

## **The Thirty-Third King of Tibet: Srong-btsan sgam-po and his Period**

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*Abstract: The thirty-third King of Tibet, Srongtsan Gampo [Tib: Srong-btsan sgam-po] is a well known figure in Tibetan history. In fact, many scholars maintain that the written history of Tibet started from his period only. Many aspects of Tibetan history and cultural developments are attributed as being King Srongtsan Gampo's achievements. But the strange and unresolved side of his story is that historians and scholars are divided on the question of how long the King lived. From the varied hypotheses, that he lived until 33 years, 36 years, 82 years and 94 years of age, the two most popular theories are that he lived up to 33 years or 82 years of age. This paper seeks to look into the latter two proposed ages and present a logical answer to this long-standing enigma. It enumerates six logical points to support the theory that says King Srongtsan most likely lived up to the ripe age of 82 years.*

Keywords: Srong-btsan sgam-po, Srongtsan Gampo, Tibetan King, Avalokitesvara

Srongtsan Gampo, the 33<sup>rd</sup> King of Tibet, is perceived in history as a legendary king who unified Tibet and ushered in the era of Dharma kings, who established Buddhism as the state religion of the land. He conquered neighboring countries like Zhangzhung in the west<sup>1</sup>; and attacked China in the east<sup>2</sup>. King Srongtsan's army went south to punish King Arjuna of India for harassing the Chinese religious delegation<sup>3</sup>. He attacked Nepal and helped restore the reign of King Narendradeva<sup>4</sup>. Through his military and diplomatic prowess, he won the hand of the princesses of Nepal, Zhangzhung, Tangut and Chinese royal families. These marriage alliances helped him establish diplomatic, cultural and trade relations with neighboring countries.

Temples were built to host religious idols brought in by the four foreign princesses, as well as the Tibetan queen Mongsá Tricham [Tib.: *Mong-bz'a khri-lcam*]. Twelve major temples were built in different part of Tibet to suppress the "Supine She-Demon" [Tib. : *Srin-mo gan-kyal*] upon whom the land of Tibet was presumed to rest. King Srongtsan visited China and built temples at Wutaishan, and in total some 108 temples<sup>5</sup> were attributed to his initiatives. He built Potala Palace on Marpo-ri and shifted the capital from Yarlung. The origin of the Tibetan

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<sup>1</sup> 'Bri-gung skyabs-mgon, p-216 [Tunhuang manuscript P1288]

<sup>2</sup> 1) *ibid*, p-224. 2) Shakappa, p-26

<sup>3</sup> Shakappa, p-28

<sup>4</sup> 1) 'Bri-gung skyabs-mgon, p-216. 2) Gyurme Dorje and others, Jokhang, p-49. 3) Sailendra Nath Sen, p-301

<sup>5</sup> Srong-btsan sGam-po, Kachem kakholma, p-267

written script is attributed to his initiative, in sending one of his ministers, Thonmi Sambhota, to India to learn the language and design the Tibetan scripts. The King studied Tibetan writing and the two lengthy authoritative scriptures - Mani kabum<sup>6</sup> and Kachem Kakholma<sup>7</sup> - were attributed to his scholarship. He promulgated the ten sacred laws of the divine [*Tib.:Lha-chos dge-wa bcu*] and sixteen secular laws for the humans [*Tib.:Mi-chos gtsang-ma bcu-drug*]. His achievements, scholarship and contributions to the country were considered so profound and vast for a single human being, that he was elevated to the realm of bodhisattvas as an emanation of Avalokitesvara, the Buddha of compassion. The King's achievements stands out in Tibetan Imperial history, his deeds being so great and vast that it presents a quandary to believe he achieved them all in the short span of the twenty years of his reign. Although historians and scholars are unanimous in his varied feats, they are divided about how long the King lived, i.e., up to the age of 33 years or 82 years.

