

Canopy of Everlasting Joy:
An Early Source in Tibetan Historiography
and the History of West Tibet



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Abstract

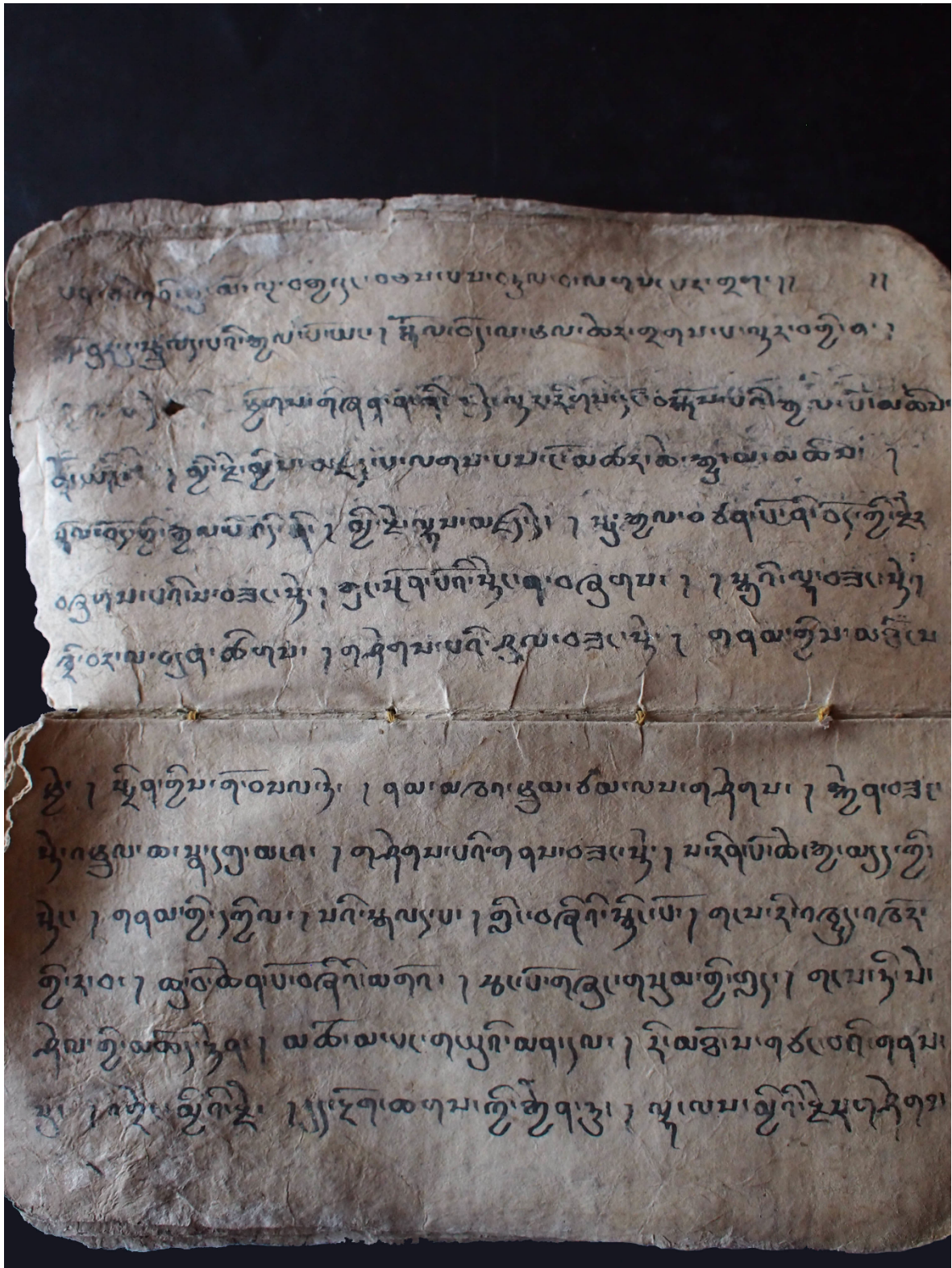
Canopy of Everlasting Joy: An Early Source in Tibetan Historiography and the History of West Tibet. Submitted by David Pritzker of Wolfson College for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Hillary Term 2017.

A more descriptive title for the dissertation might be “Early historiography in Pu rang - Gu ge and its relationship between orality, kingship, and Tibetan identity: a close study of a recently uncovered 12th century historical manuscript from Tholing monastery in West Tibet.” The present study is therefore a close textual analysis of all the outer and inner features of the Tholing Manuscript. When reading the text, there is the gradual realization that the archaic peculiarities in script, binding, spelling, vocabulary, prose, and narrative twists, all highlight the work as a wholly rare and different version from those early histories typically found in Central Tibet. The key difference lies primarily in the focal point of the narrative. Whereas most similar narratives from the time of the *phyi dar* (11th - 13th centuries) onwards place at the core of their structure the history of Buddhism in Tibet, the Tholing text puts as its central focus kingship and the history of kings in Tibet. For this reason, while Buddhism plays an essential and integral part of the story as a whole, the text can be viewed as a more secular work than any comparable monastic history of the period.

The narrative structure of the manuscript, with its heavy use of rhythmical prose, similes, archaic topoi and motifs, is hauntingly familiar to those parallel passages found among Old Tibetan Documents and is emblematic of the liminal period in which the text was written. At this time, histories were transitioning from disperse and possibly oral transmissions to predominantly formal organized written traditions. The poetic nature of the text, together with its unusual physical features, raises questions relating to its purpose and function, with the possibility of its use as a ritual manuscript for royal legitimization. Through a close study of the text, I offer some insights on the formative nature of early Tibetan historiography in establishing the sacred and political power of the kings of West Tibet.



Stitched binding of the Tholing Manuscript



The Tholing Manuscript

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Introduction

Scholarship on Tibetan historical sources often hinge on questions of authorship and facts: *who, what, when, where*. This approach (clearly the dominant mode of analysis in Tibetan textual studies) tends to leave the questions of *how* and *why* unanswered or unaddressed. Looking at texts as “snapshots” of culture and cultural phenomena taken at specific times, one may map cultural development through the text as witness. When Michael Aris took such an approach in *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives*, his study of Pema Lingpa and the Sixth Dalai Lama was criticized for disrupting something sacred and hidden. Not only did he expose central ideas and topoi to critical review, he also specifically asked questions of *how* and *why*. This criticism showed the power that these narratives, concepts and ideas played in the construction of Tibetan and Himalayan identity, as well as in our own re-imaginings of Tibet. Aris’s work has since served as a beacon for Tibetan studies, shedding a light on how to look past the surface reading and towards a more nuanced appreciation of a textual source.

In the following chapters, while I address matters of dating, identification, sources, and variants, I argue that, given the historical moment in which the Tholing Manuscript was redacted, kingship is represented therein to substantiate the role and authority of the king as well as to recall and retool the rhetoric of the sPu rgyal dynasty. That rhetoric is reworked, I suggest, to offer a critical shift in the notion of divine kingship even as it is invoked for rhetorical, literary, and political purposes. A key to understanding these qualities is to consider their presentation when read or recited aloud, particularly in a ritualized context. More specifically, the idea of a “bardic performance” of the royal genealogy offers a powerful (if speculative) tool to study the text and, indeed, early Tibetan historiography as a whole. Since the Tholing Manuscript has not been translated before, and no study of it exists in English, my central aim is to survey the most notable features of the text and to open it up for future scholarly discussion.

The largely unknown Tholing Manuscript, which was recently discovered in a ransacked *stūpa* (*mchod rten*) in Gu ge, West Tibet, is a fascinating new addition to the corpus of early Tibetan texts, as well as an important source for understanding the development of Tibetan historical writing. Written in a hybrid script that combines features of *dbu med* and *dbu can*, the work contains many archaic

orthographic, paleographic, and lexicographic features reminiscent of the documents found in the cave repository of Dunhuang. The manuscript's features, as well as its contents, suggest a date in the early part of the *phyi dar* period. Thus, the study of the manuscript offers a unique opportunity to gain insights into the written production of historiographic narratives after the collapse of the Tibetan Empire and before the marked increase in historical writings from the late 12th and 13th centuries onwards.

In terms of the text's literary and historiographic importance, a close study of the document's narrative sections, its archaic terminology, and overall teleology, reveals that the author was drawing upon manuscripts or oral traditions not accessible to later monastic historians. Based on its contents, the work may best be classified as a historical narrative in the genre of *rgyal rabs*, or royal chronicle. The fragmented text begins mid-sentence with the royal "Lunar Dynasty" (*zla ba'i rigs, candravamśa*) of India, as derived from the *Mahābhārata*. Building on a narrative of royalty and discussing the four appointed kings (*bskos pa'i rgyal po*), the narrative continues with an account of the origin and reign of the early Tibetan kings, the collapse of the Tibetan Empire, and the early rulers of West Tibet up through Zhi ba 'od (d. 1111) and his nephew rTse lde (d. 1088). A combination of analytical approaches—codicological, paleographic, orthographic, lexicographic—allows us to place the Tholing Manuscript in the rare company of only a handful of other known texts from the time of the early revival period (11th- 13th centuries), all of which have been foundational to our understanding of the history of Tibetan historiography.

The first part of my thesis has two aims: to analyze the codicological properties of the manuscript, and to contextualize some of its contents in the larger framework of early Tibetan historiography. With respect to the latter task, I shall begin by offering a brief analysis of the text's historiographic connections to other works. In doing so, I shall provide an outline of the manuscript's general contents. I will then present a physical description of the manuscript, and point out some of the manuscript's paleographic and orthographic features with the intention of determining its "space-time coordinates." Finally, a brief analysis of the text's lexicography will provide a few examples of the archaic language, terminology, and idiomatic phrasing that locates the text within the category of Old Tibetan documents.

A comparative analysis of the text with those closely related materials will be presented in part two of the thesis. Here the reader will find a close analysis of the various sections of the text and

comparative material from Old Tibetan documents, as well as relevant later histories. Part two further discusses four major recurring themes of the manuscript, namely: poetics, kingship, the rhetoric of religion and state, and the introduction of Buddhism.

In part three of the dissertation I will present my edition of the text, comprising both a diplomatic transliteration and a fully annotated translation. Before proceeding, however, I will make a brief digression to recount the story of how I came across this text, and the serendipitous nature of its discovery.

* * *

While on an expedition to explore the paternal ancestral village of Lo tsa ba Rin chen bzang po in the early summer of 2012, our group made the necessary equipment stop at the town of Zada, a district headquarters in the Ngari Prefecture and the site of Tholing monastery in West Tibet. The layover was a good opportunity to visit the ancient capital of Pu rang Gu ge and to work on my colloquial Tibetan. While speaking with an energetic young monk, the topic of the monastery's manuscript collection came up, and I asked whether they ever gathered manuscripts found scattered about in caves or ruins in the area. The inquiry led to two pieces of information: the first was that the gathering of scattered manuscripts was a regular pastime of young people, and secondly, that the manuscript fragments that he had collected were kept in the living quarters of the *dgon pa*. My curiosity having been piqued, we clandestinely went to his room, where the monk pointed out a pile of loose folios kept atop a chest of drawers. The pile was large but not insurmountable. We moved the stack down onto a low coffee table and began to sort through it, setting aside pages that appeared to be of interest. Not long into the sifting process a Western book-like manuscript stood out from the rest of the random loose leaves. Having searched many cave libraries in the past I immediately perceived that the shape and binding of this object were unusual, and that its script looked distinctive and old.

I began to read—to skim, rather, as time was short. My eyes quickly arrived at the name of Nya gri btsan po [*sic*], the first king of Tibet who descended from heaven. Turning the pages in amazement, I found many important names, such as Srong btsan sgam po, Khri Srong lde btsan, and Khri gTsug lde Ral pa can, the three great “Dharma Kings” of the Tibetan Empire. Astonished to have found such a text, I skipped to the end to see where the work left off and found the names of the early kings of sTod

mNga' ris—specifically, of the kingdom of Gu ge. I could not believe my eyes, and in the excitement of a new discovery my first thought was: “What a text! This is perfect for my dissertation!” With two supervisors waiting back in Oxford I felt tremendous pressure to return with some substantive results from my fieldwork. After photographing the manuscript, I thanked the monk, and ran to meet up with the rest of the group. I had not thought that I would find new material to work with in Tho ling, a monastery whose library has been explored many times over by scholars, but some inquiry and good luck yielded a welcome surprise. Lesson learned: you never know where a new discovery can be made.¹

Historiographic Overview with an Outline of the Manuscript's General Contents

With regard to placing the document within a broader textual context, it is significant that the Tholing Manuscript is incomplete and bears neither a title page nor colophon; thus, no clue of its origin and intended purpose are present in the text. Nonetheless, based on a number of codicological considerations (discussed below), it is likely that the manuscript was created sometime in the mid- to late twelfth century CE. The text's resonance with early post-Imperial texts from Dunhuang aside, those works that can best be compared in terms of narrative to *this* untitled manuscript are from among the earliest known *chos 'byung* (religious history) and *rgyal rabs* (royal chronicle) of the early *phyi dar*—the period from the eleventh through the thirteenth century. Texts such as the *Chos 'byung chen mo bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan* by lDe'u Jo sras (henceforth *lDe'u Jo sras*), and its more extensive successor by mKhas pa lDe'u (1123-1175), the *rGya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa* (hereafter *mKhas pa lDe'u*), have the most extensive parallels to the Tholing text, with some passages being nearly identical.²

¹ As with many important discoveries, it was not long before other become aware of them. Since the discovery of the Tholing Manuscript there have been two articles published in Tibetan. The late Tsering rGyal po photographed the manuscript in Tholing and passed those images along to Pasang Wangdu, who, after recognizing the text's importance, published a summary article in 2013. Here the author briefly surveys notable narratives and topics, bringing to bear his expansive knowledge in early Tibetan historiography, without delving too deeply into the various topics considered. A second publication done by Khyung bdag (2013) is an annotated transcription of the manuscript. Here, Khyung bdag provides footnotes to difficult terms and interesting topics. Both articles have been useful for comparison, particularly in arriving at a more accurate reading of the text. In this regard, I cite them when our readings are different or when my own has been informed by theirs, otherwise, due to the simultaneous nature of our work, and the fact that these articles were only brought to my attention in late 2014, I have generally stayed clear of comparative analysis.

² For a dating of the two lDe'u chronicles, see Leonard van der Kuijp (1992), Karmay (1998 [1994]) and Sørensen (1994: 635-37). Van der Kuijp in particular discusses a date of 1261 for the larger *mKhas pa lDe'u* while proposing that the shorter *lDe'u Jo sras* is perhaps a contemporaneous if slightly earlier version of the former. Dan Martin (*forthcoming*) is currently working on a much-anticipated translation of *mKhas pa lDe'u*. Undoubtedly included will be a fresh analysis that will look at the genesis of these two early histories.

Elsewhere, even within parallel sections, remarkable differences can be seen, with the Tholing Manuscript sometimes giving an impression of greater antiquity. One token example, which will be discussed in greater detail later, is the statement in the Tholing Manuscript that the first Buddhist scriptures to arrive in Tibet during the time of lHa Tho tho ri gnyan btsan are from China rather than India. This attribution, which contradicts later histories, manages to undercut the Indo-centric narrative of the advent of Buddhism that became established in later Tibetan historiography.

Other examples of texts which might fruitfully be compared with the Tholing Manuscript include Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's (1124-1192) *Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud* (hereafter *Nyang ral*), Ne'u paṇḍita's (1283) *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba* (hereafter *Ne'u paṇḍita*), dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (written between 1545 and 1564), as well as sections of the *bKa' thang sde lnga* (compiled by O rgyan gling pa, 1323-1367/74?) and the *La dwags rgyal rabs* (mid-1600s), among others. None of the comparable texts, however, is in any way a variant of the Tholing Manuscript, which must be treated as coming from a different tradition. In terms of the development of the Buddhist reinterpretation of the Tibetan Empire, the differences between parallel passages within these texts are often more revealing than their similarities.

In addition to those texts that relate to the Tholing Manuscript in their overall structure, there are particular ideas and topoi from key early documents that resonate deeply with the manuscript. The *dBa' bzhed*,³ while quite different in its plot, is perhaps one of the best comparisons of the Tholing Manuscript in terms of narrative strategies, as both texts present an ethos of political legitimization. Furthermore, with respect to the Tholing Manuscript's narrative of the descent of the king from heaven, several parallels can be drawn with textual fragments found in Dunhuang, such as Pelliot tibétain 1038 and the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (consisting of PT 1286 and 1287), as well as with several pillar inscriptions from the time of the Empire.⁴

³ Wangdu and Diemberger (2000).

⁴ The use of fragmentary textual material from Central Asia is essential in the comparative analysis of the Tholing Manuscript. Throughout the thesis those documents referred to as "IOL Tib J n" or "Pelliot tibétain n" (or simply PT n) are those materials found in the Dunhuang cave library in Mogao, Gansu, China. Two halves of a whole, the former are now kept in the British library, while the latter are housed within the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Russia, Japan, and China also possess fragments of the Cave 17, however these are inconsequential for the present study). For the most part I have accessed and made regular use of these invaluable texts through the wonderful resources provided by the International Dunhuang Project website (<http://idp.bl.uk>), where scans of the originals can be examined. Transcriptions of this material are also made available on the Old Tibetan Documents Online website (<http://otdo.aa.tufs.ac.jp>).

The aptness of comparisons with material from Central Tibet or Dunhuang aside, it is important to remember that the Tholing Manuscript reflects the political aims of the region in which it was discovered—West Tibet, a place marked by a paucity of early historiographic material. A close reading of the text such as we shall provide here, then, may provide a unique glimpse into the adaptation of historical narratives in Western Tibet during the early *phyi dar*.

Outline of the Manuscript's General Contents

An outline of the general contents of the document in the form of a list of events and major figures in order of appearance will provide a good overview of the narrative episodes that are included in the text.

1. The Lunar Dynasty (i.e. the Chandra lineage of the *Mahābhārata*, *zla ba'i rigs*) (1: 1-6)
2. The four appointed kings (*bskos pa'i rgyal po*) (1: 6 - 4: 1)
3. The origin myth of Tibet's first king (4: 2 - 6: 5)
4. The primordial period of Tibet, including: the Tibetan origin myth of the monkey and rock ogress, and the various names of Tibet under the reign of its prehistoric rulers (6: 5 - 7: 7)
5. The rule of the sPu rgyal btsan po(s) from Nya gri btsan po [*sic*] through Khri Dar ma Wi dur brtsan [*sic*] (8:1 - 28: 7)
 - 5.1 rJe Nya gri btsan po [*sic*]: his descent from heaven and his actions on earth (8: 1-7)
 - 5.2 lHa sras Grag ma gser thig (?) (9: 1-4)
 - 5.3 rJe Dri gum btsan po [*sic*]: his actions and the prevalence of Black Bon (9:5 - 10: 4)
 - 5.4 lHa mTho do re snya btsan [*sic*]: the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet (10: 5 -11: 3)
 - 5.5 Srong rtsan sgam po [*sic*]: his life and actions (11: 3 - 19: 4)
 - 5.5.1 Foundation of the Ra sa 'Phrul snang gtsug lag khang
 - 5.5.2 Brief mention of mThon myi Sam po re [*sic*]
 - 5.5.3 Creation of laws against murder, illicit sex, theft and lying
 - 5.5.4 The six men of great strength (*che myi drug*)
 - 5.5.5 The seven wise men (*'dzang mi bdun*)

5.6. Khri Srong sde brtsan and the institutionalization of Buddhism (19: 4 - 21: 6)

5.6.1 Establishment of: bSam yas, sKa 'tshal, Khra 'brug, rGyang, Byams sprin and mTha' Kha ce'i gtsug lag khang

5.6.2 Invitation of: Pad ma sam bha bha [*sic*] and Bo de sad twa [*sic*], the mKhan po of Za 'or, gNya na shan ti and the mKhan po Ma ha ya na. The translators sNa nam Ye shes sde and Ka ba dpal rtsegs and Co ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan

5.7 lHa sras Mu ni btsan po and Khri 'De gtsug brtsan the younger (22: 1-5)

5.8 Khri gTsug lde Ral pa can: killed by Co ro Legs sgra lHa ldon brtsan and dBas rgyal To re stag snya; the brother of Ral pa can, gTsang ma, was banished (22: 5 - 28: 1)

5.9 Khri Dar ma Wi dur brtsan (a.k.a. Glang Dar ma): assassination by lHa lung Shel [*sic*] gyi rdo rje (28: 4 - 29: 7)

6. Disintegration and the collapse of the Tibetan Empire (29: 7 - 33)

6.1 [rJe gNam lde 'Od srung]

6.2 dPal 'khor brtsan

6.3 The disintegration of state laws and the corresponding fragmentation of the country (31-33)

7. The beginnings of sTod mNga' ris (33 - 49)

7.1 Mes Khri sKyil lding [*sic*] [sKyil lde nyi ma mgon] rides west to sTod, he is offered secular power by the local aristocracy (33: 1-6)

7.2 The *Mes mchod* [mgon] *gsum* are born: bKra shis mgon is supreme (34: 1 - 34: 7)

7.3 bKra shis mgon's two sons (35 - 36: 2)

7.3.1 The elder 'Khor re (35: 6 - 36: 3)

7.3.2 The younger Srong nge (a.k.a. Ye shes 'od) (36: 3 - 41: 7)

7.4 rJe Bla chen po lHa lde brtsan (son of 'Khor re) becomes lord of secular politics (42: 1 - 43: 5)

7.4.1 Indian mKhan po dPal Mar me mdzad ye shes (Atiśa) and Kashmiri
mKhan po Tra nya ka ra (Prajñākara)

7.5 lHa btsun pa Byang chub 'od (43: 5 - 44: 5 and again 47: 4 - 49: 1)

7.6 rJe mNga' bdag chen po dBu 'byams pa (44: 6 - 47)

7.7 rJe Bla ma chen po btsun ba Zhi ba 'od (47: 1-4)

7.8 rJe Bla chen po rTse lde rtsan (49: 2 - 50: 9)

Before delving into the contents, and in order to gain a better understanding of its materiality and possible dating, Part One will discuss the codicological and the linguistic features of the Tholing Manuscript.

Part One:
The Tholing Manuscript: A Codicological Review

(1.1) Physical Description of The Manuscript

Unlike the standard manuscripts of the early *phyi dar* period in West Tibet, typified by their large loose-leaf format, “elongated” paleographic style, vermilion circles at the center, and, in some more rare cases, sumptuous illumination,⁵ our newly discovered manuscript is of a wholly different format. It is relatively small, measuring roughly 16 x 9 cm. Its script is of a hybrid style common to post-imperial scripts (to be discussed in more detail below) but not seen much, if at all, in West Tibet. Even more remarkably, the text is loosely bound along the top edge. Though not unheard of, particularly in *nag rtsis* (divination) manuals and legal codes,⁶ this type of binding is a rare feature for a Tibetan historical text. The small size and binding of the Tholing Manuscript are reminiscent of manuscripts found in Central Asia, as distinguished from any found in West Tibet. All these considerations suggest the value of further comparisons of the text to material from Central Asia and Central Tibet; however, the Tholing Manuscript locates itself and was found in West Tibet—a place where there is a paucity of early historiographical material and nothing closely resembling this manuscript. So while the traditions of scriptoria in West Tibet, such as those of Tabo and Tholing, have left behind large archives of Buddhist scriptures, and play an important role in our understanding of the developments of Tibetan religious writing during the early *phyi dar*, our text more closely relates codicologically to manuscripts from the other side of the high plateau at the eastern gate of the Tarim Basin.

The manuscript comprises a total of twenty-five folios, not including one inserted tab that is a quarter of the size of the rest. The thick pages have a rough, unfinished texture (a result of the fact that no gloss or dye was used), and are made up of densely-packed layers of paper stuck together. The individual sheets are folded and stitched along a central spine in a manner not dissimilar to certain documents found walled up in Dunhuang.⁷ The cover pages, if one may call them that, are considerably damaged by what appear to be rodent bites and mildew buildup, with the latter rendering the last or

⁵ For an iconic example of an 11th century West Tibetan folio type see plate III in Tabo Studies II.

⁶ For more on bound Tibetan manuscripts see: Helman-Ważny (2014: 63-75).

⁷ For an example, see Tib J IOL 401, Tib J IOL 530, PT 44, Or. 15193, and Or. 13162.

back page practically illegible. Nonetheless, on the whole, the manuscript is sturdy, clean, and in good condition.

Other than the standard *tsheg* (intersyllabic dot) and *shad* (vertical stroke) used to demarcate syllables and clause breaks, there are no other ornaments or distinctive opening marks (*mgo yig*). (This does not include two glosses that use, among other motifs, a *svastika* and *svastika*-like mark to indicate the part of the main text to which they belong). Each folio has a standard of seven lines, except for the anomaly of four pages (5, 13, 18, and 50) that have respectively six, eight, six, and nine lines. In addition, some pages contain glosses in the margins and along the borders. Most of these inserts are clearly written in a different hand; a few may be the products of editing, rather than notes by the original scribe. I shall discuss these additions and emendations in further detail when dealing with the book's contents.

Further codicological work needs to be done in the future in order to have an optimal description of all the physical features of the Tholing Manuscript. In particular, paper and ink analysis including radiocarbon dating and fiber analysis would help not only to confirm the dating hypothesis presented here, but would also help to place this text in its spatial coordinates, in light of the type of paper used, whether of West Tibetan or Central Asian origin.⁸ Still, without a scientific analysis, we may home in on the document's space-time coordinates through an analysis of its internal and external features.

(1.2) Paleography

Though still in its infancy, the academic study of Tibet's textual-material culture has grown rapidly in little over a decade. Papers, workshops, and conferences on various codicological issues such as material and stylistic matters, have opened up exciting and complex avenues of investigation. In the area of early Tibetan paleography and orthography, the work of Tsuguhito Takeuchi, Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, and Sam van Schaik, among others, has provided the methodological framework for examining early material (from the 7th- 12th centuries), and contributed greatly to our understanding of it. Scherrer-Schaub (1999a) outlines a methodology for dealing with the corpus of material commonly referred to as "Old Tibetan Documents." She expanded on this essay in a piece written with George Bonani (2002), which detailed the methodology for "Establishing a Typology of Old Tibetan Manuscripts." Takeuchi

⁸ For a discussion on various paper types, see Helman-Ważny and van Schaik (2013).

has long worked with manuscripts in the Stein IOL collection from the Tarim Basin. His work explores those written remains of imperial and post-imperial period communities along the Silk Road that used Tibetan as the *lingua franca* long after the collapse of the empire. Sam van Schaik, more than anyone, has delved into, sorted through, and analyzed the Tibetan Dunhuang material in the British Library. An engagement with the multidisciplinary approaches that these scholars have taken will aid us in contextualizing the Tholing manuscript.

As defined by Scherrer-Schaub and Bonani, the phrase “Old Tibetan documents” refers to documents “from the second part of the seventh to the 14th century” (Scherrer-Schaub & Bonani 2002: 184). While this may be too broad a definition, in that it includes a number of subgroups (imperial period, post-imperial period, *phyi dar* period, etc.), it is nonetheless a useful device to employ when discussing a scattered and often fragmentary corpus of early material. According to this methodological approach, we can establish a date and typology for a document or a group of documents by laying out an exhaustive list of its “inner and outer features”—codicological, paleographic, orthographic, and lexicographic. Such cumulative evidence becomes a means to better place and contextualize a manuscript amidst a wide array of dispersed, dislocated, and even lost material. My paleographic analysis aims to follow Scherrer-Schaub and van Schaik’s methodology in an effort to date the Tholing manuscript within Tibet’s vast textual history.

For reasons of comparative and rhetorical ease, Scherrer-Schaub has grouped Old Tibetan manuscripts into two categories. The first group consists of texts from the time of the Tibetan imperial and early post-imperial periods (7th-11th century); it includes those fragments found along the Taklamakan and Gobi deserts, and the massive cache from the so called “cave library” of Dunhuang, as well as all epigraphic material in the form of stone pillar edicts. The group — labeled “Central Asian manuscripts”— consists of a variety of secular and religious, as well as Buddhist and Bon manuscripts, containing a variety of codicological-paleographic styles.⁹

⁹ Since the time of Scherrer-Schaub's defining article a more nuanced understanding of the transference and identification of early textual material has been developed as a result of both discovery and further research. Nonetheless for the present study the two broad categories presented by Scherrer-Schaub work.

The second group, in contrast, contains those documents from the region of mNga' ris skor gsum—dubbed “Western Tibetan manuscripts”—which are almost entirely canonical (aside from some epigraphic material), with secular documents being curiously scant.¹⁰ The “Western Tibetan Manuscripts” primarily comprise manuscripts from the collections of Tabo and Tholing monasteries, and date from the 10th to 15th centuries. For the most part, the documents in this group are fairly homogeneous in their external features, but markedly different from historical documents due to their religious nature and function. The paucity of historical material in the “Western Tibetan Manuscripts” makes comparison of our manuscript with Western Tibetan material difficult, despite the fact that our document comes from West Tibet.

While the two broad groupings of texts set out by Scherrer-Schaub work well from the vantage of the West Tibet corpus (specifically, those major parts from Tabo monastery), they do not adequately address the Tholing Manuscript's liminal position, since it stems from the early Western Tibetan *phyi dar*, but resembles more closely the historical documents from Central Asia in terms of its binding, script, archaisms, and historical content. It thus falls neither into the category of “Western Tibetan manuscripts” (due to its different style), nor into the category of “Central Asian manuscripts” (due to its provenance and content).

The two groups, however, are not as clearly distinct as they may seem to be, a fact that is pointed out by Scherrer-Schaub:

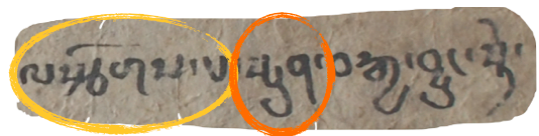
In a way, when one realizes that the famous library concealed in Cave N° 17 was probably sealed at the beginning of the 11th century, on the other hand knowing that Dunhuang, in spite of political changes, was never really cut off from Central and Western Tibet, one may legitimately presume that the collections of manuscripts of Western Tibet represent, in some respect, a quasi contemporaneous link in the transmission of a certain kind of text tradition, and that it is hardly imaginable to study them separately. (Scherrer-Schaub 1999b: 13)

¹⁰ The lack of historical material from the 10th-15th centuries in Western Tibet has long vexed and perturbed scholars of the area. A large body of historical, political, and secular literature must have accompanied the rise of the mNga' ris kingdoms. However, we are left with very little material dating from the first half of this early period. Histories from the 15th-17th centuries are more prevalent. These were written during the diffusion and eventual takeover of Gu ge by the dGe lugs pa from Central Tibet. In conversation with Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, she mentioned one possible explanation for this absence of historical documents. A hypothesis was put forward that after the La dwags occupation of Gu ge and during the dGe lugs pa invasion of West Tibet in the 17th century, many of the most important documents were either hidden away in *stūpa* (as is clear from the case of the Tholing manuscript), destroyed, or carried off by the dGe lugs pa authorities back to Central Tibet; a veritable end to the legacy of the Gu ge kingdom (personal communication, October 2014). Roberto Vitali (2012) outlines these events briefly, stating, “The occupation of Gu ge by La dwags eventually engendered the intervention of the freshly established dGa' ldan pho brang, and dGe lugs pa authority was restored in the region....With the downfall of the local dynasty, the Gu ge pa lost control of their land forever, which passed under IHa sa's oversight after the La dwags pa presence” (3).

Given the ever-present but less obvious link between the Hexi corridor and West Tibet, in examining the paleography of the text, I turn to the work of Sam van Schaik, who has led the way in developing a comprehensive methodology for early Tibetan script analyses based on the material from Dunhuang.

Van Schaik encourages us to pay more attention to the calligraphy within individual manuscripts as well as within groups. In his 2014 article entitled “Towards Tibetan Paleography: Developing a Typology of Writing Styles in Early Tibet,” van Schaik advances our understanding of early documents in terms of script analyses. Van Schaik’s typology of scripts is based on three groupings: [1] pillar inscriptions, [2] wood and paper manuscripts found in Central Asia, and [3] paper manuscripts from Dunhuang. This typology helps us to divide the corpus of early material into its constituent parts, and allows for a clearer look at the different types of material, as well as their influences and function. Within each of these groupings several styles exist; the manuscripts from Dunhuang have the greatest variety. By using a forensic methodology for handwriting analysis,¹¹ van Schaik is able to make a remarkable number of links to various contextual frameworks. His methodology breaks down various scripts into individual parts based on “key” letters that are useful in pointing out characteristics unique to different styles. Such an approach is most useful when encountering a multitude of manuscripts with some possible connection. As the Tholing Manuscript is a “one off,” so to speak, I do not hope to identify other texts by the same scribe but rather would like to employ the technique developed by van Schaik in order to identify more accurately the manuscript’s paleographic style in general.

The paleographic style seen in the Tholing Manuscript is radically different from the “elongated” style typical of manuscripts from West Tibet (Scherrer-



Schaub 1999c: 16). Some general features such as the ductus, the ligatures, the vowel consonant relationship, and the proportions between horizontal and vertical strokes evoke Central Asian Manuscripts more than those from West Tibet.

¹¹ For more on this topic, see Dalton et al. (2007).

For example, in contrast to the standard vertical stacking of Tibetan letters around the root letter, the scribe often stacks the letters on a more horizontal plane as displayed in the example above (circled in yellow). Here we see the common expression *lastsogs pa* (“et cetera”) written with each consonant in the first syllable on a perfectly continuous line. A similar paleographic feature can be observed to a lesser degree in the following syllable (circled in orange), *spun* (brothers or siblings), and in many other instances in the text (e.g. *spu rgyal*).

Horizontal stacking is a feature frequently observed in fragments found along the borders of Tibet and Central Asia,¹² particularly those that would fall under the category of post-imperial scripts dating from the 9th and 10th centuries. While the Tholing Manuscript should not be dated similarly to the immediate post-imperial texts (i.e. pre-*phyi dar*), the distinct paleographic features of the post-imperial style would place it closer to these earlier styles than to later *phyi dar* styles. In other words, the evidence supports a hypothesis of an early rather than a later dating.

The vowel root-letter relationship too bears a resemblance to Dunhuang manuscripts. Throughout the text we find a precise placement of the vowels *i*, *e*, and *o* (*gi gu*, *'greng bu* and *na ro*). The scribe consistently starts the vowel *i* directly above the root letter and finishes beyond the syllable’s end, carrying well over to the next syllable (circled in yellow). The *e* vowel (*'greng bu*) also starts directly over the root letter, descending in an almost vertical stroke, as can be seen in the final syllable *ste* in the example above (circled in orange). While the relationship between vowel and root letter may seem a minor detail, it carries weight when compared with similar relationships in the script types of the post-imperial period versus those of the early *phyi dar*, reflecting much more commonality with the former over that which is seen in West Tibet, where the contained structures of *dbu can* were prevalent.



Van Schaik’s group of post-imperial “headless styles” (2014: 18-21) should also be considered with reference to the Tholing

Manuscript. As described above, the script of the Tholing Manuscript is an inconsistent hybrid between

¹² In West Tibet horizontal stacking is not regularly seen with the exception of the earliest epigraphic material. That said, in later canonical texts, particular words were made stylistically to look archaic (13th -15th c.) in a clear effort to give more ‘antiquity’ to the text, in other words to make the manuscript look old. For more on this topic see Heller (2009).

the “headed” and “headless” scripts (*dbu can* and *dbu med*). The features of *dbu med*—like the fluid *ductus* seen in the consonants *sa*, *pha*, and *ma*—are recognizable, but the consonants *pha* and *ma* have not totally been converted to the headless style.¹³ At the same time, inconsistencies in the scribal hand's script arise in particular around the letters ཅ/ཅ and ཅ/ཅ (*ca/tsa*, *cha/tsha*), which look identical apart from the small hat atop the horizontal head. The defining characteristic of *dbu med* is only occasionally followed in the text. As a result, the reader must make a judgment on which letter is meant based on the context in which it appears. Thus, the script gives the impression of having been written during a transitional time when calligraphic styles were still in flux.

In a number of his publications, Tsuguhito Takeuchi has discussed such a hybrid style, which he has observed in and around the area of the Tarim Basin, spanning the 9th-12th centuries (see especially Takeuchi 2004; 2012). According to Takeuchi (2004), the post-imperial script and lexicon continued well into the *phyi dar* in the borderlands of the Tibetan empire. For example, the vowel-consonant relationship described above is seen regularly in Takeuchi's “post-imperial scripts,” but for some reason is rarely seen in the canonical material of West Tibet. We do, nonetheless, find it in the Tholing Manuscript, which therefore suggests a link between the Tarim Basin and West Tibet. It should not be surprising to find evidence that these two regions were intimately connected during the early developments of the Pu rang Gu ge kingdom. The route of Yar lung aristocrats escaping civil unrest in Central Tibet during the collapse of the Empire testifies to the link between these two areas. The aristocrats escaped via the northern route through Qarlug, crossing the southern pass of the Taklamakan, and finally ending up in the area around Ruthok in West Tibet.¹⁴

The same connection can be traced in the opposite direction, from mNga' ris to the Hexi corridor, as shown by the Dunhuang scroll PT 849. In this scroll, among the list of kings who took tantric initiation, appear the names of the early kings of West Tibet, including 'O lde, bKra shis mgon,

¹³ *dBu med* is not actually a specific script type but is equivalent to the English cursive, which subsumes all scripts apart from the capital or block script (although *dbu med* itself is not strictly speaking cursive, since the letters are not connected to one another). Various *dbu med* scripts include the “*bru tsha*, the *dpe tshugs* (‘book form’), and the *'khyug yig* (‘running script’) and variations on these known as *tshugs ring* (‘long form’) and *tshugs chung* (‘small form’),” see van Schaik (2014: 3 n.7).

¹⁴ For more on this, see Petech (1997: 249-50).

and Khri lde mgon, among others.¹⁵ The presence of these names shows that information was transferred from West Tibet back through the Hexi corridor. The connection between these two regions in the 10th and 11th century was still present along the Northern route across the Old Empire. Links of transference and transmission also existed from the Northeast corridor back into Central Tibet, as may be attested by examples of the post-imperial script that are found in Central Tibet. One such example is a group of manuscripts discovered in 2006 from inside the ancient dGa' thang 'bum pa.¹⁶ Among the texts found at dGa' thang, certain Bon po manuscripts bear a remarkable likeness to both Central Asian Manuscripts as well as to the Tholing Manuscript. Other critical historical and cultural examples of such transference from the Hexi corridor back to Central Tibet can be gleaned from the so-called “vinaya of the east” from Northwest Amdo, a source for bringing ordination rites back to Central Tibet.¹⁷ We might also point to the early mural paintings of Drathang monastery, which exhibit styles and motifs heavily influenced, if not directly transferred from the aesthetic motifs found in Dunhuang.¹⁸ In light of all this, we may expand our understanding of the movement of calligraphic styles that crisscrossed the whole of the former Empire during the so-called “Dark Period.”

In continuing with the description of the script, we may note the existence of three aesthetic characteristics of the hand of our text's scribe, providing more points of comparison with other manuscripts. Based on van Schaik's methodology, we observe that [1] the outline of the letters, or *ductus*, exhibits controlled shading on all strokes, with a thick down line and a narrow horizontal line. The use of shading becomes more common after the fall of the imperial period, when scribes took on more individualized calligraphic styles. The shading, however, predates formalized scriptoria in the 12th and 13th centuries (van Schaik 2014: 18). [2] The somewhat squared and squat proportions of the characters is reminiscent of early Dunhuang material that was in turn influenced by the squared graphemes of pillar inscriptions (ibid.: 7-8). These are in sharp contrast with the ubiquitous “elongated

¹⁵ PT 849 lists the figures who received Buddhist initiations during the post-imperial period as follows: ...*btsan po khri kyi ling dang sras che ba pal byin mgon dang || bkra shis mgon dang || leg gtsug mgon dang || btsan po bkra shis rtsags pa dpal dang || dpal lde dang | | 'o lde dang || 'khri lde dang || btsan po bkra shis mgon po dang || tsan po a tsa ra dang | 'khri lde mgon dang | | lha tsig can she dang | | de dag tham cad kyang theg pa chen pa 'i dbang thob pa yin no ||* || Among these figures, the earliest patriarchs of s'Tod mNga' ris ('O lde, bKra shis mgon, and Khri lde mgon) are mentioned, showing the transference of information from West Tibet to Northeast Tibet / Gansu.

¹⁶ See, in particular, Bellezza (2013), for comparable images and analysis.

¹⁷ See Davidson (2005: 86-92).

¹⁸ See, in particular, Vitali (1990), “Yemar to Drathang: A Phase of Artistic Synthesis.”

style” of West Tibet. [3] The formal use of ticks on the tails of consonants is a common trait of a fast-moving pen, representative of a style of the post-imperial period in the emerging headless script of Dunhuang (ibid.: 23). Overall, meticulous attention has been paid by the scribe to the spacing and balance of the letters on the page. The controlled nature of the scribe’s hand, taken in concert with his orthographic skill and all the features mentioned above, testify to a learned, practiced, and steady hand.



An example of the three signature features described can be seen in the “key” letters of *ka* and *ga*, as laid out by van Schaik. A standard *dbu can* squared *ka*, as would appear on pillar inscriptions or in block prints, is composed of four lines: “(i) a horizontal ‘head’ (*mgo*), and then from left to right, three vertical lines descending from the head: (ii) a stroke angled or turning to the left known in Tibetan calligraphy as the ‘tooth’ (*mche ba*); (iii) a straight line known as the ‘central arm’ (*dbus lag*) and (iv) a slightly longer straight line forming the right side of the letter, known as the ‘leg’ (*rkang ba*)” (ibid.: 21). In the Tholing Manuscript, the scribe inks the letter *ka* (detailed above) in a more fluid manner. The letter is composed of only two hooked vertical lines: the first stroke, made by a quick downward hook that is finished with a dull tick at the end; and a second, shorter stroke, that makes the “tooth” of the letter incline to the right, like a closed comma completing the grapheme with considerable shading. The result is a headless two-line *ka* reminiscent of van Schaik’s “post-imperial epistolary style” from Dunhuang. The letter *ga* similarly consists of only two-lines—a quick curled, open, downward hook, to make the ‘central arm’, followed by a quick c-like stroke, once again resulting in an early headless calligraphic style. We see how these two key graphemes take on specific features that are good markers for future comparisons to other manuscripts. If, one day, other texts of similar format and aesthetic are found in West Tibet, these observations will be a good starting point for a more in-depth analysis and comparison.

(1.3) Orthography

Some common archaic orthographic features exist throughout the Tholing Manuscript. Examples include the “hard” *da* suffix after certain past tense and imperative forms (known in Tibetan as *da*

drag),¹⁹ the *ya* subscript in the syllables *myi* and *mye*, and the irregular addition of the final letter 'a ('*a rten*).²⁰ As these are commonly known archaic spelling features, no further analysis is needed here.²¹



The slightly less common but still known *ra* superfix in syllables where it was later replaced by a *da* or *ba* prefix, also appears regularly throughout the text. An example is the spelling of the word “nine” (pictured here), normally *dgu*, but spelled *rgu* here. Most of these orthographic features do also appear in the early canonical material from West Tibet and continue to be used well into the 15th century, so their appearance in the Tholing text does not by itself provide grounds for dating. The appearance of the *ra* superfix, however, is unusual and not often seen in the region; moreover, it is a characteristic seen only in early manuscripts and further provides grounds for an early dating.

An interesting characteristic of the Tholing Manuscript, in comparison with other early secular texts, is the nearly complete absence of spelling errors. Aside from some reversals of genitive and agentive case, all verbs are written in their proper tense and nouns are spelled accurately, if occasionally condensed or characterized by archaic features. That said, proper names are often spelled in unusual ways, relative to other manuscripts from the *phyi dar* period or to texts from the Central Asian corpus. Instead of correcting the author’s seemingly obvious mistakes, however, it is perhaps more useful to ask the question: why do these variants of such stock names occur? For instance, the author writes: *nub phyogs zla ba tshes pa'i 'og na | ta zig nor gyi rgyal po*, “in the west, under the rising moon, was the Ta zig king of wealth.” The spelling of Ta zig here—in reference to Persia and connected to modern day Tajik, Tibet’s closest Persian speaking neighbor—varies from the more common *phyi dar* spelling of sTag gzig(s) (as in “tiger leopard”).²² The spelling used by the scribe is uncommon in later texts, whereas in earlier texts the name is almost exclusively spelled in this form. One explanation for these variants lies in phonological changes of the spoken language. It is believed that in old Tibetan every consonant would have been pronounced (this phonology has partly been preserved on some of the

¹⁹ On the *da drag* see Przyluski and Lalou (1933).

²⁰ On the '*a rten* see Hill (2005).

²¹ For a good general overview, see van Schaik’s website: <http://readingtibetan.wordpress.com>.

²² Additional variants such as *ta zhig* and *ta chig* as well as other Tibetan references to Islamic communities are discussed by Yoeli-Tlalim (2011) in her introduction to *Islam and Tibet*.

fringes of Tibet, in areas such as Ladakh and Baltistan).²³ So, for example, sTag gzigs would have been pronounced with all its consonants (*/stag-/gzigs/*). However, in order to be pronounced properly the word had to be spelled Ta zig, and we might presume that while our text is not from the imperial period, remnants of the old pronunciations did in fact continue during the time of mNga' ris's creation.

There is certainly an element of orality found within the other orthographic variants of proper names within the text, which suggests a possible explanation to why these variants are present. The names of major figures—kings, ministers, and preceptors—of the etiological and historical narratives that are central to Tibetan identity are spelled in a phonetic manner rather than according to a fixed standard. The rendering of the names is made all the more unusual by the relatively few spelling or grammatical errors found elsewhere in the text. The fact that almost all names deviate from the normative spellings known from later Tibetan sources implies that either the orthography had not yet been standardized or that the scribe was working from oral as well as written sources. lHa mTho do re snya brtsan [*sic*] (lHa Tho tho ri gnyan btsan), the name of Tibet's 28th king and the first of the monarchs to be introduced to Buddhism,²⁴ provides one example of the phoneticized spellings found in the text.²⁵ Further examples include: the eighth king of Tibet rJe Dri gum btsan po [*sic*]; and the legendary grammarian mThon myin Sam po re [*sic*] (Thon mi Sam bho ṭa) among others.²⁶ Though some of these variants can be found (on occasion) in later histories a look through the list of spelling variants for the names of early Tibetan kings, such as that produced by Hiltrud Linnenborn (2004), shows just how rare the name spellings in Tholing Manuscript are; their closest parallels are found almost exclusively among Old Tibetan documents.

The last emperor of Tibet, and presumptive persecutor of Buddhism, referred to in posterity as Glang Dar ma ("Darma the Bull"), is represented in the Tholing Manuscript by his original name Khri²⁷

²³ Charles Ramble, personal communication. See also the *Manual of Standard Tibetan*, (Tournadre and rDo rJe 2003).

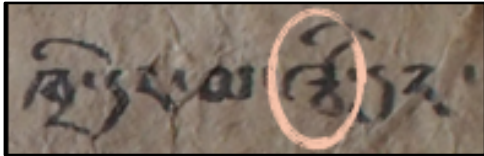
²⁴ One of the most unusual anomalies found in the Tholing manuscript, in contrast with all other versions of the same narrative, is that the two sutras that were lHa mTho do re snya brtsan (sic) and Tibet's first introduction to Buddhism, come not from the heavens (written in Indian script), as is the norm in later histories, but rather come from China (set down in Chinese script).

²⁵ Irregular orthography of lHa mtho do re, along with many other early kings, is quite common in early texts. For an extensive review and table of name spellings, see Linnenborn (2004: 27-41).

²⁶ A list of phonetic spellings of proper nouns will be explored further in Part Two of the dissertation as they come up in the text.

²⁷ The glyph for Khri is also written in an obscure way with the *ra* suffix turned in the wrong direction. However I think this may simply be chalked up to scribal error.

Dar ma Wi dur brtsan [*sic*] (?U dum po).²⁸ The grapheme made to render this name has a particularly odd paleographic form; it is difficult to read at first, as the unique glyph (circled) does not appear elsewhere in the text. A reading of the strange combination of letters circled in the image is perhaps explained as follows: *lwi* → 'u'i.²⁹ Hence, the whole name would be pronounced as Khri Dar ma U'i



dur brtsan (or more literally, as it appears, Khri Dar ma Wi dur brtsan [*sic*]). All the above variants share the common trait of being phoneticized spellings of the

name, indicating again, perhaps, that the text was set down at least partially from an oral source or perhaps dictated to the scribe.

Another example of the irregular spellings of proper nouns is that of Tibet's first mythic king rJe Nya gri btsan po [*sic*]. The archaic spelling variant in the Tholing Manuscript is extremely rare and difficult to find elsewhere in later histories. In fact, the only other example known to me is found on the rKong po pillar inscription, which dates back to the late 8th century.³⁰ The more common spelling, found in the authoritative histories from the late 12th century onwards, is gNya' khri btsan po. Even in the earlier Dunhuang material from the late 9th to 11th century, such as PT 1286, a variant similar to the later spellings is seen in the form of Nyag khri btsan po. The rKong po inscription together with the Tholing Manuscript bear witness, nonetheless, to the fact that the old spelling of Nya gri [*sic*] did in fact exist into the *phyi dar* but nonetheless raises the question as to what other ancient sources the scribe was familiar with. Given the significance of Nya gri [*sic*] in the origin myths of Tibetan kingship,³¹ the archaic spelling as it appears here is especially curious when considered in relationship to the etiological problem raised by Samten Karmay (Karmay 1998 [1988]: 759) and others. Specifically, the spelling as it is in the Tholing Manuscript undercuts the version according to which the first king was carried on the necks (*gnya'*) of Tibetans when he arrived from India.³² Regardless, we may posit that the Tholing

²⁸ For more on this see Karmay (2003).

²⁹ I would like to thank Cristina Scherrer-Schaub for this morphological analysis and for her help in reading parts of the text. On the phonetic value of the *va zur* as a half-vowel *o* or *u*. Thus, the grapheme *lwi* perhaps represents the phoneme *u'i*.

³⁰ See Richardson (1985: 64-71).

³¹ See Sørensen (1994: 137 n.355) for a road map to Tibetological discussions on gNya' khri btsan po, see also Sørensen and Hazod (2005). In recent years research on the origin myths of the first Tibetan king has produced a large number of studies which are not listed here but which substantially add to the breadth of this topic.

³² Indeed, *gnya'* is the commonest form encountered in later sources, and Snellgrove and Richardson (1968: 23-24) suggest that it was invented by *phyi dar* authors who did not know what the earliest form, *Nyag*, could have meant, so they made this

text does not draw on later Buddhist texts (where name spellings have become more standardized), but rather recalls an earlier and largely obsolete version of which the only other example is the official rock edict in rKong po.

A last note on archaic orthographic features that appear in the text pertains to the occurrence of Tibetan transliterations of Sanskrit terms. The occurrence is not unfamiliar to scholars of Tibetan Studies;³³ it is a feature of many early religious manuscripts from the imperial and early post-imperial time. PT 849 (mentioned above for its list of early kings) is a great example of the scribal habit of rendering the Sanskrit titles of important Buddhist texts, concepts, practices, and so on, in Tibetan script. The Tibetans seem to have spelled Indian words as they heard them from the South Asian *paṇḍitas* with whom they collaborated. Thus, Himalayan pronunciations have crept into the Tibetan transliterations of Sanskrit works, and certain phonetic variants such as *t*sa for *ca* and *d*za for *ja* have been adopted systematically, as for instance in *dharmarāja* (Tib. *chos kyi rgyal po*) rendered in PT 849 as *dar ma ra dza*. Furthermore, some words are rendered according to their Tibetan pronunciation, for instance *vajra* (Tib. *rdo rje*) spelt *ben dza*. In the Tholing Manuscript we find the same type of transliteration in the titles of certain texts, terms and names. One such instance is the appearance of the word *man dal*, for Sanskrit *maṇḍala*, as opposed to the Tibetan *dkyil 'khor*. While these features occur in many Tibetan texts, there is a significant case of an orthographic “Indianization” that cannot be overlooked; particularly as it relates to one of the main aims of the current section: to provide a relative date for the Tholing manuscript. This “Indianization” is reflected in the scribe’s spelling of Tibet’s quintessential tantric master Padmasambhava.

The name appears twice in the text in a fairly rare Indianized form, Pad ma sam bha bha and Pad ma sam bha ba.³⁴ Other known witnesses to the use of this name appear in a few Old Tibetan Documents, each one has been key to our current understanding of this seminal religious figure.³⁵ Most

one up and invented the neck-enthronement story to explain it. But of course, *nyag* isn’t the earliest form, *nya* is. There are three prevailing narratives on the origination of Tibet’s first king. Outlined by Karmay they are: An Indian King (gSang ba chos lugs), descent from the *lha* gods (*bsGrags pa bon lugs*), and originating from the *g.yang* (*g.yang gsang lugs*) Karmay (1998 [1994]). In our text, we are given a slightly different version. In particular, it locates the myth in West Tibet as opposed to rKong po or India. For more on this topic, see the discussion in section (2.3), pages 67-70 as well as note 99.

³³ Sanskritized titles appear for almost every single work title in the Tibetan Kanjur and Tenjur.

³⁴ The full title given is “the Indian *mkhan po* Pad ma sam bha bha” (*rgya gar kyi khan po pad ma sam bha bha*).

