Bringing Buddhism to Tibet
Beyond Boundaries

Religion, Region, Language and the State

Edited by
Michael Willis, Sam van Schaik
and Lewis Doney

Volume 10
Bringing Buddhism to Tibet

History and Narrative in the *Dba’ bzhed* Manuscript

Edited by Lewis Doney
Lewis Doney

Preface

Tibet has never been as closed off to the rest of the world as it exists in some westerners’ imaginations. During the seventh century, Chinese ambassadors passed through a Central Tibet ruled by the Tibetan empire. In the eighth century, artisans from Nepal and China were present at court and helped establish Tibetan Buddhist material culture. In the south, the trade routes across the Himalayas continued to provide access to the Indian subcontinent after the fall of the empire and, in the western Himalayas, the Mnga’ ris Kingdom traced its heritage back to central Tibet but also maintained strong ties to South Asia. With the second dissemination of Buddhism, more Tibetans travelled to Kashmir, Nepal, Bengal and the Gangetic Plain in search of Buddhist teachings and texts, writing of their peregrinations and advising future travelers of the dangers that they would face. The journeys of Indic masters to Tibet are also recorded, though more usually in the third person.

Yet, the question still remains, what is Tibet? The geographical extent of what constituted ‘Tibet’ (Bod/Bautai/Baitai/Tubbat/Fa/Tufan) during the imperial period (c. 600–850 CE) varied considerably as the Tibetan empire expanded and contracted at its various borders over time. Yet, through the prism of especially Buddhist historiography, a ‘Tibet’ emerged that was increasingly identified with the values of Indic Buddhism rather than military expansion. Works of historiography reflecting the influence of Buddhist literature and the cultural memory of the post-imperial Tibetans transformed the cosmopolitan Tibetan imperial world into a wild borderland contrasted with the Buddhist Indian subcontinent of the first millennium, through the biographies of its emperors who brought queens and religious masters to court from throughout their realms and beyond and thereby civilized the “land of snows.” When the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) ruled over Tibet, the latter then gradually took on a new role as guru to the region’s new imperial power. This rise in the status of Tibet on the world stage influenced even later accounts. For example, the lists of countries whose Buddhist masters played roles in converting imperial Tibet became longer, reflecting an expansion in certain Tibetans’ geographical awareness in the interim. These histories raise certain questions: To what extent did such accounts draw on first-hand experiences of the places described, either as people saw them at the time of these works’ compilation and/or during the imperial period itself? Is there anything in the depiction of the flow of people between South Asia and Tibet that links the self-representation of the emperors to the later ‘national’ self-image of the Tibetans?

As Buddhism spread through Asia during the first millennium, its encounter with the lands and societies it entered was represented in a variety of unique ways. Narratives of “the coming of the dharma” (chos byung) had profound effects on each country’s literature and, together with the influx of foreign narratives about South Asia itself into these countries, formed an integral part of their assimilation of Buddhism. The myths surrounding the Tibetan empire and its place in the spread of Buddhism in Asia steadily grew in length, variety, and influence from the post-imperial “time of fragments” (sil bu’i dus) through the politically charged fourteenth century to the more philologically critical milieu of the fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682). However, Buddhist historians during this entire period rarely made explicit statements about their work. They seldom provided criteria defining different genres of historical text or any of the rules governing their choice of sources. It is therefore of central importance to analyse the adaptation and redaction of their narratives, if we ever hope to reveal Buddhist approaches to historiography in practice. This will also help us answer wider cultural questions of attributed authorship, literary genres, and the creation of traditionally authoritative Buddhist historical narratives. This book intends to do just this, and so contribute to ongoing debates about the religio-politically motivated reconstruction of history and narrative in Buddhist Asia, and its lasting effects on the national identities of those countries.

This edited volume brings together six scholars of Tibetan studies to examine one such history, the Dba’ bzhide.1 The principal narrative of the Dba’ bzhide reflects an eleventh or twelfth-century view of the Tibetan imperial period and especially the acts on behalf of Buddhism that the eighth-century emperor (btsan po) Khri Song IIDE btsan (as his name is spelled there), his subjects and invited religious masters performed in Tibet, China and India. The Dba’ bzhide’s full title is: “Dba’ bzhide, the royal narrative (bka’ mchid) concerning how the Buddha’s

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1 The manuscript containing this work is reproduced and translated in Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, dBA’ BZHIDE: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha’s Doctrine to Tibet (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000). This exemplar will be referred to in this book as DBA’ 2000.
*dharma* arose in Tibet." This description encapsulates the main account given in the text, and perhaps indicates the antiquity of its core depiction of this period. The *Dbā' bzhed* first surveys the reigns of four major Tibetan Buddhist emperors: the prehistoric *Lha tho do re snyan btsan*, during whose reign Buddhism is said to have appeared in Tibet; *Srong btsan sgam po* (d. 649), during whose reign the practice of the doctrine was introduced; *Khri Srong lde btsan* (742–c. 800), during whose reign the doctrine spread and prospered; and *Khri Gtsug lde btsan* (Ral pa can; d. 841), during whose reign the doctrine was thoroughly systematised. The biographies of these emperors divide the narrative into four parts, with *Khri Srong lde btsan* taking the lion’s share.

When the thirteen-year-old *Khri Srong lde btsan* takes over the governance of the empire (on folio 4v:6), the narrative shifts from the emperor to a small group of Tibetan ministers and their conspiracies against the dharma. The *Dbā’ bzhed*’s principal protagonist is the Buddhist minister *Dbā’ Gsas snang* (known to later tradition as Gsal snang), with a lesser but still important role played by *Dbā’/’Ba’ Sang shi*. Despite the rival ministers’ destruction of all that previous Buddhist kings had achieved and their interdiction against its future practice, *Dbā’ Gsas snang* goes in search of the dharma to India and Nepal where he worships at Buddhist pilgrimage and monastic sites (5v:1–2).

*Dbā’ Gsas gnang* convinces the emperor to invite the Indian abbot Śāntarakṣita to Tibet. Śāntarakṣita in turn recommends the tantric master Padmasambhava to invite. However, Khri Srong lde btsan grows suspicious of the siddha’s power and asks Padmasambhava to leave Tibet half-way through the narrative. The emperor instead appoints *Dbā’ Gsas snang* to “the highest religious authority (chos kyi bla) as head [at his] right side (sa g.yas kyi tshugs dpon).” While a forerunner thereof, the Śāntarakṣita continues to play a more prominent role than *Dbā’ Gsas snang*, for instance in debate with the followers of the indigenous Bon religion of Tibet or digging out the site of *Bsam yas* with *Khri Srong lde btsan* (14v:3–15v:3).

When the abbot dies, *Dbā’ Gsas snang* is ordained as Ye shes dbang po and becomes the main moral goad of *Khri Srong lde btsan*. Ye shes dbang po recommends inviting the disciple of the now deceased Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, to take the gradualist side in the famous *Bsam yas Debate* against proponents of the instantaneous path to enlightenment (19v:3). *Khri Srong lde btsan* finally chooses the gradual approach as the victor and spreads it throughout Tibet (24v:2–3). Towards the end of the *Dbā’ bzhed*, it states that his reign marked a high-point in the rise of Buddhism in Tibet:

> Where the *dharma* did not get established during the reign of the five previous kings, *Lha sras* Khri Srong lde btsan, *Ācārya Bodhisatva*, *Dbā’ Ye shes dbang po* and *’Ba’ Sang shi*, these four, established the shrines of the triple gem.

These protagonists are actively responsible for bringing Buddhism to Tibet, despite the manuscript’s title and opening lines framing the narrative as an arising of the *dharma* in a way that de-emphasises (human) agency. This should alert us to the multiple depictions existing with the same text. Providing the core narrative of this text in precis here gives the misleading impression that it is perhaps the homogenous work of a single author. However, the *Dbā’ bzhed* represents a collage of narratives that probably took on its recognisable shape around the eleventh century. Some Tibetans over the centuries may have read this text as a single work (just as it is translated as a single piece into English), but it was surely created through a process of compilation and annotation over a number of centuries. The text therefore contains numerous strata of narrative, which give differing impressions of the central protagonists of the narrative, the organisation of the court and religion’s role in Tibet (both Buddhist and non-Buddhist). In this way, the *Dbā’ bzhed* offers us a number of different snapshots of a vital evolving corpus of texts and quotations within Tibetan historiography focused on the eighth century, that shall be referred to in this volume as the *Testimony of Ba* tradition.

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2 DBĀ’ 2000, 1v:1–2r:1: // dba’ bzhed bzhugs so // sangs rgyas kyi chos bod kha bsu ji t’ar ‘byung ba’i bka’ mchid kyi yi ge .
3 See DBĀ’ 2000, 1v:1–3, where the content of the narrative is outlined.
4 DBĀ’ 2000, 14r:6–7: gsas snang ni snam phyi’i sa g.yas kyi tshugs dpon chos kyi blar bskos so // .
6 In this volume, ‘Testimony’ is used in preference to ‘Testament.’ ‘Testament’ (interchangeable with ‘will’) is already a prevalent and more fitting (though imperfect) translation for another set of terms in Tibetan historiography, bka’ chems / bka’ thang / thang yig, whereas ‘testimony’ more properly captures the meaning of bzhed as ‘witness of’ or history ‘according to’ the *Dbā* perspective. See also Leonard W.J. van der Kuip, “Some Remarks on the Textual Transmission and Text of Bu ston Rin chen grub’s Chos ’byung, a Chronicle of Buddhism in India and Tibet,” Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines 25 (2013): 146; Per K. Sørensen, “Preface: DBĀ’/SBA bzhed: The DBĀ’/SBA [Clan] Testimony Including the Royal Edict (bka’ gtsigs) and the Royal Narrative (bka’ mchid) Concerning the bSam yas Vihāra,” in DBĀ’ bzhed: The
Contributors to this book describe the earliest sources preceding the *Dba’ bzhed* history and the process of recension that created it and then altered it down the centuries. This process gave birth to the *Testimony of Ba* tradition on Khrisrong I Ide btsan and the spread of Buddhism in Tibet during his reign, the *Testimony of Ba*. The *Dba’ bzhed* is the oldest available full version of the tradition, and its core narrative probably dates to the eleventh or twelfth century. Yet, it contains earlier narratives perhaps dating back to the ninth century, as well as later additional elements and interlinear notes. A longer, redacted version of the same narrative first published in 1980 most likely dates to the twelfth century, but a condensed version of the same narrative published in 1961 represents a thirteenth or fourteenth-century redaction.

In Chapter 1, I describe how the modern study of the *Testimony of Ba* began in 1961 when a late version of the narrative was published by Rolf A. Stein (1911–1999). As more exemplars appeared, they influenced scholarly debates (in Tibetan and other languages) over Tibetan history and historiography, its language, society and religion. Chapter 1 then sketches out the relation between a few of the key witnesses to the *Testimony of Ba* tradition. This investigation helps to show the high place that the text holds in the Tibetan historical tradition, as well as some of the ways in which the narrative was perceived and used over time.

In Chapter 2, Michael Willis and the late Tsering Gonkatsang examine the codicology, palaeography and internal history of the *Dba’ bzhed* manuscript. Close study of the organisational structure and scribal peculiarities of the manuscript bring us closer to establishing the date of its compilation and the earliest history of the narrative. This is followed by copious notes on philologically intriguing aspects of the manuscript, its main text and annotations.

In Chapter 3, Sam van Schaik investigates the first evidence of the narrative, which comes from a fragment found in one of the Mogao caves near Dunhuang, Northwest China. This fragment dates between c. 800 to 900 CE, during or shortly after the time when the Tibetan empire controlled this area. The fragment may represent the narrative in its formative state and a close examination of its palaeography, codicology and content deepens our understanding of how the *Testimony of Ba* evolved between the ninth and eleventh century.

In Chapter 4, Brandon Dotson engages in a close reading of lexical details within the *Testimony of Ba*. He shows the relationship between the title and the *Dba’ bzhed*. The identification of these archaisms reveals much about the sources of the narrative and the cultural context of those who compiled and edited it over the centuries.

In Chapter 5, Serena Biondo focuses in on the Bsam yas Debate between followers of the gradualist and instantaneous paths to enlightenment. The historical veracity of the account, its sources and influence on later religious and philosophical debates in Tibet has long been a topic of intense interest among scholars of Buddhist Studies. Chapter 5 uncovers some important quotations of other Buddhist works within the *Dba’ bzhed*, reinterprets its ending and reconsiders the identity of some of the major protagonists of the Bsam yas Debate.

In Chapter 6, I conclude Part One with a look at the depiction of Khrisrong I Ide btsan as a Buddhist king in the *Dba’ bzhed*. Earlier narratives present a glorified, divine image of this emperor and describe his reign as a ‘golden age’ of Buddhist practice, from which Tibetan ritual has since declined. In contrast, the *Dba’ bzhed* places the period of decline in the eighth century. Tantric masters such as Padmasambhava attempt to prevent its destruction. The emperor then hastens its demise by banishing Padmasambhava and causing a division in the Buddhist community. This depiction causes tensions in the portrayal of Buddhist kingship that later editors of the *Testimony of Ba* had to deal with if they wanted to keep representing the imperial period as a ‘golden age.’

Finally, the book provides a facing-page transcription and translation of the *Dba’ bzhed* undertaken by Tsering Gonkatsang and Michael Willis and a very useful index to the text compiled by Serena Biondo. The manuscript presented here has 31 folios. The translated text runs to 16,670 words. Gonkatsang and Willis’ transcription improves on a number of recent attempts in the sophistication of its philology and the clarity of the type-setting. Their translation also builds on that of Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger in 2000, more thoroughly emphasising the main text and adding depth to the meaning based on our two scholars’ long experience in Tibetology and Indology respectively. Having recourse to Pasang Wangdu and Diemberger’s facsimile of the text and copious notes is still

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7 None of the truly old texts discovered in the Dunhuang library cave date from after the early part of the eleventh century according to Yoshiro Imaeda, “The Provenance and Character of the Dunhuang Documents,” *Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* 66 (2008): 98.
advised. I hope that this volume will prove of use to students and scholars of Tibetan Studies, and also those in the wider academic world interested in the redaction of historiography and the place of literature in the Buddhisation of empire.

As readers make their way through this book, it will become clear that, at points, its contributors present different translations or interpretations of *Dbabzhed* narratives. I have neither sought to reduce these tensions, nor ‘solve’ these contradictions, since one of the main aims of this volume is to problematise the monolithic presentation of the *Dbabzhed* as a single work of some genius author that can be mined for their ‘intent’ in writing it at a single moment in history. Instead, these different readings show the *Dbabzhed* to be a rich and complex source of the wider *Testimony of Ba* tradition. The strata within both should be distinguished, as in an archaeological dig, to highlight the different layers of historiography, identity politics and religious perspective deposited by the various redactors over time. In the future, I hope that this will lead to a relative chronology of the narratives surrounding the *Dbabzhed* history of the coming of the *dharma* or bringing of Buddhism to Tibet, and shed light on the changing cultural dynamics of the early second millennium that fed the soil of our extant exemplars of the *Testimony of Ba* and sowed the seed of its enduring popularity. In closing, I would like to heartily thank the contributors for their hard work, patience and many forms of help over the years beyond writing their individual contributions, and to Aaron Sanborn-Overby and Sabina Dabrowski at De Gruyter for seeing the book through the press. Most of the writing, editing and publication of this book was generously funded by the European Research Council and the Royal Asiatic Society as part of the project “Beyond Boundaries: Religion, Region, Language and the State” (ERC Synergy Project 609823 ASIA). Finally, this volume is dedicated to the memory of Tsering Dhundup Gonkatsang, who patiently guided the work at every step and gave keen attention to transcription and translation of the text, and whom we shall all miss.
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In the course of his life Tsering Dhundup Gonkatsang played many roles, but he found his vocation—above all else—as a teacher and a translator. Confident in his own skills, he never sought any particular academic prestige. Rather he found fulfillment in using his expertise to help others. This involved him in a wide variety of tasks, from deciphering complex historical texts to organising community events, making films, and translating human rights documents into Tibetan. His formal career culminated in his appointment as the first Instructor in Tibetan at the University of Oxford. Beyond his family, his greatest delight was in the success of his students.

Tsering was born in Da nga, Sharkhog, eastern Tibet in 1951, shortly after the Chinese Communist takeover of the region. His family were relatively prosperous, the kind of people who might be classified as class enemies. In the mid-1950s, fearing that their son might be at risk, his parents took him on what became an extended journey first to Ngawa, then to Dartsedo (Kanding), and eventually to Lhasa. At that point, his father got into trouble with the Chinese authorities, and was imprisoned. Together with his mother, uncle and aunt, Tsering travelled on to Kalimpong in north-east India where he went to his first school. They did not see or hear from his father for more than 20 years.

In India, Tsering and his relatives at first lived precariously, and in that respect their fortunes mirror those of many others in the Tibetan refugee community. From Kalimpong they moved to Simla. During the colder winter months, the adults earned a supplementary income selling sweaters in Calcutta (now Kolkata), and Tsering helped out during the school holidays. Later, his uncle and aunt were allocated a small plot of land in Bylakuppe, a Tibetan settlement in southern India, where they lived from the sale of maize and other crops, as well as wood gathered from the nearby forest.

Despite these hardships, Tsering was fortunate in being able to gain a good education as a boarder at the Central School for Tibetans at Happy Valley in Mussoorie, where he excelled both academically and at sport. Everything that he achieved subsequently was grounded on this early training.

Tsering went on from Mussoorie to study English at Chandigarh University. After graduation, he was recruited into the Special Frontier Force, a Tibetan military unit within the Indian Army, based in Chakrata (now part of Uttarakhand). He completed his training, but there was a delay in the confirmation of his appointment as an officer following an Indian government policy review after the 1977 national elections. Rather than hang around waiting, Tsering decided to change course and become a teacher. He therefore studied for a B.Ed degree at the Central Institute of Education in Delhi. In 1979, he joined the SOS Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV) school in Dharamsala, the north Indian town that serves as the headquarters of the Tibetan government-in-exile, and in due course rose to become headmaster.

Early in the 1980s, during the period when there was a brief hope of political liberalization in Tibet, Tsering’s father was able to travel via Nepal to India. Despite not knowing either Hindi or English, he found his way to Calcutta and, having met a Tibetan monk at Howrah station, contacted the Tibetan community in search of his family. Tsering once told a moving story of how his father was reunited with his aunt. Thinking that a sudden unannounced meeting might be too much of a shock, his father waited outside her home while her relatives prepared her with a gradual build-up of hope and expectation. Their conversation started with the thought that it would be good to hear from Tsering’s father after so many years. Then they discussed how wonderful it would be if he could come to India. And it would be even better if he could come to see her. The climax came when they announced that he was waiting just outside.

Tsering’s father had hoped that his family might accompany him back to Tibet. His uncle went so far as to obtain the necessary identity papers from the Chinese embassy in Delhi, but they ultimately decided that they would return only when the Dalai Lama himself was able to do so. Meanwhile, Tsering continued his teaching career in Dharamsala.

It was in Dharamsala that Tsering first became interested in the challenges of translation. The immediate spur was a guidance document issued in Tibetan by Samdhong Rinpoche, who was then at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Varanasi. Until then, exile Tibetan schools had focused on the teaching of English as a core
survival skill, often at the expense of the mother tongue. Samdhong Rinpoche now called on them to redress the balance in favour of Tibetan. Evidently, his concerns were justified because Tsering had to translate this guidance for his Tibetan colleagues who were, themselves, products of an English-language education. He sent his translation to Samdhong Rinpoche, whose warm endorsement encouraged him to take his own Tibetan language skills a step further.

In 1987 Tsering moved to the University of Glasgow in Scotland to study for a postgraduate degree in education, with a particular focus on mother-tongue teaching. He then moved to north London and set up a home there with his wife Dolker and their three children, Lhayum, Choeyang, and Tashi, who all joined him from Dharamsala. Dolker's constant support and their happy family life served as the foundation for everything else that Tsering did. He was immensely proud of his children, their partners, and two grandchildren, all of whom survive him.

From 1991 until 2001, Tsering worked at the International Community School in London, eventually becoming Head Teacher. Meanwhile, he was involved in a wide range of other activities. Already an accomplished teacher of English to non-native speakers, he now began to apply the same skills to the teaching of his own language. I was myself among a select group of friends who regularly visited his house in north London for private lessons. He also served as the General Secretary of the Tibetan Community in Britain (TCB) from 1994 to 1996, and for many years taught Tibetan to the TCB children. At the same time, he provided translation to and from Tibetan for a number of organisations, including Amnesty International, the Tibet Information Network (TIN), and the Trace Foundation in New York.

Once he had settled in London, Tsering was able to revisit Tibet. In 1997, he travelled to his home in Amdo, together with Dolker and Choeyang. In 2004, he and Dolker visited her home in Tinkye, southern Tibet. Finally, he was again able visit Amdo in 2007, a year before his father passed away.

In 2001, Tsering took up a position as Instructor in Tibetan at the University of Oxford; this was a new post, created in memory of the Tibetan scholar Michael Aris (1946–1999). Tsering's now well-honed talents as a teacher and a linguist meant that he was the perfect candidate. During his years in Oxford he was able to put all his varied skills and experience to the best possible use.

Tsering taught beginner and intermediate Tibetan, as well as working intensively with advanced students on the reading of specific texts. He typically spent two days a week in Oxford. Driving up from his home in London, he would start early in the morning and stay late, surviving on orange juice when there was no time for meals. For his teaching materials Tsering drew on an eclectic range of sources including the adventures of Tintin, his own translation of the Twelve Days of Christmas (an English carol), as well as Tibetan-language Internet blogs and historical texts. He presented papers on Tibetan teaching materials at successive triennial conferences of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS). The panel that he planned on this topic at the 15th IATS conference in Paris in 2019 will be dedicated to his memory.

Tsering’s students remember him for his warmth, encouragement and sense of humour, often telling jokes that set the class into fits of laughter. At the same time, they marvelled at his linguistic versatility, whether they needed help with dharma texts, poetry, folk tales or historical records. Always unassuming, he was at the heart of the Oxford Tibetan studies community.

Tsering was equally generous in his collaboration with researchers beyond Oxford, and I was myself a beneficiary. Together we wrote three historical papers on Ladakh, and a fourth was in preparation at the time of his death. Other close colleagues included Michael Willis of the British Museum with whom he wrote three joint essays; they were working on a project on the advent of Buddhism into Tibet according to the Chronicles of Dba’ at the time of his death. It is a great pleasure to see this book finished and in the hands of readers.

Tsering’s other personal projects included the translation of an illustrated biography of the 14th Dalai Lama on behalf of the Domey (Amdo) Association in Dharamsala, and a book on the protector deity of Kirti monastery (in Ngawa, Eastern Tibet). At the same time, he was still fully involved in Tibetan community activities, serving as a trustee of the Tibet Foundation from 2009 to 2017, as well as Tibet Watch, a UK-based NGO monitoring Tibetan affairs, from 2008 to 2016. He provided translations for, among others, the US-based Radio Free Asia, and collaborated on the production of films and documentaries related to Tibet. In all of these activities, he rarely showed signs of fatigue. Tsering’s daughter Choeyang shares part of the secret. For her father, there was no boundary between his formal work and the wide range of Tibetan-related activities that brought him satisfaction and joy.

In April of this year I met Tsering at the British Library in London, and we chatted for two hours in the canteen. This would in any case have been a memorable occasion, since I now live in Singapore and we rarely had an opportunity to meet in person. Now the meeting has taken on an extra significance. Our conversation turned to his birthplace in eastern Tibet. Tsering then ran through the key
events of his life, retelling old stories, and sharing new ones, including some of the anecdotes related here. He had one more year to go before retirement from Oxford, and then he would have had plenty of other projects. The overwhelming impression was a sense of fulfilment and contentment.

Less than three weeks later, Tsering died after a car crash on his way to Oxford, having started early on a Friday morning to offer extra help to students before the start of his formal lessons. It was and remains hard to take in this news. He still had so much to contribute and—on a personal note—there was still so much that I and others had wanted to ask him.

Tsering’s legacy includes a range of articles and translations in print and scattered across the Internet. More than that, he will remain a continuing presence in the lives of the many people who knew him as a friend, colleague, and mentor. Between us, we will build on what we learnt from him, take it a step further, and share it with others. There can be no better way of honouring the best of friends and the most beloved of teachers.
Abbreviations

BDRC        Buddhist Digital Resource Center
BL          British Library
Bu ston      Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364)
DBA’         Dba’ bzhed (for versions and editions see Bibliography)
IOL         India Office Library (on these sources see Bibliography)
MBNTH       Mes dbon gsum rnam thar (for versions and editions see Bibliography)
MTN         Me tog snying po (for versions and editions see Bibliography)
Nyang ral   Nyang Ral pa can Nyi ma ’od zer (1124–1192)
Or.         Shelf mark used at the BL, ‘Oriental’ (on these sources see Bibliography)
Pelliot tibétain Shelf mark used at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (on these sources see Bibliography)
RBA          Rba bzhed (for versions and editions see Bibliography)
SBA          Sba bzhed (for versions and editions see Bibliography)
Transliteration

Where the transliteration of Tibetan in the footnotes and appendices to this volume does not follow the standard modified Wylie system, it accords with the more rigorous codicological system adopted by editors of the Old Tibetan Documents Online portal (see under “Editorial Policy” at https://otdo.aa-ken.jp/). For instance, the reverse gi gu is transliterated with the upper case “I” and stacked letters that are not found in the Classical Tibetan orthography of indigenous words are transliterated with the “+” sign (e.g., dhi with a subscribed ha is d+hı), the sign marking the beginning of a folio, paragraph, etc. is transliterated with $ and the anusvāra is transliterated with M (capital letter).

Tibetan terms and other foreign terms are given in italics. Exceptions are place names and personal names. These are spelled according to the orthography in the main text of the Dba’ bzhed or other source being quoted, for example Bodhisatva (with one “t”; see also Chapter 2, footnote 9), disregarding any interlinear amendments or additions. In proper nouns, the first letter is capitalised, as opposed to the root letter. Family names are capitalized alongside personal names, where both can be established, e.g. “Sba Gsas snang” for Gsas snang of the Sba family. Similarly, titles or honorific elements within names are also capitalized, e.g., Khri Srong lde btsan, where Khri is a royal title added to the name Srong lde btsan.

When quoting secondary sources, their authors’ spellings have been retained but their transliteration system has been brought into line with that of the volume. This means that hyphens and diacritics have been removed (e.g. daṅ-po is converted to dang po) and names capitalised by their first letter rather than their root letter. The exception to this is in the case of bibliographic information, where accuracy may be required in order to find sources. Please consult the Bibliography for the abbreviations used for exemplars or the Testimony of Ba tradition in this volume.
Figures and Tables

Figures

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Content of the exemplars of Testimony of Ba 1 and the recensions Testimony of Ba 1, 2 and 3 by syllables

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*Dbat’ bzhed* manuscript, folio 25r with the closing sentences of the text proper marked (ending 1)

Figure 2.2
*Dbat’ bzhed* manuscript, folio 25v with the two stated endings of the text marked (ending 2 and 3)

Figure 2.3
*Dbat’ bzhed* manuscript, folio 26r with the closing sentence of the supplementary text marked (ending 4)

Figure 2.4
*Dbat’ bzhed* manuscript, folio 17r showing the description of the Bsam yas temple inserted between line 5 and line 6 of the running text with further notations

Figure 3.1
The two fragments of the *Testimony of Ba* manuscript, shown together

Figure 3.2
British Library fragments, Or.8210/S. 9498A–D, in Melinex sheet

Figure 3.3
British Library fragments, detail from Or.8210/S. 9498D

Figure 3.4
British Library fragments, Or.8210/S. 13683A–D, in Melinex sheet

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Part One
Introduction

Several important historiographical traditions were created as Buddhism was transmitted to Tibet and assimilated there from the seventh century on. Although our understanding of these traditions is in its early stages, the Testimony of Ba has emerged as a key work. This consists of a bundle of closely allied texts that are important both for their influence over the longue durée and the problems that they raise about the sources and narrative strata of Tibetan history. One of the oldest versions of the Testimony of Ba is titled the Dba’ bzhed. This version is the focus of the present book.

Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp, well aware of the difficulties associated with the Testimony of Ba tradition, produced the following sober assessment of the wider field in 1996:

The earliest Tibetan historiographical materials are extremely diverse and, regrettably, to a large extent still unpublished. Investigations into the literary sources used by authors of those texts that are available to us are also in their infancy, as is, consequently, research into the particular ways in which they have made use of them. This renders it particularly difficult to determine the original contributions made by these early authors in terms of how they interpreted them when they were not simply incorporating large portions of their sources into their own work.1

Although scholars of Tibetan historiography have made good progress since 1996,2 it has been outpaced by the publication of new Tibetan data over the same period. Of the many new sources published from Central Tibet alone, the recent publications of mostly rare biographies and histories by Dpal brtsegs alone already make up 120 volumes.3 The last ten years has also seen an unprecedented digitization of Tibetan materials, including biographies and histories, now available to scholars online at the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC, https://bdrc.io; https://www.tbrc.org/), International Dunhuang Project (http://idp.bl.uk/) and other sites. This treasure trove of data has yet to be systematically analysed in any depth. The wealth of historical and hagiographical texts alone has only begun to be placed in some loose chronological order.4

Imperial and early post-imperial sources are usually the focus of Tibetologists interested in the first introduction of Buddhism to Tibet.5 If they are not chiselled into

4 See Martin, Tibetan Histories. A second, expanded edition of this invaluable resource is now in preparation.
5 For example, Michael L. Walter, Buddhism and Empire: The Political and Religious Culture of Early Tibet (Leiden: Brill, 2009), xxii–xxv seeks to base his claims only on the most reliable early sources.
stone, commissioned by the emperors (btsan po) or containing their proclamations or praise for their acts, then they are found for the most part in the so-called ‘library cave’ near Dunhuang. These manuscripts date from different periods between the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang in the late eighth century and the closing of the cave at the beginning of the eleventh century. Foremost among this group are the year-by-year royal records that constitute the Old Tibetan Annals, and the poetic account of imperial Tibet known as the Old Tibetan Chronicle. The inscriptions and the Annals are the oldest, but should not be taken for this reason as unbiased since they still constitute the ‘official’ self-presentation of the imperium. The Chronicle and other narrative Dunhuang documents are early post-imperial depictions of, for instance, the life and acts of the Tibetan emperors. These works build on the positive imperial self-presentations of the empire with the emperors cast as idealised Buddhist kings or celestial bodhisattvas. As such, all of these sources may only be used with care, since they already partake in a ‘mythographical’ representation of the past that they narrate.

However, by the end of this work Walter draws increasingly on the later redacted versions of the Testimony of Ba tradition in making claims about imperial Buddhist ritual (Walter, Buddhism and Empire, 186–89).

6 The term btsan po is difficult to translate but may be akin to the term “emperor” used by the previous rulers of China or Japan. In other words, it is an indigenous term for the sole ruler of the Tibetan state. The term btsan po, when used alone without adjectival qualification, is therefore inapplicable either to anyone in the same country who has not held this position, or to the head of another state, kingdom or empire. From the seventh century onwards, though, the Yar (k)long rulers were also “emperors” in the more literal sense of the term, “ones who rule over an empire,” and the Tang dynasty (618–907) referred to them as either zanpu or using terms meaning “emperor” from this period onwards; see Christopher I. Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese During the Early Middle Ages. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 20. Dotson (Old Tibetan Annals, passim) uses the term “emperor” as used by the histories use btsan po; see also Christopher I. Beckwith and Michael L. Walter, “On the Meaning of Old Tibetan rje-blon During the Tibetan Empire Period,” Journal Asiatique 298, no. 2 (2010): 538–39. Walter, Buddhism and Empire, 59, n. 50, states that the term means “warrior,” which may indeed be one of the connotations of this undoubtly multivalent term. Below, I refer to him as an emperor when the histories use btsan po, and a king when rgyal po becomes his primary epithet (especially in post-imperial histories).


Histories said to date from the eleventh century onwards also need to be approached with caution.\textsuperscript{13} The extant versions of these texts are all later copies of the originals and, as such, they show evidence of subsequent alteration, either as a result of their transmission or through conscious redaction by later generations of scholars. Following Paul Ricoeur, these processes should not be seen as a degradation of a postulated ‘pure’ original work, but as part of its ongoing evolution by \textit{mimesis}.\textsuperscript{14} These influences and adaptations throughout the later tradition of Tibetan historiography can thus be studied in their own right, and in a number of ways that may bear rich fruit. However, it is important not to let anachronisms obscure a better understanding of the creative processes taking place beneath the surface of this work.

Both types of alteration—through transmission and redaction—are evident in the \textit{Testimony of Ba} in all of its known versions. The exemplar titled the \textit{Dbā’ bzhed}—henceforth DBA’ 2000—is transliterated and translated in Part Two of this book.\textsuperscript{15} It is clearly a composite work, touched by a long line of transmission and by generations of scholarly redactors, beginning perhaps in the ninth century. The manuscript itself dates to about the fourteenth or fifteenth century, but the main narrative stems from the eleventh or twelfth century. The DBA’ 2000 narrative represents a later redaction of the non-extant earliest version of the D/S/Rba’ (\textit{bzhed}) history of Emperor Khri Srong lde brtsan’s reign (756–c.800).\textsuperscript{16} Some ‘proto-version’ of this history was perhaps originally composed during the late imperial period and then expanded, or may constitute a later compilation of late imperial sources.\textsuperscript{17} As a result of either process, narrative strata from six centuries of changing Tibetan historiography are contained within the DBA’ 2000 manuscript. The oldest of these strata describe Khri Srong lde brtsan in ways similar to the positive imperial-period self-presentations or the Dunhuang texts’ glorifications of the empire. The interpolations and interlinear notes then portray him from several, slightly different, perspectives—each reflecting the time of their addition and thus providing us with a sense of changing religious and political values among certain Tibetan communities.\textsuperscript{18}

The processes of transmission and redaction are also evident in the wider tradition of the \textit{Testimony of Ba}, as noted above. The complex relationship between these strata suggest that a strictly stemmatic analysis of the data may not prove as fruitful as one that emphasises the natural \textit{mouvance} or instability of depictions of the imperial period among this textual corpus.\textsuperscript{19} The influences


\textsuperscript{13} Such historiographical sources include those claiming themselves to date from the eleventh or twelfth century, by means of historical figures mentioned in their colophons, or those that Tibetan tradition (sometimes quite recent) attributes to Buddhist masters from this period. Examples of the former include the \textit{Bka’ chems ka khol ma}, \textit{Mani bka’ bum}, \textit{Zangs gling ma} and \textit{Me tog snying po} (MTN), which are all extant in several exemplars. The most notable of the latter type for this volume is the \textit{Mes dbon gsum gyi rnam par thar pa} (MBNTH) that is extant only in one version. A few of these works are discussed below.

\textsuperscript{14} Paul Ricoeur, \textit{Temps et récit} (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1983–1985), provides a particularly perspicuous representation of the movement of history through culture. He identifies a continual process of imitation (\textit{mimesis}) in historical writing, conceived of as the constant (re)appropriation of an object of representation (such as the Tibetan imperial period). Ricoeur divides this process into three phases, \textit{mimesis}$_1$, \textit{mimesis}$_2$, and \textit{mimesis}$_3$. The first phase is found in a pre-narrative, symbolically charged world of actions, the subject of history. The second phase is the creation of narrative history itself, which makes sense of the often-chaotic world of actions by means of a ‘plot’ with a beginning, middle and end. The third phase, \textit{mimesis}$_3$, occurs when readers naturally adapt this (hi)story to their own concerns. They are changed by the narrative and transform it within themselves by the same process of reading. Readers can then become re-tellers, disseminating the narrative in their own way to be re-interpreted by their audiences. This concept of \textit{mimesis} is thus a valuable tool for theorizing the metamorphosis of histories over time and in relation with a changing audience and culture.

\textsuperscript{15} For abbreviations of the exemplars, see the Bibliography in this volume. The manuscript is reproduced in greyscale in Wangdu and Dieremberger, \textit{Dbā’ bzhed}, 126–56; Dpal brtsegs brol dpe snying zhib ’jug khang (ed.), \textit{Bod kyi lo rgyus}, vol. 36, 1–62, and more recently in colour in ‘Brug thar and Karma bde legs (eds.). \textit{Bod kyi snga rabs dam pa rnam sgying chos phyag bris ma rin chen gser phreng}. (Lanzhou: Kan su’u rig gnas dpe skrun khang, 2015), vol. 9, 161–222. My thanks to Jörg Heimbel for verifying the existence of the latter reproduction. Lastly, folios are available online on Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3359902.

\textsuperscript{16} On the variants of this title, see Wangdu and Dieremberger, \textit{Dbā’ bzhed}, 3–4.

\textsuperscript{17} See Per K. Sørensen, “Preface: \textit{Dbā’i}s/\textit{sBa bzhed}: The \textit{Dbā’i}/s/\textit{sBa} [Clan] Testimony Including the Royal Edict (\textit{bka’ gtsüz}) and the Royal Narrative (\textit{bka’ mchid}) Concerning the bsam yas Vihāra,” in \textit{Dbā’ bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha’s Doctrine to Tibet}, ed. Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Dieremberger (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), x.

\textsuperscript{18} See Chapter 6, below. The main additions come at the beginning and end of DBA’ 2000—on the relations of Khri Srong lde brtsan’s ancestors to Buddhism in Tibet (Ir1–4r;5), and its last section on the debate between Buddhism and Bon over who should perform the \textit{bstan po’s} funeral rites (25v:1–31v:6) respectively (see Chapter 2 in this volume).

\textsuperscript{19} I borrow these concepts from Paul Zumthor, \textit{Essai de poétique médiévale} (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 65–75, which I also addressed in the
driving the evolution of the *Testimony of Ba* tradition may not be strictly intertextual, but draw on surrounding cultural discussions, growing trends in religious practice and contested places of power that mean texts in this tradition resist easy analysis into archetypes, descendants and lemmata (quotations). These problems embrace the DBA'2000 and a number of other texts telling the same basic story, albeit with sundry additions, omissions and alterations. Versions of the *Testimony of Ba* are still being published in various places around the world, attesting to its continued popularity over more than a millennium. The influence and redaction of the *Testimony of Ba* will form the subject of this Introduction, but more information about DBA'2000 is given in the chapters below and in the landmark Preface and Introduction to the translation of this exemplar by Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger.

### Previous Study of the *Testimony of Ba*

In 1961, when the highly contested national identity of Tibet was in the world’s spotlight, R.A. Stein published a full transliteration of an important and hugely influential Tibetan history that he titled *Une chronique ancienne de bSam-yas: sBa bzhed*. This *sBa bzhed* (herein referenced as SBA 1961.1) is based on an appendicised version (zhabs btags ma) of a work that had previously only been known to European scholars, such as A.I. Vostrikov (1904–1937), through references in later Tibetan histories.

Both before and after Stein’s publication of the *Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma*, Tibetologists investigated the core narrative of the tradition, as attested in lemmata in later Tibetan works, for the light it could shed on Tibetan history. Most often, they mined this *Testimony of Ba* tradition for the same narrative, which its own colophon claims to be based on a comparison of different versions of the narrative (SBA 1961.1, 92.1–9).

I recently found the copy of the *Testimony of Ba* used for this publication within the papers of Hugh Edward Richardson held at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (box 38: 78 and 81–128). It is written in a notebook on lined pages, and evidently photographs of these exact pages formed the basis of SBA 1961.1. Richardson says as much on two pieces of paper slipped into the front of the book (box 38: 79 and 80). The latter begins: “This is a copy of SBA BZHED given me at Lat Lhasa by Zurkhang Shappé. It is the original from which Stein’s edition is reproduced. Some words are clearer here than in Stein.” Giuseppe Tucci also possessed his own manuscript of the same work (here SBA 1961.2) from the same source, Zur khang Dbang chen bde legs (1910–1977). Stein notes: “I possess a manuscript copy of the book, which was kindly presented me by His Excellency Zurkhang Shape” (Giuseppe Tucci, *The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings* (Rome: Serie Orientale, 1950), 79, n. 59). Tucci himself used it in a discussion of the famous Bsam yas Debate according to the Tibetan sources (Giuseppe Tucci, *Minor Buddhist Texts II* (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), especially 12–59). There, he only gives the title *sBa bzhed* (Tucci, *Minor Buddhist Texts II*, VII) and rare quotations from it to support his case.

Stein brought these two exemplars together in his edition. He states that Richardson’s copy “is not without orthographic errors. I have collated it together with another manuscript, in dbu-med, belonging to Mr Giuseppe Tucci. I include only noteworthy variants. I give these after the text with references to the page and line [of the main text].” [Stein, *Une chronique*, VI reads: *Le manuscrit publié ici est une copie en dbu-can exécutée pour M. Hugh Richardson à Lhasa. Il a été choisi comme texte de base à cause de sa clarté et la facilité de la reproduction. Mais il n’est pas exempt de fautes d’orthographe. Il a été collationné avec un autre manuscrit, en dbu-med, appartenant à M. Giuseppe Tucci. Seules les variants significatives ont été retenues. Elles sont données après le texte avec référence à la page et à la ligne.*) Instead, numbered footnotes are given, which on the whole may reflect the variants of the Tucci manuscript. The fact that Stein’s notes continue throughout the text, even within the zhabs btags part, strengthen the possibility that SBA 1961.2 was also an appendicised version of the narrative. However, Stein’s notes may not consist solely of notable variants from Tucci’s manuscript. For instance, one of Tucci’s only quotations from SBA 1961.2 apparently reads *na za dgu p’hrug* (Tucci, *Minor Buddhist Texts II*, 56–57), whereas Stein amends the same reading in SBA 1961.1, 63.13 to *na bza’ [dgu p’hrug]* (note 213). However, this could conceivably be a mistake on Tucci’s part.

the witness it provided of a debate said to have been held in eighth-century Tibet between those who believed in the possibility of ‘instantaneous’ (cig car ba) enlightenment, led by the Chinese monk Hwa shang Mahâyâna (Heshang Moheyan), and proponents of the ‘gradualist’ (rim gys pa) approach such as the Indian master, Kamalaśīla. Stein then compares the famous Bsam yas Inscription, still found on a stela at Bsam yas Monastery, with the longer edict given in Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba’s (1504–1566) religious history (chos ‘byung) titled the Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston. Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba was a rather idiosyncratic figure, to judge from his writings. The benefit of his Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston for scholars investigating the Testimony of Ba tradition lies largely in the long lemmata of a number of versions of that tradition found in it. He has not critically edited the texts or come to what we might call especially text-historically informed conclusions about which of his sources are more antique or reliable, but despite holding his own fixed opinions about Tibetan history (sometimes holding them in spite of the evidence or testimony of his sources), he appears to transcribe, copy


23 Rolf A. Stein, La Civilisation Tibétaines (Paris: Dunod Editeur, 1962), 34: “Mais ce qui fut l’événement décisif pour la civilisation tibétaine à cette époque, ce fut l’adoption officielle du bouddhisme indien par le roi. … Nous suivrons avant tout le récit le plus ancien qui prétend remonter à des témoignages contemporains bien qu’il ait été remanié par la suite (le Bashe, XII-XIVe siècle ?).”

24 Stein, La Civilisation Tibétaines, 33–34.

or otherwise put down on paper the sources at his disposal when discussing a topic, before sometimes dismissing them based on his own sense of historical reality.29 The Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston was published in a popular edition from New Delhi between 1959 and 1965 and the volume that contains the most lemmata was published in 1962.30 Their combined witness to this tradition is henceforth referred to as SBA 1962. Stein finds both the Bsam yas Inscription and the account of it in the Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston consistent. On the basis of the latter, he describes the Indian Buddhism introduced at the time of Khri Srong lde brtsan thus:

This straightforward moral code [of the Indian teachers], the ten virtues and the ten sins, has even been ascribed to the period of Songtsen Gampo, and it is the moral aspect of Buddhism that Trhisong Detsen refers to in his edict.31

This leads Stein, on the next page, to suggest that Khri Srong lde brtsan prejudged Indian Buddhism’s “gradual path” (Madhyamaka) to be favourable to what he calls “Chinese quietism” (Chan) in the debate between the two at Bsam yas Monastery (SBA 1961.1, 54–62). Apparently, Stein believed that Khri Srong lde brtsan’s shorter Bsam yas Inscription, which predates the Testimony of Ba, corroborates the much longer proclamation preserved and ascribed to the same emperor in the Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston.32 Stein therefore uses sources to critique SBA 1961.1’s account of the parentage of Khri Srong lde brtsan, but else-

29 His treatment of sources is evident, for instance, in his treatment of the testimony of Khu ston Betson ‘grus gyung drung’s Lo rgyus chen mo (see Martin, Tibetan Histories, 26, no. 7) or the Padmasambhava biographical genre and particularly the Zangs gling ma (see Doney, The Zangs gling ma, 38, n. 44).


31 Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 67. Compare Stein, La Civilisation Tibétaine, 36: “Ce simple code moral du bouddhisme, les dix vertus et les dix péchés, a même été attribué déjà à l’époque de Songtsen Gampo, et c’est à cet aspect de morale bouddhique que se réfère le roi Thisong Detsen dans son édit.”


where uses similar sources to ‘explain’ the apparent acts of Khri Srong lde brtsan, as recorded in SBA 1961.1.

A similar dynamic is found in another work of the same year, V.A. Bogoslovskij’s Essay on the Tibetan People. Yet perhaps he privileges Chinese histories to a greater extent than Stein. He evidently interprets Khri Srong lde brtsan’s character more by SBA 1961.1 than by the scant evidence of the Old Tibetan inscriptions, for instance. For him, Chinese sources corroborate the Testimony of Ba’s depiction of Khri Srong lde brtsan’s reign, namely that “the second half of the eighth century was marked by major external and internal political upheavals.”33 Furthermore, he uses the Sino-Tibetan conflicts evidenced in the Tang History to ‘explain’ the Bsam yas Debate.34 He says:

The Tibetan State’s foreign policy was not without influence on the outcome of the debate. Indeed, its rulers did not wish to advance a religion with sinophilic tendencies during this period of tension with China.35

Here, Bogoslovskij uses readings of Sino-Tibetan relations in the Chinese histories to give background to one Tibetan history’s portrayal of Khri Srong lde brtsan.

Snellgrove and Richardson make greater use of the Old Tibetan inscriptions than any other writers of this period, in their 1968 book A Cultural History of Tibet. Yet their interpretation is, like that of Stein and Bogoslovskij, backed by a reading of SBA 1961.1. They evidently consider this latter text a reasonably reliable source, since they use it in the chapter on “history” (titled “The Introduction of Buddhism”) rather than the chapter on “histories” (“The Later Literary View”).36

This interesting distinction relegates inter alia biographies of the great eighth-century tantric master, Padmasambhava, from the top rank of historical sources on


35 Bogoslovskij, Essai sur l’histoire du peuple tibétaine, 59: “la politique extérieure de l’État tibétain n’avait pas été sans influence sur l’issue de la lutte. En effet, les dirigeants ne voulaient pas voir progresser une Église de tendance pro-chinoise pendant cette période de tension avec la Chine.”

the imperial period.37 These biographies were used by some scholars before the publication of SBA 1961.1.38 In Snellgrove and Richardson’s schema, these later life-writings become objects of study as cultural artefacts, rather than being quoted as witnesses to the events they narrate. For example, after quoting the fourteenth-century Padma bka’ thang’s lengthy description of the scene wherein Padmasambhava first meets Khri Srong lde brtsan, we read:

How far this quasi-historical narrative diverges from the true course of events, the reader may be left to judge. Nevertheless, as a piece of imaginative writing based upon historical themes this ‘biography’ of Padmasambhava remains a quite remarkable piece of medieval Tibetan literature.39

Snellgrove and Richardson anticipate the reader’s critical judgement in their use of the terms “quasi-historical,” “imaginative writing,” “literature” and the ‘scarce-marks’ around the word “biography.” Thus, the birth of serious interpretations of Khri Srong lde brtsan’s own self-representations as “history” coincides with the birth of studying what were previously perceived as sources for the life of Khri Srong lde brtsan as examples of medieval literature. Snellgrove and Richardson evidently treat the Testimony of Ba as a more as a source of “history” than a piece of “literature,” however.

In the same year, the Shes rig par khang or Tibetan Educational Printing Press, Dharamsala, published an edition of the appendedicized Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma (henceforth SBA 1968) with a preface (and perhaps edited) by Stag lha Phun tshogs bkra shis.40 He refers to Stein’s edition but claims that this edition is based on the original manuscript used to make Stein’s copy, from ‘Ba’ nyag Monastery in Gangtok.41 The edition is thus almost identical to Stein’s, including its errors, and yet seemingly incorporates none of Stein’s amendments into its text. Although the publication in South Asia of a cheaper and more easily available edition was evidently welcome, this edition has not been so widely cited as SBA 1961, and Dan Martin even claims that this edition is dependent on SBA 1961.1,42 which no doubt decreased it use as a source even further.

In 1980, G.W. Houston began a second wave of interest in the Testimony of Ba by comparing the available versions in a sustained manner.43 His work transliterates and translates SBA 1961.1, as well as the long lemmata from the Testimony of Ba tradition in the Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston (SBA 1962), as part of a collection of sources on the Bsam yas Debate. He also speculates on Khri Srong lde brtsan’s character in a similar manner to the scholars above:

By outlawing Bon practices, then by stopping the Chinese Buddhist teachings, Khri srong lde brtsan solidified his empire under his sole control. It is evident that although Khri srong lde brtsan may not have understood all of the philosophical arguments of the two parties at the debate, he did understand politics. His political intuition told him that there must be one state religion, and also, that he must diminish the chinese influence upon his court. In order to reign supreme, Khri srong lde brtsan had to declare the Rim gyis pa [gradualists] the winners.44

In spite of some shortcomings in his method, or because of them, Houston’s work inspired a new generation of Tibetologists to revisit the exemplars of the Testimony of Ba in

37 The authors position these biographies below ‘the stone inscriptions, the Tun-huang documents and the Chinese accounts’ (Snellgrove and Richardson, A Cultural History, 95) and presumably below SBA 1961.1. The Testimony of Ba is not mentioned, though the authors use it as a source in their discussion of the Bsam yas Debate (Snellgrove and Richardson, A Cultural History, 78–80).

38 On the twelfth-century, earliest full-length biography of Padmasambhava, see Doney, The Zangs gling ma. On the later tradition, especially the fourteenth-century Padma bka’ thang, see Lewis Doney, “A Richness of Detail: Sangs rgyas gling pa and the Padma bka’ thang,” Revue d’Etudes Tibetaines 37 (2016): 69–97; Lewis Doney “Revelation and Re-evaluation: The Flourishing of Padmasambhava Biography after Yuan Mongol Decline,” European Bulletin of Himalayan Research 52 (2018): 46–70. Tucci, Tombs of the Tibetan Kings, uses it to discuss various aspects of the imperial Tibetan history under its other title, the Padma thang yig. Interestingly, by 1970 Tucci classifies both the Testimony of Ba and this fourteenth-century Padmasambhava biography under “Cycles of Legends” that can nonetheless offer a glimpse of imperial Tibet (Giuseppe Tucci, The Religions of Tibet trans. Geoffrey Samuel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980 [1970]), 3, 7, 9 and 312). The former cycle, which he calls the Sba bzhad (sic), leads him to conclude that its two protagonists named Sba Gsal snang and Sang shi were somehow responsible for Khri Srong lde brtsan’s indecision over whether to favour Indian or Chinese Buddhism (Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 2–3).

39 Snellgrove and Richardson, A Cultural History, 98.

40 This is titled Btsan po khri srong lde btsan dang / mkhan po slob upon pad’na’i dis mdo snags sa so rdmza’d pa’i sba bzhed zhabs btags ma (Dharamsala: Shes rig par khang, 1968). It was reprinted in 2000.


42 Martin, Tibetan Histories, 23.

43 Garry W. Houston, Sources for a History of the BSam yas Debate (Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1980). In the same year, Craig E. Watson translated part of Stein’s SBA 1961.1 (83.5–89.7), concerning the beginning of the second propagation (phyi dar) of Buddhism after the fall of the Tibetan empire; Craig E. Watson, “The Introduction of the Second Propagation of Buddhism in Tibet According to R.A. Stein’s Edition of the Sba-bzhed,” Tibet Journal 5, no. 4 (1980): 20–25. The ‘critical transcription’ that Watson, “The Introduction,” 20 suggests is contained in the article is missing, though his notes (pp. 25–26) offer some corrections to the text.

44 Houston, Sources, 9–10, with his underlining of proper nouns.
a more thorough philological fashion. van der Kuijp criticised Houston’s methods and offers his own analysis of the *Testimony of Ba* tradition, in a 1984 review article concerning the Bsam yas Debate. It concludes that “philological weeding thus becomes an essential precondition for any justified use of the ‘Sba-bzhes’ as a reliable historical source.” In this review article, van der Kuijp also brings to the attention of scholarship a newly published version of the *Sba bzhed*.66

This source is titled *Sba bzhed ces bya ba las sba gsal snang gi bzhed pa* (henceforth cited as SBA 1982). It is an eclectic edition of three manuscripts (SBA 1982.1–3) that Mgon po rgyal mtshan edited together while adding inter-linear notes. It is thus not an exemplar of the *Testimony of Ba*, but well represents a certain redaction of it. SBA 1982 lacks the zhab ftags appendix, but this is only the most obvious of many differences between SBA 1961.1 and SBA 1982, as Tibetologists soon discovered. In 1990, Jinhua Tong and Bufan Huang published the first complete translation of the *Testimony of Ba*, based on this edition.47 Tong also wrote an article on the authorship and major Sino-Tibetan themes of the tradition around the same time.68 This was followed in 1996 with Dbyangs can mtsho’s discussion of the *Testimony of Ba*,69 in which the exemplars SBA 1962/ SBA 1982 are considered to reflect the short or condensed recension (bs dus pa), the source mentioned in SBA 1962, 89v:6 as the Bsam yas dkar chag chen mo is the middle length recension (*bring po*, as it is also named in that source), and SBA 1961.1 reflects the long recension (*rgyas pa*).70 The article goes on to lay out the subject matter of the *Testimony of Ba*, its value for history and impact on Tibetan historiography.51 A 2003 entry by Bis mdo Rdo rje rin chen in a Tibetan encyclopaedia largely recounts the historical details of the *Testimony of Ba* but also briefly discusses its authorship and proposes a three-fold recension in the tradition, all following traditional sources.52 Neither author mentions Tong and Huang’s translation or any secondary literature on the tradition. Another work in Tibetan, published this time in India in 2005, focuses on the Bsam yas Debate.53 It brings in traditional Tibetan sources including SBA 1982 and SBA 1962, but also Chinese and Dunhuang manuscripts (for the Chinese account of the debate), the secondary literature of Demiéville, Imaeda and the sources and insights of David Seyfort Ruegg (see below).

Returning to the 1980s, a marked improvement on Houston’s work was that of Fleming Faber.54 He also criticises Houston and makes more rigorous use of sources including long passages resembling SBA 1961.1–2 in the newly published manuscript edition of the *Me tog snying po* (henceforth MTN), a religious history attributed to Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer (1124–1192).55 Faber notes, for

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46 van der Kuijp, “Miscellanea to a Recent Contribution,” 178–79.
47 Jinhua Tong, and Bufan Huang, “Ba xie” (zeng bu ben) yi zhu (Chengdu: Sichuan min zu chu ban she, 1990).
49 According to van der Kuijp, “Some Remarks,” 134, n. 45, it was first published in *Zangxue Yanjiu Wen* (Lhasa: Xizang rein min chubanshe) in 1989. The article describes the *Testimony of Ba*’s exemplars, authorship, dating—ostensibly the eighth century but probably in the second diffusion (phyi dkar) after the tenth century—during which Tong provides brief descriptions of ‘Ba’ Sang shi and Dba’ Gsal snang, then recounts passages in the text related to Tang-Tibet relations in precis and quotation: The marriage of Khri Lde gtsug brtan to Jincheng and birth of Khri Srong lde brtan (contrasted with the Dunhuang evidence), the civilising influence of Buddhism against Bon, culminating in Chinese influence (through Dba’ Sang shi), the anti-Buddhist acts of the indigenous reli- gion, the continuation of the Buddhist religion by Khri Lde gtsug brtan (–Khri Gtsug lde brtan?), the building and consecration of Bsam yas (Padmasambhava is mentioned briefly here alone), and the Bsam yas Debate (in which the two versions are suggested to reflect a series of historical debates, in some of which the Chinese side is stronger). In conclusion (and in Tong, “Lun ‘Bashi,’” 75f.) the author argues that *Testimony of Ba* shows Tibetan historians to be skillful folklorists, and that Chinese influence has been positively civilising and well received by them from the Tubo period onwards. Tong ends with words of praise for the literary merits of the tradition:

> In short, when describing historical events, the *Sba bzhed* is meticulous, detailed, and often adopts folklore story techniques, and is full of myth and legend. Therefore, it is an excellent work...
instance, a mention of Ting nge ‘dzin in this source “not in BZC [SBA 1982] or the CBKgh [Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston i.e. SBA 1962], indicating that Nyang ral has used the same version of the Sba bzhd as we find in the BZS [SBA 1961].”56 He argues that the recension of the Testimony of Ba standing behind the exemplar SBA 1982 is the extensive one, not the ancestor of SBA 1961.1, despite the latter’s appendix making it appear larger today.57 He also suggests a later date for the latter recension by drawing attention to the citation of Bu ston Rin chen grub’s (1290–1364) religious history of 1322 (the Bde bar gshegs pa’i bstan pa’i gsal byed chos kyi ’byung gnas gsung rab rin po che’i mdzod) at SBA 1961.1, 54.10: gsung rab rin po che’i bang mdzod du ... 58

Based in part on Faber’s study, David Seyfort Ruegg then analysed the representation of the Bsam yas Debate in SBA 1961.1, SBA 1962, SBA 1982 and MTN in his 1989 monograph Buddha-Nature.59 His analysis is excellent, but the results occasionally only deepen the mystery of the relation of the versions. For example, he points out an inconsistency among the texts’ attributions of the speeches to famous Tibetans:

It should be noted, moreover, that the words ascribed to Dpal dbyangs in this Chos ’byung [MTN, 433a–33b], in one version of the Sba bzhd (G [SBA 1982], p. 70) and in the Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston ([SBA 1962] ja, f. 117b) are ascribed in the Zhab sbugs ma version of the Sba bzhd (S [SBA 1961.1], p. 59) to a certain Sang shi, a name (or title) borne by another member of the ‘Ba family...60

In other words, Ruegg notices that SBA 1962 and SBA 1982 agree, against SBA 1961.1, and adds further that MTN follows the former two over the latter.