**Genesis:** One of the most difficult issues for anyone attempting to document Tibetan history is the lack of recording of the proper chronology of national historical events. This is further complicated by the use of Rab-byung<sup>8</sup>, a 60-years cycle, where mention is made of element and animal [*Tib.:khams dang lo-rtags*] of the year, and sometime the animal [*Tib.: lo-rtags*] only. Based on this system, early Tibetan historians could be divided into two: those asserting Fire-Ox year as King Srongtsan's birth year and others favoring Earth-Ox year. While they differed on the birth year, they were unanimous in the fact that Srongtsan lived for 82 years<sup>9</sup>. Some scholars said he lived for 94 years<sup>10</sup>. Gos Lotsawa [*Tib.: 'Gos lo-tsa-wa*], the author of Blue Annals, while stating that Srongtsan's birth was in Earth-Ox year [569 CE], later on confused the year with 629 CE, another Earth-Ox year with a mere gap of six decades in between<sup>11</sup>. This also confused many historians on King Srongtsan's correct year of birth. While Fire-Ox year is generally taken as 617 CE, it could be 557 CE if King Srongtsan was to have lived for 94 years. It

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<sup>6</sup> Ma-ni Ka-'bum: Attributed to Srongtsan Gampo 7th century CE. It was discovered by three masters: sLob-pon dngos-grub, Nyangral Nyima Odzer and Shakya Od at different times.

<sup>7</sup> bKa'-chems ka-'khol-ma : Testament given by Srongtsan Gampo 7th century CE. Text revealed by Atisha Dipamkara Srijana in the 11th century.

<sup>8</sup> The system originated in 1027 and is used extensively. One 60-year cycle is taken as one Rab-byung. These 60 years come to one cycle with five elements of earth, iron, water, wood and fire, and the male and female turn of each of the 12 zodiacs [mouse, ox, tiger, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, bird, dog, and boar].

<sup>9</sup> 1) mKhas-pa lDe'u, p-160. 2) Bu-ston, p-185. 3) Sha-kya Rin-chen sde, Yarlung Chos-'byung, p-53. 4) dPa'-bo gtsug-lag 'phreng-ba, p-259. 5) Shakappa, p-29. 6) She-rig las-khung, Tibetan Reader IV, p-24.

<sup>10</sup> Ka-thog rig-'zin tse-dbang nor-bu, Yid kyi me-long, p-57 ff

<sup>11</sup> "'Gos Lotsawa after declaring the year 569 AD (sa-mo-glang / Earth-Female-Ox) to be the year of King Srongtsan's birth calculated other dates from the year 629 AD (also an Earth-Female-Ox year) without having noticed the intervening sixty years." - G.N. Roerich in his introduction to the translation of Blue Annals, XI ['Gos Lotsawa has further written that "from earth-female-ox to fire-male-ape (1476 AD), the year of his writing the book, 848 years have elapsed."]

should be noted that the origin and the year of the first King of Tibet, Nyatri Tsenpo, has also been not satisfactorily established. We shall come to this later.

Let us now examine the theory that King Srongtsan lived for only 33 years. This theory came up as a popular contention more recently, with the discovery of ancient Tunhuang manuscripts<sup>12</sup> and their conformity with the ancient Chinese Tang history<sup>13</sup>. Gedhun Chopel (1903-1951) [*Tib.: dGe-'dun chos-'phel*], a renowned modern Tibetan scholar, wrote in favor of this theory of King Srongtsan having lived for 34 years<sup>14</sup>. Drigung Kyabgon [*Tib.: 'Bri-gung skyabs mgon*] has, in his work, *Bod btsan-po'i rgyal-rabs*, done an extensive study in establishing a proper chronology of the early Tibetan kings based on Tunhuang manuscripts. He also claims the King Srongtsan lived for 33 years. Professor Jampa Samten of The Central University of Tibetan Studies says that this theory, although negating earlier scholars' theory of the King having lived for 82 years, is more in proximity with reason<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, while the birth of King Srongtsan is still not clear, his death in 650 CE [Iron-Dog] is considered reasonably established by scholars. We shall accordingly subscribe to this [650 CE] as the year of King Srongtsan's demise.

**Probability Analysis:** Now, with Fire-Ox or Earth-Ox as Birth year, and 650 CE as the most widely accepted year of death of King Srongtsan, let us conduct a probability analysis via the following tables to reach the most probable year for King Srongtsan's birth. Fire-Ox year around the time could be 557 or 617 CE, the former makes the years of life of King Srongtsan 94, and the later 33 years. Earth-Ox year could be 569 or 629 CE, the former makes the years of life of King Srongtsan 82, and the later 21 years. So, the three probable years for the analysis are: 557, 569 and 617 CE.

