholars and translators.

The chronicle of the ministers (bLon po bka’i thang yig)
Concerns the origins of the kings and ministers in Tibet and their activities, including military conquests and expansions and the establishment and promotion of Buddhist doctrine. It also describes the emergence of tantric practices, Bön, astrology, and medicine, and the creation of terma.
**EXTRACTS**

**Lha ’dre bka’i thang yig** (The chronicle of the gods):

[p. 77–78]

In the female fire pig year [1347] the army of the law will appear in Yarlung.

It continues by saying that all the teachings will subsequently be destroyed.

**rGyal po bka’i thang yig** (The chronicle of the kings):

Introduction

1. How the external environment was formed
2. How the inner content, living beings, were created
3. How the *cakravartin* rulers (*khor los sgyur rgyal*) appeared
4. How the Buddha (*bde gshegs rgyal ba*) appeared
5. How the inner and outer Buddhist cycles (*yāna*) were taught

[p. 108]

The land became empty of high quality masters and disciples,

The royal law faded like the setting sun,

Human customs (*mi chos*) disintegrated like a grass rope,

The monks’ religious law unravelled like a silken knot,

Study of the doctrine vanished like a mist.
How the Dharmarāja (chos rgyal) arrived in Tibet

At the time of Songtsen Gampo, temples are being established.

As the holy doctrine (dam chos) flourished, Tibetan religious practice (lha chos) was transformed;
As the ten virtues were practised, general laws (thang khrims) were made;
The spirits of central and eastern Tibet and all living beings were made happy.

In the time of Mutig Tsenpo (Mu tig btsan po) and his descendants:

The edicts and general laws (bka’ khrims thang khrims) were observed even more closely than before.

Five types of general law (thang khrims) and internal [Buddhist] laws (nang gi bca’ khrims) were established.
The five edicts (zhal lce) distinguished between good and bad goals and attitudes.

How the translators and teachers came to Tibet
How the holy doctrine spread in Tibet
How the tantrists (sngags ’chang) and siddhas (grub thob) came
How the royal tutelary deities were established
11 The great temples built by the royal family
12 How the tomb of Srong was offered
13 How the temples were erected
14 How the residential royal forts were built
15 How important general decrees were promulgated

[pp. 149-150]

How the most important decrees were promulgated.
When the emperor issued oral decrees,
He carefully examined the good and bad, the lesser and greater, and the higher and lower.
He considered them thoroughly and in great detail.
He formulated them with succinct words, concise meanings, implications, contrasts, and metaphors.

[After] the king speaks once
If [the decrees] have been contravened, wrongs are to be punished.

[But] if the good and bad, the lesser and greater, and the higher and lower [aspects] have not been examined,

And time is not taken to analyse corruption, then under the oral decrees of the emperor

Innocent people receive many punishments.

The king seems like a demon, devoid of kindness.

The king who does not examine corruption in detail is like an avalanche.

If time is not taken to examine the good and bad, and the greater and lesser,
Common [people] [become] like beasts of burden, choked by false accusations.

The unexamined, unanalysed oral edicts of the emperor
Are despised by others, and disputed by everyone.

Without reason, sentient beings will be abandoned to an ocean of suffering,

Even if they themselves feel remorse, they will not be able to bring it to an end.

Bad ministers generate disputes among the people.

At a time when the scales of law ought to be properly examined,
Because of self-serving explanations, not one word of truth will be heard.
།རྒྱལ་པོ་གོས་ངན་ཆས་སུ་ཞུགས་ནས་ནི།
།རང་གི་མངའ་རིས་ཡུལ་ཁམས་མྱུལ་བར་བྱས།
།ལེགས་ཉེས་ཁྲིམས་ཀྱི་བྱ་ར་ལོ་རྒྱུས་གསན།
།རྒན་རྒོན་ཁ་འཆལ་དག་ལ་འདྲི་བར་བྱ།
།བྱིས་པ་ཁ་འཆལ་དག་ལའང་འདྲི་བར་བྱ།
།རྒྱལ་སྲིད་གལ་ལ་བབ་པའི་དུས་སུ་ནི།
།དཀོར་ལ་མི་འཕོངས་སྡིག་ལ་མི་འཛེམ་སོད།
།རྒྱལ་སྐྱིད་ཉམས་ན་རྒྱལ་པོ་གྱ་བ་ཡིན།
[So] the king puts on poor clothes,
And travels around to investigate his subjects and his kingdom.
He hears accounts by his spies about good and bad laws,
He enquires into the chattering of old men and women,
And he also enquires into the chattering of young people.
In any period of royal government,
If wealth is not spread and sin not actively avoided,
And the kingdom is degenerate, then the king is damaged.
In future generations, when people observe the instructions of the law,
When the emperor issues oral edicts,
All the activity of law and punishment, for locals and foreigners,
Must not be conducted in haste, but should be considered properly.
When [the emperor] delivers a speech
He does not speak to any person who does not investigate thoroughly,
He does not speak to any person who is unprepared.
[So], you should broaden your mind [by] speaking to the investigating ministers (nang blon),
Just as the ministers of old asked for advice.
Do not act self-importantly, give properly with complete sincerity,
Speak honestly and open-mindedly of the ancient advice.