Standing back from these details, Ruegg questions the worth of applying Yoshiro Imaeda’s fourteenth-century dating of the Sba bzhd (mentioned in footnote 22) to the core underlying narrative common to the entire Testimony of Ba tradition:

In sum, despite the fact that the Supplemented Version of the Sba bzhd published by Stein [SBA 1961.1] must for reasons mentioned above be considered as a whole to be much later than the eighth century, and although the recensions of the Sba bzhd now available to us differ in wording and in many details, there would nevertheless seem to exist no compelling reason to reject as completely spurious and unreliable the matter on which the recensions agree in substance ... and that we thus have reflected (however indirectly) in our texts of the Sba bzhd the major views of the participants in these events.61

In a later essay, he is more direct: “It could nevertheless be that these Sba records go back at least in their core to a time soon after the Great [Bsam yas] Debate, and in any case to the time of the Yar klungs dynasty in the early ninth century.”62 In this he specifies their content, not their language—though the exemplars do contain some archaisms (see Chapter 4, below).

Ruegg also rightly criticises interpretations of the political aspects of the Bsam yas Debate, such as he finds in the work of Demiéville (and we have seen above in that of Bogoslovskij):

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It will also be far from the mark—and quite anachronistic—to regard the “Great Debate” as a more or less politically motivated confrontation between the Indians and Chinese as rival powers in Central Asia. Accounts found in Tibetan historical literature in fact seem to reflect the Tibetans’ attempts either to rediscover their early history or to constitute tradition, or even do both of these things at the same time. As a consequence, the “Great Debate” of Bsam yas often appears in this literature more as a semi-historical topos than as an historical event, and the Hva shang Mahāyāna as a more or less dehistoricized and emblematic figure standing as it were for a certain typological variety of Buddhism.63

He instead highlights the doctrinal opposites at play in this debate, and their importance in shaping later Tibetan Buddhist orthodoxy. In this respect, Ruegg is closer to Snellgrove and Richardson in emphasising the later remembrance of the Bsam yas Debate. Yet, his interests are more doctrinal than political, and he makes the first steps toward examining the Testament of Ba tradition as made up of expressions of cultural ideas rather than sources on an actual historical event. Other important secondary literature on the Bsam yas Debate can be found in Chapter 5 of this volume.

In 1994, Per K. Sørensen published his translation of the Rgyal rabs Gs al ba’i me long, a text completed in 1368. There, in notes and supplementary material, Sørensen undertakes the first major comparison of the entire narratives of SBA 1961.1, SBA 1962 and SBA 1982 with MBNT, along with other sources.64 One source of especial interest is the Mes dbon gsum rnam thar (henceforth MBNTH). The title of this work suggests a biographical anthology that comprises three biographies of Tibet’s imperial dharma-kings, Khri Srong lde brtsan/ Srong btsan sgam po, Khri Srong lde brtsan and Khri Gsug lde brtsan/ Ra’o can. Yet, in reality it consists of two works joined together: a biography of Srong btsan sgam po, in the tradition of the Bka’ chems ka khol ma or the Mani bka’ ‘bum’s Lo rgyus chen mo, and a retelling of Khri Srong lde brtsan’s reign and the history of Buddhism after his death based on an ancestor of SBA 1961.1, but with its own minor omissions and additions.65 Sørensen traces the origin of the shared Testament of Ba narrative back to a no-longer extant Bsam yas ka gtsigs chen mo narrating the building of Bsam yas Monastery during the reign of Khri Srong lde brtsan.66 This echoes the findings of Philip Denwood in his 1990 article on the origins of the Testament of Ba.67 Sørensen’s analysis also shows the extent to which the Testament of Ba

65 MBNTH: “Mi rje lhas mzasad byang chub sens dpa’ sens dpa’ chen po chos rgyal mes dbon ram gsum gyi ram par thar pa rin po che’i phreng ba,” in Rin chen gter mzasod chen po’i rgyab chos (Paro: Ugyan Tempai Gyaltse, 1980), vol. 7. The publisher’s attributed this work to Nyang ral Nyi ma ‘od zer, but the attribution was rightly questioned in János Szerb, “Two Notes on the Sources of the Chos ‘byung of Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub,” in Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylte ed. Lawrence Epstein and Richard Sherbourne (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 143–48. Szerb, “Two Notes,” 166, n. 4 suggests that the work may date to the fourteenth century.
66 See Doney, “Nyang ral Nyi ma ‘od zer.” The quotation from the Testament of Ba in MBNTH begins on 82r:6 and the first omission that marks its divergence against SBA 1982.1–3 and SBA 1962 in agreement with the Testament of Ba 3 is at 82c:6. MBNTH continues to quote the bzhabs btags ma recension (including the appendix, again with minor divergences) right up to folio 150r:1 (corresponding to SBA 1961.1, 91.6).
67 See Sørensen, Tibetan Buddhist Historiography, 9–12. Sørensen also writes in concluding his bibliographic entry on the Testament of Ba (Sørensen, Tibetan Buddhist Historiography, 633–35):

BZH [i.e the Testament of Ba], CHBYMTNYP ([MTN] ab 292a5 ff., though interspersed with lengthy sub-sections), MBNTH followed by the Lde’u versions (GBCHY, DCHBY) display a fair degree of correspondence in the chain of events related, suggesting that they draw from a common proto-version of BZH, possible Bsam-yas Ka-gtsigs chen mo (cf. the Introduction). Nyang-ral, moreover, has employed a version identical or cognate to the Chin. ed. of BZH [SBA 1982], while he cites a part of its colophon ([MTN] 439b3–6), but, most surprisingly, Nyang-ral (ab 440a6, cf ad note 1385 ff.) shares long verbatim passages with the annotated version of BZH (found in Stein ed. [SBA 1961.1], which indicates that the so-called zhabhs btags ma, was in circulation and inserted (?) into a BZH-version already in the XI-XIth century.

Dan Martin is currently preparing a translation of the Lde’u chos ‘byung that will no doubt address both the sources Sørensen cites here as Lde’u versions, so at present I shall leave them out of this analysis. 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).
68 Philip Denwood, “Some Remarks on the Status and Dating of the Sba bzhyed,” The Tibet Journal 15, no. 4 (1999): 135–48. Denwood, “Some Remarks,” 135–41 argues that the application of the term bka’ gtsigs (and variants) to the Testament of Ba could not have been in the fourteenth or even twelfth century, since the meaning of the term (bka’) gtsigs dates from the imperial period, meaning ‘charter’ (and occasionally ‘treaty’) and its meaning was not remembered much past the fall of the empire. He concludes that the Testament of Ba may have originally been a charter that Khri Srong lde brtsan disseminated to the Dba’(s) clan and/or after the Bsam yas Debate that was expanded over the centuries, or perhaps an imperial-period narrative that was not originally a charter but had the term attached to it (Denwood, “Some Remarks,” 146 and 144). Whichever is more likely, “the use of the term bka’ gtsigs in connection with the Sba bzhyed goes back to the royal period, and that it lends the work some degree of
tradition influenced the later genre of Tibetan Buddhist historiography.

Mathew Kapstein, in his 2000 book *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, focuses almost exclusively on what Snellgrove and Richardson had called “literature,” rather than “history,” whether discussing the representation of reality offered by the Tibetologist, the Tibetan histories or Khri Srong lde brtsan himself. Though he begins with a scientific chronology that includes Khri Srong lde brtsan’s conversion, military activities and the Bsam yas Debate, he admits on the first page of his introduction:69

The scholar as contextualiser must in the end be a myth maker, spinning tales of reason, truth, and history, in virtue of which the actions, arts, sciences and myths of persons elsewhere and elsewhen may become somehow more intelligible for us than they would have been otherwise.

Here, the scholar seeks to contextualise the “elsewhere” (Tibet) and “elsewhen” (pre-1400 CE) for “us,” the reader, but the object can only become more intelligible, never fully known. His primary foci are the worlds that the Testimony of Ba and Padmasambhava biographies create, as narratives of the conversion of Khri Srong lde brtsan and Tibet.70 He explains elements that previous scholars discussed as “history,” such as Khri Srong lde brtsan’s Chinese mother and his invitation of Padmasambhava to Tibet, as literary episodes that owe more to other texts and traditions than to their groundings in reality (whatever they may be).71 In a long endnote, Kapstein discusses the official status (Denwood, “Some Remarks,” 146), meaning that the Testimony of Ba is not a twelfth-century or later invention.

70 Anne-Marie Blondeau had already carried out important groundwork in this regard; Anne-Marie Blondeau, “Conférence de Mme Anne-Marie Blondeau,” École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses, Annuaire 99, 1990–1991 (1990): 69–76. In that contribution, she compares the representation of Padmasambhava in SBA 1961.1, SBA 1962 and SBA 1982 and concludes that they are generally consistent in their outline and in narrating that Padmasambhava left Tibet before Bsam yas was built, the first monks were ordained or Bon was suppressed (Blondeau, “Conférence,” 69–72). She also notes that, whereas in later Tibetan tradition the title mkhan po is applies to Sántaraksita and slob dpon to Padmasambhava, in the Testimony of Ba they are used interchangeably, perhaps leading to confusion as to which master performed which activities in Tibet (Blondeau, “Conférence,” 72).
71 See Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation*, 23–37 on Khri Srong lde brtsan’s Chinese mother; Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation*, 46–50 and 155–62 on his invitation of Padmasambhava. Later works follow this lead, such as Ronald Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Davidson begins with the fall of the Tibetan empire in the ninth century and only ever refers to Khri Srong lde brtsan.

redaction of the Testimony of Ba tradition, and concludes that “[it] seems most likely [that] the expanded redaction represented by the Richardson-Stein text [SBA 1961.1] had in its ancestry a text closely resembling the Beijing edition [SBA 1982].”72 This is part of the conclusion to which I came independently and to which I shall return below. Yet, Kapstein’s use of “expanded” here suggests that he does not know of (or has not accepted) Faber’s point that the recension of the Testimony of Ba standing behind the exemplar SBA 1982 is actually the extensive one, not the ancestor of SBA 1961.1—despite the latter’s appendix making it today appear a little larger.73

In the same year, that is 2000, Wangdu and Diemberger published their translation and facsimile of a manuscript from Lhasa, whose title they translate as: “The *dba’ bzhed* [sic], the royal narrative concerning the bringing of the Buddha’s doctrine to Tibet.”74 The Preface and Introduction to this workstress the difference between the *dba’ bzhed* and the later tradition. Wangdu and Diemberger seem to portray and the main content of SBA 2000 as a shorter and earlier version of the Testimony of Ba that lacks many of the latter’s “mythographical” elements:

In the *dba’ bzhed* there is no mention of the legendary assumption of power by Khri Srong lde brtsan during his childhood, nor of the story that Gyim Shang Kong co [the Chinese princess] was the true mother of Khri Srong lde brtsan, which are given in the *sba bzhed* versions.75

They use these “historical correspondences with the dynastic sources” over the later tradition to suggest that
DBA' 2000 may be a comparatively early historical narrative, but their notes throughout the text never go so far as to claim its access to the “history” of Khri Srong Iide brtsan’s reign on a par with “the dynastic sources.”

Wangdu and Diemberger’s publication has significantly benefited the study of early Tibetan Buddhism, inspiring a third generation of interest in the Testimony of Ba. Putting aside the obvious value of DBA’ 2000 for assessing the actual reign of Khri Srong Iide brtsan that it claims to narrate, or for gaining anthropological insights into the Buddhification of Tibet, this manuscript helps us immeasurably to see the process of redaction of the Testimony of Ba in the later exemplars. Also of great value for charting the trajectory of the narrative was Sam van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao’s discovery of fragments of what seems to be the Testimony of Ba among the British Library manuscripts from the Mogao cave complex near Dunhuang. As Chapter 3 of this volume makes clear, it is difficult to establish whether these fragments, together referred to as the BL fragment, constitute one side of a folio intended for an earlier version of the Testimony of Ba, or part of an independent narrative that was also incorporated into the Testimony of Ba tradition. Nevertheless, they show the strata of narrative tradition that went into the Testimony, and the redaction undertaken by scholars and copyists over the tenth and eleventh centuries to create the core drama that unfolds between folios 4v and 25r of the DBA’ 2000 manuscript transcribed and translated in Part Two of this volume.

Recently Published Exemplars of the Testimony of Ba

In the last few years, a number of exemplars of the Testimony of Ba have appeared that help assess the different recensions of the tradition. In 2009, the ‘Rba bzhed’ phyogs bsgrigs was published. This contains a transcription of a Sba bzhed (80–158, henceforth SBA 2009.I) without a bzhab btags supplementary end section and resembling SBA 1982, and a Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma (159–236, SBA 2009.2) resembling SBA 1961.1–2. This is in addition to a faithful transliteration of SBA 1961.1 (1–79) and a transcription into dbu can of the DBA’ 2000 manuscript (237–81).

76 See also Wangdu, “King Srong btsan sgam po.” One exception to this may be Wangdu and Diemberger’s discussion of Padmasambhava, who they claim may have actually introduced to Tibet “the sophisticated irrigation systems used in his land of origin”; Wangdu and Diemberger, dBa’ bzhed, 14. See footnote 12, above.

77 See, for instance, Michael Willis, “From World Religion to World Dominion: Trading, Translation and Institution-building in Tibet,” in Religions and Trade Religious Formation, Transformation and Cross-Cultural Exchange between East and West, ed. Peter Wick and Volker Rabens (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 231–59. That contribution also includes a detailed analysis of the DBA’ 2000 manuscript and a discussion and dating of its interlinear notes and end section, though see now Chapter 2.

78 Diemberger, “Padmasambhava’s Unfinished Job.”


80 Sam van Schaik and Iwao, “Fragments of the Testament of Ba,” 484, are tentative of the former opinion. Though they are careful not to refer to the BL fragment as part of an exemplar of the Testimony of Ba, they conclude: “Though merely fragments, it is clear that they were once part of a well-prepared and finely written manuscript, probably of much greater length” (van Schaik and Iwao, “Fragments of the Testament of Ba,” 484). The expert handwriting, and the fact that the episode could not have started on line 1 or been concluded on line 6, supports the first part of this argument. I am still unsure how much ‘of much greater length’ the original text could have been, as the authors claim. In the form in which the BL fragment have come down to us, the narrative could represent an excerpt from a ninth or tenth-century Dba’ bzhed, or they could instead form part of a short narrative on Śāntarakṣita that was copied and adapted for use in the Testimony of Ba. Such a short narrative on Śāntarakṣita would be akin to Pelliot tiibetan 44’s narrative on Padmasambhava, on which see Cathy Canwell and Robert Mayer, Early Tibetan Documents on Phar pa from Dunhuang (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008), 41–67.

81 bde skyid (ed.), ‘Rba bzhed’ phyogs bsgrigs / bde skyid kyi bsgrigs / (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe’i skrun khang, 2009). In the same year was published Tshe ring don grub (ed.), Bsam yas dkar chag (Gansu: Kan su’i mi rigs dpe’i skrun khang, 2009), consisting of a transcription of SBA 1982 (pp. 1–104), DBA’ 2000 (105–61) and SBA 1961.1 (or a dependent exemplar) with unique amendments (163–268) as well as a Zhang zhung-Tibetan dictionary (269–313) seemingly corresponding to the Zhu ya mi gra gsas pa mdzad pa’i zhang bod kyi sngags bsdebs (an undated xylograph held in digital form in the BDRC under Resource ID W8LS16829).

As the title suggests, the collection (phyogs bsgrigs) was apparently compiled (bsgrigs) by a certain Bde skyid, who has done a less-than-perfect job of transcribing DBA’ 2000.83 However, his transcription of SBA 1961.1 is a marked improvement.84 Thus, at least some limited trust can be placed in his transcription of the other two texts, whose provenance De skyid does not discuss in his introduction. As mentioned above, SBA 1982 is an eclectic edition of three manuscripts (SBA 1982.1–3). It may be hoped that only a single manuscript is transcribed as SBA 2009.1. Is it too much to hope that it is one of the exemplars forming the basis of SBA 1982? The text bears a similar title, but contains some minor differences from SBA 1982 that place it closer to SBA 1961.1–2.85 However, it lacks that supplementary zhabs btags end section, and so is not a part of that recension.

In 2010, Longs khang Phun tshogs rdo rje published a collection titled Dba’ bzhed, which includes a far better transcription of the DBA’ 2000 manuscript (pp. 1–58),86 transcriptions of SBA 1982 (59–157) and SBA 1961.1 (158–258), and a curious work entitled Rba’ bzhed (259–318). van der Kuijp noticed that the majority of the narrative in this latter text was completely different from the Testimony of Ba tradition, and by analyzing the end portion was able to date this history to the early fourteenth century.87 However, he did not see that the opening narrative (259–70.1) is very similar to that of DBA’ 2000 folios 1–7r.
It is now clear that this “Rba’ bzhed” consists of two texts mistakenly combined together. By good fortune, I made this discovery thanks to the publication of the thirty-sixth volume of old histories and biographies from Dpal brtsegs, 2011. It includes photolitographs of the original manuscript of the just-mentioned Rba’ bzhed (63–110, henceforth RBA 2011.1) along with the DBA’ 2000 manuscript (1–62). It also contains another manuscript, also titled Rba’ bzhed, which consists of a Sba’ bzhed zhabs btags ma (henceforth RBA 2011.2).

RBA 2011.1, folios 1–4 (pp. 63–70), strongly resemble the opening portion of DBA’ 2000 that recounts the life-stories of the previous emperors and the reign of Khri Srong lde brtsean up to his invitation of Śāntarakṣita. The narrative is also included in the BL fragment, as discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of this volume. From folio 5r, however, the narrative jumps from eighth-century Tibet to India during the lifetime of the Buddha. The very different history that then follows is summarised by van der Kuip as part of his article on this Rba’ bzhed. Longs khang Phun tshogs rdo rje failed to notice this break in the RBA 2011.1 manuscript when he transcribed both texts as one in his book. van der Kuip did not have access to the original RBA 2011.1 manuscript, and so also failed to notice the break. The overall agreement of RBA 2011.1 and DBA’ 2000 against the later Testimony of Ba tradition, in relating the life-stories of the previous emperors before narrating the life-story of Khri Srong lde brtsean, suggests that these may be two exemplars of a shared recension rather than that DBA’ 2000 stands alone against all other exemplars of the Tradition of Ba. Unfortunately, since RBA 2011.1 is missing its final folios, we cannot assess whether it originally also contained the Zas gtad narrative as part of its manuscript.

Below is a list of the exemplars of the Testimony of Ba, omitting transcriptions or reprintings of already existing exemplars. They are grouped into three categories that I believe conform to three major recensions, DBA’ 2000, SBA 1982.1–3 and the Sba’ bzhed zhabs btags ma, or Testimony of Ba 1, Testimony of Ba 2 and Testimony of Ba 3:

The DBa’ bzhed, Testimony of Ba 1

Dunhuang fragment, London 2008
This is a manuscript fragment (or fragments) from Dunhuang now in the collections of the British Library, London. It contains the oldest surviving text giving a recognisable portion of the narrative. It was published first in Sam van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao, “Fragments of the Testament of Ba from Dunhuang,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128 (2008): 477–88. This will be referred to here as the BL fragment.

Vienna 2000
This is the oldest known full-length version of the text and the focus of the present study. It was first published in Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, *dBa’ bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha’s Doctrine to Tibet* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000). The text, casually but correctly written in a cursive hand, was reproduced photographically on pages 126–56. The same manuscript was reproduced again as a photo-lithograph facsimile in volume 36 of the *Bod gyi lo rgyus rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs* published from Zi ling (Xiling) in 2011 (see BDRC W1PD153537). This will be referred to in this book as DBA’ 2000.

Zi ling 2011, text one
This version was also reproduced as a photo-lithograph facsimile in volume 36 of the *Bod gyi lo rgyus rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs* (see BDRC W1PD153537). This text is closely related to DBA’ 2000 in its palaeography and the narrative also corresponds up to folio 4v (pp. 63–70), after which a different work recounts events in the life of the Buddha. This will be referred to here as RBA 2011.1.

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88 See Doney, “Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer,” 9, n. 8.
89 The two texts have been collated for study purposes by Tsering Gonkatsang and Michael Willis, and are available online at Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.574881.
90 The story corresponding to DBA’ 2000, folios 1–7r, ends at the end of RBA 2011.1, line 4v:10 (Phun tshogs rdo rje, *Dba’ bzhed*, 269.21–70.1: chos bsgyur ba’i sngo thogs te / a nandas) and another narrative begins with RBA 2011.1 line 5r:1 (Phun tshogs rdo rje, *Dba’ bzhed*, 71.1: nas dgra bcom pa inga brgyas bsdus ba dang po mdzad pa ni /). Although seemingly in the same hand (this needs more detailed study), the folios jump from containing 10 lines per side to containing only nine lines per page for the rest of the text, and from then on contain interlinear notes (*mdchan* ‘grel). The changeover between folios 4 and 5 corresponds to Phun tshogs rdo rje, *Dba’ bzhed*, 269.21–70.1, which obscures the changeover but whose resulting text makes no sense (especially having a terminative following an ergative): chos bsgyur ba’i sngo thogs te / a nandas nas dgra bcom pa inga brgyas bsdus ba dang po mdzad pa ni /.
The Sba bzhed, Testimony of Ba 2

Edited by Mgon po rgyal mtshan under the title Sba bzhed, this version was issued from Beijing in 1980 and 1982 (see BDRC W20000). The text presented is based on three allied manuscripts not otherwise known. In this book, this version is cited as SBA 1982.1–3. In time, when the three copies behind this version become known, it may be possible to refer to them as SBA 1982.1, SBA 1982.2 and SBA 1982.3 but these manuscripts are not available to me and thus not used in this study.

This version was published as part of the ‘Rba bzhed’ phyogs bsgrigs edited by Bde skyid and issued from Beijing in 2009 (Bde skyid, Rba bzhed, 80–158; see BDRC W1KG6259). It consists of an edited transcription of a source resembling SBA 1982 and this source may turn out to be one of the three manuscripts used by Mgon po rgyal mtshan, i.e. SBA 1982.1, 2 or 3. In any event, this version will be referred to here as SBA 2009.1.

The Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston is attributed to Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba (1504–1566) and its chapter ja, which concerns us here, was published in 1962 by Lokesh Chandra as mKhas-pa’i-dga’-ston, Part 4 (Śatapiṭaka Series, no. 9 [4]. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture; see BDRC W1KG24245). This monumental work narrates the history of the dharma from the teachings of the Buddha up to the sixteenth century. Its chapter ja, on the imperial period of Tibetan history, contains long sections quoted from the Testimony of Ba tradition. It relies on a number of exemplars, but its most often-quoted source lies close to the witness of SBA 1982.1–3. These lemmata are cited below as SBA 1962.

This edition of the Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston was published in two volumes in Delhi, based on prints from Lho brag blocks from Rumtek Monastery, Sikkim (see BDRC W28792). It is largely identical with the 1962 edition but is page-set in a dpe cha format. Here, it is referred to as SBA 1980.

The Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma, Testimony of Ba 3

R.A. Stein published this version as Une chronique ancienne de bSam-yas: sBa-bzhed (Paris: Institut des hautes études chinoises, 1961). The publication consists of a facsimile of a hand-copy of an old manuscript made for Hugh E. Richardson. Stein collated this with a second manuscript in the possession of Giuseppe Tucci. The Richardson version will be referred to here as SBA 1961.1, while the Tucci manuscript used for collation by Stein will be cited as SBA 1961.2.

This version was reproduced in a photo-lithograph facsimile in volume 36 of Bod gyi lo rgyus rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs published from Zi ling in 2011 (see BDRC WIPD153537). This copy, neatly written in a dense cursive hand, stands in the same Zhabs btag ma recension as SBA 1961.1–2 and Sba (2009.2). It is referred to in this book as RBA 2011.2.

An edition of the appendicized Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma by the Shes rig par khang or Tibetan Educational Printing Press, Kashmir House, Dharamsala (see W3CN17326). The editors appear to refer to a manuscript from ‘Ba’ nyag Monastery in Gangtok used as the basis of the transcription, but it may instead be dependent on Stein’s edition SBA 1961. Nonetheless, this will be cited here as SBA 1968.

The Process of Redacting the Testimony of Ba

How do the versions just listed relate to each other? The situation is certainly complex, but a sketch can be made based on earlier research (see also Figure 1.1, below). van Schaik and Iwao already compared the accounts of the
invitation of Śāntarakṣita in DBA’ 2000 and the BL fragment. There, they draw attention to the later Testament of Ba’s alteration of this episode. For instance, in DBA’ 2000 the Indian abbot is not “placed” in the Jo khang, as in the BL fragment, but instead “asked to reside” there.91 van Schaik and Iwao note that “this passage is further weakened in the Sba bzhed, where the order to investigate Śāntarakṣita comes not from the king, but from his ministers instead.”92

It now seems clear that the redactors of the Testament of Ba tradition created the ancestor of SBA 1982.1–3 and SBA 2009.1 from a narrative more closely resembling DBA’ 2000 and RBA 2011.1. They not only added to DBA’ 2000 but also rewrote it in their narrative to reflect an increasingly pious reading of history. However, the variance between DBA’ 2000 and RBA 2011.1, where they recount the same narrative, and the different ways in which they altered the vignette found in the BL fragment, suggest that we should take care when ascribing redaction within the tradition.

Where the Dba’ bzhed differs from the later Testament of Ba tradition in minor details, these variants could be as easily due to the amendments made in the compilation of the Dba’ bzhed as to the redaction that created SBA 2009.1, or SBA 1982.1–3.93

However, it is clear that most of the narrative shared in SBA 1982 and SBA 2009.1 is created by expanding an older narrative also contained in DBA’ 2000 and RBA 2011.1.94 So, in many parts of the former narrative, almost every word of DBA’ 2000 is included while additions of various lengths are interspersed among them. These additions either clarify the grammar of the sentence or provide extra details to the story from earlier written sources or oral tradition. For example, in one episode DBA’ 2000 (11v:1–4; not contained in the surviving fragment RBA 2011.1) describes Śāntarakṣita prostrating to Khri Srong lde brtsan and then beginning to convince the Tibetan emperor to welcome Padmasambhava to Tibet. The later Testament of Ba tradition expands this episode, perhaps in line with the growing popularity of religious themes in Tibetan historiography. With the words that remain from DBA’ 2000 in bold, SBA 1982 reads:

When Abbot [Śāntarakṣita] arrived at the palace, he introduced (brda sbyar) [his presence] to the emperor (Khri Srong lde brtsan), then prostrated to the emperor (btsan po). And the emperor said: “[I] cannot [accept] the prostration of an ordained man.” Then Master [Padmasambhava] prostrated to a boulder, so that it split into pebbles (pha bong shags = pha bong shag [ma]). Since the emperor prostrated, the master asked after his health. ... Ācārya Bodhisatva (Śāntarakṣita) spoke to the emperor: “Previously, when the Buddha dwelt in the world, there was no one among the divinities and demons95 who was not bound to his oath. Since there are many harmful [beings] in Tibet who are not bound under oath, the emperor is prevented from practising the dharma. Here and now, after inviting this, the most able [master] in ‘Dzam bu gling, named Padmasambhava, he resides [here]. During the reign of Emperor Srong btsan sgam po, [he] was prevented from practising the dharma; and the lakes and reservoirs broke their banks and a great river flooded into ‘Phang thang [plain]...”96

91 van Schaik and Iwao, “Fragments of the Testament of Ba,” 482. See also Chapter 3 in this volume, which further incorporates RBA 2011.1’s witness into this analysis.
92 van Schaik and Iwao, “Fragments of the Testament of Ba,” 482, n. 9.
93 One example of this may be the description of the Buddhist’s defeat of non-Buddhists in China (DBA’ 2000, 11v:7–12v:4), which Wangdu and Diemberger, DBA’ bzhed, 55, n. 157 note corresponds to no account in the wider Testament of Ba tradition.
94 The main omissions, however, are from the beginning and end of DBA’ 2000 (1r:1–4r:5 and 25v:1–31v:6 respectively; see above).
96 Note the Tibetan words from DBA’ 2000, 11v:1–4 (in bold) that are incorporated, in order, though not necessarily spelled the same, in SBA 1982, 27.13–28.4: mkhan po pho brang du gshes nas btsan po la brda sbyar nas btsan po la phyog bzhes pa la / btsan po na re / rab tu byung ba'i phyog mi thub gsangs nas / slob dpon gyis pha bong la phyag mdzad pas pha bong shags kyi gas / btsan po pas phyog phul bas slob dpon gyis snyun rms pa mdzad / chags gar phibs ces pa dang / sang shis de'i bar du ston pa rtsig ces nas / brag dmar mgrin bzang ’khor sa sgo ma mchis pa cig rtisga tsa na / nang thang sgo rgya’i de’u shan la dpe blangs pa gcig tshar lags pas der phyag ’bebs par zhus / de dus a-tsa’rnyas bo d-di na tvas btsan po la gso ba / sngon sangs rgyas ’jig rten na bzhugs pa’i tse / lha ma s rin dam ’og tu ma chad pa ma mchis par rigs pa la / bod yul na dam ’og du ma chad pa’i dgyud pa can mang du mchis pas / btsan po chos mdzad du ster mi ’dra bas / da lta ’di na ’dzam bu gling na nus pa che ba’i padma ’byung gnas zhes bya ba’i dpyad de’u shan las drangs nas bzhugs pas / bod kyi btsan po srong btsan sgam po’i sku ring la dam pa’i chos mdzad du mi ster zhang la rdzings dang / bem rdzings gdol [brtal] nas ’phang thang du chu bo che gton ba dang /.
97 See Tsumagari, “Bashey With Supplement,” 206, n. 12 on this. The other exemplars of the Testament of Ba are equivocal on this temple’s name.
This is by no means the only example of such an addition. Identifying in each episode the process of recension that, as a whole, transformed an ancestor of DBA’ 2000 and RBA 2011.1, what we could call Testimony of Ba 1, into the ancestor of SBA 1982.1–3 and SBA 2009.1, Testimony of Ba 2, remains to be done. However, the above comparison already highlights the increasingly Buddhist attitude of Tibetan historians towards the imperial period. The Testimony of Ba redactors seek to explain the Testimony of Ba 1 narrative by adding extra details to each scene. Yet, these are almost invariably religious (rather than political) details. Instead of explaining that narrative, they sometimes even reverse its position (as in the case of Padmasambhava meeting Khri Srong lde brtsan) by making religious figures appear superior to royal ones.

Let us now move on to the even later Testimony of Ba tradition, where the core narrative appears to actually shrink. SBA 1961.1–2, SBA 2009.2 and RBA 2011.2 omit parts of SBA 1982.1–3 and SBA 2009.1 and DBA’ 2000 and RBA 2011.1 from their shared account. Yet, far from constituting evidence that they are all part of an earlier recension than Testimony of Ba 2 (SBA 1982.1–3 and SBA 2009.1), I shall show below that their readings actually support the argument that they reflect a later recension than Testimony of Ba 2. Returning to the vignette translated above, SBA 1961.1 reads:

[Sāntarakṣita] arrived at the palace and introduced [himself] to an ambassador in order to meet the emperor. Then, he prostrated to the emperor but the emperor said “[I] cannot [accept] the prostration of an ordained man. Then [Padmasambhava?] prostrated to a boulder that split into pebbles. After the emperor prostrated, the master asked after his health. ... Ācārya Bodhisatva spoke to the emperor: “Previously, when the Buddha dwelt in the world, there was no one among the divinities and demons who was not bound to his oath. However, there are

98 SBA 2009.1, 105.16–106.7; mkhan po pho brang du gshegs nas btsan po la brda sbyar nas btsan po la phyag bzhes pa la / btsan po na re / rab tu byang ba’i phyag mi thub gsungs nas / slob dpon gyis pha bong la phyag mdzad pas bshags kyis gas / btsan po phyag phul bas slob dpon gyis snyun med pa mdzad / chags gar phibs ces pa dang / sang shis de’i bar du ston pa rtsig ces nas / brag damar ’grin bzang ’khor sa sgo ma mchis pa cig rtsgs tsa na / nang th a khang ’god dp Yad de’u shan las dpe blangs pa gcig tshar lags pas der phyogs ‘bebs par zhus / de dus a+.tsary ba d+hi satvas btsan po la gso / pa / sngon sangs rgyas ’jig rten na bzhugs pa’i tse / lha ma srin dam ’og du ma chud pa ma mchis par rigs pa la / bod yul na dam ’og du ma chud pa’i gduz pa can mchis nas pas btsan po chos mdzad du st er mi’ra bas / da ita ’di na ’dza sm bu gling na nas pa che ba’ pad ma byang gnas zhes bya ba’i s Gyurpar dangs nas bzhugs pas / bod kyi btsan po srong btsan s gam po’i sku ring la dam pa’i chos mdzad du mi st er zhing lha rdzings dang / bam rdzings gdol [brdol] nas ’phang thang du chu bo che gtong ba dang /.

99 Śāntarakṣita’s reference to Srong btsan sgam po being prevented from practising the dharma is an interpolation that seemingly is not “religious” in motivation. SBA 1961.1, SBA 2009.2, 2011.2 and SBA 1962 do not include this reference—though it is in SBA 2009.1, which may be one of the sources that Mgon po rgyal mtshan used to compile SBA 1982. No version of the later Testimony of Ba tradition includes the opening folios of DBA’ 2000, on the previous Tibetan emperors, but here SBA 1982 and SBA 2009.1 make a clear comparison between Khri Srong lde brtsan and his predecessor, Srong btsan sgam po. This interpolation is therefore at least consistent with DBA’ 2000’s royal narrative. However, I would argue that it still has a religious emphasis. Sāntarakṣita makes the comparison in terms of their attempts to establish Buddhism in Tibet. SBA 1982 uses the shared religious aspects of their lives, rather than, say, their imperial domains, to explain how Sāntarakṣita convinced Khri Srong lde brtsan to accept Padmasambhava into Tibet.
many harmful beings in Tibet who are not bound under oath so the emperor is prevented from practising the dharma. Here and now, after inviting the most able [master] in ‘Dzam bu gling, named Padmasambhava, he resides [here]. As for expelling, subduing and binding to oath all [those forces] that previously prevented the Tibetan emperor from practising the dharma, this mantrin [Padmasambhava] will weed them out (sngo thog).\(^{100}\)

SBA 2009.2 agrees in this reading, albeit with greater variation in orthography than shown between SBA 1982 and SBA 2009.1, above.\(^{101}\) However, one difference stands out at the beginning. Whereas SBA 1961.1–2 recounts that Padmasambhava bows to the emperor (btsan pos la phyag bzes pas \(\))\(^{100}\), SBA 2009.2 reverses this, saying “the emperor bowed [the prostration of] the ordained one” perhaps mistakenly repeated from the next sentence (dittography). RBA 2011.2 lies somewhere ordained one" perhaps mistakenly repeated from the

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\(^{100}\) SBA 1961.1, 21.15–22.10 reads: pho brang du byon nas btsan po dang zhal mjil ba'i pho nyas rda sbyar nas / btsan pos rab tu byung ba'i phyag mi thub gsum nas pha bong la phyag mdzad pa'i shags kyi gas / btsan pos phyag phul nas / slob dpon gyis snyun smed pa mdzad / phyag gar 'bebs ces pa dang / sang shis de'i bar du ston pa gcig rtsis ces nas brag dmar 'gran bhang 'khor sa der gso ma mchis pa gcig rtsis tsa na / nang tha khang mgo de'u shan la dpe blang pa gcig rtsis lags pa / der phyag phesbs par zhus / a tsarya bo d-hi satvats btsan po la gsol pa / sngon sangs rgyas 'jig rten na bzhus gsar'i tshe / lha ma s rin dam 'og tu ma tshad pa ma mchis par rigs pa la / bod yul nas dam 'og tu ma chud pa'i gdug pa can mang du mchis pas / btsan po chos mdzad du ster mi 'dra bas / da lta 'di na 'dzam bu gling na nus pa che be'i padma 'byung gsar zhes bya ba spyan drangs nas bzhus pa / bod kyi btsan po chos mdzad du mi ster ba thams cad skrad cing gezir gezir ba dang / dam la 'dogs pa ni sngags mkhan / 'dis sngo thog ...

\(^{101}\) SBA 2009.2, 17.12-78.1 reads: pho brang du byon nas btsan po dang zhal 'jal ba'i pho nyas rda sbyar nas / btsan pos rab tu byung pa'i phyag bzhes pas / btsan pos rab tu byung pa'i phyag mi thub gsum nas pha bong ci la phyag mdzad pas shags kyi gas / btsan pos phyag phul nas slob dpon gyis snyun smed pa mdzad / phyag gar 'bebs ces pa dang / sang shis de'i bar du ston pa gcig rtsis ces nas brag dmar 'gran bhang 'khor sa der gso ma mchis pa gcig rtsis tsam na / nang thanga khang 'go ste shan la dpe blang pa cig lags pa der chags 'bebs par zhus / a rgya bo d-hi sa tas btsan po la gsol pa / sngon sangs rgyas 'jig rten na bzhus pa'i tshe lha ma s rin dam 'og tu ma chud pa ma mchis par rigs pa la bod yul na dam 'og tu ma chud pa'i gdug pa can mang du mchis pas btsan po chos byed du ster ster mi 'dra bas / da lta 'di na 'dzam bu'i gling na nus pa che be'i padma 'byung gsar zhes bya ba spyan drangs nas bzhus pas / bod kyi btsan po chos mdzad du mi ster ba thams cad skrad cing gezir gezir ba dang / dam la 'dogs pa ni sngags mkhan / 'dis sngo thog ...

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\(^{102}\) RBA 2011.2, 5v:2–5 reads: pho brang du byon / btsan po dang 'jal ba pho nyas brda sbyar nas / btsan pos rab tu byung ba'i phyag mi thub gsum nas / pha 'ong la phyag mdzad pas shags kyi gas / btsan pos phyag phul nas slob dpon gyis snyun smed pa mdzad / phyag gar 'bebs ces pa dang / sang shis de'i bar du ston pa gcig rtsis ces nas / brag dmar 'dran bhang 'khor sa der gso ma mchis pa gcig rtsis tsam na / nang thanga g'ru? ste shan la dpe blang pa gcig legs pa der phyag 'bebs par zhus nas / bo d-hi sa tsvas btsan po la gsol pa / sngon sangs rgyas 'jig rten na bzhus pa'i tshe lha ma s rin ste brigsod / dam 'og tu ma tshad pa med par rigs pa la / bod yul du dam 'og tu ma tshad par gdug pa can mang du mchis pas / btsan po chos byed du ster ster mi 'dra bas / da lta 'di na nus pa che be'i pad ma 'byung gsar zhes bya ba spyan drangs nas bzhus pas / btsan po chos byed du mi ster be'i gdug pa can thams cad skrad cing gezir gezir ba dang / dam la 'dogs pa ni sngags mkhan / 'dis sngo thog ...
be investigated. These relationships are shown here in Figure 1.1. Finally, in narrating Śāntarakṣita’s recommendation of Padmasambhava to Khri Srong lde brtsan (quoted above according to published editions of the Testimony of Ba proper), Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba evidently consulted old versions of the Testimony of Ba. Yet, the final text contained in his Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston (SBA 1962) is here apparently very much his own. SBA 1962 follows a version of Testimony of Ba 2 very closely. However, it also contains its own interpolations and modernisations:

103 I am not certain that the long section at the end of MTN that resembles the Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma belongs to Nyang ral Nyi ma ‘od zer’z original version (see above). If this section was added to MTN after the twelfth century, then quotes from a Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma could have been interpolated at any time. On the other hand, if Nyang ral Nyi ma ‘od zer did borrow from the Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma then it suggests that Testimony of Ba 3 contained this section. As a result, SBA 1961.1 could perhaps be a twelfth-century redaction of the Testimony of Ba 2. This will require further analysis, but there is no overwhelming evidence to suggest it so far. It is also worth pointing out that MTN could quote from the same narrative that the Testimony of Ba 3 later includes as its zhabs btags section, rather than quoting from the Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma itself.

104 For a more detailed chart of DBA’ 2000, see Penghao Sun, “The Metamorphoses of the Testimony of Ba: Notes on the Padmasambhava Episode of the Dba’/Sba/Rba bzhed,” (M.A. thesis: Harvard University, 2015), 26, which inspired the format of this figure.

After Abbot [Śāntarakṣita] of Za hor arrived at the palace, [he] introduced [his presence] to the emperor (Khri Srong lde brtsan). The emperor welcomed [him] and since [Khri Srong lde brtsan] prostrated Master [Padmasambhava] asked after his health. Master [Padmasambhava] stretched out the palm of his right hand to a boulder, so that it split into pebbles. ... At that time Acārya Bodhisatva (Śāntarakṣita) spoke to the emperor: “Previously, when the Buddha dwelt in the world, there was no one among the divinities and demons who was not bound to his oath. However, there are many harmful deities (lha ‘dre) in Tibet who are not bound under oath so the emperor is prevented from practising the dharma. Here and now, after inviting this, the most able [master] in ‘Dzam bu gling, named Padmasambhava, he resides [here]. Previously, to prevent [you] from practising the dharma, a great river flooded into ‘Phang thang [plain]...”

SBA 1962, 85v:5–86r:1 reads: za hor gyi mkhan po pho brang du gshegs nas btsan po brda sbyar / btsan po bsus te phyag mdzad pas slob dpon gyis bsnyun mred / slob dpon gyis pha bang zhig la phyag gyas pa’tai thal mo phyir mdzad pas pha bang shags kyis gas / da phyags gar ‘bebs ces pa la / sang shis de’i bar brag dmar mgrin bzang ’khor sa sgo ma mchis pa cig la nag lha khang rgya’i de’u shan lha lpe blangs pa cig bzihengs tshar nas der phyags phebs par zhus / de dus a+’ tsarya bo d+hi sa tvas btsan po la gsal pa / sngon sangs rgyas ’jigs rten na bzhugs pa’i tse lha ma sin dam ’og du ma tshud pa ma mchis par rigs pa la bod yul na dam ’og du ma tshud pa’i lha ’dre gdag pa can mang du mchis pas btsan po chos mdzad tu mi ster ba la da la ’ita ’dir dzambu’i gling na nus pa che ba’i padma ’byung gnas ces bya ba ’di spyan drangs nas bzhugs pas sngon chos mdzad tu mi ster bar ’phang thang du chu bo che g tong ba dang ...
Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba elsewhere cites a great and a
middling Testament of Ba version at the end of volume ja,
and quotes from other exemplars at various point in
the work, one of which at least falls within the same
recension as the oldest (twelfth-century?) source for SBA
1982.1–3. However, it omits Śāntarakṣita’s prostration and
has Khri Srong lde brtsan bow to Padmasambhava.106 In
an earlier comment, Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba expressly
denies any other histories’ claims that a religious figure
would prostrate to a king.107 This very thorough and
thoughtful historian thus quotes the later Testament of Ba
tradition, and unconsciously contradicts its source,
the ancestor of DBA ‘ 2000. The trajectories of portrayals
over time can reverse even the position of their original
narration. Kapstein noted this trend in the attribution of a
Chinese mother to Khri Srong lde brtsan.108 Dpa’ bo Gtsug
lag phreng ba reverses the position of the ancestor of DBA
2000, when quoting the later Testament of Ba tradition,
too. He argues that no Indian religious figure would bow
to a Tibetan king. Yet, this is just what DBA’ 2000 states
did happen.

Conclusion

Before the publication of the Dba’ bzhed manuscript (DBA’
2000), it was impossible to know for certain that the trunc-
cated narrative preceding the appendix in SBA 1961.1–2
was actually later than the longer recension indicated by
the eclectic (and so partially opaque) edition SBA 1982.
Above, I have argued that SBA 1982 and SBA 2009.1 reflect
an interpolated and (in some cases) ideologically altered
recension (Testimony of Ba 2) of the shared ancestor of
DBA’ 2000 and RBA 2011.1 (Testimony of Ba 1), and that
SBA 1962 in grosso modo closely follows this Testament of Ba 2 recension (though lemmata from other exemplars
are found therein). SBA 1961.2, SBA 1961.1, the dependent
SBA 1968 and the newly published SBA 2009.2 and 2011.2
reflect Testament of Ba 3, an edited and reduced version
of a source within the Testament of Ba 2 recension. To this
recension has been added an extra section covering later
history that has earned it the description Sba bzhed zhab

106 Compare the beginning of the quote in the note above with DBA’
2000, 11v:1–2. The order of the sentences has also been changed, and
as a result the king’s prostration precedes, and is not caused by, the
magical act of Padmasambhava.
107 Mkhhas pa’i dga’ ston 1962, 84v:5–7; see also Wangdu and Diem-
berger, DBa’ bzhed, 54, n. 152 on Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba’s long
explanation.
108 See Kapstein, The Tibetan Assimilation, 36.

btags ma. These exemplars need to be placed in such a
chronological order in order to avoid anachronism in
representing accounts of each exemplar. Moreover, chart-
ing the alteration of key scenes over time will hopefully
deepen our understanding of the narratives contained in
the various recensions as products of different periods
within the maturing Buddhist ideology within Tibet. This
is especially true concerning the perceived role that impe-
rial Buddhism played in Tibet’s evolution.

However, it must be stressed again that no work is the
singular creation of a lone inspired author. DBA’ 2000, for
example, was not the original work of one imperial-period
creative figure and the Ur-text for everything that followed.
Instead, it had already been expanded and altered by the
eleventh or twelfth century, as suggested by the existence
of a similar ninth- or tenth-century narrative found in the
BL fragment (see Chapter 3). The overwhelming similari-
ity between this version and the corresponding episode
found in DBA’ 2000 and RBA 2011.1 demonstrates that
the account shared between the latter sources contains
vignettes that stem from at least the ninth or tenth century.
The subtle differences show that the text of these narra-
tives have been redacted since those times. The evidence
of the BL fragment therefore suggests that the main part of
DBA’ 2000 contains a roughly eleventh-century narrative
made up of various earlier and contemporaneous strata.
In a similar way, the narratives contained in later recen-
sions of the Testament of Ba may be set in their final-ish
form by a group of editors, but the sources of those addi-
tions and the inspiration for their amendments may pre-
date the milieu of those editors by some time.

From the twelfth century onwards, anonymous redac-
tion of the Testament of Ba seemingly gave way to incor-
poration of its witness as adapted precis and acknowl-
edged lemmata in works attributed to a single author. The
overlapping of these two forms of historiography writing
results in the ‘feedback loop’ whereby Bu ston Rin chen
grub is referenced in SBA 1961.1. Yet, it remains to be
seen which of the exemplars of the Testament of Ba stand
closest to the lemmata in MTN, MBNTH and so forth, clues
which may help to date the production of both the histo-
ries and also their exemplars in future. However, ascrip-
tion of authorship also often obscures processes of anon-
ymous (group) compilation, editing and transmission by
many hands. This is even more true of the Testament of Ba
tradition, which is only later attributed to Sba Gsal snang.
It remains an open question, therefore, the extent to which
the anonymity of this tradition’s compilers encouraged its
mutability, and/or the degree to which its mouvance (see
footnote 19) resisted the ascription of the Testament of Ba
to an ‘author’ for so long.
Finally, the variant account found in the BL fragment also raises questions about the various ages of the strata within DBA’ 2000 and the early state of the *Testimony of Ba* tradition. Dotson’s Chapter 4 uncovers archaisms in both DBA’ 2000 and the surrounding tradition, which may further help to date the strata in the future. Due to the composite construction of the narrative, it is not easy to ascertain which episodes date from the earlier period and which were added later. The situation is further complicated because, as with the BL fragment, above, it is possible that later redactors made changes within episodes, rather than leaving them as they found them. This is especially true of the accounts of the Bsam yas Debate (see Chapter 5), perhaps because later Tibetan Buddhist traditions imbued the event with such importance in their doctrinal debates. Thus, in order to satisfactorily analyse the depiction of the imperial period in DBA’ 2000, one would need to date not only individual episodes, but also individual elements within episodes.

Nonetheless, the witness of DBA’ 2000 has already proved invaluable in deciding the relative ages of the strata in the wider *Testimony of Ba* tradition. In Chapter 2, Willis and Gonkatsang distinguish the layers of the manuscript archaeologically. They show that the beginning and end of the manuscript are lacking in the later *Testimony of Ba* tradition—on the relations of Khri Srong lde brtsan’s ancestors to Buddhism in Tibet (1r:1–4r:5) and the debate between Buddhism and Bon over who should perform the emperor’s funeral rites (25v:1–31v:6) respectively. The opening narrative, on the previous emperors, is also covered in the Rba’ bzhed, which shows that the Dba’ bzhed is part of a recension that included at least the opening portion. The loss of the latter portion of RBA 2011.1 leaves us unable to assess whether this manuscript once contained the final Zas gtrad narrative found in DBA’ 2000. No later *Testimony of Ba* contains either DBA’ 2000’s opening folios or its last section. The *Testimony of Ba* redactors had no reason to omit the beginning and end of the Dba’ bzhed, if it was contained in their archetype. Hence it is most likely that these parts were not present in the Dba’ bzhed version that the redactors used.

The Dba’ bzhed and the *Testimony of Ba* tradition of which it is a part both throw up a number of multivocal narratives. As I attempt to show in Chapter 6, complex royal identities and religious dynamics are played out in DBA’ 2000, which are certainly not merely products of the dynastic period but reflect the various ages of their strata. The *Testimony of Ba* was always in a state of becoming, rather than a fixed entity that could only be corrupted. This tradition has always been in flux, metamorphosing to suit the changing tastes of its Tibetan-speaking audience, whomever they may have been.
Chapter 2
An Archaeology of the Dba’ bzhed Manuscript

The only absolutely certain thing is the future, since the past is always changing.¹

The Testimony of Ba—as the work presented here is generally known—has slightly different names according to the version: Dba’ bzhed, Rba bzhed, Sba bzhed, and Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma are among the best known. The differences hint at the text’s distance from the historical events it describes, a point supported throughout the narrative, as we shall see in the course of this chapter. In this study we use the spelling Dba’ bzhed because this appears in the manuscript that stands at the heart of the present book. The name comes from the Dba’ clan, one of the elite families of the dynastic period. (The name is sometimes spelt Dba’s in the oldest sources, as discussed in Chapter 1). The purpose of the Dba’ bzhed is to chronicle the arrival and establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, but it also aims—as the title indicates and the text soon reveals—to show how members of the Dba’ family played a vital role in the process. In particular, the story centres on the actions of an individual called Dba’ Gsas snang who took the name Ye shes dbang po when he entered the Buddhist order. He became the preceptor of King Khri Srong lde brtsan (742—circa 800 CE) and with him was involved with the establishment of Bsam yas, the main monastery and temple in central Tibet.² This temple and the events that happened there form the core of the Dba’ bzhed narrative.

Over the last fifty years, a number of versions of the Testimony have been discovered and published, as discussed in Chapter 1. Further versions appear to have been in circulation from an early date, and it seems likely that some of these will be found as research goes forward. For the moment and for the present book, the sources listed and described in Chapter 1 give the materials that are available. We do not seek to privilege any copy of the text at this stage. Yet, the fragment from Dunhuang, discussed below and in Chapter 3 of this volume, is the oldest surviving indication of the story and the version presented in this book is the oldest complete copy of the narrative proper currently extant. The core of this text dates between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, with the actual manuscript belonging to the fourteenth or early fifteenth century.³

A key problem for Tibetan historical writing is the relationship of the Dba’ bzhed to the other versions of the narrative. All the versions are connected, but they differ in ways that point to a process of redaction and supplementation over time. How we should deal with these processes pose historical problems. In this chapter, we seek to provide some answers to these problems by examining the Dba’ bzhed as a text and as a manuscript. Our contention is that a study of the codicology helps show how histories were assembled and how readers responded to them over time.

The Dba’ bzhed, like most texts, was not static: it has been supplemented, commented on, corrected and amplified. It has been read and re-read through different eyes, with some of these readings showing as notations on the pages. This complex layering explains the word ‘archaeology’ in our chapter title. Like an ancient habitation site, the Dba’ bzhed has many phases and layers. And like an ancient site, it has no simple or essential core. It simply continues as a place in the landscape where people have

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¹ A Yugoslav aphorism, cited in Katherine Verdery, National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu’s Romania (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 215, for which reference we are grateful to Csaba Dezső.


lived and continue to live. And just as a place means different things to the different people who have lived there or passed by, so too the text has different meanings for those who have come across it and paused to dwell on it. We are, in the end, not excluded from the long chain of readers: ours is the most recent deposit in a thousand years of reading and textual stratigraphy. To help demonstrate these points, we will look at the *Dbpa’ bzhed* on two levels: firstly, the general organisation of its parts and, secondly, the internal organisation of each part, including the notations made on the folios by readers over time. The discussion here is guided by Table 2.1.

As a preliminary, we should note that we have tried to avoid repeating the observations made by Wangdu and Diemberger, who first published the manuscript in 2000. They identified many of the individuals mentioned in the text, discussed problematic readings and compared the *Dbpa’ bzhed* with later versions. While some overlaps are inevitable, our aim has been to supplement this earlier work and, in a few places, offer a different understanding of how the text should be assessed.

**General Organisation: Two Texts**

A key point with regard to the organisation of the manuscript of the *Dbpa’ bzhed* is that it combines two different but related texts. This is not a new observation, certainly, but it is worth restating and reformulating in the present context. The second text begins on folio 26r and starts in a formal way: “During the first month of spring in the Horse Year, his majesty Khri Srong lde btsan died” (Figure 2.3). There follows an account of the confrontation between Buddhist and Bon factions over the nature of the king’s last rites. Table 2.1 in this chapter outlines the events against the corresponding folios of the manush of the king’s last rites. The text, discussed problematic readings and compared the *Dbpa’ bzhed* with later versions. While some overlaps are inevitable, our aim has been to supplement this earlier work and, in a few places, offer a different understanding of how the text should be assessed.

The key transition point comes in folio 25v. As illustrated in Figure 2.2, we have the text closed in the following way in line 3: “So ends the *Dbpa’ bzhed*—the account from the *Dbpa*’ perspective—the text of the noble narrative of how the *dharma* of the Buddha came to the region of Tibet.” This is a definitive end, certainly. However, we can see from the folio itself that the text continues with an account of events after the death of Ye shes dbang po. From the perspective of codicology, we note that the writing style from this point onward is different (see Figure 2.2, line 4). In terms of narrative content, this change means that everything from the account of Ye shes dbang po’s daughter’s actions to the end of the *Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus* was written by one scribe. This scribe was different from the person who wrote the earlier part of the manuscript.

This change in writing style has a number of implications. The main conclusion we can make from the manuscript is that the scribe who wrote the text from folio 25v:4 onwards was compiling information from his sources as he wrote. The subjects of the sentences change abruptly.

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5 The original manuscript, with folio and line numbers marked, is available here: *Dbpa’ bzhed*. Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3359902. See also text and translation, folio 26r, end of line 2.