**Probable Years for King Srongtsan's Birth with 650 CE as Death Year**

1. Fire-Ox Year of 557 CE				
Options	If Birth Year (X)	If Lived for Y Years (Y)	Concomitant Death Year (Z)	Comments: Relationship of Concomitant Death Year Z to Widely Accepted Death Year 650 CE
1	557	33	590	<650
2	557	82	639	<650
3	557	94	651	=650 / Possible

<b>2. Fire-Ox Year of 569 CE</b>
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<sup>12</sup> A large volume of ancient manuscript discovered around in Tunhuang cave near Tibet in 1900 CE. ['Bri-Gung sKyabs-mgon, p-244]

<sup>13</sup> sTag-lha phun-tzog bkra-shis, p-13, 80, 251 and 306

<sup>14</sup> dge-'dun chos-'phel, deb-ther dkar-po, p-109 ff

<sup>15</sup> Byams-pa bsam gtan, Bod kyi lo-rgyus slob-gnyer ....p-7,

Options	If Birth Year (X)	If Lived for Y Years (Y)	Concomitant Death Year (Z)	Comments: Relationship of Concomitant Death Year Z to Widely Accepted Death Year 650 CE
1	569	33	602	<650
2	569	82	651	=650 / Possible
3	569	94	663	>650

3. Fire-Ox Year of 617 CE				
Options	If Birth Year (X)	If Lived for Y Years (Y)	Concomitant Death Year (Z)	Comments: Relationship of Concomitant Death Year Z to Widely Accepted Death Year 650 CE
1	617	33	650	=650 / Possible
2	617	82	699	>650
3	617	94	711	>650

Probable Three Options for King Srongtsan's Birth Year				
Options	If Birth Year (X)	If Lived for Years (Y)	Widely Accepted Death Year	Comments: Element and Animal Years of Birth and Death
1	557	94	650	Fire-Ox to Iron-Dog
2	617	33	650	Fire-Ox to Iron-Dog
3	569	82	650	Earth-Ox to Iron-Dog

From the above tables and the deduction made, we come to the conclusion that Fire-Ox to Iron Dog years may mean that King Srongtsan either lived for 94 years or 33 years, which conforms to the popular theory on King Srongtsan's death in terms of the Tibetan calendar of element and animal, but not on the years King Srongtsan lived as per early Tibetan scholars. Earth-Ox to Iron-Dog years conforms both to the early Tibetan scholars' assertion that King Srongtsan lived for 82 years and the popular theory that King Srongtsan died in the Iron-Dog year [650 CE]. This clearly illustrates that the probable time span for King Srongtsan's life was 569 -650 CE, i.e. Earth-Ox to Iron-Dog year.

Against this background, let me now dwell on some points to further support the statement that King Srongtsan Gampo, the 33rd King of Tibet, lived for 82 years and the corresponding years were Earth-Ox [569 CE] to Iron-Dog [650 CE]. The following facts point in this direction:

**Firstly**, the popular theory that asserts that King Srongtsan's lifespan was 617-650 CE has some technical errors. It asserts he lived for 33 years. However, it is established in early writings that his son Gungtsang Gungtsan was enthroned at 13 years of age, and died at 18 years of age, and

King Srongtsan was said to have retaken the throne<sup>16</sup>. This statement does not fit into the 33 years lifespan theory of King Srongtsan's life. Even if we keep minimum one year for King Srongtsan's rule after his son's death, Gungsrong had to be born in 613 CE, and King Srongtsan would have been only 14 at the time. See the table below:

617	Srongtsan Born	Fire-Ox Year
629	Srongtsan enthronement	Srongtsan was 13
631	Gungsrong Born	Srongtsan was 14
644	Gungsrong enthroned at 13	Srongtsan was 28
649	Gungsrong died at 18	Srongtsan was 32
650	Srongtsan's Death at 33	

It is evident from the above table that this theory of [617-650] CE as King Srongtsan's life span does not fit with the story of his son Gungsrong getting crowned at the age of 13 and dying at the age of 18, and King Srongtsan again taking over the reign. So, this theory is invalid. On this reasoning, King Srongtsan's birth in 629 CE and a life span of 22 years would make the things all the more illogical.

