

THE GROWTH OF A LEGEND

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Abbreviations

GBY	<i>rGya-bod Yig-tshang</i>
GSM	<i>rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long</i>
HD	<i>Hu-lan Deb-ther</i>
JA	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
Karma-pa rnam-thar	Chos-rje karma-pa sku 'phreng rim byon gyi rnam -thar bsdud dpag bsam khri zhing zhes bya ba
PT	<i>Chos-'byung of dPa'-bo gtsug-lag Phreng-ba</i>
TPS	<i>Tibetan Painted Scrolls</i> . G. Tucci. Rome
TTK	<i>Tombs of the Tibetan Kings</i> . G. Tucci. Rome. 1950

I

Many Tibetan histories record that soon after the death of Srong-brtsan sGam-po (A.D. 650) a Chinese army invaded Tibet and reached as far as Lhasa. No such event is mentioned either in the histories of the T'ang dynasty, which would hardly have suppressed so great a success, or in the Tibetan Annals from Tun Huang; it cannot, therefore, be regarded as fact.

Although there may be a vague allusion to it in the *Lha-'dre bKa'-thang* (fo. 44), the earliest surviving version is that in the *Hu-lan Deb-ther* – the Red Annals – by Tshal Kun-dga' rDo-rje, ascribed to the year 1346. In the edition published by the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology at Gangtok in 1961 (HD) there is the brief statement at fo. 5b that “in the male iron-horse year, because the Tibetans had taken all the Yu-gur country in the rear of the T'ang empire, the minister Sye bzhin gu, sent by the Emperor with 100,000 men, reached Lhasa” (“*lcags pho rta'i lo la bod kyi dmag mis thang gi rgyal khams la rgyab yu gur gyi yul thams cad blangs pas | rgya'i rgyal pos blon po sye bzhin gu dmag khri tsho bcu dang bcas pa btang nas lha sa bar du sleb pa*”). The writer goes on to say that the mGar minister completely defeated the Chinese.

The next version comes about 40 years later in the *rGyal-rabs gsal-'i me-long* by the Sa-skyapa monk bSod-nams rgyal-mtshan which may reasonably be dated in 1368. At fo. 77a in the edition by B. I. Kuznetsov published by E. J. Brill, Leiden in 1966, it is said that “in the time of Mang-srong mang-btsan, the Chinese Emperor knowing that Srong-btsan sGam-po was no longer alive and remembering the devastation wrought in China by 'Gar, sent an army of 500,000 men to conquer Tibet and carry

off the (image of) Jo-bo Shakya. In the alarm caused by this news the Jo-bo was brought from the Ra-mo-che to Lhasa and placed in the southern gateway called Me-long-can (adorned with mirrors). The entrance was plastered over and (an image of) 'Jam-dbyangs was put there." Further on, at fo. 91a is the statement that "in the time of Mang-srong mang-btsan a Chinese army came to Tibet and conquered it but the minister 'Gar was made commander-in-chief and taking an army of 200,000 men he defeated the Chinese". A note which precedes that passage, but clearly refers to it, states "the story how a Chinese army came to Lhasa and burnt the Potala but when they could not find the Jo-bo Rin-po-che they took away the (image of) Mi-bskyod rdo-rje to the distance of a morning's march (*snga gro* [for *dro*] *gcig*), all that is to be found in Chinese records (*rgya'i deb ther na*)".

The incident is mentioned in the *rGya-bod yig-tshang* of Subhutchandra written c.1434 (see *Préambule à la Lecture d'un rGya-bod yig-chañ* by Mme. A. Macdonald, JA, 1963). At fo. 65 of a MS. at the University of Washington, Seattle, of which I have a copy, it is stated, much on the lines of HD that: "In the time of Mang-srong, king of Tibet, there was sometimes agreement between China and Tibet but on many other occasions there was rivalry in war. The Chinese minister dPyä bzhin dgu'i, being appointed to command 100,000 men, came as far as Lhasa." This is followed by an account of the destruction of the Chinese army by the eldest son of mGar.

