TA SI TU BYANG CHUB RGYAL MTSHAN GYI BKA' CHEMS MTHONG BA DON LDAN

The testament of Ta'i Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen

INTRODUCTION

The seat of the Lang Pakmodru (rLangs Phag mo 'gru) was established at Densatil (gDan sa mthil) in central Tibet in the twelfth century. Initially closely associated with the Drigung kagyu ('Bri gung bka' brgyud) they developed a distinct religious sect (Phag mo bka' brgyud). In the 1240s, the Pakmodru domains were recognized as one of the thirteen *trikor* (*khri skor*) within the Yuan admininstrative structures, with the seat of its leader, the *tripon* (*ikhri dpon*), at Neudong (sNe'u gdong) in the Yarlung valley.

In 1322 Jangchub Gyaltsen (Byang chub rgyal mtshan) (1302–1364) was appointed as leader by the Yuan emperor and he gradually wrested power from the formerly powerful Sakya (Sa skya) and their *ponchen* (*dpon chen*) in central Tibet. This was recognized by the Yuan when the emperor granted him the title of Ta'i Si tu in 1357 and he received the *ponchen*'s seal of office. Jangchub Gyaltsen created new administrative offices, gradually coming to exercise authority over the other *tripon*. He reorganized the *trikor* into the fort (*dzong*) system, with associated aristocratic families and estates.

The Testament was probably completed shortly before his death in 1364.

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EXTRACTS

The page numbers are references to the 1986 edition.

1240

Chenga rinpoche (Spyan snga rin po che) is at the court of the Pakmodru (the 'jig rten mgon po chos rje) at Densatil. During the reign of Ogodai (O ko ta), son of Chengis khan (Jing gir), the Hor general, Dortnagpo (Dor ta nag po), arrives in Tibet.

[p. 109]

[B]'न्चॅब'मिनेष'ग्री'रेट'व्य'चॅन'र्] र्कॅर'विअष'त्रूट'वर्ग र्कॅर'र्न्र'न'वग'र्येष'न्यग'र्येव'चुष'वषा

During the time of the two, the uncle and nephew,¹ the law of the Hor came to Tibet. The Hor general was Dor ta nag po.

The general threatens the monasteries of Reting (Rwa sgreng) and captures the Drigung ('Bri gung) gom pa (sgom pa, civil administrator), Shakya rin chen, only to be met by earthquakes and hail stones. He then venerates Chenga rinpoche and establishes fortresses.

When he had established the law, the royal and religious law were like the rising sun at daybreak and a domain with a single Tibetan language emerged. This was thanks to the great kindness of Spyan snga rin po che.

1290s

The text discusses the activities of various rulers, including the *tripons*, and the receipt of an order ('ja' sa) from the emperor. Regarding the *tripon* Zhonu Yontan (gZhon nu yon tan):

[p. 119]

स्ट (एटंट्र) त्यक्ष सूप्र:कृतका मृटा। वालय (प्रहायका अ) सूचा ताला सूचा प्राप्तिका स्थात स्थाप प्रसादि स्थापित स श्र.कृष्ट का त्या प्रसाद के सूचा वी क्षिया स्टान विका कि स्थाप का सी ताला स्थाप स्थाप स्थाप स्थाप स्थाप स्थाप स

¹ The references are probably to Sakya Pandita and Phakpa Lama.

Regarding the water taxes of the area of Sa ris gan me tog, all was lost to the hands of the Sa skya pa, [but] they were recovered from the possessions [of the Sa skya] at his death.² He combined the households of the area (*mi sde*) into an arrangement of ten by ten dwellings [but] the [steps] necessary to establish postal stations at such places as Me tog and to enact tax regulations were only taken after the kindness of his passing.³

1346

There is a long-running dispute between Jangchub Gyaltsen (Byang chub rgyal mtshan), who was then *tripon* and contending with the Sakya, among others, for ultimate power in central Tibet, and the Gya zangpa (G.ya bzang pa). The latter gather troops from the G.ye, Gnyel, and Ngo log.

