

The Epic of King Ling Gesar

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King Gesar, an International Cultural Hero:

Ling Gesar Gyalpo ལྷིང་གེ་སར་རྒྱལ་པོ་

(‘King Gesar of Ling’) is a legendary Tibetan king, a cultural and spiritual hero, and the central figure in the Gesar epic



The Gesar epic is the longest Epic poem in the world

EPIC TRADITION: 11TH -12TH

Gesar story-telling, performance and ritual traditions are found in *Tibet* (especially *Eastern Tibet*), *Mongolia*, *Buryatia*, *Ladakh*, and *Bhutan*



CAESAR

Some believe the name Gesar is linked to the Latin Caesar. Gesar is also sometimes called the **‘Tibetan King Arthur’**



The Gesar Epic as Oral and Literary Culture:

17TH
CENTURY



There are hundreds of different versions of the epic which have survived for centuries through oral recitation and preservation. From the 17th century, these oral stories start to be written down and published



Epic is recited and performed by special Gesar bards

འཇུང་བབ་པ་ འཇུང་བབ་པ་ droongbabpa

Bards often enter into trance, see visions of events and characters or become possessed by them as they recite



Bards' recitation style is similar to that of Tibetan and Himalayan spirit mediums

New stories may be revealed to bards via past life visions in which they remember participating in events described.

Bards may function as tertön or 'treasure-revealers'

Key Elements in the Epic:



An upper, middle and lower world cosmology

ལྷ་ལྷ་ལྷ་ or celestial deities,
གཤམ་ nyen or mountain gods,
ལྷ་ལྷ་ lü or spirits under the earth



Gesar is a magical hero and warrior-king

sent from the upper heaven realm/Supreme Deity/Buddhas to conquer and tame warring tribes in the middle realm of humans



Gesar represents དགའ་ཕྱོགས་ karchok 'the light

or white sand fights against འག་ཕྱོགས་ nakchok 'the dark or black side' forces of violence and disorder

Gesar's Birth-place and childhood

Gesar sent from heaven to be born on earth, is known as ཇོ་རུ་ Joru when he is a child

Gesar has human and non-human relatives, in the upper, middle and lower worlds and was born into the གནེང་ Dong clan

His birth-place is said to be in Derge county, Kham (Sichuan province)



ཇོ་རུ་ Joru





Gesar's Two Wives

Drukmo འབྲུག་མོ་ ('female dragon'): his first wife, gentle and compassionate

Atak Lhamo ཨ་སྐྱུག་ལྷ་མོ་ ('tiger goddess'): Gesar's more aggressive, warrior partner

The Heroes of Ling

Gesar is surrounded and supported by a number of patul, pat'hul དཔལ་ལྷུ་ལ། དཔལ་བརྟུ་ལ།, loyal and brave warriors or knights

Some Tibetan lamas have been recognized as reincarnations of Gesar's relatives and heroes.

The heroes also sometimes possess spirit-mediums and bards

Many of these heroes are related to Gesar by marriage or by blood, like with the ལུ་རུ་ལུ་མ་བརྟུ་, p'hunusoomchu 'The Thirty Older and Younger Brother Heroes', who are Gesar's right-hand men and supporters



Epic Geography

- The epic has a big geographic scope - Gesar's 'empire' and exploits extend across Tibet, China, Mongolia (hor), and Persia (taksik)

