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Chapter 4
Archaisms and the Transmission of the *Dba' bzhed*

The investigation of archaisms in the *Dba' bzhed* rests on a number of assumptions.[1] In the first place, there is the assumption that the concept of 'archaism' is relevant to the transmission and editing of the *Dba' bzhed*. This is to assert that the editors of the *Dba' bzhed* were aware of a difference between the past that they curated and described and the present that they inhabited, expressed on a linguistic level. Such an assertion may seem innocuous enough, but precisely this sort of assumption has been challenged as a potentially anachronistic projection in the context of the use of archaisms in Homeric epic.[2] Considering the *Dba' bzhed*, however, there is no question that the imperial period became an important site of myth making when it came to be viewed as a heroic age from at least the tenth century onwards. The question of the appropriateness of the concept of archaism nonetheless reminds us that our own awareness of the periodization of Tibetan language and history is not that of the Tibetan historiographical tradition. Nowhere is this more evident than in the way in which these differing epistemologies approach language and linguistic change. Modern scholars attempt to identify orthographic and phonological developments and to locate these in time and place. Traditional Tibetan scholarship, on the other hand, has tended to hem in the rough edges of the variants that one finds in early Tibetan writing, altering unrecognizable terms and phrases until they take a shape more recognizable to the Classical Tibetan lexicon. (There are some notable exceptions within the *brda gsar rnying* traditions of textual scholarship in Tibet, a good example of which is the *Li shi'i gur khang* of 1536.[3]) Unpicking some of these rough edges that

the *Dba' bzhed*'s editors have been good enough to leave only partly hemmed, one can examine the use and misuse of archaisms and their relevance to dating the *Dba' bzhed*. The titles *Dba' bzhed* and *Sba bzhed* (as I shall call the later *Testimony of Ba* tradition), as well as the history's subtitles, are also relevant to the question of archaisms, and to the origins of this historiographical tradition.

Dba' bzhed and *Bka' mchid*: What's in a Name?

The *Dba' bzhed* contains several orthographical and lexicographical enigmas. The most obvious of these is its title, "*The Testimony of Dba': the Text of the Royal Narrative Concerning How the Buddhist Religion Came to Tibet*" (*Sangs rgyas kyi chos bod khams su ji ltar byung ba'i bka' mchid kyi yi ge dba'i bzhed pa*), which pertains to its genre and also advertises its location between imperial-period sources and later religious histories. The most insightful work to date on this issue, and one which is exemplary for the study of Old Tibetan archaisms in Classical Tibetan sources, is Philip Denwood's "Some Remarks on the Status and Dating of the *Sba bzhed*."[4] Here Denwood considers the tradition, found in SBA 1961.1–2 and elsewhere, according to which the text is a "royal edict" (*bka' gtsigs*). After carefully establishing the normative use of the term *gtsigs* in imperial-period documents, where it is used consistently in official documents and treaties to mean "charter" or "edict," Denwood demonstrates how by the time of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192), *gtsigs* and the related term *bka' gtsigs* were no longer understood, and were glossed by Nyang ral and others with terms like *rtsis* and *dkar chag*.[5] Denwood proposes that the use of *bka' gtsigs* in the colophon of SBA 1982.1–3, 82.11—"the *bka' gtsigs* given to, or associated with Sba gsal snang" (*sba gsal snang gi bka' gtsigs kyi yi ge*)—is relevant to dating the origin of the work. Making allowances for a long process of subsequent transmission and edition, Denwood concludes that the designation of this work as a *bka' gtsigs* must date to the

2 Jonas Grethlein, "From 'Imperishable Glory' to History: The *Iliad* and the Trojan War," in *Epic and History*, ed. David Konstan and Kurt A. Raaflaub (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 128–29.

3 See Manfred Taube, "Zu einige Texten der tibetischen brda-gsar-rnying-Literatur," in *Asienwissenschaftliche Beiträge: Johannes Schubert in memoriam*, ed. Eberhardt Richter and Manfred Taube (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1978), 169–201.

4 Philip Denwood, "Some Remarks on the Status and Dating of the sBa bzhed," *Tibet Journal* 15 (1990): 135–48.

5 Denwood, "Some Remarks on the Status and Dating of the sBa bzhed," 143–44.

imperial period or shortly thereafter.[6] In this, he hypothesizes that the imperial germ of the text might have been a royal decision following the Bsam yas Debate, over which Emperor Khri Srong lde btsan (742–c.800) presided.[7]

Denwood's essay demonstrates the value of lexicography to dating Tibetan writing, and provides valuable leads to follow in considering the term *bka' mchid* in the *Dba' bzhed*'s title. Per Sørensen has already explored this line of enquiry in his insightful preface to Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger's annotated translation of the *Dba' bzhed*. He writes that the *Dba' bzhed*, "presumably in some original form, may have contained the detailed wording of the royal edict (*bka' gtsigs kyi ye ge zhib mo*) that may have been issued in the wake of the Bsam yas Debate, as well as the wording of the accompanying royal narrative (*bka' mchid kyi yi ge*) that provided the aetiology, the rationale (*gtan tshigs*) and the history (*lo rgyus*) behind the solemn decrees, *in casu* the introduction of Buddhadharma to Tibet."[8] Behind these remarks, and Denwood's hypothesis, stand two important documents—a "royal edict" (*bka' gtsigs*) and a "royal narrative" (*bka' mchid*), preserved in Dpa' bo Gtsug lag's sixteenth-century work, the *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*.[9] Presumed to be genuine copies of imperial-pe-

riod sources, these two documents accompanied the publication in stone of the Bsam yas Edict, probably dating to 779, that proclaimed royal and official support for Buddhism. The *bka' gtsigs* gave some background to the decision, and included the text of the oath and the names of those who swore it. As such, it performs a binding legal function. The *bka' mchid*, on the other hand, is devoted entirely to giving the narrative background and rationale for the decision. Hugh Richardson for this reason aptly dubbed it "the first Tibetan *chos 'byung*" or religious history.[10] Its title closely resembles that of the *Dba' bzhed*: "The Text of the Royal Narrative Concerning How the *Dharma* Came to Tibet in Early and Later Times" (*chos bod yul du snga phyir ji ltar byung ba'i bka' mchid kyi yi ge*), a point already noted by Wangdu and Diemberger.[11]

These documents in fact built upon an earlier binding decision that was born of a consultation (*bka' gros*) that Khri Srong lde btsan held in order to root out opposition to Buddhism shortly after the law banning its practice was overturned, probably in 761. Here, too, the emperor had his vassals and councilors swear an oath not to persecute Buddhism, as related in his brief recounting of the affair in the *Bsam yas bka' mchid*.[12]

The *Old Tibetan Chronicle* also reflects the fact that *bka' mchid* were narratives as opposed to binding legal records. A short eulogy to Emperor Khri 'Dus srong (676–704) in the *Chronicle* draws on and refers to a *bka' mchid* concerning this ruler. One sentence reads, "being noble unlike to mankind, all the kings under the sun and the black-headed subjects gave him the name-moniker 'Sacred King' (*'phrul gyi rgyal po*), as it is said in the *bka' mchid*."[13] Unfortunately, such a *bka' mchid*, if it ever existed, is no longer extant. From the quotation, however, one can assume that it would have had a narrative histor-

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6 Denwood, "Some Remarks on the Status and Dating of the sBa bzhed," 143–44.