[p. 167]

पट्टेट. ह्या. बिट्या ल्टे. त. टेट. | ट्र्यूय. ब्र्या. शावप. प्रज्ञूय. ट्याट. येवा. सेय. ही. येथा. यटा. दु. हीय. जुवाया थ. ट्या. ट्याय. प्रयू. हीय. ख्रु. ही. ब्र्या. च्या. प्रयू. हीय. जुवाया थ. ट्या. ट्याय. प्रयू. हीय. जुवाया थ. ट्या. ट्याय. हीया. प्रयू. हीया. प्रयू. हीया. च्या. हीया. प्रयू. हीया. प्रयू. हीया. च्या. हीया. प्रयू. हीया. प्रयू. हीया. च्या. हीया. प्रयू. हीया. प्यू. हीया. ह

On the eighth day of the eighth month of the male fire dog year, the army of G.ye bsnyal arrived. On the eleventh day, they [came to] the gSeb la pass on the rDog po range. They were acting lawlessly (*khrims kyi dben cha yod pa*). The Three Jewels and female deities distinguished good and bad. Our strategies were good. We killed their leader, Ma dga' dgra dga, and about twenty men and when we were victorious, we pursued them a long way.

Then the *ponchen* Gyalba zangpo (rGyal ba bzang po) intervenes and challenges (or arrests) Jangchub Gyaltsen. The latter addresses the *ponchen*.

[p. 171]

I, myself, repeatedly request the *dpon chen* to act graciously now, without error. The practices of the Sa skya lamas have arrived here. When the dpon chen was not in control, there was no law. I beseech you: I have been wearing shackles (*An*) for half a month; may I finally be released in accordance with the truth of the 'ja' sa documents?

² This appears to be a reference to Sakya Drakpa Rinchen (Grags pa rin chen), who died in 1310.

³ This seems to be a sarcastic reference to the shortcomings of this official.

There is then conflict between the Pagmodru and the *ponchen* Wangtson (Dbang brtson), whose allies are the Tselpa (Tshal pa) and the Gya zangpo.

In **1349** Jangchub Gyaltsen attacks the Gya zangpa and in **1350** he seizes Gongkar (Gong dkar). A mediation is initiated at Rabtsun (Rab btsun), but then the *ponchen* attacks Gongkar. Jangchub Gyaltsen goes to Tsel Gungtang (Tshal Gung Thang) and forces the Tselpa to surrender and hand over a son as hostage. Then he goes to Gyama (rGya ma), where he meets the Drigung administrator (*gompa*, *sgom pa*) Kunga Rinchen (Kun dga' rin chen), who is now being supported by the Yuan. Jangchub Gyaltsen explains that he is weary of the fighting and the attacks on his property and wants to pursue a mediation and seeks to persuade the *gompa* to do the same, on the basis that he will no longer fear the imperial army (*khrims dmag*). The *gompa* retorts, sceptically:

[p. 203-04]

'What are the advantages (*tig tig*) of Hor laws?' [Byang chub rgyal mtshan] replies, 'What would be the benefit for either your seat or my six areas if there were no advantages to the Hor laws? The Hor laws are extremely advantageous. Due to the benefaction and the laws of the Mon 'gor king,⁴ you 'Bri gung pa have acquired your name and your teachings; due to the benefaction and the laws of Sechen,⁵ the Sa skya pa and the Tshal pa acquired their power and their teachings; due to the benefaction of the Hulegu,⁶ the territory of the Phag mo gru has been established.'

He then complains about the letters in which the *gompa* has been deceitful, and then claims that he, himself, has made the area around Taglung (sTag lung) happy by establishing the law there (*khrims bsdams skyid du bcuq nas*).

⁴ The khan Mongke, d. 1259

⁵ The khan Qubilai, d. 1294.

⁶ The khan Hulegu, d. 1265.

In **1354** a meeting takes place at Gongkar, between Lama Dampa (bLa ma dam pa), the *ponchen* Gyalba Zangpo, and Jangchub Gyaltsen. The first two accept the power of Jangchub Gyaltsen and that Gongkar will remain in his possession. Then Lama Dampa and the *ponchen* returned to Kyisho (sKyid shod).

The Tselpa lay seige to Dronpari (Gron pa ri) and ask for help from the Pagmodru, who send the *chenpo* Rinzang (Rin bzang), who is victorious. But then the *Nangpa* Kunga Bum (Kun dga' 'bum) arrives with new troops. The *Nangpa* Drakwang (Grags dbang) attacks Tongmon (mThong smon) in Shangs, the stronghold of the *Ponchen*. The latter then calls on Jangchub Gyaltsen for assistance.