7 Perhaps the best diagnostic letter is ya, as can be seen in Figure 2.2.

8 Readers are also referred to the chart in this chapter and our Tibetan text and translation.
### Table 2.1: Outline of the events recorded in the text against the corresponding folios of the Dba’ bzhed manuscript

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>folio</th>
<th>Summary of episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title page</td>
<td>1r</td>
<td>Title of the work with later library notation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude</td>
<td>1v</td>
<td>Prelude recounting activities of earlier dharma kings Lha tho de snyan btsan and Khri Srong btsan who built the Ra sa vihāra; Thon mi Gsas bo ra is sent to India; he returns with Kaṃśādatta and the Ratnameghasūtra and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decree of Khri Srong btsan</td>
<td>2r</td>
<td>Dašakuśalāni (Ten Virtues); the texts are sealed and deposited in the royal treasury; the writing system is taught to four trusted attendants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission to the Chinese court</td>
<td>2v</td>
<td>A mission to China is sent under ‘Gar Stong btsan yul zungs; dispatch box episode; princess Mum shang Ong co brought to Tibet as a bride; she brings a gold image of the Buddha which is placed in the Ra mo che where she resides; the king resides in Lhan kar ta mo ra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Prophecy and the two monks from Khotan</td>
<td>3r</td>
<td>Two monks come from Khotan to see Khri Srong btsan who is reputed to be an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara; the story is recorded as a prophecy taken exactly from the Lung bstan chen po.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate dharma kings</td>
<td>3v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The anti-Buddhist reaction of Zhang Ma zhang</td>
<td>4r</td>
<td>King ‘Dus sro po rje slung nam builds the Glang ri tse; his son Khri ‘Lde gtsug btsan takes Gyim shang Ong co as his queen and builds five temples; the queen annually worships the Buddha at Ra mo che; great festivals and the tshe rituals are celebrated; the couple duly pass away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dba’ Gsas snang in Tibet</td>
<td>4v</td>
<td>Sna nam Ma zhang khrom pa skyes (otherwise known as Zhang Ma zhang) leads a revolt against the dharma; the Buddha image in Ra mo che is removed with plans to send it back to China; monks are sent back. Temples otherwise are desecrated or destroyed, some nobles are executed and the tshe rituals suspended. Zhang Ma zhang, however, does not survive: he is buried alive as the king’s scapegoat after a female diviner is bribed to make a false prognostication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dba’ Gsas snang in India and Nepal and meeting with Bodhisatva (Śāntarakṣita)</td>
<td>5r</td>
<td>Doubts about the Ra mo che image continue and it is sent toward Nepal. A plague arises and the tshe rituals for the dead continue to be forbidden. The children of Dba’ Gsas snang—who appears now for the first time—fall victim to the epidemic. Bon rituals are performed for appearances, but the tshe is performed in secret. An old Hwa shang is summoned to foretell the post-mortem destiny of the two children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debates at court and the arrival of Bodhisatva</td>
<td>5v</td>
<td>Dba’ Gsas snang is secretly initiated and practices meditation in secret; king Khri Srong lde btsan appoints him as an officer in Mang yul and Gsas snang proceeds from there to India (Mahābodhi and Nālandā) and Nepal where he worships and studies in contravention of the ban instigated by Ma zhang. He invites Bodhisatva (known to other sources as Śāntarakṣita) back to Mang yul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodhisatva predicts the building of Bsam yas and states he is willing to serve as kalyāṇamitra to the king of Tibet. He bestows the name Ye shes dbang po on Dba’ Gsas snang and grants him leave to return to Tibet and meet the king. Bodhisatva returns to Nepal; Dba’ Gsas snang travels to Tibet.</td>
<td>6r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Khri Srong lde btsan orders Dba’ Gsas snang out of harm’s way and prompts Zhang Nya bzang to instigate a ministerial debate in council about the merits of Buddhism.</td>
<td>6v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Khri Srong lde btsan enters the discussion in support of Zhang Nya bzang, ordering the return of the Ra mo che image and the summoning of Dba’ Gsas snang to court; the latter commends Bodhisatva. The king orders Dba’ Gsas snang to Nepal to invite Bodhisatva. The lord of Nepal giving his assent, Bodhisatva proceeds to Mang yul. The Tibetan king then orders Gsas snang and Lang ‘Gro snang ra to escort the preceptor Bodhisatva from Mang yul to the Ra sa vihāra where Lang ‘Gro snang ra serves as his attendant.</td>
<td>7r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Theme folio Summary of episodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>folio</th>
<th>Summary of episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bodhisatva is investigated</td>
<td>7v</td>
<td><strong>King Khri Srong lde btsan</strong> stays in Brag dmar, ordering the preceptor to remain in the Ra sa vihāra; he sends three ministers (i.e. Zhang blon chen po Sbrang Rgyal sbra legs gzigs, Seng ’go Lha lung gzigs and ’Ba’ Sang shi) to investigate the preceptor and determine if he is up to mischief and black magic. The brāhmaṇa Janitabhadra from Kashmir is found as a competent translator. The enquiry continues for two months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodhisatva is given audience amid calamitous events</td>
<td>8r</td>
<td>The ministers are convinced that the preceptor’s intentions are good and he is given audience in Brag dmar. With the help of translators, the preceptor reminds the king of their shared experiences in earlier lifetimes; the king studies the Indian dharma for six months. However, floods, epidemics and famine raise doubts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King reconsiders and Śāntarākṣita returns to Nepal</td>
<td>8v</td>
<td><strong>King Khri Srong lde btsan</strong> visits the preceptor and advises that he should withdraw in the long-term interest of establishing Buddhism in Tibet; both the preceptor and the Buddha image from Ra mo che are escorted by Seng ’gro Lha lung gzigs and Gsas snang to a place called Blang sna’il gru tshugs. Thereafter Lang ’Gro snang ra and Gsas snang escort the preceptor to Nepal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dba’ Gsas snang is sent to China</td>
<td>8v</td>
<td>The king orders Dba’ Gsas snang to China in search of the dharma with a team of thirty including Sbrang Gtsang bzhed and ’Ba’ Sang shi. Meanwhile the king discourses in favour of the dharma at court.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictions in China and the arrival of the Tibetan Delegation in Eg chu.</td>
<td>9r</td>
<td>As the Tibetan delegation heads to China, the Chinese preceptor Gyim Hwa shang in Eg chu predicts their arrival, saying that two of the party are Bodhisatva emanations. He further predicts that a court astrologer will announce their arrival to the prince in Bum sangs and present a drawing of the two Tibetans in question. The prince informs the emperor of China, who orders a welcome if the Tibetans match the drawing and the descriptions. The Tibetans arrive and ’Ba’ Sang shi and Dba’ Gsas snang are duly recognised as Bodhisatva emanations according to the drawing and the descriptions. An elaborate welcome ensues and the party are presented to the prince of Eg chu and Gyim Hwa shang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prophesies and instructions of Gyim Hwa shang</td>
<td>9r</td>
<td><strong>Gyim Hwa shang</strong> states that Sang shi is the Bodhisatva called ‘Wild Horse’ and prophesies that he will establish the dharma in Tibet. Sang shi replies that he was minded to request Mahāyāna sūtra volumes from the emperor for distribution in Tibet, but that he has decided the time is not yet right; he then asks Gyim Hwa shang if he will live to see the day. Gyim Hwa shang announces that the king of Tibet is a bodhisatva and predicts Sang shi will support the king in debates to come. In addition, he predicts that Sna nam Nya bzang, Michims Mes slebs and Seng mgo Lha lung gzigs will rise to prominence in the debates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience with Keng shi court</td>
<td>10r</td>
<td>The delegation travels to see the emperor at Keng shi and is hailed along the way; the Chinese emperor gives them a great welcome and confirms that Sang shi and Gsas snang are bodhisatva-s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation returns to Tibet</td>
<td>10v</td>
<td>Gsas snang thanks the emperor for his kind words and asks to meet a Hwa shang who might instruct them in meditation. Gyim Hwa shang is summoned from Eg chu for this purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padmasambhava enters Tibet</td>
<td>11r</td>
<td>Bodhisatva invites Padmasambhava to Tibet; concurrently Gsas snang invites a preceptor of geomantic signs for laying the foundation of Bsam yas. Padmasambhava enters Tibet and subdued troublesome nāgo-s and causes hot springs to cool. The angry spirits at Snying drung are subdued in a ritual contest during which Padmasambhava causes clouds, thunder, lightning and hail.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After a month Padmasambhava pays his respects to his majesty at the palace; Bodhisatva then makes a detailed case before king Khri Srong lde btsan in favour of Padmasambhava, describing how he will be able to subdue the malevolent deities who obstructed the dharma in Tibet even in the Buddha’s time; he will bring them into submission with divination texts and his command of the mirror divination of the four great kings.

Bodhisatva draws on historical precedent in China, noting how non-Buddhists there were defeated by logical disputation and supernormal displays. He advocates the same in Tibet now. The king agrees that Bodhisatva and Padmasambhava should fill these roles.

Bodhisatva and Padmasambhava urge the building of Bsam yas under the supervision of the divination expert from Nepal. The king agrees and Padmasambhava then performs the mirror divination of the four great kings.

Bodhisatva changes the malevolent deities into human form and castigates them; Bodhisatva counsels them in the dharma through a translator. Padmasambhava advocates performing the ritual two more times.

Padmasambhava advises that the water for the ablution of the king’s head should be brought from a spring called Aśvakarṇa. Using his magical powers he sends a vase there through the air; he summons the immediate return of the vase with mantra-s.

The ministers reject the use of the water from Aśvakarṇa. Padmasambhava speaks at length about transforming the landscape with hydrology projects, creating springs, meadows and fertile fields so the people will be busy with productive fieldwork. To prove his point, he transforms several barren areas through japa and dhyāna.

The ministers are alarmed by these developments and raise suspicions in the king’s mind; the king suspends the two further rituals commended by Padmasambhava (in folio 12v), and requests Padmasambhava to return to India.

The archers sent to kill Padmasambhava wait in a gorge, but he renders them motionless using a mudrā. Approaching Mang yul, he announces to his escorts that if the ritual to bind the malevolent deities had been performed three times (folio 12v), the dharma would be well established and the king’s reign and that of his successors would be long and stable. He predicts that in the final five hundred years of the dharma, the Buddhists will dispute among themselves and turmoil will prevail in Tibet. He releases the assassins from their frozen state and the envoys return. They give a full account to the king who becomes despondent on hearing it.

A dharma council is organised in Brag dmar and Gsas snang is appointed to a key role. A debate is planned between Bon and the Buddha dharma and the parties assemble at the palace of Zus phug skyang bu tshal.

The teams for each side are named; the Buddhist are led by Bodhisatva; the only Buddhist in the list who also appeared in the prophecy of Gyim Hwa shang (folio 9r) is Seng mgo Lha lung gzigs. The Bon side is led by Stag ra Klu gong and others. The Bon are defeated in logical debate (supernormal displays, planned above in folio 12r, are excluded because Padmasambhava has returned to India). Bon rites, especially the slaughter of animals for the dead, are proscribed; the Bon rites are compared to the single performance of Padmasambhava after which epidemics ceased and rain has fallen in due time.

Bodhisatva lays the foundation of Bsam yas and the divination expert from Nepal examines the auspicious signs and omens. Dba’ Lha btsan becomes a monk.
Background activities 15r under the name Dba’ Dpal dbyangs. The Buddha image is brought back and reinstalled in Ra mo che. A temple is built at Glag at the behest of Gsas snang; the latter urges members of his clan to follow Buddhism and a number of them and their friends convert.

Temple plan Bodhisatva climbs the mountain of Khas po ri with the king, Sang shi and Snyer Stag btsan ldong gzigs; looking down he orders that an enclosure be made of sheaves of grass like a horse corral.

Site examination King Khri Srong lde btsan puts on a golden mantle and digs the site seven times with a golden hoe. He is assisted by four young nobles.

First temple and selection of prototypes Construction begins with a temple for Ārya palo. The king and Bodhisatva discuss the images for the building. A Chinese vermillion seller publicly announces that he is an expert image maker and is available for the work; the king decides that Indian and Chinese prototypes should not be followed. Rather, handsome young Tibetan courtiers should be used as models; the most handsome are duly selected and the work begins.

Temple consecration and marvellous events The shrine and its paintings and images are completed and the building is consecrated. In the evening a miraculous light shines from the top the shrine; the king orders a shrine of Amitābha be added to the top of the temple as a result. A feast to honour the Chinese vermillion seller is prepared but he has disappeared; it is concluded he was an emanation.

Prayer to Tārā Bodhisatva reminds king Khri Srong lde btsan that Tārā stimulated his first wish for enlightenment at the vajrāsana and that prayers should be made to her now as a consequence. After receiving instructions from the preceptor and while meditating in the temple of Ārya palo, Hayagriva is heard to neigh thrice.

Dbu rtse and the king’s dream The Dbu rtse is built where the site was examined (folio 15r). Khri Srong lde btsan wonders about its images; in a dream a guide takes the king to Khas po ri where he shows him rocks in the shape of Buddhas, Bodhisatvas and other figures. In the morning the king goes to the mountain and sees that the rocks approximately correspond. Stone masons from Nepal shape the images and they are transported on a horse-cart to the temple. The earth shakes as they reach the gate and are installed in the Dri gtsang khang. Four stūpa-s are built.

The blue stūpa and marvellous events For the blue stūpa, in the south direction, a cakra is made. It goes missing and is found installed on the stūpa. The carpenter responsible dreams that the cakra is installed by four men in gold chain-mail. When day breaks the four men are gone but one suit of gold chain-mail remains as the carpenter’s reward. The divination expert informs the king of these happenings; the four men are acknowledged to have been the four great kings and their likenesses are engraved on a vase.

Ye shes dbang po The Gtsug lag khang is completed; Gsas snang is given the name Ye shes dbang po with his ordination (compare folio 6r).

Indic language and new ordinations Sons of the ministers are taught the language of India but only Śākyaprabha (son of Mchims anu) and Vairocana (son of Pa’or Na ‘dod) and Lha bu (son of Zhang Nya bzang) and Bse btsan and Shud po Khong slebs become proficient. Rad na (son of Dba’ Rma gzigs) becomes proficient also and takes Rad na as his ordination name.

Consecration The temple is consecrated and one hundred people are ordained including Jo bo gcen khri rgyal and Sru btsan mon rgyal.

Reforms A proclamation is issued withdrawing the extreme punishments that were instituted by Khri Srong btsan (reported in folios 3r-3v above); the rule of dharma prevails. High and low agree to adhere to the new dispensation and charitable donations are made. Monks are assigned a standard allowance of barley each year.

Appointment of kalyāṇamitra Ye shes dbang po gains supernormal insight and the king appoints him kalyāṇamitra (succeeding Bodhisatva, folios 6r, 8r, 10r, 10v, and whose death is incidentally reported in folio 19v); protocols and council arrangements are changed.
Ye shes dbang po suggests that long term endowments be established to support the saṃgha rather than annual allotments (folio 17v). A debate ensues in court about the size of the endowments and Ye shes dbang po reflects on their political, agrarian and social implications.

In accord with Ye shes dbang po’s suggestion, two hundred servants are assigned to each monastery and three households (involved in agrarian production) are assigned to each monk.

Lands are selected for the endowments, but the monk Myang Ting nge ’dzin and others grumble about the arrangements; Ye shes dbang po reports this to the king and retreats to an isolated place for meditation.

In accord with Ye shes dbang po’s suggestion, two hundred servants are assigned to each monastery and three households (involved in agrarian production) are assigned to each monk.

Ye shes dbang po quotes a statement made by Bodhisatva before his death to the effect that in the final five hundred years of the dharma in Tibet, Buddhists will dispute amongst themselves (compare folio 14r) and when that happens, Kamalaśīla should be summoned from Nepal.

Kamalaśīla is summoned and preparations begin. The followers of the instantaneous path take the Prajñāpāramitā to the Bsam gtan gling and practice debate for two months. Ye shes dbang po provides an account of the gradualist position to king Khri Srong lde btsan who is convinced by it.

Sang shi’s reply

Kamalaśīla’s reply

Sang shi sets out the understanding of charitable giving, moral conduct, forbearance, diligence, one-pointed concentration and wisdom from the instantaneous perspective. He acknowledges that approaches vary but common ground is universally agreed, such as the striving for nirvāṇa.

Dpal dbyangs’s reply

Dpal dbyangs disagrees and amplifies criticisms of the instantaneous path, rejecting the validity of common terminology. He asks rhetorically which Buddha has attained Buddha-hood instantaneously, knowing full well that there is no scriptural warrant for it. He then describes the ten stages to supreme omniscience in detail; his discourse on the ten stages continues to folio 24v.

Ston mun pa defeated

The followers of the instantaneous path find themselves unable to refute the gradualists and accept defeat. The king rules that the instantaneous path shall not be followed.

Implementation

The king implements the recommendations of Ye shes dbang po and Bodhisatva and a translation school is established. An account is given of works translated: Sūtra and Abhidharma texts, but not Mahāyoga from the Tantra corpus. The Kriyā and Udāna are translated, so also the Dirghāgama and Abhidharmakośa. Teachers are appointed in every place and the nobility are encouraged to study the dharma.

End (1)

The core text here ends as follows: “Whereas the dharma could not be established during the reign of the five previous kings, the devaputra Khri Srong lde btsan, Ācārya Bodhisatva, Dba’ Ye shes dbang po and ‘Ba’ Sang shi—those four—established seats for the triple gem (and) the noble holy dharma was propagated widely in the region of Tibet.”

Death of Ye shes dbang po

Ye shes dbang po nears death and is attended by the king with a food offering. With his passing, Khri Srong lde btsan thinks that his life will end soon and he reflects on the fact that due to the fire at Nālandā only a portion of dharma texts could be retrieved from India; as a consequence he regrets that the complete canon in China was not translated.
**DBA’ BZHED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>folio</th>
<th>Summary of episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>End (2)</strong></td>
<td>25v</td>
<td>The text states “This is the end.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khri Gtsug lde btsan</td>
<td>25v</td>
<td>Text continues to the reign of Khri Gtsug lde btsan during whose time scholars come from India and further texts are translated; those translations made earlier are revised according to the new language system; 108 temples built and Vinaya rules tightened. Text states this is the end of the Dba’ bzhed; marginal note says “Edited.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End (3)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dba’ za Spyan ras gzigs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dba’ za Spyan ras gzigs, daughter of Ye shes dbang po (compare folio 5r) asks Jo mo Byang chub (see folio 19v) to build centres for dharma study; she builds stūpa-s; Indian tablets with writing appear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khri Lde srong btsan</td>
<td>25v</td>
<td>Khri Gtsug lde btsan dies and during the reign of Khri Lde Srong btsan the king dreams that Ācārya ‘Ba’ Rad na will translate the Shes rab ‘bum for the first time (compare folio 19v). It is offered to the king by Dba’ Mañju(śrī).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Death of ‘Ba’ Sang shi</strong></td>
<td>26r</td>
<td>‘Ba’ Sang shi dies and Tārā is heard weeping in the temple of ‘Gran bzangs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End (4)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Text ends once more (reflecting some of the content in folio 25r): “Thus it was that the dharma was first founded.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funeral rites of Khri Srong lde btsan</strong></td>
<td>26r</td>
<td>Text starts in a formal way with the death of Khri Srong lde btsan “in the Horse Year” and his funeral rites under his son Mu ne btsan po. Ministers in favour of Bon make arrangements, setting up a funeral tent in the Mtsho mo valley in Brag dmar; experts in Bon practice are summoned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dream of Mu ne btsan po</strong></td>
<td>26r</td>
<td>Mu ne btsan po has a dream in which his father Khri Srong lde btsan appears with Vairocana in the Akaṇiṣṭha realm with Vajrapāṇi and Mañjuśrī; he deems that the funeral rites cannot be conducted according to Bon. He orders a discussion so a common agreement can be reached.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vairocana and the assembly</strong></td>
<td>26v</td>
<td>Monks assemble and Vairocana is summoned from the kingdom of Tsha ba tsha shog. The two sides enter the chamber and jostle for seating positions around the king; Vairocana displays wrathful emanations in his beard to startle the Bon and they step away;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Btsan bzher legs gzigs states the Bon case</strong></td>
<td>27r</td>
<td>the Buddhists quickly occupy the right hand. Btsan bzher legs gzigs opens the discussion from the Bon side with an account of the wondrous regalia of the royal dynasty, how assemblies in ancient days were marked by magical happenings, how funeral practices were instituted in the time Lha tho tho ri snyan shal, and how the rites included funeral feasts and the construction of tombs at Ra ba thang. The king propitiated the tutelary deity Yar la sham po of awesome power and the kingdom, once small, is now much expanded, its statecraft exalted. The Bon priests are commendable in action and ideology while their rites for the transfer of dead souls are effective and beneficial; he warns that the Indian system should not be followed otherwise the long-standing Tibetan understanding between king and subject is certain to decline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vairocana replies</strong></td>
<td>28r</td>
<td>Vairocana appeals to the king as one who belongs to an august lineage of bodhisatva-s and, presenting himself as humble yet experienced, asks to submit a few key points informed by wider realities:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28v</td>
<td>the auspiciousness arising from the propitiation of Yar la sham po, the building of tombs and so forth is much exaggerated; Nālandā is far more auspicious. Steadfast adherence to the dharma gave Indian rulers and their teachers lifetimes that extended to 1500 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28r</td>
<td>Moreover, the lineages of Indian kings, such as Indrabhūti, were uninterrupted for fourteen generations and they benefitted from a Buddha-field where virtue ripened instantaneously. Vairocana then gives a description of the Dharmadhātu palace of Akaṇiṣṭha (see folio 26v) which is more wondrous and auspicious than anything Bon has to offer; the awesome power of Yar la sham po is also exaggerated because the four guardian kings in Akaṇiṣṭha are more so;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29v</td>
<td>Vairocana (the main Buddha in Bsam yas albeit not reported in the Dba’ bzhed) is skilled in means and controls all conditioned existence. Turning to ritual matters, Vairocana observes that the assertion that Bon practices are good is a further exaggeration; he cites examples of how kings propitiated cruel gods, supported Bon animal sacrifice and piled up sin to such an extent that they lost their kingdoms and seats of power.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Michael Willis, Tsering Gonkatsang

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>folio</th>
<th>Summary of episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vairocana concludes</td>
<td>30v</td>
<td>The funeral arrangements of Khri Srong lde btsan should thus be in accord with pure Buddhist practice: to do otherwise would be like putting a black blanket on a white horse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response and conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Btsan bzher legs gzigs responds with exasperation: he complains that the Buddhists are otherworldly and that their arguments are derived from thin air; he facetiously demands that monks attend the king, run the palace council and guard the border. When Vairocana retorts that monks will happily do so, the king is delighted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funeral rites</td>
<td>31r</td>
<td>Monks perform the funeral in accord with the DevaputraVimala Sūtra; a maṇḍala of Vajradhātu is made; a feast is offered; the Pratyārāmītā is recited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts translated and protagonists depart</td>
<td>31r</td>
<td>Texts are translated by Mu ne btsan po, Vairocana and G.yu sgra snying po; some are hidden away at Bsam yas in a black box. G.yu sgra departs for the Tsha ba country (for which folio 26v).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing summary</td>
<td>31v</td>
<td>Thereafter, funerals are performed according to the Buddhist system. In lieu of the supposed Bon custom of concealing wealth of the deceased as hidden treasure, masters of the dharma institute the ritual food offering.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and, in folio 26r, the spacing between the lines is wide and studied (see Figure 2.3). The definitive end to the sentence about ‘Ba’ Sang shi—marked in our illustration—shows that this was drawn from an outside source or is imitating a narrative in the grand manner: “Thus it was that the sad-dharma was first founded.”

The wording of this passage gives the impression that the scribe was drawing in material to forge a narrative bridge from the end of the Dba’ bzhed to the funeral of Khri Srong lde btsan. Further, the way it is written shows that this bridge was composed expressly for this copy of the manuscript. Once we get to the Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus, the scribe picks up the pace: the words are written without hesitation and he appears to be copying from his source with confidence (folio 26r:2 onward, see Figure 2.3). In addition, the author of this transitional section shows himself to know the contents of the earlier portion—what we call the Dba’ bzhed proper—and to know what was needed to form a viable narrative bridge to the Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus. The author has carried the narrative forward to the death of the key protagonists: Khri Srong lde btsan, Ācārya Bodhisatva (=Śāntarakṣita), Ye shes dbang po and 'Ba' Sang shi. Their deaths pave the way for the introduc-

dition of Vairocana and the funeral of Khri Srong lde btsan that is given in the Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus. Two conclusions may be drawn: (a) the Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus was copied from an exemplar that might be early, but the narrative bridge was written later to allow that text to be added in a way that harmonised with the Dba’ bzhed, and (b) the formation process around the Dba’ bzhed as a text—what might be added and what might be excluded—was still under development when the narrative bridge and this actual copy of the Dba’ bzhed was compiled. We will come to the dating problem below; for the moment, we turn to the multiple endings of the text and their chronological implications.

**Endings 1 and 2 (Figures 2.1 and 2.2)**

The way that the Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus has been added is indicative of how many Tibetan texts were compiled. In addition to colophons—sometimes giving the title and circumstances surrounding the copy—paragraphs or nota-

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9 We use Bodhisatva and bodhisatva throughout this chapter based on the spelling in the manuscript of the Dba’ bzhed; for wider dis-

tions were occasionally appended to include information that was deemed relevant. In subsequent copies, this additional material is often written in a continuous fashion, without breaks. This results in the appended materials being incorporated into the running text, effacing the historical layers. Evidence of the same process is found in several places in the Dba’ bzhed manuscript. Despite this, a reasonably close reading shows where the old endings fall, and thus how materials were added over time.10 In the case of the main text of the Dba’ bzhed, the first ending comes in folio 25r. This is shown in Table 2.1 and illustrated in Figure 2.1. The corresponding place in our Tibetan text and the translation may also be consulted. At this point, the Dba’ bzhed states the following: “Whereas the dharma could not be established during the reign of the five previous kings, the devaputra Khri Srong lde btsan, Ācārya Bodhisatva, Dba’ Ye shes dbang po, and ‘Ba’ Sang shi—those four—established seats for the triple gem (and) the noble holy dharma was propagated widely in the region of Tibet.”11

This summarises what has been recorded in the narrative overall and is the logical end of the story. There can be little doubt that this signals the end of the text proper. However, as can be seen from Figure 2.1, the text continues without a break in the way it is written. The writing style is uniform and continuous. The literary style, however, is at variance with what has come before. The story continues with a somewhat cryptic account of the death of Ye shes dbang po, followed by reflections on the part of Khri Srong lde btsan. This coda is then closed with punctuation marks and the statement rdzogs s+ho: “This is the end.” This is shown here in Figure 2.2 (line 1, with words marked). The main point here is that the lines from folio 25r to folio 25v—the sentences that describe the death of Ye shes dbang po and reflections of Khri Srong lde btsan—were added at a later date, i.e. they are newer than the narrative proper.

This newer portion (from folio 25r to folio 25v:1) contains some historical information that helps fix the date of the addition. In these lines, king Khri Srong lde btsan laments that his life will end soon and that, due to the fire at Nālandā, only a portion of the dharma could be translated. He further laments that the complete canon in China was not translated. These anachronistic remarks reflect the chronological horizon of canon formation in Song China, on one side, and the destruction of Nālandā, on the other.12 The fire at Nālandā referred to here is the great fire that destroyed the monastery sometime between 1197 and 1206.13 This is not going to be some sort of other fire—about which we have no historical record. The Dba’ bzhed has no close knowledge of day-to-day happenings in medieval Bihār, any more than other Tibetan historical works. Rather, it sees India from a distance and takes only major events into account. The chronological implication, therefore, is that this portion of the text was added after circa 1200 and that the earlier portions of the Dba’ bzhed—what we call the Dba’ bzhed proper—predate the early years of the thirteenth century. We will address shortly by just how much they predate it. For the moment, the main observation is that this additional portion of the text was

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10 Multiple endings have also been noted in the work of Nyang ral, see Daniel Hirshberg, Remembering the Lotus-Born Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet’s Golden Age (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2016), 141–75.


12 Jiang Wu and Lucille Chia, Spreading Buddha’s Word in East Asia: The Formation and Transformation of the Chinese Buddhist Canon (New York: Columbia, 2015), all of Part I is relevant, probably the best current overview in English.

13 Harmut Scharfe, Education in Ancient India (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 150.
being transmitted within the *Dba’ bzhed* proper by the early years of the thirteenth century. Moreover, this was already embedded in the exemplar on which the present manuscript was based.

**Endings 3 and 4 (Figures 2.2 and 2.4)**

As if two endings were not enough, further endings are found as we read on in folio 25v. As can be seen from Figure 2.2 (line 1 onward), the scribe has again continued his copying with a small break after the ending in the first line. The narrative continues to the reign of Khri Gtsug lde btsan and after the short summary of what was done for the *dharma* in his time, the texts states: “So ends the *Dba’ bzhed*—the account from the *Dba’* perspective—the text of the noble narrative of how the *dharma* of the Buddha came to the region of Tibet.” This is shown and marked in Figure 2.2. The text is actually named in this third ending. As the consistent writing style indicates, this sentence belonged to the exemplar on which our manuscript was based. This means that the name the *Dba’ bzhed* was attached to the main text from the time of the exemplar.

Folio 25v:3, rather than the title page, is the earliest internal evidence for the name in this manuscript. With the name *Dba’ bzhed* appearing in an added section—and after the part that belongs to *circa* 1200—it seems likely that this section is again somewhat later. Naturally, we should like to know the date. An external fix is provided by Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251). He refers to a *Dpa’ bzhed* or *Dba’ bzhed* and *’Ba’ bzhed*, as well as *Rgyal bzhed*.14 Barring later extrapolations, this points to the name being current in the first half of the thirteenth century. Bu ston (1290–1364) knows the title *Rba bzhed*,15 and that title appears in one of the oldest manuscript copies of the text, as noted in Chapter I.

The above evidence thus attests that the title *Dba’ bzhed* and its variants were in circulation during the first half of the thirteenth century.16 The passage containing the title in our manuscript was also in the exemplar on which the present copy was made. We know this because, after the third ending, the text gives a series of awkward transitions to the *Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus* and the scribe of these subsequent parts is different. To restate and summarise the matter another way: everything up to and including the third ending (“So ends the *Dba’ bzhed*” on folio 25v:3) was by the first scribe. Everything after was by the second scribe (see Figure 2.2). Of course, composition and copying are different things, and the copy before us may have drawn on old material. Based on his analysis of the *Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus* and its narrative connections with earlier texts, Dotson concluded that the *Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus* is no earlier “than the end of the intermediate period,” thus no earlier than the early eleventh century.17 However, our analysis of the first and second endings shows that the manuscript was copied out—with the *Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus* added—no earlier than the thirteenth century.


16 Older attestations may be found but are not known to us. Per K. Sørensen, *Buddhist Historiography: The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies—An Annotated Translation of the XIVth Century: rgyal-rabs gsal-ba’i me-long* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 10, n. 24 says that the work was earlier called the *Rgyal po’i* (or *Bsam yas*) *Bka’ gtsigs* (*chen mo*). The *Me tog snying po* borrows the final self-reference from the Sba bzhed zhabz btags ma (corresponding to SBA 1961.1–2, 91.10–92.1). However, this appears to be a later extrapolation inserted into Nyang ra’l’s core text and anyway does not actually use the title *Sba bzhed*. Thus, we are no further back in time for the title.

17 Dotson, “The Dead and Their Stories,” 69, 77.
To round off this part of our discussion, we turn to the fourth ending. It comes in the transition to the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus. As noted before, this appears in folio 26r:2 where the text reads: “Thus it was that the sad-dharma was first founded.” See Figure 2.3. This ties in with the first ending, where the contribution of Khri Srong Ide btsan, Ācārya Bodhisatva, Dba’ Ye shes dbang po and ‘Ba’ Sang shi are mentioned. The fourth ending recounts their deaths.

**Date(s) of the Dba’ bzhed Proper**

The discussion given above provides a platform for determining the date of the core text, the Dba’ bzhed proper. By this we mean the text before the material added in the supplements at the end. To state the essence of our conclusions thus far: the supplements give the terminus ante quem in that one of these mentions the fire at Nālandā, showing that the Dba’ bzhed proper must be earlier than circa 1200 CE. This is confirmed by the name or title Dba’ bzhed which appears in one of the supplements and also externally, in several variants, in the writing of Sa skya Paṇḍita and Bu ston.

While this pins down the core text to before 1200—a date that will not be controversial—the matter is complicated by the fact that subsequent writers have interpolated material into the Dba’ bzhed proper in a number of ways. This gives the Dba’ bzhed proper a chronological density that is often difficult to assess. As we shall see, this has some bearing on how we read, understand and use the text.

**The Kriyāsaṃgraha**

Textual links with the Kriyāsaṃgraha—a ritual text from Nepal describing the construction and consecration of religious buildings—confirms a chronological horizon in the 1200s. In this work, mention is made of the inauspicious items that might be encountered in a building site, such as bones, chaff, ashes and charcoal, iron, broken clay pots, pebbles and lead.18 In folios 15r-15v of the Dba’ bzhed we find a parallel. At this point in the narrative, the exploration of the site of Bsam yas is described and it is noted that “pebbles, bone, pot shards and the like were not found.” The king’s digging with a golden hoe and the subsequent discovery of barley and rice also find parallels in the Kriyāsaṃgraha, which recounts how the earth should be turned with a golden plough and the ground ritually struck.19

It is not surprising that these parallels should be found in the Dba’ bzhed, because the text itself reports that a divination expert came from Nepal to examine the site of Bsam yas (see folio 14v). According to Tadeusz Skorupski, the oldest manuscript of the Kriyāsaṃgraha is dated to 1277 and a translation into Tibetan was made in the same century. This presents a chronological problem because the supplementary endings of the Dba’ bzhed show that the core narrative was already in place by circa 1200. There are two possible explanations. The first is that the Dba’ bzhed was influenced by the milieu of the Kriyāsaṃgraha rather than directly by it, and thus drew on materials that were available in the early 1200s if not before. This position can be supported by the fact that the Kriyāsaṃgraha is an anthology and that the individual rituals were neces-

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18 Tadeusz Skorupski, Kriyāsaṃgraha: Compendium of Buddhist Rituals: An Abridged Version (Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2002), 31. The parallels with the Kriyāsaṃgraha noted first in Willis, “From World Religion to World Dominion,” but here the implications are reassessed.

19 Skorupski, Kriyāsaṃgraha, 38–39. Michael Walter, Buddhism and Empire: The Political and Religious Culture of Early Tibet (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 186–89 for a wider context, albeit anachronistic in many places. Note Walter, Buddhism and Empire,” 243: Tibetan sa zhag refers to a pliable grey clay used to fashion the faces of the images.
sarily well established before they were assembled in the collection.

However, such an interpretation, namely of indirect influence in the early 1200s, is based on the working assumption that the Dba’ bzhi
d proper is a single unit, undisturbed by redaction. This is unlikely. When we look at the notations added to the manuscript of the Dba’ bzhi, it is clear that readers had no qualms about adding comments and making corrections. There can be little doubt that earlier readers did the same, and that these earlier additions are now submerged in the running text. We will return to this below in our discussion of Nyang ral and note further instances in the folio-by-folio discussion that appears later in this chapter. For the moment, we need only note that the paragraph describing the ritual digging of the site in folios 15r-15v can be read as extraneous to the general thread of the narrative. As can be seen from our text and translation, this part of the story comes in the middle of a series of choppy transitions. One could skip easily from the king and his retinue inspecting the temple site from the hilltop (folio 15r) to the construction of the first shrine (folio 15v) without the narrative substance of the Dba’ bzhi being affected. Thus, actual sources, rather than supposed antecedents for which there is no evidence, show that the portion mentioning what was uncovered while turning over the soil at the temple site was inserted into the Dba’ bzhi at a time when the Kriyāsaṃgraha was available in Tibetan, i.e. in the second half of the thirteenth century. This may not be what we would like: a neat distinction between the supplements and the text proper. In terms of chronology, the parallels in the Kriyāsaṃgraha actually tell us nothing about the dates of the earlier parts of the Dba’ bzhi, except that they are before the second half of the thirteenth century, a dating already known from the evidence set out above.

Dharmasvāmin

The supposition that material was inserted into the Dba’ bzhi proper during the thirteenth century is supported by a short episode that appears shortly after the consecration of Bsam yas. At this juncture, Sāntarakṣita takes the opportunity to tell Khri Srong lde btsan that the goddess Tārā stimulated his first wish for enlightenment in a former life, just as Tārā instigated the turning of the wheel of dharma when the Buddha tarried at the vajrāsana (folio 16r). This is a manifest insertion, inconceivable before the thirteenth century in that it draws on Dharmasvāmin’s account of a miraculous Tārā at Bodh-
gayā.20 The known facts that Dharmasvāmin travelled to India in the 1230s, and died in 1264, points to this material entering the Dba’ bzhi in the middle of thirteenth century.21

Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus

The interface between the Dba’ bzhi proper and the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus corroborates the chronology established to this point. As noted above in our opening remarks about the organisation of the text, the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus was not simply appended to the Dba’ bzhi in a random way, but was in narrative dialogue with it.22 The chronologically significant point here is that, if the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus was in dialogue with the Dba’ bzhi, the Dba’ bzhi must have existed when the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus was added. Dotson’s conclusion, outlined earlier in our discussion of the organisation of our text, is that the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus can be no older than the early eleventh century. This is the earliest possible date for the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus and thus for the Dba’ bzhi.

A more precise dating can be offered in the light of our codicological observations, also given before. To repeat: the scribe who added the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus was responsible for composing the narrative bridge, i.e. what we see in our manuscript was composed at the same time that the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus was added, and the text in the Dba’ bzhi is the prime copy (and indeed only copy) of the bridging sentences and the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus itself. Now, the Kriyāsaṃgraha and Dharmasvāmin’s account of Tārā in the running text, coupled with the multiple endings added to the Dba’ bzhi proper, tells us that additions were being made in the thirteenth century. In terms of our main concern—dating the Dba’ bzhi—the only thing that really matters is when the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus and the narrative bridge were added. Because the narrative bridge was written to interface the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus with the Dba’ bzhi in the form it had in about 1250, the Dba’ bzhi necessarily existed at that time. This

22 See the section above called ‘General organisation: Two Texts.’ We have drawn on and extended the idea of ‘narrative dialogue’ based on Dotson, “The Dead and Their Stories,” 78.
may seem a disappointing result of the above investigation, but the evidence of the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* carries us no further.

**Nyang ral**

The author, Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer (1124–c.1192), knew elements of the *Testimony of Ba* and quotes or paraphrases it in his writing. In our earlier work, we used these connections to date the *Dba’ bzhd* between *circa* 1000 and 1100.\(^{23}\) However, since we published those observations in 2013, the study of Nyang ral has progressed substantially and this requires a reappraisal of the evidence. Indeed, we shall see below that our earlier conclusion about the date is overturned by the new research. The key monograph is *Remembering the Lotus-Born* by Daniel Hirshberg.\(^{24}\) This book argues that Nyang ral used the biography of Padmasambhava to elaborate his identity as an enlightened personality and key player in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. Hirshberg’s thinking developed concurrently and in dialogue with that of Lewis Doney. The latter’s work has appeared in a series of publications that provide analyses of the literary output of Nyang ral and how his work was transmitted in the Tibetan tradition. The most useful for our purposes is Doney’s examination of the relationship between Nyang ral and the *Dba’ bzhed* and its sister texts.\(^{25}\) Also relevant is Doney’s study of the earliest recensions of the *Zangs gling ma*, Padmasambhava’s biography by Nyang ral.\(^{26}\) Developing his interest in problems of religion and polity, Doney published a study of *bodhisatva*-kingship and an exploration of the role played by the king’s preceptor.\(^{27}\) All these works will be used here for the chronological and inter-textual evidence they provide.

Striking differences exist between the *Zangs gling ma* and the *Dba’ bzhed* in their description of the events and personalities of the Tibetan imperial period—as scholars interested in this subject have long been aware.\(^{28}\) In the *Zangs gling ma*, Padmasambhava comes to Tibet to control evil forces and participate in the building and consecration of the temple at Bsam yas. He bestows Tantric teachings on Khri Srong lde btsan and leaves Tibet only after the king’s death.\(^{29}\) This course of events is at variance with the *Dba’ bzhed* and its sister versions. As can be seen from our translation—and the chart outlining the narrative (Table 2.1)—the *Dba’ bzhed* has Padmasambhava sent back to India after some of the ministers become suspicious and the king, yielding to political pressure, agrees that Padmasambhava should return. The temple at Bsam yas is finished after Padmasambhava leaves and *Dba’ Gsas* snang takes the lead in religious matters. He attains supernormal insight and assumes the ordination name Ye shes dbang po, becoming the king’s preceptor (*kalyāṇamitra*) and the guiding force in the organisation of endowments for Buddhist institutions and other protocols.\(^{30}\) These differences have a number of literary and historical implications, but for the moment our focus is chronology. We want to know whether Nyang ral can be used to date the *Dba’ bzhed*.

Shared motifs and stories might be one way to determine a chronological relationship. Yet, it is difficult to determine if one text is based on another or if both draw on common sources. The only way to decide if there is a dependent relationship is to trace direct borrowings. Examples of such borrowings are found in the closing portion of the *Zangs gling ma* as it appears within the *Chos ’byung Me tog snying po*, the larger religious history of Tibet written by Nyang ral. Doney and Hirshberg have discussed how phrases from the appendicised *Testimony of Ba* were interwoven with the text of the *Me tog snying po*.\(^{31}\) In this passage, the portions in bold come from the *Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma*.\(^{32}\)

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29 See Doney, *The Zangs gling ma*.
30 See Table 2.1 for the place of these events in the narrative, and Doney, “Narrative Transformations,” for the role of *kalyāṇamitra*.
32 This passage is translated by Hirshberg, *Remembering the Lotus-Born*, 171. For the present purpose, Lewis Doney has provided a re-translation. Flemming Faber, “The Council of Tibet according to the *Sba bzhed*,” *Acta Orientalia* 47 (1986): 44 pointed to elements where Nyang ral appeared to draw on the *Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma*, i.e. SBA 1961.1–2, but at the time he was writing the complexities surrounding the transmission and redaction of Nyang ral’s work were not well understood.
Although many variant chronicles of the history of Buddhism have appeared, and some disparage them, some wish for them, some summarise them, some split them up, and some take them to be contrived, this history is free from impurities and is genuine, well understood and well written, well taught and artfully constructed. What has been compiled by ordinary people can be mistaken. Genuine textual traditions are exceedingly difficult. If something is present in all the oral instructions, who among the scholars has fabricated it? Do not give it to others, but keep the text in mind and teach it. Having been written, when held in a [suitable] vessel, it is a jewel treasury. All noble people by necessity must keep it in mind! [This is] the detailed appended text of the proclamation.

This borrowing comes in a section that Hirshberg has called the “fourth coda.” He regards this as the last addition and not the work of Nyang ral himself. As he says with precision and elegance: “... while the addendum now appears as single unit ... it is, in fact, composed of at least five parts accumulated over at least four redactions by at least four redactors, which is evidenced by its four distinct colophons, each with a variant compound of Nyangrel’s name. Like waves lapping at the shore in a rising tide, each colophon represents a high-water mark left by a distinct wave of redaction before it receded behind another.”33 And indeed, it appears indisputable that the portions at the end of the Me tog snying po were inserted by the followers of Nyang ral sometime after his death, i.e. sometime after 1192. In terms of dating, Hirshberg notes that some of the individuals involved were contemporaries of Nyang ral, notably Zhig po bdud rtsi (1141–1199) and ‘Jig rten mgon po Rin chen dpal (1143–1217).34 At the very least, the first colophons show redaction in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. However, the redactor who has drawn on the Sba’ bzhed zhabs btags ma for the fourth colophon comes at the end of the process and was probably active in the first decades of the thirteenth century. As a working hypothesis, the work can be attributed to the next generation of Nyang ral’s followers and assigned to circa 1225.

This evidence means that the Sba’ bzhed zhabs btags ma was available for reference and quotation in the first decades of the thirteenth century, a date that coincides with the evidence we have adduced for additions to, and interventions in, the Dba’ bzhed. The Sba’ bzhed zhabs btags ma is not, of course, the oldest form of the narrative—as explained here in Chapter 1—so the Dba’ bzhed proper is necessarily earlier in time. Just how much earlier than circa 1225 is a matter of opinion and the chronological conclusions reached thus far do not help directly. At the risk of testing our reader’s patience, we summarise the evidence: (a) the sequence of colophons added to the Dba’ bzhed date after the Nālandā fire, so after circa 1200, (b) the Kriyāsaṃgraha points to material being inserted into the Dba’ bzhed proper in the second half of the 1200s, (c) the account of a miraculous Tārā image appears to come from Dharmasvāmin (d. 1264), so was inserted in circa 1250 or somewhat later, (d) the Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus, itself not before the early eleventh century but more likely of the 1100s, was added to the Dba’ bzhed no earlier than the late 1200s. The Dba’ bzhed proper is older than all these additions. The writing of Nyang ral, as redacted, shows that the Sba’ bzhed existed in circa 1225. In terms of date, therefore, the evidence from Nyang ral carries us no further. All that can be said for certain on this evidence is that Dba’ bzhed proper predates circa 1200. The question arises: Can we squeeze anything further from the evidence? While this question has to be answered, most probably, in the negative, in the following section, we propose to examine the narrative relationship between Nyang ral and the Dba’ bzhed in an effort to probe the lower chronology and—more generally—explore the wider agendas of history writing in medieval Tibet.

### Reading Nyang ral against the Dba’ bzhed

The relationship between Nyang ral and the Dba’ bzhed—and the date of the latter—can be understood from an overview of the competing nature of the two narratives. We start with Nyang ral. His work belongs to a turbulent period when different families and individuals were making claims to religious and political authority.35 As a descendent in the Myang clan, Nyang ral belonged to an ancient and noble lineage, one long associated with Buddhism (as mentioned in the Dba’ bzhed, e.g. folio 14v, 15r). However, Nyang ral offers not only a different history than the Dba’ bzhed—in terms of the sequence of events and Padmasambhava’s place in them—but a different vision of himself as an author and historical actor. In his representation, as touched on before, Padmasambhava comes to Tibet and initiates Khri Srong lde btsan in the ways of Tantra. He then conceals the guidebooks to these practices as hidden text treasures (gter ma). In a dramatic

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33 Hirshberg, Remembering the Lotus-Born, 174.
34 Hirshberg, Remembering the Lotus-Born, 162–172, all of which is relevant.
35 For the context in this paragraph we draw on Doney, The Zangs gling ma, 8–10.
narrative twist, Nyang ral inserts himself into the story as a reincarnation of Khri Srong lde btsan. As the king’s reincarnation—and so the direct recipient of Tantric initiations three centuries before—Nyang ral recovers the gter ma composed by his master in the eighth century. By effectually bending time through a series of pre-incarnations—what Hirshberg aptly describes as catenations—Nyang ral links himself to the establishment of Bsam yas and the imperial past. In fact, this is an understatement of Nyang ral’s position: he is not simply linked to the imperial past, he is the imperial past pure and simple—a living witness to Padmasambhava, the introduction of Tantra and the building of the great temple. The boldness of this claim is astonishing, if somewhat surreal to modern eyes.

The historical vision of Nyang ral stands against the Dba’ bzhd. Our text has little place for Padmasambhava and seeks to discount his importance. When we look at the organisational structure of the Dba’ bzhd (see, again, Table 2.1), the entire Padmasambhava episode could have been dropped: his presence in Tibet has no lasting impact—aside from subduing a few malevolent deities. The narrative could have run easily from the mission of Dba’ Gsas snang in China and the summoning of Śāntarakṣita to the defeat of Bon in debate and the foundation of Bsam yas. Why, then, does the Dba’ bzhd bother with recounting the activities of Padmasambhava if there is no enduring place for him? The reason is that the writers who assembled the Dba’ bzhd could not ignore him. As we know from documents found at Dunhuang, Padmasambhava was already remembered as a significant figure in the religious landscape of the dynastic period by the late tenth century. If the vision of history set out in the Dba’ bzhd was to have authority—and determine how historical precedent was to be used to guide the present—it had to find a place for Padmasambhava, appropriately acknowledging his powers, yet relegating him to a place beneath the institutions and ordination lineages set in place by Śāntarakṣita and Dba’ Gsas snang.

Re-reading the Padmasambhava sections of the Dba’ bzhd with this in mind, we note that the text does not involve Padmasambhava on the site of Bsam yas or the defeat of the anti-Buddhist deities there. Rather, Śāntarakṣita and Padmasambhava recommend that a divination expert from Nepal supervise the temple construction—a suggestion to which the king immediately agrees (folio 12r). Padmasambhava’s performance of the divination ritual of the four great kings, used to subdue evil forces, is contextualised by Śāntarakṣita as a rite of state protection following precedents set in China (folio 11v). The text does not change the location of events from the royal palace and it is there that the divination is performed, duly witnessed by the court chamberlain (folio 12r). The Dba’ bzhd thereby distances Padmasambhava from the site of Bsam yas.

Later in the story, Padmasambhava castigates the king for his narrow-minded attitude, sneers at the petty politics of the Tibetan court and makes derisory remarks about the king’s gift of gold to him (folio 13v). From the late-twelth century onwards, this could be read as a veiled criticism of Nyang ral—he is, after all, none other than Khri Srong lde btsan incarnate. The criticisms come directly from the mouth of his own master and rightly so: in violation of all teacher-student protocol, the king has the temerity to say that his master should return home to India. This encounter can be usefully contrasted with the deferential exchange between Dba’ Gsas snang and Śāntarakṣita, when they first meet (folios 5v-6r). There the master-disciple relationship is a glowing picture of things as they should be.

Subsequent interactions between Khri Srong lde btsan and Dba’ Gsas snang (who by this time has taken the name Ye shes dbang po, folio 17r) could be read as criticisms of Nyang ral also. Later in the story, the king is depicted as a hopeless character, unable to control the squabbling Buddhist monks (folio 18v-19r). With no idea what to do, he sends a desperate message to Ye shes dbang po who has gone into retreat for meditation: “Here all the monks are in conflict due to opposing (views). What should be done?” (folio 19r). When Ye shes dbang po refuses to budge, the king resorts to threats of violence: the hapless courtier Gnon Kham pa is told to go and fetch Ye shes dbang po; his certain death awaits if he fails. Out of compassion, Ye shes dbang po agrees to come, and so saves the poor man’s life, but he does not hide his displeasure (folio 19r). He bluntly tells Khri Srong lde btsan that he should not have been disturbed over such a trivial matter, and that the disruption of his meditation will impact the king’s life span and the stability of the dharma in Tibet. He then recommends that Kamalaśīla—Śāntarakṣita’s disciple—be summoned from Nepal so that doctrinal differences can be judged in the Bsam yas Debate (folio 19v). This representation of events lays the source of the whole problem on the doorstep of the king—and so Nyang ral—and places the solution neatly

36 Perspectives on the Padmasambhava episode vary and the literature is extensive: Matthew T. Kapstein, Gray Tuttle, and Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Sources of Tibetan Tradition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer, Early Tibetan Documents on Phur Pa from Dunhuang (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008); Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba’ bzhd, 13–14.
37 See Doney, “Narrative Transformations,” 315.
Much of the cross-referencing in the *Dbpa’ bzhed* may be hard to detect and we can claim to have tracked only the most basic and obvious links. Like every classic, the *Dbpa’ bzhed* yields new meanings with each reading and like every classic it has inspired discussion through the centuries. What emerges is a work that is informed by the religious currents of the time, a text that was constituted in the dynamic world of medieval Tibet. The histories of the post-dynastic age are grappling with events long past, but they are not arguing about the basic facts—the temple at Bsam yas, King Khri Srong lde btsan, Padmasambhava and so forth. Rather, the issue is how these facts might be sequenced and interpreted, and how individuals and institutions might position themselves against the facts in a compelling way. If we accept that there is a narrative dialogue between the *Dbpa’ bzhed* and Nyang ral with regard to these matters, this has implications regarding the date of the *Dbpa’ bzhed*.

As noted in the previous section, based on the citation of the *Sba’ bzhed zhab btags ma* in circa 1225, the *Dbpa’ bzhed* proper dates before this time. With Nyang ral born in 1124, the core of the *Dbpa’ bzhed* proper—if it is understood as responding in part to Nyang ral as a charismatic leader—should have been assembled when Nyang ral was emerging as a powerful religious figure in the mid-twelfth century.\(^{41}\) Our view is that the *Dbpa’ bzhed* took shape rapidly at this time. The *Dbpa’ bzhed* is not a text that evolved slowly, with accretions added here and there as the decades slowly passed. Rather, it is a text that formed quickly to meet the challenges facing those vying for the possession of Bsam yas in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The cluster of chronological evidence for the *Dbpa’ bzhed* points in this direction: the colophons added just after circa 1200, *Kriyāsāmgraha* material inserted in the late 1200s, the account of the miraculous Tārā inserted after circa 1250, the *Zas gtag kyi lo rgyus* appended toward the end of the 1200s. The *Me tog snying po* history, as redacted, then quotes the *Sba’ bzhed zhab btags ma* in circa 1225. There cannot be much distance between circa 1200 and *Dbpa’ bzhed* proper because the additions point to a flurry of text activity in the thirteenth century. And the fabric of the *Dbpa’ bzhed* itself gives the

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38 See the section above on Dharmasvāmin.


40 For example, in folio 16r, after Khri Srong lde btsan receives instructions in the worship of Tārā and is meditating in the Ārya Palö shrine, “the inner courtiers and temple guards actually heard Ārya Hayagriva neigh three times.” The vignette confirms the king’s religious direction because Hayagriva is an esoteric form of Padmasambhava and that deity empowers Padmasambhava in later redactions of the *Zangs gling ma*. The simple point here is that the worship of Tārā by the king (and by extension Nyang ral) is shown to be confirmed by Padmasambhava. See Doney, “Nyang ral Nyi ma ‘od zer,” 13; Doney, “Narrative Transformations,” 318.

41 Hirshberg, *Remembering the Lotus-Born*, 52 gives an outline of his life, noting that he received empowerments at the age of 13 (thus about 1137); two decades later he was probably at the height of his influence. Hagioographies often make their figures child prodigies, but a sceptical view leads us to temper the biographic representation, not dismiss it.
impression of text compiled in haste, with awkward juxtapositions, disjointed transitions and contradictions that are only seldom resolved. There is even uncertainty hovering over what to include and what to reject in the text proper, a point that is made especially clear in the case of the long insertion in a minute hand on folio 17r, discussed below in our folio-by-folio analysis. The rapid compilation of the Dba’ bzhed from circa 1150 would help account for the other recensions of the Testimony of Ba, each seeking to expand or improve the narrative. The relationship between these many versions is not clear, but it is certain that there were a substantial number of them and that more copies of the recensions are likely to be found with the passage of time. An especially poignant indicator of the number and complexity of versions is the fact that the Dba’ bzhed recension itself has no extant textual descendants.

Older Elements from the Dunhuang Fragment and Mādhyamika Philosophy

The information given in the foregoing sections show that the Dba’ bzhed existed in the late thirteenth century and—if our further observations are accepted—that it was compiled rapidly from circa 1150. Yet, somehow, it seems much older, or presents itself as much older. As Louis Renou famously remarked: “Everything is much older and much newer than it seems.” This is especially so in a text that attempts to map key moments from centuries before and draws on pre-existing texts to constitute its narrative. With many texts, there is a tendency among scholars to expect a long process of textual development behind the earliest version. Outside the Tibetan field, a good example is The Book of Enoch, an ancient Jewish work known only through secondary references in medieval sources for many centuries. In the 1700s, the first manuscripts were found—Ge’ez translations in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian manuscripts do not pre-date the seventeenth century, but a papyrus folio of Enoch, found in the nineteenth century and now in the Chester Beatty Library, belongs to the fourth century CE. This is impressively early, but the situation was transformed in 1948 when Aramaic fragments were discovered in the caves at Qumran. These pushed back the manuscript history of Enoch to the first century BCE.

What Qumran is for The Book of Enoch, the famous ‘library cave’ at Dunhuang is for the Dba’ bzhed. Among the manuscripts found at Dunhuang is a fragment reproduced and discussed in Chapter 3 of this volume by Sam van Schaik. The physical manuscript fragment cannot be later than circa 1000, since it had been re-used by the time that the cave was closed in the early 1000s. Given that the text on that fragment is close to what is found in the Dba’ bzhed, the fragment suggests that the Dba’ bzhed narrative, or its prototype, predates circa 1000. It is also important to remember that the Dunhuang fragment was out of reach for centuries, sealed in a cave until modern times. With the parent manuscript destroyed long ago, the certain conclusion is that there were other copies of the same text in circulation and that one these copies (or a fragment of it) informed the exemplar on which the Dba’ bzhed was based in the twelfth century. However, before we proceed with the implications of these facts, we are obliged to ask what we mean by the Dba’ bzhed. To put the matter in a more precise way, what is the purpose of the Dba’ bzhed as it stands in the manuscript presented in this volume and in the other versions of the Testimony of Ba?

While the scope of the original Dunhuang text is unknown to us, Śāntarakṣita’s existence is verified externally by Dunhuang documents (see, again, Chapter 3). It is not surprising to find other accounts of his arrival in Tibet in the genres of literature that are found at Dunhuang. What makes the fragment notable is the close correspondence of its wording to the Dba’ bzhed (folios 7r-7v). This shows that a copy of the Śāntarakṣita narrative was available and incorporated as a vignette within the Dba’ bzhed (and Testimony of Ba tradition). However, the Śāntarakṣita narrative cannot be construed necessarily as an early form of the Dba’ bzhed because it does not document Dba’ Gsas snang—or any other member of his family—as a protagonist. The Śāntarakṣita episode was certainly taken into the Dba’ bzhed, but it was redacted in the process. This is shown by the wording: the repeated assertion that three men went to interview Śāntarakṣita—said thrice in many lines—reveals a level of insistence that immediately prompts us to doubt the testimony: “The lady doth protest too much methinks.” RBA 2011.1—discussed in Chapter 1, above, and itself redacted but preserving a more archaic version of the story—gives a different account of the individuals present at this key historical event: it

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says that the initial encounter with Śāntarakṣita involved Rgyal Sbrang legs gzigs and Gnyer bskyum pa.⁴５ The team increases to three a little later in the story, among them 'Ba' Sang shi, as in the Dba’ bzhed. This shows that there were disagreements about the people who were present at the investigation of Śāntarakṣita, even among manuscripts of the same date. The repeated insistence in the Dba’ bzhed on three people was made against texts that stated otherwise. However, no matter how we read the relative relationship of the Dba’ bzhed to other versions of this event, they do not change the fundamental nature of the evidence from Dunhuang: the fragment simply does not document the presence of the Dba’ family. It cannot, therefore, be regarded as part of the text we now call the Dba’ bzhed without corroborating evidence. To us, the only thing that the Dunhuang fragment shows is that earlier post-dynastic materials were available to the compilers the Dba’ bzhed.

