THE NGARI CHRONICLE

mNga' ris rgyal rabs

INTRODUCTION

This is a general history, which includes a section on the Yarlung dynasty in Tibet and another

section on the post-imperial history of Guge Purang (Gu ge sPu hrang). It was written by Ngawang

Dragpa (Ngag dbang grags pa), who studied with Tsongkapa (Tsong kha pa) in Ü Tsang (dBus gtsang)

and had returned to Ngari (mNga' ris) by 1424. The chronicle indicates that it was written in 1497

and there is evidence that the author had an exceptionally long life.

Sources

Vitali, Roberto. 1996. The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang: according to mNga'.ris rgyal.rabs by Gu.ge

mkhan.chen Ngag.dbang grags.pa. Dharamsala: Tholing gtsug lag khang lo gcig stong 'khor ba'i

rjes dran mdzad sgo'i go sgrig tshogs chung.

TBRC: W1KG14788

Ngag dbang grags pa. 1996. Gu ge mkhan chen ngag dbang grags pas mdzad pa'i mnga' ris rgyal

rabs. Dharamsala: Tho ling gtsug lag khang lo gcig stong 'khor ba'i rjes dran mdzad sgo'i go sgrig

tshogs chung.

OUTLINE

The chronicle is divided into three sections:

1 The India section: creation of the world, castes and lineages.

2 The Yarlung dynasty

3 The Guge Purang section

EXTRACTS

The extracts below are drawn from the text reproduced by Vitali (1996), with page number

references to both the text and translations in that edition.

The Yarlung section

This includes an account of the activities of Songtsen Gampo (Srong brtsan sgam po). After Tonmi

Sambhota (Thon mi sambho Ta) has returned from India and created the Tibetan script, Songtsen

Gampo goes into a four-year retreat. When he emerges, he makes an announcement to the people concerning his status as a religious king.

[p. 104 (p.24)]

ह्रिश्चत्रच्छत्यां चित्रस्यः च्यान्त्रम् अथत्याक्ष्यः जान्त्रम् त्यान्त्रम् क्रियान्त्यः स्वत्यः स्वत्यः स्वतः स

'In order to help living beings become accustomed to making offerings to the Three Jewels in perfect harmony with the true doctrine, and practise excellent worldly professions and physical bravery, and undertake intellectual training in the sciences, and in particular practise the ten virtues, and honour those with spiritual knowledge (*prajñāpāramitā*) and those who do not know the baser elements, and be respectful and reverential to scholars and teachers, and serve and honour the elders each day, and praise the ascetics and brahmin practitioners, and make offerings respectfully, and not drink *chang*; and in order to establish the traditions of the sixteen pure customs, I have set out the laws'. All Tibetans were established in the dharma and because everyone declared 'This king is a profound person (*sgam po*)', he was known as 'Srong btsan sgam po'.

The Guge Purang section

The early part of this section is missing. The existing text begins with an account of the royal lineages, following the decline of the empire. It states that the kingdom was in turmoil and the teachings were abandoned for five generations. People were practising heretical religion.¹

Lama Changchub Sempa Yeshe Ö (*bLa ma byang chub sems dpa' ye shes 'od*) was born to emancipate human beings in the kingdom of Ngari. Because of his great compassion he struggled to provide means to secure the peace and happiness of human beings. His minister (*Gu ge blon po zhang rung*) made a declaration, referring back to the emperors and the translations made of Buddhist texts during their time, and to the subsequent decline:

[p. 107-09 (p. 51-3)]

त.क.टामुंब,वंबा,एटाटक.प्रॅं,वेशक,मुटा, टाजीए.टावुंब.टे.श्रिटा,बंकटा,ी कूब,कूबोब.ग्री.टाजीए.वुंशका,श्रःशैटा,वंटव,ट्रंब,टी,वंटव,ट्रंब,टी,वंटव,ट्रंब,ट्

¹ Vitali (1996: 108) explains that this refers to the period 841–986.