³⁵ “A Survey of the Tantric Material in the Dunhuang Collection” by Dalton and van Schaik (2006), together with an article by Dalton (2004) which focuses specifically on early documentation of Padmasambhava, provide excellent building blocks

notable are two Dunhuang manuscripts, PT 44³⁶ and IOL Tib J 321.³⁷ The former contains a narrative in its first section describing the journey undertaken by Pad ma sam bha bha [*sic*] from Nepal to Tibet including the dramatic use of Vajrakīlaya.³⁸ In IOL Tib J 321, a 10th century commentary, which contains within it a complete rNying ma pa Mahāyoga Tantra, the Indian master is mentioned four times. In the last three cases, the name is rendered as Pad ma sam ba bha [*sic*] and, on last page of the manuscript, as Pad ma rgyal po and Sam ba bha. PT 44 and IOL Tib J 321 are not only some of the earliest witnesses for the Padmasambhava legend, but also of his Sanskrit name. Curiously, the *dBa' bzhed* (Testament of dBa), which exists as an 11th-12th century manuscript which draws upon an earlier archetype,³⁹ also uses the Indianized name Pad ma sam bha bha. Other texts from the 13th century onwards tend to use Tibetan name forms instead.⁴⁰ The transition appears to be the result of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's foundational narrative hagiography of Padmasambhava (the *bKa' thang zangs gling ma*), as well as other revealed treasure texts (*gter ma*).⁴¹ From that point forward, the *gter ma* progenitor is referred to by many epithets, the most common being Pad ma 'byung gnas ("Lotus born"). The Tholing Manuscript's treatment of the tantric master seems to predate the apotheosis of Padmasambhava and the ubiquitous Tibetan cult that arose around him during the time of Nyang ral (12th cent.) and Gu ru Chos dbang (1212-1270) or, at least, it does not show any traces of being influenced by Nyang ral's retelling of the Padmasambhava legend.⁴² Based on the two early witnesses from Dunhuang, it is my supposition that the spelling of the Tholing Manuscript represents an archaic

for further research on this topic. In addition, a detailed review and analysis of *Early Tibetan Documents on Phur pa from Dunhuang* was published by Cathy Cantwell and Rob Mayer (2008). This book provides a detailed review of the multiple sources related to the singularly important practice connected to the cult of Padmasambhava. Further, Cantwell and Mayer (2012) provides an in-depth analysis of IOL Tib J 321. Finally, the duo's blog, *kīli kīlaya* (<http://blogs.orient.ox.ac.uk/kila/>) serves as an excellent resource for research on early texts related to Guru Rinpoche, Phur pa practice, and other early source material.

³⁶ Coincidentally, PT 44 is also another example of a bound manuscript similar in format to the Tholing manuscript.

³⁷ A third example from cave 17 is PT 307.

³⁸ Three translations have been done on this text: the first by Bischoff and Hartman (1971: 11-28), the second by Kapstein (2000: 158-59), and most recently a third, with an analysis by Cantwell and Mayer (2012: 41-67).

³⁹ On dating, see Wangdu and Diemberger (2000: xiv, 8).

⁴⁰ Cathy Cantwell has pointed out to me that the Indian name is used later on to describe one of the eight forms of Padmasambhava (Pad ma sam bha). Perhaps this is a remnant of the archaic usage? (Personal communication, Wolfson College, 13 September 2013.)

⁴¹ I would like to thank Lewis Doney for pointing me in the right direction for research on this topic (personal communication, 7 September 2013).

⁴² For more on the topic see Cantwell and Mayer (2013: 19-50).

name form. I posit that our scribe was working from older versions detailing the narrative of Padmasambhava, and so perhaps predating the later preference for the master's Tibetan name.

In summary, the use of archaic spelling norms (such as the *da drag*), the archaic spellings of proper names, the archaic Indianization of terms, and the Sanskritic spelling of Padmasambhava, all support a pre-13th century dating for the Tholing Manuscript. These orthographic features can also be considered emblematic of the fluid and formative nature of the historical narrative of the early kings contained in it.

(1.4) Lexicography and Style

Like the formative non-static nature of name spellings within our text, the archaic terminology and topoi used are also suggestive of flux. The prose as a whole has a distinct rhythm and movement, and it appears that due to the work's abbreviated nature, the scribe was basing the work on a larger narrative that he fit into a relatively small space. This narrative would have then perhaps been read aloud or recited by memory using the Tholing text as an outline. The oral dimensions of the text are made particularly evident in the sections written in verse, even sections written in prose are not as detailed and complex as their parallels in later histories. Given the relatively brief nature of these prose sections, the narrative as a whole moves fluidly from one episode to the next. A mixture of verse-like sentence structures and rhythmic idiomatic phrasing imparts its performative quality.

A small but still pertinent example of oral-type versification, or rhythmic prose, may be found in the quotation below, which is a description of the prehistoric Tibetans encountered by Nya gri btsan po [*sic*]. The text reads as follows:

dus de tsam na khyo ga'i phyag ni yo yo | bud myed kyi phyag ni tug | gos ni zhab ma⁴³ | zas ni glo gro tsog dang rgyu 'tshem bu las ma mchis te|

“Around that time the hands of men were *yo yo* (shifty?) [and] the hands of women were *tug* (thick? *stug pa*). As for clothing [it only covered?] the lower parts. As for food, it was nothing else except lung (*glo*), gathered (*tsog=tshogs*) potentilla tubers (*gro [ma]*?) and stitched intestines (?) (*rgyu 'tshem bu=rgyu ma⁴⁴*)” (8: 6-7).

⁴³ Read: *zhabs ma*.

⁴⁴ For a modern-day recipe for either, see *Food in Tibetan Life* by Rinjing Dorje (1985). See especially page 87 for *glo ba* and 89 for *rgyu ma* (the recipe for stuffed lungs looks particularly enticing!).

Each clause ties into the next, while the use of *ni* creates a rhythmical pattern typical of Old Tibetan poetry, with *ni* marking the caesura half-way through the line. The quasi-onomatopoeic term used to describe mens' hands, *yo yo*, also add to the rhythm, and recall old Tibetan imperial style versification with its regular use of onomatopoeic words.⁴⁵ Other terms within the excerpt are shortened to fit the verse. Elsewhere in the text, grammatical particles are dropped making the overall structure more difficult to comprehend. The combination of these features results in a narrative that gives the impression of actual as well as stylized archaism.

The archaic feel of the text is heightened by its terminology, topoi, and similes. Key terms such as *gtsug lag* or *skol bod* are used variously throughout the text. The former, which has not gone unnoticed by Tibetologists, is used with at least three different meanings connected to it (to which I will return presently). The latter is employed in an archaic proto-national term for “Our Tibet” ([’o] *skol bod*) not commonly found in later writing.⁴⁶ Elsewhere old Tibetan stock phrases like “the helmet was mighty,” (*dbu rmog ni brtsan*) in reference to the state of kingship, or “[he] came down as the lord of men” (*myi’i rjer gshegs*) in reference to the descent of the first king from heaven, all add to the archaic characteristics of the narrative, as well as the hypothesis of an early dating for the manuscript.

A few token examples of the poetic usage of simile may be drawn from the section dealing with the collapse of the empire. Their poetic prose and imagery is not unusual in the text but rather typical of the narrative’s characteristic voice. The text reads:

*skol bod kyi rgyal khams dbu bye’u rgyun chad pa bzhin du sug thal zhing | ya rabs ni
byi khung bsubs | dma’ rabs ni gnam mthongs bye ste |*

It was as if (*bzhin du*) the leadership (*dbu*) of our kingdom of Tibet was interrupted like (a line of flying) birds that is cut off (or: has lost its head), and the good noble families (*ya rabs*) disappeared (*bsubs*) into mouse holes, [and] for the not so good families of the lower classes (*dma’ rabs*), the gateway of heaven (*gnams mthongs*) opened; (31: 1-5).

Later, after the dust had settled following the collapse of the Empire, and the prosperous rise of the Pu rang Gu ge kingdom was underway, we read that: “mNga’ ris was a region administered like a settled yogurt” (43: 4) (*mnaga’ ris zho mnan ba ltar bskyangs pa chig gda’*). The analogy used here is not so

⁴⁵ On the use of onomatopoeic terms used in Old Tibetan, see, for example, Beyer (1992: 47-48).

⁴⁶ On the use of the first person plural inclusive pronoun [’o] *skol* see Hill (2015a). In general the term is somewhat common for “we” in early *phyi dar* sources; later it seems to fall out of use, see further discussion in section 2.3.

uncommon: *rgyal khams zho ldar chag*, “the kingdom had become settled like yogurt.” This implies that there are no political disturbances; all is calm. It can equally denote a certain amount of indifference or apathy, although in the context above this is not the case.⁴⁷

The term *gtsug lag*, which has most notably been written about by Ariane Macdonald, Rolf Stein, and Michael Hahn, appears on numerous occasions with slightly different context-dependent meanings.⁴⁸ This textual flux is exemplary of the early period when terms had not yet been solidified. Generally speaking, in the majority of cases found in the Tholing text, *gtsug lag* is used in conjunction with a proper name of a monastic building, as in the famous lHa sa gtsug lag khang which houses the Jo khang. Elsewhere its functions are more akin to those that it performs in imperial and early post-imperial texts, where the terminology is still variable. Four meanings emerge within the Tholing Manuscript: [1] *gtsug lag* with reference to a monastery, i.e. the house (*khang*) of *gtsug lag*, [2] *gtsug lag* with reference to sciences and specialized knowledge, i.e. China as a center of *gtsug lag* (*rgya nag kyi gtsug lag*), [3] *gtsug lag* with reference to religion or a religious/normative system in general (*stod mnga' ris 'dir gtsug lag ni bon chos*) and to the Bon tradition in particular (*gtsug lag bon chos ni lha chos su mdzad*). Finally, [4] we find *gtsug lag* also referenced as a specific, though undefined tradition (*chos lugs*); in this case we find that after conversion to Buddhism that *gtsug lag* (together with *bon*) is “banned” (*myi dbangs*).⁴⁹ Interestingly, with regard to the last meaning, we may observe, with the assistance of A.M. Macdonald’s argument, taken in conjunction with R.A. Stein’s disputation of it, that in the Tholing Manuscript’s usage, there are occasional indications that *gtsug lag* refers to a stand-alone practice. It is difficult to say with any specificity what this practice was. It may simply be one specific

⁴⁷ Personal communication with Tsering Gonkatsang, May 2014. When I first came across this yogurt simile I had to reread the line several times to be sure that I wasn’t missing something; after some time, and humour, Tsering was able to point to a few examples in the colloquial language in which the same concept was being used. In conversation with Charels Ramble, and thanks to the help of Alex Smith we find that the simile of settled yogurt as it relates to the well being of the kingdom also shares perhaps a more ancient parallel in a narrative that appears in the *gZi brjid*, book 6. In brief, the passage appears in a longer narrative that outlines the mythic origins of both *ju thig* (rope divination) and the first divine sheep, *lug lha ba bal chen*, who is generated from a wish made by the god Srid pa ye smon rgyal po. In an effort to alleviate the poverty and suffering of humanity, Srid pa ye smon rgyal po wishes for an animal that will support all of humanity’s needs — clothing, milk for drinking, meat and cheese for eating, and friendship. To make this wish manifest, the royal god sets about collecting the essences of thirteen “dissonant substances” (*mi 'phrod rdzas sna bcu gsum*), the very first of which is “a curd on the verge of becoming yogurt, which is the essence of sky” (*gnam zho khad ki ru ma dang*). (Blo ldan snying po, sPrul sku. 2000 [completed 14th century]. *mDo dri med gzi brjid* (12 volumes). Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe skun khang. p.440: 14).

⁴⁸ See Macdonald (1971: 190-391), Stein (2010 [1985]) and Hahn (1995: 347-54).

⁴⁹ For a breakdown of the usage of *gtsug lag* and *gyung drung* as the terms appear in the text, see the appendix two.

to the astrological/divinatory sciences referred to early in the text. However, there is text-internal evidence that *gtsug lag* also refers to Bon, as well as to yet a further religious “science.”

In some of the various phrases used, we also find allusions to old customs or rituals that might have existed in the area of West Tibet and perhaps in Central Tibet as well before the *phyi dar*. One example of such allusions appears in a unique pair of compound nouns not regularly seen elsewhere. The text describes the offering of gold and turquoise libations, or *gser zhag* and *g.yu skyems*, which were made by lHa mTho do re snya brtsan [*sic*] in homage to his (and Tibet’s) first introduction to Buddhist scriptures. In the Bon tradition, this pair of offerings still exists; although nowadays only the gold offering remains in the Buddhist tradition, in which the “gold” liquid is beer or *chang*.⁵⁰ In old texts, however, in which we see the appearance of both gold and turquoise, the term *skyems*, is almost always associated only with the gold. In our text an interesting variant appears connecting the turquoise, *g.yu* with *skyems*, while the gold is given yet another container, *zhag*, not found elsewhere.⁵¹ Early historical texts afford a central role to the offering pair of gold and turquoise (*gser skyems* and *g.yu skyems/sngon*). On its own, the term *skyems* regularly appears in Old Tibetan documents in connection with libation offerings. The term ([*dgyes*] *skyems*) is prominent already in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, where it refers to a royal libation banquet in which drinking and swearing allegiance were the central activities of the gathering (cf. PT 1287: 220, 320, 434; see also the year [682-683] in the *Old Tibetan Annals*). Likewise, the “gold libation” (*gser skyems*) is first recorded in PT 1042 as an offering made to the gods (*lha*) as part of an elaborate burial ritual. Later, in early *phyi dar* material, the use of gold in a divine drink and turquoise as part of a divine drink/food begins to appear more regularly, though clearly, and most often, with reference to the more ancient traditions. Both the dBa’ bzhed (2000: 24) and *bKa’ chems ka khol ma* employ the two in the context of lHa Tho tho ri gnyan brtsan. As an explanation, in the *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* (92: 2-3), dPa’ bo gtsug lag phreng ba writes, “that which is called *gser skyems* is a drink in which gold has been placed and ... *g.yu sngon* can be seen when a good

⁵⁰ I would like to thank Samten Karmay for help in this matter.

⁵¹ In the *Bon skyongs rgyun tshogs nar ma’i dbu phyogs bzhugs so*, a 16 folio manuscript belonging to Lama Tshultrim of Lubrak, Mustang, there is a line describing the iconography of *gshin rje nag po*, the “Black Lord of Death,” who is said to hold among other objects, a skull cup (*bhan rda shag*). The full line reads: *las kyi gshin rje nag po mthu bo che | zhal cig phyag gnyis ral kyu bhan rda zhag* | “the powerful black lord of death, the agent of karma, with one face, two arms, holding a sword (*ral kyu = ral gri*) and skull cup (*zhag*).” This is the only such reference with regard to *shag* as a ritual holder. For a full translation of the passage, see the work of Charles Ramble on <http://www.kalpa-bon.com/>.

turquoise has been placed atop food” (*gser skyems zhes btung bar gser blugs pa dang* | | *g.yu sngon sgog pa yin zer yang ma dag pa ste bza’ ba’i steng du gyu bzang po bzhag par snang ngo* | |). In this way Karmay, further points out that a stone turquoise placed in a cup of water can also be used. Karmay (2014 [2009]: 85) further translates “the gold cup and turquoise plate” as correlating directly with the divine drink and food.⁵² The ritual importance of these objects has further been attested by Nebesky (1956), Ramble (1998) and Karmay (1998 [1987], 2014 [2009]). On the topic as a whole, Martin concludes that, “We might say that the pairing of these two highly valued substances, gold and turquoise, is quite an old one, while the perhaps rather late accounts of the legendary ruler lHa-tho-tho-ri may at least assure us that their tellers believed both to be indigenous to Tibet” (Martin 2014: 84-85, n. 13).⁵³ Finally while I am not able to provide a philological discussion of these differences, I do want to point out the unique lexicographic use of these compounds in contrast to later texts, which employ *gser skyems* as the offering made by lHa mTho do re snya brtsan [*sic*] to mark both the rarity and archaic nature of the text.

The language used in less significant parts of the text, such as section transitions, is remarkable only in that it evokes an early stage of writing characterized by a relative paucity of complex rhetorical turns. Each *vita* is begun with the name of the king followed by *gyi sku ring la*, “during the life of.” A shift in the text occurs after the time of the Old Tibetan kings in which each subsequent ruler in West Tibet is introduced by name followed with *zha nga nas*. *Zha[l] snga nas* literally means “before the face of,” meaning “in the presence of,” but here we have something akin to the earlier “during the time of.” This seems to indicate either direct speech (*zhal nas* “from the mouth of”) or, what is more likely, something more along the lines of “during the command of,” which I have loosely translated as “during the reign of.” A quick word search in the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) shows that the latter phrase (*zha snga nas*) also appears in the *dBa’ bzhed* and in parts of the *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston*. In both instances the term is used with reference to the rule of the *btsan po*. In the *brDa dkrol gser gyi me*

⁵² The centrality, and even the special nature, of gold and turquoise is perhaps best visually represented in the royal banquet wear of the Old Tibetan kings. Here, such as in the cups, bowls serving plates, ewers, and decanters, the coupling of the pair is a distinctive feature of that period in Tibet and Central Asia, the importance of which cannot be underestimated.

⁵³ For more on this topic, see also: Walter (2009: 204), van Schaik (www.earlytibet.com), Bellezza’s translation of a narrative on “golden libation” recovered from the *dGa’ thang ’bum pa* (www.tibetarchaeology.com/april-2011).

long (1997: 759), an invaluable dictionary for unusual pre-twelfth century terms, we find that the author, bTsan lha Ngag dbang tshul khirms, indicates that the phrase has the meaning of *sku ngo mas*, a personal pronoun used in the honorific (i.e. in the case of the *btsan po*); thus we find the phrase used regularly in Old Tibetan inscriptions together with other Dunhuang material, most notably in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.⁵⁴

(1.5) The Manuscript in its Larger Context

Regardless of whether a manuscript is studied *in situ* or at a site far from its original location, it may be analyzed in an archeological manner as an artifact. An appraisal of all the inert information that is at hand can be addressed and, if a manuscript is *in situ*, the context of its surroundings will add greatly to the understanding of the manuscript as a whole. Nonetheless, if studied away from its location, a similar approach is still applicable, though the challenge of placing and dating the text may become increasingly difficult, as the object is dislocated from its context. In the case of the Tholing Manuscript, we are faced with an object that is somehow *in situ* (found only miles away from the remains of the *stūpa* in which it was buried) but that exists in something of a vacuum—alone, orphaned, and nameless. Therefore, in order to contextualize the text and produce an overall analysis, available data must be screened through ancillary disciplines—codicology, paleography, orthography, and lexicography. Such a multi-faceted, holistic review facilitates a more comprehensive interpretation of the manuscript as object.

⁵⁴ In conversations with Charles Ramble (March 2017) it became apparent and worth pointing out that in Imperial-era oaths the multiple repetition of the syllable *zha* denotes “for ever and ever,” so it does seem to have a temporal significance. On this, Cristina Scherrer-Schuab (1999b: 214, n. 22), adds in a footnote that: “The expression ‘*za(l) sna nas*’ is well attested in the Old Tibetan inscriptions, see Li and South Coblin, 1987: 111, ‘In our corpus it occurs in the agentive, *za sna nas* ‘(from) by his Majesty’ and in the terminative, *za snar* ‘to or for His Majesty’. Röntas 1955: 253, n. 12 and 264, notes that ‘In some instances, the genitive of the proper name has been preserved’. According to Professor Luciano Petech (letter of October 3rd, 1997) at an early epoch the particle ‘nas’ had already lost its grammatical function and become an integral part of the word. The expression *za(l) sna nas / nar* is recorded also in the epistolary and quasi-secular documents of Central Asia, see Imaeda and Takeuchi 1990, s.v. Unequivocally and according to the inscriptions and the Dunhuang chronicles, whose phraseology our colophon evokes, this expression means or implies that the action is done on the part of a ‘person’, in the juridical meaning, that is both a ‘natural person’ (bearing a name, and so on) and an ‘artificial person’, as for instance in the case of statues. Without doubt, in the inscriptions, as well as in the Tibetan documents of Central Asia, ‘*za sna nas*’ (or also ‘*za snar*’, ‘at the presence of’) refers to a living ‘natural’ person. It is true that in Indian inscriptions, for instance, some deceased persons could have been associated with donative formulas, but in such cases the epithet ‘departed’ (*kālagata*) is usually added to the name.”

While the Tholing Manuscript stands alone among the corpus of material from West Tibet, the opportunity for comparative analysis still exists. Once we look beyond regional boundaries, patterns of trade and cultural exchange gradually emerge, suggesting many points of comparison from across the borders of the Tibetan Empire. In this chapter, I hope to have demonstrated the transitional nature of this manuscript, and to have established a strong case for its creation in the 12th century. The dating is partially due to the *terminus post quem* of 1111 CE, the death of Zhi ba 'od, the second to last person mentioned in our text, with rTse lde being the last and having died in 1088 CE. More convincingly, however, the date of the manuscript is based on the script type, which is unlike the well-known elongated style of West Tibet found in the late 10th through 15th centuries in Buddhist texts, and which, as we have seen, is more akin to the Central Asian type that was in use until around the 12th century. Furthermore, the archaic orthographic and lexicographic features within the text point to the formative period of Tibetan historiography. We would be very unlikely to find these features in a text written after the establishment of the authoritative histories of the mid-13th and early 14th centuries, when spellings and terminology solidified. One example of this archaism is the spelling of the name of Padmasambhava which attests to a tradition that is apart from the those based on Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer or, as I have suggested, predates him. This would then imply a dating sometime after the first quarter of the 12th century and before the beginning of the 13th century.

The following chapter will engage the narrative material in a multidisciplinary comparative analysis in order to provide further evidence for dating, and, more critically, to highlight the major, distinctive themes and key features of this text. The chapter will explore the compositional technique(s) of the author, and, in conjunction with those techniques, the social-political context in which he wrote.

What do I mean here by “compositional technique”? Because many of the manuscript’s narrative episodes, phrases, and even whole passages share close parallels with various other early material, an investigation of the individual parts may show more clearly the author’s or redactor’s own work in the creation of *this* manuscript. Particular edits (or the lack thereof), idiosyncratic passages, stock phrases, orthography and lexicography suggest connections with and variations from the disparate sources such as pillar inscriptions, Central Asian manuscripts, and the early *phyi dar* histories of lDe'u Jo sras, mKhas pa lDe'u, Nyang ral, Ne'u paṇḍita, and dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba (among others).

Overall, the Tholing Manuscript consists of an assembly of textual fragments that have been skillfully woven together to create a unique whole, one seemingly designed for a specific time and place. The early dating that we have posited places the text at a foundational point in the history of the Pu rang Gu ge kingdom. In that context, how would this manuscript have been used? Who could have been its patron and who was its audience? The next part of this thesis will address these questions in detail.

Part Two: Major Themes and Topics

(2.1) Introduction

I use the Tholing Manuscript as a compass to chart the waters of early Tibetan historiography as well as to guide my route in the exploration of the manuscript itself. The text is therefore both the object of study as well as the guide for what to study. Uncertainties in the text raise questions for investigation that may or may not lead to discovery but will, at the very least, add fuel to larger historical and historiographic debates. What follows, then, is a presentation of some of the overarching questions posed by the text together with an account of the answers or clues that I have found thus far. The sections below deal with vitas and narrative episodes individually and with respect to themes internal to the text, as well as those generated by my reading of it.

As scholars continue to dig into Tibet's imperial and pre-imperial history, the relative closeness of the relationship with Turko-Persian-Mongolian-Sinitic cultures, as distinguished from those of India, becomes increasingly evident. Given geographic considerations, this might not sound so revelatory; however, if one were to examine Tibet's history writing/historiography from the last thousand years, it would suggest a very different story. Many of these Tibetan histories, based in the cultural milieu of Central Tibet's *phyi dar*, evince a close link with the narratives, history, and religions connected to India. As a token example of this link, we may note that *phyi dar* historians explain ancient pre-imperial names such as gNya' khri or lHa tho tho re nyan shel in Indian and or Buddhist terms; essentially functionalizing or reducing the name to its Indian or Buddhist value.

One of the striking features of the Tholing text is that while it maintains a heavy resonance with Buddhism, there is a noticeable absence of connections with India. Although Buddhism plays a prominent role, the central narrative revolves around kings and divine notions of kingship. For this reason the Tholing text stands in sharp contrast to its contemporaries such as the two *lDe'u chos 'byung*, which emphasize a religious telos that overrides many of the archaic elements presented in the Tholing text. While it employs archaism, the Tholing text does not do so unconsciously; it is not without its own agency. Through a close comparison with other early historical sources, we may discern the ways in

which *phyi dar* historians actively changed archaic sources and narratives to suit their own agendas. Such a comparison may also yield an awareness of the extent to which the redactor of the Tholing Manuscript utilized archaic forms while altering or connecting them in unexpected ways to support a specific agenda of amplifying the role of the kings of West Tibet.

Based on the codicological review presented in Chapter One, it is likely that the Tholing Manuscript was created sometime in the mid-twelfth century CE. This dating scheme locates the text at a foundational point in the history of the Pu rang Gu ge kingdom. While maintaining a strong resonance with the epigraphic material from the time of the sPu rgyal btsan po, as well as vital documents from Dunhuang, such as the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, the text's content and overall narrative structure can most closely be compared with some of the earliest known *rgyal rabs* and *chos 'byung* of the early *phyi dar*—from the eleventh through thirteenth centuries. Texts such as the *Chos 'byung chen mo bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan* by lDe'u Jo sras (henceforth *lDe'u Jo sras*) and its more extensive successor, the *rGya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa* by mKhas pa lDe'u (hereafter *mKhas pa lDe'u*), have some of the longest parallel sections to the Tholing text, with some passages being nearly identical.⁵⁵ Elsewhere, even within parallel sections, remarkable philological differences can be pointed out, due to the Tholing Manuscript's apparent archaism. One critical example of such differences can be seen in the Royal Origin Myth (a topic which will be taken up in detail in section 2.3). A composite of multiple origin myths, the full cycle of the Royal Origin Myth shows no signs of Buddhist editorial alterations or reinterpretations. Strikingly, it maintains the *sacral* nature of the king. Thus we are provided with an example of a critical continuation, during the *phyi dar*, of an archaic form of the critical royal narrative.

Within that archaic form we also find unusual twists in the recounting of stories that become set pieces in the foundational narratives found in later *chos 'byung*. We see this specifically in the story of lHa Tho tho ri gnyan btsan and his first encounter with Buddhism. Here, the script of the sacred text(s) is said to be written in Chinese rather than an Indian script, which is traditionally recounted. This simple switch undercuts much of the Indo-centric narrative that had become readily established during the *phyi dar*. Further, upon investigation, it is clear that the switch is neither a conscious redactional

⁵⁵ See for example the narrative of the seven wise men of Tibet in the Tholing Manuscript and in *lDe'u Jo sras*.

change nor a simple scribal slip (*rgya* instead of *rgya gar*), but rather an accurate fact, corroborated by more ancient documents from Dunhuang, and indicating that in *this* instance the Tholing Manuscript draws from older sources. The question of why such an archaic narrative might still have existed even at the height of one of Tibet's most fervent religious transformations will be a critical focus of investigation throughout.

Overall, the redactor of the Tholing Manuscript appeals to the myth of divine kingship, particularly in the Royal Origin Myth. However, the narrative takes a critical step forward in transferring and transforming that rhetoric to fit the kings of West Tibet. Therefore, in the process the narrative recasts the Old Tibetan kings by eulogizing them in the light of their wondrous, heroic, and enlightened qualities, which are then projected onto the ruling house of mNga' ris. These qualities are explicitly defined within a Buddhist framework including the title and description of a Bodhisattva; yet, perhaps oddly for a text written during the twelfth century, it does not seek to expurgate ideas of divine kingship. Even more oddly, we find no attempt to interpolate didactic Buddhist content. What then are we to make of this text? Is it a "secular," regional, political deployment of myth, lore and history, rather than a straightforward, uncritical recapitulation of fragments from various historical documents? If so, what is its purpose with respect to the task of legitimizing royal or Buddhist authority? And how might we place it in the development of Tibetan historiography?

Throughout the following chapter, I shall explore the ways in which lyrical prose, rhetoric, and the assembled patchwork of passages come together to suggest a particular relationship between kingship, religion, and the state (or law). With respect to historically situated questions of function and literary strategies, I will focus on the way in which, through the utilization of imaginative lyrical prose, the text paints a dynamic picture of the role and importance of kingship in Tibet. A key to understanding this picture is to consider its presentation when read or recited aloud, particularly in a ritualized context. More specifically, we shall consider the idea of a "bardic performance" of the royal genealogy in this context. Finally, I shall consider the political significance of the text with respect to the topics of kingship, law, and polity. In this chapter, I address each of these matters in turn, while arguing that, given the historical moment in which the Tholing Manuscript was redacted, kingship is being

represented both to substantiate the authority of the king in his role of tutelary guard, as well as to recall and retool the rhetoric of the sPu rgyal dynasty.

I shall begin with a short review of literature pertaining to the theoretical and historical frameworks within which I approach the text. I then discuss the text's literary features, with a focus on the interplay between orality and writing. In this section, I shall draw upon concepts of myth and narrative, before presenting an in-depth study of the foundational Royal Origin Myth. Building upon this analysis, I then present a chronologically oriented philological analysis of the rhetoric through which the relationship between the king, polity, religion, and law is constructed. Finally, I will consider the notion of religion and the introduction of Buddhism as it is portrayed in the narrative.

(2.2) Form and Function: The Interplay Between Text and Performance

In a paper given at Wolfson College in Oxford, Walter Ong (1986) began by commenting that, “Literacy is imperious” (23). This terse statement does not so much relate an affront to literature as it gives an assessment of the commanding force that the written word has in restructuring our thoughts. For the royal court of the sPu rgyal dynasty, the written word was introduced, quite literally, in its imperial function as exemplified by edict pillars and legal codes; however, having only just invented a Tibetan alphabet (sometime in the 7th century), the kingdom remained a largely oral culture that would necessitate the oral-aural performance of those imperial concepts which enlarged the society via myth, history, law, and religion.

The power of words to instantiate dynamically or give power to what is named is a universal feature of oral cultures. In speaking to this phenomenon, Ong (1982: 32) points out the basic but profound fact that “sound cannot be sounding without the use of power.” That power is both social and inherently interactive. However, in examining the noetic function of sound, Ong points to its essentially evanescent quality; sound cannot be stopped or made permanent—even momentarily. How then may ideas be retained if they are not written down? More practically, in an oral or near oral society, such as that which we understand to have existed in Old Tibet, how was it possible to get the basic concepts of the law, religion, and the authority of the kingdom into people's heads? One answer, it would seem, is that you sing them. In other words, as pointed out repeatedly by scholars who have studied the interplay between orality and literature, through the use of “mnemonic patterns...heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulaic expressions, in standard thematic settings... in proverbs” (Ong 1982: 34) and the like, complex and articulated thought can be retained and retrieved.

How then might we use *orality* as a heuristic device to study early Tibetan historiography and, in particular, the Tholing Manuscript? Here, I use orality to explore the multiple social dimensions of the text. I consider the redactors and their peers, as well as the larger political audience within the royal court and in the general populus.

* * *

As mentioned in the codicological review presented in Part One, Sam van Schaik (2014) has suggested a relationship between paleography and genre and utilized this theory better to determine the use of different types of manuscripts found in the cave library of Dunhuang. In like fashion, we too might look at how form and function influence one another in the Tholing Manuscript. As it establishes the historical lineage of the Gu ge kings, the text uses teleology as a vehicle for political legitimization. The narrative's agenda makes sense when considered against the backdrop of the rise of the kings of West Tibet. From the late 10th-12th centuries, the Gu ge Pu rang kingdom had to consolidate its power as a new ruling body amongst the older social structures of Zhang zhung. Understandably, then, it sought to legitimize itself by invoking the lineage of the Old Tibetan kings and their exemplary conversion to Buddhism (further legitimizing the transition from the *snga dar* to the *phyi dar*). The lyrical nature of the narrative prose of the Tholing text suggests a redaction from both oral and written sources, implying a narrative that was already in circulation. Building on this suggestion, and coming back to the small size of the manuscript, it is my supposition that it was prepared to be portable, as evidenced by its bound format. If this is the case, we can perhaps go further to suggest that it may have been read aloud in a ritual etiological reaffirmation of the legitimacy of the Gu ge kings. Precedence for this is provided in the similar practice with regards to the edicts of Ye shes 'od which were widely disseminated and read aloud in the kingdom's early development.⁵⁶

Written narrative speeches to be read aloud during yearly cycle rituals, funerals, weddings, or coronation ceremonies work towards similar ends. A good example of this performative narrative function can be observed in the later Mollas of Mustang, which as Michael Peissel (1968) first pointed out “contained the names of all the kings and told of all their deeds” (ibid.: 223) and which David Jackson (1984) later describes as “written texts of speeches whose contents included historical information” (ibid.: 23). Jackson goes on to link the term *mol ba* to a synonym *'bel gtam* defined as a “discourse or narrative,” a term that could be aptly applied for the Tholing Manuscript. An anecdotal example of a *mol ba* is gleaned by Jackson from the biography of Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1352-1405).⁵⁷ He cites the occasion on which the master gave a eulogy for one of his great patrons Ta'i Si tu Chos

⁵⁶ See for example Vitali (1996).

⁵⁷ The biography of Grags pa rgyal mtshan was written by his nephew, Bo dong Phyogs las mnam rgyal (1376-1451).

kyi rin chen. While “conducting a great religious assembly, he [gave an account of] that great religious king’s qualities of greatness, and [recited] the histories of his noble ancestry by way of his ‘lineage’ (*rigs*), ‘clan’ (*rus*), and line of maternal descent (*cho brang*), expressing these matters through poetical constructions, poetical figures, synonyms, etc.”⁵⁸

This example of commemorative speech described in a 15th century biography is not too far removed from our text’s use of poetics, rhythmic prose, similes, metaphors, etc., to recount the deeds and qualities of Tibet’s royal lineage. We might observe therefore that the Tholing Manuscript’s account of the Old Tibetan kings and elaboration of the qualities of the early West Tibetan Kings, casts light on the nature of early Tibetan historiography in the form of *rgyal rabs* during the period of political fragmentation. The rhetorical strategies employed in this genre are particularly relevant to the kings of West Tibet, who could have used these narratives to bolster their own power and royal authority (*chab srid*), with Buddhism and the “royal lama” ideal (the *lha bla ma*) playing an important but supportive role. In Petech’s magisterial review of the history of West Tibet (1997), the author provides another example of such rhetorical practice, namely, that of bSod nams rtse mo in his “Introduction to Buddhism” (*Chos la ’jug pa’i sgo*) compiled in 1167. Here, the Sa skya pa hierarch records that in the year 992 CE “[a]ll the *yab-mched* of the West and of the East met at sPeg-mkhar of the Cog-la region, and on this occasion a great oration was delivered [or: a great discussion was held]” (Petech 1997: 232).⁵⁹ Petech translates the term *mol ba chen po* here quite literally; however, given the context mentioned above, we might better understand that the event described as a “great oration” was in fact a history mediated through poetic recitation. A similar instance can be found in the biography of lHa Bla ma Ye shes ’od with reference to the occasion of a great assembly when the ministers gathered to discuss the best ways to rule the kingdom. At the head of the assembly, Ye shes ’od was asked for his own advice on this topic; to this request he responded by narrating the history of the kings of the past (Gu ge Pan chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po: folio 12b). More recently, Christian Jahoda (*forthcoming*) has addressed the topic of authoritative speech acts such as the the *mol ba* oratory tradition

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.25.

⁵⁹ *chu pho ’brug gi lo la cog la yul [gyi] sbeg mkhar du stod smad kyi yab mched bying gdan ’dzom pa’i dus su mol ba chen po mdzad | rum yul pa sgam gyi dben sa gсар du btugs pa’i dus su brtsis na* (*Chos la ’jug pa’i sgo*: 494).

within what he calls “the framework of certain socio-political assemblies” (320) in West Tibet. The author further points to terms such as *skad cha*, *bka'*, or *mchid* as expressions that indicate such traditions and indicates that these traditions “in Spiti, Upper Kinnaur, and Purang show notable interrelationships with written texts and textual traditions” (312). As Jahoda states, however, there is a lack of evidence as to the form and content of such royal genealogies. Might our manuscript be such a document?

The pedigree presented in the Tholing Manuscript works to legitimize the new kings of Pu rang Gu ge. But it doubly works to stipulate the role and authority of that royal lineage, and indeed, of the rule of kings more generally. An example of such a relationship is observed by Marie Lecomte-Tilouine (2006) in her discussion of the bards or *huḍke damāi* of Western Nepal. The example she cites is suggestive with respect to the putative use of our manuscript. In her paper “Drawing a Genealogy of Western Nepal’s Genealogies,” Lecomte-Tilouine states that these “genealogies were already transmitted in both written and oral forms during the Malla period (XII-XIVth centuries)” (ibid.: 19). The presence of this social arrangement in the Western Himalayan region is perhaps a continuation of the archaic traditions of the imperial period, once preserved in West Tibet, and still performed in the Western Himalayas. Lecomte-Tilouine further points out multiple reasons for producing such texts, including that of making legitimate property rights. She notes that, “When oral, genealogies are thus explicitly conceived as eulogies, panegyrics, and as such, they mark identity and status” (ibid.: 19).

It has long been thought that oral recitations with historic and mythic themes held a key function in upholding the social, political, and cultural fabric of Tibetan society. Later histories, and even contemporary ethnographies, show that the power and royal authority of the early kings was somehow facilitated or maintained through the continuation of a living poetic narrative tradition. Due to the paucity of written material from the imperial period, it is difficult to come to any firm conclusions. We may, nonetheless, be somewhat encouraged from the living examples of bards in the Western Himalayas as studied by Marie Lecomte-Tilouine. These bards may be seen perhaps as surviving evidence of what was once, during the Empire and possibly in West Tibet, a sacerdotal class of bardic historians whose guardianship and performance of various royal and mythic narratives preserved royal and national identity.

The Tholing Manuscript, then, stands as a witness to the continuation (at least in West Tibet) of the ancient link between orality and kingship, whereby royal bardic narration played an integral function in preserving the polity (also: *chab srid*). The social dimension of a poetic recitation of the royal genealogy captures a rare example of the transitional stages from orality to literality as well as the ongoing interplay between the two. Written on extensively in the case of Hellenistic and early European literature, the coexistence of oral and written literature in Tibet reveals a high degree of an “oral residue” in a culture that had already turned to writing. Certain archaic poetic structures such as those found in the Tholing Manuscript suggest a work that has not fully given way to the literate culture of monastic historians but rather has maintained elements of an archaic performative structure.

It is therefore imperative to discuss from the outset the literary forms and archaic topoi embedded within the text in order to assess properly the literary tradition within which this particular narrative emerges. We will probably never be able to answer the big questions of how, who, and in what manner the author(s) or compiler(s) set down the material contained in this “booklet.” Nevertheless, the Tholing Manuscript, through comparative analysis, does offer some avenues for speculation. A more fruitful pursuit than seeking after unattainable certainty in terms of attribution, perhaps, is to study the various idiosyncratic qualities of the text, and ask questions of them. For example, by dealing with the text’s codicological features, many areas for investigation and insight become available. Further, the specific features of the text offer clues as to its purpose and audience. Subjecting the language and use of topoi to critical, comparative, and philological analysis may then indirectly supplement our overall understanding of the development of Tibetan historiography as a whole.

* * *

Poetic Form

An inescapable feature of early historiographic material, touched on continually by scholars throughout the process of discovery, description, and analysis, is its poetic form (cf. Beyer 1992; Dotson 2013; Jackson 1996; Sørensen 1994; Stein 1972; Thomas 1957; Uray 1972b, among many others). The use of oral poetic prose, at least as depicted and evinced in later texts, points toward the centrality of orality

and lyrical oration during the royal period. Indeed, over the centuries the interplay between orality and literature in Tibet has become a hallmark of the ways and means that Tibetan authors have used, composed, and transmitted religious teachings, history, myth and epic.

The Tholing Manuscript's archaic and literary qualities, together with its poetic, almost oral quality, are perhaps the literary features of the text that most compel our attention. The archaism is immediately apparent in the myriad orthographic, paleographic, and lexicographic features discussed in Part One. The prose style features the use of varied rhythmical patterns that flow rapidly from one narrative to the next. Verse-like structures lend emphasis to the most important sections. Filled with powerful intertextual stock phrases that help to augment and define the contours of kingship, the text is, to borrow a phrase used in a different context, "[an] authored, literate production that uses the expressive idiom of oral tradition" (Foley 1998: 94).

The study of Tibetan literature, therefore, cannot be the study of Tibetan text alone. *Literature* is an evaluative term. When we talk about oral expression, poetry, storytelling, these are also evaluative terms—they both merit our attention. Many of the formulaic expressions, themes, and imagery that appear in early texts are already well developed and thus, revealing of the textual debt to oral traditions. Oration, narration, and recitation, on the other hand, have oral qualities, but they can also be literary. Oral tellings, therefore, also have a heavy debt to textuality. In many cases these are two sides of the same coin.

In addition to drawing upon oral traditions, and perhaps written transcriptions of oral performances, our manuscript clearly engages extensively with the developed textual traditions of ancient Tibet. It therefore has certain notable features in its capacity as a written text which mirrors those found in Old Tibetan documents, such as the rhythmic use of particles like *ste* in its "colon function" (*ste/te/de*) and the particle *ni* as a topicalizer ("as for," "as to"). Both particularly function to create cadence and timbre. A prime example of the former can be observed in the *vita* of Nya gri btsan po [*sic*] (see section 2.3). The use of the particle *ni* can be heard in the following short poetic lines. Here the "author" describes the height of the Empire through metaphor, allegory and simile. I have **bolded** and underlined the central particle so that one can clearly sense the rhythm. The passage is composed of a single verse followed by three couplets of matching syllable count, which are themselves

followed by another slightly more fluid couplet and a final concluding line. It exhibits fluid transitions between prose and verse or verse-like structures that are typical of Tibetan oral recitations. I have formatted the English translation to better convey the *feel* of the text and its content.

*ge ba ni bag yangs su bgyid | rta yan te ni sga myed | ba yan te ni sna myed | myi ni
nyi mas slong | phyugs ni zhag zlas sdud | byes myi ni glu len | yul myi ni bro rdung |
rje ni rigs pas khol | 'bangs ni chu gang gis bgyid | cing dge ba 'ba' shig spyod de |*

People engaged in virtuous activities freely,
 wild horses without saddles,
 wild bulls without nose rings,
people rose with the sun,
animals came in with the moon,
 Outsiders sang songs,
 As the locals danced.
Kings reigned by reason,
subjects channeled like a river,
 And they engaged exclusively in virtuous activities. (26: 1-4)

Switching the meter slightly, the text continues for another few lines in semi-verse form to describe the activities of kings and subjects, as well as the flourishing of the Dharma. The song ends on a note of proto-nationalist sentiment that echoes pillar edicts⁶⁰ as well as the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.

*skol bod gyi rgyal khams skyid pa'i g.yung rung du gdugs brdal bas 'dzam bu de⁶¹ ba
zhes bya bar grags te rgyal khams gzhan gyi smon ba'i dper⁶² che bar gyurd pa las |*

And the kingdom of our Tibet, since it was an ever-expanding canopy of eternal joy, it became known as a World of Well-Being, and it became the great object of admiration of all the other nations. (26: 7 - 27: 3)

The vision of a land that acts harmoniously and “naturally,” if wildly, features repeatedly in early Tibetan projections of their royal court. What is perhaps most striking about the above utopian vision of kingship and the kingdom is what it does *not* suggest: ancient kings are not represented in explicitly Buddhist terms. Rather, the text seems to echo an archaic vision without editorial alteration. This

⁶⁰ See for example the *rdo ring* at 'Phyong rgyas; here, as in the Tholing Manuscript, the Tibetan king is held at the center, his kingdom extending out in all four directions. Richardson (1985: 41) translates, “In this way, by the glory of the greatness of the dominion the whole of Tibet became great in territory and wealthy throughout. And within too, being always at peace it dwelt in happiness” (*de ltar chab srid che ba'i byin gyis | bod yongs yul che | khong phyug du gyurd pas | nang nas kyang | nam zhar bde zhing skyid par gnas so* |). Richardson notes that “*skyid* ‘happiness’ is the outcome of divine kingship and world order” comparing the inscription from 'Phyong rgyas, as well as lines 55, 58 and 59 from the west face of the Treaty Inscription “where *skyid-rtag* is the name of a regnal era” (ibid. 89, n. 3).

⁶¹ Read: *bde*

⁶² Read: *dpe*

decision not to edit, of course, reflects a particular authorial choice, one that must be understood in terms of the range of literary strategies that the author could have employed at the time.

* * *

Simile, via the comparative “like” (*bzhin du*), creates a number of analogies reflective of specific cultural concepts and idioms. The Tholing text abounds in images such as: “the government of Tibet was *like* a settled yogurt;” “offerings flowed *like* a river;” “kings and ministers were separated *like* flesh from bone;” “It was as if the leadership (*dbu*) of our kingdom of Tibet was interrupted like (a line of flying) birds that is cut off (or: has lost its head);” “bKra shis mgon, *like* the middle finger of the hand, was the highest out of the three;” “his words were rhythmical *like* the waves of the ocean.” These phrases, often appearing in rhythmical verse, add vividness, but also reflect rhetorical forms that are set in a literary context.

The following passage is a beautiful example of the poetic usage of simile that occurs regularly in the text. The penultimate verse describing the disintegration (*bsil chad*) of the Tibetan Empire speaks to the perennial themes of the uncertainty of life and continual threat of suffering. The text reads:

gdung rabs (de man chad) bod spyi thun⁶³ gyi bsod nams ni sos ka'i chab brum bzhin du bas | bod spyi thun⁶⁴ gyi byur 'dre ched pos ni rgongs ga'i grib so bzhin du non bas bdud kyis bslus pa byung ste sman gyi rtsa ba las dug gi sdong po skye ba ltar sangs rgyas gang na bzhugs pa bdud der byung ba |

After that time, because the collective merit of Tibet drained like the rains of the spring, and an inauspicious great demon oppressed [the country] like the shadow of night, the divine country suffered the deceptions of demons. Just as a poisonous tree grows from the root of a medicinal plant, so too wherever the Buddha abides, Māra arises.” (27: 2–6).

The notion “that the collective merit of Tibet drained like the rains of the spring” (*sos ka'i chab brum bzhin du bas*) is echoed in the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, “the power of the rulers diminished like the descending [melting] water in winter (*dgun kha'i 'bab chu bzhin bri*)” (Sørensen 1994: 427). The latter verse uses the verb *'bab chu*, “cascading water,” rather than the archaic *chab brum*, which is less clear than *'bab chu* in terms of diction and meaning. The term *brum* here looks to be an allomorph of an archaic term, *phrum*, which we encounter in the royal origin myth of Nya gri btsan po [*sic*]; there we

⁶³ Read: *mithun*

⁶⁴ Read: *mithun*

read that the king came down “from a light drizzle of rain” (*nam mkha' phrum tsam las*). Based on the context the two similarly sounding terms, *phrum/brum*, seem to refer to a light rain. While the line from the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* speaks of the diminished water in the winter, the Tholing text switches the metaphor to focus on the rains of the spring. The difference evokes a more symbolic meaning that draws upon a metaphor with earlier precedence in the poetics of Old Tibet.

Traditionally, in the agricultural traditions of the high plateau of Tibet, as in most pre-modern traditions, the seasons come with their respective characters; that of the fall is, of course, harvest. The winter and early spring is a time of enjoyment of the harvest, but also of its gradual depletion. In this way, we might understand the poetic simile that the “provision” of the collective merit of Tibet drained away during the spring rains. Conversely, and further evidence to the above, during the antithesis, when the kingdom is at its utopic heights we find in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* that, “spring passed like fall; [and] they had enough [food] for a full year,” *dpya' sgyu ni bskyungs | dal du ni mchis* (PT 1287: 449).

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In the few examples that I have provided above we can observe several of the literary features of early Tibetan chronicles. The topic of such features is not a new one; rather, it has been an area of great scholarly interest for more than a half-century.

Frederick William Thomas (1957) was the first to do a full study of what he dubbed Tibetan “Ancient Folk Literature,” of which he commented that “the subject is poetical, and the sentiment and language natural” (14). While Thomas understood these texts to be derived from a larger oral tradition, the work of Lalou (1953), and the earlier work of Bacot et al. (1946) expanded the arena by revealing the range of early literature from which we can draw for study and comparison. Lalou remarked that in these sources, “a prodigious lyricism in both the form and substance is unleashed” (Lalou 1953: 2). Regarding the same topic, Bacot had written previously that “here and there [the text] is interspersed with songs of spontaneous lyricism drawing on nature as a source of inspiration.”⁶⁶ Another watershed

⁶⁵ Translation based on that of Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang (2011).

⁶⁶ *Çà et là s'intercalent des chants d'un lyrisme spontané empruntant essentiellement à la nature leur inspiration et leurs images* (Bacot et al. 1940: 94).

moment in the study of early literature occurred with the work of Snellgrove and Richardson (1968). In order to shed light on the imperial period, their work used a multitude of sources, both Buddhist and Bon, that had been practically unknown in the West before their publication. After quoting from the 14th century *gZi brjid*, they remark that, “as sacred archetype in the form of myth...This was an entirely oral tradition” (ibid. 56-57). In other words, the texts were presumed to have been derived from, and be preserved in, an oral tradition.

For comparison, we may refer to the living example of bardic tellings of the Ge sar epic that flourish in standard images and formulaic language, similar to the Tholing text. To be sure, however, these formulas often vary from one bard to another. Indeed, formulaic language and structure is an important characteristic in defining a range of Tibetan “textual” literary forms: *chos ’byung*, *rnam thar*, ritual texts, and suchlike. Arguably, the demands of different types of *performance* to different audiences necessitate particular kinds of structure. Inevitably, such matters point toward the “great divide” between notions of the “textual” composer as author: agent, creator, aesthete, and poet, on the one hand, and, on the other, the “oral” composer as *mechanic*: one who channels inherited traditional elements—a slave to form. This conflict is familiar to us from the literature on oral traditions as Lord’s “binary opposition” versus Finnegan’s “spectrum.”⁶⁷ In a Tibetan context, however, such notions of a “great divide” along these lines are particularly problematic. Contrary to what one might expect based on the theories of orality “versus” literacy, textual composers may be very conservative, while oral composers are often more free. This is clear when comparing, say, the author of a Tibetan *chos ’byung* to that of a Ge sar bard. Who is exercising greater literary agency, or is the difference one of kind rather than degree? The “great divide,” as discussed by Milman Parry and Alfred Lord, is problematic in the case of the early Tibetan textual sources. Lauri Honko’s concept of the “pool of tradition” perhaps helps blur the “great divide” and helps us to better account for the Tholing Manuscript, in which a patchwork of sources have been stitched together and redacted in a condensed fashion. We might also point to the

⁶⁷ In Chapter Six of *The Singer of Tales*, Albert Lord (1971) lays out a number of binary oppositions (oral versus literary, illiterate versus literate, and so forth) with a focus on the important distinction between oral song and written transcriptions. Ruth Finnegan (2003: 11-12) instead argues that “the repertoire varies of course according to locale, purpose, social situatedness, genre, ideologies and available technologies: there are constraints as well as opportunities for particular actors. But any form of human expression—and of learning—is in practice, and in any era, likely to draw not just on language but on a remarkable spectrum of communicative resources.”

work of R.A. Stein, who, while analyzing some of the same material as Thomas, does not relay it as “folk literature.” Rather he emphasizes its “priestly” and “learned” structure; in this context, the abbreviated structure is perhaps indicative of a larger, oral “pool of tradition” but also, at some early phase, a product of ritual redaction. In a recent lecture, Per Kværne has problematized the perception created by earlier scholars that early historical material should be described as “folk.” Rather, he points to the ways in which these early sources may be read as carefully crafted works of poetic literature. These works may have been orally transmitted as well, but they contain within them a highly literate genre made, not for the farmers, so to speak, but for the educated elite of the royal court.⁶⁸

In its connection with the royal court, and the idealized king, the concept of the hero and the heroic is a central theme in Tibetan historiography that is particularly captured in early poetic forms. Deployed performatively, the heroic—in its modes of martial agility, honor, cultural prestige, and spiritual accomplishment—is variously represented through metaphor, and allegory, as well as formulaic idioms and expressions that augment their significance. In light of this, the genre of early *rgyal rabs* then might also be read within a broader context of heroic epic poetry. In this way we find in the epic of Ge sar many idiomatic phrases and topoi that are closely shared with the archaic royal *mgur* found in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* and elsewhere in early literature. However, unlike the Ge sar epic and that genre in general, in which the single hero follows the strict patterns of classical heroic narratives, in *rgyal rabs* we find heroic attributes distributed among various characters who collectively populate a single mytho-historical origin narrative. Thomas (1957: 14) rightly points out that within the Old Tibetan documents, and specifically the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* “we have the purest example of the manner of an oral narrator or Rhapsodist;” however, Thomas’s conclusion that “on the whole the language of these texts may be regarded as Tibetan Folk speech,” (ibid. 16) is not unproblematic. However much they maybe suited to rhapsodic performance, the texts, at least in the form that they have come down to us, are carefully crafted literary works.⁶⁹ They are not self-evidently “folk

⁶⁸ Per Kværne’s lecture was given in a two-day conference entitled “The Interplay between the Oral and the Written in Tibetan Literature.” The conference was convened by Lama Jabb at Wolfson College, Oxford, on the 13th and 14th of May 2016. There is no plan to publish any of the papers given, however, it is the hope of this author that there will be a sequel, with a full publication to follow (as indicated by the convener!).

