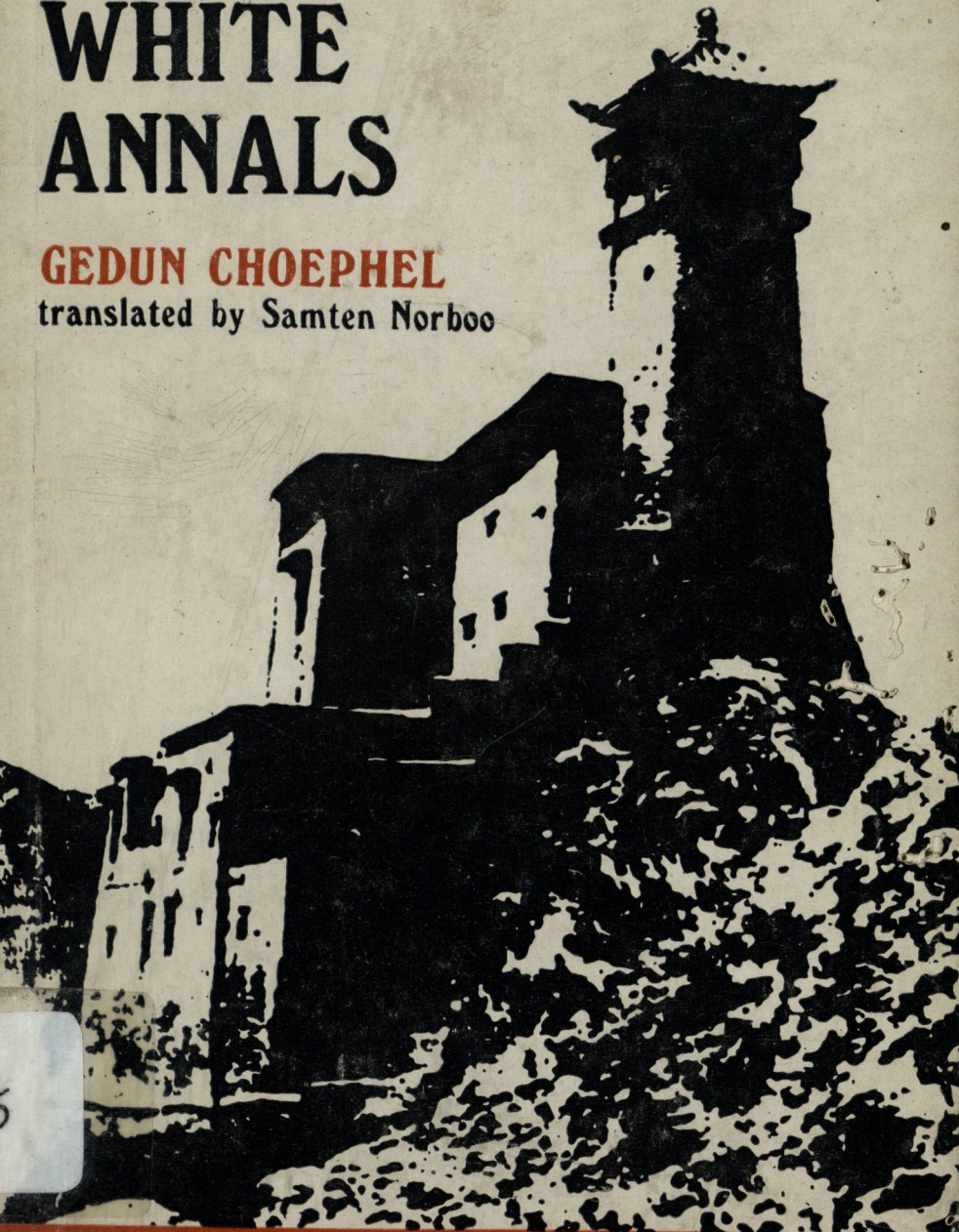


# THE WHITE ANNALS

**GEDUN CHOEPHEL**

translated by Samten Norboo



LIBRARY OF TIBETAN WORKS & ARCHIVES

# The White Annals

*Cover : The Yambulagang, the first historical building in Tibet, Constructed during the reign of king Nya-tri Tsen-po in about 127 B.C. It is now known to have been destroyed in 1968 by the Chinese Red Guards during the "Great Cultural Revolution."*

(from a painting by the state artist, Jamyang)

# The White Annals

*(Deb-ther dkar-po)*

*by*

Gedun Chos-'phel

*Translated from the Tibetan*

*by Samten Norboo*



**LTWA**  
**Dharamsala**

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## Publisher's Note

In November 1971, with the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, courses in Buddhist Dharma and Language were inaugurated at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. Concomitantly, it was felt that the Library engage in publishing pursuits and record as many aspects as possible of Tibetan culture on topics both secular and religious.

*Deb-thar Kar-po* or *The White Annals* was written by the late Reverend Gedun Chos-'phel, a native literary genius and a refined political revolutionary of northern Tibet. Written at the turn of this century, it constitutes a critical historical analysis of Tibet and her early kings. The translator, Professor Samten Norboo is to be commended for his fine efforts in making a portion of Tibet's written history available to a wider circle of readers.

November 1977  
Dharamsala

Gyatsho Tshering  
Director

## Introduction

History has always attracted Tibetan literary attention and not without valid reason. For barring a few countries, Tibet perhaps possesses the richest historical literature in Asia. Our literary resources have come down to us in the form of gTer-ma works (Hidden Treasures) like *Pad-ma bKa'-thang* (the biography of Padmasambhava, the great Indian tantric teacher who visited Tibet in the 8th century); Lo-gyu'i (chronicles); rGyal-rabs (genealogical histories) such as *La-dvags gyal-rabs*; Dan-rabs (monastic chronicles) such as the *Chos-sde chen-po ta-sni 'khyil-kyi dan-rabs kha-sgong dang bchas* (a volume devoted to the history of the bLa-brang monastery in A-mdo); Khrung-rabs (history of incarnations) such as *sKyes-rabs rnam-thar dad-pad'i sgo-'byed* (the biographical work of the sixty-first head of the dGa'-ldan monastery, Lhasa); bsTan-rtzis (chronicle treatises); Chos-'byung (history of religion) such as Bu-ston's *Chos-'byung* on the establishment of Buddhism in India and Tibet; and Deb-ther (historical and religious records).

