

Titles, Decrees and Dharma

A Genuine Autonomy?



Changchub Gyaltsen, founder of the Phagmodru dynasty

As the power of the Yuan Dynasty declined, the princes of Phagmodru challenged the power of the Sakya hierarchs. In 1358, Changchub Gyaltsen marched to Sakya and emerged as Tibet's new ruler.

For many Tibetans, this was a golden age; for the first time since the Religious Kings, no foreign 'protection' was required. A *code of law*, similar to the one adopted by the early kings was enforced and the Mongol administrative system was replaced by a purely Tibetan one. In 1368 in China, the Yuan Dynasty collapsed and was replaced by the Mings.

The Phagmodru princes ruled Tibet for nearly a century, before being replaced by another dynasty, the Rinpung in 1481. From 1565, until the advent of the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1642, the princes of Tsang ruled Tibet.



Map showing Tibet as an independent entity



Seal in Phagpa scripts given by a Yuan Emperor



Tibetan rulers sometimes used decrees issued by the Chinese Emperors



Type of seals presented by the Chinese emperors



The Chinese assert that Tibet has been a part of China since the Yuan Dynasty. Their 'evidence' is based on titles bestowed by the Yuans, Mings and Manchus on Tibetan Lamas. The process began with the Mongol Khans; it flourished during the Ming Dynasty and continued during the Qing Dynasty. There is no logic behind this 'evidence'.



Emperor Yongle



Title conferred by Emperor Yongle to a Tibetan Lama



The Fifth Karmapa Deshin Shekpa



While in Nanking, the Karmapa performed some special rituals for the Emperor Yongle



Letter sent to a Sakya hierarch by the 'Imperial Tutor'



Shakya Yeshe, Tsongkhapa's disciple was conferred titles and given a black hat by Emperors Yongle and Xuande