**Secondly**, having shown that the hypothesis of Fire-Ox year of 617 CE as King Srongtsan's birth year emerges a technical error of imposing on an 18 year old son and a grandson to a young man of 33, let us see the possible solution to this problem. The year 617 CE could be the year when Srongtsan's son Gungsrong was born, and 629 CE could be the year when he was enthroned and not Srongtsan. Earth-Dog year of 698 CE<sup>17</sup>, which was taken as Srongtsan's death could be the year Gungsrong died [638 CE Earth-Dog year], and not Srongtsan. There are several facts which points to this direction. Let us study the following table:

YEAR	EVENTS	YEAR & AGE	COMMENTS
569	Srongtsan Born	Earth-Ox year	
617	Gungsrong Born	Srongtsan at 48	dPa'-bo put this at 621 when Srongtsan was 53. p-245
629	Gungsrong enthroned	Srongtsan at 60	
638	Mangsrong born	Gungsrong at 17	Dog Year [Ideu p-187], 'Bri-gun p-259,
638	Gungsrong died	Gungsrong at 21	Popular theory he died at 18.
638	Srongtsan took over at 67	Mangsrong at 1	Earth-Dog year, 638 CE / 698 CE
650	Srongtsan died at 82	Mangsong at 11	Iron-dog year
679	Mangsrong died at 42	Earth-Rabbit year	rGya-yig p-16,90. deb-dmar, Tang, Ideu, 'bri-gung

<sup>16</sup> 1) 'Gos lo-tsa-ba, Blue Annals, p-49. 2) dPa'-bo tsug-lag, p-245. 3) Shakabpa, p-27. 4) She-rig las-khungs, Tibetan Reader VI p-24.

<sup>17</sup> dPa'-bo tsug-lag, p-259.

Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa [*Tib: dPa-bo tsug-lag 'phreng-ba*] has said that in 621 CE, when Srongtsan was 53, Gungsrong was born. Gos Lotsawa said, in 618 CE when Chinese Tang's Kautsun died, Srongtsan was 50<sup>18</sup>. Both of these statements point to 569 CE as the year of Srongtsan's birth.

In other supporting evidence, the fact that ancient and modern scholars both are unanimous in Mangsrong having lived 42 years [638 CE-679 CE], and his death in Earth-Rabbit year [679 CE at age 41] takes Gungsrong's birth to 619 CE [638 CE at age 18], this takes Srongtsan's birth to 569 CE [618 CE at age 50], validating the theory that he lived for 82 years. There is no chance that the Fire-Ox year of 617 CE could fit in here as King Srongtsan's birth year. Here, we are also inspired to probe that Gungsrong could have lived for 21 years.

lDeu chos-'byung text says Mangsrong was born in the Dog year, and within a 12-year [*lo-skor cig*] period, his grand-father died<sup>19</sup>. This means that the dog year was Earth-Dog year of 638 CE, and completing 12-year cycle, grandfather King Srongtsan died in 650 CE.

Tsalpa Kunga Dorje [*Tib.: 'Tsal-pa kun-ga' rdor-rje*], in his book Deb-dmar [1363 CE] says that King Srongtsan was born in Fire-Female-Ox year [617 CE], and in the Earth-Female-Bird year, the King died at the age of 82 years<sup>20</sup>. Now, the probable year for Earth-Female-Bird is 649 or 709 CE. If 649 CE is taken as his death year, King Srongtsan lived for 33 years, and if 709 CE is taken, then the King lived for 93 years. But the author says the King lived for 82 years, then the year of his demise should be 699 CE [Earth-Female-Boar]. We can see the inconsistency here. However, it is clear that the death in the Earth-Bird year [649] and living for 82 years means King Srongtsan was born in 569 CE. This is the Earth-Ox year of Gos Lotsawa, [with a negligible difference of one year], which the author was actually referring to. It should be noted that Gos Lotsawa's work was based on Deb-dmar.

