

THE LDE'U CHRONICLES

INTRODUCTION

Two related texts, written in the thirteenth century, contain substantial sections describing the legislative and administrative activities of Songtsen Gampo. They are generally referred to as:

Chos 'byung chen po bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan of lDe'u Jo sras (*Jo sras*)

rGya Bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa of mKhas pa lDe'u (*lDe'u*)

Context, authorship, and dates

Jo sras is the briefer text and is quite possibly earlier, while *lDe'u* is more detailed. van der Kuijp (1992) and Dotson (2006) suggest that both date from the mid to late thirteenth century. Cabezón (2013: 267–69) suggests that *Jo sras* may have been written slightly earlier, by someone who was part of a lineage of Padampa Sangyé's Pacification teachings.

There are references to Nyingma texts, but the authors do not mention either the Sakyapa or the Kagyupa schools of Buddhism (van der Kuijp 1992: 473).

The texts, their sources, and later use

Both texts are in two parts. The first is a long exposition of Indian Buddhism, presented as a commentary on a (non-extant) verse text.

The second part is a history of Buddhism in Tibet, presented as a genealogy of the Tibetan royal families. It continues into the period of the *phyi dar* (the second diffusion of Buddhism) and, in the case of *lDe'u*, into the thirteenth century.

Within the second part is a long section, which is sometimes known as *The Section on Law and the State* (SLS). It describes the legislative and administrative activities of Songtsen Gampo. It outlines different aspects of his government in considerable detail, including the division of Tibet into thousand-districts (*stong sde*). It includes lists of different types of ministers, their duties and ranks, and different types of law.

In a detailed analysis and translation of the SLS, Dotson (2006) traces correspondences between parts of this section and what is known of law and administration in the Tibetan empire, including from Old Tibetan sources. He suggests that imperial catalogues—records of administrative measures—must have formed the basis for much of the detail and structure of the SLS.

Both texts list different types of law—five and six, respectively. *Jo sras* claims that the *Thang yig chen mo*—a non-extant, probably early ninth-century, chronicle—is a source for one of these types of law.

This section seems to be a source for a short section in the fourteenth-century *rGyal po bka' thang yig* and for a very similar, although considerably longer and more detailed, section in the fifteenth-century *mKhas pa'i dga ston*. Neither the *lDe'u* nor *Jo sras* is referred to by other Tibetan authors, however, which suggests that they were, in general, little known in Tibet (van der Kuijp 1996: 469).

Primary sources

Chos 'byung chen mo bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan. 1987. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang.

[*Jo sras*]

TBRC: W20831

mKhas pa lDe'us mdzad pa'i rGya Bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa. 1987. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang. [*lDe'u*]

TBRC: W21784

mKhas pa lDe'us mdzad pa'i Rgya Bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa. 2013. Delhi: Bod kyi gtsug lag zhib dpyod khang. [*lDe'u*]

References

Cabezón, José. 2013. *The Buddha's Doctrine and the Nine Vehicles: Rog Bande Sherab's Lamp of the Teachings*. Oxford: University Press.

Dotson, Brandon. 2006. *Administration and Law in the Tibetan Empire: The Section on Law and State and its Old Tibetan Antecedents*. DPhil thesis, University of Oxford.

[available at <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/3358/1/DotsonDPhil.pdf>]

Hill, Nathan. 2015. The *sku bla* rite in Imperial Tibetan Religion, *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 24: 49–58

van der Kuijp, Leonard. 1992. Tibetan Historiography. In J.I. Cabezón and R. Jackson (eds), *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*. Ithaca: Snow Lion.

Uebach, Helga. 1989. Notes on the Section of Law and State in the Chos-'byung of Lde'u. In S. Ihara and Z. Yamaguchi (eds), *Tibetan Studies*. Narita: Naritasan Shinshoji.