

The Origin of the Tibetan Kingdom

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In the Tunhuang Chronicle there is a list of forty-two kings down to 'U'i-dun-brtan, Glang darma, who died c. 842 A.D. Most are little more than shadows; some are clearly mythical; others legendary; some, perhaps, real persons of whom oral tradition has preserved little but their names; only of the last eleven has history anything definite to say.

The early part of the genealogy is seen by Professor Petech as representing Bon cosmology and the first seven names seem to fall into that category. The list begins with Yab-bla bdag-drug who dwelt above high heaven and had six sons, with one more, Khri'i bdun-tshigs making seven. Although those names might appear to mean Six High Father Lords and the Line of Seven Enthroned Ones, they only account for two persons in the list, and it is a point of little consequence since they are clearly denizens of the outer world. With Nyag-khri btsan-po divinity descends briefly to earth. In the poetic language of the Chronicle "he came like a shower of rain to this sheltered place, as lord of the hidden land, to become ruler of Tibet of the six divisions; after which he went to heaven". In a ninth century inscription from Rkong-po his name appears as Nya-gri and his line is said to have dwelt for seven generations at Phying-ba Stag-rtse which is identified with the ruined castle near the ancient royal burial ground at 'Phyong-rgyas. Later tradition, without any basis in early documents, changes the name to Gnya'-khri and elaborates a legend that he was carried on the necks (*gnya'*) of his new subjects.

According to the Chronicle Nyag-khri was succeeded by five Kings with the syllable *Khri* in their names, of whom it is said that when the son was old enough to ride a horse the father withdrew to heaven, suggesting a ritual - and violent - termination of these early reigns. Later tradition recounts how the kings returned to heaven on a magic rope. Although that myth is not found in surviving early *mss.*, that does not necessarily imply that it was not current in the early centuries.

After the seven *Khri* kings, who had special links with heaven, comes a line headed by Dri-gum btsan-po who, although a son of the last heavenly *Khri*, was involved in earthly conflict and death. In an obscure story he challenged one Lo-ngam rta-rdzi who succeeded in neutralizing the magic powers with which Dri-gum was protected and so was able to kill him. The encounter took place at Lo-ngam's capital Myang-ro sham-po. Although there is mention of Dri-gum's protecting deity Lde-bla gung-rgyal - The mountain god 'O-lde gung-rgyal? - being driven in defeat to the snows of Gang Ti-tse it is unlikely that it was so far in the west. Later tradition sees the site as being in the valley of the Nyang - chu near Gyantse; while the pandit Nain Singh of the Indian Survey found a similar story current near the Dangra Yum-mtsho', a lake sacred to the Bon-po; but many indications point to the valley of the Rkong-po Nyang-chu. The two sons of Dri-gum who had been taken into banishment in Rkong-po eventually avenged their father by killing Lo-ngam in his palace of Myang-ro sham-po. According to the Chronicle, the younger Nya-khyi became ruler of Rkong-po while the elder Sha-khyi betook himself to Phying-ba -- that is the capital of the Tibetan Kings. The story is adumbrated in a ninth century inscription from Rkong-po with the difference that Nya-khyi is described as the elder and Sha-khyi, who became Lha-btsan-po, ruler of Tibet, as the younger. That may reflect an earlier tradition about their common ancestry which the Tibetans sought to reverse in order to claim seniority after they had reduced the rulers of Rkong-po to the position of *rgyal phran* - feudatory Princes. A hint of an earlier tradition may also be seen in the Btsun-mo bka'-thang where the mountain on which the legendary founder of the Tibetan royal line descended -- usually held to be in Yarlung-is described as Rkong-po Lha-ri rgyang-do. That

might be identified with the sacred Lha-ri east of the Artsa lake and pass seen by the Abbes Huc and Gabet and by pandit Nain Singh. The story may be an amalgam of hazy memories from different groups or tribes of people of Tibetan stock from the east coming into conflict with other such immigrants already settled in the country.

In the Chronicle Sha-khyi, Spu-lde gung-rgyal, is succeeded by seven kings with the syllable *leg* or *legs* in their name, followed after one generation by a line of kings whose names mostly included the syllable *lde* — regarded later as the royal patronymic -- and also *brtsan* which was part of the names of almost all the kings down to U'i-dun-brtan.