**Thirdly**, Shakabpa says that his finding indicates that 28th King Lhathothori was born in 173 AD and that King Srongtsan Gampo's birth is generally taken as 617 CE<sup>21</sup>. Between the rule of Lhathothori to that of Srongtsan, there were four Kings<sup>22</sup>: Khrinyan Shungtsan, Dronyan Deru, Tagri Nyanzig and Namri Srongtsan. Lhathothori was believed to have lived for 120 years; therefore, his death was in 293 CE [173+120]. The princes were said to ascend to the throne when they reach 13 years of age. So, from King Srongtsan's ascendancy to the throne, some

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<sup>18</sup> 'Gos lo-tsa-wa, The Blue Annals, George Reorich's Intro, p-xx

<sup>19</sup> mKhas-pa lDeu, p-187

<sup>20</sup> 'Tsal-pa dkung-dga rdor-rje, Deb-dmar, p-31/33

<sup>21</sup> Shakappa, p-25

<sup>22</sup> Tibetan spelling: Khri-nyen gzungs-btsan, 'Bro-gnan lde'u, sTag-ri gnyan-gzig and gNam-ri Srong-btsan

336 [629-293] years lapse in between for the four Kings, which means the four Kings lived an average of 84 years. Even if we take this average life span as accurate, this will not connect King Srongtsan to 617 AD. Assuming the princes were born when the Kings were in their 30's (average), and crowned at 13 years of age, let us see the following table:

Name of the King	Born [Years in AD]	Crowned	Death	Lived
Lhathothori	173	186	293	120
Khrinyen Gungtsan	203	216	284	81
Dronyan Deru	233	246	314	81
Tagri Nyanzig	263	276	344	81
Namri Srongtsan	293	306	374	81
Srongtsan Gampo	323			

So, as per the above table, with Lhathothori's life span at 173 CE - 293 CE, Srongtsan Gampo's birth should be around 323 CE. But the assertion here is that Srongtsan Gampo was born in 617 CE. Now, if we try to bring Srongtsan's life 617 CE-650 CE in the above matrix, then the preceding princes should have been born when the Kings were in late 80s [89 years old]. Study the following table:

Name of the King	Born [Years in AD]	Crowned	Death	Lived
Lhathothori	173	186	293	120
Khrinyan Gungtsan	262	275	349	87 average
Dronyan Deru	351	364	438	87
Tagri Nyanzig	440	453	527	87
Namri Srongtsan	529	542	616	87
Srongtsan Gampo	617	629	650	33

Princes being born at an average age of 89, when the average age of the four Kings themselves were only 87 is preposterous. This is illogical; therefore, the years and chronology between Lhathothori [173 AD] and Srongtsan [617 AD] is not valid.

**Fourthly,** Nyatri Tsenpo's birth is said to be 127 BC., with 28th King Lhathothori at 173 CE. This would imply we had twenty seven Kings in three hundred years [127+173] that gives each King an average of around eleven years, which is also illogical. How can twenty seven Kings from Nyatri to Lhathothori have three hundred years with eleven years each, when four Kings from Lhathothori to Srongtsan have three hundred and twenty four years [617-293] with an average of eighty one years each? So, this year of 127 BC for Nyatri and 173 CE for Lhathothori is not valid. Shakabpa also expressed doubt on the validity of this theory of Nyatri at 127 BC, Lhathothori at 173 CE and Srongtsan at 617 CE – a Tibetan school text book<sup>23</sup> makes a special comment on this chronological discrepancy.

<sup>23</sup> She-rig las-khungs, Tibetan Reader VI Part II, p-13-14

The logical approach is to see Nyatri Tsanpo and Srongtsan's period beyond 127 B.C. and 617 CE respectively and Lhathothori later than 173 CE. Bon history takes Nyatri's period to 1137 B.C.<sup>24</sup> Jumipham and Zapatrul have put Lhathothori at 374,<sup>25</sup> and Sachen Kungnying and sTag-tsang rZong put him at 408<sup>26</sup>. Based on these facts, and with Srongtsan's birth at Earth-Ox year of 569 CE, assuming the average age of the Kings when princes were born at 32, and the princes crowned at 13, the following scenario could be observed:

Lhathothori [408 CE] to Srongtsen Gampo Period							
Assuming that princes were born when the Kings were 32 and Princes crowned at 13							
S.No.	Name	Born	Crowned	Reigned	Died	Lived	Remark
28	Lhathothori Nyantsan	408	421	32	527	120	
29	Trinyan Sungtsen	440	453	32			
30	Drognyan Deru	472	485	32			
31	Tagri Nyanzig	504	517	32			
32	Namri Srongtsan	536	549	32			
33	Srongtsan Gampo	568	581		650	82	

The above table looks quite logical bringing Srongtsan's birth to 569 CE. With the death of Srongtsan at 650 CE, the Earth-Ox year of 569 CE would justify his living for 82 years as mentioned in many ancient texts.