Over a century later, in the *Chos-'byung* of dPa'-bo gtsug-lag Phreng-ba (1564) the story has acquired picturesque accretions. It is the author's practice to gather together several accounts of the same event from different sources. In Vol. *ja* he tells the story twice. On fo. 75a in a passage in verse – in which he writes the main outline of his history – he relates how, at a time apparently just after the accession of Mang-srong at the age of 13, "on hearing that a Chinese army was coming to Tibet, the image of the Buddha at the age of 12 was put in the southern gateway of Ra-sa, called Me-long-can; the door was plastered over and an image of 'Jam-dbyangs painted over it". There follow a few sentences about Mang-srong's reign and death; then the verse resumes "in his time a Chinese army came to Lhasa. The Fierce King rMe-brtsegs opened his breast and sending forth a phantom army he turned back the Chinese." The account continues in prose, which the author uses for his commentaries on the story he has told in verse: "It was mGar's firm intention to destroy China, so, as soon as Srong-btsan was dead, a great army was prepared and mGar acting as commander-in-chief inflicted frequent defeats on the enemy. Later the minister died in battle. When the king Mang-srong died a Chinese army of 500,000 came to Tibet. They burnt the palace of Khri-rtse dmar-po. They could not at first find the Jo-bo Shakya and later, although they came to know where it was, they could not destroy the painted figure of 'Jam-dbyangs. So they carried off the

Jo-bo Mi-bskyod rdo-rje. At that time the rMe-brtsegs of Ra-sa, that is set up there with his two clenched fists held close together in the gesture of dispelling pollution, opened his breast with his clenched fists and a great phantom army came out, whereupon the Chinese army scattered in terror. The Jo-bo Mi-bskyod rdo-rje was left for a week on the plain of Ngo-ma to the east of Lhasa, hence it is called 'The place Where the Jo-bo grew weary' (*jo-bo 'o-brgyal thang*). It is written in Chinese records how the eldest son of the minister mGar was made commander-in-chief and defeated the Chinese so that for them he seemed to be a manifestation of the spirit of war." In Vol. *Ma*, fo. 11b the story is told yet again, starting this time in exactly the same words as Hu-lan Deb-ther but going on to say that after the Chinese army came to Lhasa "they burnt the Potala and the palace of Khri-rtse dmar-po. Though they searched for the Jo-bo Rin-po-che they could not find it so they took Jo-bo Mi bskyod rdo-rje a distance of a morning's journey." The story of mGar's retaliation follows.

In contrast with the discursiveness of PT, the nearly contemporary *Chos-'byung* of Padma dkar-po (1526–92) gives an account so compressed as to be almost unintelligible without knowledge of the story from other sources. It refers to the moving of the Jo-bo and its concealment beneath painted images of 'Jam-dbyangs on the side and on top of it; and so, when the Chinese came, although they knew (where the image was), they did not dare to destroy the 'Jam-dbyangs.

The last version I shall mention is that of the Chronicle of the Vth Dalai Lama (1643) which, at fo. 30a combines material from GSM and PT as follows: "At the time of Mang-srong when the Chinese knew that the miraculous king (Srong-btsan) was no longer alive, their army came to the 'Phrul snang (the Jo-khang of Lhasa), but when a phantom army came from the body of rMe-brtsegs they fled back. In retaliation mGar took a Tibetan army of 100,000 men and conquered China, but mGar himself was killed in the battle. Then once more, when there was a great rumour that a Chinese army was again coming, the Jo-bo was put in the southern gateway called Me-long-can. The door was plastered over and an image of 'Jam-dbyangs painted on it. Not long after, the Chinese army came and burnt the palace of Potala. Not being able to carry off the Jo-bo Shakya Mu-ni they took the Mi-bskyod rdo-rje to a place a morning's march distant."

Thus, by the seventeenth century the terse comment in HD has grown into a story of two Chinese attacks on Lhasa within the space of a few years. We may look back to see how this happened.

II

There is plenty of evidence that Tibetan historians had access to early Chinese records. HD, from which most subsequent Tibetan histories including the Deb-ther sngon-po – the well-known Blue Annals of 'Gos