7 The orthography of the name Khri Srong lde('u) b(r)tsan is itself an important shibboleth, on which see Brandon Dotson, "Naming the King: Accession, Death, and Afterlife Through the Re- Un- and Nick-Naming of Tibet's Kings," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 24 (2015): 22. For the purposes of this article I use the *Dba' bzhed*'s spelling of this name, which reflects a post-imperial orthography.

8 Per K. Sørensen, "Preface: *dBa'/sBa bzhed*: The dBa'[s]/sBa [Clan] Testimony Including the Royal Edict (*bka' gtsigs*) and the Royal Narrative (*bka' mchid*) Concerning the bSam yas Vihāra," in *dBa' bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet,* ed. Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), x–xi. See also the similar conclusions, along with further perceptive remarks concerning, among other things, archaisms in the *Sba bzhed*, in David Seyfort Ruegg, "On the Tibetan Historiography and Doxography of the 'Great Debate' of bSam yas," in *Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the Fifth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, *Narita 1989. Volume One*, ed. Shōren Ihara and Zuihō Yamaguchi (Tokyo: Naritasan Shinchoji, 1992), 239–40.

9 Hugh Richardson, "The First Tibetan *chos-'byung*," in *High Peaks, Pure Earth: Collected Writings on Tibetan History and Culture*, by Hugh E. Richardson, ed. Michael Aris, 89–99 (Parkfields: Serindia, 1998); W. South Coblin, "A Reexamination of the Second Edict of Khri-srong-lde-btsan," in *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, ed. Lawrence Epstein and Richard Sherburne (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 165–85; Matthew T. Kapstein, "The Conversion Edict of Tri Songdetsen," in *Sources of Tibetan Tradition*, ed. Kurtis Schaeffer, Matthew T. Kapstein and Gray Tuttle (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 60–64.

10 Richardson, "The First Tibetan *chos-'byung*," 96.

11 *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* 1962, 110r:2. The text that follows further describes it as "The text of the history of the construction of the supports for the triple gem, and the practice of the Buddhist religion in Tibet, from early times until the present" (*gna' da 'chad bod yul du dkond cog gsum gyi rten bcas te/ sangs rgyas kyi chos mdzad pa'i lo drung gi yi ge*.) Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), 23, n. 1.

12 Richardson, "The First Tibetan *chos-'byung*," 93–95; Coblin, "A Reexamination of the Second Edict of Khri-Srong-lde-btsan," 170–73; Kapstein, "The Conversion Edict of Tri Songdetsen," 62–64.

13 *'bangs mgo nag pyogs kyis / / mtshan bla dags 'phrul gyi rgyal po zhes / btagste / bka' mchid kyi dper brjod do /*; Pelliot tibétain 1287, ll. 330–31; Jacques Bacot, Frederick W. Thomas and Charles-Gustave Toussaint, *Documents de Touen-houang relatifs a l'histoire du Tibet* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1940–1946), 149.

ical flavor and would have essentially extended the sorts of royal eulogies that are found in the Inscription at the Tomb of Khri Lde srong brtsan (d. 815) and in the 'Phyong rgyas Bridge Head Inscription.[14] A narrative *bka' mchid* is closer to the *Dba' bzhed*'s genre than is an administrative *bka' gtsigs*. A shared genre designation also links the *dBa' bzhed* with the *bSam yas bka' mchid,* and situates it in proximity to the royal eulogies of the inscriptions and the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*. This is not to deny that the *Dba' bzhed*/ *Sba bzhed* dovetails with other genres as well, which it patently does.

Both Denwood and Sørensen look to a *bka' gtsigs* following the Bsam yas Debate as the putative ancestor to the *Dba' bzhed* and its *bka' mchid,* or as the ancestor to the *Dba' bzhed* as a *bka' mchid*. This decision comes just before the "first ending" of the *Dba' bzhed*, but it is not in fact referred to as a *bka' gtsigs* or a *gtsigs*.[15] Despite the importance of the Bsam yas Debate, one might contend that the construction and consecration of Bsam yas Monastery was in fact the central event of the *Dba' bzhed*. Indeed the emperor's proclamation upon its consecration in the year of the sheep is referred to as a *bka' shog*, and an annotation adds that he issued a *chos gtsigs* and erected a pillar.[16] Therefore the putative origins of the *Dba' bzhed* may lie in the edicts following the consecration of Bsam yas—or, more accurately, its accompanying *bka' mchid*— which would double as a history of the establishment and the fate of Buddhism in Tibet. Such a document would have drawn on the consultation of c.761, when Buddhism was adopted as one of Tibet's official religions. It might also have been further updated in the wake of a pivotal event such as the Bsam yas Debate. In such a manner, the narrative account of the *dharma*'s fate in Tibet would be successively updated and disseminated in official documents. These royally commissioned accounts and their focus on the advent of Buddhism in Tibet could in such a way provide a plausible crucible for the development of the *chos 'byung* genre.

The *Dba' bzhed*'s proposed genesis in successively updated *bka' mchid*-s concerning the Buddhadharma in Tibet does nothing to account for the text's other title, the "Testimony of the Dba' Clan" (*Dba' bzhed*), since there is no obvious reason why this or any clan should be inextricably linked to this narrative. Here once more the term *gtsigs* offers a possible explanation. As Denwood notes, a *gtsigs* in Old Tibetan sources is issued to a person and to his descendants, usually granting them privileges. In fact there is one such instance of a *gtsigs* in the *Dba' bzhed* itself, and it happens to implicate the Dba' clan in a way that might account for their centrality in the transmission of this narrative. After Dba' Gsas snang escorts Śāntarakṣita back to Nepal after this Indian master's first, somewhat unsuccessful trip to Tibet, Gsas snang returns to Tibet and Khri Srong lde btsan entrusts the *Dba' bzhed* protagonist and reputed author with another mission:

> For the sake of the *dharma*, the emperor ordered Gsas snang to act as a messenger to China, and he accepted. [He also promised Gsas snang that] if he subsequently accomplished the task according to [Khri Srong lde btsan's] wishes, he would grant him a decree (*gtsigs*) awarding him the great silver [insignia].