**Fifthly**, it was maintained that during King Srongtsan's reign, a delegation of some sixteen ministers and their sons were sent to India to study Indian script, but the mission failed. Many died on the way, and some could not stand the Indian heat and some returned without having learnt anything. Another delegation of sixteen people was sent and Thonmi Sambhota, an intelligent lad of eleven years old, was one of them<sup>27</sup>. Thonmi Sambhota studied under Pandita Lharigpai Senge [Devavidyasimha] and Sage Lijin for seven years, and he took another three years to design the Tibetan script and written language. It was said that King Srongtsan Gampo took four years to study and master the language. The two classical scriptural volumes, Manikabum and Kachem Kakholma, running into thousand of words were attributed to his scholarship. The seven years of study in India, three years of designing the script and establishing the grammar, and four years of King Srongtsan's study, all approximately add up to more than 15 years. We do not have the exact year when Thonmi Sambhota went to India.

<sup>24</sup> 1) Tenzin Namdak, 'Bel-gtam lung-gi snying-po, p-189

<sup>25</sup> She-rig las-khungs, Tibetan Reader VI Part II, p-14

<sup>26</sup> Byams-pa bsam-gtan, Bod-kyi lo-rgyus lob-gnyer, p-6

<sup>27</sup> Nyang-ral Nyima 'Od-zer, p-169-170. 2) Rang-sdra, p-65 ff



Some scholars put this at 633 CE<sup>28</sup>, during King Harshavardhana's (also known as Harsha) reign [606-648 CE] in India. As King Srongtsan was to have been crowned in 629 CE, the first delegation without Thonmi Sambhota, and the second delegation with Thonmi Sambhota, should have travelled to India within the period 629-648 CE. Although these 15 years can fit in King 20 years of Srongtsan's reign, it is a little too tight considering the time and energy Srongtsan had to devote for this and other great events occurring around the time.

It is also well known that around the same time, Huen Tsang, a Chinese scholar, was in India for fifteen years from 629-645 CE<sup>29</sup>. He was respected and greatly welcomed by King Harsha [reign 606-648 CE]. Huen Tsang has written at great length about his visit to India and about King Harsha<sup>30</sup>. We do not find any mention about Tibetan delegations being in India or meeting the King around the time. This prompts us to reason that Thonmi Sambhota's visit to India happened much before 629 CE, taking King Srongtsan's era beyond 617 CE.

**Critique:** If King Srongtsan's life of 82 years, [569 CE-650 CE] as proposed in this paper is taken as a fact, we may need to answer some questions.

Pawo Tsuglag has said that King Srongtsan was 53 when his son Gungtsong was born. We do not have the years when Srongtsan received the Tibetan, Zhangzhung and Tangut Princesses. Nepalese Princess Bhrikuti came in 634 CE, when Srongtsan was 65, and Wen-chen Kong-jo started from China in 641 CE, when Srongtsan was 72. It may be said, how could Srongtsan have thought of taking multiple brides at such an advanced age. Scholar Gedhun Chopel has, in his book *Deb-ther dkar-po*, commented that those who support 82 years as the lifespan for King Srongtsan should accept the fact that the King took a bride at 79 with a pinch of salt<sup>31</sup>. But from the historical perspective, receiving princess of any foreign land could be seen more as exhibiting one's power and strengthening diplomatic relation than a marriage per se. It should not be taken in the mundane sense of marriage.

Another important aspect is the Nepalese and Chinese Princesses were venerated and accorded high respect in the Tibetan history. They were said to be the emanation of Goddess Tara in Green and White form [*Tib.: sGrol-ljang and sGrol-dkar*]. King Srongtsan Gampo himself was believed to be the emanation of Avalokitesvara. Furthermore, inspiration behind the lengthy description of how the two queens and the king dissolved into the idol of Avalokitesvara as related in the Mani Kabum and other texts are indicative of the sacred and platonic nature of

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<sup>28</sup> 1) 'Dri-gung sKyabs mgon, p-187. 2) Rang-sdra, p-94

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Beal, p-XVIII

<sup>30</sup> Upinder Singh, A History of Ancient and Medieval India, p-563

<sup>31</sup> dDe-'dun chos-'phel, deb-dkar, p-108 ff. [*Tib.: 'zum-bag cung zad dang bcas mkhas len dgos*]

the alliances. So, the concept of marriage in the conventional sense and age is not valid here. This would also be supported by the fact that these two queens did not have any offspring.

