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An Excerpt from *The Gesar of Ling Epic*, translated from Tibetan to English by Robin Kornman with the assistance of Sangye Khandro and Khenpo Chöying Namgyal.

The following excerpt includes a short introduction to explain the reading and a glossary to identify some of the foreign terms.

Reading from Vol. II of the Tibetan *Epic of Gesar of Ling*

Introduction

This is a translation and introduction I did for the Hawai'i Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture, ed. by Victor H. Mair, et. al. (Honolulu: U. of Hawai'i Press, 2005) and is their copyright.

It was done to give some evidence for the nature of the Tibetan view of China in the *Gesar Epic*. As you can see in this passage, the Chinese Emperor is viewed as an honored relative and superior. Later in the epic there is opposition between Gesar and China in some editions. But here the Emperor meets with Gesar's half-brother Gyatsha Zhalkar and the future leaders of some of the future enemies of Ling.

In the third century B.C. the first imperial dynasty of China, the Qin, erected the Great Wall as a barrier between their agrarian civilization and groups of pastoralist nomads who occupied the steppes and highlands of Inner Asia. Although the nomads lived off their herds, they had also perfected the art of horseback warfare and were a constant threat to China's peace. At times the sedentary agrarian Chinese would invade the pasture lands of these nomads and convert them to agricultural use. The reverse would happen as well, the nomads turning bandit and crossing the boundary into China. The Great Wall was built to block such nomads' entry, but it also marked a natural ecological frontier between the arid steppes where herding was natural and the more fertile, better watered plains where farming was the natural way of life.

Sometimes the nomads would form a tribal confederation, develop a charismatic leader, create a state with a mighty army of horsebacked bowmen, and conquer China itself. The Tibetans did this briefly in the sixth century, occupying Chinese-speaking territory to outskirts of their capital. The Mongol nomadic state actually conquered China in the thirteenth century, creating the Yuan dynasty. The Manchus did this again in the 17th century creating the Qing dynasty.

Between these two poles of sedentary conquest of nomads and nomadic conquest of the sedentary, China and its surrounding traveling, tented nomads carried on an active and complex foreign policy. The Chinese would send tribute, gifts, or assistance to the nomads, send them diplomats and regional administrators, incorporate their leadership by granting them office, and chronicle their political and cultural life.

Nomadic policy towards the Chinese is more difficult to know, because they were slower to develop literacy and keep written chronicles. But here is an oral epic of the Tibetans which presents their side of the Tibetan-Chinese interaction and gives us an unusually intimate glimpse at some of the attitudes of the surrounding nomad pastoralist milieu.

It is interesting to think about the contrasting views of Chinese histories and diplomatic records, which view the pastoralist warriors at their frontiers as "barbarians" and the nomadic view of respect tinged with greed reflected here in the Tibetans and other ethnic leaders visiting the Chinese court. In the background is an unwritten understanding that the frontier kingdoms and confederations at times raid the Chinese and at times conduct policy with them, at times are their adversaries, but as often send religious leaders to the Chinese court to teach the emperor and his retinue. Recent histories in the West give a more nuanced view of the relationship between China and its so-called "frontiers."¹ The pastoralists beyond the great wall are no longer barbarians harrying the edge of Chinese civilization, but a complex and rich cultural sphere of their own based on a different ecology.

The Tibetan *Gesar of Ling Epic* is a gigantic oral epic sung by Tibetan bards and written down over the last few centuries in many different forms. Versions of it can be found in China, Mongolia, Tibet, and among tribal peoples of Inner Asia. It tells the story of an enlightened hero, Gesar of Ling, who protects the land of Tibet from anti-Buddhist invaders. Like an Achilles or an Aeneas, he uses his military prowess and leadership abilities. But more importantly, he uses the unique, ironic, humorous, outrageous, and vast perspective of a buddha. Seeing things from the cosmic point of view gives him a unique sense of skillful means to overcome enemies while creating a civilization based on the Buddhist principles of compassion and wisdom. Possessing the power of a buddha to see beyond mere appearance to the ultimate level of reality gives Gesar magical powers that make him a sorcerer knight, as if King Arthur and Merlin were joined in one man.

The lore that combines alchemical magic with skill in weaponry and political inscrutability is shared to a degree by his future subjects, the people of the land of Ling.

Ling is a land of Tantric steppe warriors. Their religion is a peculiar kind of Buddhism which does not turn away from the world to a purer sphere, but achieves enlightenment by seeing the phenomenal world as sacred in every detail. This means that the buddhas in the epic teach not ascetic denial of worldly things, but alchemical transmutation of the ordinary into magical reality. Magical reality is enlightened reality. The unenlightened world is made up of merely physical things, of objects, people, plants, and animals. The enlightened world is made up of the kind of things found in expositions of alchemical Taoism: power places, gods, heroes, animistic spirits, and vital energies.

A word should be said about the expression “White Ling,” which occurs constantly in the epic. It means, in effect, Ling the Good. It distinguishes Ling from enemy kingdoms which surround it. These enemies are usually demons or reincarnations of demons. And so the opposite of White in this case would be something like “demonic.”

In the same way, society itself is represented in what the authors of the epic would consider to be an enlightened society. This means that the state and national identity is constituted not by laws with executive arms to enforce them, but by kinship relations and tribal compacts to create political entities. Customs of mediation and blood-money are used instead of courts to settle disputes between them. Crimes are not punished, but likewise settled by mediation and what we call today “restorative justice.” When mediation does not work there is tribal warfare to rectify imbalances that occur where trust is betrayed or there has been a failure to adjudicate the wrong.

The genealogy that begins the passage lays out therefore not simply the names and descent of the important families in the epic, but the basic structure of the ideal Tibetan state--- a land where every relationship is not merely legal or contractual, but real in the sense of being a blood connection or a tribal compact. Sense of place, sense of family, sense of country become one experience in the shamanistically wholistic world of the epic.

