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པི་ཅི་མིན་མོད་རིག་པའི་དབྱུང་ལྗོངས་ཕྱོགས་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་དབྱུང་ཚོམ་གནད་བཅུ་ལྔ་

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On the Structure of the Collection of Lyrical Songs Ascribed to the Sixth Dalai Lama

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The subject matter of this note appeared quite by chance and at first seemed somewhat dubious. Any real attempt to find “a deeper structure [within] this quite heterogenous corpus of songs” (as Per Sørensen correctly puts it) has to

seem, at first sight, to be a fruitless task. It seems enough to find a number of groups of between two and, at most, five songs, connected with one another in a thematic and/or lexical way. For instance, the connection between songs 7-9 is quite evident, where the image of approaching autumn is used to show the fading of love; of these three, songs 7 and 8 share an image of bees and flowers. Another example here is found in songs 30-33, with its story of loss of a beloved woman won by a stronger rival. But how can we tie together all these apparently disparate groups, particularly when we consider the fact that a number of songs cannot be assigned to any group at all?

This question might perhaps not have occurred to me had it not been for one event. When I translated the Sixth Dalai Lama’s songs into Russian and made glossaries for each of them, I came upon a few lexical issues noted also by other scholars. One of them appears in the opening verse of the collection, the enigmatic phrase *ma-skyes a-ma*. The majority of translators see here a reference to a young girl - a virgin, perhaps, a fantasy, unreal. That no-one found any relation to the hero’s mother is not surprising, though, since the context of Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho’s work is primarily amorous.

Nonetheless, two arguments suggest that this interpretation might, in fact, be more fruitful. Firstly, it appears to be the intuitive translation favored by Tibetans themselves. I asked Jampa Namdrol, a young Tibetan working at the Tibetan collection of the St Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS, about this phrase; with total assurance, he translated it as “one’s own mother” or “mummy” - which is interesting, if one interprets the first part as *ma(r)-skyes*, literally “she who bore down” (i.e. gave birth), hence “own, dear”. Of course, the opinion of one Tibetan can hardly be definitive in this matter, touching as it does a work written three hundred years ago. This point of view, however, gets a sudden boost from the second argument - the idea that there is a timeline which binds together the entire collection of Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho’s songs.

If we turn our attention to the final songs of the collection, we can see that they offer a culmination of the drama which runs throughout the corpus. The hero’s need to hide his nocturnal adventures and the fear that they might be discovered (song 52), the realisation of this fear (53) and the acknowledgement of the tension between his societal role and his emotional life (54), his misgivings about his beloved (55) and,

finally, his parting from her (56), the point at which the drama reaches its height. A whole story unfolds in front of us and we can see it in the tragic end of Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho's life, as indicated clearly in the final two songs. In song 57 the poet promises to come back, in his next life, from Li-thang (precisely where the Seventh Dalai Lama was born), while in song 58 he prays that his next life might be more accommodating than this one.

Thus the collection ends with the anticipation of his death and the prophecy of his rebirth: does all this not suggest, then, that the first song is about the poet's mother, that the collection begins by hinting at the birth of the hero? In my opinion, it does, especially if we add here another observation, noted by L

Savitsky but not explained by him, concerning the very title of the collection, the xylograph and manuscript of which he himself had published: Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho'i rnam-thar snyan-'grugs kyis bkod-pa. It is absolutely clear to me that this title should be translated as "The Biography of Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho, Composed in Poetic Fragments", and that it shows that the collection of songs must be considered as a linear depiction of the Sixth Dalai Lama's life. Thus, the conjecture that the first song refers to the hero's birth seems very likely, while the fact that the final songs depict the tragic end of his life is, to my mind, indisputable. On the other hand, the songs lying in between do not fall as neatly into place under such interrogation; nonetheless it is my intention to indicate the trajectory, whilst encouraging other scholars to expand and develop the whole picture.

As far as song 2 is concerned, we have every reason to interpret it as depicting the hero's growing up. The images of green sprouts transforming into hard straw and a young body becoming even more pliant than a southern bow seem to illustrate the ways in which a boy changes into a man. This change naturally brings about new, sensual desires, which are reflected in the subsequent group of songs (3-6), focussing on immature, still rather shy dreams about love, the possessing of a beloved girl. Interestingly, in song 5, this girl is referred to as the daughter of a minister, most probably the mighty regent, Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho. We can suppose that, having known this girl from childhood, Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho could straightaway fall in love with her. But here tragedy appears, as the young man recognizes that his fate, prescribed by the Regent, prevents this passion from taking place.