> *chos kyi slad du gsas snang rgya yul du pho nyar btsan pos bka' stsal nas/ mchid kyis 'tshal te slad nas dgongs pa bzhin du grub na dngul chen po stsal bar gtsigs gnang/.*[17]

The most intriguing thing about this promised decree to the *Dba' bzhed*'s central Dba' clan protagonist is that it appears that it is forgotten or never fulfilled. When Gsas snang returns from China, for example, he has surely enjoyed great success, but he does not receive his promised reward. Ahead of the Buddhist contest with the Bon po-s, Gsas snang is awarded several positions, including *chos kyi bla* and *snam phyi'i sa g.yas kyi tshugs dpon*, but no mention is made of a decree (*gtsigs*) awarding him insignia.[18] After the foundation of Bsam yas, he is appointed the "representative of the Bhagavat" (*bcom ldan 'das kyi ring lugs*), and is treated as the highest-ranking official in Tibet, but still there is no explicit mention of a decree or insignia, and no reference to the emperor's pledge.[19] After Gsas snang is called back from his meditation-retreat-cum-self-imposed-exile, he plays a minor role in the Bsam yas Debate by recommending that Khri Srong lde btsan invite the Indian master Kamalaśīla to refute Hwa shang Mahāyāna (Heshang Moheyan) and his Chan proponents. The main narrative of the *Dba' bzhed* then ends with Khri Srong lde btsan's decision and a quasi-colophon, but

14 See Fang Kuei Li and W. South Coblin, *A Study of the Old Tibetan Inscriptions* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1987), 227–60. On the close relationship between the eulogies published in stone and those collected in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, see Hugh Richardson, *A Corpus of Early Tibetan Inscriptions* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1985), 37; and Rolf Stein, *Rolf Stein's Tibetica Antiqua, with Additional Materials*, trans. Arthur McKeown (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 197.

15 DBA' 2000, 24v.

16 DBA' 2000, 17v:4.

17 DBA' 2000, 8v:6. On the translation of *mchid kyi 'tshal* with "to accept" or "take responsibility," see Tsuguhito Takeuchi, *Old Tibetan Contracts from Central Asia* (Toyko: Daizo Shuppan, 1995), 143.

18 DBA' 2000, 14r:6–7.

19 DBA' 2000, 17v:6–7.

without any explicit mention of a decree to Gsas snang. The first addendum to the *Dba' bzhed*—or its "second ending" (see Chapter 2 in this volume)—includes a visit by Khri Srong lde btsan to Gsas snang's death bed, but it does not mention any decision or insignia either, even though this would appear to be the ideal setting for the king to grant a decision bestowing privileges on Gsas snang's descendants.[20] Intriguingly, there seems to be an acknowledgement of a lack of closure concerning Gsas snang's mission to China: before the colophonic "This is the end" that closes the *Dba' bzhed*'s "second ending," Khri Srong lde btsan laments, among other things, that the scriptures of China were not translated (*rgya'i dar ma ma 'gyur ba yid la gcags gsung ngo/ /*).[21]

What is the significance of this withheld edict and unfulfilled promise from the emperor to Dba' gSas snang? One can read this in a number of ways. It may, for example, simply constitute a narrative blind spot. It could also indicate that other imperatives, such as the "decline of the *dharma* motif" took precedence and that their expression was more important than tying up the loose ends of the relationship between the emperor and Gsas snang.[22] The deathbed scene between the two men tends to suggest, however, coming as it does following the first ending of the *Dba' bzhed*, an addendum offering closure and an evaluation of Gsas snang's deeds upon his death. Ironically, this evaluative statement takes the form of the emperor's expression of regret, which does not resolve but rather extends the sense of indeterminacy or open-endedness with which the *Dba' bzhed*'s "first ending" closes. It strongly suggests that Gsas snang's mission to transmit Buddhism to Tibet, particularly from China, was not fulfilled, and/or that the *Dba' bzhed*'s authors and editors chose to cultivate this sense of a lack of fulfillment.

Dba' Gsas snang's promised but withheld decree contrasts with Khri Srong lde btsan's manifest edict upon the consecration of Bsam yas Monastery. Both of these edicts—the one that was given and the one that was withheld—help us to think about the nature and genesis of the *Dba' bzhed* and its two titles. It is this withheld decree to Gsas snang and the Dba' clan's postponed fulfillment of

his task to bring the *dharma* to Tibet that might account for the history being not just a royal *bka' mchid*, but also a testimony of the Dba' clan. As caretakers of Gsas snang's legacy, the Dba' may have been motivated to fulfill his destiny, so to speak, and to succeed in the task that the emperor entrusted to him. Although Gsas snang and Padmasambhava may belong to different strata of the narrative, the motivating power of an ancestor's lack of fulfillment recalls Hildegard Diemberger's remarks on Padmasambhava's "unfinished job" in the *Dba' bzhed*, namely his failure to bind Tibet's indigenous deities by oath for a third and final time before he departed Tibet for Nepal.[23] This, Diemberger argues, explains the partly wild nature of Tibet's *dharma* protectors (*dharmapāla*), but it also leaves Padmasambhava's successors with the task of fulfilling the work left undone.[24] In the context of the study of Tibetan aetiological myths, it is a reminder that present-day success is not always underwritten by mimetic antecedents of success performed by heroic or mythical predecessors. Myths of failure, or of partial success, can also empower and motivate.

Had Gsas snang been granted an edict, then the accompanying narrative—or the narrative element of the edict—could, given Gsas snang's career, double as a history of the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. The same, or indeed a greater sense of responsibility to narrate the story of Buddhism in Tibet, might also be kindled by a sense of partial failure, and of unfinished business, and this seems to be the charter that the Dba' clan set for themselves: despite all of his great achievements, Gsas snang does not receive the royal edict, and the king even expresses disappointment at Gsas snang's deathbed. This aspect of their self-identity, and the belief that they were destined to fulfill Gsas snang's mission, may account for the Dba' clan's leading role when, leading up to and then following the collapse of the Tibetan empire, royal historiography of the Tibetan adoption of Buddhism was decentralized and taken over by aristocratic clans who promoted and preserved the imperial legacy in their own ways.

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20 See, for example, chapter five of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, where Srong brtsan sgam po grants privileges to the aged councilor Dba's Dbyi tshab and his descendants; Bacot *et al.*, *Documents de Touen-houang*, 143–47.
21 DBA' 2000, 25r:7–25v:1. Note that Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, 90, translate this passage following Khri Srong lde btsan's direct speech not as indirect speech, but as a mixture of prose and direct speech. I think it is clear that that it is all indirect speech, and that the king is detailing his regrets about the state of the *dharma*.
22 See Chapter 5 in this volume.

23 See Hildegard Diemberger, "Padmasambhava's Unfinished Job: The Subjugation of Local Deities as Described in the *dBa' bzhed* in Light of Contemporary Practices of Spirit Possession," in *Pramāṇakīrtiḥ: Papers Dedicated to Ernst Steinkellner on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday,* ed. Birgit Kellner *et al.* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 2007), 85–93.
24 Note the symmetry between Padmasambhava's twice taming the demons and the two binding decisions described in Khri Srong lde btsan's Bsam yas edicts: he bound his councilors by oath to protect Buddhism in the consultation of c.761, and again at the consecration of Bsam yas in c.779.