Scholars have repeatedly emphasised the importance of Tibetan historical literature but not solely for the purpose of research. They have been prompted by reasons far wider in scope: to study and expound, in addition to the history of their own country, that of all other countries where Buddhism was prevalent. Such reasoning accrued logically when seen within the framework that for centuries Tibet had been the spiritual nucleus for Asiatic Buddhists (particularly those belonging to the Mahayana school) and the Tibetan language had become their *lingua franca*. Under these circumstances, scholarly efforts have invested Tibetan historical literature with valuable histories of the

Mongols, the Oirats, Tangut, Khotan, Nepal and even that of India and China.

*Deb-ther dkar-po* or the *White Annals* on the political history of Tibet is the work of the late Reverend dGe-'dun Chos-phel. It is the successor to *Deb-ther dmar-po* (*Red Annals*) composed in 1346 A.D. by Tshal-pa Kun-dga' rdo-rje and *Deb-ther sngon-po* (*Blue Annals*) composed between 1476 and 1478 A.D. by 'Gos-lo-tsa-ba gshon-nu-dpal. While both *Deb-dmar* and *Deb-dkar* are political histories, *Deb-sngon*, a voluminous work running into several chapters, belongs to the category of Chos-'byung (history of religion). It traces the origin and development of Buddhism in Tibet and the patronage it received under the different kings and rulers. *Deb-sngon* has derived its main sources from the biographies (rNam-thar) of religious teachers and the *sBa-bzhad*, a chronicle containing histories of the reigns of Kings Khri-srong de-tzan and Mu-ne-tzan-po, as well as from *Deb-dmar* and Bu-ton's well-known work on the history of Buddhism, the *Bu-ston Chos-'byung*.<sup>2</sup>

*Deb-ther mar-po* contains a list and brief account of the kings of Tibet and Mongolia. It has mainly been based on Tibetan translated excerpts from the *Thang-shu*, the *iGya'i Yig-tsang* or Chinese Annals rendered into Tibetan by bLa-ma Rinchen Grags-pa.<sup>3</sup> The author of *Deb-dmar* had referred to early Tibetan sources as well as dZam-bhala Shi-mgon's work<sup>4</sup> with regard to the list of Mongolian kings.

*Deb-ther dkar-po* is a comparatively short work and deals with the reign of King Srong-btzan sgam-po. Reverend dGe-'dun Chos-'phel is perhaps the first Tibetan historian to utilise material from archaeological finds: the historical documents in old Tibetan and Ughir discovered from within the ruins of a temple in Touen-houng, Li-yul (Khotan). He has also consulted the Chinese Annals which had been incorporated in *Deb-dmar* and *Deb-sngon*. Parts of the Touen-houng documents, the source of dGe-'dun Chos-'phel's *Deb-dkar*, were discovered by A. Stein and P. Pelliot. These were analysed and translated by Professor F.W. Thomas and published under the title *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents concerning Chinese Turkestan* (1927).

Professor Thomas, C. Toursant and J. Bacot brought out another work also based on the same archaeological finds and entitled *Documents de Touen-houng relatifs a l'histoire du Thibet* (Paris, 1940). P. Pelliot's *Histoire Ancient du Thibet* (Paris, 1961) also dealt with the same theme. Since these documents were the earliest written records (of Tibet) discovered so far, it was but natural that dGe-'dun Chos-'phel gave so much importance to them.

Though *Deb-ther dkar-po* is a brief work, the author had plans to compile an exhaustive and detailed volume devoted to Tibetan history covering a period up to the recent past. According to the testimony of Professor Ngawang Jinpa of St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling, this large compilation had been completed and the manuscript in the custody of Mr. Ma-nang A-po, an associate of the author. Unfortunately we have lost track of the manuscript, following the demise of Mr. A-po.

dGe-'dun Chos-'phel was undoubtedly a great Tibetan scholar and historian. In the foreword to Reverend Chos-'phel's translation of *Dharmapada* (Anagarika Dharmapala Trust, 1946), Dr. George Roerich has noted that "Tibetan readers throughout Inner Asia and all those interested in Tibetan will be grateful to Reverend dGe-'dun Chos-'phel for having given them an excellent Tibetan translation of the Buddhist classics, the *Dharmapada*... The translator is not only a Tibetan scholar of eminence but a distinguished poet as well, and his translation combines scholarly exactitude with a highly literary value."

dGe-'dun Chos-'phel's position should not be considered less as a historian too. This will be evident from the verbal testimony he provided Dr. Roerich while the latter was compiling the *Blue Annals*, a translation of 'Gos-lo-tsa-ba's *Deb-ther-sngon-po*.<sup>5</sup> In the introduction to this work, Dr. Roerich has acknowledged the assistance and guidance he received from Reverend Chos-'phel. Reverend Chos-'phel was also the author of *rGya-gar-gyi gnas-chen khag-la bgrod-pa'i lam-yig* (Calcutta, 1939) or *A Guide Book to Buddhist Sacred Places in India*.

One of the author's objects in writing *Deb-ther dkar-po* was to eliminate certain obvious discrepancies in 'Gos-lo-

t<sub>sa</sub>-ba's chronology of Srong-btzan sGam-po's birthdate as had been annotated in *Deb-ther sngon-po*. 'Gos accepts the Earth Female Ox (569 A.D.) year to be the year of Srong-btzan's birth<sup>6</sup> and claimed that Srong-btzan lived until his eighty-second year. Though Reverend Chos-'phel relegates to 'Gos a prominent place among Tibetan historians and chronologists, yet he is compelled to refute 'Gos' data regarding Srong-btzan's birthdate and points out the discrepancies in *Deb-ther sngon-po* : "Having based his chronology on mTshal-pa's *Deb-dmar*, 'Gos writes that Thang Ka'u-dzung, the Chinese Emperor, seized the throne in the Earth Male Tiger year (618 A.D.) which is the fiftieth year of Srong-btzan.<sup>7</sup> The Emperor ruled for nine years and his son Thang-th'i-dzung (The-*tsung*, *Deb-dkar*) ascended the throne in the Fire Male Dog year or 626 A.D.<sup>8</sup> After nine years the latter made a treaty of friendship with the Tibetans.<sup>9</sup> Wun-sui Kong-jo (Mun-chang Kong-jo, *Deb-dkar*) was sent in the Iron Female Ox year (641 A.D.) to Tibet.<sup>10</sup>