Into this seemingly coherent genealogical tree must somehow be fitted a name of prime importance which is not included there. In the inscription on the pillar at the tomb of Khri Lde-srong-brtsan and in that on the Sino-Tibetan treaty pillar at the Lhasa Jo-Khang it is 'O-lde spu-rgyal who appears as the founding ancestor who came from being a god to rule over men. He is similarly described in a document from Tunhuanḡ recording a prayer at the foundation of a temple on the frontier in celebration of the establishment of peace. The Lhasa inscription also quotes a sort of poem, using words like those in the Chronicle about Nyag-khri, describing Tibet as the centre of high mountains, the source of great rivers, a high country, a pure land. From that it might appear that the two were one and the same, and in the Fifteenth century they were so identified by 'Gos Lo-tsa'ba in his Deb Sngon where he quotes the Lhasa treaty inscription as saying that the kings held sway since the divine 'Od-lde spu-rgyal (sic) founded the kingdom; and he goes on to comment that since Gnya-khri btsan-po 'Od-lde (sic) there were forty-two kings.

The use of similar language about different personages — especially divine beings -- does not necessarily mean that they were identical. Both Gnya-khri btsan-po and Spu-lde gung-rgyal are described as coming like rain upon the earth; and Spu-lde gung-rgyal — who was also Sha-khyi and Grang-mo gnam gser brtsig — was eighth in descent from Nya-khyi and clearly not the same person. His divine powers seem, moreover, to have been compro-

mised when his father who had the power to return bodily to heaven, was defeated and killed and his body thrown into the river, while his sons were bound and exiled. But one should not look too critically into the language and doings of mystical divinity; and the Tibetan kings down to Dbu'i - dun-brtan were always referred to as sons of god.

In addition to his appearance in the two royal inscriptions and the prayer, 'O-lde spu-rgyal is mentioned in the Chronicle at the end of a passage enumerating the rival principalities by which Tibet was surrounded. Apart from other lists of principalities, some clearly mythical relating to Kingdoms of gods and demons and princesses skilled in poisons and cures, those in the Chronicle and in Pelliot Tibetan 1290 deal with real places which came to form part of the Tibetan kingdom and whose rulers have an appearance of verisimilitude. Of them it is said that by internal feuding they destroyed one another and in the end were not a match for 'O-lde spu-rgyal. This would seem to bring 'O-lde down virtually to historical times for some of the places named -- e.g. Ngas-po, Klum-ro and Skyi-ro were conquered by Gnam-ri slon btsan. While Dags-po, Nyang-po and Rkong-po were finally subjugated in the time of his son Srong-brtsan sgam-po; and Zhang-zhung not until much later. Perhaps by the ninth century a haze of legend had come to attribute the conquest of the neighbouring principalities to 'O-lde spu-rgyal as a symbol or personification of Spu-rgyal Tibet, much as John Bull stands for Britain and Uncle Sam for the U.S.A., without any exact idea of chronology.

In this context there is a lively contribution from Chinese historians who are known for their habitual and rational recording of events and for their interest in the doings of peoples beyond the frontier who might disturb their peace. In the earlier of two versions of the Tang Annals it is related that the origin of the Tibetans is uncertain but some say they are descended from T'ou-fa Li-lou-kou of the Southern Liang. He had a son, Fanni, who was quite young when his father died in 414 A.D. and, after various misfortunes, fled westward across the Huang-ho and founded an extensive state among the Ch'iang who followed him enthusiastically. He changed his name

to Sou-pou-ye and called his dynasty T'o-pa which became corrupted into T'ou-fan. The later version starts with an ancestor among the Ch'iang who was called Hou-ti pou-sou-ye. It goes on to repeat the alternative story about Fanni; and then records the names of seven successors of the first prince (Hou-ti pou-sou-ye) as follows: Kia-si-tong-mo; T'o-t'ou-tou; Kie-li-che-jo; P'ou-lomg-jo; kiu-so-jo; Louen-tsan-sou; K'i-tsong-long-tsan also called K'i-sou-nong whose clan was Fou-ye. Among these names 'O-lde spu-rgyal, Tho-dosnya-brtsan; Slon-brtsan and Srong-brtsan can be recognized; they and the others, must have been provided by a Tibetan informant about the middle of the tenth century; while the Fanni story seems to have come from Chinese sources.