gZhon-nu-dpal – derive their information on Chinese affairs, clearly states its prime sources. There, at fo. 12a the account of relations between China and Tibet is ascribed to the record composed in the time of Thai-zung by Su-khyi which was continued by Hang-gsi hu-tsha and was translated in the wood-bird year at Shing-kun (on the Tibet/China border south of Lanchow) by the Chinese translator Hu-gyang-ju and printed in Tibetan by the Gu-sri Rin-chen grags-pa in the wood-ox year. The dates cited appear to be 1285 and 1325 respectively. The author also refers to the Thang-shu thu-han and the Thang-shu shu-hwen (fos. 8b and 12a) and further notes, fos. 8b and 12b that he was given oral information about Chinese and Mongolian affairs by Jam-bha-la sTo-shri-mgon who told him that according to Chinese records seen at the Jo-khang, 700 years had passed since the Chinese princess brought the Jo-bo to Lhasa (fo. 8b), Jam-bha-la sTo-shri was one of the Mongolian envoys who came to Tibet in 1344 to invite Bu-ston Rin-po-che to China (see *The Life of Bu-ston Rin-po-che*, by D. S. Ruegg, Rome, 1966, p. 122). One of the envoys who escorted the Third Karma-pa Zhwanag Lama on his visit to China in 1331 had a similar name, or title, "Zambha-'o" (*Karma-pa rnam-thar* fo. 67a). The information about the date of the Chinese princess could have been discovered from the bilingual treaty inscription of A.D. 822 which stands outside the west gate of the Jo-khang at Lhasa.

Still further light is thrown on the Chinese sources of HD by a passage in GSM, fo. 12a which records that Tsen-tshe sLob-dpon Shes-rab Ye-shes who was well versed in the records of China and Mongolia translated them at Gung-thang (the centre of the Tshal-pa school) and that dGe-ba'i bLo-gros (another name of Kun-dga' rdo-rje) made use of them in his history.

So far as earlier Tibetan history is concerned Kun dga' rdo-rje refers indirectly, through one dPa'-thog Rin-rdor, to the *dPag bsam ljon-shing*, a lost work, composed apparently in 1283 by Byang-ston Shes-rab-'bum. But early Tibetan sources may be dismissed as a possible origin of the story of the capture of Lhasa not only because there is no trace of it in the Tun Huang MSS. but because it is specifically attributed in HD to Chinese records; and a look at the T'ang Annals provides the answer. (I refer to the translations by S. W. Bushell in JRAS, 1880, p. 448, and Paul Pelliot in *Histoire Ancienne du Thibet*, Paris, 1961, pp. 7 and 86.)

Under the year that corresponds to the Tibetan wood-horse year and to A.D. 670 it appears that in response to Tibetan aggression against the Tu-yu-hun and following their seizure of important garrison towns on the silk route across central Asia, the Emperor appointed Sie Jen-kou as general of a "Lo-so" (Lhasa) army. That expression is explained in the New T'ang Annals as meaning an army to operate on the road to Lhasa. In fact the great force got no farther than Tafeichuan near the Koko-nor where it was signally defeated by the Tibetan general K'in Ling (Pelliot, *op. cit.*, p. 7, l. 18) [mGar Khri-'bring].

The story of the capture of Lhasa must be based on the misconception that because an army was directed towards Lhasa it actually got there. It cannot be known with certainty whether the misconception began with the original translators or with Kun-dga' rdo-rje. It may be significant that it is not mentioned by Bu-ston Rin-po-che in his *Chos-byung* written in 1322 some 24 years before HD.

III

It is interesting to examine how the story developed from its very simple beginning in HD. Already, in the GSM it has been fancifully linked with the great figures of Srong-btsan sGam-po and his minister mGar sTong-btsan yul-zung by putting it back to a time just after Srong-btsan's death; but by describing it as retaliation for destruction caused in China by mGar, it makes nonsense of history for from both Tibetan and Chinese records it is clear that there was no Tibetan invasion of Chinese territory until much later and that the great mGar died in 667 after maintaining continuously friendly relations with China. It was only in 670 that the Tibetans attacked Chinese interests and did so well outside China's own borders. Further, Khri-'bring, son of the great mGar, who was responsible for the defeat of the Chinese did not die in that battle but by his own hand 28 years later.

GSM also introduces the subsidiary story of the concealment of the Jo-bo and its subsequent discovery, the development of which will be examined later.

The note at fo. 91a which mentions for the first time the burning of the Potala and the inability of the Chinese to find the Jo-bo is surely fanciful in attributing those incidents to Chinese sources. That is the more surprising because the writer not only knew of the work of Kun-dga' rdo-rje (fo. 12a) but may himself have consulted the translation by Rin-chen grags-pa for at fo. 91b he writes, "This record of the history of China and Tibet which was composed in the time of the Thai-zung emperor by Su-khyi-han was put into continuous form and later translated into Tibetan by the Chinese translator 'U-gyang-ju at Shing-kun sde-chen. Because some dates did not agree and because names of that period seemed unreliably represented, the Lama Gu-sri Rin-chen-grags, when he was living in China, collated the details of the connexion between China and Tibet and had the work printed, at full length, at Shing-kun sde-chen in the female wood-bird year. Because the present account is merely an abridgement, if you want to know in detail about the relations between China and Tibet and the history of the Uncle and Nephew, you should look at the printed book."