From the above, Reverend Chos-'phel deduces that Srong-btzan was fifty years of age when Kau-*tsung* seized the throne, in the Earth Tiger year (618 A.D.). Since K<sub>au</sub>-*tsung* ruled for nine years, Srong-btzan was fifty-nine when The-*tsung* ascended the throne. Sino-Tibetan relations commenced from the ninth year of The-*tsung*'s reign and Kong-jo was sent as a bride in the Iron-Ox year (641 A.D.). If Kong-jo's meeting with King Srong-btzan was deferred by six years, it would seem that Srong-btzan married her when he was seventy-nine years of age, which does not seem to be a plausible argument. Reverend Chos-'phel further contends that most Tibetan historical literature accept that Srong-btzan proposed marriage to Kong-jo in his thirteenth year, the year of his enthronement. If 'Gos' calculations were to be accepted, then in the Earth Ox year, Kong-jo was a bride of over sixty-two years of age. According to Reverend Chos-'phel, 'Gos had advanced his calculations by sixty years and since the Iron Dog year (650 A.D.) was the year of Srong-btzan's death, 'Gos came to the conclusion that the king lived for eighty-two years (569-650 A.D.). Due to this erratic

inference, a discrepancy of sixty years more or sixty years less has resulted in the calculations of *Deb-ther sngon-po*, beginning from the Iron Bird year (901 A.D.), the year of King gLang-darma's persecution of Buddhism and proceeding backwards.

According to Reverend Chos-'phel, Srong-btzan was born in the Fire Ox year (617 A.D.) or 1161 Nirvana year. He ascended the throne at the age of thirteen in the Earth Ox year (629 A.D.). Sino-Tibetan relations began during Srong-btzan's eighteenth year. Kong-jo left for Tibet in the Iron Ox year (641 A.D.) when Srong-btzan was twenty-five years of age. Kong-jo's meeting with the king was deferred by six years and his actual marriage with the Princess took place in his thirty first year. They lived for three years together and Srong-btzan died in the Iron Dog year (650 A.D.) when he was thirty-four years of age. Reverend Chos-'phel quoted *Deb-ther sngon-po* and has mentioned that the Tibetans fought the Chinese for eight years following The-*tsung's* refusal to give his daughter in marriage to King Srong-btzan. This hostility probably took place during the eighteenth and twenty-fifth years of Srong-btzan. Reverend Chos-'phel also quotes Bonpo history, the *Byams-ma*, in support of his argument : "As Srong-btzan was hostile to Bonism, he could not survive for more than thirty-six years." The difference of two years is explained by Reverend Chos-'phel on the basis of information collected from documents discovered in Touen-houng, which state that Srong-btzan's death was kept a secret for two years. According to the Bonpos, his age at death, on disclosure, would therefore be thirty-six.

It is most interesting to note that the discrepancies in 'Gos' work also came before Dr. Roerich's attention. The latter discussed them elaborately in his introduction to the translation of *Deb-ther sngon-po*. He wrote : "There exists considerable confusion in the *Blue Annals* and other Tibetan historical works regarding the Tibetan chronology of the early period : King Srong-btzan's birthday either in 569 A.D. or 629 A.D. and the date of the persecution of the Buddhist doctrine by King gLang-darma either in 841 A.D. or 901 A.D." Both Dr. Roerich and Reverend Chos-

## 14 Introduction

'phel ascribe an incorrect understanding of the Sanskrit passages contained in the *Manjusri Mula Tantra* (Tib. 'Jam-dpal rtsa-ba'i rgyud) as the reason for the discrepancies.

Another important discussion Reverend Chos-'phel expounded in his *Deb-ther dkar-po* was on the subject relating to the origin of Tibetan writing, a subject that has attracted keen interest from Western scholars. According to Tibetan historical works, the Tibetan alphabets were invented by Thon-mi Sam-bho-ta during Srong-btzan sgam-po's reign in the seventh century. There is however no unanimity among Tibetan traditions with regard to the particular Indian script that served as a model for Thon-mi's Tibetan characters. *Deb-ther sngon-po* asserts that Thom-mi created the thirty letters from the fifty Indian alphabets. The Tibetan work, *Situ Sum-rtags*, a commentary on Thon-mi Sam-bho-ta's work on grammar, *Sum-bchu-pa-dang rtags-kyi-'jug-pa*, mentions that Thon-mi used the Devanagari characters as his model. Sa-kya bsod-nam rgyal-rtsen in his *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long* mentions that the two, dBu-chan (with head) and the dBu-med (headless) Tibetan characters were modelled from the Ranza and Vartula script (chapter 10 of *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long*). A-la-sha bstan-dar in his work *Yi-ge bshad-pa mkhas-pa'i kha-rgyan* also supports the latter view. According to Dr. N. Kowitz, the Tibetan traditions are wrong in the assumption that the Tibetan script developed from the Ranza and the Vartula as both these two forms of writing originated at a later period.

The derivation of the Tibetan writing from the Ranza and the Vartula scripts has also been refuted by P. George in his work *Alphabetum Tibetanum* (Paris. 1762). According to George, the Tibetan writing developed from the Syrian script. For another scholar, P.S. Pallas, the Tibetan script appeared similar to the Devanagari. This fact has also been observed by Bu-ston Rin-po-che. Csomo de Koros, the great Hungarian traveller and scholar ascertained that a predecessor of the Devanagari, the so-called western Gupta script, as used in the seventh century, showed marked similarities to the Tibetan script, specimens of which were noted on inscriptions at Bodhgaya.

Nevertheless, the German scholar, A.H. Francke in his *Indian Antiquary* (Bombay, 1903) expounded a new theory that Tibet was in possession of a headless alphabet and the so-called 'inventor', Thon-mi Sam-bho-ta, did no more than to furnish it with a head. Following the discovery of ancient manuscripts in Khotan, Francke propounded a new theory that the Tibetan system of writing originated from the Central Asian Gupta or the Kashgar Brahmi script. His theory was also supported by A.F. Hoernle. At a later date, both L.A. Waddell and E. Vogel came to the conclusion that the Kutilla type of the Western Gupta script showed even greater affinity and similarity than the Khasgar Brahmi script.