The *Dba' bzhed* is an artifact of this process, and, as a religious act, its composition and transmission is part of the Dba' clan's fulfillment of their ancestor's task. This process offers insight into the meaning of the name *Dba'i bzhed pa*, which essentially modifies the royal narrative referred to in the long title: the narrative is not a verbatim rendering of the imperial source itself, but is rather an adjustment of it. It tells not only of the unfolding of the fate of Buddhism in Tibet, but also of the unfolding of the Dba' clan's relationship with it: *Dba'i bzhed pa* is simultaneously "The Wish (or Mission) of Dba' [Gsas snang]" and "The Wish [Fulfillment] of the Dba' Clan."

Dba's bzhed

There is an archaism of sorts in the *Dba' bzhed*'s short title. The title *Dba' bzhed*, as opposed to *Sba bzhed*, reflects an orthographic change that happened over time. A famous and powerful clan in Tibet was known first as Dba's, and then as Dba', Dbas, Sbas, Sba and Rba. The process of orthographic and phonological change did not happened overnight, and it should be generally datable. This sort of orthographic change is relevant to other clan names, whose changing orthographies are also pertinent to historical phonology more generally. The Myang, for example, become the Nyang; the Mnon become the Snon, and the Mchims become the 'Chims.[25] The changing orthographies also map a gradual decline in the importance of clans in Tibet, as is well known. One consequence is that the misspelling or misuse of imperial Tibetan names, which are fairly different from post-tenth-century names, can advertise a text's distance from the events it purports to narrate. Such considerations may be relevant to the name of the story's protagonist, who is called Gsas snang in the *Dba' bzhed* and Gsal snang in the *Sba bzhed*.[26] These orthographic changes are not necessarily categorical and consistent: editors fail to standardize divergent spellings such that of Dba' and Sba, or Sba and Rba that appear side-by-side. This can reflect both the various strata of the text and the editors' ignorance of the proper name of a moribund clan.

Were Gsas snang granted the insignia with a decree (*gtsigs*) like those inscribed on a few central Tibetan steles, the privileges would have been granted to himself and to his descendants in the clan then known by the name Dba's. In whatever manner the clan associated itself with the royal narrative, if this happened in the imperial period it would have done so as the Dba's clan. In the *Old Tibetan Annals*, the *Annals of the 'A zha Principality*, Pelliot tibétain 1290, the Inscriptions at Zhwa'i Lha khang, the name of this clan is spelled Dba's. In our extant manuscript of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, Dba's appears thirty-three times against a single occurrence of Dba'.[27] In Dunhuang manuscripts most certainly dating to the tenth century, the appearance of both Dba' and Dbas is more common. In Pelliot tibétain 149, a text that Sam van Schaik and Lewis Doney date to the tenth century, the form Dba' appears in the name Dba' Dpal byams.[28] The forms Dba' and Dbas occur side by side in a lineage of imperial Tibetan religious officials that includes Dba' btsun ba Ye she [sic] dbang po, Dba' Dpal dbyangs and Dbas Byang chub rin cen (IOL Tib J 689, 2v:4–6).[29] This, too, may date to the tenth century. Thus, while the use of the term *bka' mchid* in the longer title mirrors the use of this term in the similarly titled *Bsam yas bka' mchid*, and could therefore be said to reflect imperial usage, the main title of the text, if it existed in the imperial period, would have probably been **Dba's bzhed*.

The very name of our document therefore sets it apart as reflecting an old, but not an imperial orthography. Even so, the fact is that the name of the text was updated to accord with changing orthographies. This is why it is best known as the *Sba bzhed* or *Rba bzhed*. Reciprocally, the fact that the text is not called the **Dba's bzhed* does not

25 Changing orthographies are particularly evident in the spellings of personal and place names; see, for example, my brief remarks on some orthographic differences between the thirteenth-century *Rgya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa* of Mkhas pa Lde'u and the sixteenth-century *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* of Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba; Brandon Dotson, "At the Behest of the Mountain: Gods, Clans and Political Topography in Post-Imperial Tibet," in *Old Tibetan Studies Dedicated to the Memory of R.E. Emmerick*, ed. Cristina Scherrer-Schaub (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 163, n. 8.

26 The form Gsal snang appears once in the DBA' 2000, 5r:3; see Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, 38, 39, n. 77. This is in the context of the episode concerning Chinese *zhai* rituals and the vermillion pearl, on which see Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 38–41. The fact that this episode is a stand-alone "set piece" could be taken to be an

indication that it was inserted into the narrative from another source with differing orthographies.

27 On the uncertain date of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, see Brandon Dotson and Agnieszka Helman-Ważny, *Codicology, Paleography, and Orthography of Early Tibetan Documents: Methods and a Case Study* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 2016), 128–36.

28 Sam van Schaik and Lewis Doney, "The Priest, the Prayer and the *Tsenpo*: An Early Buddhist Narrative from Dunhuang," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 30, nos. 1–2 (2007): 192.

29 Samten Karmay, *The Great Perfection (rDzogs chen): A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*. Second Edition (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 78.

constitute proof that such a text never existed; its title may simply have been updated in the same fashion as *Dba' bzhed* was updated to *Sba bzhed*. One can also observe this process of updating at work in the case of the *Dba' bzhed*'s use of imperial-period archaisms.

Three Men in a Boat: the Consequences of 'Correction'

One principle of Denwood's essay on *gtsigs* and *bka' gtsigs* is that it is not the mere presence, but rather the misuse or emendation of an archaism that can help to date a text. Another way to put this is to state that the misuse of an old term constitutes an innovation, and innovations, unlike the conservative preservation of archaisms in formulae and so forth, have the potential to be dated. As Denwood demonstrates, one must establish a term's normative use in its earlier context (such as royal inscriptions) and its normative use in a later context (such as the *Sba bzhed*) before one can judge whether or not the latter misuses an archaism and thus represents an innovation. This is a painstaking process, and there is no question of surveying all of the extant material in which a single term might appear, nor is it possible here to perform such an analysis on every archaism in the *Dba' bzhed*. Instead, one can begin with an example that compares the *Dba' bzhed* and the *Sba bzhed,* and then investigate a few intriguing archaisms in the former with respect to Old Tibetan materials.

To illustrate how archaisms are glossed over in the transmission of a text over centuries one need look no further than the passage cited above concerning the decree (*gtsigs*) promised to Dba' Gsas snang. For the sake of convenience, I repeat it here, alongside the corresponding passage in SBA 1982.1–3:

> DBA' 2000, 8v:6: For the sake of the *dharma*, the emperor ordered Gsas snang to act as a messenger to China, and he accepted. [He also promised Gsas snang that] if he subsequently accomplished the task according to [Khri Srong lde btsan's] wishes, he would grant him a decree awarding him the great silver [insignia].