Another old motif within the Dba’ bzhed is found in folio 22v, where Sang shi discusses doctrinal issues as part of the great debate. The nature of the text in this and adjacent folios is discussed in Chapter 6. From the chronological point of view, the only matter of concern is the fact that Sang shi refers to the three schools of Mādhyamika. These three schools find first mention in the work Pa tshab Nyi ma grags (circa 1055–1145).⁴⁶ This portion of the text is thus an anachronism and cannot predate the first half of the eleventh century. This is the earliest possible date; it could have been added subsequently. The date of the incorporation could perhaps be traced from the circulation and citation of the work of Pa tshab Nyi ma grags.⁴⁷ In our discussion of Nyang ral (given above) we argued that the evidence suggests that the Dba’ bzhed took shape around 1150. The mention of the three schools in Sang shi’s speech thus seems to represent developments that were emerging in Tibetan thinking in the second half of the eleventh century. The reference to the three schools is accordingly part of the oldest materials assembled in the Dba’ bzhed.

### Compilation, Notation, Redaction

The discussion so far has helped frame the textual processes taking place in the Dba’ bzhed and the ways in which source materials were redacted as they were pulled into its narrative. The folio-by-folio notes given below provide specific examples as well as further observations. The ways in which primary sources were used shows how the authors and redactors of the Dba’ bzhed drew conclusions from the evidence before them that accorded with their readings, their world views and their historical ambitions. The history of the imperial age in Tibet is not a set piece: from the eleventh century to the present, different narratives of the Yarlung past have existed side-by-side and in dialogue. This is because medieval religious histories, including the Dba’ bzhed, have a purpose. They are concerned, at their heart, with describing the individuals, institutions, texts, and ritual practices in which the dharma properly resides. This is a key point. Historical narratives are used to name the legitimate dharma-holders who merit the trust and support of the faithful and exclude those who are not. With regard to some, such as the followers of the instantaneous path and Bon, one side may have sought to show themselves perfectly right and the other side hopelessly wrong. Yet, within the closer community and religious fold, the texts have a nuanced rhetorical and hierarchical relationship in which each side seeks to absorb, surpass and subordinate the other.

As the composition and redaction of the texts continued, an important part of the process was the understanding that writers had of themselves as authors and commentators. If we look at the pages of the Dba’ bzhed manuscript we see this seemingly abstract idea in action before our very eyes: individuals have not just read the text, they have picked up their pens and inserted corrections and explanations. They have done this because they knew that they had valid points to make: in essence, they knew they were right. There is simply no other reason for the notations we see in the manuscript. This means that the text was fluid, and that its transmission involved alteration, correction and supplementation. One of the clearest statements of this in mainstream Buddhist literature is found in the Milindaapañha, from the early centuries of the Common Era, where the protagonist Nāgasena outlines his vision of textual sources and his relationship to them.⁴⁸

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⁴⁶ Ruegg, Buddha-Nature, 80 and Chapter 5.


⁴⁸ V. Trenckner, The Milindapañha: Being Dialogues Between King Milinda and the Buddhist Sage Nāgasena (Oxford: Pali Text Society,
As sire, all the water that has rained down on the low-lying and elevated, the even and uneven, and the swampy and dry parts of a district, on flowing away from there collects together in the ocean of great waters—even so, sire, if there be a recipient, whatever are the sayings on the Nine-limbed word of the Buddha that relate to submissive habits, to the practice and to the noble limbs of the special qualities of asceticism, all will be collected together here. Illustrations for the reasons out of my wide experience and discernment will be collected here also, sire, and by means of them the meaning will be well analyzed, ornamented (vicitta, saviccitta), filled out (paripuñña), and completed (samānīta or purita samattita). As, sire, a skilled teacher of writing, on showing some writing if he is requested to do so, fills out the writing with illustrations for the reasons out of his own experience and discernment, so that that writing will become finished and accomplished and perfect (anānīka), even so, illustrations for the reason out of my wide experience and discernment will be collected together here also, and by means of them, the meaning will become well analyzed, ornamented, filled out, quite pure, and completed.

This passage in the Milindapañha is essential for cultural historians who seek to understand the evolving place of a text in a Buddhist society. To return to our archaeological analogy: there is no essential core behind the accretions, extrapolations and representations. A habitation site is an accumulation of many layers, built up over time. Each layer is simply one in the sequence. A controlled excavation involves a recognition and description of the sequence, not judgements about what is good or bad.

In a similar way, our approach does not deny the validity of text-critical methods or stemmatics. It hardly needs saying that texts are related to other texts and that the differences have chronological implications. Thus here we have sought to show how the Dba’ bzhed evolved with time and in relation to other works. We set out this thinking—perhaps somewhat basic in theoretical terms—because it determines how we should assess and use the Dba’ bzhed and its sister versions. In the remaining parts of this chapter, we make a number of observations on the text and draw conclusions that seem relevant with this position in mind. Given that the assessment of the Dba’ bzhed, its notations and its sister versions is still in its infancy, hopefully this will open new avenues of analysis for the future.

Observations

Folio 1r

The first folio carries the title and a subsequent library notation. A similar notation appears on the first folio of the RBA 2011.1, discussed in Chapter 1. These notations suggest that both manuscripts were held in the Gnas bcu lha khang, located on the second floor of the main assembly hall within the ’Bras spungs monastery, but were collected, perhaps before the eighteenth century, from libraries outside (phyi) ’Bras spungs.

Folio 1v

The first page of proper text displays notations and erasures that are indicative of what we encounter throughout the rest of the manuscript. The first page of the scribe’s exemplar was evidently in a poor state and the person who wrote the manuscript before us faced problems making sense of his source and what he should write. Notably, in line 5, there is a space in the running text. Although no words are missing, some letters have been scrubbed out, leaving a smudge; no text is written in the space. This may be simply a badly corrected mistake, yet it seems more likely that the source manuscript was damaged and that the scribe anticipated the wording incorrectly.

The opening page provides a synopsis of the work as a whole with an abbreviated account of the dharma kings: 1) Lha Tho do re snyan btsan, in whose time texts were first found, 2) Khri Srong btsan, in whose time traditions were instituted for practising the dharma, 3) Khri Srong lde btsan, in whose time the dharma was propagated, and 4) Khri Gtsug lde btsan, in whose time the dharma was codified fully.

When we turn to related versions of the Testimony of Ba, the enumeration is different. In RBA 2011.1—an old

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49 Throughout this section, readers are referred to the archived version of the Dba’ bzhed manuscript with each folio and line numbered: Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3359902.


51 These observations drawn from Cécile Ducher, “A Lineage in Time: The Vicissitudes of the rNgbog pa bkra’ byrgud from the 11th through 19th Centuries” (Thèse de doctorat, l’Université de recherche Paris Sciences et Lettres, 2017), 41–45, for which reference I am grateful to Lewis Doney.
copy of about the same date as the manuscript under study—an earlier king is inserted at the start: Khri Thog je thog btsan. In his time, we are told, cymbals sounded from the realm of the gods, presaging the coming of the dharma. The next king, Lha Tho do re snyan btsan, is denied the epithet lha and is called simply Tho re snyan btsan, while Khri Srong btsan is given the epithet sgam po (‘the profound’). This reveals something of the nature of RBA 2011.1, in that those who copied and redacted the text felt compelled to name the king with his post-dynastic title, rather than allowing the story to explain how Khri Srong btsan acquired the name sgam po (as in the Dba’ bzhed).

Line 6: The position of the Dba’ bzhed against other versions is also shown by the notation khri btsun added below line 6. This is an epithet of the Nepalese queen known as Bal mo bza’ or Bhṛkuṭī. The point here is that the person who compiled the Dba’ bzhed did not have any further particulars of the queen in the exemplar, so this was supplied subsequently when the epithet khri btsun was known and used. In RBA 2011.1, we find that the detail about the queen is not yet added. This means that the absence of an epithet for the queen in the Dba’ bzhed is not an incidental or idiosyncratic omission and that, at the earliest level of this historical tradition, the queen was known simply as Bal rje’i bu mo.

Also of note, the following sentence in line 6 is absent in RBA 2011.1: “Furthermore, the temples of the four administrative divisions were constructed at the king’s behest.” The word gzhan yang in the Dba’ bzhed shows that this is a supplement and that RBA 2011.1 preserves an earlier version of the text that did not contain this statement. The notation to line 6 in the Dba’ bzhed then raises the number of temples to forty-two. The literature on this point is given by Wangdu and Diemberger, who note that the Ma ni bka’ bum knows a scheme of twelve temples. This heterogeneous collection of ‘treasure texts’ was found by Grub thob dngos grub at Lhasa in the 1100s. The text then passed to Nyang ral and Rje btsun Shakya bzang po (the latter lived to the mid-thirteenth century). In the assessment of Matthew T. Kapstein, the Ma ni bka’ bum collection was in existence by 1250. The scholar Mkhas pa lde’u, whose histories date to the second half of the thirteenth century, adduced that king Khri Srong btsan built forty-two temples. The trajectory of the textual tradition is accordingly clear. At the earliest level in RBA 2011.1, there is no tradition, or at least none deemed worthy of record, but by the time of the Dba’ bzhed, there are four royal temples. Concurrently, according to Nyang ral and his followers, there were twelve temples, but by the second half of 1200s, forty-two temples were recorded. This indicates that the notation mentioning forty-two temples in the Dba’ bzhed belongs to the late thirteenth century or somewhat later, and that it was added by someone who likely knew the histories of Mkhas pa lde’u or the latter’s source.

Folio 3r

Line 1: After the success of the Tibetan mission to China, the ambassadors stay on. It seems unlikely that the envoys would be “detained” for two months following their audience; accordingly, we understand bton as ston, both pronounced the same in modern speech. This yields the probable meaning of the mission being “entertained” for two months.

Line 3: When they return, the name of the palace in which the king resides is Lhan kar ta mo ra. This name is probably based on a middle Indo-Aryan word akin to alaṃkārottama (the ‘uppermost ornament’). The name appears in folio 31r as Lhan dkar ta mo ra.

Line 4: Here begins a story inserted from an external source, named below in folio 4r as the Lung bstan chen po (“Great Prophecy”). This is the first indication of the older sources that are brought into the Dba’ bzhed, with this portion naming the title of the work quoted.

Folio 4r

Line 1: The end of the vignette from the Lung bstan chen po is marked with double shad or daṇḍa marks and spaces, supporting the assessment that this is a genuine insertion from an outside source, and so indicated in the exemplar, rather than being a literary device introduced to excise the dra-

52 RBA 2011.1, 1v.
53 The absence is seen at RBA 2011.1, 1v:5.
54 The absence is seen at RBA 2011.1, 1v:5. The four temples are discussed in Michael Willis and Tsering Gonkatsang, “Armlet of the Pinnacle of the Noble Victory Banner: Locating Traces of Imperial Tibet in a Dhāraṇī in the British Museum,” in Locating Religions, ed. Reinhold Gei and Nicolas Jaspert (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 351–52, see DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004335066_013. As noted in this paper, the four temples betray the idea of a maṇḍala arrangement, something more associated with Khri Srong Ide btsan, see Skar cung Incription, line 12 (see online at SIDDHAM INTIB1.1.8).
55 Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba’ bzhed, 26, n. 17.
56 Martin, Tibetan Histories, no. 16.
58 Sørensen, Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies, 568.
conian measures of King Khri Srong btsan on the grounds that he is Avalokiteśvara. The compilers of the *Dba’ bzhed* evidently saw this as a sufficient appeal to textual authority to explain the king’s policies (repealed subsequently in the time Khri Srong lde btsan, see folio 17v).

**Table 2.2: Lists of temples in the source texts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DBA’ 2000</th>
<th>Temples</th>
<th>RBA 2011.1</th>
<th>Temples</th>
<th>Skar cung</th>
<th>Temples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lha tho do re snyan btsan</td>
<td>Khri thog je thog btsan</td>
<td>Tho tho re snyan btsan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khri Srong btsan (MS folio 1v., line 6)</td>
<td>Ra sa, Brag mar image and four temples</td>
<td>Khri Srong btsan gam po (MS folio 1v., line 5)</td>
<td>Ra sa, Brag mar image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Dus sro po rje rung nam (MS folio 4r, line 2)</td>
<td>Glang gi ri rtse, annotations: གླིང་གི་ཁྲི་རྩེ་</td>
<td>[‘Dus is not listed]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khri Lde gtsug brtan (MS folio 4r., line 3)</td>
<td>'Ching bu nam ra, Kwa chu in Brag dmar, ‘Gran bzangs, ‘Khar brag, and Smas gong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khri Srong lde btsan (MS folio 6r., etc.)</td>
<td>Bsam yas in Brag dmar</td>
<td>Khri Srong lde btsan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khri Gtsug lde btsan, annotation: བསྟན་པ་ཅན (MS folio 1v., line 2 and MS folio 25v., line 1)</td>
<td>No temple; texts translated and old translations revised; Vinaya tightened</td>
<td>[last portions of text not preserved]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khri Srong lde btsan (MS folio 25v., line 6)</td>
<td>No temple; Shes rab bum translated</td>
<td>[last portions of text not preserved]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mu ne btsan po (MS folio 26r)</td>
<td>Appears in the annex as the son of Khri Srong lde btsan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Line 2: Here we have brief mention of the ruler ‘Dus sro po rje rung nam. This king is not listed in the opening summary (folio 1v above), giving this the appearance of an inserted portion of text. His building of the Glang gi ri tse is recorded, but this information is subject to several notations in the manuscript. The name is corrected to Gling gi khri tse and we are told in a further notation that this place was in Khams. As Per K. Sørensen notes, this geographical information was known to Bu ston, so the origin of the notations may date to the fourteenth century.  

‘Dus sro(ng Mang) po rje rung nam was followed on the throne by Khri Lde gtsug brtan. He is credited with five temples (see Table 2.2). As can be seen from the table, the spelling of his name conforms to that given in the Skar cung Inscription. Slightly later in the *Dba’ bzhed* (line 5), brtan has become btsan. The older spelling has been replaced by the standard later form. The same orthography is found in RBA 2011.1 too, also shown in the table. This confirms our earlier conclusion that RBA 2011.1, although based on an archaic prototype, was subject to redaction.

The temples that Khri Lde gtsug brtan built are listed in Table 2.2 and, as this shows, only two of these are listed in the Skar cung Inscription. Comparison with RBA 2011.1 reveals how two temples developed into five. RBA 2011.1 has only four and does not mention Kwa chu, a temple signed to Khri Lde gtsug btsan in a number of sources rather than ‘Dus sro.”
that appears consistently in later versions of the *Testimony of Ba*.\(^6^0\) This is telling because although RBA 2011.1 shows itself redacted in a number of places, the omission indicates that the listing of the temples attributed to Khri Lde gtsug brtan was in formation when the texts were being compiled. Moreover, the absence of Kwa chu in RBA 2011.1 shows the list was developed textually, without reference to epigraphic records.\(^6^1\)

**Folio 4v**

**Line 2:** Here begins the story of the old Hwa shang sent back to China during the reaction against Buddhism after the coronation of Khri Srong lde btsan. He drops one of his shoes along the way. When this is discovered, it is understood as an omen presaging the future return of the *dharma* to Tibet. In the sixteenth century, Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba declared this episode to be a later addition.\(^6^2\)

While a comprehensive study of his readings is beyond the scope of the present discussion, we note that the story is in place in RBA 2011.1. This shows that it was embedded across several versions of the text by the end of the twelfth century.\(^6^3\) What seems to inspire Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba’s statement is the comment at the end: *mchis skad*, i.e. “So it is said.” Perhaps this signalled that the story was not based on textual authority.

**Line 5:** The interdiction against Buddhism here can be glossed: “In the event that anybody is found practising the *dharma*, he shall be banished alone (i.e. without family and property) forever,” (*brgya la* *chos byed pa cig yod na* *pho reng du gtan spyug go zhes*). Wangdu and Diemberger proposed that the reading be corrected to: *rgya'i chos la byed pa cig yod na* based on SBA 1982 where the reading is: *rgya'i lha chos bygid pa gcig mchis na*.\(^6^4\) The use of the word *brgya la* is archaic but clear; in RBA 2011.1 this is rendered in a more updated fashion: *rgya la chos byed pa zhig mchis na pho rong du gtan nas spyug go*.\(^6^5\) The *Dba’ bzhed* reading is thus preferable in terms of the first compilation: the proclamation circumscribes all forms of *dharma* practice, not just Chinese. In later times, as *brgya la* fell out of use, there may have been a development of some kind of anti-Chinese sentiment, as Sørensen has suggested.\(^6^6\) Yet, it is also possible that the correction comes from the Chinese content of the surrounding text: the Chinese image is ordered back to China, the old Hwa shang is sent back to China but leaves behind a shoe that hints at the return of Buddhism, temples are damaged and the *tshe* ritual suppressed. After some people are brutally eliminated, discussion turns to whether the Chinese image was threatening or harmful. As the text was transmitted, this content may have led to the assessment that *brgya la*—probably available to later scribes in copies that mostly read *rgya la*—really meant *rgya'i lha*. This change was in place by the time of Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba, thus in the early sixteenth century.

**Line 7:** In the context of the elimination of some apparently non-Buddhist Tibetans, we find the reading *skams* for which we understand *skam*. This generally means ‘desiccated’ or ‘dried out’ which might make sense if the person was exposed and died of dehydration. However, the word could also be understood as representing the Indo-Aryan root *śuṣ-, ‘afflict,’ ‘injure,’ ‘destroy,’ which seems to make sense here.

**Folio 5r**

**Line 1:** At this point, the Buddha image from China is discussed: “The question arose among everyone, high and low, whether the Chinese *devatā* was threatening or harmful in accord with divination and omens.” The wording shows that these concerns were in wide circulation and publicly voiced. This finds a parallel the Skar cung Inscription. From line 29 onwards, the inscription explains how attacks on the triple gem were to be refuted.\(^6^7\)

As a result, the seats for the triple gem that were established and the *dharma* of the Buddha that was embraced by successive generations of the dynasty—by my father and the ancestors—were lovingly protected in all circumstances; [and if] on account of omens in dreams, divination etc., or some other means [it was said]: “They are evil” or “They are inauspicious,” that was not acted on and these words were said by great and small men alike: “They shall not be destroyed,” “They shall not be renounced.”

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\(^6^0\) Wangdu and Diemberger, *Dba’ bzhed*, 34, n. 57 contains a list of the variants.

\(^6^1\) Compare Kapstein, *Tibetan Assimilation*, 35 where he posits that the *Testimony of Ba* was influenced by a pillar inscription.

\(^6^2\) Cited in Wangdu and Diemberger, *Dba’ bzhed*, 2.

\(^6^3\) RBA 2011.1, 3r:10.


\(^6^5\) RBA 2011.1, 3r:6. The word *rgya la* is written in an abbreviated way, but the reading is confirmed in line 8 of the same folio: *sha kya mune’i mes po rgya gar*.

\(^6^6\) Sørensen, *Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies*, 596, cited and endorsed by Wangdu and Diemberger, *Dba’ bzhed*, 37, n. 71.

\(^6^7\) The text now online as SIDDHAM INTIB1.8.
The similarity suggests that the *Dba’ bzhed* is drawing on a source text that is related to the Skar cung Inscription but not directly from it.

**Line 3:** Here, Dba’ Gsas snang—the main protagonist—is introduced suddenly for the first time. Throughout the rest of the text, the spelling of his name is Dba’ Gsas snang. Moving to RBA 2011.1, there are two forms. At his first appearance, he is called Sba Gsas snang. Later, we have Dba’ Gsas snang. Naturally, we should like to know the historical reasons for these variations. Firstly, the use of Sba when the protagonist is introduced in RBA 2011.1 can be explained as reflecting a redaction that happened when Sba was circulating as the dominant form of the name. As noted above in our discussion of Nyang ral, this spelling was current during the opening part of the thirteenth century. The redactions in RBA 2011.1 thus relate to the textual milieu of that time. The use of Dba’ Gsas snang at RBA 2011.1 folio 4v:1 appears in the context of the king’s command and seems to represent a fossilised borrowing from the parent text. This parent is not the source text that is related to the Skar cung Inscription but is drawing on a *Dba’ bzhed* as we have it, but a related version that has not been traced or has not survived. By the mid-fourteenth century, this spelling was current during the opening part of the thirteenth century, the accepted form was Sba Gsal snang, and so it has remained. This shows that the first use of the term *Śrī śrī btsan po* ("his noble majesty"), a particularly Indic wording and thus an early form.

**Line 4:** The phrase ye shes dbang po dbyangs su dgags so is explained with the notation: *dbang po dgags so zer*. The hand of the notation and main text are the same, showing the notation was probably in the exemplar. In this instance, the notation is telling us that *ye shes dbang po* is meant, i.e. that *dbyangs* is extra. Although *dbyangs* (or *ghoṣa*) appears often in Buddhist contexts as the last part of a name (notably *Dba’ bzhed* folio 15r, where Dba’ Lha btsan takes the name Dba’ Dpal dbyangs on ordination), it is not testified otherwise for Ye shes dbang po. This is the earliest appearance of the name Ye shes dbang po in the *Dba’ bzhed* and what we see here documents an early form of his name that disappears later in this text and in other versions. We have already noted early variations in the name of Dba’ Gsas snang above, while discussing folio 6r:3.

**Line 6:** In the episode involving the insertion of a pearl in the mouth of Gsas snang’s deceased child, the meaning is made difficult by the introduction of the Indic term *śarirāṃ*. The sense is that relics (*śarirāṃ*) of a bodily nature emerged from the bones of the children. Perhaps when their bones were broken open small spherical objects, normally identified as *śariradhātu*, were found. For this context see Dan Martin’s work on relics.

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68 RBA 2011.1, 3r:9 = DBA’ 2000, 5r:3  
69 RBA 2011.1, 4v:1 = DBA’ 2000, 7r:2.  
70 Sørensen, *Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies*, 367,  
71 For this episode see Kapstein, *Tibetan Assimilation*, all of is chapter 3 is relevant.  
73 As noted in Wangdu and Diemberger, *Dba’ bzhed*, 39, n. 81.
As noted in our discussion of the Dunhuang fragment, above, the *Dba’ bzhed* is redacted at this point. The three names are emphasised in a way that raises suspicions; RBA 2011.1 with its two names appears to offer a more antique reading. This assessment is supported by the name Rgyal Sbrang legs gzigs. A comparison of the names in the two versions suggests that Sbrang has been added as a clan name in the *Dba’ bzhed* to clarify his position as a minister. This is confirmed by the witness of the Dunhuang fragment, which gives the name of the minister as Rgyal sgra legs [*gzigs*: *zhang lon chen po rgyal sgra legs* [*gzigs*].]

Slightly later in RBA 2011.1, three men return a positive verdict to the king after several months of questioning: (1) Sbrang legs gzigs, (2) Seng mgo Lha lung gzigs, and (d) Dba’ Sang shi. The corresponding passage is in *Dba’ bzhed* folio 8r, where only “Sang shi and others” are mentioned.

The varying details raise some points of interest. The name of one envoy is confirmed as Sbrang legs gzigs or, to give the more archaic form in the Dunhuang fragment, (Rgyal) Sgra legs [*gzigs*. The addition of Sbrang at the start of his name in the *Dba’ bzhed* is thus demonstrated to be a redaction. RBA 2011.1 is not entirely innocent of this process: Sang shi is given Dba’ as a clan name. Some light is thus shone on the position and nature of RBA 2011.1. It is based on an old prototype, written in a simple style with none of the fine phrases in the *Dba’ bzhed*. However, it has been redacted at a time subsequent to the *Dba’ bzhed*, influenced by later manuscripts and subsequent religious concerns. This is shown particularly in folio 4r, where a brief account of Khri Lde gtsug btsan is given. In RBA 2011.1 we find the following additional statement inserted: “In Tibet, the noble doctrine of the *Sūtra of Golden Light* from China was rendered in ten volumes and due portions of the ritual performances were obtained; many musical techniques were adopted from China.”

**Folio 9v**

Sang shi meets Hwa Shang in China and receives a number of instructions for introducing the *dharma* into Tibet. The exchange concludes (line 6) with the remark that Sang shi received many prophecies like those just given. At this point, a double *shad or daṇḍa* marks the opening of a separate section, indicating the combination of two sources here.

**Folio 10r**

Continuing from the last line of the previous folio, the following sentences, down to line 5, use the double *shad*. Here further detailed prophecies and instructions are given, with the end shown by the comment “so it was said” (*graso*, with notation g to make *gragso*, i.e. *grags so*). Such abbreviations, not seen earlier in the manuscript, highlights that this material has been drawn from a separate source.

**Folio 11r**

After briefly mentioning that the king spoke in favour of the *dharma* while the envoys were away in China (in folio 10v), the narrative moves on quickly to Bodhisatta’va’s invitation of Padmasambhava. Concurrently, Gsas snang invites a divination expert for the building of Bsam yas. The term *rlungs la* used in connection with Gsas snang’s invitation is explained by Dotson in Chapter 4 of this volume. The expert does not reappear until folio 12r and the narrative turns to an account of the events that marked Padmasambhava’s arrival in Tibet. Thematically the Padmasambhava episode is self-contained. This has been pulled into the running narrative, as highlighted by the use of the verb form *red* (line 3). The same words are repeated in folio 11v:1. These are the only appearances of this verb form in the entire manuscript.

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74 van Schaik and Iwao, “Fragments of the Testament of Ba,” 484. We add [*gzigs*].
75 RBA 2011.1, 4v:7–8. More on the clan name in the next paragraph.
77 This device is also used to set apart the *Lung bstan chen po*, see folio 4r above.
Folio 12r

Line 7: Calamitous events are described as having taken place, repeating the phrases given in folio 11v:4. However, folio 11v describes them as having happened “last year” (na ning), while folio 12r says “previously” (gshe ni). The second seems slightly archaic, suggested also by the use of Ra sa (against Lha sa) in the same passage. The notation in folio 12r, written in dbu can, makes the correction to gzhe ning. This makes sense in itself but introduces a contradiction: in folio 11v the events occurred last year, but in folio 12r the events happen, with the notation, in the year before last. This reveals two points: (1) the first account of these events was corrected as the text before us was being copied out and edited (as recorded in folio 25v), so we find “last year” and Lha sa (as we might normally expect). The repetition has not enjoyed the same level of attention, so archaisms survive and the respectful adjective sku for the citadel has been omitted. This gives us some measure of the changes introduced across the whole of the present copy: when passages are repeated, it is always the first that is corrected, while the second is often left as it stands. (2) One of the notations in folio 12r adds sku, to match the previous page. This was done in a different hand and style than the notation changing gzhe ni to gzhe ning. This means that an earlier wave of notations makes folio 12r match folio 11v, but the second corrects a point in isolation, without reflecting on the implications of the change. This suggests that the later notations in dbu can, while perhaps correct in themselves, reveal the tendency of this commentator to impose hyper-corrections without a wider overview.

Folio 13r

In this folio, the water for the king’s lustration, brought magically from Aśvakāraṇa by Padmasambhava, is rejected summarily by the chief ministers and poured out. Without a transition, Padmasambhava begins a disquisition about how Tibet could be made fertile and enters into meditation to effect the necessary changes. The non sequitur indicates that the two parts have been pulled into the narrative from separate sources. The rejection of Padmasambhava’s proposals lead to his departure from Tibet.

Folio 14r

Line 6: After an account of the failed assassination attempt on Padmasambhava, the king feels despondent. The close of the story is indicated by a double shad. Moving abruptly to a new theme, probably from different source material, a debate is convened in the Pig Year.

Folio 14v

Line 5: Changing theme again, the Dba’ bzhed records the founding of Bsam yas is announced in the spring of the Hare Year. Wangdu and Diemberger calculate that this corresponds to 763 or 775, with the completion in 779.79 The divination expert examines the site to good effect, but in line 7 the narrative breaks (by means of a double shad again) to give an account of conversions and ordinations.

Folio 15r

Continuing the discussion of conversions and ordinations, the text mentions that Gsas snang built a temple at Glag and that the Buddha image was brought back to Ra mo che from Nepal (see folio 5r for its removal).

Line 3: The story returns to the decision to build Bsam yas in the Hare Year, showing the foregoing paragraphs have entered the text from a separate source. The continuing story adds further information about the temple’s plan and construction.

Folio 15v

While describing the ritual examination and consecration of the site, this folio shows parallels with the Kriyāsaṃgraha. The chronological implications of this are discussed above in the main part of this chapter.

Line 4: The preceptor addresses the king’s worries about the lack of an image-maker for the temple and says that only the requisites have to be supplied. The word used for requisites is yo byad (Skt. deyadharmā), a well-known Buddhist monastic term that appears in the Bsam yas Inscription.80

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79 Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba’ bzhed, 63, n. 201, with further notes.
Line 5: Here, Śāntarakṣita poses a question about the images and whether they should be Indian or Chinese. In response, the king says that Tibetan models should be followed because these will inspire greater faith in Buddhism among his subjects. Where the text mentions Indian and Chinese (models), the word rgya’i (Chinese) is circled and corrected in a notation to bod gyi (Tibetan). This has been done to match the king’s statement that the sculptures should be in the Tibetan style. We see here the process of redaction, carried out in order to give logic and symmetry to the text. However, there is rather more to the change than narrative consistency. The author of this notation cannot countenance the original because the text is reporting that the king overruled Śāntarakṣita. As an individual with a wide knowledge of Buddhism, Śāntarakṣita knows of two possible sources for Buddhist imagery: India and China. More to the point, Śāntarakṣita is a bodhisatva and the fountainhead of traditions in Tibet, especially from the perspective of the Dba’ bzḥed. For the commentator who has written the notation, the idea that this great sage should be contradicted or wrong is impossible.

The commentator’s point of view reflects a later time, when great religious leaders were deemed infallible for all practical purposes. The style of writing of this notation is different from most of the other notations and subsequent to the present manuscript copy. This means that the notation was added after the text was copied out, so after circa 1400. The writing style is distinctive, being done with a fine-tipped pen in a learned style. Particularly indicative are the sharp ends to the ya letters. This same commentator has written notes on folio 17r:5, folio 22v:5, folio 23v:3, folio 24r:1 and 5 and folio 25v:6. The intervention on folio 22v is especially important from the historical point of view and will be dealt with below. At folio 25v, we see him correcting a statement concerning the translation of the Shes rab ’bum and the transformation of Tibet into a pure land of the Buddha. These notations show that the remark in folio 15v is not incidental. Rather, it comes from the hand of an individual who knows his religion, his history and his position.81 We dwell on this notation because it shows the problems of attempting a critical edition and, behind that, assuming that the reductive undertaking of a critical edition serves any useful purpose. From the historical perspective, there is no wrong or right in the readings: this text is showing us how readers approached the Dba’ bzḥed and interpreted it with the passage of time. Perspectives evolved and, with that, the text itself.

Folio 16r

In this folio, the temple’s consecration and consecration are mentioned. This is followed by a series of disjoined statements: there are a number of auspicious signs, the Chinese vermillon seller who made the images is found to have been an emanation and the preceptor speaks of Tārā’s role in the instigation of the dharma. The chronological implications of the last point are explored in the main part of this chapter.

Folio 16v

With folio 16v:1, we come to the construction of the central shrine (dbu rtse). The king, once again, starts to wonder about the images. He has a dream in which a white man appears. Leading him to Khas po ri, the white man points to various rocks that have the appearance of buddhas and bodhisatva-s. When the king wakes in the morning, he proceeds immediately to the mountain where the rocks are seen to correspond to the dream. Craftsmen from Nepal are summoned to make the images and these are transported to the temple. They are installed amid auspicious signs; the upper parts of the images are dressed with clay (line 7).

This narrative is notably different from the earlier account of how the images were modelled on handsome young nobles, and the king’s certain opinion that sculptures based on their appearance would inspire faith among his subjects. Although the architectural focus has shifted from the Ārya Palo shrine to the central shrine, two sources are indicated: a dream-dependent methodology as opposed to a practical choice based on living people. To keep both sources and harmonise their differences, the Dba’ bzḥed shifts the location. This is a useful device but the names demonstrate that we are dealing with a conflation of two narrative visions: the central shrine is called the Dri gtsang khang in line 6, but it is called the Gtsug lag khang in the context of the consecration in folio 17r.

One of the most remarkable features of the Dba’ bzḥed is that, despite the lengthy discussion of the Bsam yas temple and the pooling of source texts to give a full account, it makes no mention of the fact that the main
image in the central shrine was Vairocana (Tib. Rnam par snang mdzad). This form of the Buddha was associated with an imperial cult, the foundational text being the *Mahāvairocanatantra*. This work—which took shape in the mid-seventh century—focuses on Vairocana, the first or primordial of the five wisdom buddhas.82 Subhakarasimha translated the *Mahāvairocanatantra* into Chinese in 724 as *Dāvīluzhena chengfo shen bian jìachi jìng*; a Tibetan version was prepared slightly later by Śilendrabodhi and Dpal brtsegs. These literary activities shed light on the kind of Buddhism advanced in eastern India, Tibet and Japan from the seventh century. It was, at heart, a royal cult centred on Vairocana with this all-seeing buddha at the centre of a circle of royal power.83 The absence of any mention of this in the *Dba’ bzhed* shows the text is not concerned with giving an account of the political and religious matrix of the Yar lung dynasty, but more with establishing the authority of the abbots and ordination lineages in control of Bsam yas in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.84

**Folio 17r**

In this folio, the architectural setting shifts again, this time to the four stūpa-s built around the main shrine of Bsam yas. Only one of them is described, the blue stūpa, though it is unclear why.85 Perhaps the magical installation of the *dharma-cakra* on top of the shrine, thanks to the four great kings, ties it to the divination of the four great kings performed in folio 12r. The patron of the blue stūpa is not stated.

The most conspicuous feature of folio 17r is the long insertion of an independent description of the Bsam yas temple in a minute hand (see Figure 2.4). This has even displaced the running text. We offer the following translation.86

Surrounded by a dark perimeter wall with gates in the four cardinal directions and four platforms for dismounting from horses. In the interior, the plaster floor (was) bright like a mirror upon which broad-beans rolled from the south reached the north gate. Inside the perimeter wall, not counting birds, animals were not allowed in and out.87 If people entered, they had to wash their feet. The outer temple Khams gsum was [donated] by Tshe spong za, the Sbu tshal by Pho Long za, the Dge rgyas by ’Bro za, [and] all the scriptures by Khri bzang yab lha. That [i.e. the Bsam yas temple] which was thrice consecrated by Bodhisatva in the Sheep Year was like a heap of turquoise on the earth placed on a foundation of gold;88 finally, having gone to each and every image in the precinct of the central temple (*dbu rste*), he performed a religious ceremony (and) thereafter returning, everyone was seated in their respective seats. As a consequence the king was delighted.

As can be seen from Figure 2.4 and our transcription of the Tibetan, the place where this passage is supposed to be interpolated into the main text is marked clearly.


84 For the transformation, Doney, “Degraded Emperor.”

85 An interlinear note to 16v:7 contains details on the stupa-s also found in the later *Testimony of Ba* tradition, but this may be a coincidence rather than a sign that this information was originally in the main text of the *Dba’ bzhed* (see Doney, “Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer,” 27–28, n. 51).

86 Wangdu and Diemberger, *Dba’ bzhed*, 67–69 identify and discuss the individuals mentioned.

87 Here ’gro can be understood as short for ’gro ’long.

88 We understand sa bkom pa lta ba as prthivisamūheva.
The reason for the configuration of the manuscript can be understood from the narrative context. As just noted, the previous sections of the story describe the creation of images for the main temple and completion of the blue stūpa. Folio 17r and 17v follow this with mention of the people who were ordained and those who were taught the language of India. The text then moves to the king’s proclamation and the steps taken to spread the dharma. It seems that the scribe of the current copy had the exemplar before him, but he noticed that there was no description of the temple there. He therefore turned to a text (perhaps a fragment) containing a description. To accommodate this, he left a blank. The end of line 5 says: “the Gtsug lag khang (gtsug lag khang),” and the start of line 6 says: “it was built (ni brtsigs).” Between these words, the scribe skipped a line for the extra material. Thanks to a slight miscalculation, the last part of the insertion spilled down to the foot of the folio (Figure 2.4). Matters are complicated by sub-notations, but the process of compilation is clear nonetheless: while the Dba’ bzhed was copied from the exemplar, the text was being supplemented from other sources.

Folio 17v

In this folio, the account of those ordained concludes with a double shad. Then in line 3 we are told that the great consecration (pra ti chen po) was conducted in the Sheep Year. This is an unnecessary repetition given that the lengthy insertion on folio 17r has already recorded the temple consecration in the Sheep Year by Bodhisatva. The duplication, and lack of redaction, helps to confirm that the consecration did indeed take place in the Sheep Year. This is an unnecessary repetition given that it is said in the exemplar and in the external source represented by sub-notations, but the process of compilation is clear nonetheless: while the Dba’ bzhed was copied from the exemplar, the text was being supplemented from other sources.

Line 5: The Dba’ bzhed here describes the king’s proclamation repealing the harsh punishments instigated by Khri Srong bstan. In a notation, it is said that oaths were taken and a stone pillar raised as a record (rdo ring btsugs). This is the only reference to a pillar inscription in the Dba’ bzhed.90 This is written in a hand subsequent to the main copy of the manuscript, so it can be assigned to a period subsequent to circa 1400. Although this shows knowledge of a stone pillar inscription, presumably the one at Bsam yas, there is no intertextuality showing that the epigraphic text was consulted.

Folio 18v

After discussion at court, Ye shes dbang po gives a ruling about monastic property: two hundred servants should be assigned to each monastery and three households to each monk. This refers to the ‘upper share’ or surplus assigned to the donee and documented by the copper-plate charters of the Pāla period in India.90

Ye shes dbang po then goes into retreat and, shortly after, sectarian conflicts begin to arise. Concerns about the role of the kalyāṇamitra and claims that he should exercise his authority and attend to the affairs of the religious community find an echo in the Skar cung inscription but direct reference to the epigraphic text by the authors of the Dba’ bzhed is not certain.91

Those causing particular sectarian trouble are mentioned, but the names Gnyags Bi ma la and Gnyags Rin po che look like a duplication: they both crushed their genitals, and below (in folio 20r) where the name and actions are given again Gnyags Rin po che is omitted. As seen elsewhere in the text, when sentences are repeated for the sake of the narrative, the second reading generally preserves an older or less redacted reading. In any event, the conflicts set the stage for a debate between the graduates and those following the instantaneous path.

Folio 20v

Line 6: After Hwa Shang has set out his views, Kamalaśīla begins a long rebuttal; this runs to folio 22r (line 5). Parallels are found in Kamalaśīla’s Bhāvanākrama texts of which this appears to be a digest. Chapter 5 in this volume is given over to an analysis of these passages and the way in which the Dba’ bzhed has pulled in source material to structure the narrative. A few supplementary remarks are added here.

91 The text and translation are online at SIDDHAM INTIB1.1.8 (line 37 on): “…the kalyāṇamitra will be selected from the devout guided toward mokṣa and from among those the most able, always selecting one whose doctrine is that of the Lord and one who is heeded also in (his) commands regarding the activities of the religious community of those who follow the doctrine of the Lord, and one who will exercise authority and attend to the affairs of the religious community.”
Folio 22r

**Lines 5–6:** A statement by the king is given in the text after Kamalaśīla’s discourse: “The devaputra responded, ordering: ‘The followers of the instantaneous and gradualist paths, as they please, must present their arguments in turn.’” After shal nas, a later hand has inserted khyed as an interlinear annotation. This form of the pronoun is honorific, softening the nature of the command. This suggests that the individual who wrote the notation was uncomfortable with the king’s seeming lack of deference. The finely written letters show the intervention of the same person who commented on folios 15v and other pages. His meticulous interpolations, and the nature of his historical and doctrinal views, have already been noted and will draw attention in folio 22v.

The statement by Sang shi (from line 6) has been read as an elaboration of the gradualist position. It is, however, a moderate statement of instantaneous views, as explained here in Chapter 5. This created a problem for the compilers of the text and the general coherence of the narrative. Sang shi’s key role in the history of Buddhism in Tibet—his presence at the first interview of Śāntarakṣita at the command of the Tibetan king, his being part of the mission the king sends to China, his being recognised there as a bodhisatva, his receipt of good prophecies from the Chinese emperor, and his participation with Śāntarakṣita and the Tibetan king in the foundation of Bsam yas—all make it rather hard to place him in the opposing, and ultimately defeated, theological camp. This apparently explains the cryptic wording of Sang shi’s speech and his conciliatory tone: he that may be close to the Chinese position philosophically, but the narrative has been arranged so he is not made part of the instantaneous faction and their extremist activities and threats.

**Folio 22v**

In this folio, Sang shi completes his theological statement with comments on the cause of sectarianism within the Buddhist tradition (line 4). Although these concerns are a recurrent theme in Buddhist histories, the statement is unique to the Dbā’ bzḥed and its sister texts and does not seem to have a scriptural source. It is therefore worth noting, especially since it marks a moment of historical reflection.

The context (of these misunderstandings) is that after the Teacher had passed beyond sorrow, there were no doctrinal differences for a long time. Later on there emerged disagreements in the three schools of Mādhyamika in India and the fissure between the gradualist and instantaneous paths in China—not encountering (the Buddha), all the misunderstandings emerged. Otherwise, even though the approaches vary, the state of non-conceptualisation and non-observation are one. The result also, the striving for nirvāṇa, is one. This is universally agreed.

The gradualist and instantaneous paths are named here in abbreviated form (as in folio 22r:5 and folio 23r:2): ton tsend for ston mun pa (instantaneous) and rsten mun pa (gradualist). As noted in our discussion of chronology, above, the three schools of Mādhyamika are known only from the late eleventh century. Codicologically, the notations made on the original text are revealing. Because the verb (zhig par gyur) describing the break between the gradualist and instantaneous paths also technically applies to the schools of Mādhyamika, the commentator—whom we described in our discussion of folio 15v—has inserted a phrase giving an additional verb to describe the emergence of incompatible views. He then reorganises the sentence using superscript numbers. In his view the text should read as follows: kun ma mjal ba dang ma rtogs pa las gyur gyi. This can be glossed: “All emerged from the misunderstanding and the absence of encounters (with the Buddha).” The difference is subtle, but the scholar making these notations clearly felt that intervention here was needed.

**Folio 25v**

As noted in the main part of this chapter, this and the preceding folio carry the supplementary codas appended to the Dbā’ bzḥed proper. At the start, it is reported that new texts were translated for the first time during the reign of Khri Gtsug lde btsan. The names of the three translators are given in abbreviated form: ka cog rnam 3. The full names may or may not have been known at the time that this manuscript was copied, but by the fourteenth century the complete names are recorded: “The translators [s]Ka ba dpal brtsegs, Klū’i rgyalmtshan [of] Cog ro and bandhe Ye shes sde translated the Dharma [i.e. Buddhist treatises into Tibetan].” The name of the last mentioned appears elsewhere as Sna nam Ye shes de, so here Rnam is probably a mistake for Sna nam.

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92 Faber, “The Council of Tibet,” 49.
93 Sørensen, The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies, 412.
94 Sørensen, The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies, 399, n. 1359 and 412, n. 1430. Further observations are found in Wangdu and Diemberger, Dbā’ bzḥed, 90, n. 346 and 96, n. 380.
In line 6, it is said that the *Shes rab 'bum* was translated first in the time of Khri Lde srong btsan. The text was already recorded as being in Tibet and consulted for the Bsam yas Debate, see folio 19v. Taking the *Dba’ bzhed* at face value, it seems to be saying the text was in Chinese because it was consulted by followers of the instantaneous path on that occasion.

**Folio 26 r to 31r**

Folio 26r contains the final coda recounting the death of 'Ba’ Sang shi, followed by a separate section describing the funeral rites of Khri Srong lde btsan as organised by his son Mu ne btsan po. This section of the text, as noted above, has been discussed in detail by Brandon Dotson.

The remaining folios of the manuscript have relatively few erasures, corrections or notations. All features are given in our transcription, which can be compared to the original folios. The only point we would make in conclusion regards folio 31v. In line 1, exceptionally for the manuscript, a correction on a small slip of paper is pasted over one of the letters, giving the reading *za*. The person named has not been identified.
Chapter 3
Reflections on the Original Form and Function of the Testament of Ba From Dunhuang

How the fragments were found

The manuscript from the Dunhuang ‘library cave’ containing a portion of the narrative found in the Testament of Ba was discovered by Kazushi Iwao and myself, and the textual features of the manuscript have been discussed in a jointly-authored article. Named the BL fragment in this book, I shall also refer to it as the Testament fragment in this chapter in order to distinguish it from other fragments from the British Library’s Dunhuang collection. It remains the earliest exemplar of any portion of the text. My intention here is to complement that earlier work by looking more closely at the manuscript itself, using palaeography and codicology to enquire into its original form, the date of its creation, and the social context in which it functioned. I will also consider the relationship between the BL fragment and the later texts of the Testament, extending earlier testimony here is to complement that earlier work by looking more closely at the manuscript itself, using palaeography and codicology to enquire into its original form, the date of its creation, and the social context in which it functioned. I will also consider the relationship between the BL fragment and the later texts of the Testament, extending earlier comparisons with the Dba’ bzhed by bringing in the manuscript recently published under the name Rba bzhed in the Dpal brtsegs series.

The manuscript actually comprises two fragments, clearly from the same original piece, that were separately numbered in the British Library sequence Or.8210 (see Figure 3.1). This sequence was intended for the Chinese scrolls acquired by Aurel Stein from Cave 17 in Dunhuang, and sent to the British Museum for cataloguing and numbering. The first part of the sequence (S. 1–6890) contains scrolls mainly from Stein’s first Central Asian expedition, with some 600 at the end from his third expedition. These are followed by twenty printed documents (Or.8210/P.1–20). After this, the sequence continues from S. 7009 onwards, with mostly smaller scrolls. Many of these were neither catalogued nor numbered until much more recently. This sequence includes smaller pieces that were either neglected because of their size, or only came to light during the conservation of the larger scrolls, since they were folded into or pasted onto the more complete scrolls. After recent conservation work, the fragments in the latter part of the Or.8210 sequence are now preserved in clear plastic Melinex sheets, often with several manuscripts in each sheet. The Testament fragments belong to this latter part of the Or.8210 sequence.

The first, larger fragment is numbered Or.8210/S. 9498. It is composed of four parts, distinguished by the letters A to D (see Figure 3.2), of which A has the text of the Testament. Though we do not have any conservation records for this item, the four manuscripts were probably pasted together when recovered from the Dunhuang cave, and then removed from each other in the modern conservation process. Parts B, C and D look to have originally been a single manuscript fragment composed of three layers of fine paper. Given that the recto (the side with text) is darkened, apparently with dried glue, it seems that this fragment was pasted written-side-down onto Parts B, C and D, probably as a support for them.

On part D, we can see what remains of a printed design, with curling foliage and two human figures probably representing babies with the traditional three tufts of hair on their heads (see Figure 3.3). These resemble the auspicious babies of the nianhua (年画) genre. Thus, this seems to have been a print with a talismanic function, on weak paper that was repaired at some point by addition of the Testament fragment, glued face-down. These nianhua type prints are known to have been in circulation from the eleventh century onwards, so this may be an early example of the genre, dating from the late tenth century.

2 This Rba bzhed, RBA 2011.1, is reproduced on pages 64–110 of volume 36 of the Dpal brtsegs Bod kyi lo ngyus rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs series, though it is actually two texts conflated in one (see also Chapter 1 in this volume). The Testament portion ends abruptly at the end p. 70 (folio 4v), whereas p. 71 (folio 5r) contains a different text that continues to the end of the manuscript. The passage corresponding to the BL fragment is on p. 70.
3 The Buddhist manuscripts from the first part of the sequence were catalogued by Lionel Giles, Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Manuscripts from Tun-hung in the British Museum (London: British Museum, 1953).
4 Several other Tibetan documents apparently cut up and used as patches are found in this sequence; e.g. Or.8210/S. 9323.
5 See Sung-nien Po and David Johnson, Domesticated Deities and Auspicious Emblems: The Iconography of Everyday Life in Village
The smaller fragment, which fits at the bottom left of the larger fragment, is numbered Or.8210/S. 13683. This is also in four parts, distinguished as A to D, with the Testimony fragment being Part C (See Figure 3.4). Part A is a fragment of a Chinese document. Part B is a blank fragment of the same type of paper as Or.8210/S. 9498B, and Part D is a wooden roller, similar to scroll rollers, but without any lacquer or other treatment. One possibility is that it was the support used to hang the print onto which the Testimony fragments were pasted.6

Not a great deal can be concluded from all this, except that we would expect some time to have passed between the creation of the Testimony manuscript, which was (as will be discussed below) an expensive and carefully produced object, and its re-use as backing for a talismanic print. By the time the manuscript was put to this use, it was no longer valued enough to repair; instead its only value was as material with which to repair other items. Moreover, there was another stage subsequent to this repair involving the ripping of the print into fragments (unless that happened after the manuscript was acquired by Stein, which is unlikely). Given that an expensively produced manuscript should not become repair material immediately, we can estimate the passage of at least some decades between the creation of the manuscript, its later re-use, and the subsequent closing of the Dunhuang cave in the early eleventh century.

Palaeography and Codicology

The size of the Testimony fragment as we have it now is 24 cm long at its top edge, and 9.5 cm high at its right edge. It was obviously once both longer and higher. The length was probably a little more than double the current longest edge, at 48–52 cm, the length of many of the loose-leaf pothi manuscripts from Dunhuang. This measurement makes it highly unlikely that the original format was a scroll, and is also wider than the usual size of concertina manuscripts. Therefore, it seems that we have a folio from a pothi volume. The height, if there was one more line at the top, would have been some 1.5 cm higher, at roughly 11 cm, also a common height for pothi pages. This would mean the folios contained seven lines of text. The folio could have been even higher, but more than eight lines of text would result in unusual proportions for a pothi page. Thus, it is likely that there were 7 or 8 lines of text per page in the original.

The verso of the folio is blank, which suggests that the original folio was composed of two pieces of paper pasted together. This method is seen in the large Perfec-
Figure 3.2: British Library fragments, Or.8210/S. 9498A–D, in Melinex sheet

Figure 3.3: British Library fragments, detail from Or.8210/S. 9498D
tion of Wisdom manuscripts made during the first half of the ninth century, and suggests that the original manuscript was a relatively expensive production. It also raises the possibility that the manuscript was made during the Tibetan imperial period, since most of the Tibetan pothi-format manuscripts from the tenth century are made with only one layer of paper.7

Turning to the original mise-en-page or layout of the folio, we can see that horizontal guidelines were ruled in red ink. This feature is common in the Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts, perhaps more so in the earlier pothi manuscripts. Furthermore, red guidelines can be seen in some folios found in the Central Asian site of Miran, which was probably abandoned soon after the mid-ninth century. One example of this style is Or.15000/332, a folio from a manuscript of the Pratimokṣa sūtra (see Figure 3.5). This latter manuscript also has string-holes surrounded by red circles, a feature found in both early and late Dunhuang manuscripts. It is quite possible that the Dunhuang manuscript containing the Testimony of Ba narrative originally had either one or two of these holes and circles, though they are not seen on the Testimony fragment.

The writing style of the Testimony fragment is somewhat puzzling. It does not fit into any of the common styles of the imperial-period manuscripts, which I have described elsewhere.8 On the other hand, neither does


it show the characteristic features of the post-imperial Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang. The writing shows most of the archaic orthographic features found in the Dunhuang manuscripts, including the inverse gi gu, the ya btags under the ma, and the upper hook on the ‘a. Though the latter feature is not found in some later texts, it is used by some scribes through to the tenth century, so this is not (on its own) proof of an early date but should be considered alongside other indicators of dating.

The closest example of this writing style in another manuscript is seen in Pelliot tibétain 1064, and also IOL Tib J 480, another folio from the same manuscript (see Figure 3.6). This interesting manuscript was also re-used. In its original condition it was a concertina manuscript containing regulations for the local Buddhist communities. Each section of regulations was sealed with an official stamp, of the kind seen only in imperial-period manuscripts. Like the Testimony manuscript, this was constructed by gluing together two sheets of paper; the later re-use of the manuscript involved separating these sheets and pasting them back together with the blank sides facing outwards.

There are many shared characteristics between the writing style of Pelliot tibétain 1064/ IOL Tib J 480 and the Testimony fragment, though the hand is clearly different. The inverse gi gu and ya btags under ma appear, but more specifically, key letter forms such as ga, cha and zha are formed with exactly the same ductus. On the other hand, the Testimony manuscript is more carefully written, with greater attention to consistency of letter forms, and making a more careful distinction between heavy and light strokes. In short, it is still not possible to date the Testimony fragment through analysis of its format and script, but several indicators point towards it being a product of the late imperial era or the decades following, that is, mid-to late-ninth century.

Comparison with Dba’ bzhed and Rba bzhed

The Testimony fragment or BL fragment is similar enough to the same passage in the Dba’ bzhed manuscript, DBA’ 2000, that these two may be considered (in the passage represented in the fragment) to be variants of the same text. Later versions of the Testimony diverge much further from the BL fragment. However, the newly published manuscript of the Rba’ bzhed, RBA 2011.1, is also similar to the fragment (see Appendix 2 ending this chapter). The Rba bzhed diverges from the BL fragment to about the same extent as the Dba’ bzhed, though often in different ways, and in places the Rba’ bzhed is closer to the fragment (see Appendix 3). For example, at the beginning of line 2 the BL fragment has bcugs na “when he entered,” whereas the Dba’ bzhed gives mjal nas “after meeting.” The Rba’ bzhed is much closer here with gzhugs na, “when he went in.”

Both later manuscripts contain significant interpolations into the passage in the BL fragment. The longest interpolation occurs in the first line of the fragment,

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9 See van Schaik and Iwao, “Fragments of the Testament of Ba,” 484.
where the *Dba’ bzhed* inserts a line repeating Khri Srong lde brtson’s doubts about whether Śāntarakṣīta is bringing foreign black magic. The *Rba bzhed* also inserts text here, but it is completely different: a statement that Gsal snang returned to the palace.10

RBA 2011.1 also throws an interesting new light on a problem that was raised in van Schaik and Iwao, “Fragments of the Testament of Ba”: the *Dba’ bzhed* contains too much text (at 42 syllables) to fit in the lacuna between lines 1 and 2 of the BL fragment. The text in DBA’ 2000, 7v: 2–3 reads (in translation):

> … Seng ’go Lha lung gzigs and ’Ba’ Sang shi, “You three ministers … .” This would mean that the *Dba’ bzhed* adds two extra ministers to the earlier version, in which only one minister, Rgyal sgra legs, is mentioned. This raised in our minds the interesting possibility that members of the Ba clan were inserted into the narrative at some point during the evolution of the text after the BL fragment (or its exemplar) was written. The *Rba bzhed* now appears to support this, since it mentions only one minister at this point, just like the BL fragment. It does go on to mention the three ministers at a slightly later point, which corresponds to the lacuna in the fragment between lines 2 and 3. Also RBA 2011.1 at this point where the three ministers are enumerated contains too much text to fit the

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10 At other points, the *Dba’ bzhed* and the *Rba bzhed* both differ from the BL fragment in much the same way: (i) Both refer to the temple as *Ra sa pe har* rather than *Ra sa ben khang*. (ii) Both state that Śāntarakṣīta was “asked to remain” in the temple rather than that he “was placed” there, though the *Dba’ bzhed* further softens this by the addition of “a little while” (*cung zhig*). (iii) Both change the skills of Ānanta from *gtsug lag* and *srmang rabs* to *sgra* and *sman brlabs.*
lacuna in the BL fragment (31 syllables, in comparison to 23 in DBA’ 2000), suggesting that the extra ministers were not mentioned in the fragment lacuna at this point either. This strongly suggests that the two extra ministers’ names were indeed inserted into the text as part of the later development of the narrative, at different points in the Dba’ bzhet and Rba bzhet.11

Original Context and Function

The key remaining question is, how much of what we now call the Testimony of Ba narrative, as represented in the early manuscript tradition of the Dba’ bzhet and Rba bzhet, was found in the complete manuscript of which the Dunhuang fragments were once a part? There is, unfortunately, nothing in the BL fragment itself that might offer a clue to this. Perhaps the expensive and finely-produced nature of the manuscript suggests that it would not have been merely a couple of folios, since such expense would only be justified in the production of a significant manuscript object. Nevertheless, the Testimony text might only have been one of many in a compendium, which is often the case with the Dunhuang manuscripts.