Reverend Chos-'phel, who supports the views of Csomo de Koros, claimed that the Tibetan writing was designed on the Gupta model. He however did not solely base his theory on observations of the inscriptions at Gaya. According to him the dBu-chan (with heads) and the dBu-med (without heads) characters were not created simultaneously. The dBu-med characters were gradual developments from the dBu-chan, a development which resulted from the need to write with greater ease and speed. In support of his theory he cites the example of the gTer-tshag inter-syllabic sign or the two dots (: ) placed one upon the other appearing either singly or doubly after every syllable in the old gTer-ma works. In course of time, writers developed the tendency of joining them together and drawing a straight line ( / ) instead of two dots (: ). This ( / ) became the new inter-syllabic sign of the dBu-med script. Reverend Chos-'phel further explains how *spa* of the dBu-med assumed its form under similar circumstances. Previous practice in Tibetan writing was to place the 'sa' before the 'tsa' and not 'sa' over 'tsa' as in the modern usage. In course of time, the word gradually developed into *spa* as a result of these two letters coming together in an effort to write faster. The argument is at once both scientific and convincing. The only error and drawback of Reverend Chos-'phel is that he did not mention the name of the particular variety of the Gupta script which he believed to be the basis of the Tibetan script.

Reverend Chos-'phel has also devoted a few pages of his *Deb-ther dkar-po* to tracing the origin of Tibetan terminology. Equally interesting are his efforts to derive the origins and the type of costumes worn by the ancient kings and ministers, as well as a description of the social habits and customs of the people. The curious annotations of the dead will, I hope, initiate interesting discussion from learned scholars and students of Tibetan studies in the future. I feel confident that the *Deb-ther dkar-po* will be of considerable help to historians in the reconstruction of Tibet's ancient history. Since the *Deb-ther* was first published at Lhasa, I was unable to have access to its original publication. I thus had to base my translation on a publication from the Freedom Press, Darjeeling (1964) which unfortunately contained several printing errors.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, who have not only undertaken the publication of my translation but also the entire burden of transliterating the Tibetan words, numbering and arranging the footnotes, and separating the author's comments from those of the translator. In fact, without the help and co-operation of the Library, the publication of this work would not have been possible. In particular, I would like to thank Mr. P. Wangyal, former Assistant Director of the Library, and Mrs. Yangzom Tsarong, Editor of the Tibet Journal, who have kindly gone through the entire manuscript and removed certain inadequacies in the translation. If any further errors or inconsistencies are to be found in the work, they are purely my own. Lastly, my sincere thanks are also due to Professor N. Jinpa of St. Joseph's College Darjeeling for assisting me in the translation of some of the difficult passages in the *Deb-dkar*.

Samten Norboo

# The White Annals

*By*

Gedun Chos-'phel

# PROLOGUE

## A Hymn of Praise

Homage to the Triple Deities<sup>1</sup> of the Three Worlds,<sup>2</sup>  
The Lord whose face sends forth waves of delight,  
Unto the pure ocean of righteous actions of beings.  
Endowed with a two-score set of well-arranged teeth  
That possesses the lustre of the moon,  
May the light of smiles shining through it protect you all.

Descendants of the 'Od-gsal-lha<sup>3</sup> celestial beings,  
Possessors of the finest pearl of lineage,  
You have raised the mountain of temporal order,  
That is blessed with the wealth of four acquirements,<sup>4</sup>  
High in the midst of the snowy lands,  
And raised the prosperity of the subjects,  
Who have been loved and protected under the guidance of  
your precepts

To rival that of the heavenly beings.  
Victory to you, the Three Ancestral Forefathers,<sup>5</sup>  
Endowed with the art of all knowledge.

King Srong-btzan sgam-po,  
The living incarnation of the god Phyang-na pad-mo<sup>6</sup>  
Has firmly established the order of the Two Systems,<sup>7</sup>  
And overshadowed the three realms of existence<sup>8</sup> by the  
brilliance of his greatness,

In accounting his exploits of the kingdoms of the four  
quarters

Based on whatever old and available records,

Written with well-founded dates,

And thus in attempting to measure the extent of the first  
Tibetan kingdom and its political power,

I have taken up a little courage.

It is said that the valiant, red-faced and cannibal-looking  
Tibetan soldiers,

Whose lives were protected by rTa-mchog,<sup>9</sup> the wrathful  
deity

Had conquered two-thirds of the globe.

# 1

## Early Tibetan Historical Records

Descendants of the 'Od-gsal-lha, these divinely ordained kings were incarnations of Rigs-gsum mgon-po.<sup>1</sup> So powerful were they, that they held sway over massive territorial jurisdiction, asserting their power through the leverage of the Golden Wheel of Method and Wisdom.<sup>2</sup> In view of their territorial jurisdiction, sovereign and military strength, the common man regarded their kings to equal the might of King Shri Harsha of India, Emperor Thetsung of China and King Yai-sha Miger-da of Ta-zig.<sup>3</sup>

Historical records we undoubtedly possessed; records that assessed a minute scrutiny of the day to day and year to year activities of our kings and their ministers. But unhappy events heralded sad beginnings for our annals, beginning with the rule of Lha-sras dar-ma and the revolt of his subjects, which resulted in the subsequent turmoil and collapse of the Tibetan kingdom. Moreover, the constant shifting of royal residences by later kings, the threat of Mongol invasion from sTod-smed and the gains or losses against Chinese forces in Khams aggravated the situation further. All these centrifugal tendencies threw the country into upheaval and left us the poorer, since most written documentation was irretrievably lost. In the years that followed, except for religious documentation, nothing was left thus. Records which could substantiate

# 2

## Terminology and Nomenclature

Before tracing our early political development, I would like to give a brief explanation on the origins of our terminology and nomenclature. For as long as we can recall, our country has been classified as Bod in the Tibetan language. We are known to the Indians as Bho-ta, for no substantial reason other than that in ancient orthography both Bo and d were pronounced individually and hence the linguistic forms such as Bo-d, Bho-d, Bho-ta (all implying Tibet) developed. Yet certain religious texts refer to our country as Kha-ba'i ljongs (Himalaya) and Gang-can (Himavat). Both these literary usages are more accurately applicable to a chain of mountains in south Tibet only, but gradually came to be applied for the entire country.