There is nothing improbable in a Ch'iang tribe accepting the leadership of a dynamic prince from some other people. In the kaleidoscopic pattern of dynasties of short or long duration and of greater or less territorial extent created by the medley of peoples in north China and neighbouring central Asia during the fourth and fifth centuries there was, as Professor W. Eberhard has pointed out, no real national unity and tribes or groups of one people might readily join or be absorbed by another. The Southern Liang, whose territory was in eastern Kansu, were Hsien-pi, a basically Mongol people containing Han and Turkic elements. Before the Southern Liang there had been a powerful kingdom, described by Eberhard as Tibetan, spreading from Tunhuang to Chengtu where they were neighbours and rivals of the Hsien-pi; and it is just when the Tibetan kingdom broke up that Fanni is supposed to have created his kingdom among them. It is noticeable that the names of 'O-lde spu-rgyal's successors in the Tang Annals number only six before Srong-brtsan sgampo who was born c. 610 A.D. That would go back to Khri-thog-brtsan in the Tibetan Chronicle's list and to a possible date around 410-420, the supposed time of Fanni. If it is intended that Houti pou-sou-ye, Fanni, immediately preceded Kia-si-tong-mo that would make him the seventh predecessor of Srong-brtsan sgampo and contemporary or identical with Khri-sgra sbung-brtsan of the Chronicle.

It is noticeable also that Khri-sgra sbung-brtsan is the first king to whom is attributed a queen from a historically recorded clan; and that practice is followed regu-

larly after him. From his time the genealogical tree may have some more substance -- though tenuous -- than what has gone before. Five generations or so is no great stretch of time for oral tradition in a society without written records to preserve a reasonably consistent family memory.

Khri-thog-brtsan's successor Lha-tho-do snya-brtsan has a special place in later literature perhaps because of the syllable "Lha" in his name. It is said that the first trace of Buddhism reached Tibet in his reign when volumes of scripture fell on the roof of his palace but no one was able to read them. He is said also to have lived to the age of one hundred. Recent calculations of his date, shown on the Tibetan coinage, put his birth at the year 173 according to W.D. Shakabpa and at 254 according to Zurkhang Shappe. That is to stretch the longevity of Srong-brtsan's predecessors beyond the bounds of credulity and a more reasonable estimate would be c. 460 A.D.

Nothing in these diverse traditions clarifies the relationship between Nyag-khri btsan-po and 'O-lde spu-rgyal. It emerges only that for the Buddhist Chos-rgyal the divine first ancestor was 'O-lde spu-rgyal while Nyagri btsan-po holds that place for the rulers of Rkong-po -- of whose religious persuasion there is no certainty. A prince of Rkong-po witnessed the edict of Khri Lde-srong-brtsan to maintain the Buddhist faith but that might have been a political as much as a religious act; and in later days Rkong-po together with Dvags-po and Nyang-po had a bad reputation as "poisonous countries" which might imply some religious shortcomings. At last, with the reign of Stag-bu snya-gzigs, Lha-tho-do's great-grandson and Srong-brtsan sgam-po's grandfather, wilder speculations can be left behind and it is possible to trace some history in the legend; and the story as told in the Chronicle is so lively that it is surprising it has made virtually no impact on later histories.

The king, Stag-bu snya-gzigs, third in succession from Lha-tho-do snya-brtsan, had his capital at phyng-ba stag-rtse. His neighbour at Nyen-kar rnying-pa was Zing-po-rje Stag-skya-bö, prince of Ngas-po in the Skyi Chu and 'Phan-po valleys, who was an arrogant and tyrannical ruler. When one of his ministers -- leaders of great clans