This excerpt is from a nine-volume version of *The Gesar* sung and read in Northeastern Tibet, principally in Qinghai and Gansu province. It records the life and religious beliefs of the warlike high altitude nomadic herders. Their wealth is found in their herds of yak and dri (female yaks), cows, horses, and sheep. They live most of the year in yak hair tents and in fortress castles in the winter. They have farms as well, but their agriculture does not typically use irrigation or the more efficient techniques of the Chinese farmers. Their population, therefore, is sparse compared to China and many of their goods are gained through trade with their neighbors. When trade will not do, raiding and banditry are considered an equally honorable alternative. If they are caught by their victims, then mediation and restorative justice are the usual resort.

They are followers of Tibetan Buddhism but their daily ritual life combines elements of Indian Buddhism with shamanistic practices found across Inner Asia, including some elements of ancient Chinese alchemical Taoism. All nomads ride armed to the teeth, for there are no police or governmental authorities. Legal disputes are handled by mediators who rely on a vast invisible corpus

of proverbs to decide cases. Instances of murder, kidnapping, and theft are settled before negotiation by vendetta and after negotiation by exchanges of blood money. Often opposing parties will settle disputes through exchanges of blood-price simply to avoid the military conflict of vendetta.

Ling is a Tibetan speaking country and stands in the reader's eyes for Tibet itself. The Ling view of nationality is based on tribal notions with all legal structures created by kinship relations and blood oaths of loyalty. This passage begins by introducing us to the Mukpo clan, the tribe of Tibetans who rule the kingdom of Ling. We meet some of Ling's greatest warriors--- in particular, the King of Ling, Chipön, the epic's Agamemnon, and the fiery Buddhist warrior, Gyatsa Zhalkar, the epic's Achilles.

The shamanistic version of Buddhism practiced in the epic includes a complex machinery of gods and special powers that surround the warrior. Every warrior has developed a sort of "battle aura" called *wang thang*, literally, a "field of power." This invisible shield of light glows about the hero or heroine's shoulders and head, creating an impression of invincibility. In addition to this charisma, there are a group of "patron deities" that perch on the warrior's armor and bodily centers. One of them is called a "garuda," a magical bird spirit that usually perches on the head. There are also father and mother gods on the shoulders and heart center, and body gods to protect both the body and the family name. There is also the all important life-force (*srog*) dwelling as a sort of treasury of energy in the heart. Also in the heart is the life-essence (*la*), a kind of second soul that departs just before the body dies, and the *tshe* or life-duration energy--- a force that determines longevity. To support the *srog*, keep the *la* from wandering, and increase the *tshe*, the warrior must lead a stainless life and do rituals of gathering and reversal of negative forces. Chief among the forces which must be gathered, collected, and nourished is the ancient notion of "windhorse," which is found both in China and Tibet. This is a power of upliftedness and *élan*--- a personal energy of dignity and innate success. When the power of a hero's windhorse is raised, not only is life-force increased, but the field of power opens like a radiant flower and the warrior seems to glow. Then local spirits and matrices of energy associated with dignity, confidence, and upliftedness are drawn to the body and land on it. These complexes of energy are called "wargods." They come in many varieties and occupy their special positions on the body, armor, the horse, and the weapons. This translation mentions many deities of the class of wargods. Some are like household spirits. Others, like the *nyen*, are independent gods of mountains and natural phenomena.

The ability to invoke, control, and increase these energies and gods is an essential art taught by the Tibetan epic and practiced by its Buddhist heroes--- a sort of warrior's magic. The ceremony of invocation that ends this translation is an example of such a ritual practice. In this ceremony a column of smoke is created and a host of deities are asked to descend down via the smoke to bless the assembly. The highest gods who descend are actually Buddhist deities. The lower ones are native Tibetan wargods.

The events in this reading show Zhalkar and two other young knights from other tribal kingdoms meeting with the Chinese Emperor. He is their maternal uncle, for their fathers have (all through policy) married Chinese wives. This is actually indicated in Zhalkar's family name, Gyatsha, which means "chinese nephew." In the epic the names of heroes indicate both their patriarchal and matriarchal descent. The name "Gyatsha" indicates that his mother was Chinese. Thus, In the Tibetan epic, even the Chinese emperor is a tribal leader, addressing the Tibetan and Inner Asian princes as if he were more a patriarchal chief of chiefs, head of all clans, than the ruler of a politically and legally constituted state. He gives amazing weapons that fire the imagination of Tibetan bards, who dream of the technological superiority of the Chinese and reminds us that these nomadic pastoralists get most of their manufactured goods from surrounding agrarian civilizations.

Then, when Zhalkar returns from China he discovers that his cousin has been killed in battle. There is a debate about whether or not the Ling army will be lead by Zhalkar on a mission of revenge.

Numerous proverbs are bandied as exercises in nomadic judicial rhetoric. To the Tibetan this scene is very funny, because Gyatsha's youthful anger drives him out of control and he harshly criticizes the most virtuous person in the epic, Chipön, the chief of Ling.

The scene then moves to the conquered land, Gog. There the family of the future mother of Gesar of Ling is preparing to flee, along with her adopted father Ralo, from the returning Lingite hoards. In the confusion, Gogmo, Gesar's future mother, is separated from her family and wanders along with her dowry of magical possessions into the camp of the Ling invaders.

This is a fateful moment, for Ling gains not only Gogmo's treasure, but also the magical woman who will give birth to a warrior buddha, the future savior of Ling, Gesar. This sudden windfall is accepted as a sign of future good fortune, and a smoke offering is performed to maximize the blessings of the event. The stage is thereby set for the coming miraculous birth of the great Tibetan enlightened hero, Gesar of Ling.

Identification of proper names and Tibetan or Sanskrit for translations of technical terms may be found in the glossary at the end of this reading.

