



The Epic of Gesar of Ling: Gesar's Magical Birth, Early Years, and Coronation as King



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The epic of Gesar has been the national treasure of Tibet for almost a thousand years. An open canon of tales about a superhuman warrior-king, the epic is still a living oral tradition, included on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This book is a translation of the beginning portion of this enormous corpus, covering all the events from Gesar's divine conception to his human birth and mischievous childhood to his coronation as king of Ling.

Born in the pure lands the son of two wisdom deities, Gesar takes rebirth in the human realm in order to defeat the demon kings who had taken over the empires of Asia and to thus liberate the people from suffering. His jealous uncle Trothung proves to be the first major threat to this goal, but Gesar outwits him every time using magic. In the last chapters of the book, he and Trothung's son face off in a high-tension horse race to decide who will win the throne of Ling and the hand of the coveted Princess Drugmo in marriage.

Gesar's story is popularly read as an allegory, with Gesar representing the ideal of spiritual warriorship—that is, fearlessness in the face of obstacles on the path to enlightenment. Just as Gesar rides his flying steed, we too can ride the energy of dignity, confidence, and power that is inherent to us, subduing inner demons and claiming victory.



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