That suggests that bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan himself drew on the work of Rin-chen grags-pa and his remark about the latter "living in China" may imply special knowledge. It is quite probable that Rin-chen grags-pa is the

person who became Ti-sri in 1330 (see Tucci, TPS, p. 15). When he was living in China with the rank of Gu-sri he may have been an official in the office of the then Ti-sri. The attribution to him of the wood-bird year (1285), which HD attributes to Hu-gyang-ju, seems to be due to a confusion. The wood-ox year (1325) cited in HD, would be more appropriate.

IV

The story of the concealment of the Jo-bo, which will now be examined, is the necessary prelude to the connected story of its rediscovery some 40 years later by the second Chinese princess who came to Tibet as bride of the king – Khri-lde gtsug-brtsan, which is told at fo. 78b of GSM.

The first appearance of that story to which a date can be given is in the *Chos-'byung* of Bu-ston Rin-po-che. There (fo. 125a) although the concealment is put at the time of the death of Srong-btsan sGam-po, it is not connected with a Chinese attack on Lhasa. Bu-ston says "At that same time, the Kong-co gave orders saying 'bring the image of Shakyamuni from the Ra-mo-che, hide it in the projecting turret of the 'Phrul-snang, cover over the doorway with plaster (*zhal zhal gyis*) and draw an image of 'Jam-dbyangs there'. Then together with Khri-btsun all three merged, or passed away, into the image of Thugs-rje chen-po. The ministers, therefore, changed over the two images according to that last instruction (*bka'chems*)."

On the same folio the rediscovery is told with extreme brevity in connexion with the marriage of the second princess to Mes Ag-tshom (Khri-lde gtsug-brtsan). "The princess searched out the image of Shakyamuni and made offerings to it (*mchod pa byas so*)."

The next version is probably that in *sBa-bzhed*, a short chronicle from bSam-yas which may be read in the edition by Professor R. A. Stein, Paris, 1961. The work certainly embodies early material but, although Professor Roerich considered that it might date from the eleventh or twelfth century, Tibetan opinion I have consulted is that it was composed in its present form in the fifth or sixth *rab byung* – i.e. the second part of the fourteenth century by a Karmapa monk who drew on the ancient records at bSam-yas.

It seems that Tibetans, after the resurgence of Buddhism, had some difficulty in understanding how the Jo-bo Rin-po-che, which they believed to have been first established in the Ra-mo-che, came to be found in the Jo-khang. (It would be possible to speculate that the Ra-mo-che was not, in fact, earlier than or contemporary with the Jo-khang but was built at the time of the second Chinese princess; but that is for another occasion.) Bu-ston's account may not quite have satisfied later historians and one is left rather in the air about the "changing over" of the two images which is not really covered by what he has said before. There was probably a large body of verbal legend, based on fragments of history and misheard passages from books, that continued to circulate and change until parts of it found their

way into some written history. There is much more colour in the story in *sBa-bzhed* although it cannot be said for certain that it is later than that of Bu-ston.

sBa-bzhed, as we have it, begins only with the reign of Khri-lde gTsub-brsan so there is nothing about the Chinese invasion of Lhasa or the concealment of the Jo-bo. A new legend is introduced – that the Chinese princess was originally betrothed to the handsome young prince of Tibet but that he died and she was therefore married to his elderly father. That story calls for examination at another time. As for the Jo-bo; *sBa-bzhed* recounts (p. 3), "Later Ong jo (kong co) said 'let me see the face of the golden image of Shakyamuni which was the object of worship of my aunt Kong co'. As the image was not in the Ra-mo-che which the Chinese had founded (*rgyal stag: rgya btags* elsewhere) she searched for it by making offerings in every chapel but still she did not find it. When she made offerings in the *lha khang* of Ra-sa (the Jo-khang) there was a chapel that had been planned with a series of five doors (or 'called the Chapel with Five Doors') but, as there were only four doors, she knew that one was concealed. When she knocked on the covering of the projecting turret a crack appeared and, by digging it out, the door was opened up. And when she saw the golden image of Shakyamuni hidden there, saying 'let us perform a ceremony of showing the face for the image brought by my aunt', she inaugurated that service of offerings." One may wonder whether the emphasis on *zhal* "face" here and in another versions may not have been sparked off by the word *zhal* or *zhal zhal* – the "plaster" – with which the image was covered.