In this context it is interesting to draw a parallel with rGya-gar or India, known today as Hindusthan (a Persian derivative). In Persian, Hindu is utilised rather than the Indian Sindhu and Hapta rather than Sapta (one week). Sindhu corresponds to regions contingent with the river Sindhi in western India, but gradually the word Hindu superceded Sindhu and came to be applied for the entire sub-continent.

Today, with the exception of China, all countries refer to our country Bod as Tibet. Formerly, we were known to the Chinese as Tu-woo (Tu) Fen and as Thu-bhad to the

# 3

## Dress and Residence

Dress styles of our early kings and ministers may be hazarded from an antique painting, one whose procurement has been extremely difficult.

Tibet and Tazig have traditionally been close allies. This was a natural outcome of the fact that Tazig, in former days, was the centre of civilisation and advanced learning, with Buddhism enjoying unparalleled distinction. As a result of this cultural zenith, it was but natural that Tibetan kings and their ministers succumbed to numerous social influences. Srong-btzan sgam-po is noted to have adapted to the Thod, a head-dress of red silk, the Za-hog-gi-her, a garment of glossy sheen and curved slippers... wearing apparel prevalent among his Tazig counterparts. The Za-hog was not manifest in either India or China. Moreover, local iconographical deities reminiscent of their period, reveal concomitant styles of dress among rulers and their subjects. An examination of the bTzen-po, rGyal-po and Zang-blong icons indicate the manner in which ancient kings adorned themselves during wars. In the mNgaris bLa-dvag regions, a tribe claiming ancestry from the line of Srong-btzan sgam-po used to cater to a red head-dress during the New Year celebrations. This head-dress had great height and the image of Tse-dPag-me (the Immortal Buddha) used to be attached with red silk on the

# 4

## Tibet's Jurisdiction Over Li and Bal

Few recall the geographical position of Li-yul (Khotan), a country that was once under the jurisdiction of Tibet. A century after Tibet's occupation of Li-yul, the latter had often been misinterpreted and misrepresented to be Bal-yul or Nepal. Certain passages in gLang-ri lung-bstan<sup>1</sup> give credence to this fact. The translator Shambala<sup>2</sup> admitted that "in Tibet these days, there is no one to identify Li-yul (with Bal-yul) with the exception of Red-mdal-pa<sup>3</sup> and myself." Gro-lung-pa<sup>4</sup> had also posited that Li-yul and Bal-yul were two entirely different countries and mentioned that "on the east and west of India are the countries of Li and Bal." bChom-Idan reg-ral<sup>5</sup> had also explicitly stated that "the country of Li held by Sa-nu is not Bal-po, the country between India and Tibet."

Li-yul is situated on the northern 'back' of Tibet with Russia on its southernmost tip. To the Indians, Li-yul is known as Kampa Desh or Turkistan, and as Sin-dang to the Chinese. Li-yul's eastern borders merge with the northern back of mTso sNgon-po (the Blue Lake). Its western border embodies Yarkand, the latter having maintained active trade with mNga-ris bLa-dvags. At one time, Buddhism flourished in Li-yul but years of persecution saw the gradual fading of the doctrine, their Bhiksus fleeing to Tibet and India. These events occurred during the reign of

# 5

## System of Dating Adopted in the Present Work

Any historical narration is incomplete if it is not substantiated with a sequence of chronological dates. I consider the sources of dated history to be of equal importance. There are several methods from which dates may be calculated and after a careful judgement, I have chosen what I consider to be most appropriate. The chronological events which I will be unfolding have not been based on our system of Rab-byung (Skt. Viraspati Cycle) as it is not very convenient to work on dates prior to the introduction of this system. Dates may also be reconciled through the Indian method of Vikram Sambat, but since we are unaccustomed to this method of deriving our statistics, I have not utilised it. There is also the method of sPyi-lo (general years), the reckoning of dates commencing with the death of Jesus Christ, but for our purposes, this is unsuitable. Our calculations have been based from the year of Buddha's death, ascribing to the Sthivara system of the Ceylonese as it seems to be the most trustworthy.

It seems that not less than 2,300 years have passed following Buddha's death. We find that Megasthenes, the Minister or Ambassador of Yavana arrived at the court of Chandra Gupta (sLa-ba sbes-pa) the Maurya king, grandfather of Dharma Raj Asoka (Mya-ngan-med) and spent

# 6

## Sources of the Present Work

Turning to the main body of the history, the contents of the following two portions (out of three) defined as 'Ka' and 'Kha' have been based on a set of scrolls written in old Tibetan and Yu-gur.<sup>1</sup> These scrolls were discovered some thirty years ago encased within the walls of temple ruins on the borders of Tung-hang in Li-yul, and which were later relegated to scholars of various countries including India. I have had access to certain portions of the originals, and after an intense comparative study of these documents, I have reorganised them to present an analytical study of reliability.

The original papers, in their entirety, are presently with the two governments of Britain and France. Several portions of these valuable scrolls were diverted to Peking.

Those portions marked 'Ga' are merely certain vital statistical information extracted from the scrolls.

Portions marked 'Nga' have been based on the Chinese historical work called *Wen-mang-mu* and *Thang*. It was during the Pu-re-tsal<sup>2</sup> epoch that two translators, Gyang-du (a Chinese) and Gu-shri Rinchen Dakpa<sup>3</sup> (a Tibetan) translated brief summaries of the Chinese work and it was the later pages that were incorporated into Tsal-pa's<sup>4</sup> *Deb-dmar* and a still more abbreviated version was incorporated into 'Gos' *Deb-sngon*. Both Tsal-pa and 'Gos

# 7

## Origin of Race and Ancient Social Customs

[Script Nga]

Tibet is 8,000 le-bar (a unit of measurement), extending from Chang-ngan, the old Chinese capital. In the time of the Han emperors, Tibet came to be known as 'Jang of the west. The racial ancestry of the Tibetans is obscure, though there are theories that associate our descent with King 'Fan-myi. Historical mythology recounts that 959 years after Buddha's demise, 'Fan-myi and his family fled west, following the assassination of his uncle. This brought him to Ri-bo tsu-zhi, across the River Ma-chu, and he was hospitably received by the 'Jang people. Due to his naturally good and kind disposition, the people of 'Jang elected 'Fan-myi to be their king. Descendants of 'Fan-myi expanded numerically and gradually came into prominence. Bold and courageous, these people were given to war-like activities and soon they extended their dominions by capturing area after area. Yet it was not before a lapse of 200 years that they came into an initial encounter with China.