Selection from Volume II of *Gesar of Ling Epic*

Now, in the Clan of Mukpo Dong, the royal line of Chöphen Nagpo (Black Dhama Benefit) originated from his three wives: Serza (Wife from the Ser Tribe), Omza (Wife from Om), and Changza.² They each had three sons. The son of Ser was Lhayag Darkar (Good Divine White Silk). The son of Ombu was Trichang Pagyal (Wolf Throne Royal Warrior). The son of Chang was Dragyal Bum-me (Victorious over Enemies, Ten Thousand Flames). From these three came the Greater, Lesser, and Middle lineages of Mukpo Dong.³

In the Lesser or Cadet Lineage, the princely son of King Dragyal Bum-me (Victory Over Enemies Ten Thousand Flames) was Thogmey Bum (Beginningless Ten Thousand).⁴ And Thogmey's son was Chöla Bum (Ten Thousand for the Dharma). Chöla Bum had three wives and they were Rongza (Wife from Rong), Gaza (Ga Wife), and Muza (Mu Wife), these three.⁵

Rongza's son was an incarnation of the Pandita Suvarna born as the chief Chipön Rongtsha Tragen (Rong Maternal Nephew Old Falcon). He was smart. His intelligence and knowledge were as bright as the morning sky. His skill and compassion were like the moisture and warmth of the earth in spring. His commands were straight-forward like lines drawn with a ruler. He could distinguish the right or wrong of his subjects' actions like splitting bamboo. Unruly strong men he would yoke and surpress. But he would protect the weak and humble like his own parents. He was the chief man among the brothers and cousins, the Brethern of Ling. At meetings his was the final word.⁶ He was the general of all the bandits who tamed enemies. Although he was born in the clan of the Lesser Lineage, he was respected as the principal chief of all Ling.

To Gaza was born a son named Yugyal (Turquoise Victory), who while warring with Hor was lost in battle to the Hor.⁷ To Muza was born an emanation of the Brahmin Sudatta named Senglön (Lion Minister).⁸ At birth he was:

Outwardly gentle like a white silk scarf from China,
Inwardly gentle like white butter candy
With a warm, gentle feeling like the sun in Spring.
His gentle mind was loose and relaxed like a knot in a scarf.
His body was a heap of splendor
And his speech a flute of brilliant and melodious sound.
He gained control over the mechanism of his luminous mind.

He was a sky fortress of many wargods
And a castle surrounded by wermas.
He was the life stone that attracts the oath-bound protectors.⁹

Chipön, the Chief, married Bödza Metog Tashi Tso (Tibetan Wife Flower Auspicious Lake). Their eldest son was Yuphen Tag-gyal (Turquoise Benefit Tiger King). The middle son was Lenpa Chögyal (Moron Dharma King). The younger son was Nanchung Yutag (Neglectful Turquoise Tiger). And there was a daughter named Lhamo Yudrön (Goddess Turquoise Lamp), making four altogether.

Senglön wed Gyaza Lhakar Drönma (Chinese Wife Divine White Lamp). In the year

of the female Water Ox in the twelfth month their son was born, whose face was like the moon.

His mind was as vast as the sky.
All of his actions were dharma activity.
To his enemies he was a bitter thorn bush.
To his friends, he was a white silken scarf.
To the warriors he was a ferocious tiger.
He had the Six Abilities of a Warrior, like a fierce Horpa bird of prey.¹⁰

Everyone in his family called him Zhalu Nyima Rangshar (Dear Little Face of the Self-arising Sun). Outsiders called him Gyatsa Zhalkar of Clan Bumpa. For thirteen days the gurus did Long Life Prosperity ceremonies for him. The paternal elders (fathers and uncles) did aspiration prayers and the maternal elders danced and sang to celebrate his birth. The name of the Greater lineage's leader was Divine Son Namkhai Senzhal. The leader of the Middle Lineage was Lingchen Tharpa Sönam (Great Ling Merit of Liberation). The leader of the Younger Lineage was Chipön and these three offered a scarf inscribed with these verses of auspicious prayer to the neck of dear little Zhalkar:

All is well by day and well by night;
All is well even before the dawn,
Bringing continuous well-being both day and night,
May the auspiciousness of the Rare and Precious Three Jewels¹¹
pervade everywhere.

And Chipön answered:

“Oh, the great district of the white class of the gods--- possesses
This first sign of the spread of its field of power.¹²
Of dreams that come true it is the head
And will be the first to tame the Enemies of the Four Directions.
Listen to the silk scarf of this song undistractedly”:

And then the three leaders sang this song:

Ala thala thala the song is sung.¹³
We offer this song--- offer it to the great god Brahma.
Offer it to the Country God Magyal Pomra,
To the strict and mighty zodor Gedzo
And the god of males Nyentag Marpo (Red Nyen Tiger).
May the expanse of their great sovereignty cover the sky.
Great continent of the earth, may it contain all this.

In case you don't recognize this place, it is Chisö Yagi Khado.
It is the great gathering place Tagthang Tramo (Colorful Tiger Plain).
It is the site of joyful and happy reunions
In the great four-cornered yak hair tent.

If you don't know the likes of me---

I am King Chipön of Rongza.

Those who accompany me in this song are the leaders of the Greater and Middle lineages.

We three brother leaders offer this song.

Today the stars in the sky are excellent.

On earth the time is right and the signs are excellent.

Now when the three excellences unite,

On the birth celebration of the future chieftain of Mupa

White Ling is engaged in song and dance.

May the divine gurus perform longevity, prosperity, and smoke purification rituals.

May the mothers and aunts make excellent prayers.

May the fathers and brothers have open minds in their methods.

According to the sayings passed on by ancient Tibet:¹⁴

The gods, Three Jewels, and dear leaders, these three---

If you supplicate, make offerings, and show respect to them,

All desirable necessities will arise.

Trade, husbandry, and taming enemies, these three---

If accomplished with diligence are the source of prosperity.

Horses, wives, and houses, these three---

To decorate them and keep them clean is for your own good.'

Earlier on it was a custom in the land of Ling

Since the time of Ling's founder Chöphen Nagpo,

That when the enemy came, we raised our spears as one.