⁶⁹ The use of vocabulary is indicative of what Peter Schwiieger (2002: 128) has noted in describing the contrast between the “constructed plot structures of historiographic literature” and its “oral traditions,” on the one hand, versus “oral histories” produced by ordinary Tibetans, on the other.

literature,” if the phrase connotes the sense that the texts belonged to the non-elite or non-royal strata of society. Rather, these are poetics of the royal court employed in accounts (oral or otherwise) of history, duty, ideals, honor, genealogy, and legitimacy. Stein analyzes some of the same texts as Thomas but he does not classify them as folk literature. Instead, he subjects them to a structural analysis, emphasizing the scholastic dimensions of these texts (Stein 1959, 1972). Such classifications do not, of course, preclude one sort of text borrowing from another, as in the case of royal *mgur*, which evince complex craft. Uray (1972b) masterfully shows how Sad ma kar’s song contains a clear allegorical message, concluding, for example, that the second stanza is a call to war, and the third is a call to guard the fruits of victory. Invoking memories of an old journey across the regions of Tibet, the queen laments her unenviable position. As Uray points out, the text is thus an “an artistically composed cycle,” one that, Per Kværne notes, is “hardly the work of folk or spontaneously derived poetics” (Wolfson College, 2016). Examination of the literary features of Old Tibetan documents allows scholars to deconstruct the intertextual aspects of a passage or narrative as well as to connect them to their larger social function in ritual and performance.⁷⁰ In the case of early *rgyal rabs*, such as that witnessed in the *Chronicle*, and in our own Tholing Manuscript, among others, we find a carefully constructed assemblage of narrative cycles derived from ancient sources, with songs, poems, sayings, metaphor and idiomatic phrases, all working together to augment a performative ritual that, in *this* case, confers legitimization of the king.

Overall, in literary and cultural terms, the text functions as what Foley describes as a “voice from the past;” in this context, he aptly notes that:

Thus this category of Voices from the past speaks to oral-derived texts that have employed both oral and textual technology at some point in their history, but whose exact history and identity cannot be unearthed. Since modern fieldwork has shown that textuality and oral traditions not only co-exist but interact, and since the chief criterion of how verbal art works is the language or register within which it morphs and through which it communicates, the role of textuality is certainly no reason to deny oral traditional roots. Better to remain agnostic about scenarios for which we have no primary, irrefutable evidence, and at the same time to take full account of the oral traditional structure and expressivity of such works. We find no more celebrated example of this kind of oral-derived text than Homer’s *Odyssey*, which reveals phraseological and narrative patterning associated with oral tradition even though it

⁷⁰ Others have similarly begun to examine the literary features of Old Tibetan documents and to connect them to their larger social function in ritual and performance. In a recent article by Brandon Dotson (2013), for example, the author takes up the same narrative of the “Unhappy bride and her lament” to discuss not only the textualization of oral traditions but, more specifically, how the narrative of Sad mar kar employs a “matrimonial narrative trope” that “also inform[s] ritual liturgies and divination texts” (201).

reaches us only after a long, poorly understood manuscript history. If we deny Homer his oral traditional language, we will inevitably misread his (and his tradition's) poem. (Foley 2015: 108-09)

* * *

With the interplay between orality and literature in mind, I want to take a moment here to look at the *mgur* of the “seven wise men” as it appears in our text (14: 3 - 19: 2). Before presenting the poem in full it is worth taking a moment to first discuss some early parallels in order to suggest its background. The “seven wise men” (*'dzang myi bdun [sic]*) are credited in Tibetan historiography with introducing certain cultural innovations during the time of Srong btsan sgam po. The exact structure of the list of “seven wise men” from our text appears elsewhere only in *lDe'u Jo sras* and *Ne'u paṇḍita*, while the individual figures can be found scattered among various other histories such as *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*. The earliest known reference exists in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.

The passage begins with a familiar utopic vision of the empire. It is notable for its strict four-syllable verse count and use of the rhythmic particle *ni*, and distinguished by its use of simile and other rhetorical forms, which are employed for the purpose of constructing contrast, spatial and temporal hierarchy, and classifications.

*ston dpyid nI bskyal || 'khor bar nI spyad | 'dod pa nI byin | gnod pa nI pye | btsan ba
nI bcugs | sdo ba ni smad | 'jigs pa nI mnan || bden ba nI bsnyen | 'dzangs pa nI bstod
| dpa' bo nI bkur | smon par nI bkol || chos bzang srId mtho ste || myI yongs kyis skyid
do |* (PT 1287: 449-451)

Spring passed like fall;
they had enough [food] for a full year;
their desires were granted;
dangers were removed;
the emperor was firmly established;
rivals were brought low;
threats were defeated;
truth was relied upon;
the wise were praised;
the brave were venerated;
the disgraced were put to work;
religion was good and government lofty.
All the people were healthy and happy.⁷¹

The *Old Tibetan Chronicle* then summarizes the narrative of the seven wise men.

*bod la snga na yI ge myed pa yang | | btsan po 'di 'I tshe byung nas | | bod kyI gtsugs
lag bka' grims ched po dang | blon po 'i rim pa dang | che chung gnyis kyI dbang*

⁷¹ Translation based on that of Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang (2011: 204).

*thang dang | legs pa zin pa 'I bya dga' dang | nye yo ba 'i chad pa dang | zhing 'brog
gi thul ka dang dor ka dang | slungs kyi go bar bsnyams pa dang | bre pul dang | srang
la stsogs pa | | bod kyi chos kyi gzhung bzang po kun | | btsan po khri srong brtsan gyi
ring las byung ngo | myi yongs kyis bka' drin dran zhing tshor bas | | srong brtsan
sgam po zhes mtshan gsol to | | (PT 1287: 451- 455)*

Though Tibet previously had had no letters, they came about at the time of this emperor, following which the great Tibetan legal codes, the grades of ministers, the powers of high and low [ministers], rewards for successful work, punishments for erring into misdeed, measuring fields in *dor ka*, herds in *thul ka*, and the distance between way stations were all standardized. All the excellent traditions of Tibet, such as the measures *bre* and *phul* and the weights *srang* and *rgya ma*, and so on, came about during the time of this emperor, Tri Songtsen. All people recognized his kindness and felt it, and thus named him Srong brtsan sgam po (honest-emperor steadfast).⁷²

Though the passage above does not identify each action with a specific figure, the administrative and institutional structures are strikingly similar to those found in the poem of the seven wise men as witnessed in the Tholing Manuscript. Technologies, such as writing and law, are essential with respect to the administrative and social aspects of forming an imperial court. Their appearance in the form of a list, as seen in the *Chronicle*, suggests that the larger *mgur* might well have been in circulation during an earlier period;⁷³ thus, a comparison of the version found in *IDe'u Jo sras, Ne'u Paṇḍita* and our text similarly show strong resonance with more ancient sources. However, the extended version that we find in the Tholing Manuscript is distinctive with respect to its use of orally informed, performative prose in this particular context. It may perhaps represent the fullest version of the song known to date.

* * *

The *mgur* of the seven wise men is the single longest continuative poetic structure in our text (14: 3 - 19: 2). It is usefully considered with reference to another textual fragment, that of the “six men of great strength” (*che myi drug*). Closely connected with the time of Tibet’s military, legal, and administrative expansion, both groups of men represent an abstracted, composite list of important ministers who played an integral role in the establishment of a Tibetan royal court. The consolidation of the two groups (both wise and athletic) into lyrical list(s) is connected to the idea of a single heroic king who consolidates all kingly qualities in himself: the great king of Tibet, Srong btsan sgam po. This connection is perhaps most clearly seen in the Tholing Manuscript, where both groups are connected to

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ The list contained in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* is not in its full poetic prose but has rather been pared down to the the list of inventions of systems that was introduced during the time of the sPu rgyal. Nonetheless, their appearance in the *Chronicle* would indicate that the longer song might well have been in circulation even at that time.

the period of Srong btsan sgam po, if not specifically his lifetime. The first seven athletic heroes are often described in later histories as appearing at the time of “Dus srong mang po rje the great grandson of Srong btsan.”⁷⁴ However, a number of the heroes appear elsewhere at the time of Gung song, and that of Mang srong. While none of these kings are mentioned in the two lists of the seven heroes, each still relates the close connection between these three in a period that the Tholing Manuscript implies is the *era* of Srong btsan sgam po. The narrative of the seven wise men, in particular is bolstered by its performative structure. The passage is emblematic of the interplay of orality and literality that can be found in early Tibetan poetics.

* * *

The *mgur* of the seven wise men employs a loose but clear alternating syllabic structure, as well as strategic repetition; there are, for example, two repeated refrains that introduce and conclude the accounts of the heroes and their actions. In the first stanza, the poet alternates between a five- and six-syllable scheme making use of epistrophe—repeating the last word of the alternating line. This device places an emphasis on the last word in a phrase, creating a brisk, ordered cadence.

<i>'dzangs myi bdun la gcig tu 'dzangs pa ni</i>	9
<i>'greng gi bu ru las skyes yin te </i>	8
<i>des 'dzangs kyi las ci byung na </i>	7
<i> rdo las sol bas bzhus nas</i>	6
<i> zangs lcags gser rngul byas </i>	5
<i> shing la bu ga phug nas</i>	6
<i> bshol dang gnya shing byas </i>	5
<i> mthun [g]nyis zung du bsdebs nas</i>	6
<i> spang mtha' zhing du rmos </i>	5
<i>dang po de ltar byed pa'i phya mkhan ni </i>	9
<i>'greng gi bu pho ru las skyes </i>	7
<i>de'i gong na bod la lo thog myed </i>	8 9

Of the seven wise men, the first wise one:
was the son of the 'Gren [clan], Ru las skyes.⁷⁵
If one asks what his wise deeds were:

Having smelted [ore] with coal from stone
he made copper, iron, gold, and silver.
He bored holes in wood
to create ploughs and yokes.
Using two matching [beasts of labor]

⁷⁴ cf. *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* translated by Sørensen (1994: 349).

⁷⁵ The version of the story presented in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*: 162, derives the etymology of his name from his mother's dream, in which he was born after being incubated within a wild-yak horn. Thus, his name, “Born from the horn.” For more on this figure see *n.* 303 in section (3.3) as well as Dotson (2006: 398-400).

he ploughed the wild plains⁷⁶ into fields.
The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:
was the son of the 'Gheng [clan], Ru las skyes.
Before that, there was no crop harvest in Tibet.

While we know that harvesting existed long before the history or even prehistory of the sPu rgyal, the choice of Ru las skyes [*sic*] to start the list conveys a sense of the power of agriculture in the Tibetan Plateau. The second stanza contains a longer six-syllable line paired with a faster five-syllable close. Each of the two pairs of couplets end in *nas*, connecting the whole of the wise man's actions.

<i>gnyis su 'dzangs pa ni </i>	5
<i>khu lha bo mgo gar yin te </i>	6
<i>des las ci byas na </i>	5
<i>zhing gi dor dang 'brog gi thul du bsdebs </i>	9
<i>phu chu thum por btums nas</i>	6
<i>mtshan chu nyin chur drangs </i>	5
<i>mtsho' la gtar kha gtar nas</i>	6
<i>yur ba dkyus su bsrang </i>	5
<i>dang po de ltar byed pa'i phya mkhan ni </i>	9
<i>khu lha bo mgo gar che ba khu'i bu </i>	9
<i>de'i gong na chul la bdal ma rmo </i>	9

The second wise one:
was Khu lHa bo mgo gar.
If one asks what he did:

He divided fields into *dor* and pasturelands into *thul*.⁷⁷
Having wrapped the highland rivers into bundles
he channeled the water by day and night.⁷⁸
Having bled the lakes
he ran them into canals.

The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:
was the great son of the Khu [clan], Khu lHa bo mgo gar.
Before that, [without] channeled water there was no ploughing.

	5
<i>gsum du 'dzangs pa ni </i>	5
<i>mthon myin sam po re </i>	6
<i>des las ci byas she na </i>	9
<i>ka ka ki ki gu gu zhabs bskyed bcas </i>	9
<i>ra ra ri ri rtsang gi yig ma ron </i>	4
<i>shad kyis bcad nas</i>	4
<i>tsheg gis smra bar byed </i>	9
<i>dang po de ltar byed pa'i phya mkhan ni </i>	9

⁷⁶ The term used here is *spang mtha'* which may be rendered equally as "wild plains" or literally "border meadows." I have chosen meadows and plains in accordance with the translation by Dotson (2006) which more closely represents the two *spang* and *mtha'*.

⁷⁷ For an explanation of *dor* and *thul* see note 315.

⁷⁸ I have kept a more literal translation here to reflect the occasionally odd nature of the text. The parallel passage in *lDe'u Jo sras* is a little clearer in its description but the event is still strangely described: "He wrapped the night-water into small bundles and channeled the highland rivers into the lowlands" (*mtshan chu thum por btums nas phu chu mda' ru drangs | mtsho la gtar kha byas nas yur ba kyus su btsal |*). The meaning nonetheless is clear relating as it were the processes of channeling high mountain runoff water into usable irrigation; *thum por btums* is a reference to collecting night-water in reservoirs before redistributing along leats/channels in the daytime. In this case, *thum po* is not a small bundle but something that has been confined, i.e. a reservoir.

ka ka ki ki mthon myin sam po re ||
de'i gong na bod la yig rtsis myed ||

8|9

The third wise one:

was mThon myin sam po re.

If one asks what he did:

He created all the pure consonants and vowels,⁷⁹
the vertical line *shad* that separates [phrases]
and the inter-syllabic dot *tshag* which marks uttered [syllables].

The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:

was *ka ka ki ki* mThon myin sam po re.

Before that, there was no written system in Tibet.

Connected to the reign of Srong btsan sgam po, and credited with the creation of the Tibetan writing system, the third wise man is the great grammarian mThon myin Sam po ra/re [*sic*]. Although he is of critical importance in Tibet's literary history, there is little known about the origin and life of this figure, if indeed there was such a person at all. The most extensive narrative account of him is found in the *rGyal rabs gsal ba 'i me long*, which has been translated and studied in detail by Sørensen (1994).⁸⁰ The short verses about the third wise man in the Tholing Manuscript do little more to elaborate on this figure. That said, two elements in these verses are worth noting. The first is the archaic and partly unique spelling of his name. The first two syllables, mThon myi, are the same as those of the disloyal chief minister, mThon myi 'bring po rgyal mtsan nu who served during the time of KhrI snya zung brtsan, the 29th *btsan po* of Tibet (PT 1287: 90). The *dBa' bzhed* presents the grammarian protagonist as 'Thon mi. In later histories, we most commonly find Thon, and sometimes Thu. In looking at the morphology of this clan name: mThon (TM, PT 1287) = 'Thon (dBa') / → Thon and sometimes Thu, it appears that the spelling in the Tholing Manuscript follows the archaic spelling of the imperial period. That of the *dBa' bzhed* represents a common variation (prefix 'a for m), while later

⁷⁹ "All the pure..." is reached by the following: *ma ron = ma rong = rung ba* meaning "all" and *rtsang = gtsang* meaning "pure". In *lDe'u Jo sras* the text reads, "The third wise one was mThon mi bsam po ta. He created the consonants and vowels, the pure vowel, *na ro*, the vertical line (*shad*) that separates [phrases] and the inter-syllabic dot (*tshag*) that separates syllables. Before that, there was no writing in Tibet. (*ka ka ki ki ku ku zhabs khyud byas | ra ra ri ri gtsang gi yig ma ro | shad kyis bar bcad tshag gis smra bar byed*). In *Ne'u paṇḍita* we get, "The fourth wise one was Thon mi Sambhoṭa. If one asks what he did, he created the thirty consonants and vowels, '*dogs dang sbrel gyis tshigs su bcad*: by separating and combining he created verse; the designations for words and the vertical line *shad* that marks off phrases. Before that, there was no writing in Tibet. (*bzhi pa 'dzangs pa thon mi sambho ras: de yis ci byas na: ka kha suM bcu gu skyes byas: 'dogs dang sbrel gyis tshigs su bcad: shad kyis bcad nas tshig tu smra: de 'i gong na bod la yi ge med*:).

⁸⁰ I would like to take the opportunity here to give thanks and praise to the monumental work done by Per Sørensen (1994) for which the present thesis would have been severely diminished. While I was not in direct communication with author, his book on *Tibetan Buddhist Historiography* was a constant companion at my desk and in my research. I am greatly indebted to the time, care, and passion that Per has put into laying the ground and building the structure on which I now stand—*nanos gigantum humeris insidentes*.

texts completely drop any sign of a prefix. The second half of the name Sam po re/ra [*sic*] is simply a further variant to add to the list.

Another variant found only in the *dBa' bzhed* is the spelling gSam po ra, which Wangdu and Diemberger (2000: 69, n. 234) suggest is “an early approximate reconstruction of the Sanskrit term Sambhota/Sambhadra.” The same can be said of the Tholing Manuscript's Sam po ra/re, which, dropping the *ga* prefix, is an even more simplistic phoneticization.⁸¹ A common feature of both the *dBa' bzhed* and the Tholing Manuscripts, these name spellings are a further indicator of the early date of the Tholing Text. The narrative offered here hardly solves the puzzle; yet, in the spelling of his name we are at least provided with one more piece of the jigsaw puzzle. The second interesting element is the use of poetic phrasing—*ka ka ki ki* serves as both an indication of the creation of the alphabet as well as a kind of pseudonym for the grammarian. It could also be a simplified spelling for *ka k̄a ki k̄i* (i.e. long and short vowels), again indicating the work of the famous grammarian. This exact phrasing is not found elsewhere and is perhaps indicative of an early source from whence it came.

The use of the particle *du* in this next stanza is yet another example of a rhythmic particle used to create cadence.

<i>bzhi ru 'dzangs pa ni</i>	5
<i>rngegs khri bzang yang la ston yin </i>	7
<i>des las ci byas na </i>	5
<i>ri khyim slung <u>du</u> bslags pa</i>	6
<i>spo mthon mkhar <u>du</u> brtsigs </i>	5
<i>spang mtha' zhing <u>du</u> rmos nas</i>	6
<i>sbye⁸² mthar khyim <u>du</u> brtsigs </i>	5
<i>dang po de ltar byed pa 'i phyi mkhan ni </i>	9
<i>khri bzang yang ston yar lungs rigs gyi bu </i>	9
<i>de 'i gong du myi khyim ri la 'dug</i>	8 9

⁸¹ In conversation Ulrike Roesler further noted that “phonetically the *ra* may represent the *ṭa* in (sam)bhoṭa, which is a retroflex *t* and for a Tibetan speaker may sound similar to an *r*. Bhoṭ(i)a is of course the normal designation for ‘Tibetan’” (Roesler, October 2016).

⁸² Read: *dbye*

The fourth wise one:
was rNgegs Khri bang yang la ston.
If one asks what he did:
He assembled mountain households down into the valley
and he built fortresses over the high summits.⁸³
He ploughed the borders of the meadows into fields
and built houses along their borders.

The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:
was the son of the Yar lungs rNgeg [clan], Khri bzang yang ston.
Before that, communities lived in the mountains.

The archaic poetic form can often reveal the use of dactylic lines of matching syllabic structure that create what Roger Jackson (1996: 371) has observed as “imagistic and semantic parallelisms from stanza to stanza.”

<i>lga ru 'dzang pa ni </i>	5
<i>khri bzang ya blag chen po 'gos kyi bu </i>	9
<i>des las ci byas na </i>	5
<i>phyogs bzhi sku srungs sku'i rim 'gro mdzad </i>	8 9
<i>rgod kyi stong sde bzhi bcu rtsa nyis so kha'i dgra la rgol </i>	13
<i>myi la stong thang bcad pas phyi rabs blon po thugs khral chung </i>	13
<i>dang po de ltar byed pa'i phyas mkhan ni </i>	9
<i>khri bzang ya blag chen po 'gos kyi bu </i>	9
<i>de'i gong na rus dang stong sde myed </i>	8 9

The fifth wise one:
was the great son of the 'Gos [clan], Khri bzang ya blag.
If one asks what he did:
He instituted the royal guards of the four directions, and the ritual
for the emperor.
With the 42 military thousand-districts, he attacked the enemies at
the borders.
Since he instituted the payment of blood-price for man[-slaughter]
the worries of future generation of ministers were reduced.
The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:
was the noble son of the 'Gos [clan], Khri bzang Ya blag.
Before that, there was no [organization according to] clan and thousand-
district.

<i>drug ru 'dzang pa ni </i>	5
<i>mong khri do re snang tshab </i>	6
<i>des las ci byas na </i>	5
<i>bre dang srang gis 'du god rtsis su gsal </i>	9
<i>phul dang khyor gyis za ma zungs su bzung </i>	9
<i>dga' nyis tshong byed mthun nyis longs spyod pa </i>	9
<i>dang po de ltar byed pa'i phyas mkhan ni </i>	9
<i>khri do re snang tshab ya 'dras mong gi bu </i>	10
<i>de'i gong na bod la bre srang myed </i>	8 9

The sixth wise one:
was Mong Khri Do re snang tshab.

⁸³ There is a strange displacement of the locative in the text. Literally this line reads, “he built the high summits into palaces.”

If one asks what he did:

Thanks to the [use of the] *bre* and *srang*, the calculation of tax collection became clear.

With the measures *phul* and *khyor*⁸⁴ to [measure] food provisions, there was mutual happiness and agreement in commerce.

The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:

was the son of the Mong [clan], Khri do re snang tshab ya 'dras.

Before that, there were no weights and measures in Tibet.

<i>bdun du 'dzangs pa ni</i>	5
<i>stag brtsan sdong gzigs </i>	4
<i>des las ci byas na </i>	5
<i>mdzo mo stag mo</i> ⁸⁵ <i>be'u lug gar bder 'tsho </i>	9
<i>ba re glang re gnag re khrims su gsal</i>	9
<i>rtsa la chun por gcus nas</i>	6
<i>dbyar rtsi rgun du 'tshal </i>	5
<i>dang po de ltar byed pa'i phyas mkhan ni </i>	9
<i>stag brtsan ldong gzigs chen po snyer gyi bu </i>	9
<i>de'i gong du phyugs la res khrims myed </i>	8 9
<i>'phrul chen po de rnams kyang mes dbon</i>	
<i>gyi dam pa'i chos mdzad pa'i byin rlabs kyi rkyen ru byung ba yin no </i>	

The seventh wise one:

was sTag brtsan sdong gzigs.

If one asks what he did:

[Since] *mdzo*, *rtol*, calves, and sheep were herded wherever pastures were good,

he made clear laws for herding cows, shifts for oxen, and shifts for livestock.

Having bound grasses into bundles

the summer hay was made available for the winter.

The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:

was the great son of sNyer [clan], sTag brtsan sdong gzigs.

Before that, there was no system of shifts for [herding] livestock.

Those great miraculous [innovations] also appeared as blessings due to the fact that the ancestors had been practicing the noble *dharma*.⁸⁶

What is striking here is the account of the genesis of society construed as a collective growth in virtue. The society doesn't become advanced solely because of metallurgy, agriculture, etc.,

⁸⁴ Dpa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba ascribes the standardization of weights and measures to the grandfather of Srong btsan sgam po, Stag ri ngyan gzigs, dating the introduction to late sixth century. On this point, Eric Haahr (1969: 125) has translated the text: "At this time the son of Khri-nor-snan-btsun-mori established the measures of 'Bre, Phul, and Sran. He (fixed) the weighing standards for grain and butter. For reciprocal satisfaction he introduced trade. For reciprocal harmony he joined the valleys together. Before him there was no trade or standards of measures and weights in Tibet" ('*di dus khri nor snang btsun mong gi bus || bre phul srang bcos 'bru mar tshad kyis bcal || dga' gnyis tshong byas mthun gnyis la lung bsdebs || de gong bod na tshong dang bre srang med ||*). In his dealing with the topic Chab spel (1989: 128-29) relays the same as dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, he further notes two related traditions of weights and measures. The main difference between the two is in the conversion of *phul* to *khyor* with the first tradition equalling 3.5 and the second equalling only 3. A single *phul* measure is described as being the amount of grain that is measured by the palms of two hands cupped together. By contrast, Sørensen (1994: 412, n.1432) notes that the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, echoes a passage in the *sBa bzhed*. He attributes the standardization (according to an Indian system) to the period of Ral pa can.

⁸⁵ Read: *rtol*

⁸⁶ This version of the seven wise men is nearly identical to that found in *lDe'u Jo sras* (114-115).

conceived of as practical advances as distinguished from moral and political advances. The advanced society that we get through the actions of the seven wise men is the virtuous society. There is no boundary here between the practical technologies of social existence and the moral-political expertise of the wise men in their capacity as founders. But if advancement in practical knowledge connotes moral virtue, then the implication is that moral virtue somehow demands corresponding accomplishments in terms of social goods, norms, and institutions, especially law. That good laws concerning agriculture, trade, pastoral rights, etc., come via the wise men shows the high status of lawmaking in the founding process. The question of whether these “laws” connected to the seven wise men can be considered actual law or are they simply practical wisdom is a topic that will be taken up in greater detail in section (2.4), however it is worth pointing out here that the content together with the poetic prose reminds us that prior to modernity, the boundary between positive law, common law, custom, and non-codified social wisdom was often quite fluid.

To the extent that the text conveys “hope,” it does so via the invocation of past and (and implicitly prospective) heroic intervention. As the Empire undergoes fragmentation, a heroic “noble ancestor set off westward” to recover the glory of the sPu rgyal btsan po. In this way, the victory banner of the Dharma never sets, and the authority of the king continues to uphold the social and cultural fabric of society. The Tholing text provides a performative means through which to augment the authority of the rulers of Western Tibet through a complex circular ethos enacted by the narrative arc, and bolstered by key liturgical royal phraseology.

(2.3) The Royal Origin Myth in the Tholing Manuscript

Introduction

During the early historical period of Tibet, which lasted from the mid-seventh through the ninth centuries CE,⁸⁷ the Tibetan *btsan po* held sway over one of the largest landmass empires of Central Asia. Having gained control of the lucrative Silk Road early in the seventh century the Tibetan royal court grew substantially in wealth and infrastructure. Complex systems of governance necessitated the creation of laws, various methods of taxation, and a division of the population for census taking and conscription. A further and perhaps more basic requirement, however, was the development of a hierarchy of status that placed the king as the first among equals, *primus inter pares*, within the major ministerial clans.⁸⁸ The vertical structure therefore was not without its horizontal competition, since multiple centers of power were vying for status and authority. S.J. Tambiah's (1976) theory of a "galactic polity" in Southeast Asian empires in which ritual alliances, solemnized by oaths, did more to link satellite or vassal kingdoms than any amount of realpolitik governance, is relevant for our understanding of Tibet.⁸⁹ Nathan Hill (2015b) has bolstered Tambiah's theory as it might apply to Tibet through his own study of the ancient *sku bla* ritual narrative, supporting the likelihood of its relevance to the annual oath rites made by vassal lords to the king.

The divine Royal Origin Myth must be seen in this larger context. This myth played a central role during the imperial period in augmenting the status of the "Mighty" *btsan po*, legitimizing the royal lineage, and providing each successor with the divine nature to "rule as the lord of men" (*myi'i rje mdzad*). The myth, therefore, is the critical framework in which the king could assume his role as the central determining agent for the unity of a Tibetan polity. As Brandon Dotson has described in his "Kingship and Religion" research plan, the myth "served to ancestralize the Tibetan king and confer upon the incumbent the charisma of office."⁹⁰ This "charisma" is presented in the formulaic phrases,

⁸⁷ As a general note, it seems odd to end the periodization of the Yar lung dynasty with the assignation of Glang Dar ma in 842 due to considerable evidence to the contrary. For that reason, I do not here say the mid-seventh through the mid-ninth because I believe that the collapse and the waning influence of early Tibet carries on well through the end of the 9th century.

⁸⁸ For a detailed overview and analysis of the principles, theory, and practice of sacral kingship in Tibet, see Ramble (2006).

⁸⁹ See for example Geoffrey Samuel (1993).

⁹⁰ Brandon Dotson, Sofja Kovaleskaja-preis research plan, p. 8 (<http://www.indologie.uni-muenchen.de>).

motifs, and topoi found within the pre-Buddhist version of the myth best captured in the Old Tibetan Chronicle, though equally referenced in the pillar inscriptions that demarcate the boundaries of the empire.⁹¹ The Royal Origin Myth was a foundational narrative upon which the theory and legitimization of Tibetan kingship was built.

With the collapse of the Empire and the subsequent dominance of Buddhism in post-Imperial Tibet, the concept of the divine royal origin, and with it, the centrality of the king, was all but entirely wiped away.⁹² Monastic historians replaced these ideas with various Buddhist leitmotifs in an attempt to reinterpret the past by placing the history of Buddhism at its core. Religious histories (*chos 'byung*), therefore, underscored Tibet's relationship and continuity with Indian Buddhism, the determining agency of Avalokiteśvara, and the centrality of a religious hegemony in the form of the "high-priest" (*bla ma*), while non-Buddhist elements were minimized. It is in this cultural milieu of the *phyi dar* that an Indic/Buddhist Royal Origin Myth became predominant.⁹³

The major themes underpinning the *phyi dar* reframing of history became more or less constant, if variable in some respects, as monastic hegemony continued to formalize a refashioned view of the past. In numerous *chos 'byung* that appeared between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, kingship itself became seemingly irrelevant, or was subverted to reflect monastic authority. For instance, the presentation of the origin of Tibet's first king is often treated with little importance, and his descent "from the heights of the heaven of the gods" is all but completely eliminated. To give one such example of the general trend during the *phyi dar*: in his detailing of the various traditions surrounding the sPu rgyal dynasty, the famous scholar-historian Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364) plays down any reference to the king's mythic and divine origin. He ascribes any reference to his descent from the sky to the ignorance of the Tibetans, while explicitly connecting the king to the historical family of Udayana, the king of Vatsala in India.⁹⁴ This denial of divine descent is famously echoed by Sum pa mkhan po, who, after providing a detailed Buddhist version of the narrative, states, "All these tales of

⁹¹ Cf. rKong Po inscription, the inscription at the tomb of Khri lDe Srong brtsan, the fragmentary tablet at Zhwa'i lHa khang, and the east face of the Sino-Tibetan Treaty of 821/2.

⁹² See, for example, Tucci (1955) and Haarh (1969: 168-70, 231-50), and Karmay (1998 [1994]: 282-309).

⁹³ See, especially, Karmay (1998: (ibid.: 288).

⁹⁴ The relevant section from Bu ston's *chos 'byung* (the *bDe gshegs bstan pa'i gsal byed chos kyi 'byung gnas*) has been reproduced and translated by Haarh (1969: 179). Bu ston's royal narrative is a later adoption of the narrative favoured by Nyang ral in his *Chos 'byung me tog snying po*. For further discussions on this, see Sørensen (1994: 526).

a descent from the sky come from the fact that the Bon po like the sky. It would be quite wrong to pursue these falsehoods.”⁹⁵

Nonetheless, certain core archaic ideals did remain, particularly in the geographic and religious borderlands. For instance, as referenced by Samten Karmay, the Bon tradition has maintained in its histories the decent of the first king from heaven.⁹⁶ Similarly, the early kings of West Tibet not only maintained the royal ethos of the Empire, but also viewed themselves as the direct inheritors of that sacral royal tradition. Kingship, therefore, was not “irrelevant” in West Tibet, nor did the prevailing monastic recasting of the *phyi dar* overtake it. Rather, for the early royal court of Pu rang Gu ge (10th-12th centuries) the king, not the *bla ma*, was at the center of rule. In order to support this line of kings, and its claim to descent from the Imperial dynasty, historiography had to maintain the myth of “divine” royal authority in the historical narrative. Reflecting this need, the Tholing Manuscript provides a markedly less Buddhicized account of the origin of the first Tibetan king. In contrast with other *phyi dar* texts, the concepts that underpin the Tholing *rgyal rabs* suggest a royal teleology rather than a religious one. Here, as in Old Tibetan Documents, the origin myth of the first king is far from irrelevant. Rather, the myth underpins critical topoi that bolster sacral kingship as the central pillar upholding the social, religious, and cultural fabric of Tibet. Therefore, the Tholing *rgyal rabs* should be understood as a rare continuation of the historiographic traditions of the imperial period that allowed the pre-Buddhist institution of sacred sovereignty to persist.

To appreciate the implications of the Royal Origin Myth relative to the literary strategies and the philological shifts that characterize the Tholing Manuscript, a brief survey of earlier research on Tibetan kingship will be useful.

* * *

The topography of early Tibetan royal historiography has been well mapped out by scholarship. Tucci’s 1955 article on “The Sacral Character of the Kings of Ancient Tibet,” was, in no small way, the catalyst

⁹⁵ *gnam las babs zer ba ni bon po gnam la dga’ bas de’i rdzun kyi rjes su ’brang ba’i skyon yin no* | (Sum pa mKhan po Ye ses dpal byor 1992: 292).

⁹⁶ Beyond the “Bon tradition that is known” (*Bon po grags pa lugs*) one of the central texts which contains the Bon royal origin myth is the *rGyal rabs grags pa gling grags*. Per Kværne has been working on this text for some time, and it is his version of the myth that he has presented to this author.

for the study of sacred kingship in Tibet. Presenting the topic with reference to the theoretical foundations provided by Sir James Frazer, as well as the comparative anthropology of A.M. Hocart, Tucci set the framework for future studies.⁹⁷ Foremost among these is Erik Haarh's massive 1969 study of the *Yar-lun Dynasty* in which the author extensively presented and compared the many forms and variants of the etiological myth.⁹⁸ Ariane Macdonald's 1971 critical review of Tibetan kingship incorporated early material from Dunhuang that was not used by Haarh. Macdonald further developed her own hypothesis that the king was the ordering principle on which cosmic harmony rested, and thus an essential link between the ways of the gods (*lha chos*) and the ways of men (*mi chos*). In 1985, R.A. Stein went on to show the close parallels and overlap between Tibetan and Chinese notions of divine kingship; while he critiqued some of Macdonald's conclusions, he by and large supported and augmented his esteemed student's work. Thus, the major foundations for the study of sacred kingship in Tibet were set.

During this same period of study a number of substantive articles mapped the terrain in even further detail. The trailblazing work of Hugh Richardson (1968, 1985, 1998), Samten Karmay (compiled in 1998), and Per Sørensen (1994, 2000) have demarcated the trees from the forest, greatly advancing the study of early history and historiography, and leading others to add significantly to the topic.⁹⁹

The Royal Origin Myth

The complex and assorted theories surrounding the "origin of the lineage of the *btsan po*" (*btsan po'i gdung rabs kyi khungs smos pa*) have long held the attention of Tibetologists (c.f. Blondeau 1984; Haarh 1969: 168-270; Karmay 1998 [1994]: 282-309; Macdonald 1971: 190-230). After the pre-Buddhist royal origin myth, dating from the time of the imperium, subsided, three main versions (among

⁹⁷ Anthropologists nowadays have reservations about Frazer's approach. In particular, Frazer's "universal" model of divine kingship, which was based on the central concept of the vitality of a living god, sacred marriage, and the function of the divine king as a scapegoat, has been shown to be absent in Near Eastern concepts of kingship. This has been a point of debate between Africanist. For a detailed review of Tucci's own theoretical underpinnings and its relationship to the work of Frazer and Hocart see Dotson (2011).

⁹⁸ In particular, for the myth of the first king see: Haarh, 1969, chapters 11 and 12.

⁹⁹ Among the more recent studies the work of Charles Ramble (2006) and Martin Mills (2012) has contributed most significantly to theorising kingship in Tibet and deconstructing core mythic and historical structures.

others) for the origin of the Tibetan king became widespread. These are (as is well known): [1] an Indian origin of the king: known as the *gSang ba chos lugs* (the “Buddhist Tradition that is Secret”); [2] the descent of the king from heaven: [*bs*]*Grags pa bon lugs* (the “Bon Tradition that is Known”), and [3] the origin of the king from the The’u brang: *Yang gsang lugs* (the “Most Secret Tradition”), all of which are presented in *mKhas pa lDe’u*: 226 - 243 and has been well covered elsewhere, see especially Karmay’s (1998 [1994]) “The Origin Myths of the First King of Tibet as Revealed by the *Can lnga*.”

* * *

With this background in mind, we can now return to the Royal Origin Myth of Tholing Manuscript. It can be subdivided into four distinct parts:

- [1] The “Origin of the Tibetan King”
- [2] The “Creation of the Tibetan Polity (by the King)”
- [3] The “Origin of the Tibetan People, together with the Early Rulers of Tibet”
- [4] The “Life of Nya gri btsan po [*sic*],” Tibet’s first King.

These individual parts draw from various sources, giving the overall work a fragmented narrative flow. The assembled patchwork reveals the diversity and early variants of the individual sections, as well as the importance of their combined relationships. For this reason, a closer examination of the individual parts, as well as the origin myth itself as a whole, may contribute new elements to our knowledge of early developments in Tibetan historiography in general, and improve our understanding of the Tholing Manuscript in particular.

[1] The Origin of the Tibetan King

In comparing a number of the earliest sources related to the myth of gNya’ khri btsan po, it becomes clear that the language, imagery, motifs, and topoi found in the Tholing Manuscript are strikingly similar to those seen in Old Tibetan Documents. Correspondingly, the type of kingship presented is also the same.

From the first few lines, starting on folio 2b line 2, we can glean how the Tholing Manuscript emerges as a text that challenges the historical trends of the time. Martin Mills (2012: 225) points out

that during the early *phyi dar* period there was “a new level of ideological competition in Tibetan historiography...[and] a battle over constitutional ideas as to the meaning of legitimate kingship.” Samten Karmay (1998 [1994]: 287) emphasizes this point, describing the “extreme caution” and “sophistication” of the scribe of PT 1038, commenting that it is “striking when we compare...to the bold assertions embedded in the partisan views...characteristic...of later *chos 'byung*.”

The Tholing Manuscript’s treatment of the contentious topic is equally diplomatic, though ultimately partisan in its own approach. In an unusual self-reflexive moment, the author or compiler of the text distinguishes his stance from the notions of kingship presented elsewhere. The lines seem to have been composed in dialogue with other narrative traditions of the time (probably from Central Tibet where the majority of early histories were being created). Contrary to those other traditions, in making a proclamation of its stance, the narrative makes clear to the audience that the king of Tibet was a *myi'i rje lhas mdzad de*, “a god acting as the lord of men.” Just prior to this, the author states that Tibet regarded its first king as a “suddenly appearing king” (*glo bur gyi rgyal po*) and contrasts that to “whatever is stated elsewhere” (*phyogs gzhan na ni*); be it a “lineage king” (*gdung brgyud kyi rgyal po*) or “appointed king” (*bskos pa'i rgyal po*). (Interestingly, the latter is said to be the type of king that exists in the four great kingdoms of India, China, Ta zig and Phrom). The text then immediately goes on to make a firm stance and states: “As for the king of our Tibet, he was a god acting as the lord of men” (*skol bod gyi rgyal po 'di ni | myi rje lhas mdzad de*). The phrasing, *myi rje lhas mdzad*, evokes the essential topos of divine kingship as presented in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* and in epigraphic material.¹⁰⁰ The tone and timbre of the prose is clear; the voice of the “author,” comes through with a kind of stubborn strength, which is apparent not only in the contrasting of the divine Tibetan king with others but also in the use of the first person plural inclusive pronoun ['o] *skol* with regard to Tibet (*bod*) creating an emphatic “Our Tibet.”¹⁰¹ The text, therefore, stakes its own claim in the political battles of Tibetan historiography.

¹⁰⁰ Much of the comparable material around this essential topos has been laid out by Nathan Hill (2013) through a cataloguing of an ‘Old Tibetan mythic formula’ *rjer gshegs* (“he came as the lord”). Specific to this paper these texts are as follows: PT 1286, IOL Tib J 0751, the Kong po Inscription, and Inscription at the Tomb of Khri lDe srong brtsan, a fragmentary tablet at Zhwa'i lha khang, the east face of the Sino-Tibetan Treaty inscription. The quotations that Hill puts together reiterate a single basic premise of the imperial/“native” form of kingship—the divine descent of the imperial line.

¹⁰¹ On the importance of 'o *skol* as an archaic personal inclusive pronoun, see Hill (2015a).

For this reason, we can perhaps understand better why the narrative of *Nya gri btsan po* [sic] follows so closely that which is presented in the *Chronicle* together with the phrases also attested in Tibetan epigraphic material, stating that the king “comes from the heights of heaven” “as the lord of men” and “for the sake of animals with manes.” When compared to these older versions the striking similarities lend themselves to an understanding of the continuation of the *snga dar* traditions of historiography in West Tibet.

Given the fact that the Tholing Manuscript emerged in West Tibet at the height of one of Tibet’s most formative religious periods, it is remarkable that the work promotes such an archaic and “secular,” if simultaneously sacral, form of kingship that is cemented by the origin myth. The motifs and narrative strategies used to support this mode of kingship are imbued with politically-charged significance.

* * *

After presenting rather assertively the claim of the divine origin of the king, the text then shifts into what appears to be a new section, or fragmented text, which contains a rhythmic description of the auspicious signs defining the sacred qualities of the king:

The ground on which the *sPu rgyal btsan po* resided was good: he dwelt on the height of the blue heavens. His *sku’i lha* was good: it was *Khri bar la bdun tshigs*. The way in which he came down to earth was good: it was through a hole in the sky [5] that opened from the clearing of the clouds, he came down with a light drizzle of rain from the sky. The circumstances were good: he possessed the ninefold miraculous weapons. The land to which he descended was good: it was on the precious place [lHa ri] rGya mdud [sic].¹⁰² (4: 5 - 5: 3)

In his seminal article on the topic, Giuseppe Tucci (1955) outlined a theory of the “The Sacral Character of the Kings of Ancient Tibet,” whereby the magical, divine and life-giving qualities of the king give rise to the Tibetan polity (*chab srid*). Tucci’s framework provides a useful heuristic device for our analysis. For instance, Tucci points out various passages in early sources in which the king is likened to rain and associated with the fertility of the land; the king, then, plays a vital role in “maintaining the cosmic and social order intact and in due working order” (Tucci 1955: 200). A wonderful expression

¹⁰² There are a number of hypotheses on the location of the sacred place to which the primordial king descended. Foremost is that of Samten Karmay (1998 [1992]: 220) who regards [lHa ri] rGya mdud (sic) or Gyang to as the eastern peak of Mt. Bon ri in rKong po. A tentative translation of the name might be “intricate knot” or “seal,” but I have left it here as a proper noun and so without conclusive remarks (cf. Haarh (1969), Karmay (1998), and Ramble (1997)). According to Charles Ramble, “there is a photo – the only one in existence, as far as I know – of the summit of Mt. Gyang to in rKong po, showing the footprints of ’Nya-khri when he alighted on earth, in Ramble 1997, “The Creation of the Bon Mountain of rKong po,” with a discussion of the name.” (personal communication 07/08/15).

of this concept is found in the Tholing Manuscript's version of the origin myth, according to which the king's descent from heaven is said to be "from a light drizzle of rain" (*nam mkha' phrum tsam las*). My own reading of the relatively obscure term *phrum* is based in part on the context of "the clearing of clouds," as well as on a comparison with a similar yet more explicit description witnessed in the parallel section of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (PT 1286, ll.32). Here, the text is explicit, stating that the king "came to the narrow earth as rain to rule the earth and the fathers of the land" (*sa do la yul yab kyi rje | dog yab kyi char du gshegs s'o*).¹⁰³ *Phrum* may be linked to an onomatopoeic phrase, *phrum phrum*, used in Tibetan to describe a light glistening rain or the sound made by raindrops.¹⁰⁴ Likewise the essential qualities of the king are first addressed through his origin "from the heights of blue heaven." His *sku'i lha* is that of his father Khri bar la bdun tshigs,¹⁰⁵ and his magical abilities are captured within his martial "ninefold miraculous (*'phrul*) weapons."

Several other expressions and topoi can be singled out throughout the origin myth of the first king, each bolstering what Tucci designates as the essential role of the Tibetan king. His role is to transmit four powers: religious law (*chos*), "majesty" (*mnga' thang*), government or temporal power (*chab srid*), and his "helmet" (*dbu rmog*)—"the visible emblem of the magic power of the king" (Tucci 1955: 199-200). With the exception of the helmet, the origin myth of gNya' khri btsan po clearly evokes these fundamental concepts. The helmet appears slightly later in the text with Srong btsan sgam po. It is said that at the time when the king "departed to the sky" (*rgung*¹⁰⁶ *du gshegs te*), "the polity was heightened, the helmet was mighty, and all intentions were achieved" (*chab srid ni mtho | dbu rmog ni brtsan | dgongs dgu ni grub ste*) (13: 1), a phrase to which I shall return to later. The essential characteristics and powers of the Old Tibetan kings, as described by Tucci, are continually reaffirmed in the various eulogies of the sPu rgyal kings as presented in the Tholing Manuscript. In this context, they are credited with the creation of laws, the division of secular and religious domains, and the establishment of government.

¹⁰³ The translation follows that of Nathan Hill (2013: 169) in which the author presents a useful catalogue of references to the phrase *mi'i rje gshegs*, "he came as the lord of men."

¹⁰⁴ One definition in the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* gives, for this term: *chu thigs phrum phrum 'bab pa*: "water drops falling *phrum phrum*." The term is also found in the archaic divination manual ITJ_0738 (ll.128).

¹⁰⁵ According to The Royal Genealogy, PT 1286, Khri bar la bdun tshigs is the father of gNya' khri btsan po. He is the middle of seven sons of Ya lha bda drug, the lord of the Phyva gods, hence the etymology of his name "the middle of seven."

¹⁰⁶ Read: *dgung*

* * *

As has already been mentioned, two texts central to the study of this royal version of the myth and therefore valuable comparative sources for the Tholing Manuscript are the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* and the Lhasa Treaty Pillar of 821/2.

From the first part of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, PT 1286, we have the most extensive and authoritative version of the Royal Origin Myth. Though also presented elsewhere,¹⁰⁷ it is worth providing a rough translation of the core section (if slightly pared down) of the Chronicle for the purposes of the present study:

[The enthroned Nyag khri btsan po] came from the heights of the heavens...to the narrow confines of the earth, lord of the father land (*yul yab*),¹⁰⁸ he came as rain to the face of the earth, he came to the Sacred Mountain lHa ri Gyang do... He came as lord of the Six Parts of Tibet (*bod ka g.yag drug*).

When he first came to this earth, he arrived of his own accord having come as lord of all under heaven. From the centre of the sky, to this core of the earth, the heart of the world, enclosed by snow mountains, the headland of all rivers, where the mountains are high and the land is pure, a country so good, where men are born wise and brave, practicing good customs, a place where swift horses flourish.

[Owing to] the qualities whereby he differed from other kings, they prostrated in salutation before him, swift of foot. The nobles dressed respectfully, so that the aristocratic bearing of great persons thence emerged.¹⁰⁹

On the east face of the Lhasa Treaty Pillar of 821/2, the sacred narrative of divine descent is evoked:

From the time when the divine emanation, the *btsan po*, 'O lde spu rgyal, came to this country and appeared on the earth, his unchanging line has ruled as the great kings of Tibet. Saying "It is the centre of high snow mountains, the source of the great rivers, a high country, a pure earth," he came from the gods of heaven as the king of men.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ An initial stab at translation into English of the archaic poetical lines was first presented by Snellgrove and Richardson (1968: 24-25). More recently Matthew Kapstein in Schaeffer et. al. (2013: 37) has published a much more literal translation, though perhaps without much of the rhythmic flair found in the original and captured by Snellgrove and Richardson. My own translation has in large part followed the former with some emendations based on the latter. However, in the last stanza I tend to agree with Kapstein's exacting translation, which entails a more accurate rendering of the Tibetan. The archaic language and terse poetical prose is nonetheless difficult to translate in light of very few comparable variants from which to understand the emblematic lines.

¹⁰⁸ *Yul yab* is an Old Tibetan term which critically appears in PT 1286: 32 & 43 as well as in PT 1287: 51-52 & 59-60. In all cases the term occurs in the same phrase *sa dog la yul yab kyi rje*. Nathan Hill has noted the difficulty in translating these passages citing those by Haarh (1969: 405), Bacot et al. (1940: 127). Hill's own (2006) translation follows closely with the similar topos of *myi'i rje gshegs so* ("come as the lord of men"). As such *yul yab* looks to refer to Tibet.

¹⁰⁹ *lha gnam gyl steng nas gshegs pa' | ... sa dog la yul yab kyi rje | dog yab kyi char du gshegs s'o | | lha rI gyang dor gshegs na... bod ka g.yag drug gl rjer gshegs so | thog ma sa la gshegs pa yang | gnam mtha' 'og gl rjer gshegs pas | gnam gyl ni dbus | sa 'I ni dkyil | glng gi ni snying po | gangs kyi nI ra ba | chu bo kun kyi ni mgo bo | | rI mtho sa gtsang | yul bzang | myi 'dzangs shing dpa' du skye | chos bzang du byed | rta mgyogs su 'phel ba'I gnasu | tshul kyis bdams ste gshegs'o | rgyal po gghan dang myI mtshungs pa 'I chos | pyag mnyed khrung khrung gls 'tshal zhIng | sle ba 'od kyis len | myI btsun son pa 'I rnams | rje sa'I gos gyon zhing | skyes pa ched po rnams btsun ba'i [rnams?] pa yang de nas byung ba yIn no | | (OTDO, PT 1286: 30-40).*

¹¹⁰ *'phrul gyl lha btsan po 'o lde spu rgyal | | yul byung sa dod tshun cad gdung ma 'gyur bar | bod kyi rgyal po chen po mdzad pa yang | | gangs ri mthon po'i ni dbus | | chu bo chen po'i ni mgo | | yul mtho sa gtsang zhes | | gnam gyl lha las | | myi'i rgyal por gshegs te | (Richardson 1985: 108, ll. 5-8). The transliteration and translation of this section from the east face*

Not often seen in later histories, these lines are a eulogy that taps into the root of Tibetan mythic praise for their environment, and for the origin of the king. Occasional references can be found among a handful of later dedicatory prefaces from the Western Himalayas and West Tibet,¹¹¹ though these are archaizing fragments that have barely lingered rather than the central song that the text once was. Its presence in full, as witnessed in the Tholing Manuscript, therefore amounts to a rare and important source worthy of inclusion among the known variants. In the Tholing Manuscript, the text reads:

*gnam gyi dkyil | sa'i sgald pa | gling bzhi'i snying po | gangs ri 'khyud 'khor gyi ra ba
| chu bo chen po bzhi'i mgo' | stsang po gzhung gsum gyi glad | gangs ti se shel gyi
mchod rten | mtsho ma pang g.yu'i man dal | ri mtho sa gtsang ba'i gnas su / 'greng
myi'i rje | dud rnog chags kyi rkyen du | lha las myi'i rjer gshegs so |*

[Beneath] the centre of the sky, on the back of the earth, at the heart of the four continents, enclosed by snowy mountain ranges, at the source of the four major rivers, the head of the three great streams, at the crystal *stūpa* of Mount Ti se, the turquoise *maṇḍala* of Lake Ma pang, in the land of high peaks and pure earth, the lord of men who walk upright, for the sake of animals with manes, from the godly state he came as the lord of men (*lha las myi'i rjer gshegs*). (5: 3-6)

That this core of the archaic origin myth was quickly edited, and eventually done away with altogether, is reinforced by comparison with a later text.

Comparing parallels in other historical sources from around the same period, we enter fully into the world of the Buddhist reinterpretation of history. The “high peaks, pure earth” poem appears somewhat surprisingly at the end of the Buddhist origin myth in *mKhas pa lDe'u*.

*de ltar rgyal po ru pa skyes gdung rgyud kyi rgyal po yin la | thugs rje chen po'i sprul
pa yin pas kyang grags pa chos lugs so | de ltar rje gnya' khri btsan po de byon pa'i
khungs bzang ste rgya gar gdung rgyud kyi rgyal po yin | gshegs pa'i gnas bzang ste
gling gi snying po gangs ri rgyud kyi rwa bas bskor ba | chu bo bzhi 'dus pa'i mgo |
gtsang po gzhung gsum gyi mda' | gangs ti se gangs kyi mchod rten dang | mtsho ma
pham g.yu'i manDala gyi don mtshon pa | mi las lhar grub pas dam pa'i chos kyang
byang phyogs bod yul 'dir tha ma dar ba dang |*

Thus King Ru pa skyes was a ‘lineage king,’ and because he was also an emanation of Mahākāruṇika, it is known as the proclaimed Buddhist tradition (*grags pa chos lugs*). Thus, the origin of the Lord gNya' khri btsan po was good: he was of an Indian royal lineage. The place where he came to was good: it was heart of the earth, surrounded by snowy mountains, the source of the four rivers, at the lower reaches (*mda'*) of the three waters; Mount Ti se represents a *stūpa* of snow, and Lake Ma pang represents a turquoise *maṇḍala*. And since he was elevated (lit. established) from being a human to a divinity, the holy doctrine was also at last promulgated here in this northerly land of Tibet. (*mKhas pa lDe'u*: 242)

of the Treaty Pillar are based on Richardson's (1985: 108-109) rendering of the text. The translation has further been informed by Hill's own translation of the same section (2013: 170).