> *chos kyi slad du gsas snang rgya yul du pho nyar btsan pos bka' stsal nas/ mchid kyis 'tshal te slad nas dgongs pa bzhin du grub na dngul chen po stsal bar gtsigs gnang/.*

> SBA 1982.1–3, 23.11–14: The emperor appointed Sba Gsal snang overseer of the *dharma*, and Gsal snang agreed to go to China as a messenger. He decided that if [Gsal snang] completed this according to the intention from above/ from the authority/ from the emperor, he would construct and spontaneously grant to him a great silver.

btsan pos sba gsal snang chos kyi spyan par bkos (bskos) nas/ gsal snang rgya nag yul du pho nyar 'chi (mchi) bar mchid kyis 'tshal te/ bla nas dgongs pa bzhin 'grub na dngul chen po bla thabs su bstsal bar brtsigs bcas nas chad byas so/.

The first problem comes with *slad*, which means "subsequent," and which, in the expression *slad du*, means "for the sake of." SBA 1982.1–3's replacement of *slad* with *spyan* has resulted in Gsal snang being given yet another post. Then *slad nas* ("subsequently") is replaced with *bla nas*, which means "from above," but which in Old Tibetan—perhaps irrelevant here—means "from the authority" in the context of a royal or official decision.[30] The sentence is changed irrevocably by the glossing of *gtsigs* ("decree") with *brtsigs bcas* ("built"). This bedevils the word order and presumably leads to the insertion of *bla thabs*, which might be further evidence that the editor does not know that *dngul chen po* refers to insignia or that *thabs* refers to rank.[31] The result is nearly gibberish, and highlights some of the problems facing both those who would read this text at face value and those who would try to read between the lines to get at the original intended meaning.

In the *Dba' bzhed* similar deformities arise when an archaic technical term is misused. Such is the case with *slungs*. As established by Jian Chen (alias Bsod nams skyid), *slungs* refers to the distance between the way-stations of imperial Tibet's corvée and transportation network.[32] It thus refers to a stretch of largely uninhabited territory traversed by messengers and others, which Chen states measured thirty *li* (approximately fifteen kilometers).[33] Our most detailed information comes from a judicial document (Pelliot tibétain 1096) regarding the loss and supposed theft of a horse at a way-station. This document makes it clear that the way-stations were known as *tshugs* or *slungs tshugs*, and that among the officials in charge were the

30 In their translation of the phrase *bka non bla nas mdzad* in the west inscription at Zhva'i Lha khang (line 35) with "shall be suppressed by the authorities," Li and Coblin correctly understand the use of *bla* to mean "authority"; Li and Coblin, *A Study of the Old Tibetan Inscriptions*, 278.
31 On insignia, see below.
32 See Bsod nams skyid, "Gna' bo'i bod kyi yig rnying las 'slung tshang' dang 'slungs dpon' zhes pa'i tha snyad la rags tsam dpyad pa," in *Bod kyi yig rnying zhib 'jug*, ed. Kha sgang Bkra shis tshe ring (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2003), 266–71; see also Brandon Dotson, *The Old Tibetan Annals: An Annotated Translation of Tibet's First History. With an Annotated Cartographical Documentation by Guntram Hazod* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), 56.
33 Bsod nams skyid, "Gna' bo'i bod kyi yig rnying las 'slung tshang' dang 'slungs dpon,'" 276.

slungs pon and the *tshugs pon*.[34] Other Old Tibetan documents also use *slungs* in the same administrative context. A fragment in Pelliot tibétain 1290, for example, mentions stamps and seals borne by those who use the network of way-stations and traverse the wastes (*slungs la mci 'o 'tshal gyi bka' rtags dang phyag rgya*).[35] The *Old Tibetan Chronicle* also refers to Srong brtsan sgam po's (d. 650) standardization of the distances between stations.[36]

Apart from these and a few other similar uses of the term, *slungs* also appears in Old Tibetan ritual texts (see Pelliot tibétain 1134, ll. 123–24; Pelliot tibétain 1136, l. 29; and Pelliot tibétain 1285, *recto*: 55–56), where it apparently has a different meaning that is of no relevance here. In an administrative context in documents dating from the imperial period or shortly thereafter, however, one can safely conclude that the term *slungs* indicates the stretches between the way-stations of the imperial Tibetan transportation network.

Looking at the *Dba' bzhed*, it is apparent that this meaning is only imperfectly retained. When Gsas snang goes to meet Khri Srong lde btsan, the text states, "... he arrived at Slungs tshugs court" (*slungs tshugs pho brang du mchis*).[37] There are surely a variety of court and council sites, some with very interesting names, but "Way-Station Court" stretches the bounds of plausibility. One might speculate as to how this monstrous place name came into being. A *nas* or a *kyis*, for example, may have been deleted between *slungs tshugs* and *pho brang* ("proceeded along the way-stations to the court"). Whatever the case, the result clearly calls into question the writer(s)' and scribes' awareness of the meanings of *slungs* and *tshugs*. Nevertheless, *slungs* and *tshugs*, understood as vaguely lexical items but certainly as signifying archaic language of the imperial period, must have seemed appropriate to the *Dba' bzhed*'s editors as elements of the name of a royal residence, and were left to stand as such.

In another passage in the *Dba' bzhed*, it appears that the editors emended *slungs* with a noncommittal gloss, *rlungs*, which seems not to be a word. They may also have simply misread the *sa mgo* as a *ra mgo*. Again it is a matter of transportation, or of coming to the royal court from an outlying area. The context is Gsas snang's task of bringing Śāntarakṣita, Padmasambhava and a Nepalese architect for the foundation of Bsam yas Monastery.

> Gsas snang returned from China and saluted the presence [of the emperor]. [The emperor] had decided to invite Bodhisatva [Śāntarakṣita], and he requested that [Gsas nang] go to Mang yul and, via the *rlungs*, bring [Śāntarakṣita,] Padmasambhava, who had accepted Bodhisatva's invitation to Tibet, and the Nepalese architect who would build the foundation of Bsam yas and build the Lce ti sgo mangs. [Gsas snang did so.] They arrived at Snyi mo Thod kar.

> *gsas snang yang rgya yul nas mchis te zha sngar phyag bgyis pa dang /bo d+hisa twa spyan drang bar chad nas yang mang yul du phyin $///pa dang bo d+hi sa twas pad ma sa b+ha ba bod yul du spyan drangs nas bzhes pa dang /bsam yas rmang rtsig pa dang lce ti sgo mangs rtsig pa'i phya mkhan gsas snang gis rlungs la drangs nas gshegs par gsol ba dang /snyi mo thod kar du gshegs te*.[38]

Here I read *slungs* for *rlungs*, and assume that the meaning is that Gsas snang is to guide the three men via the transportation network or over the wastes. It is not at all clear, however, that the *Dba' bzhed*'s editors understood the term this way, and it is likely that they did not.