The Tibetans had strong physique. Those who were strong-spirited were called rgyal. Males were termed as pho. The king was designated as rGyal-pho and his queen as Mo-sman. Ministers of the Interior were addressed in accor-

# 8

## Some Events in gNam-ri Srong-btzan's Reign

It has been said that writing was non-existent in Tibet till the reign of King Srong-btzan sgam-po. Our history prior to this date was preserved through the media of oral traditions and due to this fact, a comparative chronology of dated history is inapproachable. Confusing and out-dated though it may be, I have recorded below the story of King gNam-ri, as annotated during the life-span of his son.

It seems that in 'Phan-yul (a valley north of Lhasa), there lived a petty ruler, Zing-po-rje by name and kinsman to the Tibetan king. The notoriety of his malpractices and misconduct soon caused popular resentment against him and members of the ruling elite like dByi-tsab revolted. Subsequently, they went to the court of the Tibetan King sTag-snya-gzigs, to whom they pledged their allegiance. But before Zing-po-rje could be avenged of his misdeeds, the Tibetan king passed away and the task of retribution became the legacy of his successor, gNam-ri srong-btzan. Armies were launched and 'Phan-yul was successfully brought under control. This military exploit was followed by the subjugation of the gTzang regions. Moreover, the rebellious Dhags-po people were curtailed by Seng-go mi-chen.

# 9

## King Srong-btzan sGam-po

gNam-ri's son was the great Srong-btzan sgam-po, incarnation of Arya Avalokitesvara. He is accredited with laying the foundation of a dual system of government in Tibet. Since much has been written about his religious activities, I will persevere strictly to his political and administrative achievements. The following account has been based on three scrolls of royal chronicles described earlier. The legible portions of the scrolls have been referred to in an abbreviated form. These scrolls had been written during the life-time of Srong-btzan by his contemporaries. It has been of necessity to refer to other popular historical works with regard to Srong-btzan's birth at the Mi-gyur Palace of Byams-gling, within the jurisdiction of the rGya-ma<sup>1</sup> country, since the opening chapters of scroll 'Ka' have been partially damaged. From the remaining portion of the scroll, it may be deduced that Princess Mun Chang Kong-jo was accompanied to Tibet by Minister mGhar stong-btzan yul-bzung. Following the assassination of the Nepalese monarch, Yusna Kug-tri, Nariba succeeded to the throne. A contagious black pestilence broke out. Three years following this event Lio-snay-shub (the name of a king) was subordinated during the reign of either King Khri-srong-btzan or Srong-btzan sgam-po, and all of the Shang-shung came under the latter's control. After a lapse of six years,

# 10

## Origin of the Tibetan System of Writing

Writing and canonical literature were introduced during King Srong-btzan-sgam-po's reign. It was during his reign that all state laws were codified, ranks of ministers defined, rewards for good work and punishment for crimes were properly enunciated. The thul-ka and the dor-ka of the peasants and the bre, phul and srang units were standardised and all religious traditions were established. The people were grateful to the king and they called him Srong-btzan-sgam-po.

### [Script dKyus-ma]

Some recitals were held at every state function by kings and their ministers. From the sentence 'bTzan-po'i mGur-lha' the word lha seems to be the deity that helped the king recite his songs.

The above narrations summarises the early biographical data of Srong-btzan's reign. He has three contributions of immense proportions to his name: the expansion of the country; the introduction of the Sakyamuni doctrine; and the introduction of the system of writing.

An examination of chronicles which deal with the origin of the Tibetan script reveal that Bu-ston and other scholars accepted the theory that it was Thon-mi who promulgated the Tibetan alphabets on the basis of the Nagari script.

# 11

## Srong-btzan sgam-po's Foreign Policy

### [Scroll Nga]

The king of Tibet (Srong-btzan) was also addressed as Yon-btzan Srong-btzan. He was also addressed as Lha or god. He was famed to be a sagacious and wise king and is accredited with solidifying and extending his territorial boundaries. Of strong physique, he engaged in hunting wild yaks and asses as a pastime.

In the eighth year of Cheng-kwen<sup>1</sup>, 1178 Nirvana era, the first envoy of the Tibetan king arrived at the court of the Chinese Emperor The-*tsung*. The Emperor reciprocated this gesture by sending a 'bearer of the golden letter' or ambassador to the Tibetan court. At the news of the betrothal of the Emperor's daughter to the king of Gru-gu, Srong-btzan sent a courier laden with gifts to present his case as a suitor. The Emperor turned down this request. Thwarted, Srong-btzan plundered all cattle wealth and possessions of the Gru-gu, the latter fleeing north of mTso-sngon. This acquisition was followed by the conquest of Phyang, Ba-yi-ling and 'Dzang. Srong-btzan, with an army of 200,000 strong further conquered the Chinese province of Zong-cho. An envoy was moreover sent to the Emperor, conveying a coat of mail assembled of gold, together with an underlying threat that Srong-btzan would wage war against China

# 12

## Mang-srong Mang-btzan and Khri-dus Srong-btzan

Mang-srong Mang-btzan succeeded Srong-btzan to the throne. As stated before, Mang-srong was the grandson of Srong-btzan, but being yet a minor, the administration of the country was sanctioned by Minister mGhar-stong-btzan until Mang-srong attained his fifteenth year. After five years of Mang-srong's reign, the system of 'Dun-ma (grand assembly) came into effect in the Wood Tiger year. It was at this assembly that annual administrative discussions were held by the king and his ministers. From the twenty-third year of Mang-srong's reign, this assembly expanded into two branches: the dByar-'dun and the dGun-'dun.<sup>1</sup> There was also the mDo-smed kyi 'Dun-ma or the Assembly which convened in mDo-smed.

['Ka' section continued]

1194 Nirvana era

Iron Male Dog: King Myi Khri Srong-btzan's shroud was hidden in the innermost recesses of the Phying castle. King dBon-khri mang-blon mang-btzan resided in Mer-ke for a year.

