

# Songtsen Gampo<sup>1</sup>: statue of the king of Tubo<sup>2</sup>

poem by medon (me sgron / meizhuo)

translation from Chinese to English by Yangdon Dhondup

The iron hoof has burned on the fertile wild land  
But you, you have chosen the high plateau  
Like snow, like a hungry animal, like the intoxicating lake, to wander around  
you are destined for the grassland.

The highland is also destined by the totem  
The numerous falling eagles  
The snow lion hidden in the forest.

On the map, the wings and hoofs you have amassed  
shrink into a deep red colour that no one can repeat  
The colour of the sun, the colour of blood,  
a colour which the next generation will never understand and tolerate.

Even among those who are not to endure, you have endured it.

A long time ago, I was crossing the border of your territory  
spreading ancient love,  
looking for your beautiful blue sky.

At last I understood,  
your lineage is our natural dwelling which we cannot change  
Before becoming proud I was haunted by feelings of inferiority.

Tears are hindering my sight  
I cannot see the charm and gentleness which is written a thousand times inside me  
I cannot see the magpie that consoles a lonely traveller.

Year after year, you were alone at the edge of the highlands  
Charmingly naive you disrobe yourself  
amazing a race with your transcendence above the worldly

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<sup>1</sup> *Srongtsen Gampo* (617-650) was the first of the Three Religious Kings of the Yarlung Dynasty (570-838)

<sup>2</sup> Ancient name for Tibet. Nowadays, many Tibetans living in Tibet prefer to use this name for Tibet rather than the Chinese name “Xizang” since it only includes central Tibet and leaves Amdo (north-east Tibet) and Kham (south-east Tibet) out. Amdo is included in the Chinese province of Qinghai and Gansu, Kham in the province of Sichuan and Yunnan.

You have taken a consort<sup>3</sup> from far away,  
and received also your own people's venerated Buddha<sup>4</sup>  
you defended the isolated life  
you also brought faith through simple prayer

The country which has risen from the sea,  
without gaining strength has become old and feeble.  
Is the fire burning in your heart?

Occasionally there are those who awake from your ancestral line  
Like you they wake and like you they fall,  
at that time you cannot talk, you cannot express the agony  
But I am in agony  
I repeat my confession many times  
I am in agony

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<sup>3</sup> Songtsen Gampo took in 641, among other consorts, the Chinese Princess Wencheng as his wife.

<sup>4</sup> The Jowo Rinpoche, Tibet's most sacred image was brought to Tibet by Princess Wencheng. The statue represents Buddha at the age of 12. It is nowadays placed in the Jokhang Temple, Lhasa. A Buddha statue which was given by Songtsen Gampo's Nepalese consort, Princess Brikuti, is installed at the Ramoche Temple in Lhasa