The section continues with a discussion of the qualities of good and bad ministers and how people should behave at court.

16 How the stone stelae (rtsis kyi rdo ring) were erected
17 How the future royal lineage wealth and good fortune is hidden
18 How the end of time will come

bLon po bka’i thang yig (The chronicle of the ministers):

Introduction
1 Explanation of the origins of people
2 Explanation of how the kings of the people arrived
   In an account of the lineages of the rulers:

   [p. 435]
[གྲིམས་མེད་ནོ་བོ་ཉི་ཤུ་རྩ་ལྔ་བྱོན།]
There were twenty-five kings without law.

3 Explanation of the origins of the ministers
4 Description of the army generals and cavalry
5 The making of the religious laws (chos khrims)
   This concerns the vows that can be taken by both lay-people and tantrists, along with matters of doctrine, religious practice, and moral principles.

6 The making of the royal laws (rgyal khrims)
   [p. 442–43]
   བདེ་ནས་རྒྱལ་ཁྲིམས་ཇི་ལྟར་བཅས་པ་ནི།
   ་མགོ་ནག་མི་ཡི་འཁོར་གཡོག་བསན་པ་ལ།
   ་དམ་བཞིད་ལྷགས་འཛམ་འཛིན་སོང་།
   ་ཚིག་ལེགས་ཞུ་འབུལ་རྣ་བར་སྙན་མི་འཁྱོལ།
   ་འཕྲལ་སོད་ལེགས་པ་སན་སྔར་མཛེས་པ་མེད།
   ་ལམ་སྣ་བླ་མས་འདྲེན་པ་གོ་བར་དཀའ།
   ་ཆོས་མེད་བློན་པོ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་མཐོང་ལུགས་བསན།
   ་རྒྱལ་ཁྲིམས་ཉེས་པ་ཕོག་པ་མེད་ཕྱིན་ཆད།
   ་མོས་ན་འབངས་བདེ་ངེས་ཤེས་འཕྲལ་ལ་སྐྱེ།

Next, concerning the way in which the king’s laws were made.
Regarding the teaching of the ordinary black-haired ones (the people of Tibet),
Former endearments and slander are lost,
Petitions with good words are not heard,
Nowadays, overtly good behaviour does not flourish (mdzes pa med),
Guidance along the path by the lamas is hard to understand,
The views of non-Buddhist ministers are taught,
Royal law does not address wrong-doing. But from now on,
If people are devoted, they will quickly achieve secure happiness.
Advice should comprise five types of directives (*bka’ mchid*):

- Generally, the directives found in the examples of the king’s ministers;
- The directives of one’s own lineage;
- Directives concerning knowledge of the management of the trio of good, bad, and middle;
- Directives concerning the concealment of hidden secrets;
- Not allowing women to make recommendations: this completes the composition.
The royal law commanded by the lords is the law establishing power.  
The three praises, the three scorns, the three deeds, and the three non-deeds.  
First, praise the learned monks with [high] seating;  
Second, praise heroes who defeat the enemy with tiger [insignia];  
Third, praise the wise and mindful with documents.  
The three scorns: kill thieves and expel rumour-mongers (gtam po),  
[Cut] the noses and eyes of rapists, and imprison dissolute women, making three.  
The three deeds: create supports for body, speech, and mind, and for the divine religion (dam chos);  
Create laws for blood money and wound price;  
[Provide for] compensation of one hundred for theft from a lord,  
Compensation of eighty for theft from the [Three] Jewels (dkon cog),  
Compensation of nine for theft from an ordinary person.  
The three non-deeds: do not straighten the crooked;  
Do not call to mind examples of past and future harm;  
Do not act like an arrogant soldier, but like a docile (female) servant.  