¹¹¹ See for example the dedications presented by Heller, 2009: 238

One significant addition found in the Tholing Manuscript and the *Can lnga*, as presented in *mKhas pa lDe'u*,¹¹² is the inclusion of Mount Kailāśa (Ti se) and Lake Manasarovar (Ma pang). The two landmarks form a natural gateway to West Tibet. Their inclusion in the Tholing Manuscript—a feature found only in post-Imperial material—quickly functions to reorient the place of royal descent.¹¹³ This fact is made somewhat insignificant, however, by the rationalist explanation presented in *mKhas pa lDe'u*. Nonetheless, in the Tholing Manuscript, this notion of descent plays an essential role in the royal narrative as a whole, which has at its end a focus on the kings of West Tibet—whose authority, according to our text, is derived directly from the royal line of the sPu rgyal btsan po. The point is established further and more subtly in the lines that maintain the shift westward, whereas in *mKhas pa lDe'u* the king is said to come down “at the lower end (*mda'*) of the three waters,” pointing to an eastern location on the Tibetan plateau. In his own investigation into the exact site of the king’s descent, Samten Karmay has convincingly argued that lHa ri Gyang to is connected or synonymous with one of the peaks of Mt. Bon ri in rKong po (see note 31 and 99 above), and many early documents associate the origin of the king with a place in rKong po. For Karmay, the *mKhas pa lDe'u* equates the “lower end” with the confluence of the Nyang chu and gTsang po rivers. In the Tholing text, we are presented with the exact opposite suggestion, which posits the location “at the upper end/head (*glad*),” followed directly by the sites of Ti se and Ma pang.

A closer comparative analysis of the latter two parallel passages shows further alterations that are worth considering. While the royal myth found in the Tholing Manuscript is more closely related to the pre-Buddhist Imperial versions (later associated with the Bon tradition), it is, ironically, in the Buddhist Tradition as presented in *mKhas pa lDe'u* that some of the most striking similarities can be found. Paradoxically, it is also here where the most emblematic differences may be pointed out. In other

¹¹² The *Can lnga* as presented in *mKhas pa lDe'u* is a collection of five texts that are believed to be important royal historiographic documents that were preserved and used by the early historiographers of the *phyi dar*, perhaps even as late as the 15th century (see Martin 1997: 18). The group of texts, which are no longer extant, looked to have contained not only the three versions of the origin of gNya' khri btsan po's appearance, but also designations and divisions in the development of ancient historical traditions, periodizations, and lineages. Beyond Karmay's own work the contents and variants of these five texts have been closely analysed and discussed by Sørensen (1994: 519-525). A comparison of early *phyi dar* historiography with parallels found in the redactions of the *Can lnga* remains an important source in the understanding of the development of early Tibetan historiography (the present aim of this dissertation).

¹¹³ The association of Ti se and Ma pang as the center of a larger mandala overlaid over the Tibetan plateau is a feature that follows a Buddhist cosmology; it comes into prevalence after the time of the empire. For discussions surrounding the sacred geography of Ti se and Ma pang, plus the four great rivers that originate from them, see: Karmay (IATS, Bergen), Per Kværne, and especially Alex McKay (2015).

words, when held up against its counterpart in the Tholing Manuscript, the parallel section reveals a remarkable transition—or perhaps a bifurcation—in Tibetan historiography.

Immediately apparent in the *mKhas pa lDe'u* version is the Indian origin of the king together with the additional Buddhist reinterpretations of the landscape and the explicit denial of gNya' khri's divine origin. What may not be so obvious is that the first half of the passage contains a rhythmic structure created by the repetitive use of the word “good” (*bzang*) followed immediately by the particle *ste* (= *bzang ste*). The same syntax is found in the Tholing Manuscript. However, here the rhythmical prose seems to have been developed in a more complete form:

His *sku'i lha* was good: it was... The way in which he came down to earth was good: it was... The circumstances were good:... The land [from] which he descended was good: it was...

The similarity is striking and suggests that the two share a common source. We might conclude, however, that the inclusion of the “Indian Origin” together with the omission of the king's heavenly origin in the *Can Inga* in fact suggest the editorial hand of a later historiographer, while the Tholing Manuscript has preserved a more archaic version. On the other hand, both the *Can Inga* and the Tholing Manuscript show traces of a redaction, evinced by the shared inclusion of Mount Kailāśa (Ti se) and Lake Manasarovar (Ma pang), as opposed to what is found in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* and PT 1038. To this same end, the addition at the end of the quote that Ti se and Ma pang “represent” (*don mtshon pa*) the spread of Buddhism in the north (*dam pa'i chos kyang byang yul 'dir tha ma dar ba*) provides further evidence still of elaboration by a Buddhist historiographer. Finally, it is significant that in the *Can Inga* version the famous poetic structure occurs at the end of the myth, in a sort of dedicatory eulogy, while the whole of the earlier narrative is an explanation of how the king arrived from India.¹¹⁴ In this way, the fundamental lines on the sacred geography of the Tibet appear to have been transposed. They are used to archaize and give authority to the Buddhist narrative. In other words, the author/compiler wants to have his cake and eat it: he wants to have a respectable Buddhist version but he also wants to grab the feathers of the king's original divinity.

¹¹⁴ It is worth noting that the repetitive poetic structure together with the sacred geomantic description found in *mKhas pa lDe'u* is reproduced in the *bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu*. Here, however, the lines do not include the explanation of Ti se and Ma pang but are otherwise the same. For more on this version of the myth see cf. Haarh (1969: 191-92).

Samten Karmay's seminal article, "The Origin Myths of the First King of Tibet as Revealed in the *Can Inga*," outlines and deconstructs the earliest versions of the myth that developed after the collapse of the Tibetan Empire. Karmay points out the critical conceptual gap that exists between the variants in the myth arising during the early post-Imperial period, as attested in PT 1038, and the Buddhist version that appeared during the early *phyi dar* period, contained in the *Can Inga*. It is in this gap that the version found in the Tholing Manuscript seems to rest. It was produced during the advent of the *phyi dar* but closely draws upon and echoes the traditions of the *snga dar*.

That the various origin myths were already in formation by the early post-imperial period is well attested to, if slightly confused, in PT 1038. Here, three versions of the etiological narrative are presented together with a succinct description of the first king's divine descent:

Concerning the origin of the lineage of the *btsan po*: [1] It is said that it is the god called Ku spyi ser bzhi in the height of heaven who is the master of all *ma sangs* and who rules over the universe and is the *phywa* of the *phywa* gods. [2] Secondly, it is said he originates from either the inferior caste of meat-eaters or the red-faced king or the *gnod sbyin Dza*, the master of the circle of the snow-capped mountain ranges. [3] Thirdly, it is said that it is [the god] called Khri Bar la bdun tshigs who resides at the summit of the thirteenth stage of heaven. It is [also] said [that the king] descended from the gods in heaven to earth to be the lord of the black-headed men, the master of animals with a mane that had no owners, together with the ministers lHo, rNgegs, with the Bon po mTshe and gCo, with the servants Sha and sPug. He became the lord of men, gods and demons. He arrived in (a place called) Bod ka g.yag drug. Whatever the case may be—and who knows?—his lineage was given the name sPu bod and he was called sPu rgyal, the King of sPu.¹¹⁵

Unlike later authors of *chos 'byung*, that of PT 1038 appears to take a remarkably non-partisan view of the essential myth. He presents each narrative with caution, "almost like a modern skeptic," as Karmay posits, who goes on to point out that the scribe "never fails to use such formulas as, 'we hear', 'it is said', 'whatever the case maybe', 'who knows?'" Karmay (1998 [1994]: 287). However, it seems that the scribe does not actually know or have full accounts at his disposal. Rather, from what is rendered here, it would appear that the author is recalling a lost narrative. This would account for both the scribe's

¹¹⁵ (5) ...*btsan po 'I gdung rab kyl khungs smos pa' || (6) gnam gdung gl steng na || lha ku spyi ser bzhi s bryl ba' || (7) ma sangs tham cad gl bdag po || srId pa kun la mnga' (8) mdzad pa' || phywa 'I yang phywa CR to add comment here lags shes kyang mchl || rnam (9) gnyls su nl gdol par sha za 'I rIgs || rgyal po gdong (10) dmar gyl rIgs | gangs rI byud kor gyl nl bdag po || gnod (11) sbyln dza zhes bgyI ba 'I rIgs lags shes kyang mchl (12) rnam gsum du nl gnam rIm pa bcu gsum gyl steng na | (13) khri bar la bdun tshIgs | shes bgyI || gnam gl lha las | sa (14) gdong drug du || 'greng 'go nag gl rje myed gl rje || dud rngog chag (15) bla myed kyl blar | blon po lho rngegs | bon po mtshe gco | phyag (16) tshang sha spug || myI rje lha dang bdud | du bryls nas || yul bod ka (17) g.yag drug du byon zhes mchl || gang lags kyang myI mngon ste | (18) gdung spu bod dang | spu rgyal du gsol || (OTDO, PT 1038). The translation of this passage found on the back of a Chinese scroll that was recovered from Dunhuang is slightly adapted from that given by Karmay (1998 [1994]: 286).*

lack of assurance as well as the many mistaken features. As a result, the document represents something more along the line of notes rather than a complete narrative. That the author of PT 1038 did not have access to critical sources is evident from the numerous mistakes within his outline, which confuses a number of key elements. Further, if understood as a poor production, the outline of PT 1038 matches closely that of the Origin Myth as found in the Tholing manuscript. In other words, components of PT 1038 exist in the more complete Tholing version: that the king is a god...who dwelled in the height of heaven...[and came] as the master of animals with a mane...[as] the lord of men; that the Tibetan people were from a “[red faced and] inferior caste of meat-eaters;” and that the first king was of the lineage (!) of Khri bar la bdun tshig (to name just a few). The Tholing Manuscript thus seems to have preserved an old narrative of the origin of the first king, ultimately going back to the time of the Tibetan Empire.

[2] The Establishment of Sovereignty: The Creation of the Tibetan Polity by the King

Following on the heels of the descent of the king from heaven, the text continues with a fascinating short passage relating the creation of the Tibetan polity by the yet unnamed Lord of Men (*myi'i rje*):

gtsug lag gi thang khirms ni chos lugs | dgongs pa 'phrul gyi ras chags pas ni gsang gros gnam¹¹⁶ gsum gyis ni dmyigs phye | mol chad rnam gnyis dang | bzhed rnam lngas ni bod kyi srid btsas | yig gtsang sde dgu dang | dpa' mtshan sna brgyad kyis ni bka' drin rim par gnang ste | 'dzam bu gling na mnga' chen bzhi yang rgyu dang dpya' 'bul bar grags so || (6: 1-5)

With regard to the system of the prevailing law: [it was] religion. After forming the extraordinary fabric of his thoughts: he opened [people's] eyes with the three kinds of privy counsel. By the two decrees and five kinds of commands: the polity of Tibet was formed. With the nine insignia [of great ministers] and the eight emblems of heroism [the king] bestowed favours according to rank. And it is said that even the four great [border] kings of the world paid tribute and tax.

In general, the passage above from the Tholing *rgyal rabs* closely parallels a similar one found in *Jo sras*:

gtsug lag gi thang khirms ni lha'i lugs sgrung dang lde'u tsam ni byung | dgongs pa 'phrul gyi ras chags pas | gsang gros rnam gsum gyis phyi nang gi dmigs phye | mi la chad rnam gnyis dang bzhed rnam lngas bod kyi khirms btsas yig tshang sde dgu dang dpa' mtshan rnam brgyad bka' rim par gnang te 'dzam bu gling na mtha' bzhi'i rgyal po bzhi yang dpya' 'bul lo || (lDe'u Jo sras: 102)

As for the system of the prevailing law: [there was] the divine custom, story telling, and riddles. Having formed the extraordinary fabric of his thoughts [and] by the three kinds of privy counsel, the inner and outer eyes [of the people] were opened. By the

¹¹⁶ Read: *rnam*

two agreements and five kinds of commands the laws of Tibet were formed for the people; [with] the nine insignia [of great ministers] and the eight emblems of heroism, [the king] gave rank in command and even the four [border] kings of the world offered tax.

Because the variant found in *lDe'u Jo sras* is slightly more extensive it is a helpful source in making clear some of the difficult elements in the Tholing version. I have not found a parallel passage in *mKhas pa lDe'u*.

In *lDe'u Jo sras*, the passage immediately follows the decent of gNya' khri from heaven and is included as part of his travels from one place to another as he establishes himself as the “Lord of Men.” In the process, both in *lDe'u Jo sras* and the Tholing text, the king introduces certain social constructions that bind the newly formed polity of Tibet. In the Tholing *rgyal rabs*, part of the confusion is that the narrative jumps without warning into a section with a totally different rhythm, suggestive of a semi-independent passage. This particular shift indicates that the passage might have been lifted out of a different text and simply inserted here. Furthermore, there seem to be a number of grammatical errors (for example *gyi>gyis*), unnecessary additions (such as too many *ni*) as well as omissions that further convolute the meaning of the whole. In *lDe'u Jo sras* this is not quite the case; the text here is a bit more clear. A comparison of the two allows for a better translation of the Tholing text. It nonetheless remains difficult to understand, thus warranting closer examination.

Both texts begin with the term *gtsug lag gi thang khrims*, composed of the “legal testaments” (*thang khrims*) of *gtsug lag*, a pivotal term that has elicited multiple interpretations (cf. Macdonald (1971), Stein (1985), Hahn (1997), and Kapstein (2006), all of which revolve around the “tradition,” or “science,” or “order” of or pertaining to kingship.¹¹⁷ Four meanings emerge within the Tholing manuscript: [1] *gtsug lag* with reference to a monastery, i.e. the house (*khang*) of *gtsug lag*; [2] *gtsug lag* with reference to culture and learning, i.e. China as a centre of *gtsug lag* (*rgya nag kyi gtsug lag*); [3] *gtsug lag* with reference to a particular religious practice of astrology/divination, the banned (*myi dbang ba*) *gtsug lag*; [4] *gtsug lag* with reference to religion in general (*stod mnga'ris 'dir gtsug lag ni bon chos*) and to the Bon tradition in particular (*gtsug lag bon chos ni lha chos su mdzad*).¹¹⁸ Based on

¹¹⁷ See in particular Macdonald (1971: 380-83), Stein (2010 [1985]: esp. 117-187, and Hahn (1995).

¹¹⁸ For a detailed outline of the term's usage in the Tholing Manuscript, see Appendix Two.

the last three usages, the term can be translated in ways similar to those suggested by Stein (2010 [1985]: 537) “tradition,” “morality,” “wisdom,” and “political wisdom.”¹¹⁹ In general, the term may perhaps best be summed up as representing an established “system of knowledge or order,” which I have therefore translated in its present context above as the “system of the prevailing law.”

The provisional translation of *thang khrims*, “law of rank,” proposed by Brandon Dotson in his analysis of the “Section of Law and State” suggests that the passage under consideration “obviously refers [here] to highly cultivated activities, and among these is an appreciation for and knowledge of law” (Dotson, 2007: 403). Unfortunately, Dotson does not give an explanation of how he arrived at his translation, or the literal meaning of term. Similar to Dotson’s provisional rendering, Stein (1972: 91) offers a tentative translation as “*lois par édit*” (“laws by decree”). Both translations seem to be based on the similar expression *bka’ thang* meaning “commandment, written order, or account.” “Laws by decree” is perhaps further best understood with regard to *thang*, which is a kind of measure word that can be combined with various words referring to anything flat. Hence, a *thang* is a flat plain/steppe/tundra/grasslands, while a *thang ka* is a flat scroll/ painting. The notion here of a “law by decree” or “legal testament” would therefore refer to a law set out in writing on a flat piece of something like a scroll, etc. *Thang* has a further, and more unusual, meaning of “trenchant;” a text examined by Charles Ramble (1983) features a gifted Bon po in the 13th century who gained a reputation for being a formidable debater. His Buddhist opponents gave him the pejorative nickname Bon po lce thang, “the sharp-tongued Bon po.”¹²⁰ In this case, and possibly that of the Tholing Manuscript, *thang* may be related to the *thang* that appears in compounds such as *dbang thang* and *mnga’ thang*, implying something authoritative or powerful.¹²¹

Often in the text, we see a preponderance of the bifurcated legal system of “royal laws” (*rgyal khrims*) and “religious laws” (*chos khrims*). Here, however, we find a third entity that in some manner

¹¹⁹ In *lDe’u Jo sras*: 114, *gtsug lag* is paired with *thang khrims* as part of the four kinds of pleasures (*mnyes pa rnam pa bzhi la/...gtsug lag dang thang khrim mnyes*). The whole passage reads: *mnyes pa rnam pa bzhi la | dang po gla gar dang rol mo mnyes | de nas gtsug lag dang thang khrims mnyes de nas ’phrul gyi yi ge mnyes/ de nas dam pa’i lha chos mnyes so |* (*lDe’u Jo sras*: 114) “The four kinds of pleasures: first, the pleasure of music and song and dance; [2] then the pleasure of the traditional sciences (*gtsug-lag*) and legal testaments (*thang-khrims*); [3] then the pleasure of sacred texts (*’phrul gyi yi-ge*); [4] then the pleasure of the true divine religion (*lha-chos*)” (Translation following Dotson, 2007: 390).

¹²⁰ Ramble (1983: 271).

¹²¹ The alternative meaning of the term was generated in conversation with Charles Ramble (August, 2015).

seems to encapsulate a “legal institution or order” (*gtsug lag gi thang khirms*). This includes the two pillars of the Tibetan legal system, as has been briefly pointed out by Stein (2010: 215-20). The term, therefore, seems to designate some sort of early Tibetan culture of “law” or “a legal system” that is related to kingship.

The same term appears a second time in the narrative of the monkey and the rock ogress. Here the *yakṣa*, son of the two is said to be “one not easily tamed (*'dul dka'*), and lacking in *gtsug lag gi thang khirms*” (7: 1).

Finally, a comparison of this line in the Tholing Manuscript and the one found in *Jo sras* reveals a significant difference. In *lDe'u Jo sras* we read: *gtsug lag gi thang khirms ni lha'i lugs sgrung dang lde'u tsam ni byung* ||: “as for the system of prevailing law, it originated as the divine tradition of narration (*sgrung*) and riddles (*lde'u*).” What follows here after the topicalizer (*ni*) is a much more tantalizing group than the *chos lugs* as seen in the Tholing text, which simply states: “As for the ‘system of the prevailing law’ (*gtsug lag gi thang khirms*): [it was] religion (*chos lugs*).” I understand the *Jo sras* version to refer to a traditional, if archaic, set of three: *sgrung*, *lde'u*, and *bon*.¹²² In later histories, these are said to have maintained Tibetan culture before the advent of Buddhism and to have opened the Tibetans’ eyes so that they could later adopt the dharma. In the above case, we witness, respectively, “divine religion,” “myth/story telling,” and a class of priest (*lde'u = le'u*) which has in the past been translated simply as “riddles(?)”¹²³ whereas in the Tholing Manuscript it simply reads *chos lugs*, translatable as “religion,” and in later times as the “[Buddhist] religion.” I have left the translation vague, glossing the term as “religion,” since at this time in the narrative of the text Buddhism had yet to reach Tibet. However, it is striking that the pre-Buddhist elements—narrative, riddles, and *bon*—have been eliminated and replaced by *chos lugs*, thereby interpreting the law-giving activities of the first king in a slightly anachronistic way as part of Tibet’s Buddhist story of salvation.

* * *

¹²² For more on the relationship of the three in connection with supporting the might (*btsan po*) or the *sPu rgyal* dynasty, see Stein (2010:251-255) as well as the general review done by Sørensen (1994:1, n.391 and n.874).

¹²³ In a recent article, Ngondzin Ngawang Gyatso (2016) convincingly argues not only that *lde'u* is a variant for *le'u* in Old Tibetan documents, but further that this term relates to a group of priests or ritualists, the role of which was the protection of the king through royal rituals specific to the divine body of the king.

The next line in the passage contains a number of difficult lexical features: *dgongs pa 'phrul gyi ras chags pas ni gsang gros gnam*¹²⁴ *gsum gyis ni dmyigs phye*. A tentative translation may be: “After forming the extraordinary fabric of his thoughts (*dgongs pa 'phrul gyi ras*): he opened [people’s] eyes with the three kinds of privy counsel.” However, by searching for similar usages in other old Tibetan sources, the various parts of the whole become clarified, making it is possible to work out a tentative but more reliable translation. For the understanding of *'phrul* in this specific context, as a first point of reference, the Treaty inscription of 821/2 is a good source from which we may see how the term was used in Old Tibetan. Two-thirds down, the east face of the inscription reads:

'phrul gyi lha btsan po khri gtsug lde brtsan gyi zha snga nas || mkhyen pa ni || 'phrul gyi tshul chags || mdzad pa ni lha'i lugs dang mthun te || bka drin chen pos || phyI nang gnyis su snyoms shing || dbu rmog brtsan || bka'lung gnyan te || rgya rje b'un b'u he'u tig hvang te dang dbon zhang gnyIs || 'phrul gyi dgongs ba ni mthun ... (e: 51-55, OTDO)

During the reign of the supernatural divinity, the *btsan po* Khri gT sug lde brtsan, whose knowledge is formed from miraculous inspiration, [and] whose actions conform with the ways of the gods, [who] with great kindness treats outer and inner alike, helmet mighty and commands firm, [the *btsan po*] together with the Chinese king B'un B'u He'u Tig Hwang Te, Nephew and Uncle, agreed in the supernaturally wise thoughts...

What is noticeable here is that the *dgongs pa* is qualified by the *'phrul* in the genitive, and that *mkhyen pa* is “formed” (*chags*) in a *'phrul* manner/way. Stein (1973: 418 n.21) believed *'phrul* to refer to something along the lines of “wisdom,” and hence, *'phrul gyi rgyal po* is rendered as “wise king.” Richardson remarks that in contrast to later Buddhist texts where *'phrul* often implies a magical power of transformation or manifestation, by contrast, in Old Tibetan, and in relationship to the historical kings, it “implies, rather, intellectual qualities, though of a superhuman nature” (1985: 39 n.2). This notion informs my own rendering of the term as “extraordinary.” The word should not be taken lightly, however, but rather with the full implication of its “amazingly impressive” quality. The meaning of the noun *ras* (“cotton” cloth) is unclear, though it appears in both *lDe'u Jo sras* and the Tholing text, I have therefore tentatively translated it as “fabric” (i.e. “by the extraordinary fabric of his thoughts,” *dgongs pa 'phrul gyi ras chags pas*).¹²⁵ Further, the parallel phrase in *lDe'u Jo sras* (above) though nearly identical cleans up the grammar by dropping an unnecessary particle (*ni*) in the beginning of the line.

¹²⁴ Read: *rnam*

¹²⁵ One possible alternative is that *ras* is a misreading of *ris*, meaning “pattern” or “design.”

Finally, the phrase that the king “open[ed] the eyes [of his subjects]” is elaborated on, expanding the enlightening qualities of the king’s ability to open both “the inner and outer ‘vision’” of the polity (*phyi nang gi dmigs phye*).

* * *

Next we encounter the phrase *mol chad*¹²⁶ *rnam gnyis dang | bzhed rnam lngas ni bod kyi srid btsas*, “by the two decrees and five commands: the polity of Tibet was formed.” I have loosely translated the term *mol chad* as “decree,” based on *mol ba*, a type of “oration” (i.e. “to explain, speak, or order”)¹²⁷ and the verb []*chad* literally meaning “to set forth,” “explain,” or “speak.” Here, *bzhed rnam* is the plural or “kinds” (*rnam[s]*) of “commands” (*bzhed pa*). It is not entirely clear what the two *mol chad* and five *bzhed* are. The comparable line in *IDe’u Jo sras* is the same aside from the rendering of the first syllable *mol* as *mi la*. Read literally, *mi la ’chad*, “he explained it to the people.” Either way the lines are not made any clearer through a consideration of the difference. Having said that, however, a cross-reference with another passage found in *IDe’u Jo sras* may be helpful in gaining a better understanding of the clause under examination.

The Tholing version appears to be concerned with something similar to what is read in *IDe’u Jo sras* as the “five kinds of law” (*khriims rnam pa lnga*), which form a part of thirty-six institutions (*khod*) or laws (*khriims*) in the “Section on Law and State” in *mKhas pa IDe’u* and *IDe’u Jo sras*, respectively. If indeed *bzhed rnam lngas ni* is a variant of *khriims rnam pa lnga ni*, then it may be asserted that the “two decrees” (*mol chad rnam gnyis*) perhaps refers to the first of the five laws: *khriims rnam pa lnga ni | rje’i bka’ khriims ji ltar rtsal pa dbang gcad spyi khriims | bskos pa’i rgyal po bzhi’i spyod lam la ltos bcas pa rgyal khams dpe blangs kyi khriims*. “Concerning the five kinds of laws, [1] the general law dividing the power (?) (*dbang gcad spyi khriims*) was the official law as ordered by the lord. [2] The law that takes the kingdom as its model was created by investigating the conduct of the four appointed kings” (Dotson 2006: 295).

* * *

The comparable section found in *IDe’u Jo sras* reveals a common source as well as a reference to an

¹²⁶ Read: *’chad*

¹²⁷ On the etymology of the term *mol ba* and its connection to a type of historical oration, see Jackson (1984) esp. chapter 2.

important set of structural developments associated with Tibetan kingship. As it appears in the Tholing Manuscript, the whole passage nonetheless looks to have been interpolated into the origin story of the first Tibetan king. It thus adds to the creation of a larger Royal Origin Myth where it is meant to fit the overall objective of establishing the foundation upon which the rest of the royal chronicle is to be built. The Tholing text is slightly less clear than *lDe'u Jo sras*, as if someone had created his own version of earlier material without fully understanding it, or as if someone had given an abbreviated account of something that was obvious to him, but is no longer obvious to us. In this way, the creation of an early history can be contrasted with the same fragment as it appears elsewhere. Having described the divine origin and nature of the first king, the compiler bolstered the enlightening role of the king in the formation of governance and the articulation of a hierarchy of status, associating these building blocks with the creation of the Tibetan political domain (*chab srid*). Directly connected with the royal primogenitor, these cornerstones are imbued with the extraordinary nature (*'phrul*) of kingship in Tibet. They define (albeit extremely loosely) the reign of the sPu rgyal btsan po: a social structure centered around the king's command (*mol chad*), which entails a legal system denoted by the term *gtsug lag gi thang khirms*, and an aristocratic hierarchy of those closest to the king.

After the first king has established his polity, the four appointed kings whom we have already encountered are, befittingly, said to pay tribute to the Tibetan sovereign. The passage as a whole therefore designates the newly established kingdom of Tibet as a source of inspiration and prestige, which is to be emulated by the royal line through to the kings of West Tibet.

[3] The Origin of the Tibetan Race and the Twelve Minor Kingdoms

The following passage consists of two parts. The first is concerned with a version of the Origin Myth of the Tibetan people, while the second part relates the history of the earliest legendary rulers of Tibet, beginning with the Yakṣas and leading up to and including the Mighty sPu rgyal (*spu rgyal btsan po*). The political constellation immediately preceding his reign is traditionally known as the “Twelve Minor Kingdoms of Tibet,” of which various descriptions can be found in a number of early sources such as

lDe'u Jo sras and *mKhas pa lDe'u*, archaic sections of the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, the *Me tog snying po*, and the *rGyal po bka'i thang yig*.

Strikingly, in none of these versions are the two passages linked, as they are in the Tholing Manuscript. The connection between the two is clear due to their chronological sequence as well as the fact that the *yakṣa*, the son of a monkey and an ogress, is also the first in control of the Tibetan plateau in the subsequent list (even though he is not described as a king). The connection between the two passages, while completely unseen in later histories, is not totally unfounded. In fact, the juxtaposition is significant when the work is compared with other sources in which these narratives are attested. Through a brief examination of the historiography that surrounds the myth of “monkey and demoness” in conjunction with that pertaining to the “twelve minor kingdoms” we can better understand not only some of the more difficult linguistic elements in the Tholing Manuscript, but also certain developments in early Tibetan historiography. To do this it is worth taking a moment to: [1] set the context in which the two narratives are found, and [2] to compare what is found in the Tholing text with other similar accounts.

The Origin of the Tibetan Race

Among Tibetan historical texts of the last millennium, the myth that derives the Tibetan race from the union of a bodhisattva monkey and demonic cliff ogress has enjoyed widespread popularity. The myth's development has intrigued and puzzled Tibetologists who, by and large, view the story as a creation of *phyi dar* historians.¹²⁸ While the anthropogonic myth as it appears in the Tholing Manuscript raises more questions than answers, it nonetheless provides fresh ground and a slightly different angle than has previously been possible from which to view the story.

The narrative is a particular favorite among Tibetans not only for its humorous and quasi-evolutionary take on their origin, but also because of the influence it wields in connecting Avalokiteśvara with the Tibetan race (*rigs*). It is therefore not surprising that the story occupies a critical position within the twelfth/thirteenth century treasure text (*gter ma*) *Ma ṅi bka' 'bum*. Closely

¹²⁸ See especially Sørensen (1994: appendix VII: 514-16).

associated with the writings of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer—a figure whose prolific hand has played a major role in the mythogenesis of early Tibetan history—the *Ma ni bka' 'bum* makes the determining role and importance of Avalokiteśvara its central theme. In this way, the narrative ethos evokes that of a slightly earlier *gter ma*, the *bKa' chems ka khol ma*. Posthumously attributed to Srong btsan sgam po, and said to have been found by the Indian paṇḍita Atiśa—a figure whose own work reputedly pioneered the centrality of the cult of Avalokiteśvara in Tibet—the *Ka khol ma* is also an important source for the primacy of Avalokiteśvara in the history of Tibet, and especially the version of the Indic royal origin of the Tibetan king.¹²⁹ Both texts are pivotal in the Buddhist reframing of Tibetan history, with the majority of later *chos 'byung* and *rgyal rabs* following suite. The *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* is perhaps the most crystallized expression of the narrative.

There are still further variants of the story in which the general theme remains the same. An “Indianizing” version of the story of the origin of the Tibetans is related by Bu ston, who says that they are descendants of the army of Rupati, fleeing from India into the Himalayas.¹³⁰ The story of the monkey and the ogress does not seem to be attested to prior to the *phyi dar*. The earliest mention can be found in the *sBa bzhed*, which laconically states that “all the people of Tibet were the sons of a monkey and demoness” (*bod kyi mi thams cad spre'u dang brag srin gyi bu yin*).¹³¹ The terse line does not appear, however, in the earliest extant copy of the *dBa' bzhed*, which has been published by Wangdu and Diemberger (2000), and therefore, may be a later interpolation based on the general popularity of the legend (as already suggested by Sørensen, 1994: 514-16). Because no pre-Buddhist, or rather pre-*phyi dar*, version of this legend exists, many believe the myth to be a Buddhist fabrication.

¹²⁹ Ronald Davidson approaches the topic of kingship and early Tibetan Histories in his article, “The Kingly Cosmogonic Narrative and Tibetan Histories: Indian Origins, Tibetan Space, and the *bKa' chems ka khol ma* Synthesis.” Here, he shows how the text seeks to “illuminate faith in the mythology of the Holy Dharma’s transmission down to the author’s preceptor, who stands in the position of the Buddha himself.” By looking at the “Twelfth Century Codification” he shows: a) that the *bKa' chems ka khol ma* is “the summation and synthesis of literary and cultural trends in late eleventh to mid twelfth century Tibet and in turn becomes the precipitating moment for further development of the imperial mythology.” He shows that Nyang ral’s *Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud* is directly in line with the *Ka khol ma*, and that they “set the frame story as the activity of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara”; he demonstrates as well that these *phyi dar* texts draw from a group of texts which “include such normative Mahayanist sutras as the *Ratnaraśi* and others” Davidson (2003: 64-83).

¹³⁰ The origin myth of the Tibetan race that is connected to the retreat of Rupati is further relayed by 'Gos Lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpa' in his *Deb ther sngon po* (“Blue Annals”) in which the author cites Prajñavarman’s commentaries in the *bsTan 'gyur*, the same is suggestive that this might have very well been Bu ston’s own source as well. An interesting commentary on and rebuttal of that version of the myth is later provided by dPa' bo gtsug lag; for a full review see Haahr (1969: 171-76).

¹³¹ Stein (1961: f. 2) For a transliterated version see Dan Martin’s Tibetological (<https://sites.google.com/site/tibetological/>).

With the discovery of the Tholing Manuscript, we now have another early version that relates the legend of the monkey and cliff ogress. The passage is not entirely clear, however, and it does not conveniently fit the common narrative that became widespread during the *phyi dar*, which is itself perhaps a sign of the text's early roots. There is, furthermore, a curious relationship between the short passage in the Tholing Manuscript and a similar passage found in PT 1038. In addition, isolated elements of the narrative can be found in the *rGyal po bka'i thang yig*, a fourteenth-century *gter ma* (part of the *bKa' thang sde lnga*), some of which incorporates much earlier sources.¹³² It is therefore worth taking a moment here to examine the various features of this short episode in order to analyse its position within the text, as well as its relationship to early Tibetan historiography in general.

As the passage is short, it is worth reproducing it here for the sake of discussion:

*gnam las grags pa ni brag srin dang spre'u 'tshos pa'i bu | gnod sbyin 'dza ya zhes
bya ba'i bu ldo pa po zhig | sha zan gyi rgyal khams srin po gdong dmar gyi rigs | gnod
sbyin gangs bar ba 'dul dka' zhing gtsug lag gi thang khrims rab tu zhan pa zhig tu
grags ska |*

A voice from the sky is said to have announced that the union of a rock demoness and a monkey produced a *yakṣa* son known as 'Dza ya who was a *ldo pa po* belonging to the race of the red faced demons from the kingdom of carnivores, this son [7] was difficult to tame and extremely poor in the 'prevailing law' (*gtsug lag gi thang khrims*), it is said (*skad*).

The first line of the text simply refers to “a son who was raised by (*'tshos pa'i bu*) a rock-ogress (*brag srin*) and a monkey (*spre'u*).” Immediately apparent here is the complete absence of Avalokiteśvara, an important reminder that, while it was written during the *phyi dar*, the account in the Tholing Manuscript either predates or conspicuously ignores the early Buddhist histories that were developing in Central Tibet. Correspondingly, there is no mention here of the rock ogress (*brag srin*) as being part of the class of *māras* (*bdud rigs*), as some later histories say. We are, therefore, once again confronted with a text that is without the overlay of the *phyi dar* period's Buddhist ambiance.

What is not so apparent in the first line is whether the son (*bu*) is “produced” (*'khrungs*) through a union (*'tshogs pa las*), as is the case elsewhere, or whether an alternative reading of the first line, *gnam las grags pa ni* somehow suggests that he has originated from the heavens (*gnam las*) and is, thus,

¹³² Michael Aris (1989: 96) posits that there are “genuinely archaic elements” of the *bKa' thang sde lnga*. Aris' claim is well supported by the work of Karmay (1998 [1988]) as well as the earlier work of Blondeau (1971: 29-126).

merely “looked after” or raised (*'tshos pa*) by the monkey and ogress—as the terminology literally suggests. The distinction is given further weight in the next line in which the boy is stated to be a *gnod sbyin* (*yakṣa*), a wholly different class of being from that of his two guardians. This might not seem so odd given the presumed coupling of the monkey and the ogress, except for the fact that in most other accounts the union of the two begets “young apes” (*sprel phrug*). The *yakṣa* is “called by the name 'Dza ya,” and “belongs to the race of the red-faced demons from the kingdom of carnivores.”

The nomenclature, referring to the early Tibetans as “Red-Faced Ones,” is well known. The connotations of the epithet are captured nicely here, as the reference is often made in connection with the portrait of an early Tibetan, barbaric, lawless, nature prior to the civilizing effects of conversion to Buddhism. Thus, parallels can be found in various later histories related to the pre-Buddhist offspring of the monkey and the demoness. In the *Ma ṅi bka' 'bum* for example, in which there are six sons, it is stated that “because they had a monkey for a father, their bodies were covered with fur, and their faces were red. Because they had an ogress of the cliffs for a mother, they were without tails and craved raw meat.” Another example from the *Blon po bka' i thang yig*, in which it is said that there is only one son, reads: “He stood upright and had a red flat face and no tail. He ate raw meat and drank warm blood.” *'geng bu ngo dmar leb pa mjug ma med || sha dmar za zhing khrag ni dron mo 'thung || (bKa' thang sde lnga: 432)*. These parallel features of accounts of the story of the monkey and demoness do not address the specific question of whether the son is a *gnod sbyin* named 'Dza ya (Sanskrit Jaya?). In order to address this question, and to gain a better reading of the original passage, we must turn back to the critical Dunhuang manuscript PT 1038.

On the back of the Dunhuang manuscript is a jotted-down summary (or so it would seem) of the various versions of the Royal Origin Myth that were in circulation at the time of its composition. In the “second version,” we encounter a passage that is very similar to that presently under review.

*rnam gnyIs su nI gdol par sha za 'I rIgs || rgyal po gdong dmar gyI rIgs | gangs rI
byud kor gyI nI bdag po || gnod sbyIn dza zhes bgyI ba 'I rIgs lags shes kyang mchI*

Secondly, it is said [that the king] originates from the inferior caste of meat-eaters or the red-faced king or the *gnod sbyin* Dza, the master of the circle of the snow-capped mountain ranges. (Translation by Karmay, 1998: 286)

The parallel elements are clear. Not only do we find here the corresponding lines that describe the first king's family (*rigs*) in terms that are nearly identical to those of the Tholing version, but we also find the parallel occurrence of the *gnod sbyin* called Dza. In light of this comparison we are able to arrive at a better reading of the enigmatic term *ldo pa po*, which appears to be a corruption of *gdol par* (an “outcast” or “barbarian”) as seen in PT 1038. Also, we may gain a clearer understanding of the term *gangs bar ba*. Given the evidence cited above, the meaning of the phrase should be similar to *gangs ri rgyud 'khor gi bdag po* in the Dunhuang manuscript, and therefore may refer to the *yakṣa* being “[the lord] amidst the snow mountains.”

What are we to make of all this? Are we presented here with the origin of the Tibetan race or merely yet another Royal Origin Myth, as suggested by PT 1038? Further, what is the significance of this narrative in the context of the larger *Nya gri btsan po* [*sic*] narrative of which it is a part? Finally, is there anything we can glean from the comparison of the two texts that may lead to a better understanding of

Tibetan historiography in general?

To begin with the latter, because PT 1038 survives only as a fragment, it is not entirely certain what the full context of the extant material would have been. Samten Karmay's translation (presented above) inserts the conjunction “or” between each of the clauses “because the term *rigs* is repeated in each case.” Were it not, Karmay points out, the rendering would be: “the king originated from the inferior caste of meat-eaters, whose (chief) is the red-faced king who is the *yakṣa* Dza” (ibid. 286). Karmay dismisses this reading as “unlikely.” However, this is precisely what is seen in our text. Further, it is odd that the “second version” of the royal origin as presented in PT 1038 finds no relationship in the dossier of variants provided elsewhere—such as in the *Can lnga*. It would appear therefore that the scribe of PT 1038 confuses the Origin Myth of the Tibetan King with the Origin Myth of the Tibetan Race, conflating the narrative of King Dza/Ja[ya?] of India with a Royal Origin that involves Indian decent. Whatever the case may be, based on the comparison between the two texts it is clear that the Tholing Manuscript, like PT 1038, is relating the narrative of the origin of the Tibetan race within the context of the Royal Origin Myth, thereby establishing a chronology of rule in the Land of Snow, which starts with the first beings who controlled the plateau and culminates with the sPu rgyal btsan po.

The chronology of rule by kingship in Tibet is outlined by the next passage, which presents a list of early rulers of Tibet together with the names of their respective territories. Here, we find the continuation of the Tibetan Origin Myth in the claim that the first rulers of Tibet are indeed the *gnod sbyin*. A similar passage found in the *rGyal po bka'i thang yig* helps to elaborate the overall context.

The Twelve Minor Kingdoms of Tibet

In the *rGyal po bka'i thang yig* (here after *bKa'i thang yig*), as in the Tholing Manuscript, we are presented with a brief history of the evolution of the pre-Imperial Tibetan polity leading up to the time of the Mighty sPu rgyal (*spu rgyal btsan po*). Elsewhere, such as in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, the subject appears as a central topos known as the “Twelve Minor Kingdoms” (*rGyal phran bcu gnyis*). This formula, however, finds earlier roots in the Old Tibetan Chronicle (PT 1286, ll. 22-24), PT 1060, PT 1038, and in early *chos 'byung* such as *mKhas pa lDe'u*. The *bKa'i thang yig* and Tholing Manuscript share the closest parallels to each other, although they do not match up perfectly. In the *bKa'i thang yig* the following “rulers” of the Tibetan plateau are listed:

[1] At the beginning the Black gNod sbyin ruled, and the country was called “Kha rag with the nine doors, the Country of the bDud” (bDud yul Kha rag sgo dgu). As an early indication, the gNyen po and (?) bTsan pa appeared.

[2] After that it was ruled by the bDud and the Srin mo, and was further called the “Country of the two, lHa and the Srin” (lHa srin gnyis kyi yul). As an early indication, the Red-faced Carnivores appeared.

[3] Then it was ruled by the Klu and the bTsan, and it was called “Tibet of the Nine Regions” (Bod khams Gling dgu). As an early indication, the habit of [drinking] milk and [other] white products developed.

[4] Then it was ruled by the Nine Ma sangs brothers, and the country was called “Tibet of the Six Slate Mountains” (Bod khams g.Ya' drug). As an early indication, arrows, spears and weapons appeared.

[5] Then it was ruled by the six Za rams skyes, and the country was called “The Eighteen Thousand-Districts” (sTong sde bco bryad). As an early indication, horses were ridden with bridles.

[6] Then it was ruled by the “Twelve Minor Kingdoms” (rGyal phran bcu gnyis), and the country was called “The Eight Watchtowers” (Swa kha bryad). As an early indication, hands [were clasped] in reverence.

[7] Finally it was ruled by the sPur rgyal btsan po [sic], and it was called “The Tibetan Land with Four Horns” (Bod khams Ru bzhi). [At that time] the Tibetan *btsan po* 'O de spur rgyal [sic] arrived from the gods in heaven as the lord of men.¹³³

*dang po gnod sbyin nag pos dbang byas te || yul ming bdud yul kha rag sgo dgur btags
 || snga rtags gnyen po btsan pa de nas byung || de nas bdud dang srin mos dbang
 byas te || ming yang lha srin gnyis kyi yul du btags || snga rtags sha za gdong pa dmar
 ba byung || de nas klus dang btsan gyis dbang byas te || yul gyi ming la bod khams
 gling dgur btags || snga rtags dkar bu chu la spyod pa byung || de nas ma sangs spun
 dgus dbang byas te || yul ming bod khams g.ya' drug bya bar btags || snga rtags mda'
 mdung mtshon cha de nas byung || de nas za rams skyes drug dbang byas te || yul ming
 stong sde bco brgyad bya bar btags || snga rtags rta zhon rna cha 'dogs pa byung ||
 de nas rgyal phran bcu gnyis dbangs byas te || yul gyi mying ni swa kha brgyad du
 btags || nga rtags phyag dang zhe sa de nas byung || gzhug tu spur rgyal btsan pos
 dbang byas te || ming yang bod khams ru bzhi bya bar btags || bod kyi btsan po 'o de
 spur rgyal de || gnam gyi lha las mi yi rje ru gshegs || tshangs pa phag nas gnam lha
 than dgur brgyud || gnam than sprin than char than than dgur byon || (rGyal po
 bka'i thang yig: 112-113)*

For the purpose of comparison, here is the list (in short) as it is presented in the Tholing Manuscript:

gNod sbyin > Kha rag sgo dgu

Klu > Bod ka gling rgu [sic]

Ma sangs of the nine bone lineages > Bod ka g.yag drug

six sons of Ra sangs > Bod ka sde bco brgyad

forty-odd fragmented principalities and twelve kingdoms > So kha brgyad

sPu rgyal btsan po > Bod Khams gsum Ru bzhi.

The second set of rulers in the *bKa'i thang yig* does not appear in our *rgyal rabs*. However, within the “early indications” of culture—an expression found in the *bKa'i thang yig* describing the structural evolution of culture in Tibet—there appears the emblematic description of the red-faced carnivores, which similarly appears in the Tholing Manuscript, as in PT 1038, in connection with the early Tibetans.

In the Tholing version, we read of the rule of the six sons of Ra sangs, during whose time Tibet becomes known as Bod ka sde bco brgyad (“Region with eighteen tribes”). This name does not appear in *bKa'i thang yig*, or elsewhere; however, the latter has “six Za rams skyes” which appears to be a variant of the same thing.¹³⁴ Several other spelling variations exist but the rest is more or less the same,

¹³³ The text carries on here, providing the myth of gNya' khri btsan po as being born from the nape of his mother's neck and descending from heaven (*gnam las*) to rule the black headed people (*mgo nag mi*). The text then continues to list the succession of *btsan po* after gNya' khri.

¹³⁴ For a comparative list of the variant names as they appear in Tibetan texts see Linnenborn, 2004: 310-312.

apart from the lines describing the stages of cultural development, which are missing in the Tholing text.

Certain toponyms appear in various texts as isolated place names; nonetheless, they are always connected with the earliest origins of Tibet. For example in the *La dwags rgyal rabs*, the country of Bod ka gling drug is the name of Tibet when the first king arrives. The listing of these kingdoms and their rule by non-humans leads eventually to their unification under the rule of the sPu rgyal dynasty. In this way, and in conjunction with the preceding passage of the monkey and ogress, we are provided with yet another fundamental origin myth, part of the dossier of materials provided in the larger context of the Royal Origin Myth.

[4] The Life of Nya gri btsan-po [*sic*]

In tying together the various etiological sections—those pertaining to the origin of the king, the origin of his political authority, the origin of the Tibetan race, and the earliest rulers of Tibet—the author or compiler of our text returns to the essential theme of the larger whole: that of the divine quality of the king. “From the dark depths of the sky Nya gri btsan po [*sic*] suddenly arrived atop the earth as the lord of men; he acted as a guardian and companion (*bsdebs*) [to all] in the manner of the gods” (8: 2-4). The brief reprise provides us with the critical pieces that we need to assess the role of kingship in this context: the king’s origin, type, and the divine custom on which his actions are based. We are also provided, for the first time, with the actual name of Tibet’s first king—Nya gri btsan po. What follows after the archaic poetic phrase is a brief vita of the king, which as far as I have been able to see, does not share any parallel material. The lines are terse and difficult to comprehend, let alone translate. They are, nonetheless, in keeping with and emblematic of archaic prose that is reminiscent of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (though greatly corrupted), and one cannot help but wonder from what source these lines were taken.

That the Tholing Manuscript is a rare example of an early *rgyal rabs* closely connected to the narrative traditions of the *snga dar* rather than those *chos ’byung* (and *rgyal rabs*) of the *phyi dar* may be further evinced in the spelling of the royal progenitor’s name. The general trend of historiography

from the 12th century onward, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter, reflects a desire to reframe and thus reinterpret history in conjunction with myth in order better to reflect the then present cultural horizon. An orthographic shift in the name of the first king from Nyag khri to gNya' khri is a simple but profound change that replaced an archaic and somewhat mysterious name with a rational, explanatory one. In both the Bon and Buddhist traditions, as witnessed by the *Can lnga*, we are given a spelling that equates to “Neck-Throned Mighty One.”¹³⁵ Snellgrove and Richardson (1968: 23) explain this as being “simply based in folk etymology which sought to make sense of an unfamiliar name sounding something like Nya.” The authors remark that “the original name of this first king of central Tibet seems to have been Nyag khri.” This, of course, is not entirely right, as will be shown in a moment. Nonetheless, as explained by Kapstein (2006: 36-37) the name Nyag khri, “Notch Throne,” appears to be understandable given the king’s paternal lineage as the son the Khri bar la bdun tshig, with the “notch” being understood to refer to his father, who was a middle-born son with three elder and three younger siblings.

The earliest known spelling of the name of the first king is Nya gri. The variant can be found in the rKong po rock inscription, a text that dates back to the late 8th century and is potentially the earliest reference to the myth in existence.¹³⁶ The particular spelling is, therefore, extremely rare, and I am not aware of any other attestations, with the exception of the Tholing manuscript. Given the significance of the figure in the origin myths of Tibetan kingship¹³⁷ the archaic spelling as it appears in the Tholing Manuscript is curious and raises further questions regarding the scribe’s sources. Whatever the case, we may posit here that the Tholing text does not draw on later Buddhist texts where spellings of names have become more standardized. Rather, the text recalls an earlier and largely obsolete version. Further, in relationship to the etiological problem of the first king, the rare spelling directly undercuts later narratives which rationally explain the etymology of the name gNya' khri in the context of the narrative of his arrival from India, and having been carried on the necks (*gnya'*) of Tibetans.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Viz. an etymological narrative—*gnya'* (neck) + *khri* (throne)

¹³⁶ See Richardson, 1985, pp. 64-71.

¹³⁷ See Sørensen (1994), p.137 n.355.

¹³⁸ Indeed, gNya' is the commonest form encountered in later sources, and Snellgrove and Richardson (1968: 23-24) suggest that it was introduced by *phyi dar* authors who did not know what the earliest form, Nyag, could have meant, so they made this one up and invented the neck-enthronement story to explain it. But, of course, Nyag isn't the earliest form, Nya is.

Thus, the rKong po inscription, together with the Tholing Manuscript, are important witnesses of an ancient spelling that somehow managed to carry through to the early *phyi dar*.

One can see how the rarity of the spelling variant for Nya gri btsan po would have wider implications if in fact it could be shown to be connected to an earlier form of the name. Moreover, while the meaning of the archaic name is perhaps incomprehensible at the present moment, this may simply be a matter of our limited understanding due to the paucity of material available to us today. The two examples of this rare spelling, one of which is in fact the oldest known witness, nonetheless generates some grounds for speculation.¹³⁹

* * *

Many of the elements of the larger origin myth that have been discussed in chapter [3.1.3] appear in both the Bon Tradition of the *Yo ga lha gyes can*, as compiled in *mKhas pa lDe'u*, as well as the version presented in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*. We learn that the king “resides at the heights of heaven”; that he was connected to Khri bar gyi bdun tshigs; that he was given nine magical weapons; that he came from heaven; from a clearing of the clouds to the divine mountain Gyang to; and finally that gNya' khri btsan po “having taken over the twelve kingdoms becomes the Lord of black-headed men and master of animals with manes.”¹⁴⁰ Each of these elements, essential to the underlying structure of the native origin myth, are shared with the Tholing Manuscript. The etiological episode of the monkey and ogress, while not present in the *Yo ga lha gyes can*, or *The Chronicle*, does appear, if in a rather confused manner, in the larger structure of PT 1038, which further contains fragments of each of the key structural elements.

The close similarities between all four variants of the pre-Buddhist Royal Origin Myth—PT 1286, PT 1038, the Bon Tradition as presented in the *Can lnga*, and the Tholing Manuscript—point to a larger shared narrative circulating in Tibet after the collapse of the empire but before the editorial eye of religious historians of the *phyi dar*. The curious addition of the section on the “Establishment of

¹³⁹ In a recent article entitled “Both Fish and Fowl? Preliminary reflections on some representation of a Tibet mirror-world,” Charles Ramble discusses the indistinct traces of a possible Tibetan “world-view in which opposed poles are reflections of each other.” In seeking out the possibilities of such a cosmological outlook, Ramble points to the example, among others, of the early orthography of the first king’s name as it appears on the rKong po pillar and in the Tholing manuscript (cf. Ramble [2013] Section 5, “The Bird King and the Fish King”).

¹⁴⁰ *de nas khad kyis rgyal phran bcu gnyis kyi snyen po mdzad nas | 'greng mgo nag gi rje dang dud rngog chags kyi rkyen dang bdag po mdzad do |*

Sovereignty” witnessed in the Tholing Manuscript is an altogether unique feature in its version of the Royal Origin Myth. The fragment, however, is found elsewhere in *lDe'u Jo sras*, and like the episode of the monkey and the rock-ogress, the addition and placement of the fragmented section demonstrates the choices of the compiler, thus presenting us with a glimpse into the shaping of early Tibetan historiography. Further, we may observe that “floating” texts—such as the Section on Laws and Administration worked on by Dotson, or the “Establishment of Sovereignty” as witnessed in the Tholing Manuscript—were selectively chosen and integrated into the later historiographic formats.

In summary, the author or compiler’s use of archaic sources, together with his strong adherence to the notion of a divine form of kingship, represent a rare example during the *phyi dar* of the continuation of an earlier tradition of historiography. In the coming chapters we will see how the features of this tradition are conveyed throughout the manuscript, and how it legitimizes the authority and actions of the early kings of West Tibet.

(2.4) The Rhetoric of Politics in Tibetan Historiography: Religion, the State, Law, and Kingship: Key Terms and Their Usage in the Tholing Manuscript

During the period known as the “apogee of the empire” (*bar mnga' dar*)¹⁴¹ we regularly find that with the establishment of the sPu rgyal dynasty and its imperial court comes the implementation of a set of “great legal commandments” (*bka' khrims chen po*) credited to Srong btsan sgam po. In particular, four laws said to protect against murder, thieving, speaking falsely, and lechery, become both real as well as symbolic representation for the establishment of “royal custom” (*rgyal lugs*) and royal authority (*rgyal srid*). Thus, we find in our text the clear statement that Srong btsan sgam po “enacted great legal codes that harmonized religion (*chos*) and state (*srid*);” as a result “the polity was heightened, the helmet was mighty, and all intentions were achieved.” Here, we see the importance of law as a larger socio-

¹⁴¹ The translation here is based on Karmay (1998 [1994]: 303) who offers a loose rendering, based on the context in which early histories of this period deal with the height of the Yar lung dynasty. Sørensen (1994: 521) has more literally translated the periodization as the “intermediate sphere/time,” positing a possible solution to the reduced phrase as *bar mnga' [thang] dar*. Given the historiographic context I have maintained Karmay’s translation.

political concept in the creation of the state, the establishment of religion, the custom of kingship, and the origin of royal authority—symbolically encapsulated in the “helmet” of the *btsan po*.