It might be better to look for clues in the earliest version of the fuller narrative, the Dba’ bzhet. Given that the narrative written on the BL fragment is also found in the middle of the Dba’ bzhet section on the reign of Khri Srong lde brtson, perhaps the original narrative corresponded to the portion of the Dba’ bzhet that deals with Khri Srong lde brtson’s establishment of a Buddhist orthodoxy in Tibet. This would begin with his ascension to the throne (folio 4v: 5), continue through the invitation of Śāntarakṣita to the building of the Bsam yas monastery. It might have ended with the description of the emperor’s edict (bka’ shog), i.e. the text of the pillar at Bsam yas pledging his support to the Buddhist establishment (folio 17v: 6).

Of course, even if this was the full extent of the original Dunhuang manuscript, we would expect that the Dba’ bzhet would contain further interpolations into the text of the kind described above. If it is true that members of the Ba clan were inserted into the narrative at a later date, then it is possible that the Dba’ bzhet episode in which Dba’ Gsal snang and ‘Ba’ Sang shi travel to China would not have been present in the hypothetical original Dunhuang manuscript narrative. This episode sits uneasily in the Dba’ bzhet between the expulsion of Śāntarakṣita from Tibet and his return with Padmasambhava. The later Testimony of Ba tradition places it in a different part of the narrative, during the period when Khri Srong lde brtson is still a child and Buddhism is banned in Tibet. Thus, it appears to be a separate mini-narrative that was inserted into the main narrative at different points in different later versions of the text (compare the insertion of the extra ministers names into the BL fragment passage, discussed above, which occurs at different points in the Dba’ bzhet and Rba bzhet).

It is generally accepted that the Testimony of Ba served the interests of the Ba clan itself, by placing their ancestors front and centre at the key moments of the establishment of Buddhism in the text. If the narrative represented by the BL fragment was not written in order to put forward the interests of the Ba clan in this way, it nevertheless would have had a function when the original manuscript was produced. This was perhaps to reiterate the imperial support for the Buddhist monastic community at the time of Khri Srong lde brtson and his immediate successors, making this past event present in the act of reading the narrative.

The justification of a practice or tradition through narrative is a widely spread phenomenon. Sources can be seen among two types of text also found among the Dunhuang manuscripts: the nidāna (gleng gzhi) or introductory narratives of the Indian Buddhist tradition, and the smrang or ritual narratives of the non-Buddhist Tibetan tradition. Two specific examples are particularly apposite to the BL fragment: Pelliot tibétain 149 and 996.12 The first is a narrative introduction to the Ārya-bhadracaryā-praṇidhāna prayer, set in the same period and milieu as the fragment (the Pelliot tibétain 149 manuscript probably dates from the tenth century). Here the practice of the regular recitation of the prayer is sanctioned by a story involving the emperor, his priest Dba’ Dpal byams (sic) and Śāntarakṣita. Other figures associated with the succession of spiritual heads of Bsam yas also figure in the narrative.

11 The number of syllables corresponding to the lacunae in the BL fragment are as follows:

The second narrative, found in Pelliot tibétain 996 (probably also dating to the tenth century), is an account of a lineage of Buddhist Chan masters that culminates with the composition of the Tibetan Chan treatise *Mdo sde bgyad bcu khungs*. Royal patronage forms an important theme of the text, and one of the masters, Nam ka'i snying po (*sic*), is stated to have taken ordination during the reign of Khri Srong lde brtsan. Thus, both narratives invoke the imperial patronage of Buddhism and are clearly written as justifications of their associated texts and practices.

It seems reasonable, then, to suggest a similar function for the narrative of which we now have only the part represented in S. 9498 and S. 13683: as a justification or ratification of a religious tradition and its representatives. This becomes even more evident with the later incorporation of the text of these Dunhuang fragments into the full *Testimony* narratives in the following centuries.

**Appendix 1:**

Transliteration and Translation of the BL Fragment

Or.8210/S. 9498A and Or.8210/S. 13683C (the latter in italics)

1: [...] lags gtol ma mchis / ra sa'i beng gang du bzhag / / zhang lon chen po blon rgyal sgra legs [...]
2: [...] du bcugs na / lha bal gyal ngan sngags dang / / 'phra men lta bu yod dam myed / / thugs phr{l}g[l]([...]
3: [...]l{o} ts{a}{l}{p}{a} [m]a mchis te / / tshong dus kha drug du / / kha che dang yang II lo tsa pa 'tshal [...]
4: [...]e [sbyl]In che chung gnyis dang / / kha che a nan ta dang gsum myed ma [...] 
5: [...] bram ze skyes zang kha che yul na / / stson rngams po che [...]u[...]
6: [...]u lags st[e] / /[b]ram z[e]7 [g]tsug lag dang / / smrang lugs da[ng][...]

Translation

1: [...] He was uncertain whether [...] was placed in the Ra sa Beng khang. To the great minister Blon rgyal sgra legs [...]
2: [...] he ordered: “Investigate whether there are any foreign evil spirits or black magic.” [...] 
3: [...] there was no interpreter. [...] interpreters of Kashmir and Yang li at the six market-places [...] 
4: [...] Three interpreters were found: the two [...]e sbyin brothers and A-nan-ta from Kashmir. [...] 
5: [...] the son of the brahman Skyes zang who was a serious convicted criminal in Kashmir. [...] 
6: [...] sacred scriptures of the brahmans and the tradition of ritual exposition [...] 

**Appendix 2:**

Corresponding Passages from the *Db{}a’ bzhed* and *Rba bzhed*

The passages in which the ministers are mentioned are marked in bold.

**DBA’ 2000, 7v:1-7:** ... ci lags gtol ma mchis te/ ra sa pe har du cung (zhig) bzhugs su gsol [te] / lho bal gyi ngan sngags dang phra men dag yod par thugs 'phrig bzhes nas/ *zhang blon chen po sbrang rgyal sbra legs gzigs dang/ seng 'go lha lung gzigs dang/ 'ba' sang shi dang gsum* la bka’ stsal pa/ blon po khyed gsum ra sa pe har du song la/ atsarya bo dhi sa tvai’ zhal sngag phyag ‘tshal zhing mjal nas/ lho bal gyi ngan sngags dang phra men lta bu yod daM med thugs 'phrig bzhes dgos sam mi dgos khyed kyis rtogs shig ces bka’ stsal nas/ *de gsuM* gys ra sa pe har du mchis te/ lo tsa ba ma mchis te tshong ‘dus kha drug tu kha che dang yang le’i lo tsa ba ‘tshal ba su mchis zhes tshong dpon so sor rmas nas/ ra sa’i tshong ‘dus nas kha che lhas byin che chung 2 dang/ kha che a nan ta dang gsum myed pa las/ lhas byin che chung 2 kyis ni tshong gi lo tsa ba tsam las rngo ma thog/ a nan ta ni phra bram ze skyes bzang bya ba 1 kha che’i yul du nyes pa rngams chen zhig byas pa las lho bal kha che’i chos lugs kyis bram ze dgum du mi rung nas/ bod yul du spyugs pa’i bu lags te bram ze’i gtsug lag dang sgra dang sman sbslas pas chos sgyur ba’i rngo thog nas/

**RBA 2011.1, 70:5–10 (4v:5–10):**

... da rung gang lags ci gtol ma mchis nas ra sa pe har du bzhugs gsol te/ gsas snang ni pho brang du mchis nas/ gnyer bsKuM pa dang/ *rgyal sbrang legs gzigs la bka’ stsal pa* / blon chen po ra sa’i pe har
du song la/ a rya bo dhi sa tva btsan po'i spyan sngag phyag tshal du gzhug na/ lho bal gyi ngan sngags dang 'phra len ma lta bu yod dam med kyi thugs 'phrig dgosaM mi dgos rtog dpyod gton bar chad nas/ sbrang legs gzig dang/ seng mgo lha lung gzig dang/ dba' sang she dang 3 ra sar mchis pa las/ lo tsha ba ma mchis te tshong dus kha drug kha che dang/ yang le'i phru gu lo tsha ba 'tshal na ci mchis zhes tshong dpon so sor smras pa las/ ra sa'i tshong dus nas kha che lha sbyin che chung 2 dang/ kha che a n-han ta 3 myed pa las/ lha sbyin che chung 2 kyis ni tshong brang(?) gi lo tsha ba las sngo ma thog/ kha che a nan+ta ni kho'i pha braM ze skye bzang zhes bya ba zhig gis/ kha che'i yul du nyes pa chaM song ci chig byas pa las/ lho bal kha che'ichos lugs kyis braM ze dguM du mi rung bas/ bod yul du spyugs pa'i bu a nan+ta lags te/ a nan+ta braM ze'i gtsug lag sgra dang sman bslabs pas cho bsgyur ba'i mgo thog ste/

Appendix 3:
Comparison Between (A) the BL Fragment, (B) DBA' 2000, 7v:1–7, and (C) RBA 2011.1, 70:5–10 (4v:5–10)

Interpolations marked in bold. Significant alternative readings marked with italics.

Line 1
A: [c]’I lags gtol ma mchIs/ ra sa’I beng gang du bzhag// zhang lon chen po blon rgyal sgra legs
B: ci lags gtol ma mchis te/ ra sa pe har du cung [zhig] bzhus gsol [te]/ lho bal gyi ngan sngags dang phra men dag yod par thugs ’phrig bzhes nas/ zhang blon chen po sbrang rgyal sbra legs
C: gang lags ci gtol ma mchis nas ra sa pe har du bzhugs gsol te/ gsas snang ni pho brang du mchis nas/ gnyer bskuM pa dang/ zhang blon chen po rgyal sbrang legs

Line 2
A: du bcugs na/ lho bal gyi ngan sngags dang/ ’phra men lta bu yod dam myed/ / thugs phrI[g]
B: zhing mjal nas/ lho bal gyi ngan sngags dang phra men lta bu yod daM med thugs ’phrig
C: du gzhug na/ lho bal gyi ngan sngags dang ’phra len ma lta bu yod dam med kyi thugs ’phrig

Line 3
A: [l]o ts[a] pa [m]a mchis te/ / tshong dus kha drug du/ kha che dang yang ll lo tsa pa ’tshal
B: lo tsa ba ma mchis te tshong ’dus kha drug tu kha che dang yang le’i lo tsa ba ’tshal
C: / lo tsha ba ma mchis te tshong dus kha drug kha che dang/ yang le’i phru gu lo tsha ba ’tshal

Line 4
A: [...]e [sby]In che chung gnyis dang/ / kha che a nan ta dang gsum rnyed ma
B: lhas byin che chung 2 dang/ kha che a nan ta dang gsum rnyed pa
C: lha sbyin che chung 2 dang/ kha che a nan ta 3 rnyed pa

Line 5
A: braM ze skyes zang kha che yul na/ stson rngams po che [...]u
B: braM ze skyes bzang bya ba 1 kha che’i yul du nyes pa rngaM chen
C: braM ze skyes bzang zhes bya ba zhig gis/ kha che’i yul du nyes pa chaM song

Line 6
A: [...]u lags st[e] / /[b]ram z[e]’I [g]tsug lag dang / smrang lugs da[ng]
B: bu lags te braM ze’i gtsug lag dang sgra dang sman bslabs pas
C: bu a nan+ta lags te/ a nan+ta braM ze’i gtsug lag sgra dang sman bslabs pas
Chapter 4
Archaisms and the Transmission of the *Db’a* bzhed

The investigation of archaisms in the *Db’a* bzhed rests on a number of assumptions. In the first place, there is the assumption that the concept of ‘archaism’ is relevant to the transmission and editing of the *Db’a* bzhed. This is to assert that the editors of the *Db’a* 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. Considering the *Db’a* 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.) Unpicking some of these rough edges that the *Db’a* 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 *Db’a* bzhed. The titles *Db’a* 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.

**Db’a** bzhed and **Bka’** mchid:
What’s in a Name?

The *Db’a* bzhed contains several orthographical and lexicographical enigmas. The most obvious of these is its title, “The Testimony of *Db’a*: the Text of the Royal Narrative Concerning How the Buddhist Religion Came to Tibet” (*Sangs rgyas kyichos bzhod kham 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.” 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 Nying ral 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*. 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

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1 I am indebted to Cathy Cantwell, Ruth Gamble, Diana Lange and Rob Mayer for their observations and suggestions, and I am especially grateful to Lewis Doney for his perceptive comments offered in the course of editing this paper. Any errors and misunderstandings are of course my own. I gratefully acknowledge the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, who supported the research project “Kingship and Religion in Tibet,” under whose auspices this research was conducted.


5 Denwood, “Some Remarks on the Status and Dating of the Sba bzhed,” 143–44.
imperial period or shortly thereafter. 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-priod 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 itar 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 Khri Srong lde btsan,” in Hugh 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 skor med cig gsum gyi rten bca’s 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.
ical flavor and would have essentially extended the sorts of royal eulogies that are found in the Inscription at the Tomb of Khri Lde srng btsan (d. 815) and in the ‘Phyong rgyas Bridge Head Inscription. 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. 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. 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 Buddhadharna 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 Sāntarakṣita 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 pha pho nyar btsan pos bka’ stsal nas/ mchid kyis tshal te slad nas dgongs pa bzhin du grub na dangul chen po stsal bar gtsigs gnang/. 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. After Gsas snang is called back from his meditation-re-treat-cum-self-imposed-exile, he plays a minor role in the Bsam yas Debate by recommending that Khri Srong Iide btsan invite the Indian master Kamalaśīla to refute Hwa shang Mahāyāna (Heshang Moheyandin) and his Chan proponents. The main narrative of the Dba’ bzhed then ends with Khri Srong Iide btsan’s decision and a quasi-colophon, but

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15 DBA’ 2000, 24v.
without any explicit mention of a decree to Gsas snang. The first addendum to the Dba’ bzhd—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.

20 See, for example, chapter five of the Old Tibetan Chronicle, where Srong btsan 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.
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’ 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’ 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 happen 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. 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*. 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 (gtṣigs) 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’. 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. 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). This, too, may date to the tenth century. Thus, while the term of use *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 indicate that it was inserted into the narrative from another source with differing orthographies.

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 nyas pa* of Mkhhas 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, 5r3; see Wangdu and Diemberger, *Dba’ bzhed*, 38, 39, n. 77. This is in the context of the episode concerning Chinese zhai rituals and the vermilion 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-Waźny, Codicology, Paleography, and Orthography of Early Tibetan Documents: Methods and a Case Study (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhismische Studien, Universität Wien, 2016), 128–36.


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 [*gtsigs*].

**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.

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 Gsas 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 *btsigs 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

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30 In their translation of the phrase *bka non bla nas mdzad* in the west inscription at Zhvā’ 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.


33 Bsod nams skyid, “Gna’ bo’i bod kyi rgyig 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).15 The Old Tibetan Chronicle also refers to Srong btsan sgam po’s (d. 650) standardization of the distances between stations.16

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’ bzched, 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 kys is, 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’ bzched’s editors as elements of the name of a royal residence, and were left to stand as such.

In another passage in the Dba’ bzched, 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.

Gnas snang yang rgya yul nas mchis te zha sngar phyag bgyis pa dang /bo d+hsia twa sphyon 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 sphyon drangs nas bzhes pa dang /bsam yas rtsng po dang le ci sgo mangs rtsig pa'i phyva mdkhan gnas snang gis rlungs la drangs nas gshegs par gso la dang /snyi mo thod kar du gshogs 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’ bzched’s editors understood the term this way, and it is likely that they did not.

The other versions of the Sba bzched 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’ bzched’s rlungs, which is a sort of nonsensical middle ground—to chu klung had immediate consequences for the editors of the various Sba bzched-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, [Gsas 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 sphyon drangs te/ snye mo thod dkar du byon pa dang). 38

35 Pelliot tibétain 1290, recto: 10. Cf. Ariane Macdonald, “Une lecture des Pelliot Tibétain 1286, 1287, 1038, et 1290: Essai sur la formation et la répartition des eaux,” 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.
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’ bzched, 41, n. 88.
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’i mang yul nas rdinglas bcas nas chu klong las spyan drangs nas snye mo’i thod dkar du gshags 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 yug40 (mkhan po gnyis ka gsal snang gis mang yul nas gzung bcas nas chu klong la spyan drangs ’u yug gi thad kar gshags 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] klong 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 one reach 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.yul), gold (gsers), 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

40 The meaning could also be “straight to ’U yug.”
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 Lhassa. Une controverse sur le quétisme entre Bouddhistes de l’Inde et de la Chine au VIIe siècle de l’ère Chrétienne (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), 284–86, n. 2. More recently, see Dotson, The Old Tibetan Inscriptions, 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).
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 metalwork, 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. 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 mey, with few exceptions. This is in accordance with a rule, well observed in Old Tibetan writing, that mi and me are palatalized, 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 723, verso: 21; IOL Tib J 739, 8r:12; Pelliot tibétain 1105, l. 6; Pelliot tibétain 1105, 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 craftspeople, suggests that phra men is a loanword. Looking to other instances of non-palatalized men, the most obvious and most prevalent is men tog (“flower”). 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 b.

Recently Helga Uebach proposed that phra men is “an Indian loanword connected to Skt. pramaṇḍita = ‘ornamented,’ ‘adorned’ corresponding to Tibetan rab tu rgyan pa.” 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 secondary 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 zhas pa pad ma ’phreng gi don bsdu 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


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 rewards” (pho brang du thabs phra men dang rgya byu che thang du dngang/).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 attached to the town prefect and granted the rank of gilded silver…” (rtse rje’i zlar bsko/ 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 byu’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 byu’u could be an error of hearing for the phonologically similar diphthong bryye’u rje meaning “head of a little hundred[-unit].”56

Even so, a bryye’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 Sāntarakṣita 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 Sāntarakṣita’s teachings might contain “barbarian spells and sorcery” (lha 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.


53 DBA 2000, 10v:5.

54 DBA 2000, 19r:5.


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 *Dbâ’ 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 Dbâ’ Gsas snang—account for its location between the genres of royal history and religious history and for the central role of the Dbâ’ clan. Linguistically, it also lies between Old Tibetan and Classical Tibetan, and the title of the work, *Dbâ’ bzhed*, as opposed to *Dbâ’s bzhed* or *Sba bzhed*, is emblematic of this. In the *Dbâ’ 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 *Dbâ’ 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 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 *Dbâ’ 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.
Chapter 5
Narrative Sources of the Great Debate

The ‘Great Debate’ at Bsam yas (called variously the ‘Lha sa Debate,’ the ‘Council of Lha sa’ or the ‘Council of Tibet’) has attracted much scholarly attention from the mid-twentieth century up to the present. The aim of this chapter is not to give a definitive reading of the key issue of the debate, i.e. the contest between the gradual and sudden paths to enlightenment. Rather, it is to examine how the narrative of the debate in the Dba’ bzhed was assembled and the function this narrative played in this version of the text.


While discussing the sources that were used to build the account of the debate in the Dba’ bzhed, I will digress to explain the identity and stance of Sang shi, one of the disputants. The Dba’ bzhed sheds a new light on Sang shi’s words and his philosophical alignment. This prompts a reconsideration of later versions of the Testimony of Ba and also of previous scholars’ interpretations of Sang shi’s identity and position. These problems led me to add a further section called “Further Complexities: Sang shi in the Testimony of Ba.” This moves away from the narrative of the Dba’ bzhed proper but provides useful information regarding the later Testimony of Ba tradition on this important figure.

The dispute between those who believed in an instantaneous approach to enlightenment and those who advocated a gradual path that led step-by-step to realisation belongs to the main narrative of the Testimony of Ba in all its known versions. As the text declares in its opening lines, the core of the story concerns the first appearance and establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. Such a narrative could not but describe the construction of the Bsam yas temple and the institution of the Buddhist samgha. Therefore, the kind of dharma and the monastic traditions that were adopted—as well as the reasons for their adoption—were unavoidable subjects of discussion. However, it is unclear when the debate came to be part of this narrative. The patchwork nature of this section of the narrative makes it improbable that the earliest compilers of the Testimony had a ready-made description of the debate on which they could draw. Despite the philosophical nature of the discussion, the debate has a strong political dimension, which suggests that compilers and redactors of the Testimony created an account that was inflected by their own positions, interests and agendas. The Dba’ bzhed compilers must have arranged the sources at their disposal—in addition to what they knew—in a way that was conducive to their point of view. That the debate was put together on the basis of different records is reasonably evident. The ‘bricks’ used to form the structure are clear, yet their arrangement reveals a number of ‘weak points’ in the fabric suggesting that the compilers were not completely free in their choice of material and that some of their sources might have contained unwelcome information.2

2 In the field of Buddhist studies, one of the first to speak of authorship as the ability to assemble new structures from old building
The following pages seek to identify as many building blocks as possible to see how and why they were brought together and to explain, moreover, the different understanding of the parts that have emerged over time. In doing this, I will follow the sequence of debate events. Table 5.1 below aims to identify the main sections of the debate and it provides a guide to the discussion that follows. The events that lead to the debate are numbered 1 to 6 in the table; for the sake of convenience I refer to these as the ‘introduction to the debate.’

Table 5.1: Key episodes of the debate

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Heshang Moheyan arrives in Tibet</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict between Moheyan’s followers and Sāntarakṣita’s followers</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The king summons Ye shes dbang po back from his retreat</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Ye shes dbang po recites Sāntarakṣita’s prophecy</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Kamalaśīla is summoned to Tibet</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Moheyan and his disciples prepare for the debate. They study the <em>Prajñāpāramitā</em> sūtra</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>The king opens the debate stating the reasons why the debate was held</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Moheyan speaks (<em>3</em> Bhāvanākrama + unidentified passage)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kamalaśīla speaks (<em>3</em> Bhāvanākrama)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The king opens the discussion to the followers of the two factions</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sang shi speaks (historical/doctrinal remarks + summary of the Six Perfections + remarks on the instantaneous and gradual approaches)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Dpal dbyangs speaks (remarks on the instantaneous and gradual approaches + <em>Saṃdhinirmocana</em> sūtra + a final attack to the instantaneous approach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The king proclaims the gradualists to be victorious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Introduction to the Debate**

The narrative of the debate starts after the account of the construction of Bsam yas and settlements for the sponsorship of the monks; this results in Ye shes dbang po’s meditative retreat in Lho brag. The text states that most monks at that time became followers of a Chinese master named Heshang Moheyan. Moheyan—according to the *Testimony*—teaches a doctrine based on absence of dualistic thought and the instantaneous attainment of nirvāṇa. This doctrinal position disagrees with that of the Indian side, put forward by Sāntarakṣita, and endorsed by the king, which asserts that nirvāṇa can be achieved only through gradual stages. As friction between these two parties increases, the followers of Moheyan cause disturbances by self-harming and threatening violence against those following the gradual path.

The king then calls Ye shes dbang po—who has gone into retreat—to solve the conflict. The latter, though unwilling to interrupt his meditation, eventually agrees to return. Once he arrives, he reprimands the king for not being able to sort out the matter on his own. Ye shes dbang po then recites the last words Sāntarakṣita pronounced before his death. These announce that during the last five hundred years of the *dharma* disagreements were bound to arise among the Buddhist *sangha*. At that time Sāntarakṣita’s disciple Kamalaśīla should be summoned to correct the monks who have gone astray. Sāntarakṣita’s words therefore link the well-known theory of the last five hundred years of the Buddha *dharma* on earth—believed to have been first pronounced by the Buddha himself—to the present disagreement between Indian and Chinese monks in Tibet. In this way, the text prepares the stage for the debate and confers on it a higher significance.

While Kamalaśīla is being fetched from Nepal, Ye shes dbang po explains the gradualist approach to the king who in turn proclaims Ye shes dbang po his spiritual teacher. The followers of the instantaneous path lock themselves in the Bsam gtan gling to study the *Prajñāpāramitā* in a hundred thousand verses in preparation for their final attack to the instantaneous approach.
for the debate. The text explicitly says they set aside the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*.

**The Debate**

The debate starts with the instantaneous and gradualist parties entering the temple; the king seating in the centre, the instantaneous party on the right and the gradualists on the left. The main followers of Heshang Moheyan and Kamalaśīla are introduced. Heshang’s disciples are: Jo mo Byang chub, Sru Yang dag and the monk Lang Ka. Kamalaśīla’s disciples are Dba’ Dpal dbyangs, Dba’ Rad na and “a few ordained monks” (*dge slong mi mang ba zhi*).² A garland is presented to Heshang and Kamalaśīla. The king opens the discussion by explaining that the debate is held because disagreement has arisen between the followers of the Indian master and those of the Chinese master.

The first to speak is Heshang Moheyan. His speech spans from folio 20v, line 2 to folio 20v, line 5. Fleming Faber first recognised that the Heshang’s words come from Kamalaśīla’s third *Bhāvanākrama*.³ In fact, the passage from folio 20v line 2 to folio 20v, line 4 corresponds quite closely to the third *Bhāvanākrama*’s passage stretching from 122:1 to 122:2.⁴ This section of the *Bhāvanākrama* discusses the wrong views professed by “someone” (*gang zhi*),⁵ but it is uncertain whether Kamalaśīla wrote it after the debate—and therefore gives us Kamalaśīla’s understanding of Moheyan’s view—or if the compiler of the *Dba’ bzhet* put these words in Moheyan’s mouth. The final passage of Moheyan’s speech in the *Dba’ bzhet* (20v:4–20v:5) is not attested in Kamalaśīla’s work. This runs as follows: “For the intelligent, purified in previous births, virtuous and sinful deeds obscure [the mind] equally, just as the sky is obscured equally by black and white clouds. Those who do not do anything, do not conceptualise and do not focus, they instantaneously attain the level similar to the sky is obscured equally by black and white clouds. A couple of exceptions are Bu ston’s *chos byung* and Padma dkar po’s *Phyag rgya chen po*’s *man ngag gi bshad sbyar rgyal ba*’s *gan mkzad* in *Gsvang ‘bum Padma Dkar po*’s *Darjeeling: Kargyud sungrab nyamso khang, 1973–1974. vol. 21, 331: 5*). The structure of this sentence in the *Bu ston chos byung* and the *Dba’ bzhet* is too different to suppose any relationship between the two, but Pad ma dkar po’s sentence is very close to the *Dba’ bzhet*’s. However, as the rest of the debate does not match—and sun and sky are easily interchangeable—it is impossible to say if Padma dkar po had access to a version of the *Testimony of Ba* that was more simply Padma dkar po’s emendation.

The source of this passage is not known but these words are found in both SBA 1961.1–2 and SBA 1982.1–3 and Dpa’ bo Gsugs lag phreng ba’s *Chos byung mkhas pa’i dga’ ston* (SBA 1980).⁶ There are minor differences between the version of the *Bhāvanākrama* that is found nowadays in the *Bka’ ‘gyur* and the version quoted in the *Dba’ bzhet*. Thus, it could be surmised that the compiler of the latter text was in possession of a different copy of *Bhāvanākrama* than the one now available. However, it is noteworthy that, among the different versions found in the *Testimony*, the *Dba’ bzhet* is closest to the *Bhāvanākrama* as presently preserved. It would be difficult to decide whether the last sentences of Heshang Moheyan (cited in the previous paragraph) appeared in an earlier version of the *Bhāvanākrama*—now lost but available to the compiler of the *Dba’ bzhet*—or whether the compiler, having copied the relevant section of the *Bhāvanākrama*, decided to supplement it by adding words attributed to Heshang that he had heard or read. The latter hypothesis (i. e. that the compiler added material) gains extra weight when we consider that some Tibetan texts connected with Moheyan and his instantaneous approach were created by assembling passages from the *Bhāvanākrama* and words attributed to him found in Dunhuang manuscripts.⁷ However, I was unable to locate this passage in the Dunhuang materials, so the source remains unknown for the present.

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5 Dba’ 2000, 20r:1
6 Faber “Council,” 49. Faber refers to the *Sba bzhet* he had at his disposal, but as the two quotations are very similar his remarks also apply to the *Dba’ bzhet*; see also Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, *Dba’ bzhet: the Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha’s Doctrine to Tibet* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), 81, n. 313.
8 Bsgom pa’i rim pa 122r:1
9 The translations in this chapter follow that by Gonkatsang and Wil- lis in Part Two of this volume.
10 This sentence is subject to a slight variation in SBA 1961.1–2, SBA 1982.1–3 and SBA 1980. While DBA 2000, 20v:5 records that the clouds obscure the sky (*nam mkha’*), SBA 1961.1–2, 58.6, SBA 1982.1–3, 68.18 and SBA 1980, 383:2, record that the clouds obscure the sun (*mi ma*). As the later versions of the *Testimony of Ba* had a larger diffusion than the *Dba’ bzhet* ever did, almost all the subsequent texts quoting this passage have the sun rather than the sky. A couple of exceptions are Bu ston’s *chos byung* and Padma dkar po’s *Phyag rgya chen po*’s *man ngag gi bshad sbyar rgyal ba*’s *gan mkzad* in *Gsvang ‘bum Padma Dkar po*. Darjeeling: Kargyud sungrab nyamso khang, 1973–1974. vol. 21, 331: 5). The structure of this sentence in the *Bu ston chos byung* and the *Dba’ bzhet* is too different to suppose any relationship between the two, but Pad ma dkar po’s sentence is very close to the *Dba’ bzhet*’s. However, as the rest of the debate does not match—and sun and sky are easily interchangeable—it is impossible to say if Padma dkar po had access to a version of the *Testimony of Ba* closer to the *Dba’ bzhet* or it was more simply Padma dkar po’s emendation.
Changing Speakers and Changing Positions

When the representative of the two factions end their presentations, the king opens up the debate to include the leading disciples of the instantaneous and gradual approach. Only two people speak, but the names of those two people change depending on which version of the Testament of Ba we read. In DBA' 2000 and SBA 1961.1–2, these are Sang shi and Dpal dbyangs, while in SBA 1982.1–3 and Gtshug lag phreq ba's SBA 1980, Dpal dbyangs and Ye shes dbang po speak. It should be noted that neither Sang shi nor Ye shes dbang po appear among the disciples who followed the two masters at the beginning of the debate, either in the Dba' bzhed or in SBA 1961.1–2 and SBA 1982.1–3.14 The only exception is Gtshug lag phreq ba's SBA 1980, which replaces the usual Dba' Ratna or Sba Ratna with Ye shes dbang po.15 Table 5.2 below first compares the names of Moheyan's and Kamalaśīla's followers in the different exemplars of the Testament of Ba, and then compares them with the names of the people who eventually spoke at the debate.

Sang shi appears, though there is no mention of him in the lists of the two masters' disciples.16 He commences his talk by giving a short recapitulation of the Six Perfections (pāramitā)—dāna, šīla, kṣānti, virya, dhyāna and prajñā—after which he comments on the formation of new schools after the death of the Buddha.

Sang shi's intervention is somewhat peculiar. Earlier scholars, who had only later versions of the Testament to guide them, agreed on the basis of his speech that Sang shi or Dpal dbyangs (depending on the version) was on the side of the gradualists. However, there is enough evidence to suppose that originally Sang shi’s argument was either on the side of Moheyan or that it represented a more moderate and conciliatory group. Several points suggest this. For example, we know from the introduction to the debate that the proponents of the instantaneous party spent two months reading the Shes rab 'bum in preparation. Therefore, we would expect them

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12 Bsgom pa'i rim pa, 122:1. A few folios below, Kamalaśīla says that those who claim that nirvāṇa is obtained without practising generosity and so forth are accepting the view of the Ājīvaka but whether he is referring to some Indian Buddhist scholar who propounded this Ājīvaka view or to the Chinese monk is unclear. Bsgom pa'i rim pa 127:5: yang dge ba la sogs pa'i las ci yang mi bya'o zhes zer ba de ni de skad smra bas las zad nas grol bar 'gyur ro zhes mu stegs can kun tu tshol ba'i smra ba khas blangs par 'gyur ro. As Ruegg notices the term “Ājīvaka” in the Tibetan version of the Bhāvanākrama is translated “mu stegs can kun tu tshol ba”; Ruegg, Buddha-Nature, 142, n. 271.

13 A few sentences are also missing in Kamalaśīla’s speech in the Dba’ bzhed, mainly where he references the two quotations. The quotations are found in the Bhāvanākrama, 122:5–7. Both the translations of the Gayaśīrṣa and the Tathāgataguhyāsūtra are found in the Bka’ ‘gyur. According to the colophons of these two texts, the Gayaśīrṣa and the Tathāgataguhyāsūtra were translated during the first diffusion by the famous translator and compiler of the Mahāvyutpatti, Ye shes sde. The colophon of the Gayaśīrṣa also gives the name of the Indian master Surendrabodhi, who also was involved in the compilation of the Mahāvyutpatti and whose duty was to correct the translations made by Ye shes sde and the other Tibetan translators. The passage of the Gayaśīrṣa quoted in the Bhāvanākrama is to be found in Ga yā mgo ’i ri’i mdo: Bka’ ‘gyur (Sde dge: Sde dge pa khang chen mo, 1733), vol. 49, 5757 and 5761 (CA, 288v:7 and 289r:1). The very short passage quoted by Kamalaśīla from the Tathāgataguhyāsūtra finds an approximate parallel in De bzhin gshegs pa’s gsang ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa bstan pa’i mdo: Bka’ ‘gyur (Sde dge pa khang chen mo, 1733), vol. 39, 2075–6 (KA, 103r:5–6).


16 One could argue that the compiler of the text confused Dba’ Rad na with ‘Ba’ Sang shi, as at the end of the Testament we find Rad na called ‘Ba’ Rad na. However, this does not seem to be the case, since Rad na’s clan name is only spelled ‘Ba’ instead of Dba’ in the Zas gtag appendix (25v:6). There is no confusion with regard to Dba’ Ratna’s clan name in the main text of the Dba’ bzhed. For a discussion on the names see below.
to use aspects of this text to substantiate their point of view.

The way Sang shi presents the Prajñāpāramitā echoes what we know of Heshang Moheyan’s teachings: Sang shi’s explanation of the Six Perfections is that each of the Perfections is in its highest form when the practitioner is able to go beyond the dichotomy of that Perfection and its reverse. Later texts, including SBA 1961.1–2 and SBA 1982.1–3 slightly modify the text so that Sang shi seems to claim that what he said about the Perfections represents the wrong view of the Heshang, and not his own. This is clear if we look at the first few words of Sang shi’s speech. The Dba’ bzhed simply starts with “rgya’i cig car ’jug cing rim gyis sbyor ba ...” (“The Chinese instantaneous entrance and the application through stages ...”). In SBA 1961.1–2 Sang shi is still the speaker, but the beginning of his speech slightly changes: “rgya’i ltar na cig car ’jug cing rims gyis sbyongs mchis ...” (“According to the Chinese there are the simultaneous entrance and the application through stages ...”). SBA 1982.1–3 puts these words into the mouth of Dpal dbyangs and the following speech of Dpal dbyangs is then pronounced by Ye shes dbang po. To make even clearer that Sang shi and Dpal dbyangs are on the gradualist side, SBA 1982.1–3 begins with khyed rgya’i bzhed pa (“You, holders of the Chinese [position]”). Bu ston’s account seems to be closer to SBA 1961.1–2 because, although it puts this speech in the mouth of Dpal dbyangs, like SBA 1982.1–3, it starts with rgya’i ltar. Yet, the following passage concerning the Six Perfections is worded differently from all the Testimony of Ba versions. SBA 1980 follows SBA 1982.1–3 (or Bu ston) in making Dpal dbyangs reading presupposing that, as Moheyan spoke first at the debate, so his disciple was the first to speak after the king opened the discussion to the others, we could easily read this sentence “because you [gradualists] do not even understand the Prajñāpāramitā” and then the natural explanation of the real, correct meaning of the Perfections, i.e. Moheyan’s view explained by one of his disciples. The reasons why this second option is more plausible are discussed below but it is clear from this that, if Sang shi was reporting the Heshang’s wrong reading of the pāramitā-s, he should have at least ended his speech by giving the right reading or a remark of some sort. Instead, after this lengthy exposition (of theoretically wrong views) he drops the subject without any criticism and picks up another theme.


19 Bu ston’s account is different from the others, and slightly closer to Gtsug lag phreng ba’s narration. For example, where the Testimony of Ba tradition says: “if [you] do not even understand the Six Perfections ...” Both Bu ston and Gtsug lag phreng ba supplement the sentence by adding that, according to the Chinese, the Six Perfections should be understood as their reverse (... pha rol tu phyin pa drug mi nthun phyogs las gdags par gsung te). Then Gtsug lag phreng ba goes on to give the shortened explanation of the Six Perfections that we find in the Sba bzhed-s. Bu ston, on the other hand, explains his statement further by taking as an example the Perfection of generosity and saying that this concept holds true also for the other Perfections rather than discussing the other five Perfections individually. According to him: “Highest Charity is thus viewed only as the absence of greediness. The fact of abstaining from every kind of appropriation thus represents the Highest Transcendental Charity” Bu ston Rin chen grub, History of Buddhism (Chos-ḥbyung,) trans. Eugène Obermiller (Heidelberg: In kommission bei O. Harrassowitz, 1931), 194.
speak instead of Sang shi.  It also includes Ye shes dbang po in the list of Kamalaśīla’s disciples.  Besides distancing the speaker from the Chinese side, SBA 1961.1–2, SBA 1982.1–3 and SBA 1980, by naming the Chinese at the beginning of the speech, are able to attribute to them the wrong understanding of the pāramitā-s that follows. Compared to the Dbā’bzhed, the later versions give a truncated explanation of the Perfections so that the Chinese reading of the pāramitā-s becomes a mere negation of the Perfection in question. Thus, generosity is simply giving up craving; forbearance is the mere lack of wrath; diligence is the lack of laziness and so forth. This is not the case with the Dbā’ bzhed, where the explanation of each Perfection is elaborated on, and it is said that it is that the best of generosity, forbearance etc., is the one that transcends that Perfection and its reverse. At the end, Sang shi (or Dpal dbyangs) does not attempt, even briefly, to correct the Chinese wrong understanding of the Perfections, but goes on explaining how the schools formed after the death of the Buddha. Thus, although SBA 1961.1–2, SBA 1982.1–3 and SBA 1980 are similar in wording to the Dbā’bzhed, their meaning changes.

In his closing remarks, Sang shi seems to propose that both the approaches—gradual and instantaneous—are genuine methods to reaching enlightenment. By comparing the emergence of the three Mādhyamika schools with that of the sudden and gradual approaches, he appears to grant orthodoxy to both. The reason that is given for the appearance of all these schools is that it is that the death of the Buddha left his disciples without anyone who could clarify their doubts and keep the sangha united. As already noted, the purport of this claim is not very different from what we find in Śāntarakṣita’s prophecy about the degeneration of the dharma during the last five hundred years. Yet here, Sang shi presents the issue in a more positive light. What Śāntarakṣita announces as a quarrel among Buddhists—in which one side is irrevocably wrong and the other right—Sang shi explains as the formation of different schools, all tending to the right end.

Finally, Sang shi’s assertion (and in other versions that of Dpal dbyangs) that the “goal is one” for both the gradualist and instantaneous schools is afterwards contradicted by Dpal dbyangs (and in other versions Ye shes dbang po) who asserts most clearly that “the instantaneous entrance and the application through gradual stages, these two should be spoken of distinctly” and a few lines later: “the two paths, gradualist and instantaneous, are totally different.” The words of Dpal dbyangs, when read after Sang shi’s, as they appear in the text, sound like an attack on Sang shi’s position. This would not make sense, of course, if Sang shi was putting forward a gradualist position.

In terms of general structure, Sang shi’s intervention fits more appropriately if it stands on the Chinese side; the king opens the debate to the teachers; the instantaneous side speaks; the gradualist side responds; the king then opens the debate to the disciples; the instantaneous side speaks; and the gradualist side responds. The fact that Sang shi does not appear among the disciples of either party introduced at the beginning of the debate is somewhat peculiar. It may suggest either that the writer was not inclined to class Sang shi on the Heshang’s side, or that Sang shi was above factionalism. On the contrary, Dpal dbyangs—who speaks after Sang shi—is introduced as Kamalaśīla’s disciple.

Further complexities: Sang Shi in the Testimony of Ba

The Dbā’bzhed does not provide any information on Sang shi’s background. He appears first as one of the ministers who are sent to investigate Śāntarakṣita’s intentions and then he becomes one of the most prominent delegates in the China expedition. SBA 1961.1–2, SBA 1982.1–3 and SBA 1980, however, give an interesting history of Sang shi’s origin. Here he is presented as the son of a Chinese envoy named ‘Ba’ De’u who is in Tibet during the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan’s father, Khri Lde gtsug btsan. ‘Ba’ De’u leaves his son in Tibet as companion to the young prince. Sang shi is thus able to speak both Chinese and Tibetan and for this reason is sent to China to look for the dharma. In SBA 1961.1–2 and SBA 1982.1–3 Sang shi goes on two expeditions to China, rather than just one. The first is during the reign of Khri Lde gtsug btsan and the second—which happens at the time of Khri Srong Lde

21 SBA 1980, 381:6–7 (see Table 5.2 above). Bu ston does not name the disciples at all. Instead he reports a list of text titles that Heshang Moheyen wrote at the time when he was preparing for the debate (Chos kyi ‘byung gnas, 887:5–6).
22 This matter is discussed in Chapter 2 of this volume, in Willis and Gonkatsang’s remarks on folio 22r.
btsan—corresponds with the expedition narrated in the *Dbu’ bzhed*. We do not know whether the compiler of the *Dbu’ bzhed* knew the story of Sang shi’s origins, or if it was a later addition in SBA 1961.1–2 and SBA 1982.1–3 taken from a later source. Nonetheless, Sang shi—who travels to China and receives the instructions of revered Kim—does not seem to be right person to argue against the Chinese Heshang.

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this volume, the narration of Śantaraksita’s first arrival in Tibet differs between RBA 2011.1 and the *Dbu’ bzhed*. RBA 2011.1 does not list Sang shi as one of the ministers who the king sends to interrogate the Indian master, while the *Dbu’ bzhed* emphasises the fact that three ministers are sent. The BL fragment also contains this story but the section of the manuscript that should include the names of the ministers is missing. Sam van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao, however, counting the number of syllables that could be missing from the folio reporting the story in question, show that the *Dbu’ bzhed* contains many more syllables than the missing section of the BL fragment. They thus suggest that what is missing are the names of the second and third ministers together with the words “you three ministers.” It is clear therefore that Sang shi was not originally one of the ministers who interviewed Śantaraksita. Although at this point only speculation is possible, it seems that, in the process of transmission of the narrative, redactors tried to associate Sang shi with the key figures of the gradualist school. In this way he could first be presented as someone with moderate feelings concerning the dispute between Moheyan and Kamalaśīla, and then as a proponent of the gradualist school, until his name was displaced by that of Dpal dbyangs.

Some scholars have proposed that the exchange of Sang shi for Dpal dbyangs in the debate was caused by the fact that the identity of Sang shi throughout the text is unclear, and that sometimes he was identified with Dpal dbyangs. There is no doubt that a number of misidentifications occurred during the transmission of this text, which eventually led to the replacement of Sang shi with Dpal dbyangs. The source of the problem was the insertion of a certain Sang shi ta among the names of the first Tibetans who learned Sanskrit and took monastic vows. This Sang shi ta—according to SBA 1961.1–2, SBA 1982.1–3 and several other later sources—took the ordained name Dpal dbyangs. Thus, when Sang shi was equated with Sang shi ta, Sang shi’s ordained name also became Dpal dbyangs. The narrative concerning the establishment of the Tibetan *samgha* is reported in many *chos ‘byung* and it is subject to a number of variations. Beside Sang shi ta, the identities of many other characters and their presence or absence in the narrative, varies from text to text. The number of lists reciting the names of the first ordained Tibetans increased to the point that some authors—unable to choose among so many different narratives—found it expedient to include more than one list in their histories. Although the *Testimony of Ba* is the locus classicus for this narrative, and many later *chos ‘byung* drew their accounts from this tradition, it is equally true that later versions of the *Sba/Rba bzhed* were informed by outside narratives. How much other sources were responsible for the final identification of Sang shi, Sang shi ta and Dpal dbyangs is difficult to determine. Yet, even if one could trace the source of this identification it would not necessarily mean that the same source would be responsible for the substitution of discussants in the debate. At present I shall mainly deal with what SBA 1961.1–2, SBA 1982.1–3, SBA 1980 and DBA ‘2000 say concerning Sang shi/ Sang shi ta’s identity. Table 5.3 below keeps track of the following discussion. To simplify a complex situation, I only look at the names that are of interest for Sang shi ta’s identification, and thus this table cannot be used for any comparative study about the names of the first Tibetans who learned Sanskrit and/or took monastic vows. Everything added in curly brackets is found as gloss in the text.

SBA 1961.1–2 refers to a person named Sba Khri bzher sang shi ta, who learned Sanskrit, and to a ‘Ba’ Khri bzher sang shi ta, who became a monk. These two—despite the discrepancy in the clan name—are understood to be the same person.

SBA 1961.1–2’s list of the first Tibetans who took monastic vows runs as follows: Sba Gsal snang, ‘Ba’ Khri zher sang shi ta, Vairocana, son of Pa’gor Na ‘dod, Ngan lam Rgyal ba mchog yangs, Sma A tsa ra Rin chen

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25 It is also possible that Sang shi acted only as the translator and did not express his own opinion at the debate, but the present text does not give any evidence to support this turn of events.

26 See Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa’ bzhed*, 83, n. 318;
Among the Tibetans who learned Sanskrit

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<tr>
<td>No Sang shi ta</td>
<td>Sba Khri bzher sang shi ta</td>
<td>Ratna, son of Sba Rma gzigs (also known as Khri bzher), was also known as Sang shi ta son of Sba Khri bzher</td>
<td>Rba Khri gzigs Sangs shi ta son of Rba Khri bzher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rad na son of Dba’ Rma gzigs. He was given the name Rad na with his ordination</td>
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First Tibetan to become a monk

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<tbody>
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<td>No Sang shi ta</td>
<td>'Ba’ Khri gzigs becomes known as ‘Ba’ Ratna</td>
<td>Sba (also known as Sang shi ta) Khri gzigs took the ordained name Sba Dpal dbyangs. He also becomes known as Sba Ratna</td>
<td>Rba Khri gzigs took the ordained name Dpal dbyangs. He also becomes known as Rba Ratna</td>
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<td>Dba’ Lha btsan: ordained name Dpal dbyangs</td>
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In the list of the ordained men (sad mi)

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<tr>
<td>only two names are given and none of them is connected with Sang shi ta</td>
<td>Sba Khri bzher sang shi ta: ordained name Dpal dbyangs</td>
<td>Sba Khri bzher</td>
<td>No Sang shi and no Ratna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dpal dbyangs and Ratna</td>
<td>Sba Dpal dbyangs and Sba Ratna (Ye shes dbang po)</td>
<td>Rba Dpal dbyangs and Ye shes dbang po</td>
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Kamalaśīla’s disciples (for a complete list see Table 5.2)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dba’ Dpal dbyangs and Dba’ Rad na</td>
<td>Dpal dbyangs and Ratna</td>
<td>Sba Dpal dbyangs and Sba Ratna (Ye shes dbang po)</td>
<td>Rba Dpal dbyangs and Ye shes dbang po</td>
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Discussants at the debate

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<td>Sang shi and Dpal dbyangs</td>
<td>Sang shi and Dpal dbyangs</td>
<td>Dpal dbyangs and Ye shes dbang po</td>
<td>Dpal dbyangs and Ye shes dbang po</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of the list, the text reports that they received the ordained names of Ye shes dbang po, Dpal dbyangs, and so forth (la sogs pa). Therefore, if the identification is one-to-one, Ye shes dbang po and Dpal dbyangs would be the ordained names of Sba Gsal snang and ‘Ba’/Sba Khri bzher sang shi ta respectively. All the sources agree that Ye shes dbang po was the name of Dba’ Gsal snang after ordination, thus it would make sense if Sang shi ta’s ordained name was Dpal dbyangs. In this way, SBA 1961.1–2 equates Sba/’Ba’ Khri bzher sang shi ta with Dpal dyangs. If the compiler of SBA 1961.1–2 understood this Sang shi ta to be none other than ‘Ba’ Sang shi, the son of the Chinese envoy, the identification Sang shi = Dpal dbyangs would be accomplished. Yet, SBA 1961.1–2 does not mistake Sang shi ta for Sang shi and—like the Dba’ bzhed—has Sang shi and Dpal dbyangs as two different individuals speaking at the debate.

SBA 1982.1–3, in its list of the Tibetans who learn Śāntarakṣita’s language, also has a Sang shi ta but he is not named ‘Ba’ Khri bzher sang shi ta as in SBA 1961.1–2. Instead it is said that Sba Khri bzher is the father of Sang shi ta, so that instead of one person (Sba Khri bzher sang shi ta) we have two: ‘Ba’ Khri bzher and his son, Sang shi ta.32 Here Sang shi ta is also identified with Ratna, who is said to be the son of Sba Rma gzigs. However, if Ratna and Sang shi ta were the same person, they could not be born from two different fathers. Thus, a note was added, in parentheses and in a smaller font, claiming that Sba Rma gzigs was also known as Khri bzher. In this way, Sba Khri bzher and Sba Rma gzigs become the same person in order to identify Sang shi ta with Ratna.

One cannot be surprised that the annotator decided to identify the two fathers. It is curious that the main text, while claiming Ratna and Sang shi to be the same person,

32 SBA 1982.1–3, 58.7–8 reads: sba rma gzigs [khri bzher yang zer] kyi bu rat-Nar/ sba khri bzher gyi bu sang shi ta yang zer ba ...
specified that they were the sons of two different fathers. As their names appear in a list, it would seem logical to speculate that in an earlier version the two names were distinct, and only later someone modified the text in order to identify them.33

Below, on the same page, the text states that a certain Sba Khri bzher was the first Tibetan to be ordained and that his name as a monk was Sba Dpal dbYangs. The king was so happy about his ordination that he proclaimed him to be the jewel of Tibet and bestowed on him the name Ratna. Thus he came to be known as Sba Ratna.34 Another gloss informs us that this Sba Khri gzigs is none other than Sang shi ta. As previously noted, the text claims that the son of Sba Rma gzigs was a certain Sba Ratna, who was also named Sang shi ta. The annotator could not but assume that this Sba Ratna was the above-mentioned Ratna, son of Sba Rma gzigs and therefore Sang shi ta himself. Interestingly, SBA 1961.1–2 has a virtually identical passage, recognising 'Ba' Khri gzigs as the first Tibetan to be ordained—and uses almost the same words as SBA 1982.1–3—but Dpal dbYangs does not feature in it: 'Ba' Khri gzigs is only given the name Ratna by the king and no further identification takes place.35 Thus, although SBA 1961.1–2 still identifies Khri bzher sang shi ta with Dpal dbYangs, it draws a distinction between Sang shi ta/Dpal dbYangs and 'Ba' Khri gzigs/Ratna. SBA 1982.1–3, on the other hand, goes a step further and identifies Sang shi ta with Sba Ratna, Sba Dpal dbYangs and Sba Khri gzigs.

On the next page, SBA 1982.1–3 lists the Tibetans who received ordination after Ratna.36 It runs as follows: Sba Gsal snang, Sba Khri bzher, Vairocana, son of Pa'gor Na'dod, Ngan lam Rgyal ba mchog dbYangs, Rma A tsa ra Rin chen mchog, La gsum Rgyal ba'yi byang chub. This—contrary to SBA 1961.1–2 and most other texts37—only reports one of the ordained names, Ye shes dbang po. Again if the reference is one-to-one, Ye shes dbang po is the name assigned to the first of the list: Sba Gsal snang.38 Thus, while SBA 1961.1–2 and SBA 1980 give also Dpal dbYangs as the ordained name of the second Tibetan in the list, SBA 1982.1–3 gives only one. It is logical to conclude that the name Dpal dbYangs was omitted because the text had already assigned it to Sba Khri gzigs Ratna/Sang shi. As SBA 1961.1–2 does not contain the passage that gives to Sba Ratna the name Dpal dbYangs—and this story is not recounted in Bu ston—this was probably an interpolation. In fact, not only do most sources report two of the ordained names (Ye shes dbang po and Dpal dbYangs) and not just one, but Sba Khri bzher, when understood to be the father of Sang shi ta, as in this case, does not take monastic vows. Sba Khri bzher is listed as one of the Tibetans who became monks only when his name is one and the same with Sang shi ta’s, i.e. when he is Sba Khri bzher sang shi ta.

These interpolations created inconsistencies that the person who wrote the annotations—probably Mgon po rgyal mchog (on whom, see Chapter 1 above)—tried to smooth out. He did so by adding glosses that kept track of the different names that were assigned to each character, and also sometimes by writing longer annotations that explained difficult points. SBA 1982.1–3 already has Dpal dbYangs and Ye shes dbang po speaking at the debate. It also identifies Sba Ratna with Sang shi ta and both with Dpal dbYangs. Thus, it is possible that even before glosses were added, the equation Sang shi = Sang shi ta = Dpal dbYangs had already taken place. However, the main text does not explicitly say that the Chinese Sang shi is Sba Sang shi ta. It is the annotator that, drawing his own conclusions from the text, in a longer note declares

33 This impression is reinforced by the way the text was typed. Although the grammatical structure is clear, the names of Ratna and Sang shi are divided by a shad, giving the impression that once these were two separate individuals and that, instead of the terminative particle at the end of Ratna’s name and yang zer ba de at the end of Sang shi’s name, there were only two dang-s.
34 SBA 1982.1–3, 58.18–23.
36 SBA 1982.1–3 reads: btub bam sad par bya gsungs nas skad lobs pa tsho las thog mar bod la dad pa che ba'i sba [sang shi ta yang zer] khri gzigs dge slong byas ma thag tu mtshan sba dapl db-yangs su btags/ mgon par shes pa lnga dang ldan pas/ btsan po dgyes te de'i zhabz spyi bo blangs te khyod bod kyi rin po che yin no zhes bka'tbsal nas mtshan kyang Sba rat+Na zhes btags te ...
37 e.g. SBA 1980, 351:3–4; and Bu ston chos 'byung, 885:5.
that Sang shi ta is a Chinese name and thus implicitly identifies the two. This annotation reads:39

Sba Dpal dbyangs was called Sang shi ta in Chinese; some say that Sang shi ta was the son of Khri bzher. Sba Gsal snang was [Ye shes dbang po’s] name when a layman, after he had developed an enlightened frame of mind and took monastic vows, the preceptor Bodhisatva named him Ye shes dbang po ... 40

Thus, it is certain that the annotator at least understood Dpal dbyangs and Sang shi to be interchangeable, and also that he made a one-to one association between the names in the list of ordained monks and the examples of ordination names given after it (Sba Gsal snang = Ye shes dbang po).41

The idea that originally there was no identification of Sba Ratna with Sang shi and Dpal dbyangs seems also to find some corroborations in the subsequent narrative. In SBA 1982.1–3’s account of Heshang Moheyan’s arrival in Tibet, it is said that at that time only a few Tibetans continued studying with Śāntarakṣita. Three names are given: Sba Ratna, Vairocana and Dpal dbyangs.42 Thus, here the main text distinguishes between Sba Ratna and Dpal dbyangs. However, the annotator realised that if Sba Ratna was Dpal dbyangs he could not be named twice in the list and so added “Ye shes dbang po” next to Sba Ratna’s name in order to identify the two.43 This further identification complicated matters rather than simplifying them, being in stark contrast with the narrative of the main text, which clearly states that Ye shes dbang po was the ordained name of Sba Gsal snang. Moreover, given the previous identification of Sba Ratna with Dpal dbyangs it is evident that the scenario here proposed by the annotator is unfeasible: how could Sba Ratna/ Sang shi/ Dpal dbyangs and Ye shes dbang po be the same person and be consistently treated as two different men in the main narrative? A plausible reason why the annotator might have identified Sba Ratna with Ye shes dbang po at this point is because Dpal dbyangs and Ye shes dbang po were already the two people who, according to the main text, spoke at the debate in favour of the gradual approach. It was thus logical to find them among the students who were loyal to Śāntarakṣita.

We know that SBA 1982.1–3 was compiled by collating three different manuscripts, but it is not possible—in its present typed format—to distinguish if one, two or more hands wrote the annotations or even if these two sections (the ordained men and the Heshang’s arrival in Tibet until the end of the debate) were drawn from two different sources that contained two different sets of annotations. Yet, before drawing any conclusion from this one needs to address a problem that lies even deeper than the appended annotations. This is the fact that earlier annotations/interpolations were included into what is now the main text of SBA 1982.1–3. The section that identifies Ratna with Sang shi ta, but attributes to them different fathers, and the section that identifies Sba Ratna with Dpal dbyangs, which is not found in SBA 1961.1–2, appear in the main body of SBA 1982.1–3 but they do not fit with the overall narrative. Thus we see (at least) two layers of annotations/interpolations, one hidden and one overt.44

It is probable that the ‘original’ ordained men’ (sad mi) section in SBA 1982.1–3 did not identify Sba Ratna with Sang shi, and thus presented them as the sons of two different fathers: Sba Rma gzigs and Sba Khri bzher. Like in SBA 1961.1–2, Sba Ratna’s name as a layman was Sba Khri gzigs; he was the first Tibetan who received ordination. It is also possible that this earlier recension of SBA 1982.1–3, after listing the Tibetans who took monastic vows after Ratna, provided two (rather than one) ordained names the sad mi received, i.e. Ye shes dbang po and Dpal dbyangs. If this were the case, Dpal dbyangs would be the ordained name of the second name in the list Sba Khri bzher (Sang shi’s father) who is the second in the list. However, this sounds improbable. It is more likely that the text, at that stage, instead of Sba Khri bzher, had either “Sba Khri bzher kyi bu Sang shi ta” or even “Sba Khri bzher sang shi ta”; thus recognising Dpal dbyangs as the ordained name of Sang shi ta but not linking these two names to those of Sba Ratna/ Sba Khri gzigs. When Moheyan came to Tibet three people...