चयरः। क्षेत्रात्रवाजीरः र्यमु जियावार्यरः। दे क्ष्याः हे रह्याः क्षेत्राः ग्री क्ष्यः अस्य द्री क्ष्याः विश्वयाः क्षेत्राः क्षेत्रः विश्वयाः क्षेत्रः विश्वयाः क्षेत्रः विश्वयाः विश्वयाः क्षेत्रः विश्वयाः विश्वयाः

'Since for many years both *chos khrims* (religious laws) and *rgyal khrims* (royal laws) have been declining and all the black-haired people are lacking in excellent virtues and have been deteriorating, and since it is difficult to match the deeds of the ancestors, the subjects are depressed. They follow orders (*bka'*), but there are no legal orders (*bka' khrims*) based on religious precepts (*chos rtsigs*). Since the Buddhist teachings have spread and flourished in sTod mNga' ris, I am issuing an order (*bka' stsal*) concerning virtuous activities and the dissemination of related doctrine'. Many copies of the texts of the *chos khrims* (religious laws) and *rgyal khrims* (royal laws) were prepared and distributed in order that they should become well known in all the districts of the kingdom (*mnga' ris skor*).

There follows an account of temple founding and the training of people to be translators. Then, in the year 996, Yeshe Ö called a great assembly.

[p. 109 (p. 54)]

The three—the religious teachers (*dge ba'i bshes gnyen*) of such places as Gu ge, sPu hrang, and Mar yul; the great monks (*btsun chen*); the high ministers (*bla zhang blon*)—gathered together with the most notable people. [Yeshe Ö] made great appointments amongst the wise. A great legal edict (*bka' shog chen mo*) was made, and laws (*bka' khrims*) that accorded with those that had been discontinued from former times, for which each person was given responsibility (*khu ru chud*), were circulated in every direction. A major investigation into the religious laws (*chos khrims*) was also carried out in all directions.

More statues and religious monuments are created, scholars are invited, translations made, and monasteries founded. Bon practices are eliminated.

[p. 110-11 (p. 55-56)]

भ्रै.कुर.घशक.वट्ट.ग्रुक.क्र्य.स्य.त्य.क्य.त्य.चबेट.च.टट्.। चक्ष.शट.वी मैज.क्च.श.वोट्ट्रवेज.त्य.चर्चेवाक.त.ट्ट.। चक्बे.त्.यच.ये.बैट.चषु.पटेज.बुट.बैट.च.ट्ट.। चक्बे.त्.भ्रै.त्.विट.कट.बे.चर्व्य.त.बेळ.वाबू.च.ट्ट.। भ्रैय.कटव.मैका.ग्री.चन्नेबे.त.ट्य.बुट.मैका.तय.शह्ट.कुट.। ट्यूका.र्यूसका.र्यू क्षा.विश्वा.ये.ची.मैज.वुश्वा.ग्री.का.ये.कट.ट्र.शह्ट.ट्री मैज.त्.ह्.केय.शह्ट.सप्.वुष्टावश्वा.स्

In general, [Yeshe Ö] widely diffused the Buddhist teachings and caused them to flourish. In particular, he made many texts of religious and royal laws. The law concerning the appointment of the king was that if there were many sons, all except the heir apparent were to become

monks and the ruler should protect the *sangha* of the ordained; if the lineage of the *btsan po* (king) was cut, it would be restored from among the monks; all laymen and monks should firmly safeguard the doctrine.

From now on, [although] new scriptures and commentaries have arrived and are often heard, if medicine, technical knowledge (*go cha*), and so on, do not exist here, those who keep monastic vows must bring them from elsewhere. All monks and laymen must guard against foreigners who might diminish the realm. People must learn the nine kinds of male prowess, namely, how to fire arrows, run, jump, wrestle in various ways,² swim, ride horses, write, read, and perform arithmetic. Moreover, they should be brave and agile in them all. Ordinary people are to behave virtuously and if they are ordained, no-one—lord or people— should obstruct them.

The manufacturing, casting, painting, and so on of receptacles of body, speech, and mind ought to be learned. They must not be carried out carelessly. These activities must be rewarded. The casting must not be done carelessly; and it must be rewarded appropriately. You, uncles and nephews, must behave in this way. If anyone, monk or layman, contravenes the religious precepts (*chos rtsigs*), the high authority of the king and ministers, whatever they possess, must not be imposed, but a reconciliation must be carried out, in all circumstances. In short, the religious law and the great law (*bka' khrims chen mo*) must not be contravened.

He continues by making provisions for religious establishments and then the members of the assembly swear an oath to uphold the *chos rtsigs* (religious precepts) and to instruct future generations to do the same.

The text continues with the decision of Yeshe Ö to become a monk and subsequent events.

² Vitali (1996: 111) suggests gyad kyi stangs for spyad kyi stangs.