1195     "     "

Iron Female Hog: The king sojourned in Nyen-kar for a duration

# Translator's Notes

## Introduction

1. This *sBa-bzhad* is believed to have existed in two versions: the *sBa-bzhad gTsang-ma* or *Pure sBa-bzhad* and the *sBa-bzhad Zhabs-btags-ma* or the *sBa-bzhad with an Addenda*. The latter was published at Dharamsala, India in 1968 by Mr. Phintso Tashi Takla, and is considered a biographical rarity. The French scholar, R. Stein, also published it in Paris in 1961. The original text of this work is presently in the collection of Mr. Densapa of Gangok, Sikkim.
2. Bu-ston's work has been made known to the academic world through Dr. E. Obermiller's translation of *Bu-ston Chos-'byung* or the "History of Buddhism" (Heidelberg, 1931-1932).
3. See references on page 23 of *Deb-dmar*, published by the Institute of Tibetology, Sikkim.
4. *Ibid.*
5. This work was published by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1949.
6. See Book I, page 53 of Roerich's translation of *The Blue Annals*.
7. *Ibid.*,
8. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
10. *Ibid.*

## Prologue

1. Avalokitesvara, Vajrapani and Manjugosa.
2. 'Dod-khams or realm of desire; gzugs-khams or the realm of form; gzugs-med khams or the realm of formlessness.
3. Gods of the illumined heaven or kings of the celestial region. This term may also be defined as clear light.
4. Religion, wealth, desire and salvation.
5. King Srong-btzan sgam-po (7th century); King Khri-srong lde'u-btzan (8th century) and King Khri ral-pachan (9th century).
6. Generally known as sPyan-ras-gzigs or the Bodhisattva of Infinite Mercy.
7. Temporal and religious.
8. See Note 2.
9. A tantric deity having a human face and with three horses' heads upon his own. He personifies the wrathful aspect of sPyan-ras-gzigs.

## Chapter 1

1. sPyan-ras-gzigs or Avalokitesvara; Phyag-na rdo-rje or Vajrapani; and Manjugosa.
2. The Golden Wheel refers to authority. Method (male) refers to Bodhicitta, while wisdom (female) refers to the wisdom of voidness. This latter duality can also be compared to yin and yang.
3. Persia. For a fuller explanation see Sarat Chandra Das' *Tibetan-Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.
4. gLang darma, a 10th century Tibetan king.
5. Upper and lower regions of Tibet.
6. King Arjuna.
7. Nepal.
8. Name of a district in Tibet, west of the present A-mdo Province & south of Lake Kokonor.
9. Khotan.
10. A chronicle containing the history of the reigns of King Khri-srong lde'u-btzan and King Mu-ne btzan-po. See also my introduction to the translation of *Deb-ther dkar-po*.

11. A town at the foot and forefront of the Potala.
12. Pyogs-kyab or generalisation; rjes-kyab or inference; ldog-kyab or negativity. These three modes of astrological reasoning are known in Tibetan as Tshul-gsum.

## Chapter 2

1. The first known Tibetan king to be historically recorded.
2. Name of the Shamanistic religion of Tibet which preceded Buddhism.
3. The three regions of mNga-ris (Ladakh).
4. The king, or literally, Lord Protector of the faith.
5. 'Brom or 'Brom-ston-pa rgyal-ba-'byung-gnas was the pupil and associate of Atisa Dipankara Srigyana, the famous Indian Buddhist Master who visited Tibet in the 11th century. 'Brom was a master of the Tantras and the Shastras. He revised the *Abhisamayalankara-alok*, a religious treatise by Hari Chandra as well as several other sutras.
6. A Tibetan title implying "Lord", "Chief". In this context it refers to Atisa Dipankara.
7. Works containing precepts and orders, as well as heroic legendary tales. There are many works under the title 'thank-yik'. The author has not identified the particular work from which he has extracted this quotation.
8. The title of the first section of the large collection of Buddhist works rendered into Tibetan and popularly known as the *bKa'-gyur*.
9. a,b: All three refer to monastic officials.

## Chapter 3

1. "Legends of Kings" which belong to the gTer-ma (buried treasure) class of literature, the discovery of which is attributed to U-rgyan-gling-pa who worked in the second half of the 14th century.
2. This is a name of a gTer-ma work.
3. The full title of this work is *Lha-Iden-sprul-ba'i-gtzug-lag-khang-gi dkar-chag-she'i-dkar-me-long*, an account of the main temple at Lhasa and composed by the Fifth

Dalai Lama, Ngag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho in 1644. The prose portion of the work was translated by L.A. Waddell and published under the title "Description of a Lhasa Cathedral" in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1895).

#### Chapter 4

1. The name of a sutra in the *bKa'-'gyur* said to have been delivered by Lord Buddha on a visit to Li-yul.
2. A noted translator.
3. A great scholar of the Sa-skya school of Tibetan Buddhism, and a teacher to Tzong-kha-pa, the founder of the dGe-lugs-pa school.
4. Probably the author of *bsTan-rim-chen-mo* or the *Successive Stages on the path to Buddha's Teachings*.
5. Another great scholar who worked in the 14th century. He is said to have examined the colophons and verified the number of verses in the chapters of the *bKa'-'gyur*.
6. Also known as rGyal-ba-klong-chen rab-byams. He was the author of *Rin-po-che'i-mdzod-chen-bdun* or the *Seven Treasures of kLong-chen* and was a great master of the rNying-ma-pa school which flourished during the 14th century. According to Dr. Roerich, he was the Abbot of Gans-ri thod-dkar near bSam-yas. See Roerich's *Blue Annals*, Vol. I, page 309, footnote 1.
7. This prophecy of the Li Khotan country which appeared in the Li-yul lung-bstan is one of the sources of original Tibetan works on the history of that country. This work has also been included in the *bsTan-'gyur* collections. For further details see A.I. Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature*, page 22.
8. Sumba was once a petty kingdom within Tibetan jurisdiction. Today, we find a racial admixture of the Sumba stock with the people from A-mdo proper.
9. Tirhut. See Oxford History of India. Also B.C. Law's *Ancient Geography*.
10. The Lam-yig under reference is the rGya-gar Lam-yig, a guide to India written by Chag-lo chos-rje, also known

as Chag-lo-tsa-ba. The text of this guide-book has been translated by G. Roerich and published under the title "*The Life of Chag-lo-tsa-ba*" (Patna, K. Jaiswal Institute, 1960).