The other versions of the *Sba bzhed* emend this word to *chu klung*, and therefore understand that Gsas snang/ Gsal snang conducted the great men via a river or rivers. The emendation of *slungs*—or the *Dba' bzhed*'s *rlungs*, which is a sort of nonsensical middle ground—to *chu klung* had immediate consequences for the editors of the various *Sba bzhed*-s: now faced with a river, had to insert the acquisition or construction of a boat into the narrative. In some cases, the passage only mentions "two teachers," which calls into question whether or not the editors have forgotten about the Nepalese architect such that Gsas snang, who is apparently now well versed in boat building as well as being a great religious adept, guides only two passengers. For example:

> SBA 1961.1–2, 20.10–11: There, in Mang yul, [Gsal snang] built a boat and conducted [the three men] on the river to Snye mo Thod dkar (*der mang yul nas rdzing bcas nas chu klung la spyan drangs te/ snye mo thod dkar du byon pa dang/*).

34 See Brandon Dotson, "Introducing Early Tibetan Law: Codes and Cases," in *Secular Law and Order in the Tibetan Highland*, ed. Dieter Schuh (Andiast: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2015), 285–87.

35 Pelliot tibétain 1290, *recto*: 10. Cf. Ariane Macdonald, "Une lecture des Pelliot Tibétain 1286, 1287, 1038, et 1290: Essai sur la formation et l'emploi des mythes politiques dans la religion royale de Srong bcan Sgam po," in *Études Tibétaines dédiées à la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou*, ed. Ariane Macdonald (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1971), 325.

36 Pelliot tibétain 1287, ll. 453: "*slungs kyi go bar bsnyams.*" Bacot and Toussaint gloss *slungs* with *klung*, and mistranslate "l'égale répartition des eaux," Bacot *et al.*, *Documents de Touen-houang*, 161, n. 5. This is precisely the mistake that the SBA 1982.1–3 editors made when faced with their own incomprehension of this term.

37 DBA' 2000, 6r:4–5; Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, 41, n. 88.

38 DBA' 2000, 10v:7–11r:2.

SBA 1982.1–3, 25.20–21: Gsal snang built the two teachers a boat in Mang yul and conducted them on the river to Thod dkar in Snye mo (*mkhan po gnyis ka gsal snang gi*[39] *mang yul nas rdzings bcas nas chu klung las spyan drangs nas snye mo'i thod dkar du gshegs pa dang/*).

SBA 1962, 85r:1–2: Gsal snang built the two teachers a boat in Mang yul and conducted them to Thad ka in 'U yug[40] (*mkhan po gnyis ka gsal snang gis mang yul nas gzings bcas nas chu klung la spyan drangs 'u yug gi thad kar gshegs pa dang/*).

This seems to be one of the many cases in which an element of a narrative owes its existence to a folk etymology or to a misunderstood archaism. Supposing *slungs la drangs was opaque to an editor or compiler as a result of their temporal remove from the phenomenon of the imperial transportation network, the closest sensible option would be to transform the phrase into *[chu] klung las spyan drangs*. This editorial choice poses serious problems for the itinerary of Padmasambhava and the others, however, which the editors seem to have left unchanged. The route is from Mang yul to Snye mo (misspelled Snyi mo in the *Dba' bzhed*), and then from Snye mo via Gal ta la Pass to Snying drung, near the source of the Lha chu River south of Lake Gnam mtsho in modern 'Dam gzhung county.[41] Only after a month's stay at Snying drung does Padmasambhava—the others aren't mentioned at this point—arrive at the royal court. Considering such a route, once one reaches the Gtsang po from Mang yul—no small feat—it would in fact be possible to take the river to Snye mo. From there, however, one would have to walk to Snying drung, crossing more than one pass. It may be the case that historical and geographical realities are open to adjustment in a work such as the *Sba bzhed*, but it is also the case that while some long-distance boat travel existed in Tibet, particularly between Lhasa and Bsam yas, the proposed routes are impossible unless one imagines these august travelers carrying their boat for long distances over difficult terrain.[42] Additionally, there does not appear to be any strong narrative motive for interpolating a boat into

this story. The geographical and logistical embarrassment of constructing a river cruise itinerary from Mang yul in southwestern Tibet to northern central Tibet is rather the price that the editors had to pay for not knowing the meaning of the term *slungs*.

Gilded Silver, Therianthropic Deities and Sorcerers

The *Dba' bzhed*'s treatment of the term, *phra men/ 'phra men* is more complex than the straightforward misunderstanding and deformation of an archaism. The *Dba' bzhed* is generally correct in its references to the imperial system of insignia. The ministerial aristocracy held ranks that were organized according to precious metals, which likely formed part of their epaulets or similar visible markers of rank. In descending order, they are turquoise (*g.yu*), gold (*gser*), gilded silver (*phra men*), silver (*dngul*), brass (*ra gan*) and copper (*zangs*). The next rank down is called *gtsang chen*, which seems not to refer to a precious metal.[43] Gilded silver (*phra men*) is used in this context to refer to the precious metal, and, by metonymy, to the rank associated with this metal. A councilor of such a rank was called, for example, a "gilded silver insignia-holder" (*phra men gyi yi ge pa*). In the Rkong po Inscription there is also a reference to precious documents kept in a chest made of gilded silver.[44] And the *Bsam yas bka' mchid* claims to have been written with *phra men* ink and kept in a golden box.[45]

Appearing as it does between silver and gold, and described in the *New Tang History* (*Xin Tangshu*) as *jin tu yin* 金涂銀 "silver coated with gold," it is clear that the primary meaning of *phra men* is silver gilded or cladded with gold.[46] A tradition of metalwork involving just such

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39 Read *gis*.
40 The meaning could also be "straight to 'U yug."
41 For Snying drung, see Guntram Hazod, "Imperial Central Tibet: An Annotated Cartographical Survey of its Territorial Divisions and Key Political Sites," in *The Old Tibetan Annals: An Annotated Translation of Tibet's First History. With an Annotated Cartographical Documentation by Guntram Hazod*, ed. Brandon Dotson (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenchaften, 2009), 202 (map), 217. On Gal te in the vicinity of Snying drung, see Hazod, "Imperial Central Tibet," 218 (in the entry on Lha sgal).
42 I am grateful to Diana Lange for information about travel by boat in Tibet.

43 The system of rank, which has distinct parallels in China, was analyzed in Paul Demiéville, *Le concile de Lhasa. Une controverse sur le quiétisme entre Bouddhistes de l'Inde et de la Chine au VIIIᵉ siècle de l'ère Chrétienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), 284–86, n. 2. More recently, see Dotson, *The Old Tibetan Annals*, 60–64.
44 Li and Coblin, *A Study of the Old Tibetan Inscriptions*, 206.
45 *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* 1962, 110r:3. This is either a misuse of the word, since ink cannot be easily gilded or cladded, or it is evidence to support Dan Martin's suggestion that *phra men* is electrum, an alloy of silver and gold; see Dan Martin, *A History of Buddhism in India and Tibet: An Expanded Version of the Dharma's Origin in India and Tibet Made by the Learned Scholar Lde'u* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, *forthcoming*).
46 See Demiéville, *Le concile de Lhasa,* 284–86, n. 2. Previously, in a long book review published in 1941, Rolf Stein discussed the *New Tang History*'s passage on Tibetan insignia; Rolf Stein, "Houa-si Hie-ho ta-hio Tchong-kouo wen houa yen-kieou-souo tsi-k'an, vol. I, parts 1–3,"

materials and employing the technique of gilding is well known from some extraordinary objects including gilded ewers and bowls dating to the imperial period. These objects have been the subject of several studies, and it has been argued that they either came to Tibet as gifts from Sogdians or others influenced by Sasanian metal-work, or that the objects were manufactured in Tibet at royal ateliers consisting of Sogdians, Chinese, Turkic, or even Iranian artisans, or that Tibetan artisans learned and practised these gilding and cladding methods.[47] It is therefore no stretch to propose that *phra men* refers to silver gilding, a technique transmitted to Tibet ultimately from the Iranian world.