or families — Mnyan 'Dzi-sung Nag-po warned him of the disastrous consequences of such behaviour, he deposed him and ignored his advice. 'Dzi-zung in disgust took refuge with another prince, Zing-po-rje Khri-pangs-sum of 'O-yul whose capital was at Yu-sna of Sngur-ba. With his support 'Dzi-zung killed Stag-skya-bo whose territory of Klum and Yel fell to Khri-pangs-sum. As his reward 'Dzi-zung received the castle of Sngur-ba and lands in the lower part of Klum. Among the subordinate landholders or bondsmen (*bran*) in those estates who became his subjects were two leading members of the Myang clan, Nam-to-re khru-gu and his son Smon-to-re Tseng-sku, who also had formerly been ministers of the defeated Zing-po-rje of Ngas-po. Mnyan 'Dzi-zung's wife, the lady of Pa-tsab, so grievously insulted and humiliated her new subjects that they complained to Khri-pangs-sum, the overlord of Mnyan 'Dzi-zung, but he ignored their complaint. Not long after, one of Khri-pangs-sum's own ministers, Dba's Bshos-to-re Khu-gu was killed in a duel with the prince's Bon-po priest, Gshen Khri-bzher 'dron-kong. Bsho-to-re's elder brother Phangs-to-re Dbyi-tshab, appealed to the prince for blood-money but was rudely rebuffed. He got in touch with Myang Tseng-sku who was equally resentful of the ill treatment he had suffered. The two of them, with Tseng-sku taking the lead, decided to offer their allegiance to Btsan-po spu-rgyal, that is to say Stag-bu snya-gzigs, whom they described in a short allusive song as a son of man who is indeed a son of god, a true lord whom it would be good to serve. They swore an oath of enmity to Zing-po-rje and loyalty to Spu-rgyal-btsan-po. Dba's Dbyi-tshab then recruited into the conspiracy his uncle Bzang-to-re of Mnon and when the uncle died his son took his place. Myang Tseng-sku similarly took into his confidence Nag-seng of Tshes-pong, a follower of Stag-bu snya-gzigs, who became the go-between through whom Myang and Dba's Communicated their purpose to the king. Stag-bu snya-gzigs was at first hesitant to take part in the feud because his sister was married to Zing-po-rje; also his wife appears to have been a kinswoman of Zing-po-rje for her name was Stong-cung 'bro-ga of 'Ol-god ('Ol = 'O-yul?), but he agreed to go along with them.

The conspirators made their way secretly to Phying-ba to take an oath of loyalty to Stag-bu snya-gzigs in

person. Their movements aroused suspicion among the men of Yar who attempted to seize them; and before action could be taken against Zing-po-rje, Stag-bu snya-gzigs was dead. The brief mention in the Chronicle discloses none of the circumstances but Professor Geza Uray in an important article in *Acta Hungarica* 1972 cites Pelliot Tibetain 1144, an unpublished fragment, in which a few scattered words tell that the King Stag-bu was captured by 'Ol-god, Lord of Yar-'brog and was handed over to Klu-dur, king of Lho-brag, who imprisoned him. There is also a fragmentary mention of his wife.

A more detailed account of the fate of Stag-bu snya-gzigs is found in the *Rgyal-rabs Bon-gyi byung gnas*, showing that Bon histories often have some special acquaintance with early traditions. It is related how Stag-gu gnyanzig (sic) subdued the twelve *rgyal phran*-feudatory principalities, and then made war on Phan-ra-rje, king of Lho-brag but was defeated and imprisoned. Stag-gu gnyanzig's Bon-po priest, the Sku-gshen Khri-ne-khod rescued him by his magical powers. In gratitude the King made over the kingdom to him. This is a rather different version from that of the Chronicle. It implies that Stag-bu gnyanzig was the aggressor whereas the Chronicle says he died before action could be taken against Zing-po-rje Khri-pangs-sum -- Phan-ra-rje in the Bon story is clearly a variant of that name. The implication of 'Ol-god of Yar-'brog suggests that the conspiracy which the men of Yar appear to have detected gave an excuse for their ruler 'Ol-god, who was a vassal of Khri-pangs-sum, to take action against Stag-bu snya-gzigs on behalf of his lord. Yar and Yar-'brog do not necessarily imply the country round the Yar-'brog Mtsho but may just as well be the upland grazing lands near the Gri-gu mtsho at the head of the Yar-lung valley. There is no mention in the Chronicle of Lho-brag or Klu-dur but it appears from its brief comment that Stag-bu snya-gzigs did not survive whatever incident may have occurred.

An obscure tail-piece in the Chronicle story after referring to the death of Stag-bu-snya-gzigs seems to suggest that the conspiracy was somehow disclosed by one Spug Gyim-tang rmang-bu, a follower of Tshes-pong Nag-seng the man who acted as go-between to the king. Spug Gyim-

tang at first would not share his bed with his wife for fear of betraying the plot in his sleep; but after wandering nightly in the hills he eventually returned to sleep with her. For some reason they quarrelled and he bit out her tongue so that she died. He also died without issue before an attack was made on Zing-po-rje. Other members of the clan, however, continued to be active in Tibetan affairs and one Spug Gyim-rtsang rma-chung was sent in 653 to govern Zhang Zhung.