With loyalty and affection, be of assistance [to others],
Because when advice is given, people usually become confident. If it is not possible to grasp what is correct, ask those who have experience and insight. Act according to the examples and meaning of what is good and bad. The sixth [chapter] concerning the making of the royal laws.

7 About the provision of welfare for the people

The section begins with numbered lists of advice concerning daily activities, respectful speech, and good manners.

[p. 443–44]

Discussion of what is said by good, religious people;
Discussion of bad people who engage in the twenty-two wrong-doings;
Discussion of those in the middle who are neither good nor bad.
The first [of the above] is about eliminating the stains of the mind.
The second is about being deceptive towards those in one’s community, False measurements (*bre srang*), lies, confusion, and deception, Following the wrong path, fighting, and quarrelling, Conflict, remorse, abuse, and ridicule, Threatening oaths, beating, and killing, Binding, ensnaring, and cutting, Cheating practices, and powerful deception, And lying—these are the twenty-two wrong-doings.

This is what it means to reject the law of the land (*yul khrims*).

The section continues.

8 Expansion of the borders and conquest of foreign armies
This section concerns Tibetan dominance over surrounding regions and rulers, including China, India, Turkestan, and Gesar.

[p. 445]

The royal laws were as strictly binding as iron.

9 The account of Tibetan rule.

[p. 445]

It is said that sovereignty combines religious and secular customs (*lha chos mi chos*).

[p. 446]
No person has faultless qualities.
For Tibetans who have not been freed from stupidity and confusion
The royal law (*rgyal khrims*) is a large and heavy golden yoke;
The religious law (*chos khrims*) binds with a soft silken knot;
The people’s law (*'bangs khrims*) is a combination of the many strands of a grass rope.
The exalted king sits above his subjects, who are quite content;
The subjects live below, obedient to the law of the land (*yul khrims*).
This is the ninth [chapter], explaining Tibetan rule.

10–14 Chapters on Buddhist practices and doctrinal points.

15 Instruction in the human customs (*mi chos*)
The section starts with an extended simile of a lion’s body, whose different parts indicate the structure of existence, how beings are born, the inhabitant of the world, the lineages of the ruler and the people, the structure of the teachings, the lord of the community, and one’s parents’ families.
There follow further explanations of good behaviour, including skillful and helpful activities and the need to examine one’s actions.

[p. 469]

Those who are not satisfied with their food and wealth will act contrary to the laws.
If tantrists and bönpos are angered, now or in the future, people will not be fortunate.
If the powerful spirits (lha klu) are angered, decline will set in.
If oaths invoking earthly spirits are broken, a person’s family will be afflicted by illness.
Protective ethical rules (tshul khrims) guard against a shameful reputation.

16 The dharma taught by the three emanations (kāya)
17 Distinguishing Buddhist and non-Buddhist doctrine
18 Establishing the basis of the teachings
19 The achievements of the ministers
20 The benefits of making offerings
21 The dangers of not making offerings
22 The establishment of Bön

[p. 496]
།དེ་ནས་བོན་གྱི་བསན་པ་བཙུགས་ཚུལ་ནི།
།ཕྱི་གཤེན་མོ་ལྷའི་རྒྱལ་པོ་སྐྱེས་བུ་རིར།
།ཏ་ཁུ་སྤྱིད་མིང་སྐེ་ཡི་བསན་པ་བཙུགས།
།སྣང་གཤེན་གྱེར་སྒྲོག་གར་གསས་བཙན་པོའི་ལྷ།
།མི་བོན་ལྷ་བོན་རྒྱལ་ཁྲིམས་སྣང་བས་བཙུགས།

Next, the way in which the Bön teaching was established.
On a mountain, the noble king of the divination gods, Phywa gshen,
Established the oral teaching of Ta khu spyid ming ske.¹
The sNang gshen chants and the deity Gar gsas btsan po
Were established through the appearance of the Bön of men and of deities (mi bon lha bon) and
the royal law.

The section continues with the other aspects of Bön established through the actions of other Bönpo figures (gshen).
23 The codification of astrology

¹ This may be a reference to the Bönpo deity, lHa Ku byi mang ke (Charles Ramble, personal communication).
24 The codification of medicine
25 The codification of religious doctrine
26 Padmasambhava’s knowledge of the past
27 Padmasambhava’s words about the present
28 His predictions about the future
29 The teaching protected by the treasure *gter ma*
30 Explanation of what is and is not a treasure *gter ma*

Conclusion