Before introducing the secondary meanings of *phra men*, one should note the word's peculiar orthography, specifically the preference for *men* rather than *myen*. All of the documents in which *phra men* appears consistently attach the *ya btags* to *mi* and *me*, i. e., *myi and mye*, with few exceptions. This is in accordance with a rule, well observed in Old Tibetan writing, that *mi* and *me* are pala-talized, and the presence of a suffix, as in the word *myed*, does not change this. In its many occurrences in official and legal documents, only twice does the second syllable of the term *phra men* appear in the "expected" form, *myen*. This is also true of the term *nu men* (variant: *no men*; IOL Tib J 723, *recto*: 21; IOL Tib J 739, 8r:12; Pelliot tibétain 1105, l. 6; Pelliot tibétain 1051, l. 39), which, like *mu men* (*lapis lazuli*), is a precious jewel. This irregular orthography, along with the fact that gilded silver is likely an imported technology, probably brought to Tibet by Sogdian crafts-

men, suggests that *phra men* is a loanword.[48] Looking to other instances of non-palatalized *men*, the most obvious and most prevalent is *men tog* ("flower").[49] Another is *men tri*, a type of woven silk (Pelliot tibétain 1109, ll. 11, 26; Pelliot tibétain 1128, ll. 17, 22). One also finds *men* as the second syllable in the compounds *ba men* and *rta men* (IOL Tib J 731, *recto*: 27; Pelliot tibétain 1060, l. 35). Without claiming that all of the above are necessarily loanwords, the suggestion that *phra men* is a loan is bolstered by the appearance of the less common form, *'phra men*, where the *'a* prefix might signal that it is a foreign word, perhaps with an initial f.[50]

Recently Helga Uebach proposed that *phra men* is "an Indian loanword connected to Skt. *pramaṇḍita* = 'orna-mented,' 'adorned' corresponding to Tibetan *rab tu rgyan pa*."[51] This may indeed be the source of the loan, but the proposed solution introduces a few puzzles. First, why was a very general Sanskrit adjective borrowed into Tibetan as a noun for a very specific technique of gilding that was likely introduced by Sogdians? Uebach's statement of the problem is extremely valuable for further research on *phra men*, and the suggestion concerning the Sanskrit *pramaṇḍita* may prove to be correct, but questions still remain, and one wonders if another solution may lie in Middle Persian or Inner Asian languages. In considering this question, one should also attend to *phra men*'s sec-ondary meanings besides gilded silver, which also appear in the *Dba' bzhed*.

Phra men can mean something quite different from gilded silver when it appears in a ritual context. In the Dunhuang manuscript *'Phags pa thabs kyi zhags pa pad ma 'phreng gi don bsdus pa* and its commentary (IOL Tib J 321), studied by Cathy Cantwell and Rob Mayer, the terms *'phra men* and *'phra men ma* refer to male and female "magical hybrid deities." These figures have human bodies and animal heads, and perform various tasks such as "seizing and offering the evil spirits to the wrathful deities

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Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême Orient 41 (1941): 436. There he further adds the *Comprehensive Institutions* (*Tongdian*) history's gloss on 金涂銀, which it explains as "argent orné d'or" 金飾銀上, or, more literally, "silver with gold ornamented on top of it." Relating this to the insignia as they are found in Old Tibetan sources, he translates *phra men* with "pierres précieuses" without comment, probably be-cause this is one of the secondary meanings of *phra* on its own (Stein, "Houa-si Hie-ho ta-hio Tchong-kouo wen houa yen-kieou-souo tsi-k'an," 436). Helga Uebach unfortunately mistook Stein's translation of the Tibetan for his translation of the *Comprehensive Institutions* history's 金飾銀上, and thus wrongly adduced "that another Chinese manuscript kept in Paris provides the meaning 'pierres précieuses'"; Helga Uebach, "Two Indian Loanwords in Old Tibetan: *Men-tri* and *Phra-men*," in *From Bhakti to Bon: Festschrift for Per Kvaerne*, ed. Hanna Havnevik and Charles Ramble (Oslo: Novus Press, 2015), 546.
47 On these objects, see Martha L. Carter, "Three Silver Vessels from Tibet's Earliest Historical Era: A Preliminary Study," *Cleveland Stud-ies in the History of Art* 5 (1998): 22–47; Amy Heller, "The Silver Jug of the Lhasa Jokhang: Some Observations on Silver Objects and Cos-tumes from the Tibetan Empire (7th-9th century)," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 9 (2003): 213–37; and Michael Henss, *The Cultural Monu-ments of Tibet* (Munich: Prestel, 2014), vol. 1, 77–79.

48 On Sogdian influence on Tibetan metallurgy, see, most recently Amy Heller, "Tibetan Inscriptions on Ancient Silver and Gold Vessels and Artefacts," *Journal of the International Association of Bon Re-search* 1 (2013): 285. For a semantic analysis of the term, see Uebach, "Two Indian Loanwords in Old Tibetan," 545–47.
49 See Nathan Hill, "Old Chinese **sm-* and the Old Tibetan Word for 'Fire,'" *Cahiers de Linguistique Asie Orientale* 42 (2013): 67–68.
50 On this function of the *'a* prefix, see W. South Coblin, "On Certain Functions of *'a-chung* in Early Tibetan Transcriptional Texts," *Linguis-tics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 25, no. 2 (2002): 169–85. For a more comprehensive view, see Nathan Hill, "Once More on the Letter *'a*," *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 28, no. 2 (2005): 107–37.
51 Uebach, "Two Indian Loanwords in Old Tibetan," 547.

as food."[52] The Dunhuang manuscript of this Mahāyoga *tantra* likely dates to the tenth century, and is thus later than the administrative documents discussed above. The *tantra* itself, on the other hand, predates its extant Dunhuang manuscript exemplar. One might therefore tentatively propose that the use of the term (')*phra men* (*ma*) for a hybrid deity is a secondary development, and one that moreover applies the concept of 'hybridity' inherent in the gilding or cladding of gold onto silver to that of an admixture of human and animal. The two meanings of the term would have existed alongside one another until the primary meaning of *phra men* as gilded silver was forgotten, and its previously marked orthography of *men* (as opposed to *myen*) came to appear commonplace as it converged with new orthographic norms, such that "magical hybrid deity" became its normative meaning, and *phra men* its normative orthography.