39 SBA 1982.1–3, 59.6–8. van der Kuijip, “Some Remarks,” 158–59 notes this gloss and translates it. I have reformulated his translation in order to emphasise that, at least on this occasion, the annotator seems to have distinguished between Dpal dbyangs and Gsal snang. However, the sentence is open to interpretation. For the Tibetan, see the footnote below.
40 SBA 1982.1–3, 59.6–10: sba dpal dbyangs la rgya nag skad sang shi ta zer/ ta la khri bzher gyi bu sang shi ta zer/ sba gsal snang skya ba’i dus ming/ de nas sms bs ks yed zhus nas dang rab tu byung nas ming ye shes dbang po slob dpon bod+hi satwas btags ... 41 However, the remark “some (la la) allege that Sang shi ta was the son of Khri bzher” is baffling because this is exactly how SBA 1982.1–3 presents these two people. van der Kuijip noted that the Dba’ bzhed contains a similar account concerning the time of the sad mi’s ordination; van der Kuijip, “Some Remarks,” 159, n. 89. In the Dba’ bzhed, this passage is found at DBA’ 2000, 17r:5–17v:5.
42 SBA 1982.1–3, 64.15–18.
44 The hands that wrote these two layers of annotations could also easily be more than two.
remained faithful to the gradualist side: Sba Ratna, Vairocana and Sba Dpal dbyangs, and these three are exactly the same people who are listed as Kamalaśīla’s disciples at the beginning of the debate. According to this ‘earlier’ reading, this situation presents no difficulties: Sba Ratna is not Dpal dbyangs/ Sang shi ta and thus the narration proceeds smoothly. Dpal dbyangs, as one of the ordained men and loyal to Sāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, naturally speaks in favour of the gradualist side at the debate.

At a later stage, interpolations found their way into the main text: Sba Khri gzigs Ratna was identified with Sang shi ta and then with Dpal dbyangs. Dpal dbyangs was then omitted from the list of ordained names because Ratna/ Sang shi ta had already been identified with him. Yet, the section concerning Sāntarakṣita’s three faithful students—Sba Ratna, Vairocana and Dpal dbyangs—was left unchanged although problematic since at that point Ratna and Dpal dbyangs had already been equated. The same thing happened for the list of Kamalaśīla’s disciples, where again these two were written down as two different individuals. Hence, we can think of at least two scenarios: 1. the copies of the Testimony that the editor assembled did not agree concerning these people’s identities and the editor simply reported them as he found them trying to reconcile them through his annotations; 2. some of the annotations do not belong to the editor but were found in the manuscript he copied and he left them as glosses to the main text.

As the number of texts that discussed the early spread of the dhāraṇa increased, confusion about the identity of Sang shi (and several other characters of the narrative) became greater. For example, Mkhas pa Lde’u in the “royal genealogies” section of his chos ’byung writes that a Sba Khri bzher sang shi ta introduced three texts from China (i.e. Las kyi sgrīb pa rgyun gcod pa, Sa lu ljang pa and Rdo rje gcod). The connection of this Sang shi ta with China seems to imply that Sang shi ta and Sang shi were one person.

At the time Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba wrote, in the sixteenth century, the situation was such that he felt these issues had to be addressed. In SBA 1980 he quoted at length from an “extended version of the Rba bzhes.” The long citation from this manuscript is very similar to both SBA 1961.1–2 and SBA 1982.1–3, but there is no doubt that the manuscript Gtsug lag phreng ba was consulting was, in this case, closer to SBA 1982.1–3. This quotation is once again the famous passage concerning the Tibetans who learned Sanskrit, the first who took monastic vows and the subsequent list of sad mi. The quotation is faithful to SBA 1982.1–3 in all salient points and, in short, it presents Sba Khri gzigs sang shi ta as the son of Rba Khri bzher and identifies him with Dpal dbyangs and Rba Ratna. The only difference of any consequence is that Sba/’Ba’ Khri bzher is omitted in SBA 1980’s list of sad mi.

Gtsug lag phreng ba’s comments follow the quotation. According to him, the report of these events is corrupted. His first example of such corruption is that someone (including the extended version of the Sba bzhes he had just cited) claimed that Sang shi, the Chinese dancing child, was named Rba Sang shi and that someone even said that he was one and the same as Rba Ratna, the son of Rba Khri bzher. Gtsug lag phreng ba rightly remarks that, as Sang shi was the son of a Chinese envoy, he could

45 Bu ston, who does not identify Sba Ratna with Dpal dbyangs, writes that the Tibetans who continued studying with Sāntarakṣita after Moheyan’s arrival were Dpal dbyangs and Rba Ratna, but omits Vairocana (Bu ston chos ’byung, 887:2).
46 Tucci attributed the addition of two people in Bu ston’s list of the first Tibetans to be tried for ordination to political reasons; Tucci, Minor Buddhist Texts II, 16. van der Kuijip demonstrated that these additions were already attested in older texts and there was therefore no political motivation behind it. See van der Kuijip, “Some Remarks,” 174–189.
47 Mkhas pa lde’us mdzad pa’i rgya bod kyi chos ’byung rgyas pa in Rgya bod kyi chos ’byung pa (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1987), 302:7–8.
48 SBA 1980, 355:3–356:3, which is then followed by Gtsug lag phreng ba’s comment.
49 However, Gtsug lag phreng ba had access to more than one version of the Sba/Rba bzhes. This can also be easily deduced from the fact that Gtsug lag phreng ba previously quotes from a Rba bzhes ’bring po, SBA 1980, 354:6. Yet, the following quotation from the large Rba bzhes is closer in five points to SBA 1982.1–3: One is that there is a section reporting the invitation of twelve Sarvāstivādins monks to Tibet, which in SBA 1961.1–2 comes later in the narrative than in SBA 1982.1–3 and Gtsug lag phreng ba has it at the same point as SBA 1982.1–3. The second is that he identifies Khri bzher as the father of Sang shi ta and not Sang shi ta himself as SBA 1961.2–3 does. The third point concerns the already discussed passage where the first monk Ratna is identified with Dpal dbyangs. As discussed above, SBA 1961.2–3 does not contain this passage, while Gtsug lag phreng ba includes it, even if only to criticise it later as spurious. The fourth point is that, because Gtsug lag phreng ba’s quotation like SBA 1982.1–3 identifies Dpal dbyangs with Ratna with Gtsug lag phreng ba, Dpal dbyangs is then omitted from the list of ordained names that the sad mi received. Fifth, both SBA 1982.1–3 (58.21–23) and SBA 1980 (365:1–2), in reporting the story of how Ratna got his name from the king, have the king say that Khri gzigs is the “rin po che” of Tibet and so he was given the name “Ratna” In SBA 1961.1–2 (50.14–15), instead, the shift from the Tibetan word and its Sanskrit equivalent to the name is lost as both instances are documented as “Ratna.” Except for these five points, however, SBA 1961.1–2 and SBA 1982.1–3 are more closely related to each other than to SBA 1980.
50 SBA 1980, 356:4 (for the Tibetan, see the footnote below).
not be a descendant of the Rba’ clan. He also points out that Rba Khri gzigs could not be named Bya Khri gzigs, as many people spelled his name.53 He then shows how the names of certain individuals in the list of sad mi had been modified and how sometimes people were added to it, referring more specifically to some mistakes that he had found in Bu ston’s chos ’byung.54 Later on, he also claims that there was a certain amount of confusion about Sba Ratna’s identity, and that some believed him to be Ye shes dbang po.55 Bu ston does not seem to connect these two characters, and although Gtsug lag phreng ba might have referred to what he found written in other texts, the identification of Sba Ratna with Ye shes dbang po reminds one of the annotation in SBA 1982.1–3. Thus, it is possible that the gloss next to Sba Ratna’s name was there by the middle of the sixteenth century, or even earlier.

Although Gtsug lag phreng ba was aware that the identification of Sang shi with Sang shi ta was wrong, in the version of the debate he had at his disposal, Dpal dbyangs already takes Sang shi’s place.56 SBA 1980 follows SBA 1982.1–3 in this, and starts what was Sang shi’s speech with the words: “khyped rgya’i bzhed pa ltar na ….” It is possible that in the sixteenth century, sources mostly referred to what he found written in other texts, the identification of Sba Ratna with Ye shes dbang po reminds one that in the Testimony of Ba versions therefore have many points in common: with some spelling variation, Śākyaprabha, Vairocana, Rad na and Shud pu khong slesbs. Finally, it remarks that: “The son of Dba’ Rma gzigs was given the name Rad na (i.e Ratna) upon his ordination.”57 The Testimony of Ba versions therefore have many points in common: with some spelling variation, Śākyaprabha, Vairocana, Rad na and Shud pu khong slesbs also appear in SBA 1982.1–3 and SBA 1961.1–2. SBA 1982.1–3 also agrees with the Dba’ bzhed in reporting that Ratna’s father was named Dba’ Rma gzigs; and in relating that Mchims Legs bzang (i.e. Dba’ bzhed’s Mchims Legs legs gzigs) did not learn Sanskrit. Yet, the Dba’ bzhed mentions no Sang shi ta, no Sba Khri bzher and does not identify Dpal dbyangs either with Ratna or Sang shi ta/ Khri gzigs.

It is unclear on which sources SBA 1961.1–2 and SBA 1982.1–3 drew for depicting Sang shi ta and all the other characters that do not feature in the Dba’ bzhed. Considering that SBA 1961.1–2 does not replace Sang shi with Dpal dbyangs—although Sang shi ta features in the narrative of the sad mi—we can conclude that originally the inclusion of Sang shi ta in the Testimony of Ba had nothing to do with the debate. The identification happened later in the history of transmission of SBA 1982.1–3.

One question remains: why all this confusion about Sang shi’s affiliation with the Chinese side? Sang shi plays an important role in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet.58 In the Dba’ bzhed, he is one of the ministers who goes to China to meet master Kim and the Chinese emperor. In the later Testimony of Ba tradition, he is the son of a Chinese envoy and he is also the person who introduces Buddhism to king Khri Srong lde btsan. Throughout the narratives he is crucial to the king’s decision to adopt Buddhism and he carries out tasks that are necessary to achieve this end. Sang shi could not be on the side of the noble holy dharma was propagated widely in the region of Tibet.”
defeated Chinese, so he could only take the stance of the
winners in the debate. Thus, it is possible that successive
compilers of the Testament of Ba progressively distanced
Sang shi from the Chinese side, which in some textual tra-
ditions somehow resulted in the replacement of Sang shi
with Ye shes dbang po.

Dpal dbyangs and the Saṃdhinirmocana sūtra

After Sang shi’s speech, Dpal dbyangs intervenes by saying
that the gradual and instantaneous approaches should be
spoken of distinctly, thus replying to Sang shi’s last sen-
tence. Then, after having emphasized this point through
metaphors, he starts with an exposition of the stages of the
bodhisatva path (23r:3–23v:6). This section is extracted
from the Saṃdhinirmocana sūtra—the text that Heshang
Moheyan and his followers had dismissed during their
preparation for the debate in preference for the Shes rab
‘bum.59 At the end of this quotation Dpal dbyangs attacks
the instantaneous approach directly, asserting that they
lack scriptural knowledge and that a person who follows
their path is unable to help himself, let alone others. As
Moheyan and his followers are unable to answer Dpal
dbyangs, the gradualists win the debate by quoting the
very text the Chinese monk had rejected.

The quotation from the Saṃdhinirmocana sūtra is cur-
tailed in the following versions of the Testament. Only a
few sentences remain of the quotation found in the Dba’
bzhed (folio 23r line 4 to folio 23v, line 6). This makes the
link between the introduction of the debate and the debate
itself less evident. The reason for shortening the Saṃ-
dhinirmocana sūtra’s quotation in the later versions of the
Testament of Ba is unclear.60 We can only assume that the
importance given to the philosophical dispute decreased
as time passed.

59 See Mdo sde dgongs pa nges ‘grel (Ārya-saṃdhi-nirmocana-sūtra) in Bka’ gyur (Sde dge: Sde dge par khang chen mo, 1733), vol. 49. The quotation from this sūtra runs from pp. 79:6 to 81:4. Although the quotation is mostly linear and the two works are very close in wording, it should be noted that the person who wrote this section of the Dba’ bzhed did not copy it completely from the sūtra. The Saṃdhinir-
 mocana sūtra uses a very repetitive structure when writing about the
ten bodhisatva stages, which the writer of the Dba’ bzhed curtailed
probably for the sake of space. In his Bhāvanākrama, Kamalaśīla
often quotes the Saṃdhinirmocana sūtra, however, this specific quo-
tation does not feature in his text.

60 For connections between the Saṃdhinirmocana sūtra and Atiśa,
the Bka’ dam pas and later Tsong kha pa see Alex Wayman, “Doctri-
nal Disputes.”

Final Remarks

This overview shows that the debate—like the rest of the
Testament and the majority of Tibetan Buddhist texts—was
created by combining a variety of sources and that much
thought was given to the assemblage of the units. Each
string that we find in the Introduction to the debate is tied
to a section of the debate itself. Śāntarakṣita’s prophecy
is picked up by Sang shi’s view of school formation. The
Shes rab ‘bum studied by the instantaneous party is then
quoted in Sang shi’s speech. The Saṃdhinirmocana sūtra,
dismissed by the instantaneous party, is then picked up
by Dpal dbyangs who wins the debate by quoting from it.

As the transcription of the Dba’ bzhed in Part Two of
this volume shows, the scribe does not seem much inter-
ested in the philosophical dispute. That he was copying
the debate from a parent manuscript is evident from the
number of mistakes that he makes in transcribing the text.
Twice he copied the wrong sentence because the passage
that he was supposed to write started with the same word
as the next sentence.61 Thus, we can conclude that he did
not know the source by heart and that he was not writing
under dictation. Therefore, although it seems likely that
the Dba’ bzhed compiler had some sort of agency over the
text, by adding bits and pieces he found useful into the
main narrative, it is improbable that he assembled the
debate narrative. He simply copied it.

David Seyfort Ruegg identified one interesting clue
about the date of the compilation of the debate.62 Since
the third of the three Mādhyamika schools mentioned in
Sang shi’s speech originated in Tibet through the work
of Pa tshab Nyi ma grags—who was born around 1055—
the text could not have been written before the eleventh
or twelfth century. As the writer of the manuscript of the
Dba’ bzhed does not seem to be the person who collated
the text part, we may conclude that the manuscript he
was drawing from (or even a progenitor of the manuscript
he was drawing from) was probably written around or
after the eleventh or twelfth century. The original narra-
tive must have looked similar to what we read in the Dba’
bzhed today although some points might have been added
or cut during the transmission and copying of the text after
the twelfth century.

Emperor Khri Srong lde btsan (742–c.800) ruled over the Tibetan empire from 756 CE, expanding it to its greatest extent. In the northwest, the Tibetans threatened the Abbasid Caliphate of Hārūn al-Rashid on the banks of the Oxus; in the east, they sacked and briefly occupied the Chinese capital Chang’an (present day Xi’an) in 763. Khri Srong lde btsan also presided over the growing institutionalisation of Buddhism in Tibet, epitomised by his patronage of Bsam yas Monastery. In later histories and biographies, he is said to have invited Śāntarakṣita, Padmasambhava, and a growing list of masters from outside Tibet in order to fulfill his pious wish to firmly establish the dharma. The sources generally report that he acted in emulation of his royal ancestor, Khri Srong btsan (d. 649), later known as Srong btsan sgam po.1 The mature historiographical tradition identifies both emperors as emanations of celestial bodhisattva-s, respectively representing the wisdom of Mañjuśrī and the compassion of Avalokiteśvara.2 As I discuss below, the Dba’ bzhed describes Khri Srong btsan revealing himself as Avalokiteśvara to monks from Khotan (3v:1–5) in the seventh century. Yet, its depictions of the eighth-century ruler are more ambivalent.

The Dba’ bzhed includes conflicting representations of Khri Srong lde btsan, some positive but others less flattering and suggestive of a more human and fallible form of kingship. The former strata of representations may be the oldest, either reflecting an Old Tibetan proto-Dba’ bzhed, drawing on narratives also found in the imperial inscriptions and Dunhuang documents, or copying earlier sources—as yet unidentified—into its compiled text. The latter strata, I argue here, are influenced by later intrusions into the narrative, such as the inclusion of Padmasambhava and the prophesied decline of the dharma that is blamed on the emperor by Dba’ Gsas snang (as his name is spelled almost exclusively in this manuscript). Given the influence of this narrative on later historiography, the less than perfect depiction of Khri Srong lde btsan has caused some problems for those recounting the spread of Buddhism under imperial rule. Tibetan philologists have tried to overcome the contradictions in various ways, mostly typically by a selective use of different threads in the narrative. However, the strata in the text all have value as expressions of different cultural milieux within Tibet and we should not seek to privilege one over the other or, more especially, jettison the later strata to regain an Ur text—a text that probably never existed in any case. Rather, each stratum represents an important part of the evolving culture of Tibet and should be appreciated in its own right and compared with the other strata. In order to do this, it is vital first to distinguish the strata, as set out in the conclusion to Chapter 1.

The aim of this chapter is to bring out some of the tensions in the portrayal of Emperor Khri Srong lde btsan arising from the accretion or compilation of various strata in a single manuscript. The oldest narratives contained in the Dba’ bzhed appear to represent Khri Srong lde btsan in ways akin to the Dunhuang texts’ portrayals, while the interpolations depict him from slightly different perspectives. The eleventh-century redaction of the Dba’ bzhed brings together these divergent descriptions of the emperor in one narrative, while also adding its redactors’ own representation of Khri Srong lde btsan. The extant Dba’ bzhed thus presents a number of vignettes that each favour one or more of the different redactors’ visions of Khri Srong lde btsan. By retaining the episodic style of creative compilation, at times perhaps even a ‘scissors-and-paste’ historiographical method, the Dba’ bzhed juxtaposes these different representations in one text.3

New eleventh-century themes are also evident, especially the rise of religious power in Tibet. This means that the Dba’ bzhed goes beyond the ninth/tenth-century laudatory descriptions of Khri Srong lde btsan. It portrays him occasionally as inferior in status to the narrative’s main Buddhist masters, Śāntarakṣita and Dba’ Gsas snang/ Ye shes dbang po. I believe that this is due to the increasingly

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1 From here onwards, I shall use the spellings found in the Dba’ bzhed, Khri Srong lde btsan and Khri Srong lde btsan.
religious-focused, rather than royal-centred, trajectory of
Tibetan histories in the eleventh century and beyond—a
process I have mapped out in other publications. Here,
I shall focus on the supposed decline of the dharma in Tibet. From the perspective of the ongoing project of Tibe-
tology, the Dba’ bzhed should not be misunderstood as
either representing the ‘historical’ Khri Srong lde btsan or
as a single work of literature by an author. Rather, the
text should be seen as a collection of different representa-
tions of varying dates and affiliations. The resulting com-
posite depiction of Khri Srong lde btsan arising from the
core eleventh/twelfth-century narrative of the Dba’ bzhed
is at once problematic and pivotal, when viewed from the
perspective of his changing portrayal in the increasingly
pious histories and biographies of subsequent centuries.

The History of Buddhism in Tibet

The earliest Tibetan documents describing Khri Srong lde btsan, dating from the eighth to the tenth century, present wholly positive appraisals of his reign. One of the oldest of these is an imperial ‘self-presentation,’ the almost first-person proclamation (gtsigs) in support of Buddhism recorded in the Bsam yas Inscription. Its short text promises that he and future emperors will continue to protect the main shrines of the religion—including Bsam yas Monastery—with the requisites for continuing dharma practice there in perpetuity. Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba’s sixteenth-century Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston contains, alongside quotations from the Testimony of Ba, a faithful transcription of both this and longer versions of the proclamation, including the ‘authoritative exposition’ (bka’ mchid), in

which Khri Srong lde btsan narrativises his decision to
give state sanction to the practice of Buddhism in Tibet. He recounts how the ministers opposed his enthronement in 756 and sought to block Buddhism’s rise in Tibet; how Khri Srong lde btsan heeded the bad omens arising from their calumny and the teachings of kalyāṇamitra-s; and how, in response, he increased the practice of Buddhism in Tibet and built Bsam yas Monastery so that it would continue in perpetuity—in a manner vowed in the Bsam yas Inscription.

Over the generations, Tibetan historians augmented the imperial image of Khri Srong lde btsan with a complementary and likewise idealised Buddhist portrayal of the emperor, akin to that of the legendary Buddhist ruler, Aśoka. One Dunhuang document, IOL Tib J 466/3, actually makes a direct and positive comparison between the two as Buddhists teaching the dharma, while another, IOL Tib J 370/6, contains a similarly glorified image of both Khri Srong lde btsan and his ancestor Khri Srong btsan. A bodhisatva status of some description (whether enlightened or on the path to Buddha-hood) is accorded to Khri Srong lde btsan at the borders of the empire, and in the post-imperial Dunhuang text Pelliot tibétain 840/3.

One proximate source of inspiration for such descriptions (apart from the more well-known Buddhist works of South and East Asia) was the Central Asian kingdom of Khotan, either in the late imperial period or shortly

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9 Richardson, “The first Tibetan chos-’byung,” 93.


11 This work is known as The Single Volume of Scriptures that Fell from Heaven. For a transliteration, translation and discussion of this depiction, see van Schaik and Doney, “The Prayer,” 196–97.

after. Khotan was first conquered by the Tibetans around 670, and monks from Khotan, perhaps even indigenous Khotanese, appear to have settled in Central Tibet by the eighth century at least. Khotanese Buddhism exerted influence on the form of dharma adopted at the Tibetan court. According to the Khotanese history translated into Tibetan as the Prophecy of Khotan, the founder and first ruler of Khotan is the miraculous child of King Aśoka and his chief consort, born with the signs (lakṣṇa) of a great being. The narrative then identifies the next—perhaps also mythic—generation of Khotanese royalty as bodhisatva-s and also their ordained preceptors. A king and a monk, Vijaya Sambhava and Ārya Vairocana, are said to be emanations of bodhisatva-s Mañjuśrī and Maitreya, building vihāra-s and stūpa-s in the area. All later kings, from Vijaya Jaya downwards, are not referred to as bodhisatva-s, while the text describes an arhat spreading the dharma during the reign of King Vijaya Kirti as an emanation of Mañjuśrī. Another text, the ninth or tenth-century Prophecy of the Khotanese Arhat (Li yul gyi sgra bcom pas lung bstan pa), speaks of an unnamed Tibetan emperor as an emanation of a celestial bodhisatva, spreading the dharma in Tibet.

Just as the Khotanese histories increasingly focus on the religious rather than royal acts of their rulers, over time Tibetan historians forgot the battles and even victories of the emperors (such as that in 763 over the Tang). Instead, they expanded the details of acts that they and their spiritual preceptors and ministers performed on behalf of the dharma. As such, twelfth-century Tibetan histories omit mention of Khri Srong lde btsan’s military might, which was lauded in earlier sources, in favour of recording his acts as a Buddhist patron. Parts of the Dba’ bzhed may date from around this period (see Chapter 2 in this volume) and express a similar shift in values.

Much the same narrative arc of the imperial-period Bka’ mchod is present in the core narrative of the Dba’ bzhed, which likewise recounts how opposition to Buddhism at court was overcome and how its practice and teachings received state sanction through proclamations and the construction of Bsam yas Monastery. Further, the descriptive sub-title in the first line of the Dba’ bzhed is “the authoritative exposition (bka’ mchod) describing how the dharma of the Buddha came to the region of Tibet.” This encapsulates the frame narrative of the text, which focuses on Tibet (without any preceding chapters on the history of either Indian or Chinese Buddhism or the cosmogonic beginnings of Buddhism or the world) and tells its story through narratives of the royal propagators of the dharma.

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13 These themes are explored in more detail in Doney, “Early Bodhisattva-Kingship,” but I shall outline some of the most salient connections here.


16 Tao Tong, The Silk Roads of the Northern Tibetan Plateau During the Early Middle Ages (from the Han to Tang Dynasty): As Reconstructed from Archaeological and Written Sources (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013), 21–22.


18 Emmerick, Tibetan Texts, 24–25.

19 Emmerick, Tibetan Texts, 32 ff.

20 Emmerick, Tibetan Texts, 46–47.

21 IOL Tib J 598, see Frederick William Thomas, Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Turkish. Selected and Translated by F. W. Thomas (London: Luzac & Co., 1935), 73–87; and van Schaik, “Red Faced Barbarians.” van Schaik gives tentative dates to his sources in “Red Faced Barbarians,” Appendix I.

22 The capture of Chang’an in 763, for instance, is described in glorious terms in version II of the Old Tibetan Annals, Or.822/187, line 55 ff., see 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, 2009), 132. Early Chinese sources on Tibet are more mixed in their portrayal of Khri Srong lde btsan and the Tibetan empire more generally. The Old Tang History (Jiu Tang Shu) describes the generals under his reign briefly seizing Chang’an in 763, saying that “the Tibetans, taking advantage of our difficulties, daily encroached on the borders, and the citizens were either carried off to be massacred or wandered about to die in ditches...” (Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Matthew T. Kapstein, and Gray Tuttle, eds. Sources of Tibetan Tradition. [New York: Columbia University Press, 2013], 16).

23 In general, the Dba’ bzhed records only Tibet’s cordial diplomatic relations with China and, when ‘Ba’ Sang shi and Dba’ Giis snang visit China, the Chinese praise the Tibetan emperor as a bodhisatva rather than as a worthy opponent. A Chinese Buddhist patriarch prophesies Khri Srong Iod dtsan as “the noble dharma on the land of Tibet.” (DBA’ 2000, 9v:4–5 reads: khyed kyi btsan po ni bod yul yu dam pa’i chos ‘byin pa’i byang chub sems dpa’ yin te /). This prophecy does not appear to be given in the later Testimony of Ba tradition, and so may be unique to this recension or even this exemplar.

24 As I noted in Chapter 1, Philip Denwood, “Some Remarks on the Status and Dating of the sBa bzhed,” The Tibetan Journal 15, no. 4 (1999): 135–48 argues that the Testimony of Ba may have originally been a charter (bka’ gtsigs) that Khri Srong Iod dtsan disseminated to the Dba’i’s clan and/or after the Bsam yas Debate that was expanded over the centuries (Denwood, “Some Remarks,” 146), though probably not the actual Bsam yas Inscription or Bka’ mchod. See also Chapter 4 in this volume.

25 DBA’ 2000, 1v:1: sangs rgyas kyi chos bod kham su ji ltar ‘byung ba’i bka’ mchod kyi yi ge /
Buddha’s teachings in Tibet. However, we should be cautious here because the Testimony of Ba tradition is documented by the name Dba’ bzhed/ Rba’ bzhed/ Sba’ bzhed only from late twelfth century, as indeed is its description as an ‘authoritative account.’

The same caveat should be attached to the opening descriptions of previous Buddhist rulers of Tibet in the Dba’ bzhed up to the middle of folio 4r, since these are not found in the later Testimony of Ba tradition and may be unique to the shared narrative of DBA’ 2000 and RBA 2011.1. Nonetheless, like the imperial bka’ mchid, the opening of the Dba’ bzhed appears to regard the most note-worthy act of an emperor to be temple building. These acts also live on as tangible artefacts within the Tibetan landscape and often continue to be a part of Tibetan ritual or pilgrimage practice. Thus, linking these sacred sites with their alleged founders may also have served to connect the history’s ‘present’ with the imperial Buddhist past that its compiler(s) sought to recreate. The Dba’ bzhed states that all of the Buddhist rulers before Khri Srong Iide btsan performed the task of constructing temples. It goes into more detail on the four main Tibetan Buddhist emperors, adding to their characters in line with the Dba’ bzhed’s overarching message about exemplary Buddhist kingship.

The Dba’ bzhed devotes less than two lines to the Tibetan ruler named in the historiographical tradition as Lha tho do re. It merely relates that he received and treated with care (scriptures concerning) the six syllables om mani pad me hūṃ. An interlinear note to line 1v:3 states that he also worshipped them and, although eighty years old, became like a youth of sixteen. This miracle is a literary topos of Indian Buddhist narratives, such as the story of Tantipa, the thirteenth of the eighty-four Mahāsiddhas. 26 The important point here is that the emperor not only patronised, but also worshipped, the dharma. In fact, even the main text has Lha tho do re advocating the practice of the dharma “regardless of whether the kingdom prospers or declines.” In contrast, the Dba’ bzhed does not mention any of the secular acts of this ruler, such as internal peacekeeping or international empire building. In only two lines, this section of the Dba’ bzhed fulfills the promise of its sub-title by focusing on rulers only in as much as they were focused on the dharma.

The Dba’ bzhed’s biography of the seventh-century Khri Srong btsan broadens its conception of kingship slightly. It describes how he earned the title “wise” ([b]sgam po) by displaying tact and authority in internal politics (2r–2v), supernatural knowledge and a sense for the dramatic in foreign policy (2v–3r) and divine authority in religious affairs (3r–3v). 27 This latter quality is demonstrated in the most famous episode from Khri Srong btsan’s life, where he meets the two monks from Khotan (Li yul) and shows them that he is an emanation of Avalokiteśvara (3v:1–5). The Dba’ bzhed makes an important connection between the emperor as bodhisatva and as legislator in that episode, which I explored in more detail in a previous article. 28 The Dba’ bzhed cites an apparent Khotanese source for this narrative, but it is not found in any exemplar of this work that we possess. 29 As Martin Mills has already pointed out in his discussion of this vignette in many versions, the narrative is a Tibetan adaptation of an episode from the Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra. 30 However, the Dba’ bzhed incorporates the narrative in such a way that Khri Srong btsan’s corporal punishments are not mere display (as in the Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra). 31 The punishments that the monks witness being inflicted in the Dba’bzhed are apparently in line with the emperor’s legislation according to other relatively early sources—and indeed the text itself, which recounts how Khri Srong btsan devised a legal decree and ordered his subjects to follow it in no uncertain


27 Only the first of these three descriptions ends with the emperor’s subjects explicitly declaring him to be the “wise” Khri Srong btsan (khri srong btsan bsgam po, DBA’ 2000, 2v:2), after he responds to his ministers’ doubts about his control of the empire with a complete set of laws to bind all his subjects under him.


30 Martin Mills, “Ritual as History in Tibetan Divine Kingship: Notes on the Myth of the Khotanese Monks,” History of Religions 51, no. 3 (2012): 235–36. On the popularity of the Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra in early Tibetan Buddhism, including as the first half of the narrative whose second half concerns Tibetan Buddhism under Khri Srong Iide btsan in Pelliot tibétain 169 (by the same scribe who copied the Prophecy of the Tibetan Arhat), see van Schaik and Doney, “The Prayer.” It is easy to see why this Indian narrative would have been ripe for adaptation into a Buddhist history of kingship, and in the Dunhuang manuscripts we see the collection of historiographical material that is focused on Tibet as the heir to Buddhist tradition that (as circulating in other Tibetan areas) may well have been known to the compilers of the Dba’ bzhed.

31 The episode cites a certain Great Prophecy (lung bstan chen po; DBA’ 2000, 4r:1–2) as the source of this tale, and whether this intermediary work (if it really existed) or the Testimony of Ba tradition is responsible for this amendment will have to remain a matter of conjecture for now.
terms (folio 2r). As we shall see below, the Dba' bzhed, as it is constructed in this exemplar, creates a narrative ‘set up’ for an indirect comparison between Khri Srong lde btsan and Khri Srong lde btsan as Buddhist rulers.

**Royal and Religious Identity of Khri Srong lde btsan**

In the core narrative of the Dba’ bzhed, Khri Srong lde btsan plays an important role in internal politics, international diplomacy and religious affairs. Yet, his depiction is not as uniformly positive as that of Khri Srong btsan and, in this section, other characters besides Khri Srong lde btsan perform actions on behalf of the dharmā. Indeed, a few of these characters show themselves to be in some sense superior to the ruler of Tibet.

When the thirteen-year-old Khri Srong lde btsan takes over the governance of the realm (4r:6), the narrative shifts from the emperor to the Tibetan ministers and their conspiracies against the dharmā. Here, the Dba’ bzhed deals first and foremost not with Buddhist building projects but with the destruction of all that the previous Buddhist rulers had achieved. From a narratological perspective, perhaps this desecration of the earlier (Chinese-inspired) temples clears the way for Bsam yas Monastery to take centre stage. One of the Dba’ bzhed’s principal protagonists in this section is the Buddhist minister, Dba’ Gsas snang. Despite the other ministers’ interdiction against its future practice, he goes in search of the dharmā to India and Nepal where he worships at Buddhist pilgrimage and monastic sites. He then travels to China, a wellspring of Tibet’s older Buddhist tradition, but it is India that appears to offer new hope for the spread of the dharmā.

Khri Srong lde btsan takes on an important role in the spread of Buddhism, though it is largely limited to acting as a royal patron. Dba’ Gsas snang convinces the emperor to invite the Indian abbot Šāntarakṣita to Tibet. The ruler is sceptical at first, (7v–8r), displaying the kind of worldly wisdom that Khri Srong btsan showed in internal affairs but this time with respect to religious matters. The abbot proves himself through dramatically revealing supernatural knowledge of his past lives, akin to Khri Srong btsan’s displaying his pre-knowledge of the Chinese emperor’s replies to his questions before hearing them (2v–3r). Šāntarakṣita then transmits the dharmā through abbatial succession to Tibetan religious figures, Dba’ Gsas snang and then Dba’ Dpal dbyangs. This transmission obviously bypasses Khri Srong lde btsan, but he is also not represented as either an active practitioner of Buddhism or an advanced bodhisattva.

Although the Dba’ bzhed recounts that the emperor made aspirational prayers with Šāntarakṣita during a former life, and later appears to maintain some connection with the horse-headed deity Hayagrīva (16r:6–7), he does not actively practise the doctrine during this life. He is a lay patron of Buddhism rather than a devotee—in this regard he is less self-consciously divine than his ancestor Khri Srong btsan, whom the Dba’ bzhed portrays as fully-cognisant of his identification with Avalokiteśvara. The rest of the Dba’ bzhed cements this teacher-disciple relationship; the lineage transmission from India bypasses the emperor and flows instead to Dba’ Gsas snang. In fact, far from depicting the emperor practising the dharmā, the Dba’ bzhed indicates that Khri Srong lde btsan is inferior in spiritual attainments not only to Šāntarakṣita but also to Padmasambhava and Dba’ Gsas snang under his ordination name Ye shes dbang po. Both of the latter figures actually blame the emperor for the decline of Buddhism, as we shall see below.

In the same year that Bsam yas monastery is consecrated (17v:3), Khri Srong lde btsan outlaws certain seemingly barbaric corporal punishments or, by implication, all corporal punishments. He proclaims that “henceforth, among the subjects under the rule [of the emperor] men might not have their eyes put out, women might not have their noses cut off.” The Dba’ bzhed thus depicts him as repealing the corporal punishments that Khri Srong btsan instigated earlier in the manuscript. As I have argued elsewhere, the references in both Dba’ bzhed episodes to severe corporal punishments appear to reflect the earlier associ-

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33 Note that, in contrast, Šāntarakṣita is given the epithet-title “Bodhisatva” both in the Dba’ bzhed and in other works from the Dunhuang corpus. He is named Mkhan po Bo de sva dva at the head of the list of Spiritual Friends (dge ba’i bshes gnyen) of Bsam yas and ’Phrul snang temples in IOL Tib J 689/2, and in the narrative Pelliot tibétain 149, where he performs the same role of spiritual preceptor to the emperor; see van Schaik and Doney, “The Prayer,” 191–92 and 205–206. It should be noted that the same scribe who wrote out Pelliot tibétain 149 also copied the Prophecy of the Khotanese Arhat (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) from IOL Tib J 598 into IOL Tib J 597 (van Schaik and Doney, “The Prayer,” 180–81). In depicting Khri Srong lde btsan as more of a patron than a practitioner, this part of the Dba’ bzhed again mirrors the narrative in Pelliot tibétain 149 (see the comparison in Doney, “Narrative Transformations,” 314–17). Thus, there is a striking continuity of themes between Pelliot tibétain 149’s ninth/tenth-century lineage history’s depiction of Khri Srong lde btsan and this Dba’ bzhed portrayal.

34 DBA’ 2000, 17v:4 reads: slan chad chags ’og gi ’bangs la pho mig mi dbyung / mo sna mi gcad par gnang /. 
Chapter 6  History, Identity and Religious Dynamics in the Portrayal of Khri Srong lde btsan  93

ations of emperors with rewards and punishments.35 The Dbā’ bzḥed manuscript, as it stands, highlights the differences between the characters of Khri Srong btsan and Khri Srong lde btsan and how they embody contrasting values of Tibetan bodhisatva-kingship.36 We should be aware that the Testimony of Ba tradition in general does not recount the narrative of the Khotanese monks in Tibet, and so does not make this contrast possible; however, the existence of RBA 2011.1 does show that the Dbā’ bzḥed is not an isolated manuscript carrying this opening section.

The Dbā’ bzḥed’s citation of the source of the Khotanese monks as The Great Prophecy (4r:1–2) and its ostensive quotation from an imperial edict (17v:4–6), appears to conform to our modern western concept of writing history. Yet, the lack of the above episode in Khotanese history and the divergence of the Dbā’ bzḥed’s proclamation from known imperial proclamations, alert us to the fact that something more literary is happening here. It seems that the two episodes are linked by more than a ‘use’ of primary sources. Their connection lies in their comparable depictions of two bodhisatva-kings: Khri Srong btsan is a self-aware emanation who displays divine wisdom but also punishes; Khri Srong lde btsan is on the bodhisatva path but more reliant on others, yet is a more humane ruler of his subjects.

Religious Dynamics and the Decline of the dharma

Surprisingly, the Dbā’ bzḥed places the beginning of the dharma’s decline during the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan. Śāntarakṣita even recommends a mantrin, Padmasambhava, to help halt the decline of the Buddha’s power in the world.37 He says that the Bhagavat’s power was unlimited across India (dzam bu gling), causing peace throughout the region. Whether due to Tibet’s inferiority as a ‘borderland’ to India, or a decline in the Buddha’s doctrine after his death, untamed forces hinder the spread of the dharma in eighth-century Tibet. As with Śāntarakṣita’s revelations of Khri Srong lde btsan’s previous life in Magadha, his comparison here shows India’s superiority to untamed Tibet, and the past to the eighth-century state of Buddhism, according to this part of the Dbā’ bzḥed.

Śāntarakṣita therefore recommends a master from India, not from Tibet, to restore order. He holds that only mantra(yāna) practices can bind the gods and nāga-s to an oath that they will protect Buddhism. Śāntarakṣita compares Padmasambhava to the Buddha. Though Padmasambhava’s powers are limited to the use of mantra, he is as accomplished in this practice as any of his contemporaries (in this time of general decline). The Dbā’ bzḥed thus recommends the Vaijayānā as a means of enabling Buddhism to spread in Tibet. This contrasts with the more conservative view of esoteric Buddhism displayed by members of the dynastic line and their ancestors down to the tenth century.38 Khri Srong lde btsan is ultimately responsible for inviting Padmasambhava to Tibet, creating something like a ‘golden age.’ Unlike in the Dunhuang text Pelliot tibétain 840/3 though, the Dbā’ bzḥed does not describe the emperor as a tantrika.39

36 In this way, the Dbā’ bzḥed again builds on themes seen in Dunhuang documents, for instance IOL Tib J 370/6 mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (and covered in inter alia van Schaik and Doney, “The Prayer,” 196–97). This source also deifies both emperors, stating that they “had the bodies of men but their ways were those of gods.” (IOL Tib J 370/6, line 12 reads: myi lus thob kyang tha’i lugs / ). It also records an edict written on a pillar to record their commitments to Buddhism (IOL Tib J 370/6, lines 6–7). IOL Tib J 370/6 does not describe the content of Khri Srong lde btsan’s inscription. Instead, it mentions his proclamations as symbolic of his attempt to transmit the dharma from India to Tibet. As we have just seen, the Dbā’ bzḥed continues this trend. It describes one of Khri Srong lde btsan’s edicts in a way that differs from the actual eighth-century inscription but that stresses its ‘civilising’ effect of Indian Buddhism in Tibet, like IOL Tib J 370/6.

39 Pelliot tibétain 840/3, dating probably to the tenth century, identifies Khri Srong lde btsan as a tantrika (tantric practitioner) and likens him to a legendary Indian tantric practitioner, Mahāyoga’s King Tsa.
Willis and Gonkatsang suggest in Chapter 2 that the Padmasambhava section of the *Dba' bzhed* may not be original to the *Testimony of Ba*, though it was interpolated early on in the compilation process. If so, it is perhaps no coincidence that we find the first open criticism of Emperor Khri Srong lde btsan in this portion of the narrative. Here and at a later point that echoes this, the *Dba' bzhed* claims that the *dharma* will still begin to decline during the emperor’s reign. This is because Khri Srong lde btsan asks Padmasambhava to leave Tibet before he has fully bound the spirits to protect Buddhism. Padmasambhava, as he leaves Tibet (causing Khri Srong lde btsan great sorrow), blames the emperor for causing division among Buddhists in the future:

“If the devatā-s, nāga-s and demons in the region of Tibet were bound under oath three times, then his majesty too would live long, the political power of his descendants would also be great, strife in the land of Tibet would also cease [and] the dharma of the Buddha would be established for a long time. This being so, bear in mind there is unfinished work! In the realm of Tibet, as the final five hundred years of the dharma draws near, the attacks of the unbelievers will not take place. [Rather,] a time will come when) the Buddhists will dispute among themselves [and] a huge turmoil in the realm of Tibet will come to pass.”

This “dispute” is the Bsam yas Debate, a division in the *sangha* that the *Dba’ bzhed* views as a sign of the doctrine’s decline. Ye shes dbang po later quotes Śāntarakṣita as saying:

“Tibet lacks good fortune, because, generally speaking, wherever the Buddha’s teachings emerge, there will be attacks from non-Buddhists. Since we are in the final five hundred years of the teachings in Tibet, attacks from non-Buddhist will not arise. Rather, Buddhists themselves will dispute due to conflicting views. When that situation transpires, summon my disciple Kamalaśīla, resident in Nepal, and let him to do the debating.”

The beginning of the final five-hundred-year period is here placed in the eighth century. The *Dba’ bzhed* therefore depicts the Bsam yas Debate as falling within the degenerate age. In this way, Padmasambhava’s sojourn in Tibet is not completely unrelated to the narrative of the *Dba’ bzhed*, even if it was perhaps not original to it. Another connection is a mention of Padmasambhava after he has left Tibet, describing the continuing benefit of his mantric rituals (14v:5). However, though Śāntarakṣita portrays Padmasambhava as equal to the Buddha in mantric power, after he leaves the emperor raises Ye shes dbang po to the highest Buddhist position in the land, because he is “like the Buddha’s presence” (*sangs rgyas kyi zhal dang t’ra ba; 17v:6–7*).

Ye shes dbang po uses his service of increasing the longevity of the emperor and Buddhism, then the prophecy of his predecessor Śāntarakṣita, to assert his own religious superiority over his royal patron. In this episode (19r:6–19v:3), Ye shes dbang po complains that his solitude, which was supposed to be of benefit to Khri Srong lde btsan and the *dharma*, has been interrupted. Śāntarakṣita, the personification of Buddhism’s triumphal arrival in Tibet, has also seen that the introduction of the *dharma* will lead to not only redemption but also discord between adherents of Buddhism.

In the Bsam yas Debate itself, it is noteworthy that Heshang Moheyvan’s side is subtly depicted as the threat, for which Kamalaśīla is the solution. This does not reflect an anti-Chinese sentiment, since China is portrayed positively elsewhere in the *Dba’ bzhed*, but rather an indication that the future of Tibetan Buddhism lies with gradualism and perhaps India—the land of the Buddha. The above quote of Śāntarakṣita in the mouth of Ye shes dbang po seemingly privileges the Indian side, represented by Kamalaśīla, as the prophesied victors. Most importantly, however, the reference to Kamalaśīla places his contemporar, Khri Srong lde btsan, in the age of decline. Śāntarakṣita foretells the Bsam yas Debate as part of a trying
time for Tibet’s Buddhicisation, a solution to an internal feud with which Khri Srong lde btsan finds it hard to deal. Thus, the emperor calls Ye shes dbang po, who rebukes him for interrupting his meditation and makes it clear that the emperor will die and Buddhism will decline earlier because of it. Although Kamalaśīla’s side later wins the Bsam yas Debate and the emperor declares that his gradualist approach helps to halt the decline of the dharma (24v:2–3)—this is, over all, a positive narrative of the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet—his preceptor’s rebuke marks the beginning of the emperor’s final aпорia, whereas Ye shes dbang po has fully assumed the mantle of his predecessor as superior in spiritual status to the mundane ruler.

In a coda to the main text, as the death of Khri Srong lde btsan approaches, the Dba’ bzhed describes his final sense of doubt. Ye shes dbang po dies first and the emperor says: “reflecting on the fact that the ācārya passed away, my own life cannot last long.”44 This remark mirrors Ye shes dbang po’s last recorded words just preceding the ruler’s, which describe the emperor’s food as divine and fitting for his final earthly meal (25r:4). Further, and despite this section being added on to the core narrative, the ruler’s final thoughts appear to allude to the fact that Ye shes dbang po is no longer helping to keep Khri Srong lde btsan and himself alive through his meditation (19r:7). Their deaths bind the two men together again, as they were in life and in their previous lives.

Yet another way in which this coda rounds out themes in the earlier narrative is that, at the very end, Khri Srong lde btsan voices a deep uncertainty over his final decision in the Bsam yas Debate: “‘[I] regret the fact that the doctrinal scriptures (dar ma) of China were not translated.’ This is the end [of the main text].”45 Behind the triumph of the powerful emperor is a poignant expression of regret and self-doubt. The Dba’ bzhed here portrays Khri Srong lde btsan as a frail human figure. However, as a good Buddhist, he is most concerned for the future of the dharma, rather than of the empire or his dynastic lineage.

The Tibetan emperor’s representation in the Dba’ bzhed constitutes a literary construct, rather than an attempt to find the ‘historical emperor.’ Many of the Dba’ bzhed’s less flattering depictions of him are also contained in the Indian literary tradition of the ‘Death of the Dharma,’ which is told as a prophecy in five-hundred-year periods. Jan Nattier gives this precis of the prophecy:

44 DBA 2000, 25r:5–6 reads: btsan po’i zhag nas a tsarya tshe ’das pa dang shyar na kho bo’i tshe yang ring po mi thub ces gsung.
45 DBA 2000, 25r:7–25v:1 reads: rgya’i dar ma’ gyur ba yid la gcags gsung ngo / / rdzogs so / /
The decline narrative was evidently popular in Tibet, since it is included in several versions in the Tibetan canon and at Dunhuang.49 One version is contained in the *Li yul lung bstan pa*, a prophecy text with a similar title to the *Dba’ bzhed*’s cited source on Khri Srong lde btsan and the Khotanese arhats.50 The *Dba’ bzhed*’s decline narrative necessitates depicting Khri Srong lde btsan as responsible for causing a division in the *samgha*. Whether the *Dba’ bzhed* bases this narrative on a specific text or on a more diffuse Indic/Khotanese tradition remains to be investigated. Yet, it seems to mark a watershed moment: the first crack in the façade of Khri Srong lde btsan’s idealised image.

In each episode, the *Dba’ bzhed* invests key characters with roles related to the main concerns of the Buddhist communities flourishing contemporaneously with its various stages of production between the ninth and twelfth century. It incorporates both historical details and supra-mundane metaphysics in its account, as does the earlier historiography evidenced in the Dunhuang Tibetan corpus (such as IOL Tib J 370/6 and IOL Tib J 466/3). Also, it promotes the practice of Tantra in Tibet while simultaneously warning of Buddhism’s inevitable decline (like Pelliot tibétain 840/3) and describes Khri Srong lde btsan as an important patron but not as an apotheosised religious figure (in a way that resembles Pelliot tibétain 149). The *Dba’ bzhed* neither overrides these concerns nor wholly harmonises their depictions of Khri Srong lde btsan into its narrative, leading to an episodic blend of literary genres where the emperor is first prophesied as destined to spread the *dharma*, but then blamed for accelerating its decline.

This patchwork narrative gives Khri Srong lde btsan a multifaceted and complex character. In the *Dba’ bzhed*, the emperor initially takes most responsibility for spreading Buddhism in Tibet. He outlaws corporal punishment, suggesting that he is a humane ruler who acts according to Buddhist principles of non-violence. Yet the text also suggests that he is a humane ruler who acts according to Buddhist principles of non-violence. Over the following centuries, this important narrative of Khri Srong lde btsan’s establishment of Buddhism in Tibet grew through interpolation and redaction. Comparing the *Dba’ bzhed* with three previously-known versions—SBA 1961.1–2, SBA 1982.1–3 and SBA 1962—sheds light on the recension process. Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger began this work, outlining the *Dba’ bzhed*’s relationship to later versions of the same narrative in copious notes to their translation of the text.51

Tibetan historical editors of the *Testimony of Ba* interpolated large sections into the patchwork, and even rewrote some important passages to reflect an increasingly Buddhist historiography. Despite these alterations, the core story remained the same. This depiction of Khri Srong lde btsan influenced many portrayals of the emperor in later histories as a human patron of Buddhism rather than an apotheosised practitioner. However, this changing tradition slightly alters the *Dba’ bzhed*’s description of Khri Srong lde btsan. For example, it presents him as a more faithful Buddhist by ascribing the doubts that he has about Sāntarakṣita to his ministers (see Chapter 2, above). This ‘pious alteration’ suggests the influence of growing Tibetan religiosity on historiography. It further emphasises that the emperor’s conversion and the transmission of the *dharma* from India to Tibet was predestined from a previous lifetime.52 Finally, the later *Testimony of Ba* tradition reduces Khri Srong lde btsan’s responsibility for dismissing the increasingly popular Padmasambhava, whom I shall focus on here. It seems that the redactors reworked those parts of the *Dba’ bzhed* that depict the

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50 On variations of this theme in Tibetan translations of Khotanese texts, again found in Dunhuang and in the Tibetan Canon, see Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, 188–204; van Schaik, “Red-faced Barbarians,” 53–57.
52 See Doney, “Narrative Transformations,” 315–17 for a discussion of the way that Sāntarakṣita’s revelation of his previous life with Sba Gsal snang and Khri Srong lde btsan are combined in the later *Testimony of Ba* tradition, strengthening the karmic bond of these three important figures. This depiction stands in contrast to accounts in the biographies of Padmasambhava, which replace Sba Gsal snang in this triad with Padmasambhava himself (Doney, “Narrative Transformations,” 317–18).
emperor as a shrewd, secular ruler, in order to create an equally positive image of Khri Srong lde btsan as a religious king.

In one of the most conspicuous examples of the later alteration of the core Dba’ bzhed narrative, Khri Srong lde btsan’s ministers, rather than the emperor himself, are made responsible for Padmasambhava’s dismissal from Tibet.53 SBA 1982.1–3 reads:

The ministers said; “If [Tibet] is connected with the power of mantra, [Padmasambhava, although he] is acting for the good [of] Tibet, India is going to seize the [Tibetan] realm.” Having discussed in a small committee, [his work] was left unfinished. Since Master [Padmasambhava] said “now I shall make a field,” [the ministers] said “Yar klungs [valley] is enough for a field.” Then, having prostrated (phyag byas) and offered great gifts [they] asked him to return back to India. So King [Khri Srong lde btsan] was upset, and offered the master a full bre-measure of gold [and] made circumambulations. Since [the ministers] requested as before, the master said “without desiring gold (i. e. payment), I subjugated the harmful demons in the borderland, Tibet, and enabled the emperor to practise the dharma. [I] acted for the good [of] Tibet, and happiness and jollity arose among your subjects. But, if I desired gold, it would be sufficient to act in this manner.” Then the one skilled [in mantra] grabbed stones, wood, straw and sand with his hand [and] that amount became the same amount of gold dust. In order to please the emperor, [Padmasambhava] took a handful of the gold dust [Khri Srong lde btsan had offered, then] offered it back to the emperor with his other hand.54

Comparing this to the Dba’ bzhed version (13r:6–13v:5), it is obvious that SBA 1982.1–3 has the ministers become suspicious of Padmasambhava’s dangerous character; it even omits the ruler’s request for the master to return home.

SBA 1962 follows this version closely,55 so does SBA 1961.1–2, except that its ending is rather different. SBA 1961.1–2, 25.14–16 reads:

That amount of straw (tsa = rtswa), earth and stones, etc. turned into gold. However, in order that the emperor should save face, [Padmasambhava] took a handful in his hand and offered it back to the btsan [po] by hand.56

I believe that the latter difference is not the result of a line-skip or a misreading of the text, i. e. a transmitted error. Rather, it may constitute an extended hypercorrection, necessitated by an earlier transmitted error, or it may equally be another sign that SBA 1961.1–2 represents a different recension to SBA 1982.1–3 or SBA 1962. These alterations do not change the overall narrative, however, wherein Padmasambhava is dismissed after an argument with Khri Srong lde btsan’s ministers rather than with the king himself.

This shift of blame in the later Testimony of Ba tradition notwithstanding, it agrees with the Dba’ bzhed in recounting that Padmasambhava leaves Tibet less than halfway through the narrative of Buddhism’s establishment there. The later Testimony of Ba’s redactors do not omit his dismissal entirely, or even have him then return to Tibet.57

53 Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba’ bzhed, 58, n. 177 already briefly noted this discrepancy.
54 SBA 1982.1–3, 31.15–32.5 (with what remains of the main text of the DBA 2000, 13r:6–13v:5 in bold) reads: blon po dag na re / bod yul bzang por byas po¹ sngags mkhan gyi mthu dang shyar na rgyal srid rgya gar gyis phrogs te ‘gro zhes ‘dan sa chung nagr gros byas nas ‘pho’ gum par chad ste / slob dpon gyis de zhing bya’o gsungs pas zhing yar lungs kyis chog zer te sngags mkhan la phyag byas te bya dga’ chen po phul nas slar rgya gar du bzhud par zhu ba phul bas rgyal po ma dgyes nas slob dpon la gser phye bre gang phul / bskor ba byas / sngar ltar zhis pas slob dpon gyi zhal nas / nga gser ‘dod pa ma yin te / bod mtha’ khou de’ stre sin gdug pa can btul la btsan po chos byar btub par bya / bod yul bzang por byas la / ‘bangs bde la la dgod pa¹ phyir ’ongs na / gser ‘dod na ’di tsug byas pas chog gsungs nas / mkhan pos rdo dang / shing dang / rtswa dang / bye ma la sogs pa phyag gir bzung tshad reg tshad gser phyer red do / btsan po¹ thugs bsrgun pa¹ chet du gser phye khyor gang zhig bsnams / lhag ma gzhon slar btsan po rang la phul nas / …
55 SBA 1962, 88r:2–5 reads: blon po dag na re bod yul bzang por byas po¹ sngags mkhan gyi mthu dang shyar na chab srid rgya gar gyis phrogs te ‘gro zhes ‘dan sa chung nagr gros byas nas ‘pho’ gum par chad ste / slob dpon gyis de zhing bya’o gsungs pas zhing yar lungs kyis chog zer te sngags mkhan la phyag byas te bya dga’ chen po phul nas slar rgya gar du bzhud par zhu ba phul bas rgyal po ma dgyes nas slob dpon la gser phye bre gang phul / bskor ba byas / sngar ltar zhis pas slob dpon gyi zhal nas / nga gser ‘dod pa ma yin te / bod mtha’ khou de’ stre sin gdug pa can btul la btsan po chos byar btub par bya / bod yul bzang por byas la / ‘bangs bde la la dgod pa¹ phyir ’ongs na / gser ‘dod na ’di tsug byas pas chog gsungs nas / mkhan pos rdo dang / shing dang / rtswa dang / bye ma la sogs pa phyag gir bzung tshad reg tshad gser phyer red do / btsan po¹ thugs bsrgun pa¹ chet du gser phye khyor gang zhig bsnams / lhag ma gzhon slar btsan po rang la phul nas / …
56 The whole passage, SBA 1961.1–2, 25.8–16, reads: blon dag na re / bod yul bzang por byas nas / sngags mkhan gyi mthu dang shyar na rgyal srid rgya gar gyi pho brang te ‘gro zhes mdsn ba chu nagr gros byas nas ‘pho’ gum par chad / slob dpon gyis de zhing bya’o gsungs pas / zhing yar lungs kyis chog zer nas sngags mkhan la phyag byas te bya dga’ chen po phul nas slar rgya gar du bzhud par zhu ba phul bas rgyal po ma dgyes nas / slob dpon la gser phye bre gang phul / bskor ba byas / sngar ltar zhis pas slob dpon gyi zhal nas / nga gser ‘dod pa ma yin te / bod mtha’ khou de’ stre sin gdug pa can btul la btsan po chos byar btub par bya / bod yul bzang por byas la / ‘bangs bde la la dgod pa¹ phyir ’ongs na / gser ‘dod na ’di tsug byas pas chog gsungs nas / mkhan pos rdo dang / shing dang / rtswa dang / bye ma la sogs pa phyag gir bzung tshad reg tshad gser phyer red do / btsan po¹ thugs bsrgun pa¹ chet du gser phye khyor gang zhig bsnams / lhag ma gzhon slar btsan po rang la phul nas / …
57 The whole passage, SBA 1961.1–2, 25.8–16, reads: blon dag na re / bod yul bzang por byas nas / sngags mkhan gyi mthu dang shyar na rgyal srid rgya gar gyi pho brang te ‘gro zhes mdsn ba chu nagr gros byas nas ‘pho’ gum par chad / slob dpon gyis de zhing bya’o gsungs pas / zhing yar lungs kyis chog zer nas sngags mkhan la phyag byas te bya dga’ chen po phul nas slar rgya gar du bzhud par zhu ba phul bas / btsan po de la thugs ma dgyes nas slob dpon la bskor ba byas nas gser gang phul bas / slob dpon gyi zhal nas gser ‘dod pa ma yin te / bod mtha’ khou de’ stre sin gdug pa can btul la btsan po chos byar btub par bya / bod yul bzang por byas la / ‘bangs bde la la dgod pa¹ phyir ’ongs na / gser ‘dod na ’di tsug byas pas chog gsungs nas / tsa dang sa rdo la (= la sogs pa) reg tshad gser du song / on kyang btsan po¹ ngo bsrgun ba¹ phyir khyor gang tsham phyag tu bzhes te / lhag ma phyir btsan la phul /.
Tibet. As in the *dba’ bzhed*, Šāntarakṣita takes over religious authority in Tibet, especially the building of Bsam yas, which the later *Testimony of Ba* describes in much greater detail than the *dba’ bzhed*. In fact, it is not so much Padmasambhava’s image that benefits most from the later *Testimony of Ba*’s alteration, but rather Khri Srong lde btsan’s character.