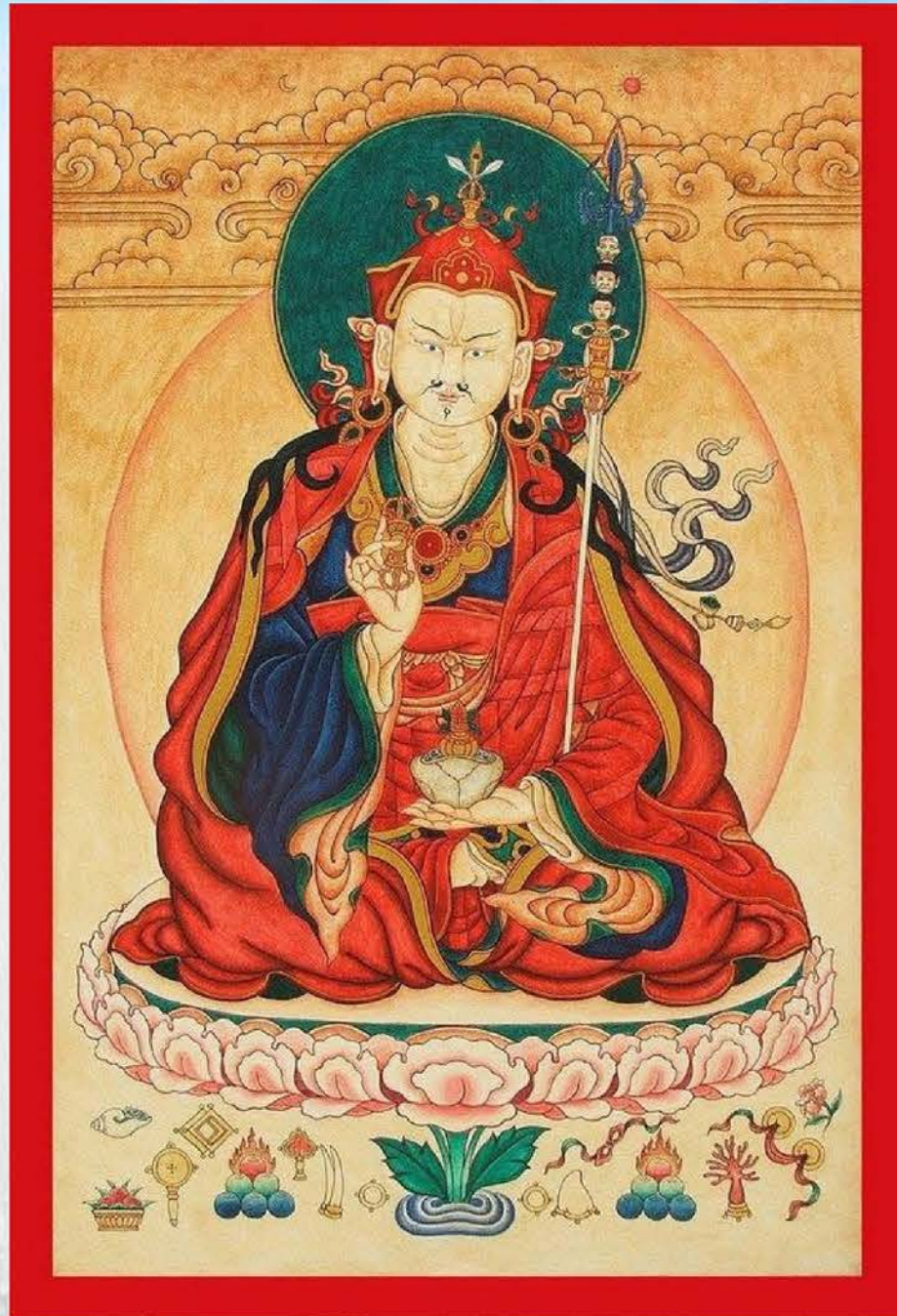
Gesar is a 'spiritual Gengis Khan', a great conqueror



Gesar's Connection with Guru Padmasambhava and Status as a Dharma-Protector:



Padmasambhava



- Padmasambhava or Guru Rinpoche is regarded as a 'second Buddha' and is the master who established Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet

- In some versions, Padmasambhava is said to be Gesar's Guru. Gesar is also described as an emissary or emanation of Padmasambhava

- Institutional Buddhism is more or less important or central in different versions of the epic



Gesar has three aspects: he is a legendary human or demi-god hero, a protector spirit, and is also recognized as an enlightened being.

He is often said to be an embodiment of Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, and Vajrapani

Gesar Ritual Traditions

- There are many Buddhist prayers, invocations and offering practices focused on Gesar. He also appears occasionally as a yidam or tantric meditational deity or Buddha

Tibetan Buddhist masters like Ju Mip'ham (1846 - 1912) and Khenpo Jikmé P'hunts'hok (1933 - 2004) considered Gesar to be an extremely powerful protector deity and enlightened being

Ju Mip'ham wrote dozens of Gesar ritual texts over his life, from when he was 13 to in his sixties. He created special cham or masked ritual dances connected with Gesar which are still performed at different monasteries today

- Gesar has become more incorporated into institutional Tibetan Buddhism and Nyingma traditions in particular since around the 19th century. Even so, he is a non-sectarian figure who transcends any specific lineage