The end of the sPu rgyal dynasty and the beginning of the kingdom of sTod mNga' ris is symbolically embodied in the escape of sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon from the maelstrom of collapse in Central Tibet. As the bridge between old and new, sKyid lde carries the proverbial helmet of the sPu rgyal btsan po towards the Highlands of West Tibet (*stod mnga' ris*):

Turning his horse uphill [towards the west] the ancestor Khri sKyil lding [*sic*] set off, and with support of the noblemen of sTod, and in agreement with the high authority and nobles (*bla dang ya rabs*), Buddhism once again flourished for a long time. Thinking that the *yig tshang* and *sgo srid* of the offspring [of the sPu rgyal] were outstandingly unique, they offered him the power, and the lord [accepted] and administered the *chab srid* properly.

|| *mes khri skyil lding chibs kha gyen tu bsgyur bsgyur nas bskyod pa la stod kyi ya rabs kyi bla dang ya rabs su bstun nas chos lugs bzang po yun tu 'phel zhing | bu tsa 'i yig gtsang dang | sgo srid khyad par du 'phags par dgongs nas mnga' phul na | rjes kyang chab srid lugs ltar zin te | (33: 4 - 7)*

From here the narrative launches into the history of West Tibet, and the establishment of *rgyal lugs* in sTod mNga' ris; a close observation of which reveals certain dynamics between law, the state, and religion.

I have deliberately not translated certain key terms in the passage above because I do not think that their literal translation adequately conveys the weight of importance in their use. Because the *yig tshang* and *sgo srid* of the sPu rgyal are described here as extraordinary, allowing their inheritors to take control of and “properly” rule the *chab srid*, these terms must be given particular weight in analysis. What were the special “credentials (?)” (*yig tshang/yig gtsang*) and “political methods/domestic governance (?)” (*sgo srid*) which allowed the heirs of the sPu rgyal to govern the “polity” so well? What was the relationship between these phenomena? How did the structure of the royal court in West Tibet copy or differ from their predecessors? More specifically what was the relationship, at least as presented rhetorically, between the king and his court, politics, religion, and law?

In the present section, I will explore certain questions related to law and historiography through a philological exploration of key terms that variously mantle the dynamic relationships between kingship and law on the one hand, and religion and politics on the other. In doing so, and by searching the Tholing Manuscript for the various ways in which religion (*chos*) and the state (*srid*) interact, we

might better determine the ways in which specific terms and shifts in rhetoric help to delineate social-political and social-religious boundaries. In addition, by outlining the changing rhetorical contours of the text, particularly with regard to the kings of West Tibet, I hope to show some of the ways in which the narrative negotiates the complex facets of kingship during this formative period in Tibetan history. Understood in context, these negotiations may give us insight into certain political and legal structures which have since been lost due to the whitewash of monastic histories, the dominance of Buddhism, and the increasing irrelevance of kingship in Tibet during the *bstan pa phyi dar*.

* * *

In order to set up the context for this analysis, it seems pertinent to first recapitulate a basic outline of what we know with regard to the law and its developments in early Tibet (among others cf. Dotson 2007, French 1995, Pirie 2013, Uebach 1992, and Uray 1972). In many ways, this synthesis will act as a simplified account to which the narrative of the Tholing Manuscript may be contrasted. The need to construct a synthetic “consensus view” is perhaps indicative of how little is known about this matter, and how much must be read into the new information supplied by the Tholing Manuscript. Nonetheless, a broad account of what we know (and do not know) will at least help to draw out certain elements that appear fresh or different in the Tholing text.

Generally speaking, post-imperial histories depict law within a larger Buddhist project according to which the kings created and implemented laws based on Buddhist virtues and morals. In this way, the law is said to rest on and to be divided into the two categories of royal law (*rgyal khrims*) and religious law (*chos khrims*). Likened to a golden yoke and silken knot, these two legal modes are divided up by later narratives into a mundane “secular” law, on the one hand, and of an enlightened or divine law, on the other. While details of the two are not very clear, the shifts in that relationship closely reflect the changing roles of “religion” (*chos*) and the “state” (*srid*) during this and subsequent periods. An emblematic struggle of the dramatic shift in power between the two political domains occurs late in the sPu rgyal dynasty and is critically witnessed by the funerary debate produced in the *dBa' bzhed*, in which the monastic community wrests control of the state from the hands of the high ministers.¹⁴²

¹⁴² The episode described in the *dBa' bzhed* points towards a fundamental debate about whether the bTsan po Khri Srong lde btsan (one of Tibet’s three most important Buddhist kings) should have a Buddhist or Bon funerary ritual. Occurring at the

Ironically, in *phyi dar* period histories it is the *rgyal khrims* that is given more elaborate description but specifically and exclusively with respect to its Buddhist origins. Thus, Srong btsan sgam po, to whom the first laws are attributed, is reputed to have created them on the basis of Buddhist virtues. In the Tholing text, we read that the four fundamental laws created by Srong btsan sgam po to protect against murder, thieving, speaking falsely, and sexual misconduct are based on the ten virtues (*dge ba bcu*) and human custom/religion (*mi chos*). A near identical passage is found in the *dBa' bzhed*, concerning which Fernanda Pirie (2013: 235) critically points out that:

In fact, the imperial laws that survive bear no obvious relation to these moral rules, nor was any such relation claimed in the Annals. Moreover, the *khrims* described in the *DBa' bzhed* included payment of blood money, compensation for theft, mutilation punishments for sexual misbehavior and the use of oaths to prevent lying; in practice, they bear very little relation to the ten virtues. Nevertheless, the claim was that imperial lawmaking had been based upon religious principles.

Regardless of this disconnect between practice and virtue, from a period around the 12th century onwards, the creation of law in Tibet is universally stated to be based on a set of Buddhist moral principles encapsulated by a set of ten virtues (*mi chos dge ba bcu*), which is further augmented by the larger, more important list of 16 pure human codes (*mi chos gtsang ma bcu drug*).¹⁴³

Little is known however of the actual circumstances of the creation and implementation of law during the imperial period. What is known can be studied (and in many cases only deduced) from the few indispensable sources that remain. In brief these may be summarized as follows:

very end of the testament, the scene is a pivotal moment in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. As a culmination of the political shifts of the royal court, the debate functions as a proxy battle between the ancient traditions of a rooted aristocracy against the norms of an increasingly dominant, albeit newly established Buddhist monastic community. Friction between the two camps had been long heightened by the death and subsequent need for the burial of the *btsan po*. The question of authority over the essential rites of burial, a critical pillar of the royal court, was hard fought. Opponents had tried to exclude Buddhists from the seating protocol within the royal court and thus, from the debate over these rituals. However, after a magical display of power, Vairocana, the head of the monastic community, so unnerved the leading opponent of Buddhism that a seat was promptly made in his stead, after which the Buddhists took the whole seating row. During the debate, Vairocana presents the argument for a Buddhist burial ritual, and in the course of doing so further affirms the sangha's ability not only properly to bury the king but also to protect the borders of Tibet, a role that essentially underpinned the authority of the aristocratic clans together with Bon ritualists. The significance of the event is of course that the pre-Buddhist system of religion and divine kingship, which was of major symbolic significance for the participants of the royal court, was no longer the bedrock for ritual, governance, and law, and that in its stead, at least as attested by the *dBa' bzhed*, Buddhism now stood as the central authority. Thus, the funeral debate as witnessed in the *dBa' bzhed*, is a critical moment of great national import in the Buddhicisation of Tibetan culture and politics.

¹⁴³ In a recent article on the topic of the “16 Human Norms” (*mi chos bcu drug*), Ulrike Roesler (2015) shows that while the *mi chos bcu drug* might have existed during the later imperial period, none of the ancient sources connect it to Srong btsan sgam po's legal reforms; rather that they “are more concerned with Buddhist ethics for lay people than with law-giving or early royal history.”

1) The first reference for the creation of law appears in the *Old Tibetan Annals* (PT 1288) in the year 655-56, in which the minister mGar sTong rtsan made a *bka' grims kyi yi ge* [*sic*] ('code of laws').¹⁴⁴

2) Among other Dunhuang documents there are legal codes which deal with blood money (*weregild*) and compensation for murder (PT 1071), injury (PT 1073), and theft (PT 1075 and IOL Tib J 753), as well as a document which deals with the ordering of rank of officials (PT 1089) and the divinatory text (IOL Tib J 740) which contains various elements related to law and conflict resolution.¹⁴⁵

3) The *Old Tibetan Chronicle* relates very little directly to law (*khriims*), mentioning only the great laws (*bka' khriims ched po*) of Srong btsan sgam po together with the establishment of good customs and order; that said, however, there is a great deal in the *Chronicle* that one may view as directly impacting law, even if it is not explicitly linked. Foremost is the occurrences of oaths and the role that oath-swearing plays in political and civil order.

4) In a similar fashion, we find tangential references in the royal epigraphic material which circle around notions of law, good government, and the structures of the royal court. For example: A single reference to the notion of *chos khriims* can be found on the bSam yas Treaty Pillar; however, it is worth mentioning here that, in addition to the contradictions witnessed between *phyi dar* historiography and imperial sources, the very concept of religious law (*chos khriims*) appears only in this one instance in the sources of the imperial period. Otherwise the notion is completely absent from Old Tibetan Documents (a point to which I shall return later). Two other documents that link the ten virtues to imperial law are dPal dbyangs' letter to the king of Tibet¹⁴⁶ and the fragmented IOL Tib J 370(5) (more famously known as the "The dharma that came down from heaven"). Both texts (the first most likely dating from the mid 9th¹⁴⁷ and the second from the early 10th century) look to have served as central sources of influence on later conceptions of morality and law. The "Dharma that came down from

¹⁴⁴ Uray (1972a: 32) rightly points out that this event, which occurs during the time of Mang slon Mang rtsan, is later backdated to the period of Srong btsan sgam po. The author further points out in this instance that the wording in the Section on Law and Administration is very close to that of the PT 1288, giving both credibility to that later source as well as showing the work of historical conflation.

¹⁴⁵ For a discussion of these and other legal documents see: Dotson (2007), Dotson in Schaeffer et al. (2013b: 87-93), as well as a recent project website (<http://tibetanlaw.org>) created by Fernanda Pirie and Charles Manson.

¹⁴⁶ "Compendium of Essential [Instructions], a Letter Sent by the Great Monk Dpal dbyangs to the King and the People of Tibet" (*gCes pa bsdus pa'i 'phrin yig btsun pa chen po dpal dbyangs kyi bod rje 'bangs la rdzangs pa*).

¹⁴⁷ Dotson (2006: 340).

heaven” even mentions aspects of filial piety that are later incorporated into the 16 pure human norms,¹⁴⁸ however, while later authors stress the Buddhist qualities of these virtues, both Yamaguchi and Stein (2010 [1986]: 215) agree that the virtues in Pal dbyangs’ letter “are not particularly Buddhist at all.” One question, then, is what relationship might the *mi chos dge ba bcu* have to Buddhist ethics? How was it connected to the king and his royal court?

Finally, in the “Section on Law and State” contained in *mKhas pa lDe’u* there is an important record which is clearly based in large part on much more ancient sources.¹⁴⁹ From this source, it is clear that there exist distinct designations, categories, divisions, and degrees in the law, rank, and administration of the royal court and throughout its territorial and military units. Reflective of the complexities entailed in an expansive and dynamic imperial court, the “Section on Law and State” provides only a glimpse, the framework as it were, of realities at the time. Nonetheless it is the most detailed compilation on the topic that we have, particularly with regard to the relationship between the state, law, and kingship.

Like the Tholing Manuscript, the “Section on Law and State” is a mishmash of textual fragments that was collected and stitched together once the dust had settled from the maelstrom of collapse. As has already been pointed out in contrast to the two *lDe’u chos ’byung*, the Tholing text represents a more succinct poetic narrative that is representative of early *rgyal rabs* before the genre was subsumed in the larger, more encompassing, and highly religious genre of *chos ’byung*. Both *lDe’u* texts are important sources of history because they gather and tie together a multitude of more ancient sources, even if under the guise (and editorial dictates) of a religious history.¹⁵⁰ It is precisely for this reason that certain elements in the two *chos ’byung*, when compared with the more archaic *rgyal rabs* of the Tholing text, clearly show the active hand of monastic editors. In the case of the “Section on Law and State,” for example, it seems odd that *chos khrims* should appear at the very end, a clear tag on to

¹⁴⁸ For a full translation, see Richardson (1998 [1977]: 74-81).

¹⁴⁹ For a detailed analysis of the Section on Law and State, see Uray (1972a), Uebach (1992) and (Dotson 2006).

¹⁵⁰ In giving priority to the religious over the political, we can readily see how the evolution of the *chos ’byung* genre developed by freely editing earlier sources; however, with access to those early sources many *chos ’byung* preserved ancient fragments. Wylie (1964: 279) summarizes this development nicely: “Later Tibetan historians, being ecclesiastics themselves, emphasized events involving ‘religious’ figures and de-emphasized ‘political’ events. Fortunately, the ‘political’ activities of the ‘religious kings’ (*chos-kyi-rgyal-po*) satisfied their historical criterion, and a general account of the Royal Dynastic Period has been preserved.”

an otherwise archaic list. Absolutely essential to the discussion of the relationship between religion and state during the early period is the question what exactly was the status of *chos khrims* (religious law) during the empire? And further, how did it change in post-imperial Tibet?

* * *

In the case of the Tholing Manuscript, the creation of both “law” (*khrims*) and the “polity” or the “reign of the king” (*chab srid*) are closely connected with the Royal Origin Myth of Nya gri btsan po. Following on the heels of the king’s descent from heaven, as a “god acting as the lord of men,” the rhythm of the narrative abruptly shifts; presenting us with a fascinating, though short, passage, that relates the creation of a new Tibetan polity by the “Lord of Men” (*myi’i rje*).

A tentative translation of the passage reads as follows:

As for the system of the prevailing law (*gtsug lag gi thang khrims*), [there was] religion (*chos lugs*),

After forming the extraordinary fabric of his thoughts, [the king] opened [people’s] eyes with the three kinds of privy counsel.

By the two decrees (*mol chad*) and five kinds of law the polity (*chab srid*) of Tibet was formed

With the nine *yig gtsang* [of great ministers] and the eight emblems of heroism, [the king] bestowed favors according to rank.

And it is said that even the four great [border] kings of the world paid tribute and tax...

Thus because the sPu rgyal btsan po [now] reigned (*mnga’ mdzad*) the name of the land became Bod, khams sum ru bzhi (“Tibet the Three Realms and Four Horns”).

*gtsug lag gi thang khrims ni chos lugs | dgongs pa ’phrul gyi ras chags pas ni gsang gros gnam*¹⁵¹ *gsum gyis ni dmyigs phye | mol chad rnam gnyis dang | bzhed rnam lngas ni bod kyi srid btsas | yig gtsang sde dgu dang | dpa’ mtshan*¹⁵² *sna brgyad kyis ni bka’ drin rim par gnang ste | ’dzam bu gling na mnga’ chen bzhi yang rgyu dang dpya’ ’bul bar grags so || ... de’i gting la*¹⁵³ *spu rgyal btsan pos mnga’ mdzad pas | yul gyi mying yang bod khams gsum ru bzhir btags te || (6: 1-5)*

At the very start, in the royal narrative’s earliest mythic past, we find a Tibetan concept of law as being formed by *chos lugs*, which remains undefined in its pre-Buddhist context. A fascinating compound, the term *gtsug lag gi thang khrims* relates something of the “science” (*gtsug lag*) of the “field” or “plain” (*thang*) of “law” (*khrims*).¹⁵⁴ In this context, the phrase communicates the existence of a larger notion

¹⁵¹ Read: *rnam*

¹⁵² *khyung bdag* reads: *mchan*

¹⁵³ Read: *ring la*

¹⁵⁴ For a full discussion of the passage and term see pages 71-74.

or study in the *field of law*—one that has an intellectually civilizing effect, as guided by *chos lugs*. Thus, later in the text we find that the very first proto-Tibetan, the *yakṣa* child of a monkey and rock-ogress, is identified as “barbarous” *exactly* because he is without *gtsug lag gi thang khrims* (7: 1).

In a parallel passage found in *IDe’u Jo sras*, we read that the *gtsug lag gi thang khrims* arises from the “divine custom of storytelling (*sgrung*) and riddles (*lde’u*).” It is striking that the pre-Buddhist elements—*sgrung*, *lde’u* and *bon*—have been eliminated and replaced by *chos lugs*, thereby perhaps depicting the law-giving activities of the first king in a slightly anachronistic way as part of Tibet’s Buddhist story of salvation. (Perhaps, however, *chos lugs* can safely remain ambiguous, simply as religion). From this intriguing confluence, whereby the *chos lugs* of our text is more clearly defined, we can glean that law and orality (and the aural experience) are integral to each other; and further, that these phenomena are to be considered religious or as part of a religious tradition (*lha’i lugs > chos lugs*).

I will not delve further into the above passage as I have already done so above in section (2.3); however, for the discussion here it is worth bringing attention to one other facet: the use of the term *yig gtsang*. The line reads:

“With the nine *yig gtsang* [of great ministers] and the eight emblems of heroism [the king] bestowed favors according to rank.”

While *yig gtsang* could be translated as “insignia of rank,” as discussed in detail by Dotson (2006:40-46) (spelled also *yig tshang* in *mKhas pa lDe’u* and *lDe’u Jo sras*), his analysis based on *mKhas pa lDe’u* and the *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* is about the “six” *yig tshang*. In the Tholing Manuscript, however, as in the parallel passage in *Jo sras*, we are presented with *yig gtsang sde dgu* “the nine *sde yig gtsang*.” I initially understood the *sde* here to demark a “category of” or “the class of” (hence, “the nine classes or groups of insignia of rank”); however, there is a distinct possibility that it refers directly to a known group of “nine great ones,” the *che dgu* that are mentioned in *lDe’u Jo sras* (112). A parallel may be found in the *dBu nag mi’u dra chag* (2002: 91-92, 117), a cosmogonic and genealogical text that relates to the origin myths of the major clans of Tibet. In that text, a similar set of nine are said to have composed a set of *yig tshang* dedicated to the seven clan-histories. A passage from Karmay and Nagano’s translation of this text reads:

Considering the six clans of the little black-headed men...There are seven [*yig gtsang*] in Tibet [which discuss them]... As for their purpose, they are intended to teach those

in later generations who do not understand, so that they may understand, and be as a blind man who is given eyes. As for their genre (*phyogs*), they relate to human customs (*mi-chos*) and royal law (*rgyal-khrims*). The lineage is extracted from divine lineages (*lha-rgyud*) and demonic lineages (*'dre-rgyud*).

dbu nag mi'u gdung drug la | ...bod la yig tshang bdun yod pa | ...da mdzad pa'i slob dpon ni | che dgu ring bcu zhes bya ste | dpon slob bcus mdzad | don ched ni phyi rabs kyi sems can ma go ba rnams la go bar ston pa'i ched du | long ba la mig byin pa dang 'dra ba'i phyir du mdzad | phyogs ni mi chos dang rgyal khrims gyi phyogs su gtogs | rgyud ni lha rgyud 'dre rgyud gnyis las btus | dbu zhabs su bsdus pa la don rnam pa bcu yod ste | don dang ldan pa'i skyes bu rnams las btus |

As described, the function of the seven *yig tshang* is to demarcate the legal authority of clans based on the vertical hierarchy that was custom. As in our own text in which the king's own wisdom "open[s] the eyes" [of the polity (?)], in the *dBu nag mi'u dra chag*, we find that the *yig tshang/yig gtsang* is meant to "teach," as if the polity were like "a blind man who is given eyes." We might point out here the similar function of the *skye bo mi chos kyi lo rgyus* texts that were sought after by the aristocracy from the *btsan po*. With these texts, aristocrats sought to combat the loss of their *legal* hereditary rights, previously well within their domain of authority (*sgo mnga*). (I will return to these shortly).

* * *

I have already argued that our *rgyal rabs* is a "secular" if sacral narrative that performatively instantiates the role of the king. In like contexts, archaic ritual practices and their ethos are intermingled within their secular equivalents to the point that distinction is not always possible. Nonetheless, the worldly or human (*myi*) is still defined in the context of *chos*. In Samten Karmay's own analysis of *bsang* offerings, we find a good example of the phenomenon whereby the deployment of the archaic purification rite functions ritually to cleanse worldly crimes such as murder and other forbidden activities. Closely connected to mythos of kingship as found in the narrative of Dri gum btsan po, we also find the notion of defilement (*grib*) directly linked to the fourth of Srong btsan sgam po's *bka khrims chen po*. Specifically we read that, "lest there be theft, [the king developed the notion] of *grib* ('polluted conduct'). Here, we see the capacity of ritual and law to intersect. A further and much more profound overlap of the secular and sacral to legally bind may be observed in the context of political oath-swearing as exhibited, among many other places, in the *sku bla* ritual. As Nathan Hill (2015b) has shown, this ritual functions "as a confirmation of the relationship between the emperor and vassals."

Indeed, we read in the Tholing *rgyal rabs* and elsewhere that laws are sustained by “swearing to the gods and *gnyan*.” One might posit the same for a host of other rituals that figure in the worldly realm.

The anecdote of the funerary debate which occurs at the end of the *dBa’ bzhed* suggests that, at this point in history, we find a blurring between what, to modern eyes, might be discrete “secular” and “sacral” rituals with respect to particular acts. More importantly, in the critical funerary debate, we see that the forms of authority undergirding ritual are themselves portable and transferable to other parties. Hence, power is ritually migratory. In dispensing functions to the monks and monastery, the monastic community implicitly posits a larger super-function (in this case, the burial of kings) which itself translates into a claim to all other domains. So, the *myi chos* is taken up in the *chos khrims*.

The secular in old Tibet: *apropos* the term *mi chos*

In his analysis of the “Nameless Religion,” Rolf Stein (1972) discusses the “wise saws...uttered in a poetic style” that make up the mere remnants of what, in his view, was a distinct religion (or custom) known simply as *mi chos*—the “religion of men.” The concept, however, as it is presented in later sources, does not seem to amount to a concrete political or legal domain. This is certainly the condition in which we find *mi chos* as exemplified by the repeatedly echoed statement that “based on the model of the ‘sixteen great human norms’ [Srong btsan sgam po] made the law consisting of the ten wholesome actions” (*mi chos chen po bcu drug la dpe blangs nas dge ba bcu’i khrims bcas*). In such cases *mi chos* appears only within the heavily venerated context of a Buddhist reinterpretation of history, and is therefore subsumed and made irrelevant in the effort to connect a Buddhist ethical model back to the time of Srong btsan sgam po’s legislation, or, as a morality that ought to act as a preparation for a higher religious practice. However much this may be the case in later sources, we cannot discount the role of *mi chos* in its legal and royal function, as well as its appearance in early sources at critical junctions surrounding issues of law and with respect to the ritual maintenance of both kingship and the legal authority of the royal court. Because of these punctuated instances, for Stein, “[*mi chos*] was a religion” (ibid. 192) which he sought to tie to and identify with a far more extensive and ancient indigenous custom.

In *this* context we find a significant if veiled connection between *mi chos* and the tripartite ritual structure of *sgrung*, *lde'u*, and *bon*, whereby, as Stein puts it, “the correct recitation of legends of origin was a religious act, necessary for upholding the order of the world and society” (Stein 1972: 195). In this respect, both Per Sørensen and Samten Karmay ([1988] 1998) have shown that, “concerning *mi chos*, [the *sBa zhed*] states that both kings Khri Srong-lde-btsan and Ral-pa-can gave expositions [in the form of a series of *skye bo mi chos kyi lo rgyus*¹⁵⁵] on law, history, and etiquette” (ibid. 240). As I have discussed earlier, we should not deny the importance of a bardic performance of royal genealogies, such as the one contained in the Tholing Manuscript, to legally to substantiate the reign of the king and authority of his court.

Thus, while early sources reflect the tension between the archaic (or indigenous) traditions of Tibet with those of the then increasingly dominant forms of Buddhism, later sources suffer from the compounded effect of loss in transmission in addition to their bias to superimpose a Buddhist morality onto an already storied heroic past. Given these problems in history and historiography, we may ask, whether there is then *any* further evidence that *mi chos* existed as a distinct legal entity?

* * *

In tracking the use of the term *myi chos* [*sic*] in the Tholing Manuscript, it becomes increasingly clear that the term does not refer simply to an abstract concept of “human norms,” or its later associations with Buddhist ethics; *rather*, it seems to relate to a much more dynamic sphere of political and legal activity, one that is distinct from, though perhaps overlapping with, that of religious law and royal law.

The term appears six times in our text, twice during the era of the sPu rgyal, and another four times in the context of the kings of West Tibet. Already, this number of occurrences is considerably more than what is found elsewhere. In *lDe'u Jo sras*, for example, the term only appears three times; similarly, in the longer *mKhas pa lDe'u* it appears only four times, two of which feature in the same

¹⁵⁵ Regarding these events, and the possible origin of the various *mi chos* texts, Per Sørensen writes: “During [Khri-srong lde-btsan’s] reign the Buddhist tradition gained increasingly a firm foot in Tibet. In order, no doubt, to reconcile and neutralize the growing resentment to this development, the minister mGos (Khri-bzang yab-lhag) is recorded to have requested, probably around 780-785 A.D., the king to effectuate the composition and compilation of a series of *skye bo mi chos kyi lo rgyus*, i.e. texts and accounts of the ruler’s genealogy (*rje'i gdung rabs*), on social (or territorial) division (*sa bcaad*) of the people and narratives on conventions, etiquette and protocol vis-à-vis the nobility (*ya rabs*), but also stories (*gtam sgrung*), accounts and expositions on general good social deportment and on the heritage and virtues of the royal ancestors etc. including possibly also a general guideline for an ancestor cult or worship” (Sørensen 1994: 3, n.6).

trope of royal and religious law.

Here is a quick breakdown of the appearance of *myi chos* in the Tholing text:

1. Srong btsan sgam po's *bka' khrims chen po* are "based on the *myi chos* and the ten virtues."
2. At the time of Ral pa can (or: Khri Srong lde btsan?) we are told that "a pillar with an edict was erected [saying that] those who had taken ordination and become a part of the precious *saṅgha*, . . . whatever faults they committed, big or small, they were punished in accord with the commands of the Buddha and through confession, and were not subject to the punishments of *myi chos* by royal (*rje sgo*) or other high authority (*bla sgo*)."
3. "At his time the elder lord 'Khor re mainly ruled (*rgyal srid*) according to the *myi chos*."
4. When Srong nge (a.k.a. lHa Bla ma Ye shes 'od) renounced his political throne "the authority of the *myi chos* was offered to the royal nephew, lord lHa lde rtsan."
5. In his younger years while Byang chub 'od is engaged mostly in Buddhist practice "he would not give audience to any of the high ministers in charge of the *myi chos*."
6. During the early life of Zhi ba 'od his elder brother dBu 'byams pa "took the reigns of the polity of *myi chos*."

The first in the list is the standard association of *myi chos*, though it is worth briefly noting that the term *mi chos bcu drug* is noticeably absent from the passage; further, as stated by Yamaguchi and Stein, there is little in the context of this and the other early parallel passages to suggest that Srong btsan sgam po is looking to Buddhism. In fact, aside from some preliminary lip service, the whole narrative vita of Srong btsan sgam po has very little by way of Buddhism.

In the second instance, we encounter an unusual precedent stipulating that the monastic community will abide by their own laws (is this the beginning of *chos khrims*?) and will not be subject to the punishment of *myi chos* (secular laws?) which appear to be part of the royal court—including the king (*rje*) and high ministers (*bla [blon]*?).

In the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth instances, we find that *myi chos* denotes a distinct and separate sphere of political rule. The indication in example five, that the *myi chos* is a domain that must be administered by high ministers (*bla blon*), indicates that this is an arena of politics and law that has to be governed. The earlier two examples (three and four), in which it is stated that the king rules according to *myi chos*, and that when the political throne is renounced, the authority of the *myi chos* is what is passed on, further corroborates the notion of *myi chos* as an active political and legal domain. Perhaps even more important is the rhetorical use of the phrase in the development of Tibetan historiography as mirrored in the Tholing Manuscript.

At first, law is introduced in its civilizing function as a normative system, in connection with *gtsug lag*. In the next instance, the foundations of the empire are built on specific laws that are themselves based on *mi chos*. These laws are then modified, indemnifying the *saṅgha* from the *mi chos* (the legal domain of the royal court), and allowing monastics instead to follow their own rules. These rules, however, are only referred to as the “words of the Buddha” (is this Vinaya?), and *not* as *chos khrims*. The authority of *myi chos* is thus maintained within the royal court even during the period marked by the growing dominance of Buddhism. The tradition of *myi chos* was preserved by the early descendants of the sPu rgyal lineage in West Tibet. But once the charismatic Srong nge hands over the *myi chos* to his nephew the legal domain becomes tethered to a political sphere that is disdained, thus giving way to a new legal code identified explicitly, and for the first time, as *chos khrims*. Created by lHa Bla ma Ye shes ’od, the political and rhetorical shift is then substantiated in the new role of the king as witnessed by the reign of lHa lde rtsan. For the first time, lHa lde rtsan administers “both the religious law (*chos khrims*) and politics (*rgyal srid*) in accord with the customs of the noble ancestors.”¹⁵⁶ In this instance, it seems that the term “royal ancestors” particularly refers here to lHa Bla ma Ye shes ’od; however the larger royal line is intimated. With that in mind, we nonetheless find that each successor of the royal line who becomes king does so by taking the reigns of the *myi chos*, even if grudgingly, due to a preference for the Buddhist life.

* * *

¹⁵⁶ *lhag par yang chos khrims rgyal srid / yab mes dam pa rnams kyi lugs ltar bskyangs te* (42: 5-6)

Seyfort Ruegg (2004) has pointed out how the relationship between *chos* and *srid* in Tibet is further bolstered by, and closely related with, the “twin legal systems” (*khirms gnyis*) of religious (or: dharmic) law (*chos khirms*) and royal law (*rgyal khirms*). In *mKhas pa lDe'u*, these two pillars of Tibetan governance are famously illustrated through the lasting simile that compares religious law to a silken knot.¹⁵⁷

The royal law (*rgyal khirms*), like the golden yoke, is thick and heavy. The religious law (*chos khirms*), like a silken knot, is soft and secure. The customs of men (*mi chos*), like the rope that binds a bundle of straw, are numerous and incorporated (*mang la 'dus*). The king sits above, with an enlightened mind. The subjects, staying below, observe the commands of the king and abide by his laws.

rgyal khirms gser gyi gnya' shing dang 'dra ste | sbom la lci chos khirms dar gyi mdud pa dang 'dra ste 'jam la dam | mi chos sog ma'i phon thag dang 'dra ste mang la 'dus | rje bla na bzhugs pa ni thugs sgam | 'bangs 'og na bzhugs pa rnams ni rje'i bka' nyan cing khirms la gnas | (mKhas pa lDe'u: 363)

Within this image of the two *khirms* there is in fact an important third element—*mi chos*—that is rarely if at all discussed. Said to “bind” (*'du ba*) the people [and the king (?)], it is the *mi chos* that makes the realm (by bringing together and “binding” various strata of society). As stated earlier, traditionally, at least by later standards, the *mi chos* relates to a designated code of moral conduct based on Buddhist principles. Stein (2010 [1985]: 126-29), however, has shown that the meaning of *mi chos* is closely related to that of *gtsug lag* in that they both somehow relate to the “practice” or “custom of men” (*mi yi chos lugs*) in contrast to the “religion of the gods” (*lha['i] chos*), or the “divine religion”, i.e. Buddhism.

Beyond simply being moral maxims, however, we find elsewhere in the *lDe'u Jo sras* that *mi chos* relates to a designated legal realm.

The interior court was dismantled, the royal law (*rgyal khirms*), like the golden yoke, was broken. The religious law (*chos khirms*), like the silken knot, was untied. The common law (*'bangs khirms*), like the rope of a bundle of straw, was severed.

nang gi mdun sa zhih rgyal khirms gser gyi gnya' shing 'dra ba ni chag | chos khirms dar gyi mdud pa 'dra ba ni grol | 'bangs khirms sog ma'i phon thag 'dra ba ni chad | (lDe'u Jo sras: 142)

¹⁵⁷ The golden yoke and silken knot are frequently echoed tropes throughout Tibetan historiography, taking on renewed importance at the time of the Sa skya-Yuan relationship, the Ming court, and the rise of the dGa' ldan pho brang. On this issue, see Ishihama Yumiko's (2004) article on “The notion of ‘Buddhist Government’ (*chos srid*) shared by Tibet, Mongol, and Manchu in the early 17th century.”

Contrasting the utopic enlightened vision (presented above) with dystopic collapse, the passage mirrors and runs parallel to the earlier example. However, here the term *mi chos* is replaced with a more specific addition to the traditional (and what is more likely, later!) concept of the *khriims gnyis*, as discussed by Seyfort Rugg. The term, *'bangs khriims* (literally: the “subjects’ law”), however indeterminate, makes clear the understanding that *mi chos* is something closer to *law* than *religion*, though perhaps crucially encompassing aspects of each. We might tentatively posit here that while later histories talk only of the two legal pillars (*khriims gnyis*)—royal and religious law (*rgyal khriims* and *chos khriims*)—we do find, philologically and particularly in the light of the Tholing text, the appearance of a third legal category that relates to a more mundane but highly important “secular” law—*mi chos*.

* * *

So what happens, at least rhetorically, when the royal custom (*rgyal lugs*) and the royal governance (*rgyal srid*) of the sPu rgyal are brought to West Tibet?

In a recent paper, Jacob Dalton (2015) explores the contours of the relationship between religion (*chos*) and state (*srid*) in Western Tibet with a focus on the pivotal historical figure of lHa Bla ma Ye shes 'od (947-1019/24).¹⁵⁸ Whereas it is traditionally posited that the political model for the union of religion and state (*chos srid 'brel de*) was in large part firmly established during the *phyi dar* and exemplified by the kings of West Tibet, particularly in the activities of Ye shes 'od, Dalton suggests that, upon close examination, the situation appears to have been more complex. In his view, at times a paradoxical blend of both union and separation existed; thus, Dalton writes that, “Ye shes 'od’s legal system depended on religion and state remaining distinct” (ibid. 109). In one field of activity, Ye shes 'od can be seen to be actively working to eliminate all heterodoxy—including (pre-Buddhist) *gtsug lag, bon*—by aligning practices with the Buddhist monasticism and requiring those in the secular domain to follow religious law (*chos khriims*). Thus in the Tholing Manuscript we find the terse line which states, *yul dpon la ni chos khriims*, “as for the local headmen [they were made to follow] the religious law” (p. 39: 7).¹⁵⁹ Yet, simultaneously, the monastic community was not necessarily subject to secular law, as

¹⁵⁸ Dates based on Vitali (2003: 55 and 61).

¹⁵⁹ The same may be seen in one of Ye shes 'od’s legal edicts. Reproduced in his biography, the king proclaims, “I swear that even those who hold power in the realm – the lords, the ladies, and their ministers in each generation – shall be bound by these

witnessed by the admonitory inscription found at Tabo monastery. Here, we read that monks and nuns were, “not to be physically punished, not even in accordance with worldly law” (*khirms pa'i chos nyid dang sbyar du*).¹⁶⁰ Tauscher (1999) points out that this admonitory statement is closely followed by a “Vinaya-like” section outlining those laws that will govern the *saṅgha*. A striking parallel can be observed in this division with what is witnessed earlier in the Tholing text whereby the monks of Khri Srong lde btsan’s time, “whatever faults they committed, big or small, they were punished in accordance with the the commands of the Buddha (*vinaya?*) and through confession” (p.24) and were not subject to the laws of *myi chos* or the authority of the court (*rje sgo bla sgo*). Dalton concludes that, “Ye shes ’od thus depicts his legal system as running in parallel to that of the monastic establishment, the Buddhist *saṅgha* and the state representing two parallel legal worlds that were mirror images of one another” (ibid. 110). Dalton’s hypothesis is tested and, to some extent, proved in the Tholing Manuscript. In this context, Ye shes ’od establishes a newly formed *chos khirms* which is then enforced by his political successor, who is given the reigns of the *mi chos*. It is clear from the text that the monastic community was distinctly separate from the community governed by secular politics in that the *rgyal srid* here relates to the *myi chos*. In this way, as pointed out by Dalton, the state and *saṅgha* represented two distinct yet parallel legal realms with *chos khirms* on one side and the *myi chos kyi rgyal srid* on the other.

There is no question that the structure of kingship that formed in West Tibet followed a different model from that of the Old Tibetan kings. The establishment of a clearly defined religious law (*chos khirms*), the custom of the renunciant *bla ma* king, and the near total absorption of the aristocracy into the monastery, all depart from what we know of the sPu rgyal dynasty. Nonetheless, we cannot deny that the rhetoric and activities of this new court carry forward and closely echo the traditions of the btsan po. The practices of *rgyal srid* observed in the activities of: the bestowal of gifts by rank,¹⁶¹ the building of border taming temples, issuing of laws and edicts, the creation of a royally sanctioned *saṅgha*, and, even, at times, the enactment of laws of conscription and corporal punishment, closely

religious laws” (*blon sras jo mo blon po yul gyi dbang bgyid pa rnams kyang gdung rab [rabs] re re la chos khirms 'di btsan par bgyi ba'i bros [bro] mi 'tshal re* (*Rnam thar rgyas pa* 35a.4–6, translation by Dalton 2015: 107).

¹⁶⁰ Translation based on Tauscher (1999: 38-39)

¹⁶¹ See specifically the end of page 37 through page 39 in the *vita* of Srong nge, as recorded in the Tholing Manuscript.

resemble the Buddhist era of the sPu rgyal that was ushered in by the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan. Likewise, at this point, with the escape of sKyi lde Nyi ma mgon, the narrative poetically and instrumentally comes full circle. The “reign of the king” (*chab srid*), this time in Pu rang and Gu ge, is made possible only because of his sacral nature. Those special credentials (*yig btsang*) which allow him to assume political rule (*sgo srid*), endowing him with a supposed innate ability to introduce the “good customs” (*chos bzang*) that make pure (*dkar*) the heretical practices of the land. These practices are specifically, once again, defined by black funerary practices (*shid nag po*).

Simultaneously, in the processes of reflecting the archaic royal myths, the narrative of our West Tibet *rgyal rabs* begins to reinvent the sacral nature of the king by introducing, for the first time in our text, the notion of the lineage of the Bodhisattva-kings. Beyond any other conceptual shifts, the most critical rhetorical development to occur in the royal court of Pu hrang Gu ge was, therefore, the way in which it deployed the notion of divine kingship and how that translated into a new legal and administrative structure.

The Rhetoric of the Bodhisattva-king in West Tibet

A quintessential deployment of what would become a specialty of the Tibetans for the next millennium appears when the text comes to speak about sKyi lde’s royal heir, bKra shis mgon. Here, we encounter, for the first time in our text (!), the claim that this family line is part of “the royal lineage (*gdung rgyud*) of the ancestors who were emanations of the dharma protector bodhisattva kings” (*yab mes chos skyong ba’i rgyal po byang chub sems dpa’i spruld pa’i gdung rgyud*). The pivotal phrase functions here as a sacred formula and or incantation that is inextricably linked with the transformation of the Tibetan king to a Buddhist. This development in turn transformed the state (*srid*) and law (*khriims*). As such, the formula is a literary construction that legitimizes the emperor and the empire.¹⁶² The conceptual language of the phrase (*byang chub sems dpa’i spruld pa’i gdung rgyud*), therefore, closely parallels the earliest known examples such as the sKar Chung inscription of Khri Srong lde brtsan, the implied sentiments of the ’Phyong rgyas inscription, PT 840/3 (a tenth century history of tantric practices in

¹⁶² In this way, the phrase harkens back to the little-known vortex in the royal practice of Buddhism during the empire.

Tibet), Buddhaguhya's letter to the king, and the various early epigraphic and colophon inscriptions from West Tibet.¹⁶³ A great deal has already been published about all of these texts.¹⁶⁴ PT 840/3, in particular, combines the lineage of the bodhisattva-king construct with the sacral "high peaks pure earth" formula connected to the origin of the sPu rgyal btsan po.

Tibet is high and its land is pure,
 Its snowy mountains are the nape of all,
 The source of innumerable rivers and streams.
 In the centre of the *maṇḍala* of deities
 The king called Tsa,
 Born into a divine family in the lineage of the bodhisattvas,
 lHa sras Khri Srong lde btsan.¹⁶⁵

yul mtho sa gtshang bod kyi yul ||
gangs ri mtho gtshang kun kyi gnya' |
chu bo klung yas kun kyi mgo ||
lha gnyan yul dbyings dkyil 'di na ||
rgyal po tsa zhes bya ba de ||
lha 'i rigs la byang chub sems dpa' i rgyu ||
lha sras khri srong lde brtsan gyis || (PT 840: 1-2)

If we follow the rhetorical thread, it quickly leads us beyond Dunhuang to the earliest epigraphic and dedicatory sources from West Tibet. In his article on Pho brang Zhi ba 'od, Samten Karmay (1998 [1980]) highlights a number of colophons that include the epithets for the king which more or less surround the most critical phrase, *bod kyi dpal lha btsan po* ("Divine and Glorious Emperor of Tibet"). In one such example, from the *dPal mchog dang po' i rgya cher bshad pa*, a commentary of the *Śrīparamādyatantra*, we find in the second colophon a eulogy to the activities of lHa Bla ma Ye shes 'od whereby the scribe uses the same phrase as that witnessed in PT 840/3 as well as in the Tholing text. On the former, Karmay comments:

The phrase of *byang chub sems dpa' i gdung brgyud* might give the impression of the Bodhisattva being simply the *lha bla-ma Ye-shes-'od*. However, the question is more complicated than it first appears. In *PT 841*, the king Tsa who is identified there with Khri Srong-lde-btsan is described as *lha 'i rigs la byang chub sems dpa' i rgyu (brgyud)*, 'of the *lha* family and descendant of the Bodhisattva.' The Bodhisattva in this line would be none other than Srong-btsan sgam-po who is an emanation of Avalokiteśvara as we read the following lines in Buddhaguhya's letter: 'Srong-btsan sgam-po is the

¹⁶³ The formulae, *byang chub sems dpa' i gdung rgyud*, is witnessed also in PT 841, as well as in the opening lines of Buddhaguhya's letter, and is made implicit in the sKar chung inscription (*dkon mchog gsum gyi rten btsugs pa las stogs pa | gdung rabs rgyud kyis | 'di ltar sangs rgyas kyi chos mdzad pa*).

¹⁶⁴ Among others, see in particular: Farquhar (1978), Scherrer-Schaub (1999c), Karmay (1998 [1980]), Steinkellner (1999b), van der Kuijp (2015). For a more complete and holistic analysis on the topic of Bodhisattva kingship in Tibet see in particular two papers by Lewis Doney (2014, 2015).

¹⁶⁵ My translation is based on Karmay (1998 [1981]: 91) with whom I also agree in his reading of *rgyu* as *brgyud* as it appear in the Tholing text and elsewhere.

dynamic body of Avalokiteśvara. The line of the descendants of this Bodhisattva has not been cut' [*Srong btsan sgam po spyan ras gzigs kyi sku | byang chub sems dpa'i sku rgyud gdung ma chad*].

In light of the Tholing text, in which the passage relates to bKra shis mgon and not Ye shes 'od, Karmay's argument holds true, particularly with regard to the line of bodhisattva-kings as related to Khri Srong lde btsan. Without going into the issue of dating Buddhaghya's letter, we find the same language being used there as well. Further, based on Karmay's work, we can see how Zhi ba 'od's own colophon is bolstered by a description of the religious events provided by Lo tsa ba Blo ldan shes rab (1059-1109) in his colophon to the *Pramāṇavārttālamkāra*, the first part of which reads:

During their life time, the *lha btsan po* of Tibet, emanation of the protectors of the three families (*kula*), the descendants of the Bodhisattva, the god who reigns over man, the king of sagacity, the *bhikṣu* of the Śākya clan, the *lha bla ma* Zhi ba 'od and the mighty, sacred, great lord Khri bKra shis rTse lde btsan in the presence of (*zhal snga nas*) [the uncle and nephew], who are the kings of kings, acted as great patrons in order to spread the doctrine far and wide in the kingdom of Tibet.¹⁶⁶

bod kyi lha btsan po | rigs gsum mgon po'i sprul ba | byang chub sems dpa'i gdung brgyud | mi rje lhas mdzad pa | 'phrul gyi rgyal po śākya'i dge slong lha bla ma zhi ba 'od kyi zhal snga nas dang | dbang phyug dam pa'i mnga' bdag chen po khri bkra shis tse lde btsan gyi zhal snga nas rgyal po'i yang rgyal po chen po khu dbon gyi sku ring la

Not only has it been clearly shown by Cristina Scherrer-Schaub (1999b) that the identification of Ye shes 'od as a Bodhisattva was already in use in the latter part of his life, we also find that the dedicatory inscription of Tabo, done in 1042, as well as the earliest colophon dedications are all contemporaneous and within the same literary milieu of post-dynastic pre-*phyi dar* sources.¹⁶⁷ As with Scherrer-Schaub's findings the assertion of the bodhisattva-king is further developed in the Tholing text specifically with regard to lHa Bla ma Ye shes 'od. Here, for the first time in our text, the king is explicitly described as a full-fledged bodhisattva.

slad na gcung srong nge'i zha snga nas kyi sku che ba'i yon tan mdor bsdu na | sku'i brjid bag ni ri rgyal bas kyang che | gsung gi bka' stsal ni rgya mtsho'i rlabs ltar dus tshigs las myi g.yo' | | thugs kyi sgam dkyel ni nyi zer bas kyang gsal | mdzad spyod kyi 'bras bu ni legs dgu'i mthar phyind pas | grags pa snyand pas ni rgya mtsho'i mthas klas par khyab ste | myi phyed pa'i dad pa dang ldan ba'i byang chub sems dpa' mos

¹⁶⁶ Translation based on Karmay (1998 [1980]: 23-24).

¹⁶⁷ The contours of such a royal literary milieu are evident due to the patient work of scholars such as Samten Karmay, Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, Ernst Steinkellner, Christian Luczanits, and others. In particular Scherrer-Schaub's study of one particular colophon from Tabo confirms that the title of dPal lha btsan po Byang chub sems dpa' is used for Ye shes 'od during his life time. Scherrer-Schaub further corroborates the point by including nine other sources from the 11th and 12th century which maintain that tradition. Karmay has similarly shown identical epithets for Pho brang Zhi ba 'od. In the case of the Tholing manuscript, we find perhaps the earliest historiographic use of the concept in West Tibet.

*pa dpyod pa'i sa la gnas pa'i lags par grag ste'i skyes bu chen por sku 'khrungs pas
rgyal srid mchil ma'i thal ba ltar spangs nas thard par gshegs te | lha bla ma ye shes
'od du mtshan gsol || ... (36: 3- 38: 4)*

Later on, during the reign of the younger brother Srong nge, to sum up his outstanding qualities: his majesty and personality were even greater than Mount Meru, his utterances were rhythmical like the waves of the ocean, the depth and broadness of his mind were even brighter than the rays of the sun, [and] the fruits of his actions, as they were thoroughly noble, they were all perfectly attained. His fame spread out boundless to the edge of the ocean. As he was born a great holy being, known as a bodhisattva of undivided faith on the stage of 'devoted conduct', he cast out political affairs as if spitting out a speckle of dust and embarked on the [path towards] liberation. [Thus he] was given the name lHa Bla ma Ye shes 'od . . .

The semantic language skill displayed here is profound. It deeply resonates with text-internal variants and nuances, and more importantly with language that is found in the most important imperial inscriptions. The *Old Tibetan Annals* and *Old Tibetan Chronicle* idealize the king in a manner reflected earlier in the Zhol inscription, while the bSam yas pillar and bell inscriptions eulogizes the dharma kings and their bodhisattva nature, the 'Phyongs rgyas inscription fully implies that the *btsan po* is a bodhisattva. Each of these show the transformation of the portrayal of the king.¹⁶⁸ We know from epigraphic and dedicatory material in West Tibet that not only was the same language used but it went further to explicitly cast Ye shes 'od as a bodhisattva in his very lifetime. What the Tholing text offers is perhaps the earliest historiographic record that makes use of such language in a grander, more poetic, historical prose.

* * *

In examining the prophetic opening passage of Gu ge Pañ chen's biography of lHa Bla ma Ye shes 'od, Leonard van der Kuijp (2015) convincingly demonstrates that the long held tradition of recalling the Buddha's prophecies for the arrival of Ye shes 'od, taken from the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, is a product of a Tibetan version of the *tantra* made specifically in West Tibet. Van der Kuijp notes that the lines are not included within the block-printed canonical version translated by Kumārakalaśa and Lo tsā ba Shākya blo gros, nor do they appear in the one surviving Sanskrit version of that text. The indication is therefore that these prophecies are the result of a particular variant produced in the publishing house of Tholing. This tradition would have then been dispersed to Central Tibet, as indicated by the appearance

¹⁶⁸ For more on the topic see, Doney (2014 and 2015).

of these same lines in early Central Tibetan histories such as that by Nyang ral and the two *lDe'u* histories. These prophecies also serve as an important source for the *bKa' chems ka khol ma*, as well as in Nyang ral's chronicle, and the later *Maṇi bka' 'bum*. Taken together these are the *locus classicus* for the *btsan po* as Avalokiteśvara narrative; a telos that is fully crystalized in the *rGyal rabs bsal ba'i me long*. One of the implications of these developments is that not only did the editing house of Tholing produce texts that directly influenced Central Tibetan historiography, but that the edits which connected the ruler of West Tibet directly to the Buddha, were already in development in that area by the early 11th century. Curiously, however, we do not find this connection made fully explicit in the Tholing Manuscript, and certainly not with respect to the old Tibetan kings. Rather, there is a wonderful indication of these narrative developments in their fledgling form, which does appear in the Tholing text through its association of the king with the divine bodhisattva ancestral tradition, the: *rgyal po byang chub sems dpa'i sprul pa'i gdung rgyud*.

* * *

In the course of our text's narrative, it becomes clear that a number of key terms rhetorically (and performatively) bolster and delineate the central concepts of law, religion, kingship (or governance) and the king. Punctuating important moments, the subtle shifts in meanings of these terms are further indicative of historical changes, both in perception and in practice, with special significance for the relationship between religion and state. Given that the use of these terms and the context in which they are delineated changed over time—even within the span of the sPu rgyal dynasty itself—it is unclear what exactly is being described, particularly at those liminal moments. What *is* clear, however, is that the gradual shift in meaning was prompted and closely followed by the royal court's own assimilation of Buddhism (between the 8th and 9th centuries). The eventual dominance of Buddhism, which only fully solidified during the *phyi dar*, indelibly changed ancient rhetorical forms, as well as the concepts which surrounded and bolstered kingship in Tibet, even if it did not prompt their complete abandonment, thereby forever altering the religio-political legal structures of Tibet. In West Tibet, because kingship *did* in fact continue in the form of real monarchy, as vestiges of the sPu rgyal dynasty, these concepts remained important in legitimizing kingly rule. Thus, while the structure of kingship and

the royal court was different from that of the old Tibetan kings, these key terms had yet to fully give way in the face of the dominance of Buddhism. Because these historical shifts are still to be properly mapped out, with each new find—such as the Tholing Manuscript—a more complex image is presented. A comparative philological analysis of early sources, which themselves draw from even more ancient sources, allows us a window into these determinative shifts in the historiography and rhetoric of kingship in Tibet.

If we take a step back for a moment and return to the argument made in Part One, in which I place the manuscript in its time and space coordinates and date it to the early part of the 12th century, we can see that the Tholing text is indeed unique in the context of the surviving sources of early Tibetan historiography, as evidenced by comparison, textual and codicological, with Old Tibetan documents, the *dBa' bzhed*, the two *lDe'u chos byung*, Nyang ral, Ne'u Paṇḍita, early epigraphic and dedicatory material from West Tibet, and a host of later writings such as the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, *bKa' thang sde lnga*, etc., all of which contain or draw on more ancient sources. The literary architecture of the Tholing Manuscript, its terminology or absence thereof, *vita* structure, rhetoric, and overall ethos, set it apart from the braided threads of Central Tibetan historiography in a way that perhaps even affects the larger pattern of that historiography. As shown by the myriad textual examples discussed in Part Two, we may use the Tholing text as a counterpoint to what we have previously known about early Tibetan historiography, particularly in the earliest part of the *phyi dar*. This is probably best encapsulated in that rare authorial moment in which our scribe contends the importance of divine kingship in Tibet, “whether considered as a suddenly appearing king (*glo bur du spruld pa'i rgyal po*) as he is generally known in our Tibet (*skol bod*), or whether he is regarded as a lineage king or an appointed king (*rigs dang skos pa'i rgyal po*) as [recorded] in other sources, it is no wonder if a human becomes the lord of men. But as for the king of our Tibet, he was a god acting as the lord of men (*myi rje lhas mdzad*).”

Whoever the author is, he has a close familiarity with the language specific to kingship in Tibet, as well as an apparent concern for enhancing the status of kingship in that context, as seen in the passage above. In that passage, kingship in Western Tibet is seen as a wondrous phenomenon, whereas kingship elsewhere is “no wonder” at all. Overall, the Tholing Manuscript gives us a window into the negotiation

of varying dimensions of kingship during this formative period in Tibetan history, when competing powers were vying for control and when Buddhist worldviews predominated. Our text reveals that such worldviews were no barrier to the strategic deployment of an archaized notion of sacral kingship. Understood in context, then, we may consult the Tholing Manuscript to better detect the multi-layered political and legal structures that once existed but have since been obscured through the passage of time.