While the later *Testimony of Ba* blames the ministers, and thus removes the stigma of being dismissed by the emperor, Padmasambhava still leaves Tibet; whereas Khri Srong lde btsan is almost completely purified of the stain of dismissing such a great master. By altering the *dba’ bzhed*’s text here, as in the above two episodes, the redactors of the later *Testimony of Ba* apparently seek to improve the image of Khri Srong lde btsan in line with the prevailing religious sensibilities of their time. Whereas the *dba’ bzhed* showed the emperor’s specifically royal power by having him ask Padmasambhava to leave Tibet (despite its consequences for the dharma), the later *Testimony of Ba* saves Khri Srong lde btsan’s religious credentials by placing a blame on his ministers. Both accounts show the ruler in a positive light, but their archetypal source for positive characterisation had shifted from the emperor to the Buddha over the centuries. The growing religiosity of histories necessitated a change in the content of these key episodes and the portrayal of Khri Srong lde btsan. In the later *Testimony of Ba*, Khri Srong lde btsan is already beginning to embody dharmic values rather than the qualities of an emperor that are evident in the *Old Tibetan Annals* and *Chronicle* and imperial-period inscriptions.

## Conclusion

Every age reinvents its ‘national’ story to suit the tastes of its contemporary audience. This involves processes of accretion or alteration, perhaps stemming from oral retellings and *ad hoc* adaptations to the penchants of particular patrons. Each reiteration has value as an expression of a particular cultural milieu. In the Tibetan context and the tradition of the *Testimony of Ba*, I have resisted the long-standing practice of discarding more recent strata in a pursuit of an Ur text and a ‘real’ or ‘historical’ Khri Srong lde btsan. The redactors of the *Testimony of Ba* interwove their interpolations into a pre-existing and seminal narrative fabric rather than creating completely new histories of the imperial period. Furthermore, the imperial-era metaphors that the redactors incorporated into the *Testimony of Ba* resisted complete Buddhicisation. The earliest strata in the *dba’ bzhed*, such as the invitation of Šāntarakṣita, appear to express ninth/tenth-century concerns and, concomitantly, greater pride in the power of the emperor. The later *Testimony of Ba*’s redactors depict Khri Srong lde btsan from a more religious perspective, removing his ambiguous proclamations and adding their own lengthy digressions concerning other characters. Perhaps the redactors were too conservative to invent many new scenes for him or, more likely, there were more highly valued, religious aspects of his reign—such as his construction of Bsam yas—already in existence that cried out for inclusion. These episodes suggest the growing veneration for Bsam yas or the burgeoning cult of Padmasambhava. Yet, Khri Srong lde btsan seems not to have flourished as a focus of religious attention between the *dba’ bzhed* and its redaction in the later *Testimony of Ba*. In some respects, we might conclude that the core story of Khri Srong lde btsan ossified with reiteration.

Tibetan histories’ depictions of his ancestor, Khri Srong btsan, remain positive throughout the premodern period. The biographies of the seventh-century emperor transform him into a monumental religious figure. In contrast, from the eleventh century, Khri Srong lde btsan becomes fallible. In Buddhist cosmology, Padmasambhava and Srong btsan sgam po are more similar to each other than to Khri Srong lde btsan is to either. Both of the former are traditionally considered to be the *nīrmanakāya*

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57 Wangdu and Diemberger, *dba’ bzhed*, 67, n. 221 claim that in the later *Testimony of Ba*, after Padmasambhava leaves Tibet, the contents of a stūpa are brought from India according to his instructions. However, the nameless slob dpon (‘religious master’) consulted according to the earliest extant version (SBA 1982.1–3, 50.14–19) is most likely Šāntarakṣita (who has just been called a slob dpon, SBA 1982.1–3, 49.15), rather than Padmasambhava.

58 See further discussion in Doney, “The Degraded Emperor,” 30f.

59 On these sources, see Chapter 1.

60 In contrast, Khri Srong lde btsan is reimagined in the works of Nyang ral Nyi ma od zer (1124–1192) and those he inspired; see Daniel A. Hirshberg, *Remembering the Lotus-Born: Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet’s Golden Age* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom). For example, the Zangs gling ma biography attributed to him depicts Khri Srong lde btsan as an emanation of Mañjuśrī (Doney, *The Zangs gling ma*, 120–22, 19v:3–20v:2; 241–42, 17r:1–18r:2). Interestingly, there Mañjuśrī emanates as Khri Srong lde btsan in order to spread Buddhism in conscious emulation of Avalokiteśvara-Khri Srong btsan. It may be that the narrative, not only the protagonist’s narrated motivation, is inspired by the example of the earlier bodhisatva-king. Also, despite being an emanation of a celestial bodhisatva, Khri Srong lde btsan is still a fallible figure in this incarnation (Doney, “The Degraded Emperor,” 45–46).
emanations of Amitābha/Avalokiteśvara. This incarnational status allows the royal figure, Srong btsan sgam po, to become a religious figure, the embodiment of Avalokiteśvara, and so continue to be idealised in histories that postdate the *Dbā’ bzhed*. In mainstream Tibetan historiography, Khri Srong lde btsan is never a self-aware bodhisatva, whereas Padmasambhava is fully enlightened and thus takes over the main role as the ruler’s master and wrathful converter of non-Buddhist forces in Tibet. This trend appears to have begun with the main narrative of the *Dbā’ bzhed*, which is presented in Part Two of this volume.

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Part Two
Folio 1r

ཕྱིི ཁ ར །༡༧༥ །༄། དབའ་བཞེེད་བཞུགས་སོ༎

Folio 1v

༡ །༄༅།། །།།སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱིི་ཆོོས་བོད་ཁམས་སུ་ཇིི་ལྟར་བྱུང་བའི་བཀའ་མཆོིད་ཀྱིི་ཡིི་གེ།

༢ །བཙན་པོོ་ཁྲིི་སྲོོང་བཙན་གྱིི་སྐུ་ར ིང་ལ་དར་ཞེིང་རྒྱས་པོར་མཛད།

༣ །བཙན་པོོ་ཁྲིི་གཙུག་ལྡེེ་བཙན་གྱིི་སྐུ་རིང་ལ་རྒྱ་གར་གྱིི་ཡིི་གེ་གསེར་གྱིིས་བྲིིས་པོ་ཅེིག་དང་མུ་ཏྲའི་ཕྱིག་རྒྱ་ཅེིག་བྱུང་ངོ།།

༤ །ཞེལ་ཕྱིེ་ཞེིང་གཟིིགས། ཞེལ་ཆོེམས་སུའང་ངའི་དབོན་སྲོས་ཆོབ་སྲོིད་ཆུང་ནའང་འདེ་ཞེལ་ཕྱིེ།

༥ །ཐོོན་མི་གསམ་པོོ་ར་ལ་བཀའ་སྩལ་ཏོེ་བཏོང་ནས།

༦ །གཞེན་ཡིང་རུ་བཞེིའི་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་བས་པོོ་ཧར་གླིིང་བརྩིིགས།

༧ །སོ་ཟེར་ཏོེ་ནས་ཡིིན་i. e. “Means blue turquoise, referring to barley.”

༨ །དེ་ལ་མཆོོད་པོ་བྱིས་པོས་རྒྱལ་པོོ་དགུང་ལོ་བརྒྱད་བཅུ་པོ་སྐུ་འགེ་སེ་བ་ཅེིག་དགུང་ལོ་བཅུ་དྲུག་པོ་ལྟ་བུར་གྱུར་ཏོེ

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(folio 1r)

Dba’ bzhed bzhugs so/

(folio 1v)

(This is) the text of the authoritative exposition describing how the dharma of the Buddha came to the region of Tibet, according to which, during the reign of his majesty Lha tho do re snyan btsan, noble dharma (texts) were first found and, during the reign of his majesty Khri Srong btsan, a tradition was instituted for practising the holy dharma and, during the reign of his majesty Khri Srong ide btsan, it was propagated widely (and), during the reign of his majesty Khri Gtsug ide btsan, it was codified completely.

That which was found during the reign of Lha tho do re snyan btsan was named the ‘Absolute Secret’ and propitiated with roasted barley and libations. Also, from time to time the emperor would respectfully open and look upon it. Moreover, in his last will he declared: “Open this even if my heirs are great in political power and open this even if they are not very great in political power.” The heirs becoming very great in political power, the ‘Absolute Secret’ was then opened and a copy of the Basket of Essence (Za ma tog gi snying po) was found written in Indian letters of gold, together with the Mu tra’i phyag rgya. Then during the reign of his majesty Khri Srong btsan, after the princess of the lord of Nepal was taken in marriage, the sanctuary of Ra sa pehar was built. Furthermore, the temples of the four administrative divisions were constructed at the king’s behest. (And) the Brag devatā was made. For the dharma of India and the writing system, (the king) gave an order and dispatched ’Thon mi Gsam po ra. He returned, bringing with him Kaṃśa-datta, an Indian man of letters, having located the Ratnameghasūtra
Folio 2r

7 ྲིན། ་བརྩིན་པོོར་གྱིིས་གྱིི་བདེ་བོོར་བཅུ་ལས་བཞེོག་པོ་མོ་འཁོར་ཐོག་པ་བསྐོས་ཏོོ།
8 །འབངས་ཐོག་ནས་འབངས་ཀུན་འབོད་ཀྱིི་ལོ་ཙ་མེད་ནས་ དེ་ལྟར་འབངས་ཁྱེེད་མི་དགའ་ན༴
9 དེ་ལྟར་འབངས་ཁྱེེད་ན་རེ་བཙན་པོོ་ནི་ཕོ་བྲིང་སྒོར་ཡིང་མི་གཤིེགས་ཅེིའི་ཆོ་ཡིང་
10 དེ་ཁྲིིམས་སྲོིད་ཀྱིང་མེད་པོར་འགྱུར་པོ་རྣམ་པོ་དྲ་བར་དུ་ཆོབ་སྒོར་ཡིང་མ་གཤིེགས་
11 དེ་ཡིང་རྒྱ་རྗེེའི་ཞེལ་ནས།

Folio 2v

7 དགུ་པར་འགྲེམ་གྱིི་བློོན་གྱིིས་ལྷན་ཀྱིིས། དཔའ་རོལ་བཅུ་དང་པོ་བཞེེས་པོ་འདི་ཀུན་རིིང་ལྷན་ཀྱིིས་པ་རྣམ་པོ་འགྱུར་མི་ཐོན་པ་ལས། དེ་ལྟར་མེད་པོ་གྱིི་ཐོན་པ་ལས་གཞེི་བློངས་པོ་ཞེིག་མཛད་དེ་ཡིི་གེ་བྲིིས་སོ༎
8 དེ་ལྟར་འབངས་ཁྱེེད་ན་རེ་བཙན་པོོ་ནི་ཕོ་བྲིང་སྒོར་ཡིང་མི་གཤིེགས་ཅེིའི་ཆོ་ཡིང་
9 དེ་ཁྲིིམས་སྲོིད་ཀྱིང་མེད་པོར་འགྱུར་པོ་རྣམ་པོ་དྲ་བར་དུ་ཆོབ་སྒོར་ཡིང་མ་གཤིེགས་
10 དེ་ཡིང་རྒྱ་རྗེེའི་ཞེལ་ནས།

13 Insertion above: རྣམ་པོ་འཁོར་ཐོག་པ་བསྐོས་ཏོོ།
14 Insertion at top of the folio (middle), keyed to a symbol: དེ་ཁྲིིམས་སྲོིད་ཀྱིང་མེད་པོར་འགྱུར་
15 Insertion below in dbu can: དེ་ཁྲིིམས་སྲོིད་ཀྱིང་མེད་པོར་འགྱུར་
16 Insertion below: གཞེི་བློངས་པོ་ཞེིག་
17 Insertion below in dbu can: དེ་ཁྲིིམས་སྲོིད་ཀྱིང་མེད་པོར་འགྱུར་
18 Insertion bottom of page: དེ་ཁྲིིམས་སྲོིད་ཀྱིང་མེད་པོར་འགྱུར་
19 Insertion below in dbu can: དེ་ཁྲིིམས་སྲོིད་ཀྱིང་མེད་པོར་འགྱུར་
20 Insertion above: དེ་ཁྲིིམས་སྲོིད་ཀྱིང་མེད་པོར་འགྱུར་
21 Insertion below: དེ་ཁྲིིམས་སྲོིད་ཀྱང་མེད་པོར་འགྱུར་
and Daśakuśalāni (Ten Virtues). The dharma-texts were sealed by order and deposited in the royal treasury of (the fortress of) Phying pa. And (the king) proclaimed: “After five generations of my heirs in the (royal) lineage, there will come someone who shall promote the dharma of the Buddha and, at that time, open the box!” As to the writing system, four trusted attendants were taught. At that time, the king resided inside the palace for a period of four full years, not deigning to go even to the main gate. Consequently, all the subjects speculated: “His majesty doesn’t even come to the palace gate and nobody knows anything, but the minister is the wise and capable one!” Such rumours, circulated openly by the ordinary subjects, were brought to his majesty’s attention. Having conferred with the four trusted attendants who were being taught writing, his majesty, after cogitating for four months, devised a legal decree, the basic ideas of which were drawn from the Ten Virtues, (and) he had it put in writing. Then, one morning, all the subjects were assembled and (the king) pointedly declared: “While I remained in a single bed chamber without moving palaces, leaving aside the affairs of state, you subjects were able to relax and be happy; yet you allege: ‘His majesty doesn’t even come to the palace gate and nobody knows anything, but the minister is the wise and capable one.’ Now, the minister that you describe as wise and capable—did I appoint him or did you appoint him? If you subjects are discontent with this situation, then here is a decree which I have prepared over four months—follow it exactly! If you do not follow it, then just as the political system of the twelve principalities had disintegrated from lack of law, many troubles will follow. Moreover, my (royal) lineage, the ruler and (his) subjects and the rule of law would also disintegrate,

(folio 2v)

so follow the edict exactly!” Declaiming thus throughout the morning before his assembled subjects, the king in person unerringly explained the written edict, the administrative aspects of his commands that were to be followed assiduously and the noble system of dharma. Thereafter, all the subjects gave thanks and offered him a title saying: “Your majesty! Since there is none more profound (sgam pa) than you, we shall also call you Khri Srong btsan the profound (sgam po).” The children of the ministers and others were all ordered to learn writing from ’Thon mi Gsam po ra and Kamśa-datta from India—and since then writing came into existence in Tibet.

Subsequently, ’Gar Stong btsan yul zungs was appointed as the khad dpon (‘chief envoy’) to mediate and seek the daughter of the emperor of China in marriage. Snyi snyi ba snya do re snang btsan was appointed the spyan dbang (‘chief observer’) (and) ’Bro Lde ru gung ton as the ’go dpon (‘head of the mission’). And entrusting them with three boxes containing royal letters, the mission was dispatched with an entourage numbering three hundred. Having reached (the court) at Keng shi, they presented one dispatch box to the emperor. The emperor, writing a reply, said: “Take this up (to Tibet) and I shall respond in accord with whatever the answer to this is.” The envoys submitted: “It is not necessary to send this up (to Tibet), this is the reply to that,” and offered the second message. When the emperor again spoke, he declared: “This is (my) response to that (second message). Send it and until a reply comes you envoys stay put here!” To this the envoys submitted: “It is not necessary to send this up (to Tibet), this is the reply to that.” So saying they offered the third box. After reading that (third reply) and becoming amazed, the emperor declared:
Folio 3r

1. འཚལ་ལོ་ཞེས་གསོལ་པོ་དང་། ཡུལ་ནས་སླར་བོད་ཡུལ་ཁྱེིད་འདིར་ལ་འོངས་ཤིེས་བཀས་རྨས་པོ་དང་། ལི་བན་དེ་༢་དེ་ལ་མ་དད་པོར་གྱུར་ཏོེ་འདི་འཕགས་པོ་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིིགས་ཅེང་མ་ཡིིན་པོས་སླར་འདོང་ཞེེས་རང་ཡུལ་དུ་འགོ་བར་བགྱིིས་པོ་ལས།

2. ནི་དམ་པོའི་ཆོོས་མཛད་པོའ ི་སྲོོལ་དེ་ཙམ་ཞེིག་བཏོོད་དོ༎

3. མེས་སྲོོང་བཙན་བསྒམ་པོོ་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིིགས་ཀྱིི་ཞེལ་མཐོོང་བར་འཚལ་ཏོེ་འདིར་མཆོིས་པོ་ལགས་ཅེེས་གསོལ་པོ་དང་།

4. འིང་འབུལ་ཞེས་བཀའ་སྩལ་ནས་སོང་བརྩིན་ཡུལ་ཟུངས་ལ་རྒྱ་རྗེེས་བློོན་ཆོེ་བའི་ཐོབས་སྩལ་ནས།

5. དངོས་ཅན་པར་གཅོང་བཀའ་ལུང་ཞེེས་བཀའ་སྩལ་ལས་འདས་ནས་ལོ་བརྒྱ་ན་ལི་ཡུལ་དུ་དམ་པོའི་ཆོོས་འབྱུང་།

6. བཙན་པོོའི་ཞེབས་ལ་བཟུང་སེ་ངུས་ནས་ཕོ་བྲིང་དུ་གཉིད་ལོག་སེ་འདུག་པོ་དང་ལྡེན་ཡུལ་དུ་སོང་ཤིིག་ཞེལ་མཐོོང་བར་འགྱུར་ར ོ་ཞེེས་གསུང་ནས།

7. སྤྱན་དངས་པོ་ཡིང་ར་མ ོ་ཆོེར་བཞུགས་ཏོེ།

8. འདི་ཕུལ།

Folio 3v

1. ལྡེན་པོང་སོགས་མི་ལྡེན་པོང་སོགས་དུ་སྨོན་པ་ཀླུ་བཀྲི་སྟེངས་པའི་ཐོབ་གྲོས་ཀྱིས་མངོན་པོ་ཡིང་དཔོན་ལྡན་པོས་པོར་སྤྱོད་པ་དང༴

2. བཙན་པོོ་ཁྲིི་སྲོོང་བཙན་ཨརྱ་པོ་ལ ོ་

3. བཙན་པོོ་བཞེེངྶིས་པའི་ིབས་གྱིས་བོད་ཀྱིི་བཙན་པོོ་དང་རྒྱ་རྗེེ་༢་འད་བར་གྱིིས་ཤིིག་ཅེེས་བཀའ་སྩལ་ནས་བྲིོ་ཡིང་སྩལ་ཏོེ་

4. མཐུད་ལ་གསེག་ཤིང་རེ་རེ་

5. མཐུད་དེས་གཞི་བསྒོད་པས་སྐྱེན་པ་དེ་དགའ་སེ་ཕྱིག་འཚལ་བ་དང༴

22 Insertion below: བློ་བོ་རིང་པ་
23 Insertion below: སྦྱར་བ
24 Insertion above: བློ་བོ་རིང་པ་
25 Insertion above: སྦྱར་བ
26 Insertion below in du Bois: སྦྱར་བ
27 The a is written in a lighter ink.
28 Insertion below: སྦྱར་བ
29 Insertion below in a later du Bois: སྦྱར་བ
30 Insertion below in du Bois: སྦྱར་བ
“My daughter will be offered in marriage!” After this announcement, the emperor bestowed the title ‘Great Minister’ on Stong btsan yul zungs and for two months the envoys were entertained. (Then) princess Mum shang Ong co and her royal entourage, numbering three hundred, were sent up (to Tibet). Moreover, the emperor, offering thirty concubines as consorts, declared: “Let his majesty in Tibet and the emperor in China be two equals!” After declaring (that) and swearing (to it), he dispatched them. (Stong btsan yul zungs) once again arriving in the land of Tibet, Mum shang Ong co was presented as a bride (to the king). Thereafter, his majesty resided in the palace of Lhan kar ta mo ra, whereas Ong co resided in Lha sa at the palace at Ra mo che. A gold image of Lord Śākyamuni, brought by Ong co from the land of China, was also placed at Ra mo che. Thus, all this was done by the ancestor Srong btsan sgam po to promote the tradition of the practice of the noble dharma.

The people of Khotan, it is said, declare: “His majesty Khri Srong btsan is surely Ārya palo.” If asked what the evidence for that is (they say): “One hundred years after the passing of the Buddha, the excellent dharma arrived in Khotan. At the time (of Khri Srong btsan), two monks aspired to see the countenance of Avalokiteśvara. As a result of worship and making propitiatory offerings for a year, Ārya Mañjuśrī appeared and asked: “Oh noble sons, what do you desire?” When they replied: “We beg to see the face of Avalokiteśvara,” (Mañjuśrī) pronounced: “Since the king of Tibet is Ārya Avalokiteśvara, go to the land of Tibet (and) you will come to see (his) face.” Each carrying a staff,

(folio 3v)

(the monks) set off immediately (and) arrived at the palace of his majesty in Tibet. That time happened to be the period when his majesty’s edict was enforced for the first time (and) witnessing some people executed, some banished, some arrested and held for life and some with their eyes and noses removed, the two monks from Khotan, losing faith, remarked: “Since he does not seem to be Avalokiteśvara, let’s go back.” As they make preparations to return to their homeland, his majesty came to know that and issued a command that was announced from the four gates of the palace, ordering the two monks: “Submit to the royal presence in the palace according to his majesty’s order!” Once summoned inside, as (they) prostrated before the royal presence, (the king) demanded: “Why have you come here?” They submitted: “We have come here aspiring to see the face of Avalokiteśvara.” His majesty arose and said: “Come along!” Leading the two Khotanese monks away to a secluded place and (after) arriving there, he manifested himself in the form of Avalokiteśvara. The two, delighted, bowed down. When he asked: “What do you wish now?” they submitted: “We pray, have us sent back to the country of Khotan.” Back in the palace, whereas they had fallen asleep, weeping and grasping his majesty’s feet, when the warmth of the morning sun woke them, the Noble One had vanished, and the two monks found themselves in the country of Khotan. “Formerly, with the thought that he was not Avalokiteśvara and intent on returning to the country of Khotan,
Folio 4r

7 སྐྱེི་ལྷ་བུ་ནམ་མཁར་དང་། སྐྱེི་ལྷ་བུ་ནམ་མཁར་དང་། སྐྱེི་ལྷ་བུ་

9 སྐྱེི་ལྷ་བུ་ནམ་མཁར་དང་། སྐྱེི་ལྷ་བུ་ནམ་མཁར་དང་། སྐྱེི་ལྷ་བུ་

Folio 4v

7 སྐྱེི་ལྷ་བུ་ནམ་མཁར་དང་། སྐྱེི་ལྷ་བུ་ནམ་མཁར་དང་། སྐྱེི་ལྷ་བུ་

31 Insertion below in dbu can: ༠
32 Insertion above: བཀྲམ་པ།
33 Insertion below: བཀྲམ་པ།
34 Insertion བཀྲམ་པ།: full correction at the top right of the page: བཀྲམ་པ། ་ཆེས།
35 Traces of writing visible above the line.
36 The word ཨོང་ཅོ་ is dotted above to indicate it is superfluous (see next phrase).
37 Insertion top of page (left): ཨོང་ཅོ་ is dotted above to indicate it is superfluous (see next phrase).
38 Insertion bottom page (left): ཨོང་ཅོ་ is dotted above to indicate it has been copied twice.
39 Insertion below: ཨོང་ཅོ་ is dotted above to indicate it has been copied twice.
40 The words ཨོང་ཅོ་ are dotted above to indicate they have been copied twice.
41 Insertion below in dbu can: ༠
42 The ཨོང་ཅོ་ is corrected to: ཨོང་ཅོ་
43 Insertion above: བཀྲམ་པ། and the first letter of the next syllable erased.
we were not bestowed any other special favours, but now without doubt he is certainly Avalokiteśvara.” Exactly this is found in the *Lung bstan chen po*—The Great Prophecy.

Then during the time of his majesty *Dus sro po rje rlung nam*, the *Glang gi rtse* was built at the king’s behest. Thereafter, in the time of his son his majesty *Khri Lde gtsug brtan*, after he took the Chinese *Gyim shang Ong co* as his queen, in each of the following places, temples were built at the king’s behest: *Ching bu nam ra*, and *Kwa chu* in *Brag dmar*, and *Gra phags*, and *Khur brag*, and *Smas gong*. Each year Gyim shang Ong co made a round of the (image of) Lord Śākyamuni in *Ra mo che* at *Lha sa*, while *Nene mo* (maternal aunt) Mum shang Ong co gazed on the face, (and) a religious feast for a thousand religious and lay people was held. In the land of Tibet, for the merit of the dead, they did not refrain from giving food and they called this ritual *tshe* or ‘Life.’ Contributing that much to the holy *dharma* during their lifetimes, his majesty *Khri Lde gtsug btsan* and *Ong co* duly passed away.

In the lifetime of (their) son, *Khri Srong lde btsan*, when he reached the worthy age of thirteen, as soon as he took the kingdom in hand, *Sna nam Ma zhang khrom pa skyes* denounced Thang la ‘bar and ordered the Chinese devatā escorted back to China from Ra mo che in Lha sa. Initially a single horseman could carry (the image) in his lap, (but) when lifted it was placed in a mesh of leather straps by three hundred men and swung out the (temple) door. Then a thousand people drag-loaded it away, entrusting it to ’Bal rje khol.

Although the whole statue was buried with earth, the following morning the upper part of the torso had clearly emerged.

An old Chinese Hwa shang, who was resident at Ra mo che and had gone as an attendant of Ong co, was also sent to China. At the border of Tibet and China, one of his pair of shoes was left behind at the resting place on the previous day’s route and pronouncing on that the Hwa shang said: “My leaving behind one shoe at the resting place on the previous day’s route portends that there will be a spark of the noble *dharma* once again in the land of Tibet.” So it is said.

Furthermore, after the Ra sa ‘khar brag devagṛha and the Brag dmar ‘dran bzang devagṛha were destroyed, the bell which is presently the bell in Bsam yas was concealed among the rocks of Ching bu. When Zhang Ma zhang was dismantling the dharma, the Ra sa pehar became a workshop and sheep carcasses were hung on all the arms of the holy images and the necks wound with intestines. Zhang (also) announced: “Henceforth, when death occurs the performance of the tshe (ritual) is not allowed. In the event that anybody is found practising the dharma, he shall be banished alone (i. e. without family and property) forever.” Giving such orders, the excellent dharma was undermined.

Not long after, Zhang Sna nam Khri thong rje thang la ‘bar was escorted to the foot of Thang lha and died there wailing kwa kwa for a long time. As for Cog ro Skyes bzang rgyal gong, he died after his tongue and all his limbs were mutilated. As for Zhang Ma zhang, he was buried alive in a pit on the pretext that he was the (king’s) scapegoat after a female diviner received a bribe to pronounce: “Due to the appearance of terrible omens of death, there is a bad prognosis for the life of the king.”
Folio 5r

1. མི་ཉོ་ལེགས་ལུས་པོ་ཁྲུ་དང་མི་ཉོ་ལེགས་ལུས་པོ་སྐྱེི་སྐྱེི་ལོངས་པོ་ལས། འཚལ་བའི་དབུ་བསྐྱེལ་བར་མོ་བཟིང་མཆོི་ནས་མང་ཡུལ་དུ་མཱ་ཧཱ་བོ་དང་ཤིི་ལེན་ཏྲ་ལ་མཆོོད་པོ་བཞིི་སོགས་པོར་ཅེི་གནང་ཞེེས་གསོལ་བ་ལས།

2. སྣང་གི་བུ་ཁྱེེའུ་ཞེིག་བཙས་ནས་ཞེག་བཞེི་བཅྤོད་པོ་ངོ་འཚལ།

Folio 5v

7. འོ་ཞེེས་བྱི་བའི་སྒ་དང་འོད་བྱུང་།

44 Insertion below: སྣང་གིས་ཞེིག་བཙས་ནས་ཞེག་བཞེི་བཅྤོད་པོ་ངོ་འཚལ།
45 Insertion below in dbu can: སྣང་གིས་ཞེིག་བཙས་ནས་ཞེག་བཞེི་བཅྤོད་པོ་ངོ་འཚལ།
46 Insertion below: བུ་མོ་ནི་སླད་ཁྱེེད་རང་གི་བུར་སྐྱེེ་ཞེེས་ལུང་སྩལ་རྟགས་དང་མཚན་མ་ཡིང་མང་དུ་བྱུང༴
47 Insertion below: བུ་མོ་ནི་སླད་ཁྱེེད་རང་གི་བུར་སྐྱེེ་ཞེེས་ལུང་སྩལ་རྟགས་དང་མཚན་མ་ཡིང་མང་དུ་བྱུང༴
48 Amendment of dbu can: inserted below: བུ་མོ་ནི་སླད་ཁྱེེད་རང་གི་བུར་སྐྱེེ་ཞེེས་ལུང་སྩལ་རྟགས་དང་མཚན་མ་ཡིང་མང་དུ་བྱུང༴
49 Insertions below in dbu can to make the reading: སྣང་གི་བུ་ཁྱེེའུ་ཞེིག་བཙས་
50 Insertion below: (tsheg)
The question arose among everyone, high and low, whether the Chinese devatā was threatening or harmful in accord with divination and omens. Because it was widely agreed that the progenitor of the Chinese (devatā) and its copies had initially come from India, the Lord Śākyamuni (image) was carried on a litter on two mules to Nepal near to India, its ancestral land. At the time it was carried away, a terrible plague arose (and), for the people who died, it was ordered that nothing (i.e. tshe rituals) should be done. After that, when both the daughter and elder son of Dba’ Gsal snang died at the same time, for appearance’s sake a Bon (ritual) was ordered to be performed. Secretly, in contrast to the sham, a thousand monks and lay folk were fed and the tshe (ritual) performed. An old Hwa shang in Ra mo che, having been summoned, was asked to illuminate (the destiny) of both children and said: “Would you be happy for both children to be born as gods or happy for them to be reborn as your own children?” The father requested: “Kindly have them sent to be gods,” whereas the mother requested: “Kindly have them reborn as my very own children.” The Hwa shang thereon performed the (funeral) ritual, having placed in the mouth of the girl an offering decorated with a pea-sized pearl one side of which was coloured with vermillion. The Hwa shang then prophesied: “The boy has gone to the land of the gods; the girl will be born again as your boy.” Many signs and omens simultaneously appeared, (for example) there emerged many body relics in the tiny pieces of bone of the (dead) children. Then, in the middle of the (next) year, when a boy was born to Gsas snang, everyone saw the offering with the pearl, red on one side, on his gum. On reaching the fortieth day after birth, he was even able to recognise his aunt,

as well as calling out for other people individually as he used to do before his death. Dba’ Gsas snang, receiving instructions in meditation from that Hwa shang, meditated at all times in secret and, having meditated at all times in secret, subsequently petitioned the king to become the envoy to Nepal and India for the sake of seeking out the dharma of the Buddha. (His majesty) thereon gave it solemn consideration and appointed him ‘Chief of Intelligence’ in Mang yul, and (Dba’ Gsas snang) proceeded to Mang yul.

Then, breaking the earlier proscription forbidding the practice of the divine dharma made by Ma zhang, he performed pūjā at Mahābodhi and Śrī Nālandā in the land of India. Having presented donations in the middle of winter, rain fell. On the Bodhi tree at Mahābodhi fresh foliage sprouted. In Nepal, the feast-offering for the entire lineage (sarva wam se) was performed. At the time of conducting a pūjā by presenting donations in the Hem Khang temple, there was light in the sky and a voice declared: “It shall be propitious!” In Mang yul, two temples were built and the necessary entitlements allotted. The teachings of all the Indian and Nepalese preceptors was learnt (by Dba’ Gsas snang).

With the recommendation of the lord of Nepal, (he) invited the preceptor Bodhisatva to Mang yul. After Gsas snang made a welcoming feast in his house, he sought dharma teachings. After that he requested: “What do you think about going on to Tibet to be the kalyāṇamitra of the king of Tibet?” To which (Bodhisatva said): “Make donations!” whereupon (Gsas snang) presented everything suitable such as cosmetic ointment, brocades, cloth, gold and silver, woollens etc. But (Bodhisatva) demanded: “Make further donations!” So he offered the precious clothes on his body, even his sash and turban. Consequently the preceptor declared: “Since the time is ripe and
Tsering Gonkatsang, Michael Willis

Folio 6r

1. འཆིལ་བར་མཁན་པོའི་སྙན་དུ་ཞུ་བ་གསོལ་ནས་གནང་སེ།
2. མཆོི་བར་མཁན་པོའི་སྙན་དུ་ཞུ་བ་གསོལ་ནས་གནང་སེ།
3. བཙན་པོོའི་ཞེལ་ནས་

Folio 6v

1. འཆིལ་བར་མཁན་པོའི་སྙན་དུ་ཞུ་བ་གསོལ་ནས་གནང་སེ།
2. མཆོི་བར་མཁན་པོའི་སྙན་དུ་ཞུ་བ་གསོལ་ནས་གནང་སེ།
3. བཙན་པོོའི་ཞེལ་ནས་

51 The first བཙན་པོོ is crossed out.
52 Insertion at top left of page: བཙན་པོོ་དང་ཁྱེེད
53 The word བཙན་པོོ is dotted above to indicate it is superfluous.
54 Insertion below: བཙན་པོོ
55 Insertion below in dbu can: བཙན་པོོ
56 Insertion above: བཙན་པོོ with dots above to indicate the reading should be: བཙན་པོོ
57 Insertion below in dbu can: བཙན་པོོ
58 Insertion below in dbu can: བཙན་པོོ
59 The phrase བཙན་པོོ་དང་ཁྱེེད་ཅེག་གི་དགེ་བའི་བཤིེས་གཉེན་ངས་བྱིའོ༴ has been misplaced and appears again in the next line. The copyist has indicated the mistake with dotting above the words.
60 Insertion below in dbu can: བཙན་པོོ
61 Insertion below in dbu can: བཙན་པོོ
(folio 6r)

both his noble majesty and you have reached the right age, build a temple called **Bsam yas lhun gyis grub** (on) the banks of the **Lo hi ta** river at foot of the hill of **Khas po ri** in **Brag dmar**! I shall be your **kalyāṇamitra**—as for you, this life is not the first time for learning and the awakening of thoughts of enlightenment—previously, in many earlier lives, you were my principal spiritual son in the awakening of thoughts of enlightenment and now I give you the name **Ye shes dbang po dbyangs**. "And touching the crown of his head with his hand, (Bodhisatva) bestowed a gift of blessings. At that time, there was light in the sky and a voice declared: "It shall be propitious!" Then all the donations (made earlier) were given back (and) the preceptor, not taking a single one, returned once again to Nepal.

At that point, because **Gsas snang** asked the preceptor that he be allowed to go immediately to see his majesty (in Tibet) and was permitted, he went to the palace of **Slungs ’tshugs**. As soon as he had bowed before his majesty, the latter declared: “I understand that you have been openly practising the **dharma**. Did he (**Ma zhang**) not banish you?” To which (**Gsas snang**) replied: “Going to the border of Nepal is certainly akin to banishment.” Later, during the course of conducting the **phan phabs** ritual, (**Gsas snang**) reported in detail about the preceptor of **Za hor**—known as Bodhisatva and living now in Nepal—his good qualities and his memory of past lives and how he thoroughly practised the holy **dharma** that is intrinsically rational and has excellent moral qualities and how the preceptor acted according to them. Moreover, he informed his majesty of the request (made to Bodhisatva) to be the **kalyāṇamitra** and said that it is (now) opportune to meet

(folio 6v)

personally with the preceptor. His majesty said: “If things are done as you say, the ministers will come to slay you, so I will advise **Nya bzang** to make the case, (whereas) you must go home for the time being.” Thus **Gsas snang** left for home.

On one of the occasions when the king and ministers congregated in state, **Zhang Nya bzang** submitted to their notice: “Whereas the ancestor **Srong btsan** and his sons promoted the holy **dharma** of the father (i.e. **Lha tho do re**) and practised it, wicked ministers, under some kind of delusion, undermined it and the Chinese image of Śākyamuni—at the time agreed to be returned to China—could not be carried even by a thousand men whereas when first brought it was carried by a single horsemen. But when (the image) proceeded to **Mang yul**, two mules were able to carry it. Moreover, the ministers who continually destroyed the **dharma** experienced excruciating suffering even in this life and died and, furthermore, many bad signs appeared. In addition, everyone’s **phyag sbyrid**—high and low—and all the divinations and signs agreed that the Chinese **devatā** has been angered. Considering that, we fear that harm is bound to come to your royal person and the state, thus it will be good to fetch the Chinese **devatā** and to offer worship and to practise the **dharma** just as our father and the royal sons did in the past.” Speaking thus, his majesty then commanded: “What **Zhang** has said is true and since I also feel the same, all you ministers bear that in mind. We must discuss accordingly.” Later, when the council of the king and ministers met again, his majesty said:
Folio 7r

1. ༼༅༽ ཐོས་རིང་བཞིན་པའི་འབིནརེལ་འབིནརེལ་ཞེས་པའི་སྲོོག་ཆོགས་ཀུན་ལ་ཕན་པོ་ནི་ལྷུར་བྱིའི་ཞེེས་བྱི་བ་ལསོགས་པོའི་དོན་རྒྱ་ཆོེར་བཤིད་པོས་སང་ཤིི་ལསོགས་པོ་ཡིིད་ཆོེས་པོར་གྱུར་ཏོེ།

2. བཙན་པོོའི་སྤྱན་སར་ཕྱིིན་ནས་མཁན་པོོ་འདི་ལ་ཕ་མེན་ནམ་ངན་སགས་སུ་གྱུར་པོའི་བག་ཅུང་ཟིད་ཀྱིང་མ་མཆོིས་ཏོེ་ཐུགས་འཕིག་བཞེེས་མི་འཚལ་ཞེེས་གསུང་།

3. བཙན་པོོའི་ཞེལ་ནས་སངས་རྒྱས་འོད་སྲུང་གི་བསན་པོ་ལ་འོ་སྐོལ་གྱིི་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་གི་རྒྱན་སྲུངས་བགྱིིས་པོའི་ཚེ་བོད་ཡུལ་དུ་དམ་པོའི་ཆོོས་ཅེིག་

Folio 7v

1. རྒྱ་གར་དང་བལ་པོོ་ཆོོས་པོོ་སུ་ཡིོད་རྨ་དགོས་ཀྱིིས་དབའ་གསེས་སྣང་ཁུག་ཅེིག་ཅེེས་བཀའ་སྩལ་ཏོེ།

2. དེ་ནས་གསེས་སྣང་བཀུག་ནས་སྤྱ་ངར་མཆོིས་པོ་ལ་བཀས་རྨས་པོ་དང་།

Folio 8r

1. ཆོོས་ཅེིག་

62 Insertion above: ངོཾིར།
63 Insertion below: ཆོོས་ཐོག
64 Insertion below in dbus can: ངོ།
65 Insertion below: ངོ།
66 Insertion below: ངོ།
67 Insertion below in dbus can: ངོ།
“Zhang Ma zhang khrom pa skyes’s persecution of the holy dharma turned out to be extremely deleterious, and now that Zhang Nya bzang says the same, it is imperative to bring back the Chinese devatā once more. Since we need to be informed of any Indian or Nepalese learned in the dharma, summon Dba’ Gsas snang!” Then Gsas snang, having been summoned to the royal presence, was asked (about this). Gsas snang replied: “The son of the king of Za hor, known as Bodhisatva, is highly learned—he was previously in India and is presently in Nepal.” Whereupon (his majesty) ordered: “It will not be acceptable for you to fail to invite that man, so go to Nepal, rather than home, and give this dispatch box of mine to the lord of Nepal and also explain the details yourself. Do everything possible to somehow invite that preceptor of Za hor, and bring back a reply!” Gsas snang went straight away to Nepal and offered the dispatch box to the Nepalese lord; assent being given to the request that the preceptor be allowed to go to Tibet, he was invited to Mang yul.

Then a messenger was dispatched to the palace (in Tibet with a message saying): “The preceptor having consented to come, is now present and staying in Mang yul.” His majesty dispatched a written order through the inner courtier (nang khor) Lang ’Gro snang ra: “You and Gsas snang, the two of you, shall make extensive offerings to the preceptor and proceed to the Lha sa vihāra.” Accordingly they came, bringing along a Nepalese translator from up there as an attendant. The preceptor stayed in Ra sa vihāra, waited on by Lang ’Gro snang ra as an attendant. At that time,

his majesty was resident at the palace in Brag dmar. The preceptor dispatched a messenger to prostrate and have audience before his majesty and petitioned: “Should the preceptor come for an audience immediately?” Being uncertain, he replied: “Please remain in Ra sa pehar for a while.” Concerned about the likelihood of black magic, sorcery and so on from Lho bal, (the king) commanded three men—the great ministers Sbrang Rgyal sgra legs gzigs, Seng ’go Lha lung gzigs and ’Ba’ Sang shi—(saying): “You three ministers go to Ra sa pehar and after meeting and paying your respects to Ācārya Bodhisatva, investigate whether or not there is alien black magic, sorcery and so forth and whether I need to be concerned or not.” The trio went to Ra sa pehar. Not having a translator, the traders in each of the six main markets were asked: “Is there a competent translator from Yang le and Kashmir?” As a result, three were found from the Ra sa market: two Devadatta brothers and Ananta the Kashmīri. Among them, the Devadatta brothers were not competent apart from commercial translation. As for Ananta, he was the son of a certain brāhmaṇa named Janitabhadra who, in the land of Kashmir, had committed a heinous crime but since the alien system of law in Kashmir makes it improper to put brāhmaṇa-s to death, he was banished to the land of Tibet. Because he had studied Brahmanical scripture, grammar and medicine, he was found competent to translate the dharma. When they investigated the noble dharma for a period of two months with him as translator, they ascertained that, as far as the noble dharma is concerned,
The words ལོན་ཞེིང་ are circled to indicate it is redundant.

Insertion below:

བལ་ཡུལ་དུ་གཤིེགས་པོའི་ཚེ་

Insertion below:

དབའ་

Insertion below in dbu can:

ས

The words ནིས་ཏྟིན་མི་འཚལ་བ་ལས་མར་ཡིང་མི་འཚལ་བའི་ཁྲིིམས་མནོས། དེ་ནས་ལང་གོ་སྣང་ར་དང་གསས་སྣང་༢་ཀྱིིས་མཁན་པོོ་བལ་ཡུལ་དུ་ཕང་།}
king’s tower in the Lha sa citadel burnt after a lightning-strike and an extensive famine accompanied with epidemics arose among the people and their livestock, the great ministers of Tibet alleged that these (problems) had arisen as a consequence of practising the *dharma*. On account of doubt arising (in the king’s mind), he decided not to practise the *dharma*

**Text and Translation**

(folio 8v)

for a while. Taking Zhang Nyang bzang and Seng ’go Lha lung gzigs as attendants, (the king) went to the sleeping tent of the preceptor Bodhisatva who was in meditation and circumambulating thrice with one *bre* measure of gold dust from Dpyar lag, he offered it to the preceptor. The preceptor took it on his lap and blessed it. Repeating this for three nights, the king said to the preceptor: “Such is my unfortunate lot. For a long time, all of Tibet has pursued dark (Bon practices) and become so attached that it is hard to reverse. If the strategy is wrong, then it is possible that our aim (to introduce the *dharma*) may not be realised; so, as a temporary measure, the preceptor should return to Nepal for a while. Later on I shall speak skilfully with the ministers and slowly convince them that it is not advisable to not practise the *dharma* and, as soon as I am successful, I will send an emissary to invite (you back).” The preceptor and the Lord Śākyamuni of Muṃ shang Ong co—both—were escorted by Seng ’go Lha lung gzigs, (who held the title) Snam phyi ba to (the place called) Glang sna’i gru tshugs. Seng ’go, who had taken a vow not to consume meat and beer, further promised not to take even butter. Then, after that, Lang Gro snang ra and Gsas snang—the two of them—escorted the preceptor to Nepal. On his return, Gsas snang was ordered to China by the king as an envoy for the sake of (finding) the *dharma*, which he accepted. If successful according to his (majesty’s) intention, he was promised the decree of the ‘great silver insignia’ (*dngul chen po*). Concurrently, the king discoursed skilfully on the practice of the *dharma* with the ministers. A total of thirty officials and servants—(with) Sbrang Gtsang bzher as the *khad dpon* (‘chief envoy’), ’Ba’ Sang shi as the ‘og dpon’ (‘deputy’), and Dba’ Gsas snang as *spyan dbang* (‘chief observer’)—

(folio 9r)

were selected to go. At the time they were setting off in Tibet, a Chinese preceptor in Eg chu—the last in the line (?) of a series of seven Hwa shangs—Gyim Hwa shang by name—declared: “Four months hence, in the presence of the prince of Eg chu, a scholar versed in the science of astrology will, in addition to his daily calculations, inform the prince: ‘A group of envoys from the west are presently on their way and on a particular month and day they will arrive at Bum sangs. Among those envoys, two are Bodhisatva emanations.’ Presenting a representation that he will have drawn, he will say: ‘The appearance of those coming will be like this.’” The prince of Bum sangs sent a messenger to the emperor of China who reported just what the scholar of astrology said. The reply came: “If Tibetan envoys have come conforming to the representation, organise a welcome-party to receive them.” When the Tibetan envoys reached China, based on a close check of the envoys who matched what had been said by the scholar of astrology and by Gyim Hwa shang and on the representation made—based on both—the appearance of ’Ba’ Sang shi and Dba’ Gsas snang—those two—matched and, as a consequence, they were given a great reception. They were put on a horse carriage with a silk canopy (while) the *khad dpon* and the envoys went on horse. On reaching Eg chu, they bowed to the prince of Eg chu and conversed. When they came out, they met Gyim Hwa shang and Gyim Hwa shang prostrated, embracing the feet of Sang shi with his hand. Sang shi also grasped the foot of Hwa shang
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77 Insertion below in dbu can: མ
78 Insertion below: མ
79 Insertion below: མ
80 Insertion below: མ
81 Insertion below: མ
82 Insertion below: མ
83 Insertion below: མ
to make: མ
84 Insertion below in dbu can: མ
and bowed. Hwa shang then prophesied to Sang shi: “You are the bodhisatva called ‘Wild Horse’ and you will spread the Mahāyāna dharma in the Tibet region and by you, Bodhisatva, it will be established (there). Because of that I bow to you.” Having so prophesied, Sang shi bowed and replied in turn: “In order to promote the practice of the noble holy dharma in the Tibet region, I had it in mind to report (the matter) to the devaputra and also to request the emperor of China at Keng shi for some one thousand Mahāyāna sūtra volumes and, after they were received and taken up to Tibet, made available (there). However just now, because his majesty is young, it is not opportune to make the request. If I were to propose the practice of the holy dharma after he reaches a respectable age, would I have the fortune and karma to be alive or not?” The Hwa shang prophesied: “Your king is the bodhisatva who will bestow the noble dharma on the land of Tibet. In a certain number of years from now, when his majesty has reached maturity, he will issue a command for the dismemberment of the non-Buddhist dharma and at that time you will argue in these ways!” Sang Shī obtained much prophetic advice (such as this).

(The Hwa shang continued:) “Sna nam Nya bzang, Mchims Mes slebs and Seng mgo Lha lung gzigs—these three—at that time (of the debate) will rise to prominence.

Since they have residual karma from former lives, you should teach the dharma to all three of these men before anyone else. Then these three, finding faith, shall work together with you as (a team of) four. When his majesty reaches the age of maturity and speaks against the non-Buddhist dharma, you will offer arguments in support. And then give him the teachings according to the Karmavidbhang, at the start, according to the Śālistamba in the middle, (and) according to the Vajracchedika at the end. As his faith develops, notwithstanding, circumstances will become conducive to the practice the holy dharma. As soon as the situation becomes favourable, you must invite the preceptor of Za hor called Bodhisatva, who regularly resides in Nepal, as the kalyāṇamitra of Tibet. He is the preceptor destined to tame Tibet!” So the prophecy was received.

When the envoys set off toward Keng shi, word had already spread that two bodhisatva-s were arriving. Wherever they stopped, all the Hwa shang-s and Chinese subjects who were so destined gathered like clouds and made offerings to the envoys’ covered carriage—so it is said. After they were worshipped by everyone, they were escorted to Keng shi. At that time, the Chinese emperor, welcoming them with silk banners festooning the walls, pillars and the whole sky and, worshipping them with incense and music, made the occasion as dignified and colourful as possible. The Chinese emperor declared: “You two are surely bodhisatva-s. As the preceptor of astrology of Bum sangs said, even though you passed through the gorges of Ke’u li, by reciting protective prayers you were not eaten by the Ke’u li, and further he said that a pair of bodhisatva-s would arrive around this time. So you are the ones.
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Folio 10v

7 དེ་ལྷ་བཤེས་གཞིིས་བཀའ་དུ་བཟོང་གསུང་བསྐྱ་ལྟོས་འཆོས་ལྟེ་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡོད་པ་དང་། དེ་ལྷ་བཤེས་གཞིིས་བཀའ་དུ་བཟོང་གསུང་བའི་ཤེས་པ་དེ་ལེ་བྱུང་གནས་ཀྱིས་བཏོན་པོ་སྨན་ལ་སངས་རྒྱས་བཅིས་དངོས་པོ་ལས་སྤྲིིན་བདེ་དེ་དེ་དཔེ་ལྟོས་འཆོས་ལྟེ་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡོད་པ་དང་། བདེ་དེ་དཔེ་ལྟོས་འཆོས་ལྟེ་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡོད་པ་དང་།

8 The ཐེ་ is dotted above to indicate it is redundant.
86 Insertion below: ང་གཉིས།
87 The words ང་གཉིས་མ་སྟེར་ན་དོན་ཚིག་པ་ཡོད་པ་དེ་དེ་དཔེ་ལྟོས་འཆོས་ལྟེ་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡོད་པ་དང་། བདེ་དེ་དཔེ་ལྟོས་འཆོས་ལྟེ་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡོད་པ་དང་།
88 Insertion below in dbu can: མ
89 Insertion below: མ་
91 Insertion below: གངས་
92 The ཐེ་ is written below, attached to right-hand descender of the ཐེ་
Gyim Hwa shang also welcomed and prostrated to you and (said), judging from your deportment, you are the kalyāṇamitra widely believed to bring the noble dharma to the land of the red-faced (Tibetans) toward the end of the five-hundred year period according to the prophecy of the Buddha. So you are the ones undoubtedly.” Gsas snang submitted: “On top of the heart-felt joy in seeing the countenance of your majesty and, unlike others, there is no greater reward than being honoured with your kind words. Nothing else is sought, simply help us meet a Hwa shang who gives instructions in meditation.” Sending a speedy messenger in the emperor’s palanquin, Gyim Hwa shang was summoned from Eg chu. After he arrived, instructions in meditation and oral precepts were received from him.

Then (the emperor) presented gifts to Sang shi and Gsas snang which were brought by envoys: a protective coat of thin Chinese leather, fifty bolts of silk, birds and basins of precious stones weighing 100 srang, ten pearl rosaries, each a span in length, one large bolt of brocade, a damascene vessel two span in circumference studded with gems each encrusted with the five precious things and so forth. Dispatching a message through the envoys, they set off for Tibet. His majesty (in Tibet) too spoke adroitly with the ministers to reach an agreement to practise the holy dharma in principle. When Gsas snang also returned from China and submitted himself to his majesty, it was agreed to invite Bodhisatva and once again he proceeded to Mang yul.

Bodhisatva (then) invited Padmasambhava to Tibet and he accepted; moreover, Gsas Snang asked a preceptor of geomantic signs to travel by the post route for laying the foundation of Bsam yas and building the multi-doored caitya. Coming to Snye mo thod kar, Padmasambhava announced: “On tomorrow’s path, there is a little hell and there I need to perform a rite of compassion.” Arriving at the hot spring of Snam, he meditated there for the morning, after which, by offering a bali in the water, the water cooled considerably and for three days the steam stopped as well. Then, coming to Gal ta la pass, the preceptor said: “There is a troublesome young white nāga who does not allow the practice of the dharma in the land of Tibet. It needs to be brought under an oath and subdued. And nearby, there is also a little hell and toward that I need to perform a rite of compassion.” So saying, he arrived at Snying drung and the hot-headed spirits asked the preceptor: “Let’s fight and see!” The preceptor cooked the body of an ox in a caldron measuring one khal (in size), then, when he gave the caldron a kick and overturned it, a cloud also appeared from the peak of Thang lha even though it was the middle of the winter month. There was, as well, terrible lightning and thunder. In addition, there was hail and body-drenching (sleet). Ever since, that region was subdued and even when (the spirits) caused trouble, they were much more docile than before. Then he meditated right there for three days.

As a result of offering a bali to the hot spring of Snying drung, the steam ceased and it cooled considerably.

After about a month, the preceptor went from there to the palace and paid his respects to his majesty. After that Bodhisatva petitioned his majesty: “Long ago when Lord Buddha was residing in the world, one can say that there were among all the devatā-s and nāga-s of Jambudvipa none who had not been taken under the Buddha's teachings by oath (however) in this land of Tibet the devatā-s and nāga-s have not been brought under control.” His majesty said: “It looks like they will not allow us to practise of the holy dharma.” (Bodhisatva responded): “There is, at the present time, no one of greater power in Jambudvipa than the preceptor of Oḍḍiyāna called Padmasambhava. In whatever way the practice of the dharma under his majesty’s grace is prevented by vicious and unsubdued devatā-s and nāga-s—such as last year’s great flood at 'Phang thang and the fire in the royal citadel at Lha sa—this master of mantra is capable of subduing most of the hostile devatā-s and nāga-s, bringing them under oath and firmly instructing them by consulting divination texts and casting the divination of the four great kings and gazing in the oracular mirror, thereby bringing peace to the country for the practice the holy dharma from that (very) moment. Hence this course should be followed. In the past,
 Folio 12r

7 ཞེས་དྲིང་ལེགས་པོ་རྒྱའི་མཁན་འབའ་ཏོང་དང་། །101
8 སྲུན་པོ་ཀུན་གྱིི་མིང་ཐོོས་སྩལ། །97
9 ཕོད་མ་ས་བྷ་བ་དང་འདན་ཏོ་། །96
10 དེ་ལྟར་ལྷ་ཆོོས་མཛད་པོར་ཆོད་ནས་མཁན་པོས་དེའི་གདུགས་ལ་གཟིིམས་མལ་བ་གནང་ཆོེན་སེང་མགོ་ལྷ་ལུང་འཚོ་བཞེེར་གཉན་ལེགས་ལ་རྒྱལ་པོོ་ཆོེན་པོོ་༤འི་པྲ་ཕབ་སེ་སྨར་

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93 Insertion below: མ་པོ་ཏ
94 The words ལྷ་ཀླུ་གནག་ཅེིང་མི་སྲུན་པོ་ཕལ་གསོལ་བ་དང་། is circled to indicate they are redundant; the same words appear in line 3, above.
95 Insertion below in dbu can: མ
96 Insertion below: མ
97 The word བཞེེས་ is circled to indicate it is redundant.
98 The word བཞེེས་ is dotted above to indicate it is redundant.
99 Insertion below: མ
100 The first vowel (འོ) of བཞེེས་ has been amended to བཞེེས་
101 Insertion below: འ
102 Insertion below: འ
103 Insertion below in dbu can: འ
104 Insertion below: འ
105 The ཉི་ is erased.
106 Insertion below: འ
107 It seems that བགྱིིས་ has been amended to བགྱིིས་
108 The word དེ་ཤིང་ is dotted above to indicate it is redundant.
when it (the dharma) arrived in the land of China, in the reign of emperor Eg Men te, when the three Indian preceptors 'Ba' ting, Bha rlan ta, and Kam shang

(folio 12r)

taught the dharma in Ge gsar, the Chinese non-Buddhists were persistently jealous, so the Indian preceptors competed with the Chinese non-Buddhists in logical disputation about the dharma and in displays of supernormal abilities. Unable (to defeat) the Indian preceptors in both, the dharma of the Buddha emerged as distinctly superior and because everyone was fully persuaded, this holy dharma remained firmly established in the land of China up to the present. Should your majesty now wish to propagate the holy dharma here in the land of Tibet as well, and if things are done in the same manner, the entire realm of Tibet will be persuaded and thereby this holy dharma will become firmly established forever. Therefore, if the holy dharma is propagated after the non-Buddhists of Tibet have challenged me in logical disputation and tested in supernormal powers with Padmasambhava, the mantra-knower of Oḍḍiyāna, the dharma will be firmly established.”