11. Author of *sNga-'gyur-rgyud-'bum-rin-po-che'i-rtogs-pa-'dzam-gling-tha-gru-khyab-pa'i-rgyan* an index to a Mahayana tantric work.
12. *Deb-ther dmar-po* or *The Red Annals*, a work dealing with the political history of Tibet. The text has been published in modern print by the Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, Sikkim. See also my introduction.

## Chapter 5

1. The full title is '*Phags-pa-sning-rje-chen-po pad-ma-dkar-po*, the name of a Sutra in the *bKa'-'gyur*, Vol. Chha.
2. A hymn of praise appearing under the *bsTod-tshogs* section of the *bsTan-'gyur*.
3. Tarkajvala (Skt), a work which reviews the several philosophical sects in India. This work has been included in the *bsTan-'gyur*.
4. Tibetan translation of a work by the Indian philosopher Bhavya who is also the author of Tarkajvala. See *Cultural Heritage of India* (Calcutta, Ramakrishna Mission, 1937.), Vol. I, p. 459.
5. Kun-mkhyan Bu-ston Rin-po-che (b. 1290 A.D.), the noted historian was the author of *bsTan-pa'i-gsal-byed-chos Tyi 'byung-gnas* or the *History of Buddhism*. This work has been translated into English by Dr. E. Obermiller (Heidelberg, 1931-32).
6. The first seven Buddhist hierarchies in succession to Gautama Buddha.
7. Also known as Sakyasri Bhadra, a celebrated Kashmiri Buddhist teacher who visited Tibet during the 11th century.
8. The 403 years since the ascendancy of King rGya-mtsho rnam-rgyal to the throne of Shambala, a legendary country until the Fire Stag year (1026 A.D.) is known as Me-mkha-rgya-mtsho or the period of the Fire Sky

Ocean. Me stands for the unit 3, mkha for the tenth unit 0 and rGya-mtsho for the hundredth 4. The Rab-'byung or the Tibetan system of reckoning dates has been adopted from the Fire Hare year (1027). See bLo-bzang bstan-'dzin's book, *rGyun-mkho'i-chos-srid-she-bya-gnas-tshul*, a work dealing with the religious and political systems of Tibet and published in Varanasi (1972).

9. Burning, cutting and rubbing.

## Chapter 6

1. Part of Mongolia, north of A-mdo.
2. This probably refers to the Tshal or mTshal-pa epoch after the name of the famous monastery of Tshal gung-thang which came to prominence at the end of the 13th century and early 14th century.
3. Author of *rGya'i-yig-tshang*, a translation of certain excerpts from the Chinese historical work *T'ang-shu*.
4. Tsal-pa kun-dga' rdo-rje, the author of *Deb-dmar* was born in the district of Tsal.
5. Name of a work enumerated in the *bsTan-'gyur sNa-tshogs* section.

## Chapter 8

1. A goblin with a narrow gullet and bulging belly, in constant hunger and thirst. A being belonging to one of the lower states of transmigratory existence.
2. Myang is Myang-shang-s nang, the son of Tsing-sku and in the original text, bKyon-phab-pa is the same as Khriims-phog-pa (censured).
3. Here 'Father King' refers to gNam-ri srong-btzan and mChyis-brang refers to 'home'. The latter is also wife in coded language.
4. A golden letter or the royal order conferring the post of envoy.
5. Gorma is a stone held in the hand during oath-taking ceremonies, a custom still prevalent among the Khams-pa(s) and the Sikkimese.

6. Nam-Nam Sha-Sha implies Nam-yang or never. In the *Shes-rabs-brgya-pa*, the words Nam-Nam Sha-Shar-'phung—"Will never be vanquished" occur. They are also to be met with in the colloquial language of Bhutan.
7. A reconstructed version of the inscription on the stone pillar with translations has been given by H.E. Richardson in *Ancient Historical Edicts at Lhasa* (Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland, 1952).

### Chapter 9

1. Today it is known as rGya-ma-khri sgang.
2. This is a death rite; an ancient ritual performed on the death of an individual.
3. A-zha, formerly part of Mongolia now pertains to Russian territory. In former days, it was under the jurisdiction of the Tibetan kings.
4. 'Black-headed' refers to the Tibetans. See Richardson's *Ancient Historical Edicts at Lhasa*, p. 16.

### Chapter 10

1. Ornamental.
2. Rounded.
3. The symbol coming at the beginning of the opening sentence of a chapter or sub-chapters.
4. rJe Tzong-kha-pa (b. 1354 A.D.) the great reformer who founded the dGe-lugs-pa school of Tibetan Buddhism.

### Chapter 11

1. This was the regnal year of the Chinese Emperor The-tsung. See Richardson's *Ancient Historical Edicts at Lhasa*, p. 64.
2. The second great collection of Buddhist works containing Buddha's doctrinal teachings and commentaries to the *bKa'-'gyur*.
3. A title.

- 4. The King, Queen and Minister.
- 5. Dignag (skt)
- 6. Kalidas.
- 7. Yastidar.
- 8. Madhumati.
- 9. A Tibetan mile.

**Chapter 12**

- 1. Sheep's skin.
- 2. Yak hair's tent.

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by \_\_\_\_\_

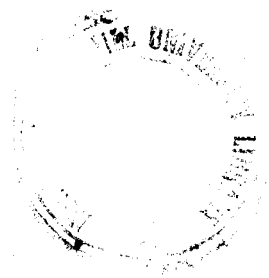
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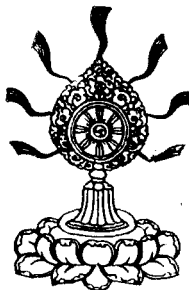


Gedun Choephel, one of the most progressive Tibetan scholars of this century, was born in Rekong, Amdo province in 1905. As a youth he studied at Tashi Khyil monastery in Amdo and later at the monastic university of Drepung near Lhasa. An exceptionally gifted and often controversial figure, he was at once a scholar, historian, literary innovator, translator, artist, poet, musician and traveller. He visited both India and Ceylon and developed highly nationalistic aspirations for Tibet. He passed away in Lhasa in 1951.



Gedun Choephel, Lhasa, 1938

His unfinished "White Annals" is unique in Tibetan historical writing in that it presents a highly critical and intelligent appraisal of the very early period of Tibetan history, dealing simultaneously with historical and cultural developments. This English translation provides a valuable perspective on the earliest proofs of Tibet's independent status, especially in light of more recent claims to its sovereignty.



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