When goods came, we portioned them with the blade of a knife and shared.¹⁵

As for the Gold or Ser Family in the Elder Lineage, at the birthday celebration they have
given

Ten paṭas of yellow gold,

Golden armor replete with silken ruffles,

A golden helmet with a yellow silken victory banner crest,

A sword with a golden guard,

A golden horse named Soaring Golden Bird Gait,

A golden saddle with golden bridle, and gold crupper---

All adorned with a silken golden scarf of auspiciousness,

These were the nine offerings of yellow gold.

For the birth celebration of the child of Ombu, from Middle Ling they have given:

In a stupa¹⁶ of white conch

A melodious conch with clockwise turning.

Conch armor and a golden martial robe,

Conch helmet with white silk crest flags,

The sword named “Wishing, Cuts at a Touch,”
With a guard of refined white silver.
The horse with mongolian gait¹⁷ White Moon Color.
Silver saddle, silver bridle, and silver crupper---
The nine white conch articles were offered.

I, Chipön of the Mu family of the Lesser Lineage, give
A piece of White Sixth turquoise¹⁸ called Essence Milk Drop,
Turquoise armor called Craig Mountain Meteorite-Proof,
A Turquoise helmet called Vast as the Sky
Adorned with silk flags called Rich Like Massing Clouds,
The ancestral wealth of Chur lha (Coral God), Chief of Jiang,
A blonde horse¹⁹ with a turquoise-beaded mane and a saddle adorned with turquoise,
With matching turquoise bridle and crupper.
I give the sword “Cuts the Enemy to Pieces in Vendetta,”
And along with it a blue silken hand guard tie,
A fish gut scarf from Nyatra Bakha---
These are the nine blue turquoise offering articles
Offered by the family of the Lesser Lineage at the birthday celebration.

The Three Lineages of the Six Districts of Ling
Are called Great, Middle, and Lesser
Not because of any difference in the greatness of their achievements or fame,
But because they were earlier or later
In the ancestral lineage of Chöphen Nagpo.
They all came from the same paternal tribe.
The lineage leaders were three golden flowers.
They were the initiatory vase placed on the crown of the head.
Whatever words they spoke were like amṛta²⁰ on the tip of the tongue.
Whatever actions they performed were for the general weal of the Six Districts.

According to the ancient sayings of the Tibetans:

When he keeps the dharma school in the square monastery, the lama,
Master of the precious vase of sutras and tantras,
Is learned in the path, the three trainings, and practice.

When he holds the tribunal of the dear imperial chieftain,
The master of the golden throne of exalted status,
Is great in the extent of his action, field of power, and knowledge.²¹

Just so, in the Lineage of the White Snow Lionness,
Turquoise Mane²² only inhabits the regions of snow,
Never thinking to go down to the bustling town,

Just so, in the Lineage of the Children of Turquoise Dragons,
The dragon thunders his roar only in the clouds.

Never thinking to wander aimlessly through foreign lands,

In just that way the lineage of the children of Mukpo Clan
Suppresses from above the other districts,
Never thinking to accomplish other than our clan's affairs.

Furthermore, even though the royal parasol of the sun
Gives warmth to the four continents,
If the conch moon did not rise in the sky
Who could find their way in the pitch darkness of night?
The stars may sparkle, but without the sun they are useless.

In this world of Jambudvīpa, the Twelve Countries of Tibet
Are bordered on four sides by Four Demon Kingdoms.
The gods have ordained their subjugators to be the kingdom of White Ling.
In combat, before the warriors with form
And the hardy picked troops girded for battle,
The three heads of Ling will dawn like the sun.
He who presses down the necks of the formless obstructing spirits,²³
Devil harrier²⁴ of gods, cannibal demons, and ghosts,
Who is not human, but pretends to be a man and a boy,
Who is first the one to whom the imperial gods all bow down,
Second, the one nyens and body gods circumambulate,
Third, the one to whom the king of the nāgas Tsugna Rinchen makes offerings,
And fourth, the one whose body has obtained miraculous powers,
May he be born to ornament White Ling.

Where in the lineage of the three brothers of the Mukpo Dong
He will be born has already been ordained.
All of this is the fervent wish of Ling.
This fervent wish has burst forth from my mouth.
It is both an outburst and a prophecy.
By the excellent auspicious connections of these words of truth,
May this golden sun of the lineage of leaders,
That great covering, fill the sky with its vast protecting sovereignty.
May the great vessel of the earth be able to contain it.
May all that has been sung in this song turn to the Dharma.
May this whole song be as meaningful as it is melodious.
If the song has caused confusion, I confess the fault.
If the words have caused harm, I beg your forgiveness.
May the Six Districts of Ling hold this in their hearts.

Then Upper, Middle, and Lower Ling celebrated the birth with vast and extensive song and dance. As for Zhalkar, in one month's time he grew as much as other children would grow in a year. When Zhalkar came of age, the Chinese Emperor invited his three nephews: the son of Sadam of Jang named Nyitri Karchen (Twenty Thousand Great Stars), Lhabu Legpa (Auspicious Godling), a son of the Achen tribe of Hor, and Zhalu Karpo, the son of Senglön Dong Bumpa. He gave each of them wealth from the natural resources of his own country and

from nowhere else: each one got a horse, a sword, and armor as the main articles. Beyond that, gold, silver, tea, silk and so forth, about a hundred gifts were bestowed.

Then he said, “Oh dear little nephews, you three who know how to succeed in your aims, listen to the white scarf of this song without distraction. Do not forget the fruit of this meaning -- hold it in your mind. Here are three words of completely flawless advice.” Saying that he broke into song: ²⁵

“Ala the song begins this way.
And thala is the sound of the melody.
Undeceiving Refuge, the Rare and Precious Three Gems,
Inseparably abide as my crown ornament.

In case you don’t know what place this is,
This is the Magic Palace of the Chinese Lord.
In case you don’t know the likes of me---
Spanning the great, vast, azure firmament,
Extending across the face of the dense earth,
I am the ruler of China.

Now, listen to me and you will hear
These well-known sayings of days gone by:

Mount Meru, the ocean, and a great leader, these three
Are best liked when firm and unmoving.
Conversation, counsel, and arrows, these three
Are best when straight, not crooked or bent.
Lawsuits, bows, and lassos, these three---
Are best if they bend wherever they go.

