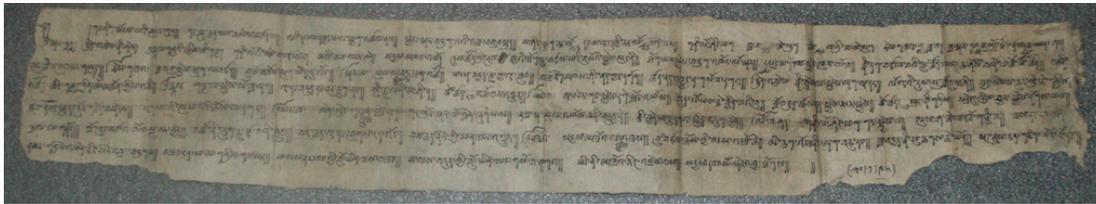


Kyetsi: Astrology at the Time of Birth



A kyetsi written by an astrologer

Many Bhutanese have strong faith in astrological calculations and divination. The first week after a child is born, the newborn's family may request a *tsipa* (ཚེ་པ་) or astrologer to write the child's birth astrology, which is called *kyetsi* (ལྷན་ལྷན་). The *kyetsi* made for a newborn usually describes the likely dominant characteristics of the child, surveys the major stages of her/his life, forecasts potential obstacles and articulates what may need to be done to clear any obstacles that may arise.

The child's parents should give the astrologer precise information about the time, day, dates, month and year of birth. The astrologer uses this information to calculate the *kyetsi*, which includes the animal sign, and information about pertinent constellations, zodiac, elemental combinations, spirits of the day, geomantic specifications, etc. to give a prediction of what kind of person the child will be and what kind of life the child will have.

A person's *kyetsi* contains information about the location of his or her *keytak khorlo* (ལྷན་ལྷན་ལོ་ལོ་) or wheel of birth on the body. *Keytak khorlo* is calculated using the locations of specific stars and/or constellations at the time of birth. For example, if the child's *keytak* is located on her/his foot, it signifies travelling and short life; when it is on the shoulders, it indicates physical strength; on hand, an urge to steal; and in the mouth, devotion to the dharma.

Most parents want their child's *kyetsi* so they can identify what remedial ritual(s) must be done to clear obstacles. The astrologer normally writes a forecast of the child's future life with all the problems that child is going to face. Thus, an elaborate *kyetsi* is sometimes called *tserab letsi* (ཚེ་རབ་ལེ་སྟེ་) or calculations of the affairs of one's lifetimes. Once a *kyetsi* is prepared, it is regularly consulted in order to undertake preventative measures to remove hurdles and misfortunes. It is not compulsory to have a *kyetsi*, but people prefer to have it since it is helpful.

Besides using a *kyetsi* for predicting the future and carrying out rituals for wellbeing, they are also references for a child's life, and they function much like modern birth

certificates. The theory for *kyetsi* is believed to have been composed by Mañjuśrī, the Buddha of Wisdom and transmitted to Bhutan from China via Tibet.

If the child's astrological calculations do not match the parents' or if the child has illness, then a friend or acquaintance whose stars are appropriate is asked to nominally adopt the child. Rituals would be performed according to the advice given in the *kyetsi* to overcome the problems.

The first name the child gets is often a name chosen by the astrologer based on the astrological and geomantic features of the child. The astrologer is given a present as a fee for compiling the *kyetsi*.

Written by Sonam Chopel and Karma Phuntsho. Sonam Chopel was a researcher at Shejun Agency for Bhutan's Cultural Documentation and Research and Karma Phuntsho is a social thinker and worker, the President of the Loden Foundation and the author of many books and articles including *The History of Bhutan*.