The conspirators evidently came out of the affair unscathed. They added three more to their number, and undeterred by the death of Stag-bu snya-gzigs, took an oath of allegiance to his two sons, Slon-mtshan and Slon-kol. This seems to have been done at the request of the princes, who had the duty of avenging their father. The words of the oath are recorded at some length in archaic language passed down, perhaps, in the family tradition of the noble ministers who swore it. A number of other members of the Myang, Tshes-pong and Dba's clans also joined in the oath.

Why, it may be asked, were they so ready to give their loyalty to Stag-bu snya-gzigs and later to his two young sons. Their domain seems to have been quite small and was threatened on the north by more powerful rulers in Ngaspo and 'O-yul and on the south from Yar-'brog. The answer must lie in the name Spu-rgyal which has an aura of special sacral and mystic qualities. It was to *btsan-po* Spu-rgyal that loyalty was pledged, not to any king or prince by name. For Myang and Dba's, Btsan-po Spu-rgyal though a man was also a son of god. One of his ancestors Tho-do snya-brtsan had the name "Lha". The Rkong-po inscription relates how one of Dri-gum btsan-po's two sons became Lha Btsan-po, the divine *btsan-po*, and went to rule at Phying-ba stag-rtse; and even when the influence of Buddhism was well established, the kings, with the title of Lha sras or Lha btsan-po, harked back in their inscriptions to their descent from 'O-lde spu-rgyal. The essence of that sacral quality is nowhere spelled out; but, if *spu-rgyal* means "hairy king" it might point to the monkey ancestor revered in the primitive beliefs of the Ch'iang people in their ancestral home on the north-west borders of China, a myth later to be adopted rather laboriously into the hagiology of Tibetan Budd-

hism. But whatever its source, it was that sanctity that held together in fealty a kingdom depending greatly on ministers from different parts of the kingdom, often rivals of one another and sometimes more powerful than the *btsan-po* himself.

After the oath-taking a plan of campaign was made and Slon-mtshan set out at the head of an army of ten thousand men while his younger brother stayed with the queen-mother. The princes were quite young and the phrase *zhabs kyis gtsuqs* describing the start of Slon-mtshan's expedition may imply that this was the first venture of his majority. Similar expressions used of a child's first steps and a young man setting up an independent household for the first time; and it is applied also later to Srong-brtsan sgam-po's first military expedition.

The campaign against Zing-po-rje, here described as Dgu-gri a title probably annexed from Dgu-gri Zing-po-rje of Ngas-po whom he had conquered, is recorded very briefly. Its climax was the capture of the castle of Yunsna by damming a river in Klum so that the defence works were flooded. Zing-po-rje was in this way destroyed. His territory as far as Bre-sna in Rkong-po (West of the Nyang-chu) was annexed by the *btsan-po* who proclaimed that the country of Ngas-po should be known as 'Phanyal. His ministers and subjects greeted him by the title of Btsan-po; he took the name Gnam-ri Slon-mtshan and he rewarded suitably all those ministers who had delivered Zing-po-rje's domains into his hands. Myang Tseng-sku received the castle of Sngur-ba which had belonged to 'Dzi-zung who had insulted him; Dba's Dbyi-tshab got those of the Gshen who had killed his brother; all received numbers of bondsmen (*bran*). Myang, Dba's, Mnon, and Tshes-pong became Councillors of the king.

The authority of the *btsan-po* and his ministers at this time was established in a comparatively small stretch of country in the valleys of the Skyi-chu and the Gtsang-po from Yar-lung and 'on to the borders of Rkong-po. But the rising star of Btsan-po Spu-rgyal soon attracted adherents from further afield.

Outstanding among these was Khyung-po Spung-sad Zutse, a vigorous, ambitious, arrogant and unscrupulous figure

who was active in Tibetan affairs for many years. He comes on the scene in the reign of Slon-mtshan, claiming to have shown his allegiance by decapitating Mar-mun, ruler of Rtsang-bod and giving twenty thousand households to the *btsan-po* who forthwith returned them to him as a reward. The location of Rtsang-bod is debatable but it might be north of the Gtsang-po around and north-west of Shangs and Shigatse. The prompt return of the subjects suggests that it was not seen at that time as suitable for direct rule.