Even if there are turmoil and battle between the divisions of the Great Districts,
The great leader should still be a single unmoving fortress.
The paternal lineage²⁶ of the Chinese is whiter than a conch.
One may not harm it, it is like gold.
The three horses: Pheasant, Peacock, and Duck,
Are the horse wealth of the country of China in the East.
These will be the horses beneath you, my three nephews.

armor called White Excellent God,
Second, the turquoise armor called Defeat Ten Thousand, Master a Thousand,
Third, meteoric iron armor called Slate Mountain Lightning-Proof.
This armor was magically forged by the Eight Classes of Non-Men.²⁷
With armor like this the castle of life²⁸ cannot be pierced by steal-blue weapons.
Oh my three dear ones, Zhal, Nyitri, and little Lha,
I give you this armor as your companion for life.
May it make your bodies indestructible.

In the Imperial Eastern Land of China

Three cranes were fed with iron dust.
After they vomited the dust back up,
At the very first rays of dawn,
It was forged by a Rākṣasa blacksmith
Into the sword Guzi Skydawn,
With male iron, like the wrath of a heruka,
Female iron smiling like a heruki,
And son iron like a shooting star.
Patterns on the blade like banking southern clouds.
Just holding it surpasses the eight classes of gods with splendor.
Striking with it reduces iron mountains to dust.
Nyitri Karchen of Jang, I offer this to you.

The iron dust that the cranes spat out
Was taken by the blacksmith of the king of the Tsen gods, Yamshud (Death Overlord).
In the obscure darkness of night he forged the sword
Azi Blazing Poison Slasher.
The nape of the sword is bright like the pre-dawn glow;
The belly of the blade is dark like the epitome of darkness;
Patterns on the blade are like swirling waves in the ocean;
Hard tempered iron is like an angry Rakṣasa;
Iron so flexible, it can be knotted like a cord.
Striking, it eats the enemy's flesh.
Lha'u Legpo of Hor, I offer this to you.

The iron left in the birds' stomachs
When the Morning Star shone was magically forged
By the blacksmith of the The'u rang gods.
It was forged with brass and metallic salts
And forged from iron salts and molten metal.
The cold water in which it is tempered is the blood of Rakṣasas.
Wargods throng the good nape of this sword,
The teeming wargods boost you with constant boasting.
Gandharvas throng the black bellied edge of the blade.
The gandharvas gather there groaning [for blood].²⁹
Patterns swirl on the blade like the ocean---
The pounded imprint like swelling waves.
If you strike a river's course with it
This wind sword is called "Reverses the River's Flow."
When it is in the country of China,
It bears the name "Splendidly Surpassing a Thousand Sword Points."
This is your patriarchal sword, Chieftain Zhalu.

And here is some gold, silver, and silk,
Varieties of tea and so forth that I offer.
Offerings by the hundreds to each of you in celebration--
All this in honor of the joyful meeting of uncle and nephews.

To keep the seat of an imperial leader of the Great Districts,
One must hold down the necks of the mighty and
Protect the humble as your own parents,
And be straight in secular affairs like a bamboo shaft.
One must be open-minded like the expanse of sky at break of day,
With means and wisdom like the rising sun.
Then the administration of the countries will be gentle like the earth and water in Spring.
Do not be obsessive in the activities you perform.
If you can't handle the enemy and he overcomes you,
No protector will come to save you in your weakness.
If you put black thoughts in your mind
You will never be taken for a righteous law-giver.

According to ancient Tibetan proverbs:

‘On nine round trips to China with a White Garuda dzo,³⁰
You may not mean to wound its back with a heavy burden,
But if the business be profitable it just might happen.

Riding your noble steed nine roundtrip journies to raid,
You may not mean to whip its buttocks,
But if you are after rich booty, it just might happen.

Swearing oaths of friendship nine times,
You may not intend to hurt each other's feelings with black words,
But if the mind gets stirred to anger, it just might happen.’

Heart essence of China, my three nephews,
Close relatives that you are, do not think to bicker with each other.
Still if there is a conflict between the Great Districts, it will probably occur.
Think about it and don't let your attitude change.
It is pointless for three young brothers to show each other black faces.
If one brother's sword is thrust in its sheath, let all be sheathed together.
And bind the three brother horses in one corral together.

The welfare of the white mother lineage is prime.³¹
Although the honorable garuda is great in power,
Garuda would never bear his talons and fight in space.
To the king of birds, the welfare of his own kind is prime.

Although the three potencies of the white snow lions are complete,
They would never quarrel with fellow animals on the earth.
To the king of beasts the welfare of wild beasts is prime.

If you understand this, it is molasses to the ear.
If you don't, I will not explain it.
Three princes, keep this in mind.”

After he spoke, everyone was filled with delight. Then the three princes with their ministers, retinue, horses, mules, and so forth each happily returned to his own place.

While Bumpa Gyatsa was traveling from Gorgeous Upper White Ling to China, war broke out between Gog and Ling. The Eighteen Clans of Gog were destroyed by Ling. In the end the son of Chipön, Lenpa Chögyal, was lost to Gog. For some time they kept this secret from Gyatsa.

One day Gyatsa went hunting close to the spring called White Lady Myriad Swirls. He had just killed a deer when two wandering villagers from Ling, a mother and son, came there. She recognized that he was Gyatsa and said, “Hey, you must be Gyatsa. Wow, this is great!

With you White Ling is the best.
Without you, we’re nothing.

It’s really true. Last year while Gyatsa was away, Gog and Ling fought and even though Ling destroyed The Eighteen Clans of Gog, what was the point, since Lenpa Chögyal, Chipön’s cherished heart son was killed? Even now, in the districts of White Ling they are saying that Gyatsa will take revenge. And by the way, since I’m already standing here before the greatly kind leader, won’t you please give me a piece of this meat you’ve caught?”