In the *Dba' bzhed*, *phra men* means gilded silver where it appears in the context of gifts that the Chinese emperor bestows on Gsas snang and Sang shi. Alongside bolts of silk and pearl rosaries, the emperor gives them "gilded silver birds" (*phra men gyi bya*).[53] In a subsequent passage, *phra men* appears to be used in the sense of gilded silver insignia: when an official succeeds in summoning Gsas snang in order to deal with the antics of Hwa shang Mahāyāna's followers, he "arrived at court and was immediately granted the rank of gilded silver and the status of great *rgya bye'u*" (*pho brang du mchis na 'phral du thabs phra men dang rgya bye'u che thang du gnang/*).[54] There is a good parallel to this passage in a decision on rank in Shazhou (an area including Dunhuang) dating to the imperial period: "appointed as attaché to the town prefect and granted the rank of gilded silver ..." (*rtse rje'i zlar bskoste / thabs phra men stsal nas*; Pelliot tibétain 1089, l. 29).[55] Here it seems to be a case of the *Dba' bzhed* getting it half right, but perhaps of doing so unwittingly. No known early source mentions the rank of *rgya bye'u*, which means either "pheasant chick" or "Chinese birdy."

Here one wonders if the *Dba' bzhed*'s editors had in mind the Chinese silver-gilt bird from Gsas snang's trip to China. Extending the benefit of the doubt, *rgya bye'u* could be an error of hearing for the phonologically similar diphthong *brgye'u rje* meaning "head of a little hundred[-unit]."[56] Even so, a *brgye'u rje* would not hold such a high-ranking insignia as gilded silver. This also casts some doubt on the editors' understanding of *phra men*, even if they qualify it, correctly, as a "rank" (*thabs*). SBA 1982.1–3 has in the corresponding place the following, slightly less garbled sentence that avoids the term *phra men* by substituting copper: "[he] returned to court and was immediately granted the great copper and the status of great rewards" (*pho brang du slar 'ongs pas/ 'phral du zangs chen po dang bya dga' che thang du bstsal/*).[57] This is also incorrect in so far as *thang* ("status, level, rank") should apply to *zangs chen po* ("great copper [insignia]") and not to *bya dga'* ("reward"). One assumes that the editors found opaque the meaning of the latter term, if not the meanings of all three.

There is another use of *phra men* in the *Dba' bzhed* that appears to correspond to neither of the two meanings discussed above. When Śāntarakṣita first arrives in Tibet, Khri Srong lde btsan has him questioned in order to ascertain what sort of a teacher he is. His principal concern is that Śāntarakṣita's teachings might contain "barbarian spells and sorcery" (*lho bal gyi ngan sngags dang phra men*).[58] After questioning, it is clear that the king's doubts are unfounded. The same doubts are raised in the BL fragment of the *Dba' bzhed*, with the almost identical phrase *lha bal gyi ngan sngags dang 'phra men*.[59] *Phra men* is also used for sorcery in a Dunhuang invocation to Mahābala: among the things that might harm a person, the verse names "perverse mantras" (*sngags log pa*) and *phra men ma* (Pelliot tibétain 443, l. 8).[60] It is interesting that the etymology of "spells" is "wicked mantras"; similarly, *phra men* as "sorcery" might derive from, or extend from, the misuse by tantrists of the hybrid deities for nefarious ends. Were this so, it would be a tertiary meaning derived from "hybrid deities," a term which itself might come from the "hybridity" of gilded silver.

52 Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer, *A Noble Noose of Methods, The Lotus Garland Synopsis: A Mahāyoga Tantra and its Commentary* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2012), 76–78. For further details on such therianthropic deities, see Ivette Vargas, "Snake-Kings, Boars' Heads, Deer Parks, Monkey Talk: Animals as Transmitters and Transformers in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Narratives," in *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics,* ed. Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 229–30, 236, n. 60.

53 DBA' 2000, 10v:5.

54 DBA' 2000, 19r:5.

55 See also Marcelle Lalou, "Revendications des fonctionnaires du grand Tibet au VIIIᵉ siecle," *Journal Asiatique* 243 (1955): 181.

56 Géza Uray, "Notes on the Thousand-Districts of the Tibetan Empire in the First Half of the Ninth Century," *Acta Orientalia Scientiarum Hungaricae* 36, nos. 1–3 (1982): 545–48.

57 SBA 1982.1–3, 65.20–21.

58 DBA' 2000, 7v:2, 7v:3, 8r:2.

59 Or.8210/S. 9498A, l. 2; Sam van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao, "Fragments of the 'Testament of Ba' from Dunhuang," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128, no. 3 (2008): 480–81; 484; see also Chapter 3 in this volume.

60 Stein, *Rolf Stein's Tibetica Antiqua*, 54.

Conclusion

Introducing these brief remarks on archaisms in the *Dba' bzhed*, I have proposed a scenario in which the conditions of the text's origin and early transmission as a *bka' mchid* or royal narrative concerning the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet—and as a promised but unfulfilled edict to Dba' Gsas snang—account for its location between the genres of royal history and religious history and for the central role of the Dba' clan. Linguistically, it also lies between Old Tibetan and Classical Tibetan, and the title of the work, *Dba' bzhed*, as opposed to **Dba's bzhed* or *Sba bzhed*, is emblematic of this. In the *Dba' bzhed*'s use of terms such as *slungs* and *phra men*, as well as *gtsigs*, *thabs* and *bya dga'*, archaisms are 1) employed correctly; 2) deformed; or 3) glossed over. While these three types of usage are found in various *Sba bzhed*-s, the propensity towards deformity, rather than revisionist glossing, seems to be more characteristic of the *Dba' bzhed* and of its temporal location. This is most apparent in the case of *slungs* ("wastes" or "stretches between stations"), which, rather than being glossed with *chu klung* ("river") as in the *Sba*

bzhed, and as echoed in Bacot and Toussaint's efforts to grapple with the same term in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, is deformed as *rlungs*. The latter doesn't seem to mean anything, but must have somehow seemed an improvement on *slungs*, assuming the result is not simply a scribal error in which one superscript has been mistaken for another. From the perspective of the *Sba bzhed* editors, who 'corrected' *slungs* or *rlungs* to *chu klung*, one can assume that *rlungs* would be viewed as sloppy work. From our vantage point, by contrast, it is valuable information that allows us to discern the outline of the word *slungs*, and the original, prosaic narrative behind the interpolated boat trip. In this instance, to gloss an unknown term like *slungs* was to take one's protagonists on a logistically impossible river cruise. The *Dba' bzhed* spares us this delightful narrative folly, and it reminds us of the value, not only in medieval Tibetan editing, but also in contemporary scholarship, of laying bare the obscurity and complexity of difficult terms and phrases rather than glossing them over with a misplaced sense of certainty at the expense of the integrity of one's sources. Down that route lie stranger tales than Gsas snang's river cruise.