[p. 237]

शह्मी जबूं, स्यूथ, त्रिश्च स्था, स्था, त्र्या, त्रक्या, त्रक्या, त्रक्या, त्रम्या, स्था, स्था,

Then, after the *dpon chen* again changed his mind (lost his nerve?) and did not do this, the army generals appointed as leaders by our *chen po* asked: 'Now what should we do? A message from Shangs has arrived here, saying "If you give assistance in the law, I/we will be able to act wholeheartedly (courageously). If we do not help each other, this will not be possible'. Then a request by the generals came to us, saying: 'The *dpon chen* has spoken, what is your advice now? Since there is nothing more appropriate than giving assistance in [imposing] law, we ask you to make a decision on the request'. Subsequently, the those appointed by the *chen po* arrived back at Yang lungs (or the cultivated area) and in order to rout the nang pa and help [impose] law, those appointed by the *chen po* were told to go and (they) set off with his army.

Still in **1354**, after further manoeuvring, including tussles over the possession of the most important seals, Jangchub Gyaltsen has a meeting at Chumig with two representatives of the Sakya counsellors. He tells them that they must immediately release the *ponchen*.

He criticizes their seizure of the *ponchen* in the following terms:

[p.257]

I did not invite veneration (*bsnyen bkur*). However, you Sa skya lamas should not hope that I make prostrations. If both sons of the lamas have been captured, hold on to them. If they fall into my hands, I will kill them. I have come to release the dpon chen and to give legal assistance (*khrims grogs*). In the 'ja' sa brought by the *phing jang* Geb cag ta'i and the Si tu Dar ma rgyal mtshan, it is said that dangerous rebels who break the law (*khrims 'gal ba*) should be beaten; they should be killed; and later a report should be sent to me (the emperor). We all have a copy of that order (*zhal bshus*). Accordingly, the rebels should be killed and beaten and afterwards a report should be sent to the emperor.

p. 259: The phrase *khrims med byas* is used to refer to people behaving badly, literally lawlessly. In this case it is the nephews of the *ponchen*, who have carried out raids.

Later, there are further negotiations about the release of the *ponchen* Gyalba zangpo. The lama Kunspangpa (Kun spangs pa) suggests that his son, the *lopon* (*slob dpon*) Grakpa Gyaltsen (Grags pa rgyal mtshan), should be sent in exchange. Jangchun Gyaltsen consults the Shangspa councillors, under the *lopon* and sends a message to Lama Kuspangpa, asking him to hand over the *ponchen*, saying:

[p. 261]

देवे विषा त्राह्य प्रते धुवा ह्रवाया लु विस्रमा द्रारा प्रते प्रवाप प्रते विषय हेवा होता

I ask for a hand-imprinted document about taking responsibility for him, which will establish the lawfulness [of what I am doing] wherever I go.

Later, the *ponchen* is released and a meeting takes place to discuss the lama Khangsarba (Khang gsar ba). The *ponchen* makes a speech:

[p. 283]

He is not known as *bla ma* Khang gsar. He is known as a hunchback womaniser. He is known as the bandit bDe legs rgyal mtshan. What is the worth of [this] bla ma? He is like someone with a grudge. He primarily profits the Khams pa, brigands, and rebels. I have a lap full [of incriminating

evidence] in my hands. When the prince, the *dben pa*, and many others gathered here, they took up an official documents (*bca' rtse*), which was sent as a request to the emperor, in the imperial capital (lit. the rich one with the red door). In that regard, if punishment is ordered, it will be at the imperial capital; if interrogators and investigators come, they will come from the emperor.

I, rGyal ba bzang po, I do not creep on the ground, I do not fly up to the sky, I do not flee. I pressed one thumb on the golden threshold of the emperor, I saw his golden countenance. When I arrived at the court (*khrims sa*) of those of the first rank (*phing gcig*), I made my hand mark. I know this law (*khrims*). Here, where there are many powerful men, such as you, the law cannot wander (*khrims 'grims mi gda' ba*).⁷

Jangchub Gyaltsen replies, saying that no-one doubts that he knows the law.