Part Three:

Edition and Translation of the Tholing Manuscript

(3.1) Notes on the Transliteration and Translation

The transliteration provided below strives to remain faithful to the language found in the Tholing Manuscript. Where there are clear spelling errors, I provide my own reading in the footnotes. In the footnotes, I have also provided those corrections that appear in the Khyung bdag edition (2013) if different from my own. Furthermore, I cite parallel passages that occur in the *rGya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa* of *mKhas pa lDe'u*, and in other texts, which have sometimes informed my reading and translation. I have not modernized typical archaic spelling conventions such as the *da drag*, *ma ya btags*, and *'a rten*. Contractions are similarly reproduced without resolving them due to the fact that there is only really one major instance of such occurrences and that is in the term “et cetera,” *las sogs pa*, which regularly appears as *lastsogs pa*. I have indicated when syllables are missing or illegible by [brackets] and the number of syllables missing. The + symbol is used to indicate interlinear additions in both the transliteration as well as the translation. Finally, readers of Tibetan, beware(!): the text often has *ba* where you would expect *pa*.

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There have been a number of difficult barriers to overcome in translating the Tholing Manuscript into English. Beyond the expected orthographic irregularities and corruptions, the text reflects the fluctuation in Tibetan literary language from the archaic poetic styles of the Old Tibetan empire to the purple prose of monastic writing. A good deal is left to deduction, rather than being conveyed directly by the words. If translated literally, both style and meaning can be lost, while at the same time the necessity to embellish undoubtedly entails departure from the original. Thus, we encounter the translator's conundrum: “he who translates literally is a liar, and one who embellishes is a blasphemer.”¹⁶⁹ With this in mind, key terms such as *'phrul*, *chos*, *khrims*, *gtsug lag*, *chab srid*, *dbu mog*, and all their various compounds and usages, undoubtedly cause semantic road blocks.

¹⁶⁹ Rabbi Judah, Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 49a.

Following the guidelines presented by Alexander Fraser Tytler more than two centuries ago, my aim has been “to give a full transcript of the original ideas; to imitate the styles of the indigenous text; and to preserve the simplicity of the original text.”¹⁷⁰ With regard to this last aim, there is no doubt that future scholarship will find more suitable translations of certain key terms, phrases, and expressions, which at present are still problematic, and which I footnote when warranted.

Because of the difficult nature of the text the translation is sometimes necessarily tentative. In general, I have tried to give a literal translation that has been subjected to a certain degree of stylistic “smoothing” in order to enhance readability and to convey some sense of the text’s literary character. A detailed description and analysis of that character is given in section (2.2) on form and function.

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In the translation, I have italicized all foreign words and book titles. Proper names are transliterated but are not in italics. In an effort to reproduce the text as it is, I have not standardized name spellings even if they appear in several different forms within the text. Provided throughout the translation are the corresponding page numbers of the manuscript which may serve as a quick guide for those interested in reading the corresponding passage in the Tibetan transliteration; these appear as [#]. In some cases, the [#] may appear slightly before or after a proper name so as not to break a multi-syllabic term or name.

¹⁷⁰ Alexander Fraser Tytler, *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, New edition. Vol. 13., (1813; John Benjamins Publishing, 1978).

(3.2) Edition

Page 1

1. [1s] *ces grag* || *zla ba'i rigs ni rgyal po skyab bseng*¹⁷¹ *gi bu gzho*¹⁷² *nu*
2. [1s]¹⁷³ *bsgrub dang* | *rlung lha dang* | *'jigs sde dang* | *kar rna dang* | *tha skar dang* | *de dag*
3. *gi bu tsha bo srin tsha bum skra 'greng las stsogs pa*¹⁷⁴ *dang* | *rgyal po yul 'khor*
4. *skyong gi bu thu bo rgyal po 'thab dka' lastsogs pa spun brgya byung ste* | *de rnams*
5. *ci ltar byung zhing rtsod pa las stsogs pa ni ba ra ta'i bstan bcos las ci ltar*
6. *byung ba ltar* | *de la bskos pa'i rgyal po yang bzhir*
7. *grags te* | *shar phyogs skar ma smyin drug shar ba'i 'og na rgya gtsug lag gi*

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1. *rgyal po ni gab tse skor sum*¹⁷⁵ *brgya la brtags shing spyad de gang bzang ba de rgyal por*
2. *bsko 'o* || *lho phyogs skar ma ri byi mo*¹⁷⁶ *shar ba'i 'og na rgya gar chos gyi rgyal po*
3. *ni* | *myi che zhing che bar grags pa bco brgyad dam* | *glang po che'i snas gser gyi*
4. *ril ba bring ga ras dbang bskur ba rgyal por bsko 'o* || *nub phyogs zla ba tshes pa'i*
5. *'og na* | *ta zig nor gyi rgyal po ni* | *rgya mtsho chen po nas nor bu rin po che gang*
6. [1s] *pa*¹⁷⁷ *de rgyal por bsko 'o* || *byang phyogs skar ma smye bdun shar ba'i 'og na* ||
7. (*khrom*) *ge sar dmag gi rgyal po ni* || *shel gyi ya gad la 'dzig nus pa'am bal*¹⁷⁸

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¹⁷¹ Read: *skya seng*

¹⁷² Read: *gzhon*

¹⁷³ Khyung bdag reads: *srid*

¹⁷⁴ Archaic spelling: *la sogs pa*. See discussion on archaic orthography in part one.

¹⁷⁵ Read: *gsum*

¹⁷⁶ Read: *skar ma ri shi*.

¹⁷⁷ Read: *blangs pa*. Khyung bdag reads: *sus lon* ?

¹⁷⁸ Read: *ba*

1. *glang 'dor ba 'i snas¹⁷⁹ ral gyi¹⁸⁰ gcod nus pa de rgyal por bsko 'o | de rnams kyi¹⁸¹ stond*
2. *par yang | rgya gtsug lag gis 'dul bar gzigs nas | 'phags pa 'jam dpal*
3. *gyis gab tse skor sum brgya skor gyis btul || rgyal¹⁸² gar chos kyis*
4. *'dul bar gzigs nas | bcom ldan 'das shag kya thub pas sde snod rin po*
5. *che gsum la stsogs pas bdul || ta zig nor gyis 'dul bar gzigs*
6. *nas 'phags pa nor sbyin 'dzind gyis ne li rkyal pa gang gi nor bu rin po ches*
7. *'dul | 'khrom ge sar dmag gis 'dul bar gzigs nas lha mo*

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1. *pad tse ka 'i bu mo lnga brgya dang bcas pas btul ba lags par brag*
2. *glo bur du spruld pa 'i rgyal po yang | skol bod la phal cher grags pa ltar bgyi na*
3. *rgyal po de ni [1s] phyogs gzhan na ni | de ltar rigs dang skos pa 'i rgyal po mchis*
4. *na yang¹⁸³ | myi rje myis mdzad pa lags pas ngo mtshar che rgyu ma mchis*
5. *skol bod gyi rgyal po 'di ni | myi rje lhas mdzad de | spu rgyal btsan po ni bod kyi rjer*
6. *bzhugs pa 'i sa bzang ste | rgung sngon po 'i steng na bzhugs | | sku 'i lha bzang ste |*
7. *khri bar la bdun tshigs | gshegs pa 'i shul bzang ste | gnam gyis mthongs*

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1. *phye | sprin gyis¹⁸⁴ go¹⁸⁵ bsal te | nam mkha' phrum tsam las gshegs | rkyen bzang*
2. *ste 'phrul cha sna dgu mnga' | gshegs pa 'i gnas bzang ste | sa rin po che rgya mdud kyi*
3. *steng | gnam gyi dkyil | sa 'i sgald pa | gling bzhi 'i snying po | gangs ri 'khyud 'khor*
4. *gyi ra ba | chu bo chen po bzhi 'i mgo' | stsang po¹⁸⁶ gzhung gsum gyi glad | gangs ti se*
5. *shel gyi mchod rten | mtsho ma pang g.yu 'i man dal | ri mtho sa gtsang ba 'i gnas*

¹⁷⁹ Read: *sna*

¹⁸⁰ Read: *gyis*. Khyung bdag reads: *gri*

¹⁸¹ Read: *kyis*

¹⁸² Read: *rgya*

¹⁸³ Khyung bdag reads: *mchis ma yang* though it is not clear in the text.

¹⁸⁴ Read: *gyi*

¹⁸⁵ Read: *sgo*

¹⁸⁶ Read: *gtsang po*

6. *su | 'greng myi'i rje | dud rnog chags kyi rkyen du | lha las myi'i rjer gshegs*

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1. *so | gtsug lag gi thang khrims ni chos lugs | dgongs pa 'phrul gyi ras*
2. *chags pas ni gsang gros gnam¹⁸⁷ gsum gyis ni dmyigs phye | mol chad rnam*
3. *gnyis dang | bzhed rnam lngas ni bod kyi srid btsas | yig gtsang sde dgu dang | dpa'*
4. *mtshan¹⁸⁸ sna brgyad kyis ni bka' drin rim par gnang ste | 'dzam bu gling na mnga' chen*
5. *bzhi yang rgyu dang dpya' 'bul bar grags so || gnam las grags pa ni brag*
6. *srin dang spre'u 'tshos pa'o¹⁸⁹ bu | gnod sbyin 'dza ya zhes bya ba'i bu ldo pa po zhig |*
7. *sha zan¹⁹⁰ gyi rgyal khams srin po gdong dmar gyi rigs | gnod sbyin gangs bar ba*

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1. *'dul dka' zhing gtsug lag gi thang khrims rab tu zhan pa zhig tu grags skad |*
2. *spyir dang po'i dus na bod kyi rgyal khams 'di gnod sbyin nag pos dbang bgyis pas yul*
3. *kha rag sgo dgur btags pa lags | de nas klus dbang bgyis pas bod ka gling rgur*
4. *btags | de nas rus rgu ma sangs kyis dbang bgyis pas bod ka g.yag drug tu*
5. *btags | | de nas ra sangs kyi bu skyes drug gis dbang bgyis pas |*
6. *bod ka sde bco brgyad du btags | de nas rgyal sil ma bzhi bcu rtsa dang |*
7. *rgyal khams bcu gnyis kyis dbang bgyis pas so kha¹⁹¹ brgyad du btags ||*

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1. *de'i gting la¹⁹² spu rgyal btsan pos mnga' mdzad pas | yul gyi mying yang bod*
2. *khams gsum ru bzhir btags te || rje nya gri btsan po gnam gyi dgung*
3. *rum nas sa'i dog la myi'i rjer glo bur du gshegs na yang | spyod pa ni lha'i lugs*

¹⁸⁷ Read: *rnam*

¹⁸⁸ Khyung bdag reads: *mchan*

¹⁸⁹ Read: *pa'i*

¹⁹⁰ Read: *bzan*

¹⁹¹ Read: *tsho khag*

¹⁹² Read: *rting la*

4. *su srung dang ldebs || 'grub pa'i 'bras bu ni srung snyan ni rje gong na bzhugs pa snyan*
5. *gyis gsan | srung g.yab ni 'bangs 'og na mchis pa sug tu nod pa lags*
6. *te | dus de tsam na khyo ga'i phyag ni yo yo | bud myed kyi phyag ni tug | gos*
7. *ni zhab ma¹⁹³ | zas ni glo gro tsog dang | rgyu 'tshem bu las ma mchis te | chos*

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1. *lugs rab tu myis bzang bas | lha sras grang ma gser thig gi sku ring la | chos*
2. *lugs de bas bzang ba cig mdzad par bzhed nas spyod pa bro glu'i srol btod de |*
3. *skor glu dang | gdung glu dang | bgab bgab dang | rtag¹⁹⁴ chod la stsogs pa spyod pa*
4. *ni rtse 'jo | 'grub pa'i 'bras bu ni khyo ga dang bud myed las ma mchis pa cig*
5. *gda' | | de'i rjes la rje dri gum btsan po'i sku ring la | rgya dang ta zig gi*
6. *sa 'tshams nas mu stegs bye brag pa'i lta ba 'dzind pa'i 'a zha'i bon po zhig byung*
7. *ste | lam lam ni 'bar | thog thog ni gsal ba'i rdzu 'phrul can du gsol*

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1. *[±3s]¹⁹⁵ ni gyer snyan dang rnga thabs | grub pa'i 'bras bu ni gson lha ni*
2. *mchod | shin dri¹⁹⁶ ni 'dul ba'i bon po nag po dar bas chos lugs rab tu myi bzang*
3. *ste | bcom ldan 'das shag kya thub pa rdo rje'i gdan du mngon bar rdzogs par*
4. *sangs rgyas nas | dam pa'i chos dard cing rgyas par mdzad na yang | skol*
5. *bod kyi rgyal khams mun rum dang 'dra ba las 'dod ki dang por lha mtho do re*
6. *snya brtsan gyi sku ring la dam pa'i chos kyi mgo brnyes ste | mu tri phyag rgya tsam*
7. *dang | pang kong phyag rgya pa rgya nag gi yi ger bris pa cig brnyes na yang mchod*

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¹⁹³ Read: *zhabs ma*

¹⁹⁴ Read: *stag?*

¹⁹⁵ Khyung bdag reads: *spyod pa ni*

¹⁹⁶ Read: *gshin 'dre*

1. *gnas brnyan mar ni ma dgongs | sdug cing sba bar gzigs nasyang¹⁹⁷ gser zhag*
2. *dang g.yu skyems kyis mchod nas | sku tshe yang de las ring | chab srid kyang de nas*
3. *zind te | 'dad kyang lhas bstangs pa brag¹⁹⁸ || || slad na myes srong rtsan sgam po*
4. *'i sku ring la || dam pa'i chos kyi srol btod de | ra sa 'phrul snang gtsug lag*
5. *khang bzhengs su gsol | mdo sde dgon cog sprin mchod gnas su mdzad | lha shag*
6. *kya mu ne spyang drangs | mthon myin sam po re dang rje 'bangs kyis yi ge'i dngos grub*
7. *[±2s]¹⁹⁹ 'phrul gyi yi ge'i khungs bton | | spyod pa'i bdag nyid ni myi chos*

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1. *dge ba bcu las don kyi dpe' blangs te | srog gcod kyis dogs nas stong²⁰⁰ | (ma)*
2. *ma byin par len kyis dogs nas grib | 'dod pas log par g.yem gyis dogs*
3. *nas chal | brdzun smras kyis dogs nas ni lha klu gnyan po rnams dpang du btsugs*
4. *te mna' myi za ba la stsogs pa'i chos dang srid du mthun ba'i bka' khrims chen po*
5. *mdzad de | dkon mchog gsum 'jig rten la bsngags shing bstod de dbu'i gtsug tu*
6. *bkur | de'i rkyen kyis dge ba myi bgyid na 'or ba lhas mdzad de | gdung rgyud rim*
7. *par byung ba'i nang nas sku tshe mthar phyind cing rgung lo brgyad bcu rtsa gcig nas rgung*

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1. *du gshegs te de'i bar du chab srid ni mtho | dbu rmog ni brtsan | dgongs dgu ni*
2. *grub ste | de man chod sku'i bsod nams kyi rkyend dang mthun ba khu lha bo 'go dkar la*
3. *stsogs pa 'dzangs myi bdun dang | 'gos g.yag brag lastsogs pa rtsal po che myi*
4. *drug byung ste | rngog ring la nag pos bal yul nas glang po che phrug gu khur*
5. *du theg | rngegs gling gam gyis g.yag 'grus²⁰¹ gcig pa theg | dpa' rgod*
6. *mda' brtsan gyis seng ge co to nas bzung | 'gong g.yas cung brtsan gyis*

¹⁹⁷ Read: *nas yang*

¹⁹⁸ Read: *grags*

¹⁹⁹ *Khyung bdag* reads: *bco* [±1s]

²⁰⁰ Read: *dogs nas mi stong*

²⁰¹ Read: *grus*

7. *sha ba'i slad*²⁰² *pu bye mas bkang ba glad pa la skor nus | cog khru 'brong khong thol*
8. *brgyad kyis 'brong thur du dkyus pa bzung nas 'then nus | gnon rgyal mtshan*

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1. *snang grags kyis mda' ste kha mas bye*²⁰³ *khra rked*²⁰⁴ *du bcad nas che chung myed par byung*
2. *ba dang | gnon khri 'dus yul byin gyis rta rgod g.yang la lhung ba slar yang then*
3. *nus pa lastsogs pa'i rtsal po che kun der byung ba dang | 'dzangs*²⁰⁵ *myi bdun la gcig*
4. *tu 'dzangs pa ni 'greng gi bu ru las skyes yin te | des 'dzangs kyi las ci byung*²⁰⁶
5. *na | rdo las sol bas bzhus nas zangs lcags gser rngul byas || shing la*
6. *bu ga phug*²⁰⁷ *nas bshol dang gnya*²⁰⁸ *shing byas || mthun nyis [gnyis] zung du bsdebs nas*
7. *spang mtha' zhing du rmos | dang po de ltar byed pa'i phya mkhan ni | 'greng gi bu pho*

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1. *ru las skyes| | de'i gong na bod la lo thog myed | | gnyis su 'dzangs pa*
2. *ni | khu lha bo mgo gar yin te | des las ci byas na | zhing gi dor dang 'brog*
3. *gi thul du bsdebs | | phu chu thum por btums nas mtshan chu nyin chur*
4. *drangs || mtsho' la gtar kha gtar nas yur ba dkyus su bsrang || dang po*
5. *de ltar byed pa'i phya mkhan ni || khu lha bo mgo gar che ba khu'i bu || de'i gong na*
6. *chul la bdal ma rmo | | gsum du 'dzangs pa ni | mthon myin sam po*
7. *re | | des las ci byas she*²⁰⁹ *na | ka ka ki ki ku ku zhabs*²¹⁰ *bskyed bcas | |*

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1. *ra ra ri ri rtsang gi yig ma don || shad kyis bcad nas tsheg gis smra*

²⁰² Reads: *blud*

²⁰³ Read: *bya*

²⁰⁴ Read: *sked*

²⁰⁵ Read: *mdzangs*

²⁰⁶ Read: *byas*

²⁰⁷ Read: *bug pa phug*

²⁰⁸ Read: *gnya'*

²⁰⁹ Read: *zhe*

²¹⁰ Read: *zhabs kyu*

2. *bar byed || dang po de ltar byed pa'i phya mkhan ni || ka ka ki ki mthon myin*
3. *sam po re || de'i gong na bod la yig rtsis myed || bzhi ru 'dzangs pa*
4. *ni rngegs khri bzang yang la ston yin | des las ci byas na | ri khyim slung²¹¹*
5. *du bslags pa spo mthon mkhar du brtsigs || spang mtha' zhing du rmos*
6. *nas sbye²¹² mthar khyim du brtsigs || dang po de ltar byed pa'i phya mkhan ni ||*
7. *khri bzang yang ston yar lungs rigs kyi bu | de'i gong du myi khyim ri la 'dug*

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1. *lnga ru 'dzangs pa ni | khri bzang ya blag chen po 'gos kyi bu | des las ci*
2. *byas na || phyogs bzhi sku srungs sku'i rim 'gro mdzad || rgod kyi stong sde*
3. *bzhi bcu rtsa nyis [gnyis] so kha'i dgra la rgol || myi la stong thang bcad pas phyi*
4. *rabs blon po thugs khral chung || dang po de ltar byed pa'i phya mkhan ni || khri*
5. *bzang ya blag chen po 'gos kyi bu | | de'i gong na rus dang stong sde myed | | drug*
6. *ru 'dzang pa ni | mong khri do re snang tshab | des las ci byas na | bre dang srang gis 'du god*
7. *rtsis su gsal | | phul dang khyor gyis za ma zungs su bzung | dga' nyis²¹³ tshong*

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1. *byed mthun nyis²¹⁴ longs spyod pa || dang po de ltar byed pa'i phya mkhan ni || khri do*
2. *re snang tshab ya 'dras mong gi bu || de'i gong na bod la bre srang myed | | bdun du*
3. *'dzangs pa ni stag brtsan sdong gzigs | des las ci byas na | mdzo mo*
4. *stag mo be'u lug gar bder 'tsho || ba re glang re gnag re khrims su gsal*
5. *rtswa la chun por gcus nas dbyar rtsi rgun du 'tshal || dang po de ltar byed pa'i*
6. *phyas mkhan ni || stag brtsan ldong gzigs chen po snyer gyi bu || de'i gong*

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²¹¹ Read: *klung*

²¹² Read: *dbye*

²¹³ Read: *gnyis*

²¹⁴ Read: *gnyis*

1. *du phyugs la res khirms myed* | | *'phrul chen po de rnams kyang mes dbon*
2. *gyi*²¹⁵ *dam pa'i chos mdzad pa'i byin rlabs kyi rkyen ru byung ba yin no* | + |
3. + [±1s] *de'i rkyen gyis gdung rabs su mnga' mdzad rim par bzhugs pa rnams kyi sku tshe 'di dang*
phyi mar 'bras bu smin cing grub pa las bar du thon po rab shig bdam nas nongs pas lha chos cung
zhib + bstabs bas kyang |
4. *mes khri srong lde brtsan gyi sku ring la* | *dam pa'i chos kyis gzhung dard par*
5. *mdzad de* | *dpal bsam g.yas lhund kyis grub pa'i gtsug lag khang dang*
6. *ska 'tshal dang* | *khra 'brug dang* | *rgyang dang* | *byams sprin dang* | *mtha' kha ce'i*
7. *gtsug lag khang bdud rtsi 'byung gnas la stsogs pa brgya rtsa brgyad bzhengs*
8. *su gsol te* | *rta'i la lo nyin cig la zhal sros*²¹⁶ *mdzad* || || *rgya gar*

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1. *kyi mkhan po pad ma sam bha ba dang* | *bo de sad twa la stsogs pa dang* | *za 'or gyi*
2. *mkhan po gnya [gnya'] na shan ti dang* | *rgya'i mkhan po ma ha ya na la rtsogs pa mkhas*
3. *btsun mang po spyan drangs* || *sgra bsgyur gyi lo tsa ba sna nam ye shes sde dang*
4. *dka*²¹⁷ *ba dpal rtsegs dang* | *co ro klu'i rgyal mtshan la rtsogs pas bka'*
5. *dang bstan bcos kyi sde snod mang du bsgyur zhing bzhengs* || *dge 'dun dkon*
6. *mchog kyang mnyan bar mdzad de* | *'bangs rnams las kyang zhabs kyi rde'u*
7. *las dbu'i mchod gnas su mdzad de* | *spyi bo'i gtsug tu bkur* | | *'bangs sna*

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1. *sna la gtogs pa'i blon po dad pa dang ldan ba rnams las kyang* | *blon chen*
2. *po 'gos khri bzang ya blag chos dang srid che ba'i mol ba'i khog phub* | |
3. *slad ma zhang rgyal mtshan lha snang* | *shud pu rgyal to re nga myi* | *ngam lan*
4. *stag ra glu gong* | | *chims mdo bzhir spre'u chung gis mchod rten chen*

²¹⁵ Read: *gyis*

²¹⁶ Read: *bsros*

²¹⁷ Read: *ka*

5. *po bzhi bzhengs pa la stsogs pa 'bangs las kyang dge ba spyod pa mang*
6. *du byung ste || dam pa'i chos nam du yang myi gtang lha rje 'bangs yongs*
7. *kyis dbu snyung bro rtog bzhes te | bstand pa dard par mdzad pa lags |*

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1. *de'i sras mched gsum las | lha sras mu ni btsan po'i zha snga nas*
2. *thugs shin tu dkar bar grags shing bod 'bangs bde skyid de dam pa'i chos dard*
3. *par mdzad par gsol ba las zla ba bcu dgu chab srid phyag tu bzhes pa nas*
4. *yum gyis bkrongs te sku tshe thungs | | gcung khri lde gtsug brtsan*
5. *gyi sku ring la chab srid dang dam so zind par mdzad || de'i sras mched gsum*
6. *las | khri gtsug lde ral pa can gyi sku ring la || skar chung gi gtsug lag*
7. *khang bzhengs nas | gdan ma lcang 'tshal du kun rig rtsa ba'i dkyil 'khor bzhengs*

Page 22a – inserted note

1. *te dkon mchog gsum dbu 'phang shin tu bstod de 'jig rtan²¹⁸*
2. *la dge kun dkon mchog bsngags shing bkur te khyad par bcas*
3. *bstod pa'i mdo' bla sgo dang po dkon mchog bstod pa'i (yan lag)²¹⁹*

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1. *yan lag tu | rgya gar gyi mkhan po pad ma sam bha bha dang | bod de sad twa ni*
2. *bzhugs gdan dang po la ni rje'i gong na bzhugs | bcom ldan 'das kyi ring*
3. *lugs la ni rje'i g.yas gong na bzhugs || dge 'dun 'phags pa rnams ni*
4. *rje'i g.yon na bzhugs te | gral la gshegs pa'i dus su rje'i dbu skra*
5. *gshegs shul du bting bas bstod || zhang blon ka pa rnams ni ya gral du*
6. *mchis su gnang ba lags | gtsug lag bon po lastsogs pa ni gral*
7. *phabs la mchis la myi dbang ba lags | | dus de tsam na dge 'dun dkon*

²¹⁸ Read: *rten*

²¹⁹ Intentional deletion.

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1. *mchog gi khongs su gtogs pa'i rab tu byung ba ser chags sde gnyis kyis nyes*
2. *che chung ci bgyis na yang | dge 'dun rnams la bde bar gshegs pa'i bka'*
3. *dang 'thun bar chos phyogs kyi chad pas gcad cing bshags pa ma gtogs par*
4. *rje sgo bla sgo gang gis kyang myi chos gyi chad pas myi dbab par rtsigs kyi rdo*
5. *rings btsugs nas dbu snyung bro rtog bzhis te | pho ni dmyig myi dbyung | mo ni*
6. *sna myi gcad te | stag ris dang 'gal khrims gang yang myi rmid par bkas*
7. *gnang nas nam du yang myi bsnyel bar rtsigs kyi do rings la bris pa lags*

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1. | *gdung rabs de yan chod rje dbus na bzhugs na bka' lung mthar brtsan*
2. + *rje khong ba stags rtser bzhugs na gog shod lha rtse la thug pa | kha ce dri stan la thug pa*
3. | *rgyal yul thang bzangs la thug pa | bal yul wo bo la thug pa | li*
4. *yul 'u rten la thug pa | glo yul brag rtsang la thug pa | + 'dzam bu gling gi*
5. + *zhang zhung khyung lung la thug pa pu rangs ya tse la thug pa*
6. *sum nyis [gnyis] mngar 'dus te | mnga'ris rnam gsum las ni gsang sdud | so ga*
7. *brgyad²²⁰ nas ni dpya' 'bul | rna bug sde bzhi las ni dkor chu bo'i rgyun bzhin du*
8. *'bab ste | rje'i chab srid ni rgung dang reg | 'bangs kyi sgo srid ni gru bo che dang*
9. *'dra zhing | mchod gnas dge 'dun dkon mchog rnams kyang 'tsho ba ni*

Page 26

1. *blo nas sbyor | rge ba ni bag yangs su bgyid | rta yan te ni sga myed |*
2. *ba yan te ni sna myed | myi ni nyi mas slong | phyugs ni zhag zlas sdud | byes*
3. *myi ni glu len | yul myi ni bro rdung | rje ni rigs pas khol | 'bangs ni chu*
4. *gang gis bgyid | cing dge ba 'ba' shig spyod de | myi phyed pa'i dad pas ni rgya gar*

²²⁰ Read: *so kha brgyad*

5. *gyi mkhan po mkhas btsun mang po spyan drangs | bzo' zhing brtson 'grus che*
6. *bas ni rgyal khams su legs pas spel | |myi nub pa'i rgyal mtshan*
7. *du ni yid bzhin gyi slob gra²²¹ so sor btsugs te | skol bod gyi rgyal khams*

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1. *skyid pa'i g.yung rung du gdugs brdal bas 'dzam bu de²²² ba zhes bya bar grags te*
2. *rgyal khams gzhan gyi smon ba'i dper²²³ che bar gyurd pa las | gdung rabs de man chad bod spyi*
3. *thun²²⁴ gyi bsod nams ni sos ka'i chab brum²²⁵ bzhin du bas | bod spyi thun²²⁶ gyi byur*
4. *'dre ched pos ni rgongs ka'i grib so bzhin du non bas bdud kyis bslus pa byung ste*
5. *sman gyi rtsa ba las dug gi sdong po skye ba ltar sangs rgyas gang na bzhugs pa bdud*
6. *der byung ba dang 'dra bas | co ro legs sgra lha ldon brtsan dang | dbas rgyal*
7. *to re stag snya sbrul tshang ma dang 'dra bas rje khri gtsug ral pa can lta bu ni bkrongs*

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1. *rje cog lha sras gtsang ma lta bu ni spyugs | legs pa thams cad spel ba'i*
2. *dge ba'i bshes nyen ni bkrongs | nyes pa thams cad sdom ba'i mna' tshigs*
3. *gnyan po ni btral²²⁷ | mnga' ris gyi mna'dang spyi zungs ni phyags mas btab*
4. *'phrul gyi rje blon sha dang rus pa 'dra ba ni phye | legs pa thams cad la rgyab*
5. *kyis phyogs shing nyes pa thams cad kyi gzhung btsugs te | khri dar ma wi dur*
6. *brtsan la mnga' phul ba dang | rje snyan tshud kyi dgyes | blon po khe rkam²²⁸*
7. *che bas rgyal chos ni mkho thabs | mdzad spyod ni chol bu | bka' khrims*

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²²¹ Read: *grwa*

²²² Read: *bde*

²²³ Read: *dpe*

²²⁴ Read: *mithun*

²²⁵ Read: *grum*

²²⁶ Read: *mithun*

²²⁷ Read: *bkral*

²²⁸ *lDe'u Jo sras* reads: *khe rmgam*

1. *ni dpung tshan du thal te | dkon mchog dbu 'phang smad cing dam pa'i chos*
2. *tshul bzhin du ma bsrungs shing mthong mthong chug chug tu mdzad pas rgyal*
3. *kham las kyis dmas la | mnga' thang thabs kyis bri zhing | zhang gsum*
4. *dang blon bzhis ni dbus kyi mdun sa shor la | dpa' sde ldong tong²²⁹ gis ni mtha'i*
5. *so ga²³⁰ shor | rna bug sde bzhis²³¹ ni dkor gyi phro²³² bcad |^{233 234} nyid nyid kyang yab mes*
6. *kyis mdzad pa'i chos kyi srol bshig pas sku tshe 'di nyid la smyin te | lha*
7. *lung shel²³⁵ gyi rdo rjes bkrongs | 'bangs rgyal to re stag rnyan dang legs sbra*

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1. *lha ldong brtsan lastsogs pa yang shis ngan du gum ste | rje 'bangs bla*
2. *blon mnga' mdzad dar cig phro²³⁶ chad la khad pa'i skabs su | mnga'ris bzlum*
3. *po cig phyogs ris gnyis su chad de | jo mo ris gnyis kyi 'khrug pas bod*
4. *kham rab tu myi bde bar gyurd | + slad nas rje gnam lde 'od srung gi sku ring la chab srid dang
dam so zin par mdzad na dbu ru g.yi²³⁷ ru 'khrugs dus bda' mtha' med khrag dang 'o ma 'dres chab
la dangs mtha' med lha srin sde brgyad 'khrugs so tshems pa bdo' mtha' med sgad²³⁸ rgud
dus ni mi med par gyurd | + | slad na mes dpal 'khor brtsan gyi*
5. *sku ring la rje'i phyag 'or ni de'u re sngas ma | 'bangs kyi sug thabs ni de'u re*
6. *phyis pas rgyal khirms dang chab srid de'u brnyes pa las | spyi mthun gyi bsod*
7. *nams chungs pa dang rje'i sku tshogs zad pa dang 'dra ste | mes dpal 'khor*

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²²⁹ Read: *stong*

²³⁰ Read: *so kha*

²³¹ Read: *bzhi*

²³² Read: *'phro*

²³³ *lDe'u Jo sras* reads: *rne'u sde bzhis skor gyi 'phro bcad |*

²³⁴ *lDe'u Jo sras* reads: *zhang gsum blon dang zhis dbus kyi mdun sa bshig | dpa'i sde gsum gyis mtha'i so shor mngag gzhug mched bcus dbus kyi gsang gcad rne'u sde bzhis skor gyi 'phro bcad |* Vitali posits that *rne'u* here is stands for *sne*, lit. "communities at the extremity, farthest point" abandoned (*'phro bcad*) their territories. (Vitali, 2000: n.5: 109)

²³⁵ Read: *dpal*

²³⁶ Read: *'phro*

²³⁷ Read: *g.yas*

²³⁸ Read: *rgad*

1. *brtsan gyi*²³⁹ *rngegs kyis bkrongs pa dang | rgyal khrims ye nas zhig tu tho bas*
2. *g.yung po la blo kham skyes te | dpal 'kho*²⁴⁰ *bzher ldong gzigs la stsogs pa*
3. *ngan log gi khrug*²⁴¹ *pa ched po byung bas skol bod kyi rgyal khams dbu bye'u*
4. *rgyun chad pa bzhin du sug thal zhing | ya rabs ni byi khung bsubs | dma' rabs*
5. *ni gnam mthongs bye ste | mchod yon la sri zhu myed | bla 'og la khyad par*
6. *med | rje kol*²⁴² *la bye brag myed te | de tshun chad lugs kyi tshul bzhi ni*
7. *shor | khrims kyi tho yor rgu ni nub | 'gyur du myi rung ba'i chos lugs*

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1. *kyi rgyal mtshan bdun ni yul na myi gnas | skye ru myi rung ba'i ngan shes*
2. *kyi thang shing bdun ni sgor skyes | byung la myi dbang ba'i g.yung rung*²⁴³ *gi rmang rdo*
3. *bdun ni gnas nas bton | | myed du myi rung ba'i rin po che'i gter bcu bzhi*
4. *ni rtsa ba nas myed | | byed du myi rung ba'i log pa'i gar thabs brgyad ni byed |*
5. *dar du myi rung ba'i mye dbal dgu ni dar | rgyas su myi rung ba'i dug ni phyis*
6. *bu bdun gyis rgyas te sdig theg chen chos la bskurd pa'i sdig g.yogs dang |*
7. *rje'i chab srid rku ba'i dbu g.yogs dang | phur myi bran du bkol ba'i la yogs gyis*

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1. *bod khams rang gyag ching | rje ni bka' myi gnyan | 'bangs 'og na khrims ma mchis*
2. *te | dus nyams pa ni gong ma gong ma nas byung bas | rgyal khams byin du dmas*
3. *shing | mnga' thang dus kyis bri ste | bka' rims kyis de ltar sil bur gyurd cing nub*
4. *pa las | || mes khri skyil lding chibs kha gyen tu bsgyur bsgyur nas bskyod pa la*
5. *stod kyi ya rabs kyis bla dang ya rabs su bstun nas chos lugs bzang po yun*
6. *tu 'phel zhing | bu tsa'i*²⁴⁴ *yig gtsang dang | sgo srid khyad par du 'phags par dgongs*

²³⁹ Read: *ni*

²⁴⁰ Read: *'khor*

²⁴¹ Read: *'khrug*

²⁴² Read: *khol*

²⁴³ Read: *g.yung drung*

²⁴⁴ Read: *bu tsha'i*

7. *nas mnga' phul na | rjes kyang chab srid lugs ltar zin te | mes mched*

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1. *gsum sku 'khrungs pa | mnga' ris bzang po la so sor bskal²⁴⁵ ba las | dngos*
2. *stag pu gug gi ya rabs kyi rje skal dang cho rigs dang mthun bar rje mnga' bdag*
3. *bkra shis mgon gyi zha snga nas kyang mched gsum gyi nang na lag sor gyi gung*
4. *mo ltar gcig tu dpangs su mtho ste | mched zla mnga' mdzad gzhan bas sku*
5. *tshogs dang sgam skyel²⁴⁶ lhag par yang che zhing | snga mar 'das pa'i yab mes*
6. *chos skyong ba'i rgyal po byang chub sems dpa'i spruld pa'i gdung rgyud dang 'tshams*
7. *sbyar du 'khrungs pa'i skyes bu chen po ltar bzhugs pa lags || slad na*

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1. *stod mnga' ris 'dir gtsug lag ni bon chos | shid ni nag po | gson dur*
2. *du brub cing sdig pas rdzongs su 'debs pa'i log lta can | sangs rgyas gyi*
3. *bstand pa'i mying yang myi grag pa | kla klo'i rgyal khams gling bar gyi mun pa*
4. *dang 'dra ba 'dir | spyi thun²⁴⁷ gyi dge ba'i bag chags cha phra mo sad pa dang | nyid nyid*
5. *kyi thugs rje dang | smon lam mthu can du gyurd pa'i dbang gis | zhi khro mched*
6. *nyis²⁴⁸ nyi zla phrugs gcig ltar sku 'khrungs te | gcen mnga' bdag 'khor re'i zha²⁴⁹*
7. *snga nas | gtsor myi chos kyi rgyal srid phyag tu bzhes bzhing | phyi'i dgra 'dul |*

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1. *nang gi khod ni snyoms | thugs dad pa'i shugs kyi dam tshig ltar sbed | sku spros*
2. *'jigs pa'i cha lugs drag mos brtan pa bsrung zhing mnga' ris nond bar mdzad*
3. *pa lags || || slad na gcung srong nge'i zha snga nas kyi sku che ba'i yon tan*

²⁴⁵ Read: *skal*
²⁴⁶ Read: *dkyel*
²⁴⁷ Read: *mthun*
²⁴⁸ Read: *gnyis*
²⁴⁹ Read: *zhal*

4. *mdor bsdu na | sku'i brjid bag ni ri rgyal bas kyang che | gsung gi bka' stsal*
5. *ni rgya mtsho'i rlabs ltar dus tshigs las myi g.yo' | | thugs kyi sgam*
6. *dkyel ni nyi zer bas kyang gsal | mdzad spyod kyi 'bras bu ni legs dgu'i*
7. *mthar phyind pas | grags pa snyand pas ni rgya mtsho'i mthas klas par khyab*

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1. *ste | myi phyed pa'i dad pa dang ldan ba'i byang chub sems dpa' mos pa dpyod*
2. *pa'i sa la gnas pa'i lags par grag ste'i skyes bu chen por sku 'khrungs*
3. *pas rgyal srid mchil ma'i thal ba ltar spangs nas thard par gshegs*
4. *te | lha bla ma ye shes 'od du mtshan gsol || sras mched gnyis*
5. *kyang thard par btsud de de nyid kyi gdung bcad | myi chos kyi mnga' dbon*
6. *mnga' bdag lha lde rtsan phul | rje byang chub sems dpa' yab sras gsum*
7. *gyis yab mes 'phrul bag can chos skyong ba'i rgyal po byang chub sems*

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1. *dpa'i spruld pa'i rjes bsnyags nas lhag par yang dkon mchog dbu*
2. *'phang bstod cing | sangs rgyas gyi bstan pa'i zhal 'dzind mdzad cing |*
3. *gtsug lag bon chos ni lha chos su mdzad | shid nag po ni dkar*
4. *por 'ongs bsgyur | nyid kyi mnga' ris la myi lha'i 'gram so sor bska²⁵⁰*
5. *tho ling gi dpal dpe myed lhun gyis grub pa'i gtsug lag khang dang | ta po'i*
6. *gtsug lag khang lastsogs pa mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang*
7. *mang du bzhengs | gtsor rgyal srid chos skor la gtims | 'bangs*

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1. *zhabs kyi rde'u las dbu'i mchod gnas su mdzad de dbu'i gtsug tu*
2. *bkur | 'bangs khyim pa rnams kyang skyabs su 'gro ba dang | dge bsnyen*

²⁵⁰ Read: *skal*

3. *dang bsnyen gnas la btsud cing chos dkar por 'ongs bsgyurd te | shes pa can*
4. *la rngan dkyigs | yon tan can la dge yon dang sbyar te | lha phyag 'tshal*
5. *ba la pang gong zhing | gsung rab byed pa la 'bul zhing | tha na dge bsnyen*
6. *byed pa la yang ban zhing stsald | rab tu byung ba la ni chos rtsigs |*
7. *yul dpon la ni chos khirms | rtsang stod la khor bu chung la stsogs*

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1. *pa so sor bkas gnang ste | chos dang srid bstan ba 'i rmeng²⁵¹ bzang po*
2. *thog mar bris | | de 'i slad nas 'bangs dad pa sad pa rnam rim*
3. *gyis 'dul zhing shes rab bskyed par bya ba 'i phyir yon tan thams cad*
4. *kyi 'byung gnas | mkhan po dar ma sa²⁵² la lastsogs pa dang | bod kyi*
5. *dge ba 'i bshes gnyen zi cung rnam nyis²⁵³ lastsogs pa spyang drangs |*
6. *dpal bsam yas lastsogs pa yab myes kyis bzhengs pa 'i mdo*
7. *sde dang sde snod kyi bstan bcos bod du bsgyur tshad spyang drangs nas re zeg²⁵⁴*

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1. *khang chen por brtsigs te | dge ba 'i bshes gnyen mkhas pa mang*
2. *po dang | gsung rab dpe cha mang po 'i rkyen 'tshogs pas mchod*
3. *gnas rig pa dang ldan ba chos la mos pa rnam mnyan pa la*
4. *btsud de | rtogs pa rim gyis 'phel nas | snum ras kyi sdong bu*
5. *'dra ba la bka 'i sgron ma shes rab kyi me chen po sbar te | stod ris*
6. *'dir log lta 'i tshogs tshang tshing gi mun pa 'dra ba bsal nas |*
7. *dam chos kyi bka ' drin ched pos phyogs yongs su khyab pa lags |*

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²⁵¹ Read: *rmang*

²⁵² Read: *dharmas pa la*

²⁵³ Read: *gnyis*

²⁵⁴ Read: *reg zig*

1. *slad na rje bla chen po lha lde brtsan gyis zha snga nas || gong du dkon mchog*
2. *gsum la bkur zhing dad | gnyis par chags²⁵⁵ 'og gi 'bangs la bka'*
3. *rtsis che zhing zhi des²⁵⁶ kyis 'dul | gsum par phyogs gzhan gyi mnga'*
4. *mdzad yab mched rnams la ni byams shing spyen che myi mdzad de | lhag*
5. *par yang chos khrims rgyal srid | yab mes dam pa rnams kyi lugs*
6. *ltar bskyangs te | rgya gar gi²⁵⁷ mkhan po dpal mar me mdzad ye shis²⁵⁸ dang*
7. *kha ce'i mkhan po tra ta ka ra lastsogs pa spyen drangs te | bod kyi dge ba'i*

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1. *bshes nyen²⁵⁹ sgra 'gyur gyi lo tsa ba chen po lastsogs pas rgyal ba'i yum*
2. *shes rab kyi pha rol du phyind pa brgyad stong ba'i 'greld pa lastsogs pa*
3. *mang du bsgyurd te | sku dang glegs bam lastsogs pa dkon mchog gi*
4. *gzugs brnyan mang du mdzad cing | mnga' ris zho mnan ba ltar bskyangs*
5. *pa chig gda' || || slad na zhi khro mched gsum la lha btsun*
6. *ba byang chub 'od kyi zha²⁶⁰ snga nas | gzho²⁶¹ nu la thard par gshegs te tshangs*
7. *par spyod pa yun ring du spyad | lhag par yang dkon mchog rgyan ris dang*

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1. *bcas pa zhal 'dzon du thugs dang bas mdzad de | myi chos kyi mnga' mdzad*
2. *bla blon gang gi yang zhal ngo g.yar ngor myi mdzad | gzhan yang khyad par du 'phags*
3. *pa'i dkon mchog gi gzugs brnyan mang du mdzad cing | bod kyi mkhas*
4. *btsun mang du spyen drangs nas mdo dang bstan bcos mang du bsgyur zhing bzhengs*
5. *ste | spyir ser chags kyi pha ma ltar bzhugs pa lags | | ∴ ||*
6. *slad na rje mnga' bdag chen po pa'i zha snga nas | sku dad pa*

²⁵⁵ Read: *chab*

²⁵⁶ Read: *bde*

²⁵⁷ Read: *gyi*

²⁵⁸ Read: *shes*

²⁵⁹ Read: *gnyen*

²⁶⁰ Read: *zhal*

²⁶¹ Read: *gzho*

7. 'i shugs dang sgam dkyel gyi rgya che yang | phyogs gzhan gyi yab mched

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1. myi sgam ba rnams kyi mdzad 'tshal ma phyigs pa 'gas spyen la phog
2. mnga' ris bzang po gzhan ni thugs la gzhag nas sku nas (gzho²⁶² nu)²⁶³ nas phyogs
3. gzhan gyi 'khrug pa la sku 'byams te sku rgya ma dang dge sbyor bde bar la²⁶⁴
4. mdzad pa'i skabs myi mnga' yang | yab mes bzang po'i zhabs rjes ma
5. slebs na myis dpyas²⁶⁵ kyis dogs pa dang | dge sbyor sna cig ma byas na
6. ngan song du thugs 'gyod kyis dogs te | tha na 'dron²⁶⁶ lam du dpe thug gi
7. gtsug lags khang bzhengs su gsol ba lastsogs pa sku rgya ba mang

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1. du mdzad de gtsor dkon mchog gnyan²⁶⁷ bar mdzad | phyogs gzhan du dwa 'khrug²⁶⁸
2. pa'i sna zug pas | sa bar gyi 'brog pa cung zhig sna zegs kyang zhang zhung
3. gi 'bangs glo ba nye ring dang mthon dman ma mchis par dus tshigs la
4. bab cing | mdzad shin tu rga²⁶⁹ ba'i dus su | dmag phogs rje la ma gtogs
5. par gnad du bsnund pa'i glo ba stor ba'i bka' chad dang | bka' babs spyi
6. khyab tu glo ba rgongs pa²⁷⁰ cig mdzad cing | zhang zhung snying tshoms kyi 'bangs
7. kyis gung skyid chen po bgyis te bka' drin gyis phog pa lags | |

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1. slad na rje bla ma chen po btsun ba zhi ba 'od kyi zha²⁷¹ snga nas sku bzhugs pa

²⁶² Read: *gzhon*

²⁶³ Inserted text

²⁶⁴ Read: *bde bar*

²⁶⁵ Read: *'phyas*

²⁶⁶ Read: *mgron*

²⁶⁷ Read: *bsnyen*

²⁶⁸ Read: *phrug?*

²⁶⁹ Read: *dka'*

²⁷⁰ Read: *dpa' dgongs ba*

²⁷¹ Read: *zhal*

2. *yang sku tshe stod la myi chos kyi chab srid phyag tu bzhes pa'i dus su |*
3. *'bangs da²⁷² dad can gyi rkyend kyis mched dbu' gas kyi 'khrug pa chen*
4. *po byung na yang | rje'i zha snga nas rang bzhin zhi des²⁷³ che zhing 'khrrel ltas²⁷⁴*
5. *la dgongs pas 'bangs glo ba nye ba dang | mtha'i srid tshan mang du bskongs*
6. *pas | skabs der mnga' ris phying ril du phyag tu 'gongs pa'i rgyu mang du*
7. *byung na yang | gcen mched la gnyen snying gis drung po'i 'brel thag*

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1. *gcod ma spyod de | 'bangs g.yar rgyal can gyi ma brdzangs nas |*
2. *tshod rig par mdzad pas mched dbu ma gas zhing mnga' ris kyang gyag*
3. *'dram su ma thal ba lags | | slad na sku tshe smad la rje mnga' bdag chen*
4. *po ni dbu 'byams | rje mnga' bdag chen po ni rab byung mdzad nas bzhugs*
5. *pa'i dus su | mnga' ris mnga' bdag tu rang babs su byung na yang | myi chos*
6. *kyi rgyal srid la ni sku skyo ba bzhes | yab dbu 'byams pa'i sras lags*
7. *pas | dbon la gnyen snying dang thugs rje 'khrungs | yab mes byang chub*

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1. *sems dpa' rnam kyi srol thugs la bzhag ste | dbon la*
2. *rgyal srid gtad | thard pa dang thams cad mkhyend pa'i phan yon*
3. *gzigs te | sras lha cig zho²⁷⁵ nu dang | btsun mo'i²⁷⁶ dam pa ni ldangs*
4. *la thugs ma chags par rab tu gshegs te | rgyal po'i dregs*
5. *pa spangs nas legs par gsungs pa'i chos 'dul ba ni lugs*
6. *bzhin du sku nyams su bzhes | | gsang sngags kyi dam tshig ni*
7. *(gzhung) bzhin du bsgom bsgrub mdzad | rgya gar dang kha ce'i mkhan po*

²⁷² Read: *dang*

²⁷³ Read: *bde*

²⁷⁴ Read: *khrel ltas*

²⁷⁵ Read: *gzhon*

²⁷⁶ Read: *mo*

1.[] *spyang drang bchan* [].
2. *lha gang sku ... du ... dang | gsung rab dang | mchod gnas*
3. *rkyen ris su phul ba lastsogs pa'i dum dge rtsa ni grengs mang du mdzad*
4. *spyir sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa dar par mdzad pa lags | slad na rje bla chen po*
5. *rtse lde rtsan gyi zha snga nas | snyeg ma'i dung sems ban 'dul dka' ba | dag*
6.*la..... dmu rgod gyi dus su | rgyal srid phyag tu bzhes na yang.....*
7. *mnga' ris gshis tsug mnan te ... |*
8. *ba dbu 'phang bstod cing | rgya gar gyi mkhan po mkhas pa*
9. *thugs dam dpe cha mang du bsgyur te | mnya...*

(3.3) Translation:

[1] . . . As for the “Lunar Dynasty”²⁷⁷ (*zla ba’i rigs*) they were the sons of King Pāṇḍu (*rgyal po Skya seng*), the young prince Siddhārtha (?) (*don bsgrub*), [the wind god] Vāyu (*Rlung lha*), Bhīma (’*Jigs sde*) [son of the wind god], Karṇa (*Kar rna*) and the Aśvin (*Tha skar*), and their demon grandchildren (*srin tsha bum skra ’greng*) and others. And the eldest son of King Dhṛtarāṣṭra (*rgyal po Yul ’khor skyong*), King Duryodhana (’*Thab dka*’), and the one hundred [Kaurava] siblings were born. As for how these [families] originated, their conflicts, and so on, that is as it is said in the treatise “*Ba ra ta*.”²⁷⁸

Now, moreover, the appointed kings were known as the four:

In the East, under the rising constellation of the Pleiades (*skar ma smyin drug*), were the Chinese Kings of science (*gtsug lag*): [2] they were appointed on the bases of examination and calculation of the signs of the three hundred [and sixty] *gab rtse* (“astrological charts”).²⁷⁹

In the South, under the rising constellation Canopus (*skar ma ri byi mo*),²⁸⁰ were the Dharma Kings of India: they ruled with a council of eighteen great men of renown,²⁸¹ or one would be chosen by an elephant rolling a golden vase with its trunk and whosoever’s [name came out] was empowered and appointed king.²⁸²

In the West, under the waxing moon (*zla ba tshes pa*), were the Ta zig Kings of Wealth: [here] whosoever was able to retrieve the precious jewel from the depths of a great ocean would be appointed king.

²⁷⁷ King Pāṇḍu had five sons from two wives: Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva.

²⁷⁸ It is interesting that the author (a) knows about the existence of the Mahābhārata and (b) classifies it as a *bstan bcos* (*śāstra*), a “treatise” (and not, for example, an epic). This is presumably because it was “Indian knowledge” such as is usually found in *śāstras*, from a Tibetan point of view.

²⁷⁹ Snellgrove (1967: 293) interprets *gab rtse* as “horoscope,” while Karmay (1972: 23, 145) translates it as “astrology” and “horoscope chart,” Lin (2007: 113 n.38), based on the Snellgrove’s work with the *gZi brjid*, writes that *gab rtse* “seems to resemble the Sino-Tibetan divination (*nag rtsis*).” It would appear that in practice *gab rtse* runs closer to the grain of various mechanical calculations based on celestial and other phenomena, at least in relation to *nag rtsis* or *’byung rtsis*, which incorporate and lean more heavily towards numerical and philosophical concepts like the *sme ba* and *spar kha*.

²⁸⁰ *skar ma ri byi mo* appears to be a corruption of *skar ma ri shi*.

²⁸¹ In ancient India, the custom of appointing a privy council of ministers (*mantrapariṣad*) was widespread. The early epics mention an elite group of *āmātyas* who served as an inner council to the king. In particular, the *Rāmāyaṇa* outlines eighteen heads of state (*īrthas*). For more on the topic of administrative practices of ancient India, see Sen (1998: 478-501) and Pandey (2000).

²⁸² *glang po che’i snas gser gyi ril ba bring ga ras dbang bskur ba rgyal por bsko’o* || The interpretation is based on understanding the verb *bring* [*ba*] here to be a copy error for the *sgril ba*, “to roll,” and *ga ras* to be a misspelling of *ga res* “whatever or whoever.”

In the North, under the rising constellation Polaris (*skar ma smye bdun*),²⁸³ were the Kings of War [Khrom] Ge sar: [here] whosoever was able to climb the crystal flight of stairs or was able [with one swing] of a sword to cut off the trunk of a Nepalese [3] elephant that had been killed was appointed king.

As regards to their [respective] teachers:

Seeing that in China [the people] could be subjugated by *gtsug lag* ("sciences"),

Mañjuśrī tamed them with the set of three hundred [and sixty] *gab rtse*.²⁸⁴

Seeing that [the people] of India could be subjugated by religion (*chos*),

the Bhagavat Śākyamuni tamed them with the precious *tripitaka* and other doctrines.

Seeing that [the people] of Ta zig could be subjugated by wealth,

the Noble Vaiśravaṇa tamed them with a mongoose-load²⁸⁵ full of precious jewels.

Seeing that 'Khrom Ge sar could be subjugated by military means [4]

IHa mo Pad rtse ka²⁸⁶ together with her 500 daughters tamed them.