Under the weight of these thoughts, or because his passion was indeed fulfilled, or for some other reason, love fades in his heart, leaving a sadness, as we can see from songs 7-9 and, perhaps, 10. But, forgetting about his most recent lover, the young Dalai Lama finds an outlet for his desires in other, more available, targets and stories of numerous infatuations appear before us. The first is a meeting with a simple market-girl - though contact with her cannot, as often happens in young love affairs, last long (11). But young love, as a rule, is followed by more serious infatuations and, immediately, in song 12 the lovelorn hero erects a prayer-flag in the hope of acquiring a girl with whom he is so in love, that her image is always present in his heart (13). That the next song (14) comes where it does, however, is more due to the similarity of images than to any logical order. The following pair of songs (15-16), though, indicates that Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho's love was apparently directed

towards a well-educated girl, who was inclined to become a nun. This theme, however, indicates the poet's reflections on his official status - as a man who took dge-tshul vows and was obliged to be the religious (as well as secular) leader of Tibet. Songs 17-18 point to the tragic impossibility of combining worldly aspirations with the study of Buddhist doctrine - at least the next two songs (19-20) tell us that Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho got some knowledge of the latter.

Nevertheless, the craving for love won out. In songs 21-23 we find another

Story of a love affair - this time with a girl from a noble family. And again it is interrupted by thoughts of his religious duties (24-25); and again his love turns out to be stronger. Now we have reached a crucial moment in the collection. After two very moving songs (26-27) in which the hero asks his beloved to assure him that her love is unflinching, there comes song 28 where we can feel a hint of the appearance of a child for Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho and his lover. As Savitsky points out, Th J. Norbu and C.M Turnbull, in their book Tibet recount a story that the Sixth Dalai Lama became a father, after which both his son and the mother were jailed. This may be a reason why song 30 speaks about rumors of the hero's secret, which reached the ears of his enemy; the poet then tells about the cruel loss of the woman who was stolen from him (30-33).

But his life did not stop there. New infatuations followed, though not such happy ones. Songs 34-37 mention the fleetingness of women's love and how it is impossible to keep hold of a woman who no longer loves you. This provokes a new crisis, deepened also through a lack of understanding shown by Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho's patron, the all-powerful Regent: weakness in the face of circumstance - such is the burden of songs 38-40.

There are, however, a number of songs which do not so smoothly follow the biographical timeline. While songs 41-44 have a clear thematic unity, developing the astrological theme, several of the subsequent songs (45-49) seem to be isolated from one another, with texts based around religious ideas (45, 47) mixed with obviously secular ones (46, 48-49). But such an interruption, however, must not confuse us. Firstly, it is not such a lengthy sequence; secondly, we are not dealing with a physical format in which everything has to follow a strict order: it would be rather strange to imagine that Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho wrote his songs exclusively to mark the circumstances of his life. We can see in this a kind of lyrical digression beyond the concerns of the poet's life.

We are finally approaching the denouement. At the beginning of this paper, I referred to songs 52-28, but we should perhaps add here also songs 50-51 as the image of a parrot whom the hero asks not to disclose his secret is quite similar to that of a dog in song 52. If this conjecture is correct we also get a depiction of the poet's final lover - a girl from Chung-gyel, lofty and beautiful. It is she to whom Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho goes at night, leaving in the snow the footprints which are to betray him; it is she to whom he says farewell, promising to come back - not in this life but in the next, since the secret is the secret no more and Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho is destined for his tragic finale....

In conclusion, I would like to say a couple of words about why no-one has yet

found this structure in the collection of Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho's songs. It seems to me connected with the fact that scholars have, by adding a further eight songs to the collection, eroded its borders. Moreover, the very fact that the collection was made also escaped the scholars' attention. Surely, we can only surmise who compiled it: Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho himself, one of his contemporaries or else a later scholar. In any case, since the textual study of the St Petersburg xylograph carried out by Savitsky leads us to think that this collection existed at least at the turn of the 18th century, we can be sure that the compiler was, if not the Sixth Dalai Lama himself, at least a contemporary or near-contemporary. As for the final eight songs, their style resembles the other songs; nonetheless, in my opinion, we should consider them as separate, otherwise the integrity is affected. The importance of this integrity, I hope, has been demonstrated in this note - this text seems to represent a poetical biography of one of the most romantic and tragic figures in the whole of Tibetan history.