He gave her whatever meat she wanted and carefully asked her questions. She spoke without concealing anything. Regret that he had not been there in Gog pierced Zhalkar’s heart like an arrow. Instantly he departed for Chipön’s Falcon Fortress: “Oh Uncle King Chipön, aren’t you like the saying:

‘First a miserable failure in one’s own affairs;
Second, a useless pimp when it comes to others.
Third and finally, just being full of shit.’

You have kept this a secret from your own people, but blabbed it to the other hundred provinces.”

He said and broke into this short warrior’s song.

“The song is ala thala thala.
Thala is the melody.
I bow at the feet of the Refuge, the Ocean of Victorious Ones.
In case you don’t recognize this place,
It is the rich Falcon Castle Sky Fortress.
In case you don’t recognize the likes of me,
I am Gyatsa Zhalkar of Bumpa.
I’m the nephew of the Emperor of China.
Now then, your highness King Chipön,
Everyone says your great intelligence is bright as the dawning sky.
But plunged in obscurity, your sky never dawned.
The ancient sayings talk of what we should tell:

‘If the minister embezzles food, tell the chief;
If someone is lost to the enemy, inform the warriors.
If there’s been a robbery, dispatch someone clever in pursuit.’

With these three tellings all is well.
But you, man, just hide your faults to yourself,
So that the chiding words of a beggar woman loaded me with ridicule and shame.

My older brother Lenpa Chögyal--
When I think of him now, my heart winds are depressed.
Two things brought the death of my older brother:
First, meaningless battle with Gog.
Second, allowing intermarriage with Hor.³²
It all started with the black shadow of Yellow Hor,
Kunga’s ill-omened daughter.
These two brought the downfall of my elder brother.
Kunga’s daughter, Zima Lake---
Send her tear-marked face back to Hor.
She must not be allowed to remain in White Ling.
For I have lost my older brother to Gog.

Yes, and his avenger shall be Gyatsa.
For I am Zhalkar, like a white snow lion.
The six skills of a warrior are my flourishing turquoise mane.
Since I eat the red meat of my enemy like a hunter eats game,
I don’t need the help of carnivore foxes.

I Gyatsa am the best red tiger of all,
Armor and weapons shine on my body like the six smiles of a tiger.³³
Since I can drink the heart’s blood of the enemy ponies,
I don’t need any spotted leopards butting in.

Now I’ll stay no longer. I go to the land of Upper Gog--
First to take revenge nine-fold.
Second, to avenge myself further, to drink the enemy’s heart blood.
And third, to see to it that the land of Gog is no more.
If I do not succeed, Gyatsa is like a corpse.
If you understand this speech, it is molasses to the ear.
If you don’t, I’m not going to explain this song.
Chipön keep this in your mind.”

Just as he had spoken, Gyatsa decided to depart alone without any more discussion.
Chipön thought to himself:

“It’s best not to go to war at this time.
But I won’t manage to convince Zhalkar not to go.
And how could he possibly go alone?
I must tell him how everything happened.”

With this thought, he began to sing a song which told the whole story and described the discussion about plans for sending a reinforcement army:

“I can’t help but sing this song.
If I don’t sing it, there’s nothing left to do.
When happy, this is a marvelous song for tea and liquor.
When sad, it’s a song to restore one’s mind.

Undeceiving Three Jewels of Refuge
And worldly zodiacs of White Ling,
Come here today to befriend Chipön.
Precious gem of the divine lineage of Bumpa,
With a relaxed mind, please listen to what I have to say.

Last year, we argued with Gog about land and people.
And since we couldn’t settle on a treaty or accord,
War finally broke out between Gog and Ling.
The chieftain of Tagrong, Zigphen,
Plus Chipön, Lenpa Chögyal, and
Maternal nephew-uncle Denma Changtra, these three
Could remain no longer and left for the Upper Land of Gog.
They annihilated the Eighteen Clans of Gog.³⁴
But it didn’t help, for still in the final outcome
Lenpa Chögyal was slain.

Then, so that Ling could have its nine-fold revenge,
The entire male gender was killed
And Gog became a land full of mourning widows.

But in the neighborhood of Ralo Tönpa³⁵
Everyone was concealed by the lha, lu, and nyen.³⁶
Thus the Ling soldiers could not see them and they were left behind.
I can’t conceive how you could possibly conquer them now.
Their protector and refuge is known as Ugyen Padmasambhava.
Their guardian is the nāga king Tsugna Rinchen for
The nāga Tsugna’s daughter is in Gog.

What I, Chipön think is
In the ancient Mother Tablets³⁷ of the Mupko Clan there is this prophecy:

‘That jewel within the ocean³⁸
Will be taken by the mouse from the pinnacle of the victory banner.
Whatever of the White is desired will be accomplished.’

If you think about it, doesn’t this apply here?

Last year during the turmoil of battle it was a case of the proverb:

‘Raising a really long club
To strike the snout of a really short old dog.
The undesired harvest of famine
Brings down weakness, suffering, and exhaustion of merit.’

After the battle the brethren put their heads together in Ling,
But I, Chipön was without my son.
According to the ancient proverbs:

‘Just because the King of Birds moults feather and wing,
That does make the white crag move or shake.
Just because the golden-eyed fish is caught on a hook,
Don’t think that the ocean will grow or shrink.
If you lose one eye in battle,
Don’t think that you can take revenge your whole life.’

Knowing I’m sonless does not torment me,
Because you, nephew Ghatsa, are alive and well.
I have no thought to seek revenge.
I swear this is true on the ancestral Hundred Thousand Verse Scripture.³⁹
Let me tell you these most dark mystery words:

First the daughter of the nāga king Tsugna,
Second, the dri cow⁴⁰ with prosperity horns,
Third, the Fine Blue Nine-winged Tent,
Fourth, the Twelve Scriptures of the Nāgas in a Hundred-Thousand Verses--
These most precious inner treasures of the cold-blooded nāgas⁴¹
Are now the inner wealth of Ralo Tönpa.
I wonder if these four could come to belong to Ling?
If that happened, whatever we wish would be fulfilled.
When the year of the mouse begins
I think the prophecy will come to pass.