Whether considered as a suddenly appearing king (*glo bur du spruld pa'i rgyal po*) as he is generally known in our Tibet (*skol bod*), or whether he is regarded as a lineage king or an appointed king (*rigs dang skos pa'i rgyal po*) as claimed in other sources, that a human should become the lord of men is not a thing of wonder. But as for the king of our Tibet, he was a god acting as the lord of men (*myi rje lhas mdzad*).

The ground on which the sPu rgyal btsan po resided was good:

he dwelt on the height of the blue heavens.

His *sku'i lha* was good:

²⁸³ *skar ma smye bdun* = the constellation next to *skar ma a brtan* > *skar ma brtan pa*. Also known as the Pole Star.

²⁸⁴ According to the *sBa bzhed* (Stein, 1961: 2), the Chinese emperor Kong rtse 'phrul chung (> Tang Taizong (?) r.629-649) was said to possess the 360 *gab rtse* of the science of divination (*gtsug lag gi gab rtse sum brgya drug cu yod*). He is subsequently referred to in the next line as the *rgya nag gtsug gi rgyal po*. The close parallel to that found in the Tholing text suggests a similar source. IOL Tib J 339 similarly mentions the "rgya nag gtsug lag gi rgyal po."

²⁸⁵ Here *ne li rkal pa* = *ne'u le sgal pa*.

²⁸⁶ *IDe'u*: 212 reads *lha mo pan rtsi ka*, which seems to render a Sanskrit word related to 'five' (*pañcīkā?*).

it was Khri bar la bdun tshigs.²⁸⁷

The way in which he came down to earth was good:

it was through a hole in the sky [5] that opened from the clearing of the clouds,

he came down with a light drizzle of rain from the sky.

The circumstances were good:

he possessed a nine-fold miraculous equipment.²⁸⁸

The land to which he descended was good:

it was on the precious place [lHa ri] rGya mdud [sic].²⁸⁹

[Beneath] the center of the sky,

on the back of the earth,

at the heart of the four continents,

enclosed by snowy mountain ranges,

at the source of the four major rivers,

the head of the three great streams,

at the crystal *stūpa* of Mount Ti se,²⁹⁰

the turquoise *maṇḍala* of Lake mTsho ma pang,²⁹¹

in the land of high peaks and pure earth,

the lord of men who walk upright,

for the sake of animals with manes,²⁹²

²⁸⁷ Khri bar la bdun tshigs is the father of gNya' khri btsan po. He is the middle of seven sons of Ya lha bDal drug the lord of the Phyva gods, thus the etymology of his name “the middle of seven.” For more on this and the term *sku lha* see section (2.3).

²⁸⁸ Granted by his father, Ya lha bdal drug's ninefold miraculous equipment (*'phrul cha*) consists of: “a conch-shell that blows itself, a bow that bends itself, an arrow that shoots itself, a coat of mail that helps to put itself on, a shield that helps to hold itself, a spear that pierces by itself, a cook called lDum bu, the priest for funeral rites and Nar la, the priest for exorcising the spirits that cause unnatural death (Karmay, 1998: 300). *dung 'phar po 'phar chung | dpal gyi gzhu rang rdung | dpal gyi mda' rang 'phen | khab rang gon | phub rang gon | mdung rang 'deb | phyag tshangs pa yod 'dren | g.yos pa rang byed | dri gshen ldum bu | 'dar gzhen nar la sogs de rnams byin no | (mKhas pa lde'u: 235)*

²⁸⁹ *rGya mdud* may be translated as “intricate knot” or “seal.” In this context, however, since the term is a place name, it seems more appropriate to leave it untranslated. For more on the location see note 99.

²⁹⁰ Mount Kailāśa.

²⁹¹ Lake Manasarovar.

²⁹² The *topos* is a well known one which finds a similar expression at the end of the first chapter of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (PT 1287: 1.62), in which the hero Sha khyi sings a victory song declaring the glory of the Tibetan king, stating that “he came as the lord of the black-headed [men] and for the sake of animals with manes” (*mgo nag gyi rje | dud mngog chags kyi rkyen du gshegs'o*).

from the godly state he came as the lord of men (*lha las myi'i rjer gshegs*). [6]

With regard to the system of the prevailing law (*gtsug lag gi thang khrims*): [it was] religion (*chos lugs*).

After forming the incredible fabric of his thoughts (*dgongs pa 'phrul gyis ras*):²⁹³ he opened [people's] eyes with the three kinds of privy counsel.

By the two decrees (*mol chad rnam gnyis*) and five kinds of commands (*bzhed rnam lnga*): the polity of Tibet was formed.

With the nine insignia [of great minister] (*yig btsang sde dgu*) and the eight emblems of heroism (*dpa' mtshan sna brgyad*): [the king] bestowed favours according to rank.

And it is said that even the four great [appointed] kings of the world (*'dzam bu gling na mnga' chen bzhi*) offered tribute.

A voice from the sky is said to have announced that the union of a rock demoness and a monkey produced a *yakṣa* son known as 'Dza ya who was an outcaste²⁹⁴ belonging to the race of the red-faced demons from the kingdom of carnivores; this *yakṣa* son was difficult [7] to tame and extremely poor in the system of prevailing law (*gtsug lag gi thang khrims*), it is said (*skad*).

Generally speaking in the primordial times this realm of Tibet was ruled by dark *yakṣas*, as a result the plateau was named Kha rag sgo dgu (“*Kha rag* with Nine Portals”).²⁹⁵ After that, since the *Klu* ruled, Tibet was known as Bod ka gling rgu.²⁹⁶ After that the Ma sangs of the nine bone lineages (*rus rgu ma sangs*) ruled and Tibet was known as Bod ka g.yag drug.

After that, since the six sons of Ra sangs ruled, Tibet came to be known as the Bod ka sde bco brgyad (“Region of Eighteen Tribes”). After that, as Tibet was ruled by forty-odd fragmented principalities and twelve kingdoms, so it was named the So kha brgyad (the “Eight Watchtowers”). [8]

²⁹³ An alternative translation would take *ras* here to mean “[light] ray,” so “following the appearance (*chags pas*) of the beam (*ras*) of his manifested mind (*dgongs pa 'phrul*), he opened...”

²⁹⁴ I read *ldo pa po* here as *gdol par*; for more on this passage, see discussion in section 2.3.

²⁹⁵ For a discussion on the toponym Kha rag and its possible location, see Ramble (2015). Here, the author proposes a location in the Western Himalayas, specifically in the area of Mustang.

²⁹⁶ Read: *dgu*

At the end of all these, when the sPu rgyal btsan po reigned, the name of the land was Bod Khams gsum Ru bzhi (the “Three Realms and Four Horns”).²⁹⁷

From the dark depths of the sky Nya gri btsan po [*sic*] suddenly arrived atop the earth as the lord of men, he acted as a guardian to protect in the manner of the gods.

The fruit of his actions:

was that of guardianship.

With his ears:

he heeded the advice of the lords above.

He protected and gave favour:

to the subjects that were below.²⁹⁸

Around that time the hands of men:

yo yo (shifty?).

The hands of women:

tug (?).

For clothing:

[it only covered?] the lower parts,

For food:

there were only dug-up tubers (*glo gro tsog*) and stitched intestines (*rgyu 'tshem bu*).²⁹⁹ [9] [Their] religion being entirely bad, during the time of the Divine Prince (*lha sras*) Grang ma gser thig, he had the desire to improve the religious tradition and introduce the tradition of dance and

²⁹⁷ A parallel passage appears in the *mKhas pa lde'u* (223-224) and a partial account can also be seen in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*: 1364. In the Tholing Manuscript while the specific name of the *dbang mdzad bcu gnyis* is not given the discussion is still present.

²⁹⁸ The translation of this passage is problematic, and difficult to know what to suggest. It looks as though it has been lifted out of an older text and stuffed in here. There are two things that are introduced by '*grub pa'i 'bras bu ni* (as for the fruits of his actions/ as for his accomplishments): 1. *srung snyan* and 2. *srung gyab*. As for 1: is the king the *rje gong na bzhugs pa* who listens (*gsan*) [to his subjects] with his ears (*snyan*)? Or is he listening to someone even higher. If so, who? As for what the term *sug tu nod pa* means it is difficult to say. Khyung bdag (has noted that in the common dialect of dBu gTsang *sug sbyin* is used similar to *lkog rngan sbyin* meaning “to bribe.” The author further points out, however, that *sug sbyin* in fact means something like a “gift” or “reward” or even as Dan Martin posits, a “gift in thanks for something.” In earlier times the term was possibly not established as a bribe as is the case today, but seems to have the meaning similar to a “thanks-giving” (*gtang rag*).

²⁹⁹ As in other places, these lines are emblematic of the archaic rhythmical prose that occur in the text, the result is that a certain degree of interpretation is needed. The use of *yo yo* and *bgab bgab* on page 9 are here clear indications of the sort of onomatopoeic terms that were more common in Old Tibetan. For more on this topic, see the section (2.2).

song. Their amusements were singing in circles, singing songs of lineage (*gdung*), dancing in unison and playing the drum, like tigers and other [animals] they engaged in theatrical performances. As the result of the practice there was nothing but men and women.³⁰⁰

Then, during the reign of Lord Dri gum btsan po, between the borders of China and Ta zig appeared a Bon po of 'A zha who held the heretical views of the Vaiśeṣikas.³⁰¹ With a magical display, which blazed brightly and shone clearly, (*lam lam ni 'bar | thog thog ni gsal ba*)³⁰² [10] they chanted and played the drum; as the fruit of their practice they made offerings to the gods of the living and they pacified the harmful ghosts of the dead. These Black Bon po [who did such things] flourished and their religious practice was exceedingly bad.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ Continuing from note 295, the lines above represent my translation of lines 8:3 to 9:5. These lines may originate from some probably ancient and unknown source. I have not been able to find any parallel, though their content is intriguing. The concept is clear in terms of the indigenous traditions, the remnants of which might still be gleaned in the customs of folk song and dance as well as that of the more formalized 'cham tradition.

³⁰¹ Worth considering is the neologism "allodoxes," coined by Scherrer-Schaub (1999a: 71). Surely here, the referent is however the doctrines themselves, and so one would assume 'allodoxist' for *īrthika* itself. I do not feel that such an expression (though quite apt) would fit comfortably into English translation, and hence, have not favoured it here.

³⁰² Tholing Manuscript reads: *lam lam ni 'bar | thog thog ni gsal ba'i rdzu 'phrul can du gsol*
lDe'u Jo sras reads: *lam lam ni 'bar thol thol ni smra*
mKhas pa lDe'u reads: *gnam la lhab lhab phur zhing kha nas thol thol smra*

³⁰³ Very little is known about the 'A zha (also rendered as *A ya*, *A yong(s)*, *Wa zha*, *Sa zha'i bon*). Their appearance within the Tholing Manuscript is, itself, a rare occurrence. The central, indeed, the only article on the topic has been produced by Charles Ramble (2007). Ramble's work presents a cross-disciplinary paper that presents both a comparative textual analysis and ethnographic local interviews, which designate the 'A zha as a distinct category of priest-ritualists with their own attributes, performances, and traditions. Comparing the five central texts, which discuss the "Aya," a few points in the Tholing Manuscript are worth bringing up here. Firstly, in contrast to the other texts which state that the 'A zha came from a region between India and sTag gzig, our text notes that they appeared from the borders of China and sTag gzig; implying that this is the 'A zha who had their kingdom near Kokonor (see for example map 2 by Guntram Hazod in Dotson, 2009: 166). Secondly, based on the comparative material presented by Ramble (2007) the characterization of the 'A zha witnessed in the Tholing Manuscript is similar, if slightly less detailed. Due to its imagistic onomatopoeic language (see previous footnote), the passage is quite difficult to translate. Nonetheless the image that is rendered (and the language used) is very similar to what is found in the *lDe'u Jo sras*, a text not included among those compared by Ramble. Though not needed in that author's paper, it is perhaps worth presenting and comparing here.

From the Tholing Manuscript:

de'i rjes la rje dri gum btsan po'i sku ring la | rgya dang ta zig gi sa 'tshams nas mu stegs bye brag pa'i lta ba 'dzind pa'i 'a zha'i bon po zhig byung ste | lam lam ni 'bar | thog thog ni gsal ba'i rdzu 'phrul can du gsol [±3s]³⁰³ ni gyer snyan dang rnga thabs | grub pa'i 'bras bu ni gson lha ni mchod | shin³⁰³ dri³⁰³ ni 'dul ba'i bon po nag po dar bas chos lugs rab tu myi bzang ste |

From *lDe'u Jo sras*:

khri btsan po'i sras gri gum btsan po te | 'di'i sku rin la rgya gar dang stag gzig gi 'tshams nas yul gyur rna pa zhes bya ba nas | ba zha'i bon po zhig byung nas | de lam lam ni 'bar thol thol ni smra | gnam gyi lha mchod | sa'i 'dre brdung | gshin gyi dri 'dul | gson gyi rim 'gro byed | rdo nag po lta bu gdum du 'brel pa zhig byung bas | rgyal te long btsan gyi sku gnyen no ||

The son of the btsan po, Gri gum btsan po, during his lifetime, there was a single Ba zha'i Bon po who came from the region called Gyur rna pa, which lay on the boarder between India and sTag gzig. Dazzling brightly his recitation would erupt [like thunder]; he venerated the gods of the sky, he drummed to the 'dre of the earth, he pacified the spirits of the dead, he performed rites for the living. He had appeared in such a way as when the pieces of black stone are joined together (= a bad sticking together?), and so he became the friend/kinsman (*sku gnyen*) of long btsan (= a *btsan po*?).

The variant that is found in *mKhas pa lDe'u* is nearly identical if more extensively dependent on the same sources as the shorter *lDe'u Jo sras* (see Ramble 2007). As is often the case, it appears that *mKhas pa lDe'u* made more extensive use of the sources used by *lDe'u Jo sras*. The latter, however, is closer in many respects to the Tholing Manuscript, which corroborates further the chronology of the three. Both *lDe'u Jo sras* and *mKhas pa lDe'u* have the 'A zha as coming from the boarders of

Even though Lord Śākyamuni had obtained perfect enlightenment in Bodhgaya and caused the sacred *dharma* to spread and flourish, the country of our Tibet was in a state resembling total darkness. It was [only] during the reign of lHa mTho do re snya btsan that the sacred *dharma* was first introduced. [And] although the mere *mu tri phyag rgya* and a single *pang kong phyag rgya pa*, written in Chinese, had been received, and [11] even though [the king] did not understand them as an object of veneration, he nevertheless looked at them as something attractive (*sdug [pa]*) and secret (*sba ba*) and so he honored them with gold and turquoise libations (*gser zhag dang g.yu skyems*).³⁰⁴ Consequently, it is said that his life span increased, he took control of the polity, and the gods assisted in his funeral rites.³⁰⁵

Later, during the time of the Ancestor Srong rtsan sgam po [*sic*], the tradition of the noble *dharma* was established, the Ra sa 'phrul snang temple was erected, he made the *Ratnamegha Sūtra* the object of his veneration, an [image of the] the divine Śākyamuni was brought (lit.: invited), mThon myin sam po re [*sic*] and the king and his subjects introduced the achievement (lit.: *siddhi*) of writing and the manifest letters were created.

[Srong btsan sgam po] regulated behavior according to the model of worldly conduct [12] based on the ten virtues:

Lest there should be killing,

[he introduced] blood payment.

Lest there be theft,³⁰⁶

India and sTag gzig, which, as Ramble and others have suggested, looks to be the area of Gilgit or thereabouts. The Tholing Manuscript on the other hand presents a geography that is more closely associated to the eastern Central Asian strip of territory “between Ta zig [*sic*] and China.” In similar fashion, we find the same in the *rGyal po bka' thang*; and, as in the parallel of the list of twelve minor kingdoms of Tibet, the *bKa' thang* presents a more archaic geography (and terminology) that is rarely, if at all, seen elsewhere except in Old Tibetan documents. As is repeatedly the case, we find again that the Tholing Manuscript seems to draw either from a different branch of sources or from more archaic versions of those used in Central Tibet. With this in mind, it is worth considering the possibility that the two *lDe'u chronicles* edited *rgya [nag]* for *rgya gar*. Similarly, we might say the same for the parallel passages found in *Nyang ral* and *dPa' bo gTsug lag*, which clearly have a common literary ancestry, as presented by Ramble.

³⁰⁴ As a pair, the ritual of offering *gser zhag* and *g.yu skyems* (lit.: gold bowl and turquoise libation) is somewhat archaic and not practiced amongst Tibetan Buddhist today. Rather the two have been combined into one in the liquid offering of *gser skyems* by the *gser skyems pa*, “the person who offered the gold libation,” which takes the form of, either, butter tea or more commonly beer and/or *chang*. A similar ritual as described in the text can, however, still be found among Bon po practices and liturgy; involving placing a small piece of gold turquoise in their respective bowls and a liquid being poured over them, hence rendering a gold and turquoise libation (*skyems*) and the use of a bowl (*zhag*). (See further discussion in section 1.4).

³⁰⁵ There are many accounts of the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet, with many variants. For full comparative list see Hiltrud Linnenborn (2004: 351-356) as well as Stein (2010: 191-215).

³⁰⁶ Literally: “taking without having been given” (*ma byin par len kyis dogs nas*). In the Vinaya, the meaning has even further connotations than just “theft.” It is also an injunction against monks producing food by farming or other means—they have to be given food by others.

[he developed the notion] of ‘polluted conduct’ (*grib*).³⁰⁷

Lest there should be illicit sex as a result of inappropriate desire,

[he developed the category of] adultery.

Lest there should be lying,

[he developed] the practice of calling to witness the fearsome *lha* and *klu* so that oaths would not be broken. He promulgated these and other good laws in accordance with religion and secular rule;³⁰⁸ the triple-gem was extolled and praised in society, and he revered them highly. Under these circumstances if one were not to act virtuously, the gods acted as monitors. From out of those who had arisen within the [royal] lineage (*gdung rgyud*), his life reached its end at the age of 81 and he departed to the sky. [13] During that time the polity was heightened, the helmet was mighty, and all intentions were achieved.³⁰⁹

Thenceforth in accord with the king’s merit, there appeared the Seven Wise Men including Khu lha bo ’go dkar, etc., and the Six Men of Great Martial Skill, who included ’Gos g.yag brag. [Of the latter group] rNgog ring la nag po was able to carry a baby elephant from Nepal. rNgegs gling gam was able to hold up a yearling yak. The Heroic mDa’ brtsan captured a lion by the tuft of hair on its head.

³⁰⁷ If slightly in a more condensed form, the version presented in the Tholing Manuscript is similar in most respects to what appears in *mKhas pa lDe’u*, *Ma ni bka’ ’bum*, and *Nyang ral*. Of particular interest is the idea that for the punishment of thieving there is the concept of *grib*, which I tentatively translate as “polluted conduct.” It is unclear what the meaning is supposed to be; however, in comparison with what appears in the parallel texts, we might speculate that the *grib* refers in some manner to being “cast out” or “banished” from the law-abiding administration. In several acts of thieving (say from the king), we find that corporal punishment is enacted, a punishment that may also be an antidote to *grib*. Similarly, for lechery, rather than more explicit punishment the Tholing Manuscript simply states [’]chal—“adultery” in both cases. On the whole, the Tholing variant is terse but complete, leaving it to the reader to fill in the blanks.

³⁰⁸ The four fundamental laws against murder, theft, lechery, and bearing false witness, are found in a number of early sources. These have been the subject of examination and comment by a number of scholars (see section 2.4). In *mKhas pa lDe’u* it is part of the “six proclaimed royal laws” (*bka’ lung rgyal khirms drug*), where, the last two are the law of the servants not revolting and not digging up the tombs. Similarly, in the *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* there is a further addition of abstaining from intoxicants. The known antecedents to these laws, found among Old Tibetan documents, have been presented by Dotson (2007). The central laws appear as the first four of the 10 non-virtues. The four fundamental laws based on the ten virtues are repeatedly associated with the time of Srong btsan gam po. In a conflation of history and in describing the creation of the state-administration and governance of Tibet under the reign of Srong btsan sgam po, the four laws are said to be a direct result of the introduction of writing. Thus the two are closely linked: the royal laws according to the 10 virtues (*dge ba bcu la brten pa’i rgyal khirms bcas pa*, or: *rgyal pos dge ba bcu’i khrim bcas*). Within the “Section on Law and State” we are given an abbreviated list of what appear elsewhere as part of the Six Codes. A comparison of the language used in parallel texts shows some unique qualities to that which is presented in the Tholing Manuscript, for a further discussion of this passage see section (2.4) here in, as well as (Uray 1972a).

³⁰⁹ *chab srid ni mtho | dbu rmog ni brtsan | dgongs dgu ni grub ste* | Perhaps one of the most emblematic lines resounding the institution of divine kingship in Tibet the terms herein are dense with meaning, and the translation cannot possibly capture their semantics. Many parallels exist in some of the most important political texts from Old Tibet, foremost among these being: the 820/1 Treaty pillar (east face: 51-54), the ’Phyong rgyas bridge inscription, the rKong po bDe mo sa inscription, which reads *lha sras kyi chab srid’di ltar mtho | dbu rmog brtsand |*, the ‘Prayers of the foundation of the De ga g.yu tshal monastery’ (IOL Tib J 751) (for a translation and discussion see: Kapstein, 2009: 33-34), in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (PT 1287: 336).

'Gong g.yas cung brtsan filled a deer skin with sand and was able to swing it round his head. Cog khru 'brong khong thol brgyad was able to catch and rein in a wild yak rampaging down hill. gNon rgyal mtshan [14] snang grags shot an axe-bladed arrow at hawks flying in the sky and severed them into two equal halves. gNon khri 'dus yul byin pulled up a wild horse that had fallen into a chasm. All those men of great physical strength appeared at that time.³¹⁰

Of the seven wise men the first
 was the son of the 'Gheng [clan] Ru las kyes.
 If one asks what his wise deeds were:
 Having smelted [ore] with coal from stone
 he made copper, iron, gold, and silver.
 He bored holes in wood
 to create ploughs and yokes.
 Using two matching [beasts of labor]
 he ploughed the meadows and plains³¹¹ into fields.
 The first [person] to possess these wisdoms
 was the son of the 'Gheng [clan] Ru las skyes.³¹² [15]

³¹⁰ For a comparative list of variants in these figures names, see appendix three.

³¹¹ The term used here is *spang mtha'* which may be rendered equally as "wild plains" or literally "border meadows." I have chosen meadows and plains to be consistent with the translation done by Dotson (2006) as well as to represent the two *spang* and *mtha'*. However, it is worth noting that in *lDe'u Jo sras* we have the word *thang* ("plain") rather than *mtha'* ("border").

³¹² A central character in the myth of Gri gum btsan po, Ru la skyes is the heroic protagonist who defeats Lo ngam, recovers the body of the bTsan po and restores the line of sPu rgyal. See Hill [2006] for a translation of the story. In the earliest version of the narrative, which is found in the first chapter of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, the hero goes by the name of Ngar le skyes, the son of lHa bu Ru le skyes. The story goes that the father lHa bu, the son of the bKrag clan, fights with the rHya clan who breaks the bKrag family line and carries off their possessions. However, one of lHa bu Ru le skyes' wives escapes, pregnant, to her homeland. The child Ngar le skyes, cut off from his clan title, is born to avenge both his father's and his king's death. When he came of age, the boy asked his mother, "If everyone has a king (*rjo bo*), where is my king, if everyone has a father, where is my father?" (PT 1287: 28-29, see Hill [2006: 94] for a full translation). In the version presented in the *mKhas pa'i dga ston*, the hero, having successfully avenged the injustices of the land is praised by the bTsan po and given the name Khu bo lHa bu sMon gzung. Thus, as Dotson has pointed out, the narrative is an ethnogenesis myth for the Khu clan. Pa'o gTsug-lag writes,

The king [Bya-khri/ Pu-te Gung-rgyal] said, 'You, Ru-las-skyes, best of men, acted in the manner of a father by raising [me] to the throne, and acted in the manner of a son by tending to the blood of my father. All men great and small envy you. Thus I give you the name Paternal Uncle Divine Son Object of Aspiration (Khu-bo Lha-bu Smon-gzung).' He thoroughly repaid his kindness. It is said that the king, having lost his paternal uncle, gave [Ru-las-skyes] the clan name 'paternal uncle' (Khu). This is Ru-las-skyes, who became the earliest of Tibet's seven magical and wise ministers.

rgyal pos mi mchog ru las skyes khyod kyis// nga yi yab kyi go bgvis rgyal sar bton// sras kyi go bgvis yab kyi sku mtshal gnyer// che chung med pa'i mi kun khyod la smon// ming yang khu bo lha bu smon gzungs zhes// btags shing drin du gzo ba rgya cher byas// rgyal pos khu bor bas khu'i rus su thogs skad// bod yul 'phrul blon mdzangs pa'i mi bdun gyi// thog nar gyur pa ru las skyes 'di yin// (*mKhas pa'i dga ston*: 163-64, translation by Dotson 2006: 399).

Before that there was no crop harvest in Tibet.

The second wise one:

was Khu lha bo mgo gar.

If one asks what he did:

He divided fields into *dor* and pasturelands into *thul*.³¹³

He wrapped the highland rivers into bundles³¹⁴

and channeled it as night water and day water.³¹⁵

Having bled the lakes

he ran them into canals.

The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:

was the noble son of the Khu [clan], Khu lha bo mgo gar.

Before that [without] channeled water there was no ploughing.³¹⁶

In later histories, where the father's name is conflated with that of his son, there is an interesting etiological myth, which has it that the hero's mother is impregnated in her dream and, upon waking, has a vision of a white yak. Her son, who is born prematurely, is further incubated within a wild-yak horn, which the mother has placed in her bootleg. Thus, the full name as it appears in *lDe'u* is: Rwa las skyes Ngar las Yu la brten (sic), or "Born from the horn Nurtured-up-from-the-shin" (*lDe'u*: 246). Likewise, it is clear that the full name provided, which is given in later histories, is a hyphenated one combining both father and son's names as presented in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.

In the Tholing Manuscript, the name recorded is yet another clan name—"son of 'Gheng [clan] Ru las skyes. The *nomen* 'Gheng has been the subject of multiple studies which argue the various meanings of the word as it appears in various contexts. Uray has addressed these arguments and substantiated the arguments of Thomas that in the case of 'Gheng-ro we are dealing with the clan name of a people from the *Nob* region, identified by Thomas as south of Chinese Turkestan and by Uray as most likely the area occupied by the thousand-district of the Sum pa Horn. It does not seem a coincidence, therefore, that the syllable 'dren should appear in the full name of Ru las skyes as it is presented in the myth provided in both *lDe'u Jo sras* and *mKhas pa lDe'u*. Interestingly the syllable may also be found in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* referring to "when the boy could stand [at knee height]" or was literally: "upright" a time which is described in the *Yar lung rjo bo chos 'byung* as being a child of the age of ten years old. Based on all this, might it perhaps been the conflation of all these ideas which led to the 'Gheng clan?

³¹³ For an explanation of *dor* and *thul*, see footnote 315 below.

³¹⁴ e.g. "He confined water in ponds/small units."

³¹⁵ The imagery is distinctive and seemingly relevant though the exact meaning is difficult to get at. One possibility (as suggested in conversation with Charles Ramble (March, 2017), is that until there were reservoirs the water could get down only at certain times of day because it was frozen up on the glacier.

³¹⁶ The second wise man is Khu lha bu mgo dkar, son of Ru las skyes (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston*: 165). Placing him very early in Tibetan history Khu Lha bu mgo dkar appears third in the 'sucession of prime ministers' as presented in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (PT 1287: 63-117). The division of agricultural and pastoral lands into *dor* and *thul*, together with the creation of an irrigation system, brings order to the earlier developments in agriculture and represents the first instance of a Tibetan legal administration. An example of the land division comes up in a section of PT 1078, a document concerned with a land dispute, it reads, "five and one half *dor* of crop fields are tallied as six, and..." (*rkya zhing dor phye dang drug drug mnyam bar khram du btab las*) (PT 1078, l. 16, translation based on Dotson 2006: 400). On this Dotson writes, "The text goes on to list the measurements of several other fields, in *dor*, according to the register of the field records (*zhing-yig dkar-cag*)." *Dor ka* is also described as "the area of a field that is able to be ploughed by two oxen" (*rmon phyugs gnyis kyis nyen gcig la sa zhing rmod thub pa'i gi rgya khyon la'o*) (for a discussion and analysis of these terms see Iwao (2009: 89-108). *Thul* is defined in the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* as: a long-ago Tibetan name for herd of cattle with a certain number *gna' snga mor bod la sgo phyugs ngo grangs nges can zhig yod pa'i khyu tsho'i ming*. In this way we might speculate that it was a suitable amount of grazing land per *thol* of livestock. Stein (1972: 50) suggests a translation of the term as "hides" and suggests the term as one regarding

The third wise one:

was mThon myin sam po re.

If one asks what he did:

He created all the pure³¹⁷ [consonants and vowels] (*ka ka ki ki ku ku*), [16]

the vertical line *shad* that separates [phrases]

and the inter-syllabic dot *tshag* which marks uttered [syllables].

The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:

was *ka ka ki ki* mThon myin sam po re.³¹⁸

Before that there was no written system in Tibet.

The fourth wise one:

was rNgegs Khri bzang Yang la ston.

If one asks what he did:

He assembled mountain households down into the valley

and he built fortresses over the high summits.

He ploughed the borders of the meadows into fields

and built houses along their borders.

The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:

was the son of the Yar lung rNgeg [clan], Khri bzang yang ston.

taxation. This would make sense in light of the Old Tibetan Annals. It is said by nomads that the term *thul ka* refers to the manner of calculation of cows, which measure one yak “hide” to one coat the standard is fixed to six sheep’s skin (*’brog las la thu ka zhes / gos tshag gcig ldeng ba’i phyugs kyi grangs brtsi tshul la’o / zhes byung bas / gos tshags gcig la lug drug gi pags pa’i tshad gzhi dang / lug drug la g.yag gcig gi grangs brtsi srol de / bod kyi mtshas bal yul gle mi khul du deng bar brtsi bar sngang*). (The Tholing Manuscript together with *lDe’u Jo sras* and *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* place him as the second wise man, *Ne’u paṇḍita* has him as the fifth. Likewise, *Ne’u paṇḍita* places Ru las skyes third instead of first and places Thon mi between these two in the fourth spot, while Tholing and Jo sras place the great grammarian third. *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* places him fourth, and has the song of Mong, Khri ngor snang btsun in the third).

³¹⁷ “All the pure...” is reached by the following: *ma don = ma rong = rung ba* meaning “all” and *rtsang = gtsang* meaning “pure.”

³¹⁸ Literally the text appears here as *ka ka ki ki* mThon myin sam po re. Generally speaking, there is no agreement among scholars regarding where mThon mi sambhoṭa came from or whether he even existed (See discussion by Wangdu [2012]). For example, based on etymology, scholars have argued that he comes from the district of sNye mo thon and the village of Lur ra ga ba and is the son of mThon mi a nu with the name Sambhoṭa, as well as the minister A ku Thon mi believed to be the grammarian’s father. mThon (as seen in the Tholing Manuscript and PT 1287) = ’Thon (dBa’) / --> Thon and sometimes Thu, Thon mi a nu’i bu sambho ta (*Deb ther dphyid kyi rgyal mo’i glu dbyangs*: 20) Thon mi Bring sto re a nu (*lde’u chos ’byung*: 298), bThon mi sam po ra - ’lo dgu brgya yas mas su song ba’i snga rabs. For a detailed discussion concerning this figure’s name see Sørensen (1994: 167-68).

Before that, communities lived in the mountains.³¹⁹ [17]

The fifth wise one:

was the great son of the 'Gos [clan], Khri bzang ya blag.

If one asks what he did:

He instituted the royal guards of the four directions and the ritual for the emperor.

With the 42 military thousand-districts he attacked the enemies at the borders.

Since he instituted the payment of blood-price for man[-slaughter] the worries of future generation of ministers were reduced.

The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:

was the great son of the 'Gos [clan], Khri bzang ya blag.

Before that, there was no [organisation according to] clan and thousand-district (*rus dang stong*).³²⁰

The sixth wise one:

was Mong Khri Do re snang tshab.

If one asks what he did:

Thanks to the [use of the] *bre* and *srang*,

the calculation of tax collection became clear.

With the measures *phul* and *khyor*³²¹ to [measure] food provisions,

there was mutual happiness and agreement in commerce. [18]

The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:

³¹⁹ The fourth wise one is rNgeg Khri bzang Yang la ston (*sic*), son of the Yar lung clan of rNgeg Khri bzang Yang ston (*sic*) / sNyags Khi bzang Yang ston, son of Rngogs, Khri bzangs Yab brten. Macdonald (1971: 288 n. 148) demonstrates that rNgegs is later written gNyags. Dotson has further suggested that gNgogs is the same as rNgegs (Dotson 2003: 64). This is substantiated in the Tholing Manuscript, in which rNgegs is properly rendered here as well as earlier with the second of the seven great athletes, rNgegs gling gam. Interestingly, the first athlete rNgog ring la nag po suggests two distinct names in contrast to Dotson's hypothesis. The name rNgegs appears later in Tholing Manuscript as the name of one of the assassins who killed dPal 'khor btsan, the last bTsan po of the imperial period. In other histories, this figure goes by the name s/gNyags. Regardless of these variants, the clan is a prominent one of central Tibet and is clearly indicated as such in the Tholing Manuscript, which directly states that his is the son of a Yar lung clan.

³²⁰ Khri bzang Ya blag (*sic*), son of the great 'Gos [clan] / mGos Khri bzangs Yab lhag is described in both the Tholing Manuscript and *IDE'u Jo sras* as the fifth, while he appears in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* and *Ne'u pañdita* as the sixth. He is said to have been a great reviser of the Tibetan Legal system (see Dotson 2006: 213-218). Mgos Khri bzang Yab lhag is recorded in the Old Tibetan Annals to have been appointed as minister in the hare year 763. In the Tholing Manuscript, this figure is mentioned again at the time of Khri Srong lde btsan, particularly in relationship to the revising of the legal system.

³²¹ See footnote 81 for a discussion on the standardization of weights and measure.

was the son of the Mong, Khri Do re snang tshab ya 'dras.

Before that, there were no weights and measures (*bre srang*) in Tibet.³²²

The seventh wise one:

was sTag brtsan sdong gzigs.

If one asks what he did:

[Since] *mdzo*, *rtol*, calves, and sheep were herded wherever pasturelands were good,

he made clear laws for herding cows, shifts for oxen, and shifts for [other] livestock.

Having bound grass into bundles

the summer hay was made available for the winter.

The first [person] to possess these wisdoms:

was the great son of sNyer [clan], sTag brtsan sdong gzigs.

Before that [19], there was no system of shifts for [herding] the livestock.³²³

Those great miraculous [innovations] also appeared as blessings due to the fact that the ancestors had been practicing the noble *dharma*.³²⁴

+ As a consequence, the [karmic] fruits of those who held power successively in this lineage (*gdung rabs*) ripened in this life or the next; apart from that, subsequently because (something was diminished/spoilt? *nong pa*) even though the noble *dharma* was established to a small extent in Tibet it was only + ³²⁵ . . .

. . . During the reign of the ancestor Khri Srong lde brtsan, the scriptures of the noble *dharma* were spread, and he was asked to found one hundred and eight [temples]: the spontaneously arisen monastic institution (*gtsug lag khang*) of the Glorious bSam g.yas [*sic*], sKa 'tshal [*sic*], Khra 'brug,

³²² According to the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, Mong Khri to re is counted as the third of the wise ministers. He is placed in the reign of sTag bu sNya gzigs; however, according to Dotson he should be placed at the time of gNam ri slon mtshan. Thus, Dotson (2006: 401) writes, "Jo sras's placement of Mong in the catalogue after Mgos khri-bzang Yab-lhag demonstrates that the list is out of chronological order."

³²³ The seventh wise one sTag brtsan sdong gzigs son of Ya 'dras mong is the same in *IDe'u Jo sras* and *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*. However, in the latter he is stated to be just after mGos Khri bzang Yab lhag. In *Ne'u paṇḍita*, he is counted as the first of the seven wise men.

³²⁴ The version of the seven wise men as redacted in the Tholing Manuscript is nearly identical to that found in *IDe'u Jo sras* (114-115). For a comparison, see Dotson (2006: 392-403) as well as appendix three.

³²⁵ Interlinear addition.

rGyang, Byams sprin, the monastic institution in the borderlands of Kashmir (*mtha' kha ce'i [sic] gtsug lag khang*) bDud rtsi 'byung gnas(?), and others.³²⁶ In the year of the horse they were all consecrated.³²⁷

The Indian [20] *mKhan po* Pad ma Sam bha ba and Bo de sad twa (*bodhisattva*, i.e., Śantaraksita) and others, [together with] the *mKhan po* of Za 'or [*sic*], gNya na shan ti (Jñānaśānti), and the *mKhan po* of China Ma ha ya na (Mahāyāna), along with other scholar-monks were invited [to Tibet].³²⁸

³²⁶ The first paragraph on the life of Khri Srong lde btsan carries significant weight in terms of the arc of the narrative as well as in the study of early Tibetan history and historiography. Within our own text, the first few lines mark the period when the royal court develops into a truly Buddhist kingdom. Likewise, it is also the first time that there is an important listing of major historic religious sites. Further, at the end of the five-line paragraph, there is the first semblance of an actual date (see following footnote). Curiously, however, in stating that the Khri Srong lde btsan founded 108 temples and border temples, the passage clearly alludes to the story of Srong btsan sgam po and the narrative of “Taming of the Supine Demoness.” The reference is further augmented by mention of the important sites of sKa 'tshal, Khra 'brug, and [Grom pa] rGyang, in addition to the western border temple of Byams sprin. While the building of 108 temples alone can be cited as a fairly stock trope, in its given context, the line is most often associated with the narrative of Srong btsan sgam po. Here, Khri Srong lde btsan is credited with the building of three of Tibet's four most important temples. This is not, to my knowledge, found elsewhere. In other words, what is presented in the Tholing Manuscript goes against the currents of Tibetan historiography from Central Tibet. The contrast, therefore, between the chronology provided in the Tholing text with that of the general trend of post-Imperial Tibetan historiography raises interesting questions regarding the actual chronology of events (if forever lost) as well as the development of Tibetan histories.

Commonly known as the “four horn and [eight] border-suppressing temples” (*ru bzi mtha' 'dul yang 'dul*) the group of twelve *vihāra* are purported to have been built by Srong btsan sgam po in order to pin down the demoness that is the Tibetan landscape, as divined by Chinese princess Kong jo (gTsang 'phrang was built to suppress her right hip, Grom pa Rgyang to suppress her left hip, Khram 'brug to suppress the left shoulder, and Ka tshal to suppress the right shoulder). The earliest source for the narrative scheme appears in the *bKa' chems ka khol ma*, while the *locus classicus*, as followed by Aris is produced in the *Ma ni bka' 'bum*, both central texts in the Srong btsan sgam po as Avalokiteśvara narrative. The episode is repeated in many of the earliest, post-imperial, histories of Central Tibet. A summary of the variant schemes of the ‘four limb’ and eight “border-suppressing” temples is provided by Sørensen (1994: 561-72). In his examination, which does not really stray from Aris (1979), Sørensen notes that while the scheme is continually reproduced in later histories, there is next to no mention of it in earlier pre *phyi dar* sources. Further to this point, Sørensen, based on the *lDe'u Jo sras*, demonstrates that in fact only a minor number of the 108 temples were in fact erected during the life of Srong btsan sgam po; he tentatively suggests that these might be the important twelve from the central scheme. Early sources, however, do not necessarily support this hypothesis. For example, the imperial inscriptions (such as those at bSam yas and sKar cung) only credit Srong btsan sgam po with the building of the Ra sa gtsug lag khang, and it is only after the completion of bSam yas, at the end of the eighth century, that these sites become the center for yearly celebrations. Sørensen and Hazod (2005) convincingly argue that the building of Khra 'brug may have occurred during the life of Khri lDe gtsug btsan, who is historically closer to the Chinese Princes Kong jo as well as her son Khri Srong lde btsan.

In many respects, while the actual chronology for the building of these four major and eight minor temples remains unclear, the chronology as witnessed in the Tholing Manuscript offers a plausible rendering of the successive phases of temple building and the longer time span for the assimilation of Buddhism in Tibet.

³²⁷ With regard to the building of the bSam yas *gtsug lag khang*, which marks the beginning of monasticism in Tibet, the Tholing Manuscript notes that it was completed and consecrated in the year of the horse. The text elaborates that in this single year all the temples at the heart and on the borders were also consecrated. The reference to the year of the horse most likely correlates to the year 778-779, which is consistent with approximation that have thus far been put forward by Tibetologists. In the *dBa' bzhed*, we read that the construction of the main temple of bSam yas was completed in the year of the sheep; however, Wangdu and Diemberger (2000: 68 n.232) point out that “like *dBa' bzhed*, Nyang-ral's *chos 'byung* (357) has five years but displaces the period by one year: a tiger year for the beginning and a horse year for the completion. Similarly, the Fifth Dalai Lama, critically considering the duration of twelve years, suggested a five-year span, from tiger year to horse year (*dPhyid kyi rgyal mo glu dbyangs* 59, 61).” Given the layered aspects of the project, it becomes difficult to ascribe an exact date for the completion of bSam yas. Sørensen (1994: 376 n.1244), without access to the *dBa' bzhed*, concludes that the years 762/3-774/5 for its erection, 776 for the celebration of its completion and 779 for the final consecration. Regardless of the two year discrepancy between 778 and 779, we might safely assume that the Tholing Manuscript refers here to the year of the horse which fell in 778. It is worth noting that the bSam yas pillar edict, the earliest document relating Buddhism in Tibet, declares the allegiance of the *btsan po* to maintain Buddhism can be dated to between 782-799, marking the year of the horse as a prime candidate for this testament.

³²⁸ To ensure the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, Khri Srong lde btsan is said to have invited many scholar-monks (*mkhas btsun*). Among them the most important was the tantrika Padmasambhava and the *paṇḍita* Śantaraksita. The trio made up what became

The translator (*sgra bsgyur gyi lo tsa ba*) sNa nam Ye shes sde, and Ka ba dpal rtsegs, and Co ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan, and others, composed translations of the Buddha's words and commentaries (*bka' dang bstan bcos kyi sde snod*).³²⁹

[Khri Srong sde brtsan] ensured that the precious monastic community was listened to [and] he made his subjects take them as their object of worship, starting from the pebbles underneath their feet, and hold them in highest esteem. [21] And from amongst the ministers of those respective subjects who had faith (in the *dharma*), the great minister 'Gos Khri bzang ya blag established a council on religion and politics.³³⁰

famously known as the *mkhan slob chos gsum*, “the three: abbot, *ācārya*, and dharma [king].” The presentation of the two masters as they appear in the text is a bit garbled. The title *mKhan [po]* usually denotes the bodhisattva Śantaraksita, while Padmasambhava should have the title of *Slob [dpon]*. Further, as mentioned earlier in section (1.3) the spelling of Padmasambhava (Pad ma Sam bha ba) is emblematic of the archaic nature of the text. The list is further extended to the *mkhan po* from China Mahāyāna, a famous early master in Tibet's Buddhist conversion who taught Zen early on and was famously defeated in the debate at bSam yas. His mention here among the group alludes to the famous ecclesiastic gathering. A fourth figure, the *mkhan po* of Za hor gNya na shan ti (Jñānaśānti) is yet unidentified; however, again, there seems to be some confusion or overlap due to the fact that the *mkhan po* of Za hor is often associated with Śantaraksita, who was known to be the son of the king of Za hor.

³²⁹ Next in the catalogue of scholar-monks are those key figures who composed the translation of Buddha's words and commentaries. The group, together with their work, represent the early beginnings of the first Tibetan Buddhist canon, which are essentialized as the Three Baskets or *Piṭaka* (*sde snod*). (Specific scriptures, or specific sets of scriptures, were made to represent each of the Three Baskets. The set of *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures represented the Sutra Basket, the main Vinaya texts were, of course, the Vinaya Basket, and the *Abhidharma-samuccaya* in particular stood for the Abhidharma Basket). The translating triad of Ka ba dpal brtsegs, Cog ro klu'i rgyal mtshan and sNa nam zhang ye shes sdes are well known in the history around the creation of the Tibetan Canon. Cited as having translated the Abhidharma of both Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, the three are well known to have worked on much of the three baskets. Dan Martin has pointed out that sKa is a native of 'Phan yul and that Zhang is of the sNa nam clan from the area of Ngam shod. According to a Dunhuang text, Cog ro, a native of the Yar lung valley, is said to have worked with Jnanagarbja (Richardson 1998: 190). All three worked closely with the great Kashmiri *paṇḍita* Jinamitra, a personage who is thought to be perhaps the most important Indian figure in the transmission of the Abhidharma to Tibet (Skilling 1994: 122). None of the members of this important triad are mentioned in the *dBa' bzhed*; however, they are in the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* as part of life of Khri gTseg lde btsan (*alias* Ral pa can). Martin (2002: 339) has commented on this, stating the he is “doubtful [of] the account in other historical sources which would place...the three Tibetan translators' activities in the times of Khri Srong lde btsan.” The trio appears as such in the *Rgyal rabs* as part of a group of nine, however, in an earlier list of nine presented in *mKhas pa lde'u* the three are not present. There is mention of the three in *dBa' bzhed* as part of the life of Ral pa can. However, the text implies that they were already working in the court at this time. This fact is further corroborated in later text internal evidence, in which sNa nam ye shes sde [*sic*] is mentioned (*dBa' bzhed*: 26b), alluding to the group of nine translators. Here, the figure is presented shortly after the death of Khri Srong lde btsan and during the short reign of his eldest son Mu ne btsan po. The close proximity in chronology between the death of the father, the reign of Mu ne btsan po, and the subsequent reign of Ral pa can, suggest that the translating trio lived and worked throughout the reigns of all three kings.

³³⁰ 'Gos Khri bzang ya blag [*sic*] is recorded in the *Old Tibetan Annals* as having become chief minister in the year 764/65 (Dotson 2009: 133, and PT 1287: 113). With regard to the council on *chos* and *srid*, Sørensen writes, “During [Khri-srong lde-btsan's] reign the Buddhist tradition gained increasingly a firm foot in Tibet. In order, no doubt, to reconcile and neutralize the growing resentment to this development, the minister mGos (Khri-bzang yab-lhag) is recorded to have requested, probably around 780-785 A.D., the king to effectuate the composition and compilation of a series of *skye bo mi chos kyi lo rgyus*, i.e. texts and accounts of the ruler's genealogy (*rje'i gdung rabs*), on social (or territorial) division (*sa bcad*) of the people and narratives on conventions, etiquette and protocol vis-à-vis the nobility (*ya rabs*), but also stories (*gtam sgrung*), accounts and expositions on general good social deportment and on the heritage and virtues of the royal ancestors etc. including possibly also a general guideline for an ancestor cult or worship” (Sørensen 1994: 3, n.6).

Later on Zhang rGyal mtshan lha snang,³³¹ Shud pu rgyal To re nga myi³³² and Ngam lan sTag ra glu gong³³³ founded the four large [corner] *stūpas* [of bSam yas] and others.³³⁴ From among the subjects there were a great many people who engaged in meritorious activities, and the king and all the subjects swore oaths that they would never abandon the holy doctrine. So the *dharma* was made to flourish. [22]

From [Khri Srong sde brtsan] three brothers [were born]. During the reign of the Divine Prince Mu ni btsan po, it is known that he was very pure of heart and the Tibetan subjects were well and happy; although he wished that he could spread *dharma* he reigned for only nineteen months, [when] he was assassinated by his mother cutting his life short.³³⁵

³³¹ A minister under Khri Srong lde btsan, Zhang rGyal mtshan lha snang (sic), is purported to have built the red *stūpa* and is known in the *dBa' bzhed* as sNa nam rGyal tsha lha snang. This chief minister held a powerful position in the later part of Khri Srong lde btsan's life and is mentioned in the royal edict reproduced in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*. He is further mentioned in Chinese sources to have become the chief minister in 782 (see Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 67, n. 220).

³³² The second minister, Shud pu rGyal to re nga myi (sic), is purported to have built the white *stūpa*. In the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, there is a minister by the same name (and spelling) as we find in the Tholing text. However, he is mentioned at the end of the list of early “ministers who possessed magical powers” (*blon po 'phrul dang ldan te*), which would place him at a time before the historical period beginning with gNam ri Srong btsan. He is similarly mentioned in the *dBa' bzhed*, though here by a slightly later orthography. Elsewhere we find yet another name of Shud pu dPal gyi seng ge, who, as Sørensen (1994: 387 n.1299) points out, was the one who completed the building of the *stūpa* after the death of rGyal to re nga myi. He was a later *chos blon* (“religious minister”) under Khri Srong lde btsan. Wangdu and Diemberger (2000: 66, n. 218) further add that “he is apparently a member of the Shud pu clan, which is considered by later sources as to have common ancestors with the royal clan. The Dunhuang Chronicle (Bacot et al. 1940:100) mentions one Shud pu rGya to re nga myi among the ministers with magical powers but referring to the period before gNam ri srong brtsan.”

³³³ The third, Ngam lan sTag ra glu gong, is reported to have built the black *stūpa*. His involvement at the time of Khri-srong lde-btsan and specifically with bSam-yas is corroborated by mention of him on the edict pillar in which is described his swearing an oath to protect the doctrine. Martin (2002) suggests that this minister might have “first had Bon po sympathies but then accepted at least to some extent the Buddhist doctrine.” He further suggests that this might be a cause for the colour of the *stūpa* (also see Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 66-67, n.219).

³³⁴ Missing from the group is the famous minister Chims mDo bzhir spre'u chung who is said to have built the blue *stūpa*. For more on this figure, see Uebach (1987: 114-15), Sørensen (1994: 388), and Wangdu and Diemberger (2000: 67, n. 221).

³³⁵ In the *Yar lung jo bo'i chos 'byung* it is said that Mu ne btsan po ruled for a year and nine months (63). He was given the junior queen of Khri Srong lde btsan, which caused his mother to become extremely jealous, resulting in her poisoning her son, which ended his life. The Tholing Manuscript mentions this episode, stating that the king ruled for only nineteen months before being assassinated by his mother. The royal genealogy, together with events, that is presented after this scandal appears slightly confused though, once again, not without its intrigues! For a detailed review of the muddled dates and history of Mu ne btsan po, see Sørensen (1994: 405-06, n. 1398-401).

It appears that the scribe of our text mistakenly wrote down the name of the second of three sons as Khri lDe gtsug brtsan rather than Khri lDe srong btsan. The former is the father of Khri Srong lde btsan, otherwise known as Mes yag tshoms, an important figure in the political-military history of Tibet but one not otherwise mentioned in the Tholing Manuscript. The mistake is regrettably understandable given the close parallel. However, confusion of the two in terms of time and importance is not to be underestimated. One can only hope that this is yet further evidence that the scribe was working at least partially either from memory or from an oral source whether dictated or recited. Regardless it is clear in the manuscript that the name is referring to the second son—Khri lDe srong btsan—a figure about whom little is mentioned, before the text jumps quickly to more important Khri gTsug lde Ral pa can.

Here, once again, it appears at first glance that the Tholing text has confused attributes and chronology, stating that Ral pa can found sKar chung and that Padmasambhava and the Bodhisattva [Śantaraksita] were part of his life. The episode, which is most intriguing, appears in an odd place. It would seem to fit best following after the last page related to Khri Srong lde btsan (page 21) in the entire folio. Pages 23 and 24, being self-contained, could easily be shuffled into the wrong order. Further to this point, on inspection it looks as though there has been some tampering, cutting and pasting of the pages; however it is difficult to know exactly how this was done. The pages in question can only be dealt with as they appear. However it is worth noting that the episode described on pages 23 and 24 more closely relate part of the Khri Srong lde btsan narrative than that of Ral pa can.

Politics and religion were maintained during the reign of the younger [brother] Khri 'De gtsug brtsan. However, from among the three it was during the reign of Khri gTsong lde Ral pa can that sKar chung was founded and in gDan ma lchang 'tshal the *Kun rig rtsa ba 'i dkyil 'khor* (the root *maṇḍala* of Sarvavid [Vairocana(?)] was built. [22a] [They] praised the triple gem in the highest possible way, and the jewel of the *saṅgha* was praised and revered in the world, and the *Khyad bar (= par) 'phags [pa] bstod pa* (Sanskrit: *Viśeṣastava*) *sūtra bla sgo dang po* (“first highest rank”?) and parts of the *dKon mchog bstod pa (?)* [23]

The Indian mKhan po Padma sam bha bha and Bod de sad twa:

occupied the foremost seating place: above the king.

According to the tradition of the *bhagavān*:

they sat to the upper right of the king.

The members of the Noble *saṅgha*:

they sat to the left of the king.

When they were walking one after the other, the King spread out his locks of hair on their path to honour them.

The privy ministers (*zhang blon ka pa*):

were permitted to be in the upper row (*ya gral*).

The *gTsug lag*, Bon po, and the like:

were demoted from the seating row and were not allowed to be present.³³⁶

³³⁶ “Seating charts” (*gdan yig*) appear regularly as both a genre and sub-genre of Tibetan literature. (Can you add a reference or two?) One of the major themes frequently established within epic, the law of the assembly, fixes the seating orders for political officials—king, *bla ma*, ritualist, ministers, *saṅgha*, etc. The purpose of such assignments is to achieve not only a consensus about order but also, and particularly with regard to political theory, it surrounds issues of legitimization. Similarly, the hierarchy of seating—left to right, top to bottom—is also a critical feature in reading and understanding Tibetan art and iconography.