The next show of loyalty by Zu-tse was in denouncing the minister Mong Sngon-po as guilty of treachery and encompassing his death. Mong is shown in a list of ministers in an earlier section of the Chronicle as having had some connection with the fall of Mar-mun; but he does not appear to have taken any part in the confederacy to support Stag-bu snya-gzigs or Slon-Mtshan. It's, however, claimed for Zu-tse, as another proof of loyalty, that he somehow supported the campaign against Zing-po-rje. This seems out of chronological order for the campaign took place before the supremacy of Slon-mtshan as established while, in the Mar-mun incident he is described as *btsan-po*. If there is anything in the claim it may mean only that Zu-tse approved of what had been done.

He next appears in the record when a campaign was being planned against Dags-po which is described as having rebelled — perhaps it was part of Zing-po-rje's territory which had been taken over by Slon-mtshan. When one Seng-go myi-chen volunteered to undertake the task Zu-tse insulted and humiliated him. Seng-go was, nonetheless, successful. Then Myang Zhang-s nang the son of Myang Tseng-sku was appointed to the royal service and a banquet was held at which Spung-sad Zu-tse vaunted his own achievements. He dwells on his conquest of Rtsang-bod and his suppression of Mong Sngon-po. He does not mention Zing-po-rje; but Myang Zhang-s nang, having been urged to reply, praised the great deeds of his father and Dba's Phangs-to-re in the defeat of Zing-po-rje. That throws doubt on the claim that Zu-tse was involved in that affair; and the proud reply by Zhang-s nang and his promotion to high office seems to have aroused enmity and envy on the part of Zu-tse.

In the list of ministers one Mgar Khri-sgra 'dzi-rmun is shown as succeeding Mong Sngon - po before Myang Zhang-snang was appointed Chief Minister with the title Mang-po-rje. Myang became an all-powerful figure after the death of Gnam-ri Slon-mtshan, while Srong-brtsan was too young to take effective action, and suppressed a widespread rebellion that followed Gnam-ri's death. Some time after that Spung-sad Zu-tse falsely accused him of disloyalty and brought about his dismissal and execution.

Myang Mang-po-rje Zhang-snang is said to have been succeeded by another minister of the Mgar clan who also fell under an accusation and committed suicide. Spung-sad Zu-tse then became Chief Minister, a post he had probably coveted for some time. In it he won a great reputation for wisdom and boldness; and he conquered all the northern Zgang-shung for the *btsan-po*. He was succeeded by Mgar Stong-rtsan Yul-zung. There is no information about when or why this took place; but in the end Zu-tse fell victim to the same accusations and suffered the same fate which, in that world of intrigue and rivalry, he had brought on others. In his retirement in old age he is said to have invited Khri Srong-brtsan to his palace with treacherous intent and that this was detected by Mgar Yul-zung whereupon Zu-tse committed suicide. But much was to happen before that.

According to a damaged passage at the beginning of the Annals, some time after the fall of Myang Mang-po-rje Zhang-snang the *btsan-po* set out on an expedition against the 'A-zha (Tu-yu-hun) and China. The Chronicle puts that event before the fall of Myang but it might be expected that the evidence of the Annals is the more acceptable.

Although the haphazard arrangement of the Chronicle, as we have it, leaves much to be conjectured, an incident recorded there may well be placed soon after the fall of Myang. In his old age Dba's Phangs-to-re Dbyi-tshab, who had been a partner of Myang Mang-po-rje's father in allegiance to Stag-bu snya-gzigs and in establishing Khri Slon-mtshan as *btsan-po*, besought and was granted a visit at his own house from Khri Srong-brtsan in order that he and his family could take an oath of loyalty to the

btsan-po in person. Perhaps the Dba's had been suspected of sympathising with their former colleagues the Myang, and Phangs-to-re was eager to dispel that idea by openly condemning the disloyalty of Myang Mang-po-rje Zhang-snang. The *btsan-po* himself first took an oath, praising the loyalty of the Dba's and vowing to protect them and their estates so long as they remained in fealty. He promised also to build a tomb for the Dbyi-tshab and to sacrifice a hundred horses there; and he sang one of those allusive songs which enrich and enliven the Chronicle. Dba's Dbyi-tshab replied in kind. Then he and his six sons took the oath of loyalty on a white stone which the *btsan-po* afterwards set up as the foundation of the tomb to be built for the Dbyi-tshab. The impressive words of the King's vow and that of the Dba's are recorded at length in archaic language which must have been transmitted in the Dba's family from generation to generation together with the insignia of the golden letter bestowed upon them.