The scholar Gedhun Chopel also said that it is not impossible for a young man of 33 to accomplish such great deeds as King Srongtsan, presenting Alexander the Great as an example. No doubt Alexander had conquered many a land and died young at the age of 32 years, but comparing him with King Srongtsan Gampo may not be appropriate. His was an ambitious sequel of conquest and warfare, and many do not see his achievements in a positive light<sup>32</sup>. On the other hand, King Srongtsan's deeds far exceed conquests on battlefields, and he is widely acclaimed for his positive contributions in numerous spheres, as enumerated above.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, if we look into the numerous important military expeditions that King Srongtsan had undertaken, alongside the contributions he made in art, architecture, law as well as establishing an indigenous writing script and system and Buddhism in the land, it is difficult to categorize all these achievements in the short span of a reign of 20 years. This fact is convincingly proved by the impossibility of his son Gungtsong's enthronement at age 13 and death at age 18, which makes Srongtsan, a father at age 7 [629 CE] or age 14 [617 CE]. The period that lapsed between Lhathothori and Srongtsan also do not support the theory, either.

These findings propel us to explore the possibility of taking Lhathothori and Srongtsan's birth beyond 173 CE and 617 CE, to look at 408 CE for Lhathothori Nyantsan's birth, and 569 CE for Srongtsan's birth as intended by Gos Lotsawa and other scholars. These two years are the most possible and convincing years in order to aid the smooth flow of the rivers of Tibetan history. The tables derived from these facts also lead to a more reasonable conclusion. But we see that most of King Srongtsan's expeditions and accomplishments were achieved in advanced age. We do not find any major achievements in his young age. This maybe because of a deliberate manipulation of historical years all along to forcibly fit everything he achieved into 33 years, or we are little off the track. Nepalese Princess Balsa Tritsun of King Amsuvarman was said to have arrived in Tibet in 634 CE. But the King Amsuvarman's reign was 576-621 CE, and he died in 623 A.D<sup>33</sup>, ruling out that King Srongtsan could have negotiated with him for his daughter's hand

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<sup>32</sup> American writer Jacob Abbot has, at the conclusion of his book, Alexander the Great, writes "Alexander earned well the name and reputation of THE GREAT. He was truly great in all those powers and capacities, which can elevate one man above his fellows. We cannot help applauding the extraordinary energy of his genius, though we condemn the selfish and cruel ends to which his life was devoted. He was simply a robber, but yet a robber on so vast a scale, that mankind, in contemplating his career, have generally lost sight of the wickedness of his crime in their admiration of the enormous magnitude of the scale on which they were perpetrated."

<sup>33</sup> Sailendra Nath Sen, Ancient Indian History and Civilization, p-301

then. This could have happened much before. Thonmi Sambhota's visit to India and some other expeditions could have taken place much before 629 CE. Further research in this area is needed.

With due respect and appreciation to all scholars of the past and present, I humbly present this short paper hypothesizing about the correct life period and life span of King Srongtsan Gampo. It is a research and writing driven by a sincere motivation to explore and present solid facts that would put the King's life and contribution in logical and certain historical perspective. I have benefited immensely by the works of many Tibetan and non-Tibetan scholars on the subject. Based on their research, I tried to dig deeper into the chronology and hypothesis leading us to believe that King Srongtsan may have lived for eighty-two years. This fact, I surmise, is more in congruence with the statement of early Tibetan historians<sup>34</sup>, who claimed King Srongtsan lived for 82 years. This lifespan for the King is also corroborated by Tunhuang manuscripts of recent discovery, which have established 650 CE as King Srongtsan's death year.

May this humble attempt of mine inspire and encourage our youngsters to study and explore our ancient history.

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<sup>34</sup> 1) mKhas-pa lDe'u, p-160. 2) Bu-ston, p-185. 3) Sha-kya Rin-chen sde, Yarlung Chos-'byung, p-53. 4) dPa'-bo gtsug-lag 'phreng-ba, p-259. 5) Shakappa, p-29. 6) She-rig las-khungs, Tibetan Reader IV, p-24. They all said that Srongtsan lived for 82 years.

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