In the seating arrangement presented in the Tholing Manuscript, the king is in the center with the two royal chaplains seated above and to his right. Their placement still emphasizes the centrality of the king, while indicating the hierarchy of teacher/student relationship. The *saṅgha* are seated to the left of the king while the chief ministers are given the privileged upper row below the king. The practitioners of *gtsug lag* (divination?) and Bon are included within the passage but they are relegated outside the seating chart and not allowed to be present. The fact that they appear is nonetheless interesting, particularly in the mention of the two as separate practices that are shunned. The identification of both together with the adverbial *etcetera* indicates that all splinter traditions, or rather those practices that were somehow cultic and so outside the mainstream of Buddhist orthodoxy were banned from the seating chart. In other words, they were outside the inner circle of the royal court.

Two examples of similar seating charts are worth mentioning here, particularly for their parallel features. The first is a seating chart produced in the dBa' bzhed, in which Mu ne btsan po gathers the assembled court to hear out the critical funerary ritual debate for his father Khri Srong lde btsan. As Wangdu and Diemberger (2000: 103 n. 421) point out, the central preoccupation of the debate regarding the funeral of Khri Srong lde btsan is the substantial concern held by certain ministers

Around that time [24] a pillar with an edict was erected [saying that] those who had taken ordination and become a part of the precious *saṅgha*, belonging to either of the two divisions, monks or *sngags pa*, whatever faults they committed, big or small, they were to be punished in accordance with the commands of the Buddha (*vinaya?*) and through confession, and were not subject to secular punishment (*myi chos*) under royal or other high authority (*rje sgo bla sgo*). As for males, their eyes were not gouged [out]. As for women, their noses were not cut [off]. He commanded that there should be no duplicity (?) (*stag ris*=lit. “stripes of the tiger”) or contradictory law (*’gal khrims*) (?) and had it inscribed on an edict pillar so that this should never be forgotten. [25]

The entire royal lineage up to that point maintained the king in the center and his authority was [enforced] firmly all the way through the borders. The king himself stayed in the palace of sTags rtse and from here [the kingdom] extended up through Gog shod lha rtse, and up through Dri stan in Kashmir, and through the realm of Thang bzang, and up through the [territory of] Wo bo in Nepal,³³⁷ and up through Li yul ’u ten , and up though the Brag rtsang of Glo, and through Khyung lung in Zhang chung, and through the [territory of] Pu rangs [and] Ya rtse, and more then two-thirds of the world were brought under the royal dominion [of the *btsan po*].

And even the three areas of the mNga’ ris were secretly(?) brought under his control.

And the eight [border] “watch towers” offered tributes,³³⁸

that the influence of Buddhism was eroding the authority of the state. As in the Tholing Manuscript those ministers that lose their place in the seating chart are those who were attributed to supporting or being sympathetic to Bon practices. The second seating chart, recorded in the *rGyal rabs gsal ba’i me long* as well as the *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston*, more closely follows that which we read in the Tholing Manuscript; it is therefore worth reproducing here:

rgyal po gung la bzhugs pa la | dbu’i ral pa g.yas g.yon gyi sne la dar yug btags | dge ’dun bzhugs pa’i gral g.yas g.yon la bting | de’i steng tu dge ’dun bzhugs par mos la dge ’dun dbu sde gnyis zhes grags ||
 The king took up [his] seat in the centre, and he fastened a silk ribbon (*dar yug*) to the end of the left and right [pigtail of] his [long] mane on [his] head. Distributed to the left and right were rows of seated [members of his] congregation (*dge ’dun*, *saṅgha*). [He thus use to] revere [his congregation of monks] sitting upon these [strips of silk attached to his hair-locks] (*de’i steng du dge ’dun bzhugs par mos la*) [as if they were sitting on his head], and these two [seated groups] were known as the ‘Head-communities’ (*dbu sde*) of the congregation. (translation by Sørensen 1994: 413)

³³⁷ Possibly a garbled form of Wol/’Ol mo? = Humla

³³⁸ The “eight watch towers” (*so kha brgyad*) appears three times in our text: once at the utopic height (as in the above) and earlier as part of the Twelve Minor Kingdoms (*rGyal phran bcu gnyis*) said to have existed before the reign of the sPu rgyal. The third occurrence of *so kha* is witnessed in the lines describing collapse, in which we read that the “divisions of the heroes lDong and [s]Tong, lost the border outposts” (*dpa’ sde ldong tong gis ni mtha’i so ga [sic] shor*). Parallel passages in *lDe’u Jo sras*, *mKhas pa lDe’u*, and the *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* all use the same term without further elaboration; however, given the context in which we find the phrase in the Tholing text, we might speculate that these are the eight garrisons charged with guarding the borders of the empire and tasked with collecting taxes. Further, these might relate to the eight (sometimes nine) military governments (*khrom [chen po]*) that formed the satellite territories at the furthest extent of Tibetan imperial expansion (for more on this, see Hazod in Dotson, 2009: 168).

and the religious offerings flowed like a river from the four farthest points,
and the politics of the king reached its height (lit. touched the sky)
and the domestic affairs (*sgo srid*)³³⁹ of the subjects were similar to a great boat³⁴⁰
and the livelihood of the sangha [26] was provided from above (by the king).

People engaged in virtuous activities freely,

wild horses without saddles,

wild bulls without nose [rings],

people rose with the sun,

animals came in with the moon [rise],

People on journeys would sing,

those in the villages would dance,

Kings reigned by reason

subjects channeled like a river,³⁴¹

And they engaged exclusively in virtuous activities.

With whole-hearted devotion:

they invited many learned masters of India.

Hard-working in crafts and farming:

the goodness of the kingdom was made to spread.

As for the never-setting victorious banner [of *dharma*]:

the individual schools were established according to people's wishes.

And the kingdom of our Tibet (['o] *skol bod*), [27] since it was an ever-expanding canopy of everlasting joy, it became renowned as a World of Well-Being (*'dzam bu de ba zhes bya bar grags* [*sic*]), and it became the great object of admiration of all the other nations.

³³⁹ Stein, *Tibetica Antiqua* I (2010: 67) has *sgo srid* in similar contexts; *sgo* there seems like a short form for *khyim sgo* "the door of the house" = the household, family. However, as the author points out, elsewhere, when relating political events we see the phrase *srid kyi sgo ni mtho| mi ni btsan|* e.g. "the gate of reign, [was] powerful, men [were] mighty." An alternative translation for *sgo srid* might therefore be something akin to "domestic rule."

³⁴⁰ The image of a ship is often used in a Buddhist context to indicate the human realm under the wise and sure guidance of the great helmsman Himself.

³⁴¹ I.e. they all "flowed together," meaning that they acted in union.

After those generations, because the collective merit of Tibet drained like the rains of the spring, and an inauspicious great demon oppressed [the country] like the shadow of night, the divine country suffered the deception of the demons (*bdud*, *Māra*). Just as a poisonous tree grows from the root of a medicinal plant, so too wherever the Buddha abides, *Māra* arises. In this way, Co ro Legs sgra lha ldon brtsan and dBas rgyal To re stag snya, who were like a nest of [poisonous] snakes, killed the Lord Khri gtsug Ral pa can. [28] Similarly, all the lords (*rje cog*), such as the prince *lha sras* gTsang ma, were banished (*spyugs*).³⁴² All those religious teachers who had spread the good [*dharma*], they too were killed (*bkrongs*). The fierce (*gnyan po*) bidding oaths which restricted all transgressions were abandoned (*bkral*). The oaths of the subjects and the general conventions were scattered as if by a broom. The wise kings and ministers were separated like flesh from bone. They turned their backs on everything good and implemented the rules of everything bad. When Khri Dar ma wi dur brtsan was offered the power, because the king was delighted by flattery,³⁴³ [and] because the ministers desired personal gain (*khe rkam che bas*)³⁴⁴ the royal customs (*rgyal chos*) were put in dire straits (*mkho thabs*), and [the *btsan po*'s] actions (*mdzad spyod*) degenerated.

As for the proclaimed laws (*bka' khrims*), [29] they were violated according to factional interests. The prestige of the triple gem diminished and the noble *dharma* was not upheld in the right manner, and since the king carelessly did whatever he wished (*mtshong mtshong chug chug tu mdzad*) the kingdom declined because of (*kyis*) the [resulting] karma, and royal authority was deliberately undermined.

The three maternal uncle [ministers] (*zhang gsum*) and the minister, making four.³⁴⁵

³⁴² lHa sras gTsang ma was the eldest of five (sometimes six) children of Khri lDe srong btsan, including, among others: Ral pa can, and Lang Darma (see: Sørensen 1994: n. 1413, 409). gTsang ma is reported to have been framed for a crime and expelled (*spyugs*) from the realm. He is also purported to be the ancestor of royal families of the eastern and central Bhutan (on this subject, see especially Ardussi 2007: 5-26)

³⁴³ *snyan tshud* = “was pleased with whatever came to his ear.”

³⁴⁴ A parallel from *lDe'u Jo sras* (138) reads: *rje snyan tshud la dgyes shing zhang blon khe rngam che bas lha'i snyan du srin gyi chu song* |

³⁴⁵ The Old Tibetan kinship term *zhang* (“uncle”) plays an important role in dynastic period historical sources. It has drawn the interest of numerous scholars, among others see: Dotson (2004); Richardson (1998 [1967]); Tucci (1950); Yamaguchi (1969). While the kinship term is prevalent in its relationship to matrimonial alliances and social hierarchies, in its usage here (as in *mKhas pa lDe'u*: 254 and *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*: 185) we should understand more specifically the context of Tibet's royal houses and the assembly of ministers closest to it. The three plus one equaling four comprise the assembly of ministers that make up the central unit. The three uncle ministers were represented by a member of the three majors clans of Central Tibet, namely: 'Bro, mChims, sNa nam, the fourth minister is thus represented by the dBa' clan (cf. Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 29, n. 36).

lost their seats in the inner council (*dbus kyi mdun sa shor la*).

The divisions of the heroes lDong and [s]Tong.³⁴⁶

lost the border outposts

The four communities at the extremity (*rna bug sde bzhi*).³⁴⁷

abandoned (*'phro bcad*) their territories.³⁴⁸

Because [the king] himself had destroyed the religious traditions that his royal ancestors had practiced, [the karmic result] ripened in this very lifetime, and lHa lung Shel gyi rdo rje killed him. Also the subjects, and [the evil ministers] rGyal To re stag rnyan and **[30]** [Cog ro] Legs sbra lha ldong brtsan,³⁴⁹ and others, suffered terrible deaths. [When] the rule of king, subject, *bla ma*, and minister was on the verge of disappearing, the subjects who had once been unified split into two factions. And a quarrel between the two factions (*ris*) supporting each of the two queens transformed Tibet into peace-less place.

+³⁵⁰ Later during the reign of the Lord gNam lde 'Od srung when law and order were re-established (*so zin pa*: to revive), and when dBu ru and g.Yas ru revolted, there was endless turmoil (? **bdo mtha' med*) It was as if there were no end to the water vitiated (poisoned) with the mixing of blood

³⁴⁶ The clan names lDong and [s]Tong appear as two of the four “proto-clans” as laid out by Stein (1961). These comprise of the Se, rMu, lDong, and sTong, and are correlated respectively with 'A zha, Zhang zhung, Mi nyag and Sum pa. Within the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, the lDong and sTong are often paired together cf. PT1287: 415-16, as well as Dotson (2006: 80-83). In the OTC (PT 1287: 239), we find “Dong and Tong augmented Phen[yul].” *mKhas pa lDe'u* (275) states, “The two who continuously subdued enemies were Dong and Tong” (*gtan du dgra thul ba ni ldong stong gnyis so*). On lDong and sTong, Chetsang (2015: 172) writes, “Dong and Tong were the generals of the two central border divisions (of the eight garrisons tasked with guarding Tibet's borders) stationed in Nyangpo, Longpo, and Kongpo.

³⁴⁷ The term *rna bug sde bzhi* is a corruption that can be understood in the context of a parallel passage in *lDe'u Jo sras*. Here, the line reads: *rne'u sde bzhis skor gyi 'phro bcad*, and *rne'u sde*, in turn, is a misspelling of *rne* “communities at the extremity, farthest point” (Vitali 2000: n.5: 109). On the full passage, see n.156 below.

³⁴⁸ A similar passage in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* helps to elucidate these lines: *thog mar bod yul ru chen lnga ru phye | | yul gyi dbang ris rnam pa bco brgyad bcad | | rgod kyi stong sde drug bcu rtsa gcig phye | | gyung gi mi sde khong dang yang kheng 'byed | | zhang gsum blon bcas dbus kyi 'dun sa 'dzin | | dpa' sde gsum gyi mtha' yi so kha srung | | de la bod kyi kho drug shes su grags |* (Beijing ed. 2006: 185) “First of all, Tibet was divided into five big horns, eighteen shares of power of the regions were determined, sixty one thousand-districts of the savage [= military; *rgod* is opposed to *g.yung*, civil] (*rgod*) were divided, the ‘groups of men’ of the tame [= civilians] (*g.yung*): the *khong* and second *khengs* were divided, the three uncles together with the councilor holds the assembly of the Centre, the three divisions of the heroes defend watch-posts of the marches, these are called “the six institutions (*kho drug*) of Tibet” (translation by Uray 1972: 18). A parallel passage in the *lDe'u Jo sras*, just mentioned in the footnote above, reads: *dkon mchog gsum rgyab tu bor ba'i skyon gyis zhang gsum blon dang bzhis dbus kyi mdun sa bshig | dpa'i sde gsum gyis mtha'i so shor mngag gzhug mched bcus dbus kyi gsang gcad rne'u sde bzhis skor gyi 'phro bcad |* “The three *zhang* plus the *blon*, which makes four, dismantled the *durbar* of dBu by the crime of eliminating support for the three jewels. The three *dpa'i sde* having had to release the *so* at the frontiers, an instigation was created. The secret dBu was disclosed by divulging it ten times. The *rne'u sde bzhi* abandoned their territories” (translation by Vitali 2000: n. 5, 109).

³⁴⁹ Both appear earlier as the assassins of Ral pa can.

³⁵⁰ The above passage regarding 'Od srung appears in the Tholing manuscript as an interlinear insertion that literally circles around Pages 30 and 31.

and milk.³⁵¹ The eight classes of worldly gods and demons were in such a turmoil without end (?) and with no one to go to when elderly (*sgad=rgad*) and feeble (*rgud*) (?). +

Later on during the reign of the Ancestor dPal 'khor brtsan, because the lord's rule (lit. honorific protection) was slightly premature, and the subjects' response (*sug thabs*) a little too late, royal law (*rgyal khrims*) and politics (*chab srid*) were only promulgated to a small degree (*de'u*), and because the collective merit was little and the king's own fortune had similarly run out, the Ancestor dPal 'khor brtsan [31] was assassinated by rNgegs.³⁵² And the royal law totally disintegrated and fragmented and the civilian population (*g.yung pa*) gained courage.³⁵³ Because [people like] dPal 'kho bzher ldong gzig³⁵⁴ and others caused a big revolt (*ngan log gi 'khrug pa ched po byung*), it was as if (*bzhin du*) the leadership (*dbu*) of our kingdom of Tibet was interrupted like (a line of flying) birds that is cut off (or: has lost its head), and

the good noble families (*ya rabs*) disappeared (*bsubs*) into mouse holes,

[and] for the inferior families of the lower classes (*dma' rabs*), the expanse of heaven (*gnams mthongs*) opened;

the priest-patron relationship (*mchod yon*) ceased to be respected,³⁵⁵

[and] there was no distinction between high and low.

There was no difference between king and servant,

and the four systems of law became undone.

The nine monoliths of law disappeared [like the setting sun] (*nub*).

³⁵¹ The saying seems to allude to the conflict created by the two heirs to the throne, 'Od srung and Yum brtan (Davidson 2005: 68-69; Sørensen 1994: 439).

³⁵² The date of dPal 'khor brtsan's assassination varies around the end of the ninth century (see Sørensen 1994: n.1563). *rNgegs* here is most likely a corruption and abbreviation of the assassin's name sTag rtse snyags, also known as sNyags sTag rtse.

³⁵³ Related to administrative systems of census taking, conscription, and taxation are the divisions of the population attested to in numerous sources from the imperial period. These sources posit that under the sPu rgyal there was a division of the population into civil (*g.yung*) and military (*rgod*) (lit. tame and fierce). For more on the topic see, in particular, Uray (1971) and Iwao (2012).

³⁵⁴ dPal 'kho bzher ldong gzig here is most likely to be yet another spelling of the minister Blon Gung bZher who appears in later texts as Kho byer lde stong sbas (*mKhas pa lDe'u*), Kho bzhir tsong sde sbas (*lDe'u Jo sra*), dBas Kho bzher legs steng (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston*). He also appears in later texts in Chinese as Shang Kong zhe. Davidson (2005) posits that the minister may be "distantly related to the sBa and Petech notes that the Chinese transcription of his name was as if it were 'Bal, another important clan." Whatever the case, we find this figure to be the instigator of the first of the so-called "three popular uprisings" (*'bangs gyen log gsum*). For a detailed account, see Davidson (2005: 68-69).

³⁵⁵ See Seyfort Ruegg's (1991) article on the subject. Especially before the 14th century, the term could refer to either the patron or the preceptor alone; however, in the context it seems safest to translate it simply as "priest-patron relationship."

The seven victory banners of the noble *dharmā*, that should have been unchanging, no longer stood in the land. [32]

The seven cedars (*thang shing*) of non-virtuous actions, that should not have grown, sprang up at the doorstep.

The seven *g.yung [d]rung* foundation stones which were extracted (*byung=phyung?*) by no one in particular (?), were taken from their place.

The fourteen indispensable treasures became totally non-existent.

The eight improper dance movements, that should never be performed, were [now] enacted.³⁵⁶

The nine cutaneous diseases (*mye dbal*) that should not have spread, became widespread.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ The reference to eight impermissible dance moves is very interesting in the context of the decline of royal court's authority as well as in the religious environment of the early *phyi dar* in West Tibet. In both contexts, we find adherence to monastic orthodoxy and resistance to *extreme* esoteric practice to the point of prohibition. The term used in Tibetan is *gar thabs brgyad* which is equivalent to *nyams brgyad* = "the eight (but also, 9 or 10) dance movements," (Dan Martin, THDL), which seem to directly relate to the Indian dramatic theory of *lāsya*. Alex Wayman (1977: 327-28) has written on this in his book on the Guhyasamāja Tantra, and it is worth citing the passages he has translated:

"Vajrasattva's activities are summarized in *Panckrama*, 3rd krama, verse 31; Sri Lakṣmī, Vol. 63, p.39-2, 3:

*śṛṅgārādyupabhogaṃ ca gitavādyādisevanam /
kalāsu ca pravṛttiṃ ca kuryād udakacandravat //*

He should practice the experience of the 'erotic', etc. (the nine sentiments), the recourse to (the three adamant) songs and instrumental music (the three beginning with *vīṇā*), and so on, as well as engagement in the (sixty-four) *kalā* (or *kāmakalā*) (in each case) in the manner of the 'moon in the water' (i.e. while in the Illusory-like Samadhi (*māyopama-samādhi*)).

In Indian dramatic theory, *lāsya* is the sweet, graceful, and feminine dance. The nine sentiments are: erotic (*śṛṅgārā*), heroic (*vira*), furious (*raudra*), humorous (*haāsya*), wonderful (*adbhuta*), compassionate (*kāruṇya*), disgusting (*bibhastā*), frightful (*bhayānaka*); plus the ninth, tranquil (*śānta*) with indifference to worldly objects and pleasures. Two passages should clarify their tantric interpretation. The first is from Śrī Rāhuguptapāda's *Prakāśa-nāma-śrīhevajrasāshana* (PTT, Vol., 56, p. 132-1):

Among those (nine sentiments), the 'single taste' (*ekarasa*) together with (the goddess) Nairātmyā is the 'erotic'; the staying at the burning ground is the 'heroic'; the furrowed brow and bared fangs is the 'disgusting'; the blazing light is the 'furious'; the enhancement (exaggeration) of face is the 'humorous'; the garland of dripping heads is the 'frightful'; the consciousness of assisting sentient beings is the 'compassionate'; the illusory form is the 'wonderful'; the defilement of lust, etc. is the 'tranquil'.

The second is from Sri Lakṣmī, Vol. 63 p.39-2:

(They are) union with the partner (*mudrā*) ('erotic'), staying in the burning ground, etc. ('heroic'), enjoying the ambrosia ('furious'), rite of revived corpse (*vetālavidhi*) ('disgusting'), holding of various emblems ('humorous'), drastic rites (*abhicāra*) ('frightful'), empathy with the great suffering of all sentient beings ('compassionate'), accomplishing enlightenment by the five great pledges, (*samaya*) in conflict with the world (i.e. the five that oppose the five layman vows) ('tranquil'), and the characteristic of having Clear Light in immediacy ('wonderful').

It seems to me, given the context in which the line in the Tholing Manuscript appears, that the "sexual" nature of *lāsya* is what makes the practice "improper" according to strict monastic orthodoxy.

³⁵⁷ In Tibetan medicine there are said to be nine types of skin diseases (*me dbal*), these are: "1) leucoderma 2) eczema 3) warts 4) scabies 5) psoriasis 6) acne 7) freckles 8) patches 9) blemishes" (Uebach 1987: 114-15).

The poisons that should not have spread (*rgyas su*), spread with seven containers (*physis bu*), such that these evildoers (*sdigs g.yogs*), who had venerated the great vehicle of harmful practice (*sdig theg chen chos la bskurd pa'i*), and caused a vengeance (*dbu g.yogs*) that robbed the authority (*chab srid*) of the lords (*rje*), [and] as a consequence (*la yogs*) of pressing the people in the valley into slavery (*phur myi bran du bkol ba'i la yogs*) [33] our very own Tibet kingdom was brought to ruin, and no one listened (*gnyan = snyan*) to the orders of the king, and the subjects below were without law; and because the degenerate age came up higher and higher, the royal realms charisma (*byin*) weakened (literally: “got low” *dmas*), and gradually its power faded, and the [royal] commands, by degrees in such a way, fragmented and disappeared.³⁵⁸

However, turning his horse uphill [towards the west] the ancestor Khri sKyil lding [*sic*]³⁵⁹ set off, and with support of the noblemen of sTod, and in agreement with the high authority and good people (*bla dang ya rabs*), Buddhism once again flourished for a long time. Thinking that the *yig tshang* and *sgo srid* of the offspring [of the sPu rgyal] were outstandingly unique, they offered him the power, and the lord [accepted] and administered the *chab srid* properly. [34]

The lord of the aristocracy (*ya rabs*) of sTag pu gug gi, his share of the inheritance and his pedigree being in accord, the reign of the great sovereign (*rje mnga' bdag*) bKra shis mgon was

³⁵⁸ The royal discord between the two brothers 'Od srung and Yum brtan in the middle of the 9th century quickly gave way to an all-out social eruption (*kheng log*), which in turn caused the erosion and fragmentation of the ancient institutions upholding the royal court of the sPu rgyal. A few notes on the language used to describe this critical episode are relevant in deconstructing some of the archaic language used. The poetic collapse plays out against the backdrop of the royal feud, but it is not contained by it. Rather, the fight among the ruling class (*rje*) opened the way for the *g.yung po*, a specific designation for the “civilian” population, to gain courage and participate in a total upheaval of the social fabric across Tibet. Thus the episode is staged under the banner of a major revolt (*ngan log gi 'khrug pa ched po*) inclusive of the whole population and not just the ruling classes. Therefore, what proceeds after the statement that the head (*dbu*) of the royal line is cut (*rgyun chad pa*) is the social disruption on the levels below the king. The passage laments the reduction of the noble families to the lowest possible place (disappearing into the mouse holes/burrows), and the elevation of the low class to the heights of the heavens. In my understanding, *mtshong* is “heaven’s gate” rather than just a skylight. It is analogous to the smoke hole in the tent; therefore, the first king, while he still lived in the sky, had to go up to it in order to even see what was going on down in the narrow earth (*sa dog*). The last lines of the passage employ an interesting and archaic expression marked by the syllable *g.yogs* (*sdig g.yogs*, *dbu g.yogs*, and *la yogs*). To paraphrase Sørensen, who has written a lengthy footnote on the topic in his TBH (n.1561 on pp.607-608), the term *dbu g.yogs* appears in classical literature “to illustrate the victimization and ill-fated misfortunes that the Bon-adherents had to suffer due to their persecution by Buddhists” (ibid.: 607). Sørensen further points out that the term “carries the added sense of deception and even delusion” and that it is even found as a term used in the context of Glang dar ma’s purported persecution, labeling him a *chos kyi dbu g.yogs*, the “(sinful) revenger or retributor causing the persecution of Buddhism.” That “sin” is made explicit in the even rarer term *sdig g.yogs*. As for *la yogs*, which is still in use today, Sørensen writes that the term “alludes subjectively to a sort of retributive *Hochmut* initially being directed towards others (albeit not necessarily), but backfiring or rebounding (*la g.yogs brgyab*), it becomes self-inflicted and the action or move is paid back in kind.” In this manner we find that the retributory actions (*dbu g.yogs*) against, sinful action (*sdig g.yogs*), resulted in, or were the comeuppance (*la yogs*) that resulted in the total collapse of the empire.

³⁵⁹ Mes Khri skyil lding = Khri skyid lde Nyi ma mgon. Spelling variants include: bTsan po Khri gyi ling (PT 849), Khri skyil lding / Khri skyid lding brtsan (various 11th/12th c. mss)

[highest] out of the three [brothers] like the middle finger of the hand. Because of that, in comparison with the other two siblings who were ruling [elsewhere], [bKra shis mgon] had great fortune and was exceedingly majestic and broadminded. He was a great being, connected with an ancestral lineage of bodhisattvas who had been kings who protected the *dharma* (*yab mes chos skyong ba'i rgyal po byang chub sems dpa'i spruld pa'i gdung rgyud*). [35]

At that time the culture (*gtsug lag*) in the sTod mNga' ris was the Bon religion. Their funeral rites were evil (*nag po*), and possessing heretical views of ransom they committed the sin of burying people alive. [In this place] the teachings of the Buddha were not even known by name. It was similar to the darkness in the middle country of the barbarians. In this place, due to the awakening of the shared (*spyi mthun*) small portions of good inclinations, and their individual (*nyid nyid*) kindness, and the power of their aspirations, the two brothers, peaceful and wrathful, took birth just as in the course of twenty-four hours the sun and moon [are born]. During the reign of the elder Lord 'Khor re mainly took care of the royal rule according to *mi chos*. He subdued and pacified equally [36] both external and internal enemies, and like someone guarding his *samaya* vow, strengthened by faith, and through the fearsome (*drag mo[s]*) terrifying attributes (*'jigs pa'i cha lugs*) of his physical manifestation (*sku spros*), he firmly protected and controlled mNga' ris.

Later on, during the reign of the younger Srong nge, to sum up his outstanding qualities: his majesty and personality were even greater than Mount Meru, his his commands showed perfect timing, like the waves of the ocean, the depth and broadness of his mind were even brighter than the rays of the sun, [and] the fruits of his actions, as they were thoroughly noble, they were all perfectly attained. His fame spread out boundless to the edge of the ocean. [37] As he was born a great holy being, known as a bodhisattva of undivided faith on the stage of devoted conduct (*mos pa spyod pa'i sa*),³⁶⁰ he cast out political affairs as if spitting out a speckle of dust and embarked on the [path towards] liberation, [thus he] was given the name Lha bla ma Ye shes 'od.

The two sons also were guided onto the path of enlightenment, thus their royal line of descent was cut, [and] the authority of secular power was offered to the *mnga' bdag* lHa lde rtsan. The three

³⁶⁰ The “stage of devoted conduct” (*mos pa spyod pa'i sa*) = *tshogs lam* and *sbyor ba'i lam*, the path of accumulation and application (*sambhāramārga* and *prayogamārga*).

bodhisattva lords, father and sons, following [in the footsteps] of the ancestors who were endowed with magical wisdom, the manifested bodhisattva kings [of old Tibet] [38] who had protected the *dharmā*, they [father and sons] glorified the three jewels and took charge of the Buddhist *dharmā*, and the practices of *gtsug lag* and the Bon religion were converted to the divine religion (*lha chos*).³⁶¹ [And] the custom of Black Funerals (*shid nag po*) was turned completely white. For his subjects he demarcated laity and ecclesiastics respectively. He built the glorious unsurpassed spontaneously arisen temple of Tho ling (*tho ling gi dpal dpe myed lhun gyis grub pa'i gtsug lag khang*), the temple (*gtsug lag khang*) of Ta po, and others as well as many outlying “border taming” (*mtha' 'dul*) temples. His time was mainly his time was devoted to state affairs and religious matters. [39] [And] he venerated atop his head the earth (lit.: pebbles) under the feet of the monastics, [and] he made his subjects who were householders (*khyim pa*) take refuge, and made them take the Buddhist lay vows (*dge bsnyen*) and the temporary additional lay vows (*bsnyen gnas*), and so they were converted to the [pure] white *dharmā*.

To those with intelligence:

gifts were offered,

To those possessing knowledge:

patronage was given,

To those who prostrated towards the divine/deities:

the complimentary (*'bul*) fields were given

To those reciting scriptures:

the middle fields were given

Even those who took laymen’s vows:

fields for religious people (*ban zhing*, lit.: monks’ fields) were bestowed.

To ordained monks:

scriptures were provided

For the local headmen:

the *dharmā* was made law.

³⁶¹ The Tibetan text here is wonderfully ambiguous!

He ordered regiments accordingly to the upper regions of gTsang [40] and thus outlined wise strategies (lit. good foundations) for religion and politics (*chos dang srid*).

Thenceforth, in order to gradually tame and develop the wisdom of the subjects whose faith was awakened, the Abbot Dar ma sa la and others [from India], and Tibetan Spiritual Friends (*dge ba'i bshes gnyen*>*kalyāṇa-mitra*) such as Zi and Cung and others, who were the source of all knowledge, were invited. Having sourced (*spyang drangs*) all the extant copies of the *Sūtra* and *Piṭaka* material that had been translated at the Glorious bSam yas and elsewhere by the ancestral patriarchs (*yab myes*), they were (*re zeg* for *re zhig?*) [41] temporarily stored in a huge building, and upon the harmonious confluence of many learned Spiritual Friends and the large collections of Buddha's teachings, the intelligent and spiritually disposed *saṅgha* [of holy monks] (*mchod gnas*) were 'encouraged' to undertake learning, and as their spiritual realisation gradually flourished/grew, like an oil-wick, lit by the light of Buddha's word, the fire of wisdom was blazing, [thus] dispelling the dark and dense fog of wrong views in this West Tibet (*stod ris*), and the grace of the noble *dharma* spread widely. [42]

Later, during the time of the Great Lord IHa lde brtsan, firstly he venerated and had faith in the triple gem. Secondly, being strong in command he tamed the subjects who were under his domain peacefully. Thirdly, towards the familial lords ruling in other regions he was loving and did not exhibit envy [towards them] (lit. without making big eyes). Moreover he administered both the dharmic law (*chos khrims*) and politics (*rgyal srid*)³⁶² in accord with the customs of the noble ancestors. Having invited [to the kingdom] the Indian abbot [Atiśa] Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (*mkhan po dpal mar me mdzad ye shis*) and the Kashmiri abbot / scholar Tra ta ka ra, and others, together with Tibetan Spiritual Friends (*dge ba'i bshes nyen*) [43] and translators such as the Great Lo tsa ba [Rin chen bzang po] and others translated the commentary on *The Mother of the Victorious Ones, the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand [Verse lengths]* and many other [sacred] texts.³⁶³ [And he] commissioned many images of the triple gem such as statues, sacred volumes, and so on and mNga' ris was a region administered like a settled yogurt.

³⁶² *chos khrims rgyal srid*

³⁶³ *rgyal ba'i yum shes rab kyi pha rol du phyind pa brgyad stong ba'i 'gred pa lastsogs pa*

Later, from out of the three brothers who were peaceful and wrathful, during the reign of renunciant king Byang chub 'od: in his youth he embraced the path towards liberation; he practiced a pure life style³⁶⁴ for a long time. Moreover, with a retinue of images of the triple gem [44] he practiced with a pure heart. And he would not give audience to any of the high ministers in charge of secular affairs (*mi chos*). Furthermore, he had commissioned many images of the holy triple gem and invited many learned Tibetan monks who translated and compiled any *Sūtra* and *Śāstra* (*mdo dang bstan bcos*). In general, he lived like a parent of those who took ordination (*ser chags*).

Later in the time of the *rje mNga' bdag chen po* ("noble great lord") [dBu 'byams pa],³⁶⁵ even though his faith was strong and his [thoughts] profound he did not have the opportunity to engage in *sku rgya ma* ("practice") and other virtuous activities since from a young age he became distracted by the conflicts of his relatives whose clamorous action (*mi sgam ba rnams kyi mdzad*) were deplorable (*spyang la phog*).³⁶⁶

[45]. Bearing in mind the other good subjects (*mnga' ris bzang po*), he feared that if he could not follow in the foot steps of his noble ancestors he might suffer slander, and [further] if he did not do a single stroke of virtuous activity he might regret it [later] in the lower realms. [Therefore] at least he [could] commission the building of dPe thug [*sic*] temple on the path [to enlightenment],³⁶⁷ and other like activities, and by performing those activities [46] he was mainly attending to the triple gem. But since wars arose in other regions, and even though a small number of nomads along the borders suffered

³⁶⁴ To "practice pure conduct," (*tshangs par spyod pa spyad*) means to observe a celibate lifestyle.

³⁶⁵ Otherwise known as 'Od lde btsan (r. 1024, d. 1037). The logic for this identification goes as follows: Our text is primarily concerned with the royal dynasty of the *sPu rgyal* as it extends through the early kings of Pu rang-Gu ge (not the whole of mNga' ris skor gsum). The lineage we are presented with is thus the line of rulers through 'Khor re and Srong nge. The latter is said to have had two sons. These sons are not named, but are said to have followed their father's monastic path towards enlightenment. As a result, his line ceases (literally: was cut, *gdung bcad*) when his sons passed (*sras mched gnyis kyang thard par btsud de de nyid kyi gdung bcad*); these two brothers can be identified as Da ba ra dza and Na ga ra dza. The secular power was then offered to lHa lde brtsan who is the second of three sons of 'Khor re (this is not made clear in the text). lHa lde brtsan has three sons who are presented as the "three siblings," *mched gsum*. The first to be discussed is Byang chub 'od; the second is dBu 'byams pa, and the third is Zhi ba 'od. Based on this genealogy, we may extrapolate that dBu 'byams pa is in fact another name for 'Od lde btsan (the eldest of lHa lde brtsan's sons). Further support for this identification exists in the events described in our text (see *n. #*); and the political, rather than religious, genealogy on which the Tholing Manuscript is based. It follows, therefore, that the next figure to be mentioned is rTse lde, the succeeding political ruler of Pu rang Gu ge and the son of 'Od lde btsan, a.k.a. dBu 'byams pa.

³⁶⁶ *Khyung bdag* reads: *chal ma phyigs pa 'gas spyang la phog*, I understand the line to be an expression which might more literally translate as: because since [they were] split (*'gas*) [and] acting wanton (*chal*), without binding (*ma phyig pa*), [it was like a] hit (*phog*) in the eye (*spyang*) [for the king].

³⁶⁷ The famous dPe thug (read: dPe thub) temple near Leh, Ladakh, is recorded in the *La dwags* chronicle to have been founded by 'Od lde in the rat year = 1024. This date follows Vitali (2003: 61) and fits well with our text's own chronological narrative. The mention of the temple and its association with the *mnga' bdag chen po* dBu 'byams pa further corroborates the identification of this figure with 'Od lde, who, in later texts, is said to have taken over Mar yul at this time.

(*sna zegs*= hurt noses?), the time had come for the subjects of Zhang chung, irrespective of their loyalty (*glo ba nye ring*) or social status (*mtho dman*), to unite, [and] so the king, finding himself in a very difficult situation, declared a strict conscription law applicable to all subjects apart from himself, that guaranteed execution for those who refused.³⁶⁸ And he ensured that this command was disseminated clearly throughout the kingdom, and [as a result] all the subjects of the three regions of Zhang chung were able to enjoy the height of happiness through his kindness. [47]

Later during the time of the lord and grand *bla ma* Zhi ba 'od, while he was taking the reins of secular affairs (*myi chos kyi chab srid phyag tu*) during his early years, serious conflicts had arisen between his father and relatives (*mched dbu*) who fell apart over the lay and monastic communities. However, during the time of the lord [Pho brang Byang chub 'od], since he had a peaceful nature and was modest he gathered together a council of loyal subjects and many leaders from bordering areas.³⁶⁹ At that time, even though mNga' ris was like a ball of wet felt in the hands, many favorable circumstances existed to consolidate the entire kingdom, and out of friendship towards the elder brothers the wise bond [of friendship] was not severed [48] (*gcod ma spyod de*). [Therefore] the mother of the subject g.Yar rgyal (?) was sent [as an intermediary] and succeeded in persuading the relatives to accept reconciliation (*tshod rig par*) [and therefore] he and the relatives did not fragment and the subjects too did not get divided.

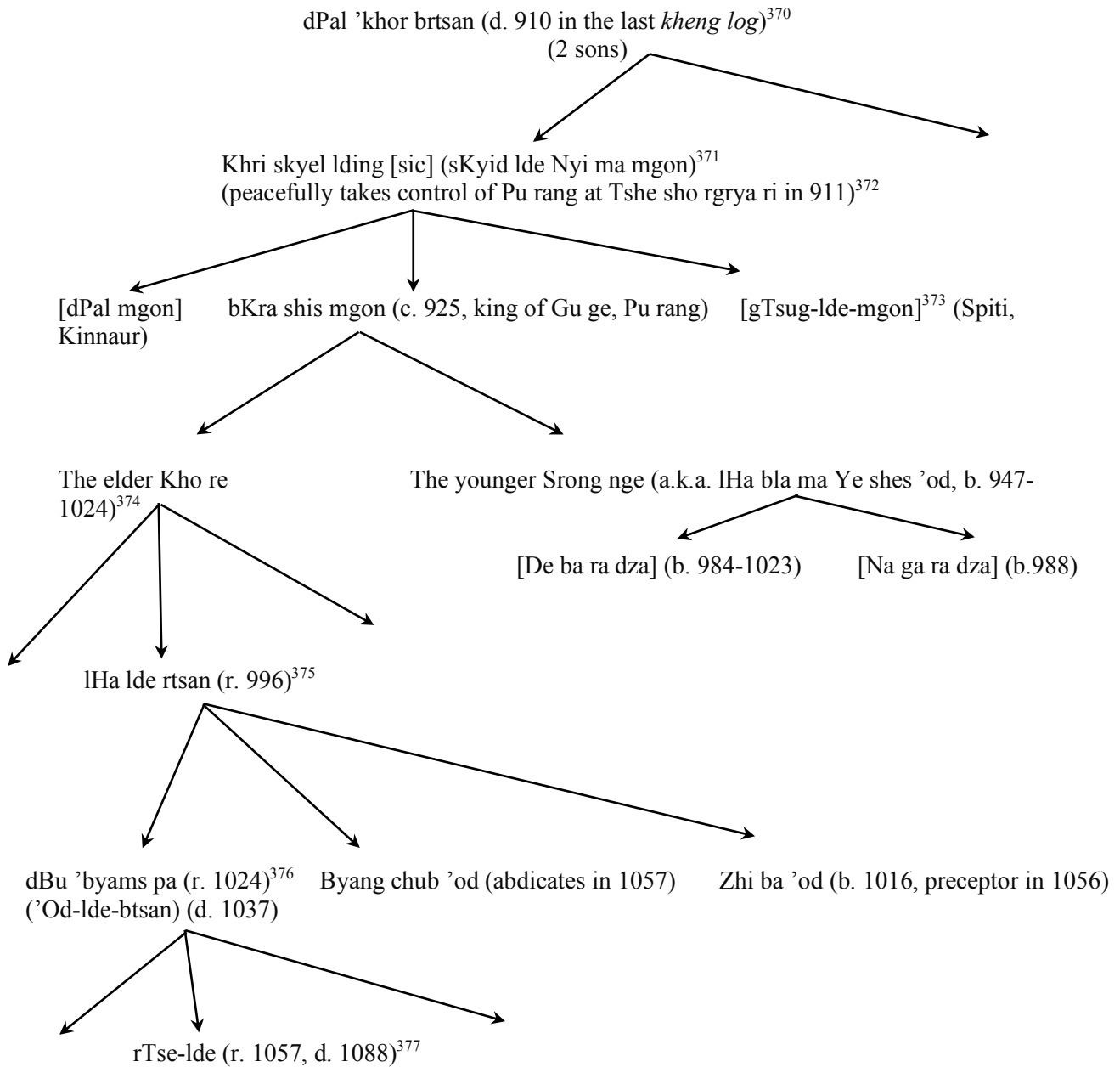
³⁶⁸ The structure and meaning of this whole passage (pp. 45-46) is a bit garbled, and so my translation is speculative, though not without reason. The idiomatic phrasing, in fact, looks to be an indication of the archaic as well as colloquial (and regional?) language used and particularly prevalent in the last section of our text that deals with the kings of West Tibet. The last lines of the passage (46: 2-7) are the most difficult (*sa bar gyi 'brog pa cung zhig sna zegs kyang zhang chung gi 'bangs glo ba nye ring dang mthon dman ma mchis par dus tshigs la bab cing | mdzad shin tu rga (dka') ba'i dus su | dmag phogs rje la ma gtogs par gnad du bsund pa'i glo ba stor ba'i bka' chad dang | bka' babs spyi khyab tu glo ba rgongs pa (dpa' dgongs ba) cig mdzad cing | zhang chung snying tshoms kyi 'bangs kyis gung skyid chen po bgyis te bka' drin gyis phog pa lags |*). The wording *glo ba nye ring* might literally translate here as “near [or] far to the heart (actually: “lungs”) [of the king].” I therefore translate the expression *glo ba nye ring mtho dman ma mchis par* as “irrespective of their loyalty or social status.” The expression *glo ba nye* can be found among old Tibetan documents as a term relating the concept of loyal[ty] or a confidant. See for example: line 3-4 in the south inscription of the Zhol pillar: *ngan lam klu khon gis | | glo ba nye ba'I rje blas byangs pha*, “Ngan lam klu khong loyally carried out the duty of *rje blas*” (after Richardson 1985: 7). Line 20 similarly states: *klu khong glo ba nye'o*, “Klu khong was received into allegiance” (*ibid.*: 9). In a different but related case, the phrase *glo ba stor ba* looks literally to mean “to smash (or take) the heart of the chest,” in other words, “to kill.” *bKa' chad* here refers to a decree or command of punishment, while *dmag phogs* seems to relate to both conscription and the military tax (*dmag khral phog*); however, given the context in *this* instance it may relate more to the former. Regardless of what the actual action was, the royal command (*bka' chad*), provides a glimpse of the more martial side of the kings of West Tibet, which would, on occasion, lead them to act in a manner outside the *chos khrims*, and to apply a law that resembled more closely the language and actions of the Old Tibetan kings. Is this *myi chos*? (see discussion in Section 2.4).

³⁶⁹ Might this be a reference to the great religious council of 1076. If so Zhi ba 'od would have been 18 years old (see Karmay (1998 [1980]: 24).

After that in his later years when [Pho brang Byang chub 'od took up ordination] the ruling lord was ['Od lde] dBu 'byams pa, [but fell in battle], while the great lord [Pho brang byang chub 'od], having been ordained, stayed behind and inherited the dominion. However, as he naturally looked upon secular rule with disdain and feeling familial piety (*gnyen snying*) and compassion [and] [49] bearing in mind the tradition of the past bodhisattva ancestors he entrusted the political rule to the good son of the father ['Od lde] dBu 'byams pa, the nephew, [rTse lde]. Seeing the benefits and advantages of obtaining liberation and omniscience, he did not get attached to his son lHa cig gzhon nu and his noble Queen, but set off for good; and giving up the arrogance of royalty he fully embraced and practiced the precepts of the well-taught *dharma* and *vinaya* according to the tradition/in the appropriate manner [and] properly engaged in meditation and practice of tantric vows. Masters of India and Kashmir were invited. [50]

Appendix One: Royal Lineage of Pu rang – Gu ge

Source: Tholing Manuscript (pp.33-50). Though not explicitly written the lineage presented is part of the *sTod kyi mgon gsum* (the three mGon of the Highlands) descended from dPal 'khor brtsan's elder son sKyi lde Nyi ma mgon.



³⁷⁰ *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung*

³⁷¹ Nyi ma mgon's conquest of sTod follows closely the expansion of the Yar lung empire in which the territory of Zhang chung was the first key and staging point to enter the hindukush and the territories of Baltistan

³⁷² *La dwags rgyal rabs*

³⁷³ Dies c. 975. The region of spiti and kinnaur is brought under the control of Gu ge, Pu rang during the life of Ye she 'Od.

³⁷⁴ In 987 Ye she 'od issues his *bka' shog chen mo*. In 988 he issued a *chos rtsigs* relating *chos khirms* and *rgyal khirms*. In 996 the *bka' shog chen mo* is re-issued and the foundations of Kha char, Nyan ma and Ta po [sic] are laid. In that same year the paṇḍita Buddha Shri shan tam ba, Buddha Pa la, and Ka ma la gup ta, all met in Mar yul chos skor Nyar ma and they translated many texts (*Nyang ral chos 'byung*).

³⁷⁵ In 996 Kho re abdicates the throne to lHa lde. In 1028, after abdicating his throne, he renovates Tho ling dPal dpe med lhun gyis brub pa'i gtsug lag khang.

³⁷⁶ 'Od lde succeeds his father on to the throne of Pu rang Gu ge after his father lHa lde abdicates and takes religious vows (assuming the name: Dharma pa bha. In that same year, lHa lde conquers Mar yul, here. He therefore becomes the successor of dPal gyi mgon, thus holding sway over the entire mNga' ris skor gsum. It is 'Od lde, not Ye shes 'od, for whom gold was asked as ransom by the people of Baltistan(?) and paid by Byang chub 'od.

³⁷⁷ Like Nyi ma mgon and 'Od lde, rTse lde went on to control much of mNga' ris skor gsum.

Appendix Two: On *gtsug lag*

gTstug lag with reference to a monastery – the house (*khang*) of *gtsug lag*:

19: 5 *dpal bsam g.yas lhund kyis grub pa'i gtsug lag khang*

19: 7 *mtha' kha ce'i gtsug lag khang*

22: 6 *skar chung gi gtsug lag khang*

38: 5 *tho ling gi dpal dpe myed lhun kyis grub pa'i gtsug lag khang*

2x on 38: 6-7 *ta po'i gtsug lag khang lrtsoqs pa mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang mang du bzhengs*

34: 7 *tha na 'dren lam du dpe thung gi gtsug lags khang bzhengs su gsol ba*

gTstug lag with reference to astrology(?) – the banned (*myi dbangs*) *gtsug lag*:

23: 6 *gtsug lag bon po lastsoqs pa ni gral phabs la mchis la myi dbang ba lags*

gTstug lag with reference to Bon, and as a separate custom:

35:1 *stod mnga' ris 'dir gtsug lag ni bon chos*

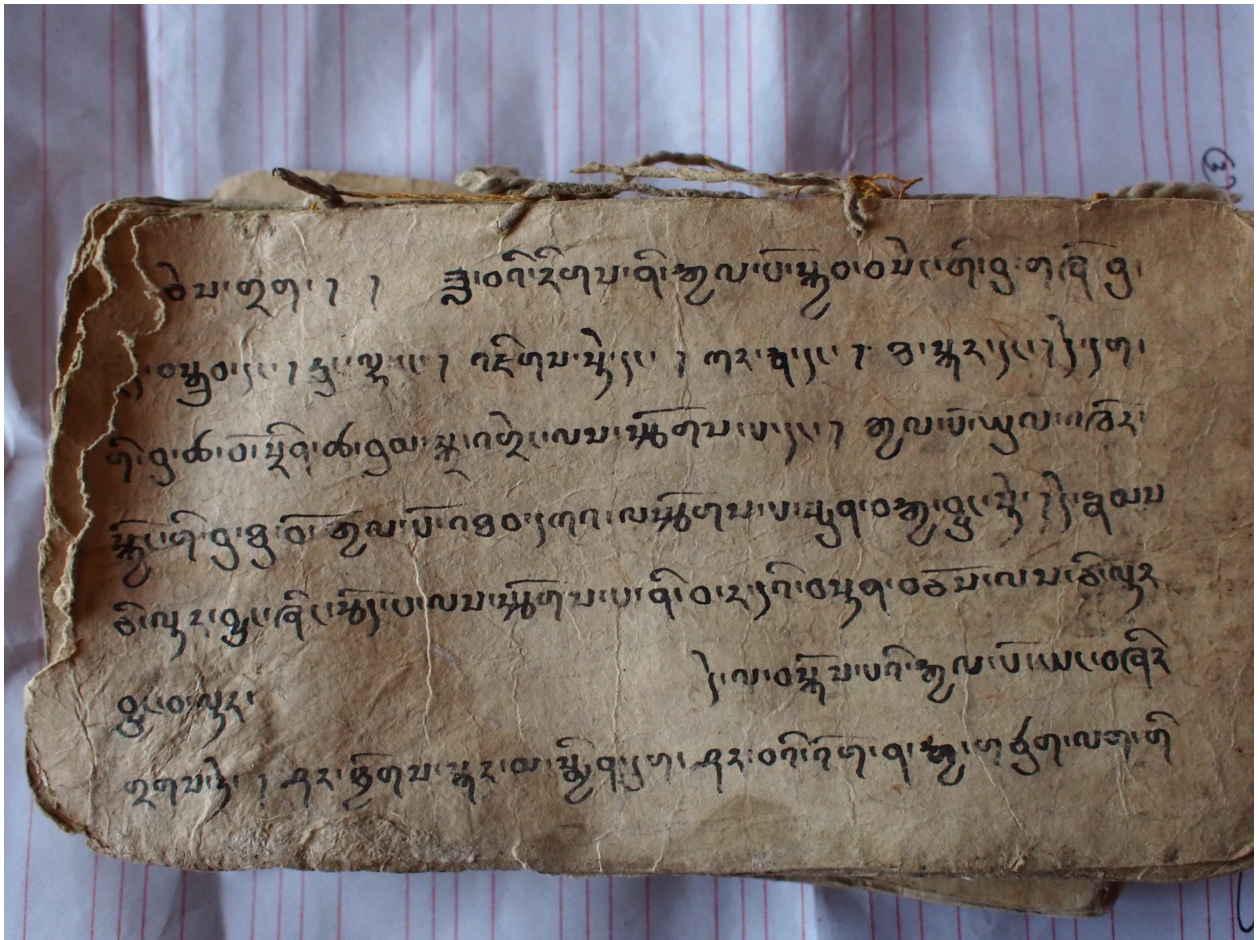
38: 2-3 *sangs rgyas gyi bstan pa'i zhal 'dzind mdzad cing | gtsug lag bon chos ni lha chos su mdzad |*

Appendix Three: The Six Athletic and Seven Wise Men

	Tholing, p.13-14	<i>lDe'u Jo sras</i> , p.119	<i>mKhas pa lDe'u</i> , p.299
1	<i>rngog ring la nag po</i>	<i>rngog ring la nag po</i>	<i>rngog ring la nag po</i>
2	<i>rngogs gling gam</i>	<i>rngogs gling kham</i>	<i>rngong gling gam</i>
3	<i>dpa' rgod mda' brtsan</i>	<i>ca rgod ltongs btsan</i>	<i>sbas rgod ldong btsan</i>
4	<i>'gong g.yas cung brtsan</i>	<i>mgos stag chung btsan</i>	<i>'gos g.yag chung</i>
5	<i>cog khru 'brong khong thol brgyad</i>	<i>cog ro 'brong shor</i>	<i>cog ro 'brong shor</i>
6	<i>gnon rgyal mtshan snang grags</i>	<i>gnon rgyal mtshan snang grags</i>	<i>gnon rgyal mtshan</i> (#3 in rGyal rabs)
7	<i>gnon khri 'dus yul byin</i>	<i>gnon khri gdas yus byin</i>	<i>gnon khri lde yul byin</i>

	Tholing, p.14-19	<i>lDe'u Jo sras</i> , p.114-115	<i>Ne'u Paṇḍita</i> , p.68-75 Uebach 1987, 4b7-5b2
1	'Grenḡ, Ru las skyes	Ru la skyes, the child of 'drenḡ	gNyer sTag tshal ldong gzigs
2	Khu Lha bo Mgo gar	Khu Lha'u Mgo dkar	Mong, Khri do re Snang tshab
3	mThon myin Sam po re	Mthon mi Bsam po ṭa.	middle child ('bring gi bu), Ru las skyes
4	rNgegs, Khri bzang Yang ston	Snyags Khri bzang Yang sto	Thon mi Sambhoṭa
5	'Gos, Khri bzang Ya blag	Khri bzangs Yab lhag	Khu, Lha bu Mgo dkar
6	Mong Khri do re Snang tshab	Mong Khri to re Snang tshab	Khri bzangs Yab lhag
7	sTag brtsan sdong gzigs	Gnyer Stag btsan Ldong gzigs	Rngogs, Khri bzangs Yab brten
8		Chinese lady Ong chung	

Appendix Four: Colour Facsimile of the Manuscript





Handwritten text in a script, likely Burmese, on aged, stained paper. The text is arranged in approximately 10 horizontal lines across the page. The paper shows significant wear, including creases, discoloration, and some loss of material, particularly on the left side. The ink is dark and somewhat faded in places. The background behind the paper is a light blue surface with vertical red lines.

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