[p. 283-84]

पद्यत्. ष्रिञ्चयत्याक्ष्यत्याक्ष्यत्याद्यत्यो वर्णयत्याद्यत्याक्ष्यत्याक्ष्यत्याक्ष्यत्याक्ष्यत्याक्ष्यत्याक्ष्यत्याक्षय

Acting in accordance with (lit. inside) the law (*khrims la khog tshud*) means acting in accordance with (lit. going inside) instructions; [but] to go completely inside meat and butter, is to over-eat. [Therefore], to act in accordance with each law is not feasible.⁸

He continues by talking about the time he was imprisoned by the *ponchen*, and the incident when he burnt his seal. He mentions the time when Salé fort (gSal le rdzong) was overthrown. Then:

[p. 285]

त्र्युं जिट.जूबो.तय-तय-त्र्यः अ.तयेटा, विश्वकाला.जूबो.क्ट्रीखा.बषा.शीखां यथा.टशबो.जुबोबा.तय-तथवा.जूटी.तथां बोबट.क्ट्रीय.टट.जबा.बो.क्ट्रा.त.खे.चुय.तपु. रेश्रेय खेरी .तयेट.यथां तहरा.बपु.खेबोबा.ताखेब .ट्र.के.डीबा.तपु.शु.तयस्य क्रिया. बिट.शावय.त्र्या.तब्र्या.डीबा.क्षेत्रबा.तयस्.जूट.तथां बु.से.ट्य.शा.क्षेता.शक्ष्य.जा.बोबट.क्ट्रीय.दि.। जबा.बो.क्ट्रा.वा ट्र्य्य.क्ष्य.क्षेता.तच्चट.क्रीबा.बीट.क्र्य.खें.व्यवस्य.

The Zhang mkhan po and his leaders were killed. Si tu Dar ma rgyal mtshan was given gifts and his work was elevated (he was promoted). The dpon chen rGyal bzang requested that because he had fought well according to the wishes of the emperor, he should also receive gifts and be promoted. Since he killed someone on the basis of the 'ja' sa, [the question is], was the king's instruction sent correctly or not and did he act in accordance with the law (khrims la khog tshud), or not?

⁷ Czaja offers a slightly different translation at (2013: 162, fn. 160)

⁸ The exact translation and meaning of this proverb is not certain.

Jangchub Gyaltsen continues by saying:

ग्रह्म. संस्था क्षेत्र स्वाप्त क्षेत्र स्वाप्त क्षेत्र क्षेत्र स्वाप्त स्व

When I was at sNe gdong Gong dkar, whenever royalty or dignatories or emmissaries came, I offered them lengthy hospitality. My purpose was to make them welcome. I abide by the king's law (rgyal po'i khrims bzung). I have been appointed by Gan Me tog. Does a person with a black hat serve a white person, who is accomplished in acting in accordance with the law (khrims las kyi bya ba drang por bsgrubs pa)? Have I spoken in a rebellious way about the king or not?

He then gives an example of improper behaviour, namely, the killing of a disabled person.

Early in **1357**, Jangchub Gyaltsen receives an imperial mission, which brings a decree that the title and seal of Ta'i Si Tu are to be bestowed upon him.

Conflict between the Pakmodru and the Drigung is inevitable and Jangchub Gyaltsen explains the situation. The Drigung have already made threatening statements about seizing his territories and annihilating his lineage. If he hands over Olkha ('Ol kha), then rebels from Ye (g.Ye) and Nyel (gNyal) will side with the Drigung and the Sakyapa would order him to interfere.

[p. 290]

प्राप्तायाप्तर्भ तद्याख्या विद्याख्या प्राप्त विद्याच्या प्राप्त विद्याच्या प्राप्त विद्याच्या विद्याच्या विद्य विद्याच्याप्त विद्याख्या विद्याच्या विद्याच्या विद्याच्या विद्याच्या विद्याच्या विद्याच्या विद्याच्या विद्याच्य

If 'OI kha is handed over, then rebels from g.Ye and gNyal will join with the 'Bri khung. The Sa skya pa will order me [to interfere] and I will not be able to abide by the king's law (*rgyal khrims*). That is the reason I will not hand it over.

In the final section, Jangchub Gyaltsen talks about times of official extortion (za 'dod) and how it is important to have strict laws (khrims dam), in order to avoid this:

[p. 372]

ट्या हुवा त्यक्षेत्र त्य वेशवा तात्री चापट्टी त्यव अप्यान्य स्वाप्त क्ष्य तात्रीय । चित्र तीता ते हिश्यवा शापट्टी वायुन्य तीवी तात्र हिला ता क्ष्य वायुन्य हिला हिला ता क्ष्य ता क्षया ता क्षय ता

In the royal territory, law was not established (*khrims ma 'jags pa*) and the response of the imperial officials and emissaries (*gser yig pa dang mngag gzhug pa*) was extortion. Formerly,

during the time of the *gompa* Shakya rinchen, the teachings of the 'Bri khung pa spread, but later the teachings degenerated and much extortion and lawlessness resulted.