Keep these words as the jewel within your collar.
If you go, there’s no reason for you to go alone.
Go shoulder to shoulder with Zigphen of Tagrong.
Let Denma bring up the rear guard.
Go with an army seventy thousand strong.
You must go arm in arm with all of the kinsmen.
To the zodor country gods
Make offerings and praise them with smoke and windhorse.⁴²
Dear chieftain Zhalkar, for your first raid
Perhaps you can win the booty without a fight.
If you understand these words, they’re molasses to your ear.
If not, I’m not going to explain it.
Chieftain Zhalkar, keep this in your heart.”

Then the kinsmen had a productive discussion. The very next morning messages and messengers were sent to the upper, lower, and middle regions of Ling like falling snow. The cousins and nephews decided among themselves that they would dispatch seven armies of ten thousand to Gog. Three days later at the crack of dawn, in the Assembly hall Tagthang Tramo (Colorful Tiger Plain) they gathered in a state of perfect readiness.

Then Trothung⁴³ thought: “Even though Zhalu of the Bumpa clan is a white snow lion, still he can be caught by the hand. Although he’s a red tiger, you can still hold him down by the ears. If his cousins and brothers and his relief army follow him to Gog, then the land of Gog will be no more, they will utterly annihilate it. This daughter of Nāga Tsugna along with the nāga wealth will be our booty. Zhalu will become legendary throughout Tibet. Even though all the treasures we capture will become the general property of Ling, yet it’s certain that the daughter will belong to the Younger Lineage⁴⁴ and not to my clan. I’m going to have to do something about this.

Therefore I’ll be a stool pigeon and do Kyalo a great favor. Afterwards I will ask him to give the Nāga princess to Tagrong as my personal portion of the booty. Along with her I will certainly acquire some of the wealth of the nāgas. Even if that doesn’t work out, she holds the name of her father, the nāga Tsugna Rinchen. What could be better than that anyway?”

He placed a charm of swift flight on a golden arrow and attached this letter to its neck:

“Respectfully presented to Ralo Tönpa Gyaltsen of Gog:
From Trothung the Chieftain of Tagrong;

The blood price for killing Chipön’s son last year is that Bumpa Zhalkar, leading seven armies of ten thousand mighty warriors, is determined to attack you tomorrow. Fighting won’t get you out of this. Therefore by nightfall it is important for you to escape to a safe and remote place. Now I have done you a great favor. Henceforth, if there’s a good turn you can do me, don’t forget what I’ve done for you.“

Then he conjured and enjoined the arrow to land on the top of Ralo’s tent. He shot it from the peak of Gedzo Rimar Wangzhu. With a sound of sparks, the arrow struck the top of the tent. Ralo quickly noticed that there was a letter tied to its neck. He read and understood the meaning and instantly sent messengers and messages throughout the land of Gog. But the mules and horses were unable to carry the turquoise tent and the Hundred Thousand Verse Nāga treasure. They were barely able to carry the dri horn nāga treasure.

That very night they began their journey, traveling to the border of the province of Hor in the region of Ma (*Mashöd*). During their nighttime escape, the dri carrying the nāga treasure turned around and went back up the path. The nāga daughter saw this, but no one else did. Because the moment of destiny had come, although the nāgini was riding a horse, she dismounted. Feeling more inclined to walk, she set out after it, but was unable to catch the running dri. Her horse got loose and went back following the clan. Although she called back to them, by the power of karma, no one could hear her. She followed after the dri along the banks of the Ma River valley. When she stopped, the dri would stop as well. Whether she went quickly or slowly, the dri would do the same and so she couldn’t quite catch up with it. Several times she almost caught it, but it would continue down the path, the nāgini still chasing the dri. The path they took wandered about aimlessly. During that time it never even occurred to her that she might be suffering from hunger, thirst, pain, or exhaustion.

Just then the Ling army, its armor and weapons flashing, arrived in the country of Gog. The land of Gog had become empty. There was nothing left except cushions and beds.

The Ling soldiers gathered for a meeting and Zhalkar, Sengtag Adom, and so on, all the young warriors, were sent on reconnaissance to find out where the people of Gog had gone. Some soldiers said, “We don’t know where they’ve gone, all these soldiers are just going to tire ourselves out to no end. Why don’t we just go back?”

Then Chipön said, “Although we may be following them for just a little silver, wherever the soldiers of the White Ling go, they have never returned, empty handed, with no booty. How could we possibly leave without a victory? So let’s have Senglön perform a divination and base our decision on that.” Then Senglön did an arrow divination and respectfully gave them as the outcome:

“If we go as far as the the time it takes to drink tea, then
Beauty is nectar to the eyes;
The refined essence of the nectar is inexhaustible,
And the treasure trove that fulfills all needs and desires will be ours.
Without fighting it will fall into our hands.
We will not need to slide our weapons in their sheaths.
The arrow will not be notched in the bow.
Victory will be decided by our field of power alone.”

Then Trotung of Tagrong thought, “That divination was amazing. It must be a sign that all of this will eventually come round to Tagrong. However it is certain that today there will be no booty.” Trothung thought he might have to seek advantage by accusing Senglön of making an inaccurate divination. So he derisively said, “Hah! If your victory in this empty land occurs without even notching the arrow in the bow or sliding the swords from their sheaths, then the fee for your divination today should be the booty itself.”

Chipön, who knew how great the booty would be, said, “Well then, if that is the chief of Tagrong’s decision today, then let it be that way. Now let’s boil some tea and make a smoke offering to the gods. Then we’ll go.”

Then they went out to gather juniper for the smoke offering.

Now, it turns out that before this all happened, Ralo Tönpa had asked his guru, Dorje Gyaltzen (Vajra Banner), for counsel. The lama predicted that in this year Ralo’s wealth would be taken away and he would be attacked by enemies. He had better make many smoke offerings and accumulate appeasement and expiation offerings to the wargods. Ralo, therefore, had prepared offerings enough to fill a hundred yak saddle bags--varieties of woods, rhododendrons, juniper, tamarisk, and wormwood. These prepared offerings the men of Ling discovered and gathered up to make their own smoke offering -- a great smoke offering that would fill all of space.