In GSM the story goes thus (fo. 78b): "When she came to Tibet the princess said, 'let me see my aunt's chapel', so she went to the Ra-mo-che; but as the Jo-bo was not there she went to the 'Phrul-snang and discovering that the Jo-bo was placed in the south doorway called Me-long-can, she opened up the doorway and revealing the Jo-bo she established it in the central chapel and instituted the service of seeing the face of the image. For the Jo-bo who had been sitting in obscurity for three generations the Chinese princess instituted that offering ceremony."

V

Returning to the capture of Lhasa: the story in GBY – which does not mention the Jo-bo at all – is clearly derived, as are its other passages about Chinese and Tibetan relations, directly from HD, although without acknowledgment to its source, which it sometimes garbles. There is no need to substantiate that statement here with specific quotations and we may pass to the elaborate stories in PT.

The evidence provided by PT has to be examined with discrimination. He makes a contribution of unique value in the reproduction of ninth-century documents (TTK, pp. 43, 44 etc.) to which he probably had direct

access at bSam-yas where he composed his history. In *Les Tribus Anciennes des Marches Sino-Tibétaines* Paris 1959, and in an article in *Monumenta Serica*, XXVI, 1967, by Professor Géza Uray it has been shown that PT had acquaintance – whether direct or indirect – with parts of the old Tibetan Chronicle of Tun Huang. The echoes are not very extensive and it may be that not so much of that material survived at bSam-yas as was found at Tun Huang. There are many good stories in the latter – admittedly not connected with Buddhism – that might have been expected to attract the jackdaw eye of PT for the picturesque. Or it may be that he derived his references from such works as the *bSam-yas kyi dkar-chag chen-mo* which he cites as one of his sources. There is, also, no satisfactory evidence – no direct quotation – to show that PT knew of any such document as the Annals of Tun Huang. And for Chinese history he relies on Kun dga' rdo rje.

In the wide range of PT's quotations there are, in addition to rare and valuable material, instances of misquotation from ancient documents – e.g. the garbled statement at fo. 132a about the contents of the treaty pillar of A.D. 822 at Lhasa. PT cannot have seen the pillar himself and his reference may derive from the similar passage in GSM, 92a.

With regard to the capture of Lhasa he provides two irreconcilable accounts without any apparent awareness of the discrepancy, the first putting it “as soon as Srong-btsan was dead”, i.e. 650; and the other dating it “after the death of Mang-srong”, i.e. 670. It may be that, although he does not explain it, PT or one of his sources had realized that the iron-horse year to which HD ascribes the incident could only correspond to the later date.

As for some details: perhaps the mention in GSM that the Potala was burnt, *me la sregs*, set off somewhere the train of thought that brought in the rMe-brtsegs story. From the Potala it would be an easy transition to rTse dmar-po; but why Khri-rtse? A place of that name is mentioned in the Tun Huang Annals in connexion with the campaigns of 'Dus-srong in 701 and 702; and the sKar-cung inscription attributes to 'Dus-srong the building of a chapel at gLing Khri-rtse; but there is no connexion there with the events of 670. Perhaps the words *khri tsho* – “tens of thousands” – applied to the numbers of the Chinese army set off that echo.

The rediscovery of the Jo-bo is told as it appears in GSM with only slight verbal alterations.

In the Chronicle of the Vth Dalai Lama, to which we come back at last, the rediscovery story again echoes the last sentences of the account in GSM: “The Jo-bo who had dwelt in obscurity for three generations was brought out from the southern doorway and established in the central chapel; and a service of offerings was instituted.”

As for the capture of Lhasa, the Dalai Lama seems to have made an attempt to bring order into the earlier stories. Again there are echoes of

GSM; but he also appears to borrow heavily from PT. There is no acknowledgment because the Dalai Lama did not approve of PT who belonged to the Karma-pa sect which led the opposition to the dGe-lugs-pa and had been finally overcome just about the time the Dalai Lama was completing his Chronicle. He mentions PT several times, usually with disparagement; but in this instance, by following PT or improving on him, the Dalai Lama has overreached himself and has converted one unsubstantiated legend into two.