གཞན་ལུང་མེད་དེ་མོ་གསལ་རུ་བསྐྱར་བ་ཡིན། གཅིག་བྱས་ན་མ་སྐྱེས་ཨ་མ་དེ་རྟོག་བཟོ་བྱས་པ་ཡིན་པ་དང་། གང་ལྟར་མི་སུ་
ཅིག་གིས་ཀྱང་དབའ་བོའི་ཨ་མ་དང་འབྲེལ་བའི་བྱ་དངོས་ཅི་ཡང་སྟོན་མེད་པ་ཡིན་ལ། དེར་ཉ་ལས་དོན་ཡང་མེད་དེ། ཅིའི་སྲིར་
ཞེ་ན་ཚངས་དབྱེད་སྐྱེ་མཚོའི་མཁུར་སྐྱའི་ནང་དོན་ནི་བརྟེ་རུང་བརྟོན་པ་ཡིན་པས་སོ།།

གལ་ཏེ་ང་ཚོས་མཁུར་འབྲུམ་གྱི་མཇུག་མཐུར་བལྟས་ཚེ་མཁུར་འབྲུམ་ཉིལ་བོའི་སློབ་ཏུ་ཞུགས་པའི་སྟུན་དག་གི་ཚེས་
མཚན་པའི་ཉམས་དེ་མངོན་ཡོད་པ་རྟོགས་ཤུབ་སྟེ། མཁུར་སྐྱེ་ཨང་ང་གཉིས་པའི་ནང་མི་སྣ་གཙོ་བོས་རང་ཉིད་ཀྱི་མཚན་མོའི་
ཉེན་ཁའི་བྱ་སྟོན་དེ་གསལ་དགོས་ཤིང་མི་གཞན་པས་ཤེས་པར་སྐྱབས་པ་དང་། ཨང་ང་གསུམ་གྱི་ནང་རུ་འཇིགས་སྐྱབས་དེ་མངོན་རུ་
སྐྱར་བ། ཨང་ང་བཞིའི་ནང་རང་ཉིད་ཀྱི་སྤྱི་ཚོགས་གོ་གནས་དང་བརྟེ་རུང་འཚོ་བའི་བར་གྱི་འགལ་བ་དེ་རྟོགས་པ། ཨང་ང་ལྔའི་
ནང་རང་གི་བྱ་མཁས་པར་སེམས་ཁུལ་བྱེད་པ། ཨང་ང་དྲུག་གི་ནང་རང་ཉིད་དང་སྟོན་ཉེ་མ་ཁ་ཁུལ་བ། མཚན་མས་འདིར་སློབ་གར་
གྱི་ཡང་ཅེར་སོན་ཡོད། ཨང་ང་བདུན་གྱི་ནང་རང་ཉིད་སྐྱེ་བ་གྱི་མར་ལི་ཐང་བསྐོར་ནས་ཡོང་བར་ཁས་བླངས་ཤིང་། ཨང་ང་
བརྒྱད་ཀྱི་ནང་རང་ཉིད་ཀྱི་ཚེ་གྱི་མའི་ཚེ་བཟ་སྐྱེ་བ་འདི་ཉིད་ལས་རིང་བར་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས་པ་དང་། དེ་དག་ལས་ང་ཚོས་
ཚངས་དབྱེད་སྐྱེ་མཚོའི་མི་ཚེ་ཉིལ་བོ་སློབ་གར་གྱིས་མཇུག་བལྟས་པ་རྟོགས་ཡོད།

དེ་ལྟར་མཁུར་འབྲུམ་ཉིལ་བོ་ནི་སྟུན་དག་པ་སྟེ་ཚངས་དབྱེད་སྐྱེ་མཚོས་རང་ཉིད་འཚོ་བའི་སྟུན་དག་དང་ཚོ་གྱི་མའི་
ལུང་བསྟན་གྱིས་མཇུག་སྐྱེལ་ཡོད་དེ། མཁུར་སྐྱེ་དང་བོ་ནི་སྟུན་དག་པའི་མ་ཡུམ་གྱི་སྟོར་ཡིན་པ་དང་། དེས་ན་མཁུར་འབྲུམ་ཉིལ་
བོ་ནི་མི་སྣ་གཙོ་བོ་འབྱུངས་པ་དང་བསྟུན་ནས་མགོ་བརྒྱུམས་པ་བྱུགས་སུ་བསྟན་པ་ཨེ་ཡིན་ནམ། ཁོ་བོས་དེ་ལྟར་རུ་འདོད་དེ།
མཁུར་འབྲུམ་གྱི་བརྟོན་སྟོན་གྱི་ལྟ་བུ་འདོན་མཁན་ས་ལེ་སི་ཇི་ཡིས་ཁོ་རང་གི་བརྒྱུམས་ཚོས་ཚངས་དབྱེད་སྐྱེ་མཚོའི་རྣམ་
ཐར་» ཞེས་པའི་ནང་མཁུར་འབྲུམ་འདི་ནི་རྒྱལ་དབང་སྐྱེ་བའི་དྲུག་པའི་མི་ཚོ་གང་པོའི་ཐིག་རིས་ཀྱི་ཞིབ་བརྟོན་ཅིག་རུ་དེས་བར་
རུ་བརྟེ་དགོས་ཞེས་གསལ་བོར་བསྟན་ཡོད། དེའི་རྒྱུན་གྱིས་མཁུར་སྐྱེ་དང་བོས་མི་སྣ་གཙོ་བོ་སྐྱེ་འབྱུངས་པ་བྱུགས་སུ་བསྟན་པའི་
ཚོད་དབུག་དེ་བདེན་དེས་བར་སྟུམ། མཁུར་སྐྱེ་གཉིས་པའི་ནང་མི་སྣ་གཙོ་བོ་ནང་སོན་པའི་བརྒྱུད་རིམ་ཞིབ་བརྟོན་བྱེད་ཀྱིན་
ཡོད་པར་རྒྱ་མཚན་ཁུངས་བཅོན་ཡོད། མཁུར་སྐྱེ་གསུམ་པ་ནས་དྲུག་པའི་ནང་སྟོན་སྐྱབས་བྱུགས་པ་ཞིག་ཡོད་འདོད་པའི་འདུན་པ་
བརྟོན་པ་དང་། སློབ་ཤེས་པ་ཞིག་ལ་མཁུར་སྐྱེ་ལྟ་བུའི་ནང་རུ་སྟོན་སྐྱབས་དེ་ནི་དཔོན་ཆེན་ཞིག་གི་བྱ་མོ་ཡིན་པ་སྟེ་ཡོད་ལ། དཔོན་
ཆེན་དེ་ནི་སྟེ་སྟོན་སངས་རྒྱས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཡིན་པའི་དེས་པ་ཆེ། ང་ཚོས་ཚངས་དབྱེད་སྐྱེ་མཚོས་ལུང་མེད་འདིའི་བྱིས་པའི་རུས་ཏེ་
ཅང་རྒྱས་ཡོན་ཡོད་ཅིང་དེར་སྐྱབས་པ་མེད་པར་སེམས་ཤོར་བ་དེ་ཚོད་བཞིས་ཚོག་ཡིན་ནའང་། སོ་གཞན་ཞིག་ཡིན་པའི་ཆ་ནས་