Ju Mip'ham



Khenpo Jikmé P'hunts'hok

Gesar and the Drala– Gesar’s Connection with Warrior Gods and the Powers of Nature:

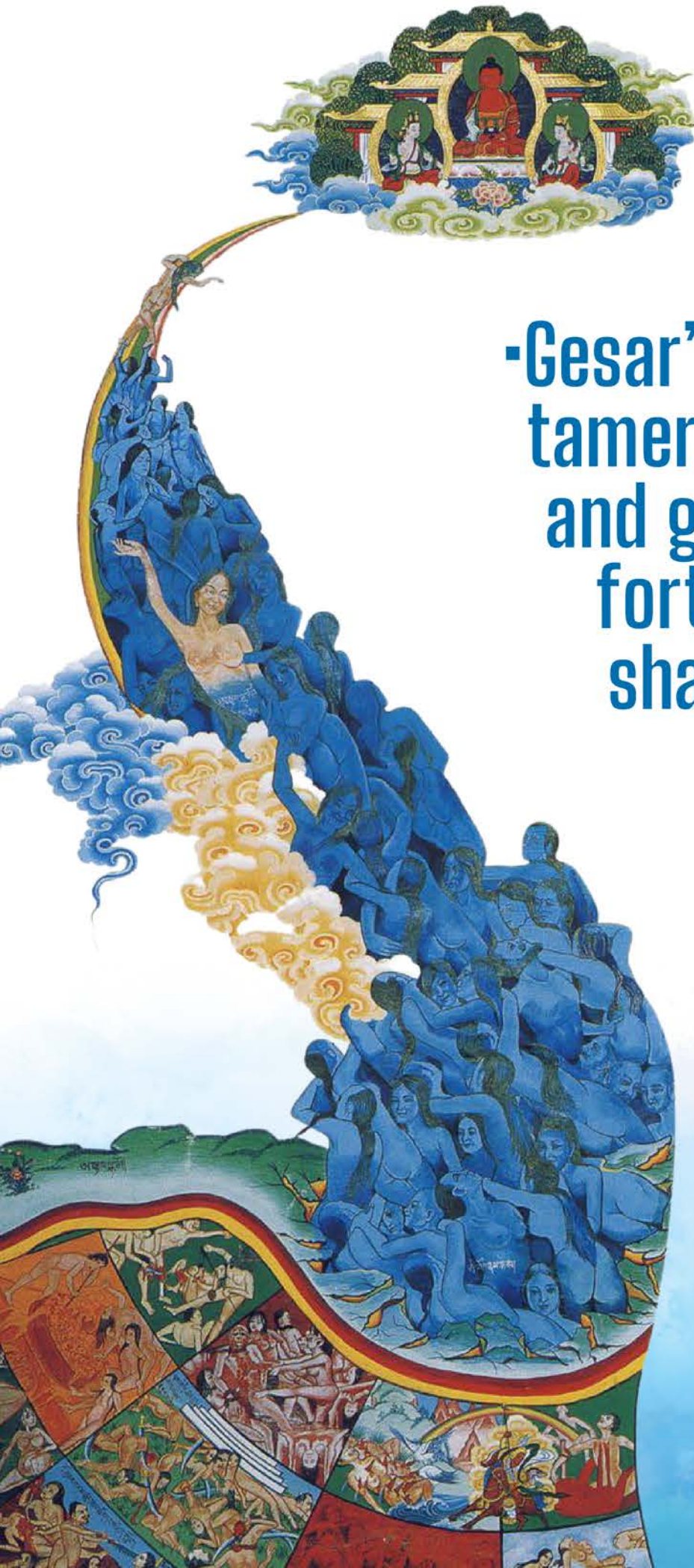
•Gesar’s roles as a spirit-tamer, linker of worlds, and god of wealth and fortune have many shamanic aspects



•Gesar is connected with drala དག་སྐྱེ་ལྔ་དག་ལྔ་ and werma ལྷེར་མ་, pre-Buddhist warrior deities who protect against enemies and harmful forces

•These deities are associated with wild animals like tigers, lions, garuda birds, dragons, wolves etc.

Gesar’s connection with animals and nature shows the importance of harmony between humans and animals, between humans and the natural world



Thank
you



SORIG KHANG

གཤོག་མཁའ་