Although in neither the Chronicle nor the Annals is there a clear sequence of chronology for these events, a fixed point is provided by the invaluable Chinese historians. Already in the period 581-600 of the Sui dynasty there was some knowledge of a Tibetan ruler Luntsan Solung-tsan, who must have been Gnam-ri Slon-mtshan, with an army of 100,000 men and a kingdom extending to the borders of India but it is the Tang Annals in which the first firm date is found when they record the arrival in 634 of the first mission from Tibet. The Chinese responded with a return mission in the wake of which the Tibetans sent another. They had heard that the Turks and the Tu-yu-hun had been given princesses in marriage to their rulers and they requested one for their *btsan-po*. When this was refused the *btsan-po* set out on a punitive expedition against the Tu-yu-hun ('A-zha), as recorded in the Tibetan Chronicle, whom they held responsible for the refusal. Having defeated and scattered them he besieged the Chinese border town Sung chou and renewed the demand for a princess in threatening terms. He defeated one Chinese force sent against him but when a larger army arrived he withdrew with some losses. The Chinese, nevertheless, realizing that they had underrated the Tibetans and had a new power to face, granted a princess. In 641 Mgar Stong-rtzan was sent with lavish presents to receive her

and escort her to Tibet. That momentous event is recorded also in the Tibetan Annals and forms virtually the starting point for a continuous Tibetan history.

Before that another remarkable but otherwise unknown incident is related in a damaged passage in the Annals. There was enmity between the *btsan-po*, the elder brother Srong-rtsan and the younger brother Btsan-srong. As the result of treachery by a servant Btsan-srong died by burning.

Although no precise dates are given in the Annals after the arrival of the Chinese princess until the dog year, 650 A.D. from when events are recorded annually, it is said that after three years Lig Snya-shur was destroyed and all the Zhang-zhung were brought under subjection. There may be some question whether this event c. 644 relates to Spung-sad Zu-tse's claim to have conquered all the northern Zhang-zhung. The name of the Zhang-zhung ruler said to have been conquered by Zu-tse, according to a divination document from Tunhuang-Pelliot Tibetan 1047 - is Lig Myi-rhya. And it is victory over Lig Myi-rhya that is celebrated in the Chronicle as the achievement of Khri Srong-brtsan and his minister Stong-rtsan in another of those splendid exchanges of song. The relation between Lig Myi-rhya and Lig Snya-shur is not clear. The latter appears in several of the lists of principalities and according to F.W. Thomas it figures also in Bon writing. If the conquest of Zhang-zhung in 644 was effected by Spung-sad Zu-tse it would mean that his career in Tibetan affairs extended for almost half a century.

Sadly there is nothing in the Annals about the achievements of the last six years of Srong-brtsan's life; it is said only that he lived with the Chinese princess for three years. She survived Srong-brtsan by twenty-two years. That suggests that she was very young when she came to Tibet and dispels the aura attached to her name as the founder of the Jo-khang. A little more can be gleaned from the eulogy in the Chronicle which relates in general terms that he was responsible for organising the internal administration of the state, agricultural systems, the laws etc, and for introducing texts of the religious law. Inscriptions of his successors also attribute to him the

foundation of the Jo-khang. But it is to the Tang Annals that one must turn for factual information. There it is recorded that in 646 Srong-brtsan sent Mgar Stong rtsan (Lutungtsan) to congratulate the Emperor on his victory over Korea with a flowery message and the present of a jar, in the shape of a goose, made of solid gold, seven feet high. In 648 when a Chinese envoy was plundered in India Srong brtsan sent an army to chastise the offending Indian leader; and the evidence that the two Chinese emperors with whom he was contemporary -- Tai Tsung and Kao - tsung - treated him with admiration and respect as a powerful and independent ruler and ally enhances the unquestioned greatness of Srong-brtsan Sgam-po as the real founder of a great Tibetan Kingdom.