Chipön said, “Today the auspicious connection is excellent, because this is the first raid of the warrior Gyatsa. Mikyong Karpo (Sengtag Adom), he whose castle Pala is a support around which the wargods of White Ling flock, do you now invoke the gods and raise a song that will cause the wargods to alight on the body of the warrior!⁴⁵ You other mighty warriors, raise aloft your three-fold panoplies, arrows, and spears, and stand at attention.”

Then there came the warrior Sengtag Adom, a white man with a white horse bearing a white flag and a white helmet with white pennants, his white cape covering his back. He bore spear pennants, banners, and a divine white lasso. Adorned with these nine whites--- white as

though they had emerged from the white gods themselves, he raised this song like a haughty snow lion in his prime:

“The song begins with ala ala ala
Thala gives the melody.
The refuge, the Rare and Supreme Three Jewels,
Please remain inseparable as my crown ornament.
If you don’t know this place,
It has degraded into an empty desert of the black enemy,
A place White Ling has conquered,
The fatherland of Gog Ralo Tönpa.
In case you don’t know the likes of me,
I am Seng Adom, a wolf among men
From the Maroon Palace of Kyutri.
This horse is Thousand Mountains Treasury of Wealth.
I am the emanation son of Mount Machen Pomra in the East and
The heart son of the god, White Brahma.
Today, the day of auspiciousness,
We make a smoke offering to please the gods of the Rare and Supreme Three Jewels.
First from the morning side of the valley, we gather the juniper.
Then from the shady side rhododendrons,
And third from between them the white tamarisk:
These three are known to be the deathless amṛta trees.
Buddha Locana is the oven for burning.⁴⁶
Mamakī is the water we sprinkle.
We melt with the power of Pāṇḍarāvāsini
We summon with the wind of Samaya Tārā.
It blazes in the expanse of the space of Dhātviśvari.
Clouds of smoke are the self-manifestation of emptiness,
The spontaneous, natural, continuous treasure of all that is desired.
By making this smoke offering of the amṛta of appearance-emptiness⁴⁷
To the Dharmakāya-Vajradhara,
The Sambhogakāya- the victorious Five Buddha Families,⁴⁸
And the Nirmāṇakāya Three Protectors Bodhisattvas⁴⁹---
The three tutelary deities of White Ling, may all be purified.

First Guru Padmasambhava,
Second Great Ling Glorious Lion,
And third, the teacher of the Ling clan, Guide of Enlightenment.
By the three lamas of Ling may all be cleansed.

Ḍākinī Yeshe Tsogyal,
The only mother, the Queen of Accomplishments,
And Manene Exalted Lady Queen.⁵⁰
By these three ladies of Ling, may all be cleansed.

The great god, White Brahma
Lord of the Nyen, Five Topknots,
And the Nāga king Tsugna Rinchen:
By these three deities that protect White Ling may we be purified.

Red Nyentag (Red Nyen Tiger),
Oath bound Vajrasadhu,
Life Lord of the Three Worlds, Pehar:
By these three, the protectors who uphold the ancestral heritage of Mugpo Dong, may all be purified.

The wargod who abides on the top of the white helmet,
The garudas who encircle the vulture feathered silk headdress,
And the wargods who rest on the black armor,
Those wargods who surround the warrior like a cape of eight auspicious symbols,
The wargods who alight on the shield,
Who surround the whip and guard the perimeter,
The wargods who alight on the dawn-colored spear pennants,
On the sight of the single notched straight arrow
And on the supreme white bowstring and the blade of the sword,
And on the magic slingshot propelled by the winds---
By all the wargods who surround these, may all be purified.

One wargod delivers into our hands
The vow-corrupting unruly enemies.
One conquers all comers at all costs.
One wargod kills just by a touch of his weapons:
May these three kindred wargod victors of the land cleanse all.

Some wargods make one unseen by the enemy, some make us proof against weapons,
And the life force free from threats. All these protectors surround like a tent:
May these three brotherhoods of protecting wargods cleanse all.

Pleasing speech, prosperity, and
Raising windhorse to give universal victory,
By the three brethern wargods who increase these, may all be cleansed.
The noble stallion's fancy baubles and trappings,
The four hooves like wheels of wind,
And the downy vulture feathers protruding from his ears,
May the wargods that surround the horse cleanse all.
May the werma who fill the heavens cleanse all.
May the great gong whose sound fills intermediate space cleanse all.

Above we offer silk banners filling the sky,
Like white clouds of the wargods *tha ra ra*.⁵¹
People fill the space between
With the dragon sound of *Ki So u ru ru*.
The face of the earth is covered with horses.

The rain of siddhis is falling *si li li*---
Inconceivable reward of the six grains.

Thus do these wargods mark the white day
Of the first raid of Chieftain Gyatsa.
The enemy aggression could not bear the splendor of his presence.
Look how they fled in the depths of the black earth.
After the black enemy is suppressed under ground
Then the many sparkling rewards will fall in our own hands.
First the dharmic wealth of the gods above---
May we today gain that as our reward.
Second the increasing wealth of the humans in the middle---
May we today be apportioned that as our reward.
Third, the inexhaustible wealth and riches of the *nāgas* below---
May we have our portion of that booty today.

White Ling and the gods are integral to each other.
The aims of the white gods will be fulfilled.
May White Ling be ornamented with myriad colorful rewards.
May this account prevail throughout the world.
May whatever we wish for be spontaneously achieved.
May the myriad rewards arrive in our hands.
Although it may be necessary for this army to be deployed for a year,
We are prepared even to encircle the Southern continent of Jambudvīpa.
May whatever prayers we make come to pass.

If you understand this song, it will be molasses to your ears.
If not, I am not going to try to explain it.
Cousins and brothers of Ling keep this in your mind.

As they rode off, they shouted in unison the warrior cry of *Ki So and Lha Gyal Lo*.
(Divine Victory).⁵²