མཇུག་མཐར་ཁོ་བོས་བཤད་འདོད་པ་ནི། ཚངས་དབྱངས་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་མཁུར་འབྲུམ་ཁྲོད་ཀྱི་རྒྱུག་གཞི་འདི་རྟོགས་མཁན་
 མེད་པའི་རྒྱ་མཚན་ཅི་ཡིན་པ་དང་། ཁོ་བོས་བལྟས་ན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་པ་ཚོས་མཁུར་གྱུ་བརྒྱད་ཁ་རྩོན་བརྒྱབ་པ་དེས་སྤྲད་རྩོན་
 ཐེབས་པ་དང་། གཞན་མཁུར་འབྲུམ་ལ་ལས་རྩོན་རྒྱབ་སྲོལ་བའི་དོན་དངོས་ཀྱང་ཞིབ་འཇུག་པས་དོ་སྣང་མི་བྱེད་པ་རེད། ད་དུང་
 མཁུར་འབྲུམ་འདི་ནི་ཚངས་དབྱངས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཁོ་རང་ཉིད་དང་ཡང་ན་ཁོ་རང་དང་དུས་མཉམ་པའི་མི་ཞིག་ཡང་ན་རྗེས་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་
 མཁུར་བ་གང་དུང་ཞིག་སྟེ་སྤུས་ཚོམ་རྒྱུག་གནང་བའི་ཐད་ལ་ང་ཚོས་འོལ་ཚོད་བྱེད་པ་ལས་ཐབས་མེད། གང་ལྟར་རྩོན་པོས་ཉི་ཤོ་
 ཡི་ས་བེ་སི་ཇི་ལགས་ཀྱི་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ལས་ང་ཚོས་མཁུར་འབྲུམ་འདི་ནི་མ་མཐར་ཡང་དུས་རབས་བཙོ་བརྒྱད་པར་བྱུང་བའི་དེའི་
 ཚོམ་རྒྱུག་གནང་མཁན་ཡང་རྒྱལ་དབང་རྒྱ་སྤེང་དུག་པ་ཁོ་རང་མིན་ཚེ་ཁོ་དང་དུས་མཉམ་པའམ་ཡང་ན་ཁོའི་དུས་སྐབས་དང་
 ཐབས་ཉེ་བའི་མི་ཞིག་ཡིན་པ་ཐག་གིས་ཚོད། མཇུག་གི་མཁུར་གྱུ་བརྒྱད་པོ་དེའི་ཚོམ་གཤིས་མཁུར་གྱུ་གཞན་དག་དང་འབྲེན་འདྲ་
 ཁོ་བོའི་བསམ་པར་དེ་ཁོར་རྒྱུད་གི་ཁག་ཅིག་བྱས་ན་མ་གཏོགས་མཁུར་འབྲུམ་གྱི་ཆ་ཚང་རང་བཞིན་ལ་གཞོད་པ་ཐེབས་པར་
 ལྷོ།