After (his majesty) agreed to act toward the holy dharma in that way, the two preceptors requested that a temple for the worship of the triple gem also be built saying: “As far as its construction is concerned, there is no one other than this Nepalese divination expert; he is skilled in building standard vihāra-s and caitya-s.” After (his majesty) agreed to act accordingly, the preceptor, on that afternoon, performed the mirror divination of the four great kings in the presence of the chamberlain Seng mgo lha lung 'tsho bzher gnyan legs and asked him to report which among the devatā-s and nāga-s had earlier caused the great flood in ‘Phang thang, gave rise to the burning of the Ra sa citadel, and caused the famine and epidemics among the people and cattle. Identifying all the names and clans of the malicious ones,

(folio 12v)

Padmasambhava summoned them to his presence and, changing them into human form, castigated and punished them. As for establishing the truth and explaining the doctrine of cause and effect, Bodhisatva counselled them, explaining the dharma in the Tibetan language with the help of a translator who was summoned. After that, the preceptor Padmasambhava submitted to his majesty: “Henceforth practise the holy dharma in the land of Tibet as you please! Notwithstanding the fact that I have the devatā-s and nāga-s under oath, I humbly implore that the devatā-s and nāga-s be counselled and brought under oath through two further rituals of the same kind.”

The preceptor later heard that the ablution of his majesty’s hair was being performed and that day he enquired: “From where was the water scooped up for the washing of his majesty’s hair?” Bzhes zla made the reply: “It was brought from the (river) Rtsang chab in the Tamarisk Forest.” The preceptor said: “There will be no benefit from this. On the summit of Sumeru there is a spring called Aśvakarṇa. If it is brought from there for hair washing, it will profit his majesty in terms of long life, supreme political authority as well as numerous progeny.” After making this request, the preceptor Padmasambhava produced, from under his cloak, an empty bird(-shaped) vase in silver embossed with the eight auspicious emblems in relief. After muttering something, he threw it right up into the sky and it went higher and higher in the northern direction without stopping. Later, the preceptor, after taking his meal, was absorbed in muttering mantra-s in the early hours and called back the vase with the auspicious symbols that (very) morning. When he opened it and looked, it was filled with a light milky water. He enjoined: “Use that water to wash the (king’s) hair.”
Folio 13r

7 གཉེན་པོ་བཟིང་པོོར་བྱིས་ལ་ཉམས་དགའ་བར་བྱི་བ་ལསོགས་ཏོེ་མཁན་པོོས་རྒྱ་ཆོེར་གསོལ་པོ་དང་།
8 འོངས་པོ་འདི་དགོས་པོ་མེད་ཀྱིིས་ཕོ་སེ་ཐོོང་ཤིིག་ཅེེས་མཆོི་ནས་ཕོ་སེ་བཏོང་བའི་རྗེེས་ལ་བཞེེས་པོ་གསོལ་ནས་ས་དོ་སགས་ཀྱིི་འཛབ་པོར་བཞུགས་པོ་དང་།
9 སོང་པོ་བཀྲ་ཤིིས་ཀྱིི་རྫས་བརྒྱད་འབུར་དུ་བཏོོད་པོ་ཅེིག་སྩལ་ཏོེ་
10 ཨཙརྱ་ནས༴
11 བྱིེད་པོ་ཟེར་པོས་བཙན་པོོ་
12 ལྷ་ཀླུ་དམ་འོག་ཏུ་གཞུག་པོ་ལསྭོོགས་པོ་ཡིང་
13 བཙན་པོོ་བཙན་པོོ་
14 རྣཾས་ལ་གསུང་།
15 འདི་ནི་མཐུ་ཆོེ་བས་སྲོིད་འཕོག་ཅེེས་
16 དེ་ཐོག་བྱེད་ཅེིག་བསྒོམས་པོས་མཚོ་མོ་མགུར་
17 བཞེེས་ཏོེ།
18 བཙན་པོོའི་ཐུགས་བསྲུང་བའི་སླད་དུ་ལན་༣་བསྐོར་བ་མཛད་ནས་གསེར་

Folio 13v

1 ང་ག་ཤེེས་
2 བཙན་པོོ་འདི་འད་
3 བོད་ཡུལ་
4 དེ་ནས་དོང་འཕམས་ཀྱིི་འཕང་དུ་བྱིོན་པོ་
5 བཙན་པོོ་
6 ལྷ་ཀླུ་དམ་འོག་ཏུ་
7 བཙན་པོོ་
8 འདི་ནི་མཐུ་ཆོེ་
9 བཙན་པོོ་
10 བཙན་པོོ་
11 བཙན་པོོ་
12 བཙན་པོོ་
13 བཙན་པོོ་
14 བཙན་པོོ་
15 བཙན་པོོ་
16 བཙན་པོོ་
17 བཙན་པོོ་

109 A cross mark has been written but there is no annotation.
110 Insertion below: ང་བཅོས་
111 Insertion at bottom of the page: ལྷ་ཀླུ་དམ་འོག་
112 Insertion below in dbu can: ང་
113 Insertion left of bottom page: ཆེབ་པོས་
114 Insertion bottom of page: ང་
115 Insertion below: ང་
116 Insertion above: ང་
117 Insertion below: ང་
118 Insertion below: ང་
119 Insertion below: ང་
120 Insertion below: ང་
121 Insertion below: ང་
122 The word ང་ is circled to indicate it is redundant.
When it was presented before the great ministers, they conferred and said: “There is no need for this is dubious water from Mon that has been summoned through the sky. Pour it out and renounce it!” After it was poured out and renounced, the mantra-knower Padmasambhava spoke at length: “All the sandy ground of upper and lower Ngam shod will be turned into a green meadow and large numbers of springs will appear in the inner valleys of Drwa, Dol and Gzhug as far as (the mountain of) Stag la. And because of the fertile fields of Tibet, the people will be busy with fieldwork. All the rivers and lakes will be contained by gabions and made passable. Barren Tibet will be made productive, happy and so forth.” To prove if this was true or not, he muttered a japa on the sandy lowland of Zu mkhar for the whole night and, as a result of the ritual, turned the sandy lowland into a meadow and a spring appeared the next morning. With a half-day meditation, the bottom of Mtsho mo and the lower part of Bla ba tshal were turned into wetlands and he made water gush in the dry land called Klu sdings.

The inner assembly cut short the rest and the ministers made his majesty suspicious through their counsel. Not performing—and even abandoning—the essential practice of imposing oaths two further times on the all the devatā-s and nāga-s mentioned earlier by the preceptor, his majesty, after bestowing presents on the preceptor, ordered: “Preceptor! It is enough that you have brought the noble dharma to the region of Tibet and done just what I wished, such as bringing the devatā-s and nāga-s under oath as well as other things. It is not necessary to make the sandy lowland of Ngam shod into parks and meadows and make springs as well, since it is enough that I have the river called the Yar khyim. Ācārya! Return back to your country!” So his majesty commanded. Ācārya Sambhava replied: “I was of the view, actually, that you believed the noble dharma would be most firmly established in the land of Tibet, the entire region of Tibet led to virtue and the land, moreover, made prosperous and peaceful. However, the king of Tibet is small-minded as well as very jealous and it seems the unfortunates harbour a suspicion that I will seize political power. I do not desire even the political power of a cakravartin never mind the political power of a king like you!”

Having said that, as he was setting out for India, his majesty, in order to placate the preceptor, circumambulated him thrice and offered much gold dust. Taking a sleeve full of sand and turning it all into gold dust he said: “If I were to desire gold dust, here it is!” But in order to placate his majesty, he took a scoop of gold dust and departed for the land of India.

Thereafter, in a meeting of the inner assembly, it was adduced that if (Padmasambhava) was not murdered, he would do harm to Tibet, so assassins were dispatched to wait in the gorge of Dong ‘phams. The preceptor said to the escorts: “Tomorrow, people will come to harm me.” As he arrived in the gorge of Dong ‘phams, the assassins drew their arrows.
Folio 14r

7 བོད་ལ་དགེ་བཙན་པོ་སོགས་པའི་ལྟས་བཟིང་པོའི་ལོ་མོ་འོག་ནས་མད་མཛད་གྱིི་ཕྱིིར་གནག་རྟ་མང་པོ་དང་སྲོོག་ཆོགས་མང་པོོ་གསོད་ཅེིང་སས་སུ་ཤི་འབེབས་སུ་མི་དང་པོོ་བོད་ལ་དགེ་སློང་གི་མིང་ཡིང་མ་མཆོིས་པོ་ལས་དབའ་ལྷ་བཙན་བན་དྷིེར་ཕྱུང་ནས་བཞེིན་དུ་འདུག་པོ་ལས་ཉུངས་ཀར་བཏོབ་པོ་དང་སྨྲ་ཤིེས་བསམ་ཡིས་ཡིོས་བུའི་ལོ་ནད་ཕྱུགས་ནད་རྒྱུན་ཆོད་ནས་བོད་ཁམས་སུ་འཁྲུག་པོ་ཆོེན་པོོ་ཞེིག་ཀྱིང་འབྱུང་བར་འགྱུར་ཞེེས་བཀའ་སྩལ་ནས།

9 བོད་ལ་དགེ་སློང་གི་མིང་ཡིང་མ་མཆོིས་པོ་ལས་དབའ་ལྷ་བཙན་བན་དྷིེར་ཕྱུང་ནས་བཞེིན་དུ་འདུག་པོ་ལས་ཉུངས་ཀར་བཏོབ་པོ་དང་སྨྲ་ཤིེས་བསམ་ཡིས་ཡིོས་བུའི་ལོ

123 Insertion below: བ

124 Insertion below: འ

125 Insertion below: བ

126 Insertion below: ཀ

127 Insertion below: ཀ

128 Insertion below: ཀ

129 Insertion below: མ

130 Insertion above: མ

131 Insertion below: ཀ

132 It appears that ཁེ་ has been erased and replaced with འ

133 Insertion below: འ
and the preceptor made the twenty-some unable to move or speak like painted figures by binding them with a mudrā—and he walked through them.

After that, just before arriving to Mang yul, the preceptor once again gave a message to the escorts: “If the devatā-s, nāga-s and demons in the region of Tibet were bound under oath three times, then his majesty too would live long, the political power of his descendants would also be great, strife in the land of Tibet would also cease (and) the dharma of the Buddha would be established for a long time. This being so, bear in mind there is unfinished work! In the realm of Tibet, as the final five hundred years of the dharma draws near, the attacks of the unbelievers will not take place. (Rather) a time will come when the Buddhists will dispute among themselves (and) a huge turmoil in the realm of Tibet will come to pass.” So saying he sent some mustard seed with the escorts and added: “Cast this at those who would shoot arrows at me, and they will be able to move.” The assassins at Dong’phams, who were still like figures, were able to move and speak as soon as the mustard seed was cast.

When the escorts returned and submitted the full account to his majesty, he felt utterly despondent.

After that a dharma council was convened in the valley of Brag dmar mtsho mo and Gsas snang was appointed head of the dharma (with the title of) tshugs dpon (‘trusted head’ in protocol) standing on the right of the Snam phyi. Having agreed to hold a debate in future between the Bon and the dharma of the Buddha, they assembled in the Pig Year at the palace of Zus phug skyang bu tshal. For the dharma (of the Buddha), the debaters were represented by the preceptor Bodhisatva, Myang Sha mi go cha, Zhang rgyal Nya bzang, Zhang Mes slebs, Snyer Stag btsan ldong gzigs, Seng mgo Lha lung gzigs, Rtsig rma rma. For Bon, the debaters were represented by Stag ra klu gong, Rtsis pa chen po khyung po dun tsug. Ru dpon chen po tse the, Gzims mal ba gtso smon tsa ra and others. Then they entered into logical debate. Since they did not contend in the miraculous, the logical debate of the dharma (of the Buddha) emerged stronger in a conspicuous way, being superior, broader, deeper and more profound. The Bon po-s were worsted as a result.

Those whose last rites were conducted by the Byi Bon po-s of the ’Phan country turned into essence-eating demons because of which the Bon po’s performance was proscribed. Since there was large-scale slaughter of cattle, horses and many other creatures for the sake of the dead, from then on meat-offerings were proscribed. Even the single ritual performance conducted by the preceptor Padmasambhava turned out to be beneficial because ever since the rain fell in time (and) epidemics among the people and livestock ceased.

In the spring of the Hare Year at Bsam yas, Ācārya Bodhisatva laid the foundation (of the temple) and the Nepalese divination expert also performed a ritual; when he scrutinised the various omens and signs, there were good portents for the establishment of the holy dharma in the land of Tibet, such as the appearance of hidden treasure from the ground etc., and many other propitious indications that augured well for the spread of the holy dharma in the land of Tibet.

Whereas even the word Dge slong did not exist in Tibet, when Dbas Lha btsan became a Buddhist monk,
Folio 15r

1 ཆོིབས་བསྲིེས་ཀྱིི་ར་བ་རྩིིག་ཅེེས་གླིེངས་ཏོེ། གྱིིན་ཏོེ་མཁན་པོོས་བལྟས་ན།
2 བོད་འབངས་ལ་དང་འཐུན་པོར་བྱིས་ན་ནག་པོོའི་ཕྱིོགས་པོ་ཐོཾད་དད་པོ་སྐྱེེ་བར་ཐུགས་རེ་ཞེེས་བཀའ་སྩལ་ཏོེ༴
3 མྷ་བཙན་པོོ་ཡིོ་བྱིད་སྡོོགས་ཤིིག་དང༴
4 གམ་པོ་དང༴
5 ཐོབས་བདུན་ཞེིག་བརྐོས།
6 དེ་ནས་ཞེང་བློོན་གྱིི་བུ་ཚ་༤ས་རེ་མོསུ་བརྐོས་པོ་དང་།
7 སྣང་གིས་བློའི་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་མ་བརྩིིགས་པོར་གླིག་གི་ལྷ་ཁང་བཞེེངས་སུ་གསོལ།
8 ཆོོས་བསླབ་མེད་ཅེེས་བཙན་པོོས་བཀའ་སྩལ་པོ་དང་།
9 སྙེར་སག་བཙན་ལྡེོང་གཟིིགས་རྩྭའི་ཐོོ་ཡིོར་བགྱིིད་དུ་སྩལ་ཏོེ་ས་བཅེད་ནས༴
10 དེ་ནས་གསས་སྙད་ནི་སྐུ་གཟུགས་
11 Insertion below:
12 Insertion bottom left:
13 Insertion below in dbu can: η
14 Insertion below in dbu can: η
15 The η is dotted above to indicate it was read as ε and corrected below to: η thus giving ζ
16 The ε is dotted above to indicate it is superfluous.
17 The η is rubbed out.
18 The word ཆོོ་ is circled to indicate it is a mistake; corrected in a cursive hand below to: ཆོོ་
19 Insertion below left: མུཁ་པོ་ཆེ་བོ་ཚན་པོ
20 Insertion below: མཁན་པོོའི་ཞེལ་ནས་ལྟ་བ་ནི་མ་བྱུང་།
21 བཙན་པོོ་དང༴
22 Insertion below in dbu can: η
23 Insertion below in dbu can: η
24 The η is dotted above to indicate it was read as ε and corrected below to: ε thus giving ζ
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28 Insertion below left: མུཁ་པོ་ཆེ་བོ་ཚན་པོ
29 Insertion below: མཁན་པོོའི་ཞེལ་ནས་ལྟ་བ་ནི་མ་བྱུང་།
30 བཙན་པོོ་དང༴
31 Insertion below in dbu can: η
32 Insertion below in dbu can: η
33 The η is dotted above to indicate it was read as ε and corrected below to: η thus giving ζ
34 The ε is dotted above to indicate it is superfluous.
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36 The word ཆོོ་ is circled to indicate it is a mistake; corrected in a cursive hand below to: ཆོོ་
37 The ε is dotted above to indicate it is superfluous.
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39 The word ཆོོ་ is circled to indicate it is a mistake; corrected in a cursive hand below to: ཆོོ་
40 Insertion bottom left: མུཁ་པོ་ཆེ་བོ་ཚན་པོ
41 Insertion below left: མུཁ་པོ་ཆེ་བོ་ཚན་པོ
42 Insertion below: མཁན་པོོའི་ཞེལ་ནས་ལྟ་བ་ནི་མ་བྱུང་།
his name too was changed to **Dbas' Dpal dbyangs**. The Śākyamuni (image) that had been escorted to Nepal, carried by a single horseman, was brought back again and reinstalled in the **Ra mo che**. Then the *devatā* shrine of **Glag** was built at **Gnas snang**'s behest instead of constructing the temple of **Bla**. He exhorted the paternal side of the **Dbas'** (clan) to give up **Bon** and follow the *dharma* of the Buddha. **Dbas' Lha gzigs** became the *kalyāṇamitra* of his friend **Myang Ros kong**, instructing him in the five fundamental vows of the *dharma*. **Ros gong**, in his turn, became the *kalyāṇamitra* of his elder and younger brothers and they converted to the pure (or white religion, i.e. Buddhism).

Then, having decided to construct **Bsam yas** in the Hare Year, while the temple foundation was being laid out, the preceptor Bodhisatva, his majesty, **'Ba' Sang shi** and **Snyer Stag btsan ldong gzigs** went to the summit of **Khas po ri** in **Brag dmar**. When the preceptor looked down, there were **sgung pa** and **skyang kal ma** (types of grass), grey in colour, round about the site. Marking the ground, he asked **Snyer Stag btsan ldong gzigs** to make sheaves of the grass, saying: “Make an enclosure as you would for a horse corral.” The outer enclosure was made with the sheaves of grass as instructed.

When the time came for the performance of the ritual for the examination and consecration of the site, four sons of the nobles with living parents—including his majesty—those five (together) put a **Nan ti** of gold on the royal person of the king. Then, after picking up a golden hoe in his hand, his majesty dug seven times just in front of him.

**With that hoe which had been decorated with silk ribbons. After that, the sons of the ministers each dug in turn. When they had dug a square to the depth of one span, about two small measures of white rice and barley were found. Pebbles, bone, pot sherds, charcoal and the like were not found. Moreover, the earth yielded an abundance of pliable grey strips of clay. The preceptor was delighted and, smearing the head of his majesty, said: “**siddhi, siddhi, phala, phala**, it will be accomplished well!”**

To begin, the **caitya** of Ārya palo was built. His majesty announced: “There is no image-maker.” The preceptor said: “**My Lord and noble majesty, (just) arrange the requisites; the image-maker will come!”** He then summoned a Chinese vermillion seller who had been proclaiming in various markets: “If his majesty of Tibet decides to build a temple, I am an expert in statues.” When the preceptor asked: “Which sort of image should we make—Indian and Chinese?” His majesty then deemed: “If the accoutrements of the images conform to (the custom) in Tibet, the hope is that all those on the dark side (of Bon) will be inspired with faith (in Buddhism).” In accord with his command, the model was based on the accoutrements of the Tibetan ministers and among the Tibetan subjects, **Khu Stag tshab, Thag bzang stag lod**, and **Rma Gnas kong**—being the most handsome—where chosen as models. As for the model for goddesses, **Co ro Lha bu sman** was chosen as the model (and the work) was undertaken. The images,
Folio 16r

1. བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས་སང་གི་ཉི་མ་ལ་ལྷང་
2. (tsheg)
3. བྲིག་དམར་གྱིི་ཕུ་མདས་སུ་འོད་ཀྱིིས་ཁྱེབ་པོར་ཟླ་བ་ཤིར་བ་༤ན་དུ་སྣང་
4. མཆོོད་རྟེན་དཀར་པོོ་ཤུད་པུ་རྒྱ་ལྟོ་རེ་ང་མིས་ནག་པོོ་ངན་ལཾ་སག་ར་ཀླུ་གོང་
5. (tsheg)
6. བྱིང་ཆུབ་ཏུ་སེམས་བསྐྱེེད་པོའང་ལྷ་མོ་སྒོལ་མས་བྱིེད་པོས་
7. བྱིང་ཆུབ་སཾས་དཔོའི་མཚན་འདི་དང་།
8. བཙན་པོོས་མཁན་པོོ་ལ་ལུང་མནོས་ན་ཨརྱ་པོ་
9. ངོ་མོ་སྒོལ་མ་དེ་ལ་གསོལ་བ་གདབ་པོ་དང་བསྙེན་པོ་
10. (tsheg)

Folio 16v

1. བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་སར་ནི་དབུ་རྩིེ་བརྩིིགས།
2. བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
3. བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
4. བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
5. བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
6. བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
7. བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
8. བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
9. བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས

143 Insertion top of page: བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
144 Insertion below: (tsheg)
145 Insertion below: བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
146 Insertion below indicating the word བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས should be replaced with: བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
147 The word བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས is dotted above and stroked through to indicate it is superfluous.
148 Insertion below: བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
149 Insertion bottom left: བཱུང་བོད་པ་འབྲིས་པའི་འོད་ཡིིན་ཏོས
painting and building all being complete, at noon on the twenty-ninth day, the performance of the consecration that had been scheduled was done. As a result, in the evening, as the sky darkened, a light shone forth from the top of the devagṛha and grew brighter and brighter, and the light illuminated the upper and lower parts of the valley of Brag dmar like a rising moon. Seeing (that) on the rooftop, (the king) commanded: “On the uppermost storey, a devagṛha of Amitābha should be built!” and accordingly a small upper storey for the devagṛha was immediately built and consecrated.

At the time of the great consecration of the Ārya palo, it being decided to offer food and a reward to the Chinese vermilion seller, a special carpet was laid out, and people sent to invite him, but nobody knew where he had gone. So it was concluded that he was an emanation.

The preceptor said: “Oh king! The goddess Tārā stimulated your first wish for supreme enlightenment and, in the past, after attaining enlightenment, even while tarrying at the vajrāsana, it was also the goddess Tārā who instigated the turning of the wheel of dharma. So, once again, to eliminate obstacles and impediments to altruism, to that same Tārā you should pray and make offering. When the king requested the instruction from the preceptor, while he was meditating in the Ārya palo caitya, the inner courtiers and temple guards actually heard Ārya Hayagriva neigh three times successively in the day and three times in the night.

On the ground

where the ritual examination of the site was done, the central shrine (dbu rtse) was built. When the building was done, after his majesty wondered what the images should be like, a white man (appeared) in a dream (and) said: “Oh king! I will instruct you regarding your concerns about which images of the Buddha should be made and from what material, because there is (a place) once blessed by the Lord—let’s proceed (there).” So saying (they) went to Khas po ri and, making (the king) look at all the rock faces, he invoked the holy names saying: “This and that are the Tathāgatas named such and so, and (this and that) are the bodhisatva-s named such and so.” Having been shown all the wrathful deities as well, as soon as day broke, he set off and saw what had been shown in the dream. And because images of the gods on the rocks roughly corresponded to the dream, he was much pleased and sent for Nepalese stone masons who, on arrival, immediately made all the images on the spot. At the time when these were placed in a horse-cart, the earth shook. When they reached the threshold of the east gate, the earth shook once. When they were taken and installed on their seats inside the Dri gtsang khang, the earth shook again. Then they were respectfully given clothing tied with a gold sash, while the upper parts were dressed with clay.

Then four stūpa-s and other shrines were built. The cakra

(folio 16r)

(folio 16v)
Folio 17r

7 གི་[159] བོ་[166] དབུ་ཅུན་པོ་རྒྱུ་ཆུང་ངུ་ལས་འབྲུས་ཆོས་པོ་འབྱུང་བ་དང༴ཁོ་[160] ་(insertion below: dbu can).  
8 Insertion in line 1:  
9 166 Insertion below in dbu can: ི་  
10 Insertion below in dbu can:  
11 Insertion below:  
12 Insertion below:  
13 Insertion below:  
14 Insertion above: ཁང་  
15 Insertion between lines 5 and 6:  
16 Insertion below in dbu can:  
17 Insertion below:  
18 Insertion below:  
19 The བ་ (inserted).  
20 Insertion below: ཉོ  
21 Insertion below: ཉོ  
22 Insertion above:  
23 The བ་ (dotted) to indicate it is redundant.  
24 Insertion below: ཉོ  
25 Insertion below:  
26 Insertion above:  
27 Insertion top page: གི་[159] བོ་[166] དབུ་ཅུན་པོ་རྒྱུ་ཆུང་ངུ་ལས་འབྲུས་ཆོས་པོ་འབྱུང་བ་
  
Folio 17v

7 གི་[159] བོ་[166] དབུ་ཅུན་པོ་རྒྱུ་ཆུང་ངུ་ལས་འབྲུས་ཆོས་པོ་འབྱུང་བ་

150 Insertion below in dbu can: ི་  
151 Insertion below: ི་  
152 Insertion at top of page: ཁང་  
153 Insertion below in dbu can:  
154 Insertion below in dbu can:  
155 Insertion below:  
156 Insertion between lines 5 and 6:  
157 Insertion below in dbu can:  
158 Insertion below in dbu can:  
159 Insertion below:  
160 The བ་ (dotted) to indicate it is redundant.  
161 Insertion below: ཉོ  
162 Insertion below:  
163 Insertion above:  
164 Insertion top page: གི་[159] བོ་[166] དབུ་ཅུན་པོ་རྒྱུ་ཆུང་ངུ་ལས་འབྲུས་ཆོས་པོ་འབྱུང་བ་
made by a carpenter and smith in the shadow of Khas po ri was meant to be brought and installed the following day on the blue stūpa in the southern direction (but it) went missing. When it was reported to be installed already on the stūpa, the devaputra said: “Bestow a great reward on the carpenter and smith!” That night, the Nepalese divination expert dreamt that the cakra was carried and installed by four men in gold chain-mail. Those men said: “Since you built (the blue) stūpa and seven more, it is well and good. As a reward, take this gold chain-mail. Those who circumambulate this (blue) stūpa will achieve whatever they desire.” As day broke and he looked about, the men were not there, but the suit of mail was actually there. The divination expert informed his majesty exactly what had passed and he and his retinue were given a reward and duly recognised. What was said and seen in that (dream) were the four great kings, so images of the four great kings were also engraved on a vase.

The Gtsug lag khang was completed (and) just before the consecration was carried out, Gsas snang was given the name Ye shes dbang po with his ordination. Whereas many sons of the ministers, such as Mchims Legs gzigs and others

were taught the language of India, only Śākyaprabha—son of Mchims A nu, and Vairocana—son of Pa ’or Na ’dod, and Rad na—son of Dba’ Rma gzigs, and Lha bu—son of Zhang Nya bzang, and Bse btsan and Shud po khong slebs became proficient in the language, while the others ran away. After he became proficient in the language, the son of Dba’ Rma gzigs was given the name Rad na with his ordination.

In the Sheep Year, in the middle of the winter month, at the time of the performance of the great Pra ti (pratiṣṭha) consecration, Jo bo gcen khri rgyal, Sru btsan mon rgyal and others—lord and servants one hundred in all—were ordained by Dba’ Rin po che as preceptor.

A proclamation was issued that thenceforth among all the subjects under the sway (of the Tibetan king), men’s eyes would not be plucked out, women’s noses would not be cut off (and it was) ordained that the great teachings of the dharma be generously conferred on every subject. All those dependent on the higher echelon adhered, from the great minister downward, and the destitute in their multitudes, who benefit from apportioned food and clothing, adhered. In one year each monk was allotted twelve khal of fresh barley as a standard allowance.

Subsequently, Ye shes dbang po came to be possessed of supernormal insight. When his lordship assembled with the ministers he himself announced: “He is our kalyāṇamitra—of both lord and people—(and) because he is akin to a living Buddha he is appointed as the Bhagavat. (We are) bound to (his) teachings on the dharma. As for seating protocol, he shall be higher than the great ministers. Moreover, the religious council
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The གཙན་པོོ་ན་རེ་ is dotted above to indicate it is superfluous.
The རྟན་དུ་ is dotted above to indicate it is a mistake.

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The བཙན་པོོས་ནི་བཞུགས་པོ་ལས་བོད་ཀྱིི་བན་དྷིེ་ཕལ་བསླབས་ཏོེ་ལྟ་བ་མ་མཐུན་ནས་འཁྲུགས་པོ་དང་།

170 Insertion above: བཙན་པོོ་ན་
171 The ཆ་ is dotted above to indicate it is superfluous.
172 The རྟན་དུ་ is dotted above to indicate it is a mistake.
173 Insertion bottom of page (middle): བཙན་པོོས་ནི་བཞུགས་པོ་ལས་བོད་ཀྱིི་བན་དྷིེ་ཕལ་[as dotted above and crossed out] ཨ་བཙན་པོོས་ནི་བཞུགས་པོ་ལས་བོད་ཀྱིི་བན་དྷིེ་ཕལ་
174 Insertion below: རྒྱ་བཞུགས་པོ་
175 Insertion below: རྒྱ་བཞུགས་པོ་
176 Insertion below: རྒྱ་བཞུགས་པོ་
177 Insertion above: ིུ་བཞུགས་པོ་ལས་བོད་ཀྱིི་བན་དྷིེ་ཕལ་
178 Insertion below in dbu can: ས་
179 Insertion below: འོག་
180 Insertion above: རྒྱ་བཞུགས་པོ་
181 Insertion below: རྒྱ་བཞུགས་པོ་
182 Insertion below: རྒྱ་བཞུགས་པོ་
183 Insertion below: རྒྱ་བཞུགས་པོ་
is deemed higher than the inner council and the Principal shall also direct communications to the assembly of ministers.”

After he was appointed the Bhagavat, Ye shes dbang po suggested to his majesty: “For the sake of the stability of the seats for the triple gem and the eternal continuity of the triple gem, instead of the triple gem and the saṃgha relying on the designated allotment of alms, it will be good in the long term if an endowment is set aside.” His majesty proposed that seven subject households be set aside for each monk as an endowment, (while) the ministers (proposed) five subject households each. When this was put to the Principal (he said): “Considering the (old) practice of assigning serfs to a privileged few or the granting of nine hundred serf households to one person’s estate which resulted in the disappearance of various paternal lineages, the crumbling of various communities in the upper gorges, the noble dharma of the Buddha will not merely be beneficial for the king’s person and (his) polity, but also usher in a lasting tradition for the king and his subjects and close the door to the three lower births and such other indescribable merits. Nevertheless, if everyone were to follow the royal proposal, it might induce repeated long-term woes for the king in future, give rise to great epidemics among the people and their livestock or bring an enemy to the western frontier as well as harm to the king and his subjects, give rise to the destruction of the (royal) lineage

or many other undesirable consequences. Therefore, to each (monastery for) the triple gem, two hundred servants should be assigned (and) to each monk three households.” After control (in accord with this plan) was conferred on the saṃgha, tax-paying subjects making up the endowment were selectively picked from the best (estates) of four (officers of state): the rgod, the rang rje’u, the khab so gnang che can and the thugs gnyen. When Gnang chen ’Bro Khri ’jam gung rton identified the best lands from the royal estate as specified (in the plan) for the division of land, the monk Myang Ting nge ’dzin and others, being dissatisfied, are said to have cast all sorts of aspersions on Ye shes dbang po and others. Then, Ye shes dbang po, asking to go into meditation, went to a solitary place in Lho brag and his majesty appointed Dpal dbyangs as Principal. While meditating at Lho brag, Ye shes dbang po, having fashioned a bamboo bridge below the cliff (called) Stag la sha bkal ba, remained in that inaccessible place. Various wild birds, as if landing on trees and rocks, perched on the (unmoving) body of Ye shes dbang po. He did not go anywhere near his companions or the authorities.

At that time, because a Hwa (shang) called (Mahā)yāṇa had come from China and was present in Tibet, most of the Tibetan monks studied (with him). Due to incompatible views, conflicts arose and his majesty, despite efforts, did not know what to do. It came to his ears that, from among the disciples of Mahāyāna, Myang Sha mi gashed his own body, Gnyags Bi ma la and Gnyags Rin po che crushed their own genitals, while Rgya set his own head on fire. Others, moreover, each taking up a knife, threatened:
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193 185 Insertion below: ཉ
186 Insertion above: ཁུ་བཀའ་སྩལ་ནས་ཕྱིག་བཞེེས།
187 Insertion above: ་བཀའ་སྩལ་གཞེན་ནི་མ་མཆོིས།
188 Insertion of (tsheg) between ཉ and ཉ and to the left is a rubbed ཉ
189 Insertion above: ཁྲབོ་དྷིི་ས་ཏྭའི་ལྟ་བ་དང་།
190 Insertion above: ་བོ་དྷིི་ས་ཏྭའི་ལྟ་བ་དང་།
191 Insertion to right: ་བློངས་ཏོེ་བསམ་གཏོན་གླིིང་གི་སྒོ་བཅེད་ནས་ཟླ་བ་༢སུ་ཤིགས་བསླབས།
192 Insertion below: ཁུ་གུན་གུན་ཁུང་ན་བྱིང་ཆུབ་ཀྱིི་གླིིང་དུ་གུང་ལ་ནི་བཙན་པོོ་བཞུགས།
193 The phrase ཀུན་བོད་ལེགས་པ་ལ་བཀུར་འགོད་ནི་མ་ཐུབ་པ་ཡིང་འགུམ་ཞེེས་བགྱིིས་པོ་དང་།
194 Insertion below: (tsheg)

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184 Insertion below: ཉ
185 Insertion below: ཉ
186 Insertion above: ཁུ་བཀའ་སྩལ་གཞེན་ནི་མ་མཆོིས།
187 Insertion above: ་བཀའ་སྩལ་གཞེན་ནི་མ་མཆོིས།
188 Insertion of (tsheg) between ཉ and ཉ and to the left is a rubbed ཉ
189 Insertion above: ཁྲབོ་དྷིི་ས་ཏྭའི་ལྟ་བ་དང་།
190 Insertion above: ་བོ་དྷིི་ས་ཏྭའི་ལྟ་བ་དང་།
191 Insertion to right: ་བློངས་ཏོེ་བསམ་གཏོན་གླིིང་གི་སྒོ་བཅེད་ནས་ཟླ་བ་༢སུ་ཤིགས་བསླབས།
192 Insertion below: ཁུ་གུན་གུན་ཁུང་ན་བྱིང་ཆུབ་ཀྱིི་གླིིང་དུ་གུང་ལ་ནི་བཙན་པོོ་བཞུགས།
193 The phrase ཀུན་བོད་ལེགས་པ་ལ་བཀུར་འགོད་ནི་མ་ཐུབ་པ་ཡིང་འགུམ་ཞེེས་བགྱིིས་པོ་དང་།
194 Insertion below: (tsheg)
“Kill all the gradualists and we will all march on the palace!” So a messenger was sent to Ye shes dbang po’s presence to deliver a written communication saying: “Here all the monks are in conflict due to opposing (views). What should be done?” When he did not come to the royal presence, the courtier Gnon Kham pa was sent with the order: “If you can persuade the preceptor to come, the great copper (insignia) will be conferred on you, if you cannot persuade him, you will be executed.” When the dispatch box was sent to the preceptor in the cave asking him to appear before the royal presence just as his majesty had commanded, (the courtier) was called into the cave. (He said): “I don’t have any other order. Since I have been told that I will be killed if I cannot persuade you, if you are not persuaded to come, I will jump on the rocks and die.” (Ye shes dbang po said:) “All this is like a great demon arising to cause an interruption (to my meditation), nevertheless I will save your life. Fetch the horses!” When he said this, (the courtier) was elated and when he reached the royal palace he was immediately rewarded with Chinese birds and enriched with multi-coloured gemstones.

Ye shes dbang po arrived in the royal presence and prostrated. (The king) said: “What should I do given this uproar among the monks?” (The preceptor replied): “For that, certainly, I should not have been called here! If I had not come, (and) my meditation not been interrupted, the devaputra—and myself too—would have lived for a long time. Moreover, the holy dharma would have lasted until the coming of Maitreya.

The preceptor said at the time of his death: ‘Tibet lacks good fortune, because, generally speaking, wherever the Buddhist teachings emerge, there will be attacks from non-Buddhists. Since we are in the final five-hundred years of the teachings in Tibet, attacks from non-Buddhist will not arise. Rather, Buddhists themselves will dispute due to conflicting views. When that situation transpires, summon my disciple Kamalaśīla resident in Nepal and let him do the debating, with the king, of course, adjudicating.’ So now please act accordingly.”

After he made this request, someone was dispatched to summon Kamalaśīla. The followers of the instantaneous path (Ton mun pa) then took the Shes rab 'bum (Prajñāpāramitā in a hundred-thousand verses) to the Bsam gtan gling and, closing the door, practised debate on that for two months. The Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra was wrapped up and set aside. Before Kamalaśīla arrived, Ye shes dbang po provided a proper account of the views of Bodhisatva and of the gradualists (Tsen men) to his majesty. His doubts removed, the devaputra rejoiced and, touching foreheads, declared: “Ye shes dbang po is my Ācārya” and he took him warmly by the hand.

Then, after Kamaśīla arrived, his majesty sat elevated in the centre of the Bodhi caitya. When Hwa shang and Kamalaśīla entered, the two were shown to their places on lion thrones to (the king’s) right and left in the Bodhi caitya; the students were properly arranged alongside. The followers of the instantaneous path (Ton mun pa) were Jo mo byang chub, Sru yang dag, the monk Lang ka, and many others. The gradualist (Tsen men)
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7 རྒྱ་ལེན་ོར་ནི་ཡང་དབང་འབུར་བྱེད་པ་དང་རྗེས་བཙོལ་སོགས་བདེེས། དབང་རྗེས་བཙོལ་སོགས་བདེས་པ་ལ་ོར་བེ་[195]ནི་ཅན་དེ་བདེེས་པ་དང་། དབང་རྗེས་བཙོལ་སོགས་བདེེས་པ་ལ་ོར་བེ་[196]

9 ཡོང་གསུང་ོན་དང་དི་བཅིང་པོ་ཡོང་ངསོ་སོགས་དེ་བན་དང་པོ་[197]ཡོང་ངསོ་སོགས་ོན་དང་དི་བཅིང་པོ་[198]རོ་བོ་རོ་ཉིི་ཆོེ་[199]སེང་། ༣༤པོ་དེ་དག་ནི་འཁོར་བ་ལས་ཐོར་བར་འགྱུར་རོ།།

10 དེ་ལྟར་བྱིེད་དུ་མི་གནང་བར་གཡིོན་བསྐོས་པོ་ཡིིན།

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7 དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་དང་བ་ལ་མི་འོག་བྱུང་བའི་འོག་ཏུ་ཧྭ་ཤིང་མ་ཧཱ་ཡིན་འདིར་ཕྱིིན་ཏོེ༴

9 དེ་ལས་བོད་ཀྱིི་སྣང་གིི་རྩི་བ་[200]པོ་དབོང་པོོ་རྣམས་ལ་ནི་ནམཁའ་

11 དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་དང་བ་ལ་མི་འོག་བྱུང་བའི་འོག་ཏུ་ཧྭ་ཤིང་མ་ཧཱ་ཡིན་འདིར་ཕྱིིན་ཏོེ༴

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7 ང་ཅེ་[201]པ་བར་གྱིི་ོ་ཁོ་བར་བོད་ཀྱིི་སྣང་གིི་རྩི་བ་[202]ཏུ་ཧྭ་ཤིང་མ་ཧཱ་ཡིན་འདིར་ཕྱིིན་ཏོེ༴

9 ང་ཅེ་[203]པ་བར་གྱིི་ོ་ཁོ་བར་བོད་ཀྱིི་སྣང་གིི་རྩི་བ་[204]ཏུ་ཧྭ་ཤིང་མ་ཧཱ་ཡིན་འདིར་ཕྱིིན་ཏོེ༴

195 Insertion above: དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་
196 Insertion below: དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་
197 Insertion below: དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་
198 Insertion between དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་and དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་
199 Two roughly horizontal strokes are attached to the right-hand descender of the དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་
200 The words དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་dotted above to indicate that they are superfluous.
201 Insertion below in དབུ་ཅན་: དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་
202 Insertion in དབུ་ཅན་: དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་
203 Insertion below in དབུ་ཅན་: དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་
204 Insertion below in དབུ་ཅན་: དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་
205 The དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་has been partly erased.
206 The words in the line up to this point repeat what is above in line 3 and are stroked out.
207 Insertion below in དབུ་ཅན་: དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་
208 Insertion to the right: དེ་ལས་བབའི་གཉིས་ཉིད་
followers comprised Dba’ Dpal dbyangs, Dba’ Rad na, and a few ordained monks. After a garland was handed to the two preceptors and to each monk, (the king) announced: “Due to the fact that all the subjects under my dominion are deeply attached to the dark (Bon faith) of Tibet, Bodhisatva, the son of the king of Za hor, was invited from Nepal and, after seats for the triple gem were established, all my subjects were encouraged to learn the holy dharma. Thereafter a few ordained monks had gone to Hwa shang Mahāyāna (seated) here, and a group from Tibet studied with Hwa shang. Others were not able to learn the way of Hwa shang being students of Bodhisatva. Disputes arose and, when I passed judgements, the students of Hwa shang were not satisfied. Myang Sha mi died having gnashed himself, Rgya died having set fire to his own head, Gnyags bi ma la crushed his own genitals, while others, each taking a knife, declared: ‘Kill all the gradualists and march on the palace!’ In order to prevent such actions, I have invited those (sitting here) on the left. Now given that Bodhisatva was the preceptor of the gradualists and his disciple Kamalaśīla has come and is here with Hwa shang,

the two of you must compare your knowledge and whoever is better in rational disputation must be offered a garland, with due humility, in accord with traditional religious practice!”

Hwa shang spoke: “Due to virtuous and non-virtuous acts generated by the workings of the mind, sentient beings circle round in the endless cycle of rebirth experiencing higher and lower realms. Whosoever does not think anything or do anything will escape from the cycle of rebirth. This being the case, do not think anything at all. As for the teaching of the ten aspects of religious practice, such as charitable giving and so forth, it is to be taught solely to those lacking karmic virtue—the vulgar, the feeble-minded, the foolish. For the intelligent, purified in previous births, virtuous and sinful deeds obscure (the mind) equally, just as the sky is obscured equally by black and white clouds. Those who do not do anything, do not think anything, do not conceptualise and do not focus, they instantaneously attain the level similar to the tenth stage (on the path to enlightenment).”

When he said that, Ācārya Kamalaśīla replied: “This claim that one should not think anything whatsoever amounts to denying the insight of discriminative ability.

Discrimination is actually the root of true wisdom. Denying this is tantamount to cutting that root and hence even a denial of supramundane knowledge. Without discrimination, by what means will the yogin establish non-conceptualisation itself? As far as the proposition goes that without the memory of all worldly phenomena there is no mental activity in one’s mind, (the reality is that) you will not be able to avoid remembering all the worldly phenomena you have experienced and you will not be able to avoid mental activity. Supposing one thinks: ‘I will not remember all worldly phenomena and I resolve not to think,’ then meditating along those lines, when one concentrates on not remembering, then, at that moment, that very (thought) will prompt a memory in the mind. If mental activity and memory are to cease, by what means will one stop these two arising? It is imperative to examine these two because it is untenable to have conditions (arising) from nothing. Without an absence of conditional characteristics and mental activity, by what means can one attain total non-conceptualisation? If you people attain total non-conceptualisation merely through that (i.e. stopping memory and mental activity), then the fallacy follows that someone who has fainted should also attain non-conceptualisation! In reality, there is no way to avoid memory and mental activity without discrimination. So without memory and mental activity, they (i.e. Hwa shang’s followers)
will not understand emptiness (śūnyatā). Supposing mental obscurations could be overcome even without an understanding (of emptiness), then they might be liberated at any given moment. Moreover, suppose a yogin is unable to engage with memory and mental activity due to oblivion arising from a loss of memory of all worldly phenomena, then, in that case, since he is totally oblivious, how can he be deemed a yogin? In reality, lacking discrimination yet practicing mental activity without memory is tantamount to practicing foolishness itself. As a consequence, any sense of true wisdom will be cast into the distance. Even if (a yogin) is neither a fool nor suffers from memory loss, then, in that case, without perfect discrimination, how will he be able to attain a state of absence of memory and mental activity? It is impossible to not remember while remembering and to not see while seeing! If a person practises the absence of memory and mental activity, how will that person remember former situations later on? Consequently, this is a contradiction, akin to when someone staying in the cold—the opposite of warm—does not become warm. This being the case, the fact is (that your position) negates the memory of the noble dharma and mental activity. In actuality, discrimination should be viewed as a prerequisite. Because of this, it is only through pure discrimination that the absence of memory and the absence of mental activity can be experienced—not otherwise! So, for example, if a yogin, using pure wisdom (alone), tries to examine (reality), ultimately he will not see the occurrence of certain phenomena in the past, present or future and, in that situation, how could there be a memory (of those things) in his mind? In actual fact, things that do not exist in the past, present or future are not experienced. Therefore, how can (the yogin) remember that which he has not experienced? So, completely pacifying all these mental constructs, one enters the state of non-conceptual wisdom. By virtue of entering that, one can understand emptiness. Understanding that, the entire web of faulty views is abandoned. By examining (reality) using wisdom endowed with the method (of discrimination), one becomes a (genuine) expert in conventional and ultimate truth. Thereupon, because one has attained wisdom unblemished by obscurations, one will attain all the qualities of the Buddha.”

The devaputra responded, ordering: “The followers of the instantaneous and gradualist paths, as they please, must present their arguments in turn.”

Sang shi then said: “There is the application through gradual stages and the instantaneous entrance of the Chinese. By totally abandoning the three realms (of form, the formless and desire) in the name of charitable giving, clinging not even to the Six Perfections, it follows that under the rubric of charitable giving everything is abandoned since there is no sense of self and belonging to self.

Preventing faults in body, speech and mind constitutes moral conduct,
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1. ཨོ་ི་ རྒྱུ་པར་པོ་མི་ནུས་པོས་འཛིན་པའི་ཕྱིོགས་བཅུའི་སྐྱེོན་མེད་པོ་དང༴། བྱིང་པོ་ཐོོབ་པོ་ཡིང་ཆོོས་ཞུ་ཞེིང་སློབ་པོོ། ཐོོས་པོའི་གཟུངས་བྱི་བའི་ཕྱིིར་འབད་པོས་ས་༣་པོ་འཐོོབ་པོོ༎

2. གྱིིས་ལུང་དང་རང་གི་རྟོགས་པོ་མཐོའ་དག་པོ་བྱིང་པོས་ཆོོག་མི་ཤིེས་ཏོེ་ཕྱོགས་བཅུའི་སྐྱེོན་མེད་པོར་འཇུག་པོ་དང༴། ལུང་དང་རང་གི་རྟོགས་པོ་དང༴། བྱིང་

3. དོན་དམ་པོར་ས་དང་པོོ་ཐོོབ་པོ་ཡིང་ཆོོས་སྤྱོད་རྣམ་པོ་བཅུ་ལ་མོས་པོ་ཤིིན་དུ་བསྒོམས་པོའི་ཕྱིིར་བཟིོད་པོ་ནི་ས་དེ་ལས་ཡིང་དག་པོར་འདས་ནས་ཡིང་དག་པོའི་སྐྱེོན་མེད་པོར་འཇུག་།།་ལུང་བ་ཕ་མོའི་འཁྲུལ་པོ་

4. སྙོམས་པོར་འཇུག་པོ་ལ་སྲོེད་པོ་དང༴། ཆོོས་ལ་སྲོེད་པོའི་སཾས་ལྷག་པོར་བཏོང་སྙོམས་ུ་

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7. བཿན་པོ་བ་ཐོོས་པོའི་གཟུངས་ན་ང་གི་ཀྱིི་ཕྱོགས་དང་འཐུན་པོའི་ཆོོས་ཐོོས་པོས་དེ་དག་གིས་དེ་ལ་གོམས་པོར་བྱི་བ་དང་།

8. ལྷུན་གྱིི་ཕྱོགས་དང་འཐུན་པོའི་ཆོོས་ཐོོས་པོས་དེ་དག་གིས་དེ་ལ་གོམས་པོར་བྱི་བ་དང་།

9. བཿན་པོ་བོ་ངོ་བོ་མོ་ལ་སྲོེད་པོ་དང༴། ཆོོས་ལ་སྲོེད་པོའི་སཾས་ལྷག་པོར་བཏོང་སྙོམས་ུ་

225. Original reading: སྐྱོང་པོ་ copied from line above and later corrected.
226. A mark above indicates that there was an insertion, but it has been erased.
227. The མ has been erased.
228. The འ is written below, attached to right-hand descender of the མ
229. A small stroke placed below in a lighter hand indicating that མ might be appropriate at this point.
230. Insertion below: ང་པོ་དུ་།
231. Insertion below: ང་པོ་དུ་། Moreover the words in this phrase have been numbered to correct the word-order to: ང་པོ་དུ་། ང་པོ་དུ་། ང་པོ་དུ་། ང་པོ་དུ་། ང་པོ་དུ་། ང་པོ་དུ་།
232. Insertion below: ང་པོ་དུ་།
233. Insertion below: ང་པོ་དུ་།
234. The བོ་ སྨོད་པོ་ is bracketed to indicate it is superfluous.
235. Insertion below: ང་པོ་དུ་།
236. Insertion below: ང་པོ་དུ་།
237. The བོ་ སྨོད་པོ་ is circled and corrected below to: བོ་ སྨོད་པོ་
238. Several insertions above and below to correct the reading to: བོ་ སྨོད་པོ་འཁྲིད་པོ་དུ་། ང་པོ་དུ་། ང་པོ་དུ་། ང་པོ་དུ་། ང་པོ་དུ་། ང་པོ་དུ་།
239. Insertion below: ང་པོ་དུ་།
240. The བོ་ སྨོད་པོ་ has been dotted above to indicate it is superfluous.
241. Insertion in dba can below: ང་པོ་དུ་།
242. The བོ་ སྨོད་པོ་ has been dotted above to indicate it is superfluous.
243. Correction of བོ་ སྨོད་པོ་ by an erasure.
but since there is no fault when there is no conceptualisation, (it follows that) abiding by higher moral conduct is not at issue. Since forbearance and lack of forbearance do not exist whatever the circumstance, (it follows that the absence of both) has to be the best of forbearance. Diligence is named so because of laziness, but since effort and non-effort do not exist, (it follows that the absence of both) has to be the best form of diligence which, by definition, is firm and unchanging. One-pointed concentration is so named because of distraction, but since distraction does not exist, (it follows that) concentration cannot be defined as such. Wisdom is so named in contradistinction to an inability to comprehend the intrinsic nature of phenomena. If the difference between the reality of phenomena and their visible characteristics is properly understood, that would surely be the best wisdom.

The context (of these misunderstandings) is that, after the Teacher had passed beyond sorrow, there were no doctrinal differences for a long time. Later on, there emerged disagreements in the three schools of Mādhyamika in India and the fissure between the gradualist and instantaneous paths in China—not encountering (the Buddha), all the misunderstandings emerged. Otherwise, even though the approaches vary, the state of non-conceptualisation and non-observation are one. The result also, the striving for nirvāṇa, is one. This is universally agreed.”

Dpal dbyangs replied: “There being terms for instantaneous entrance and the application through gradual stages, the two should be spoken of distinctly. If one seeks (enlightenment) through gradual stages, how could there possibly be a cause for differences with the gradualists? For you following the instantaneous path, what does the future matter? What is the harm if you can attain Buddha-hood right now?

Take the example of climbing a mountain: just as one does not have the capacity to jump up in an instant, so every step taken can be extremely hard. Similarly, because it is extremely difficult to attain even the first level (of spiritual development), can you tell us which Buddha has attained Buddha-hood instantaneously? Find and show evidence in scriptural sources! The gradualist and instantaneous—the two paths are totally different because as far as the gradualists are concerned, all the Buddha’s words have to be properly taught and thoroughly learnt. By relying on the three types of wisdom (derived from hearing, reflection and meditation), one attains an unerring understanding of all worldly phenomena and an acceptance of (the Mādhyamika position regarding) the lack of inherent causality. As a matter of fact, because even the attainment of the first level (of spiritual development) is due to the whole-hearted application of the ten religious practices, the acceptance (of the truth about causality) carries well beyond that level to perfected realisation. Because one is not able to attain full awareness wherever there is the slightest misunderstanding, persevering to correct this fully, the second level is attained. By not being content merely with the attainment of mundane contemplations (laukikasamādhī), absorption (samāpatti), proper instruction (upadeśa), and one’s own discursive reflection, one seeks teachings from the Buddhas of the ten directions and studies it. Persevering to perfect the retention of what one has heard without forgetting, the third level is attained. Those who have heard the teachings conducive to enlightenment, when they (try to) assimilate and meditate on them, are particularly disturbed in mental equipoise due to cravings and attachments to worldly phenomena.
Folio 23v

7 གཞན་ཀུན་བྱེད་པའི་ཤེས་རབ་པོ་དེ་ལ་ཅེི་ལྟ་བ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དང་། འཐུབ་པོ་དེ་ལ་གནས་པོར་མི་ནུས་པ་དང་། འཐུབ་པོ་བསམ་པོ་ཡིོངས་སུ་རྫོགས་པོ་ལ་འབད་པོས་ས་བཅུ་ལ་སྦྱོངས་པོར་ནི་འཇིིག་རྟེན་གྱིི་བྱི་བ་ཐོཾད་ཀྱིང་མི་ཤིེས་ན་ཐོཾད་མཁྱེེན་པོའི་ཡིཻས་རིག་པྲིང་པོ་ནི་ས་བཅུ་པོའོ།

8 རྭ་སྐྱོིམ་པོ་གཅིག་གུ་སྲིད། སྟེག་ཐུབ་པོ་དང་། འདྲ་བས་སྐྱེི་ལེགས་པོ་དབང་ཅེིང་ཤིེས་བྱི་ཐོཾད་ཀྱིི་མཐོར་ཕྱིིན་པོ་ཅེི་ལྟ་བུ་མ་བྱིས་ན་བདག་རང་གི་ཟིན་ཡིང་མི་འགྲུབ་སེ་ལྟོགས་ཏོེ་མཆོི་ན། བློ་ན་ས་དེ་ལ་བཙན་གཏེེད་པོ་ནས་སཾན་གྱིི་དོན་མཛད་ཅེིང་འཁོར་བ་ལས་བསྒལ་ཏོེ། ཞེི་གནས་དང་ལྷག་མཐོོང་ལ་གོམས་པོ་རྒྱུད་པས་ཚལ་ཏོེ། དེ་ཁོ་ན་ཉིད་ལ་སཾས་ཤིིན་དུ་གསལ་བར་ཞེི་གནས་དང་ལྷག་མཐོོང་ལ་གོམས་པོ་རྒྱུད་པས་ཚལ་ཏོེ་།

244 Insertion in dbu can below: ར
245 Insertion below: ཆུ།
246 Insertion below: བོ་
247 Insertion below: པར་
248 Later insertion below in dbu can: གྷར
249 Insertion above: བཙན་
250 Insertion above: བཙན་
251 Insertion above: བཙན་
252 Insertion below: བཙན་
253 The word གནས་ལྔ་ལ་འཇུག་ཅེིང་ཤིེས་བྱི་ཐོཾད་ཀྱིི་མཐོར་ཕྱིིན་པོ་ཅེི་ལྟ་བ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་

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7 བྱུང་ཆུབ་སོགས་དཔོ་ནི་སོགས་དང་པོས་བསམ་པོ་ཡིོངས་སུ་རྫོགས་པོར་ཡིང་མི་འགྱུར་བར་བསན་ཏོེ།

8 ལོ་ག་ལ་ནུས། འཇིིག་རྟེན་གྱིི་བྱི་བ་ཐོཾད་ཀྱིང་མི་ཤིེས་ན་ཐོཾད་མཁྱེེན་པོའི་ཡིཻས་རིག་པྲིང་པོ་ནི་ས་བཅུ་པོའོ།

244 Insertion in dbu can below: བཙན་
245 Insertion below: བཙན་
246 Insertion below: བཙན་
247 Insertion below: བཙན་
248 Later insertion below in dbu can: བཙན་
249 Insertion above: བཙན་
250 Insertion above: བཙན་
251 Insertion above: བཙན་
252 Insertion below: བཙན་
253 The word གནས་ལྔ་ལ་འཇུག་ཅེིང་ཤིེས་བྱི་ཐོཾད་ཀྱིི་མཐོར་ཕྱིིན་པོ་ཅེི་ལྟ་བ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེོན་བུ་

249 Insertion above: བཙན་
250 Insertion above: བཙན་
251 Insertion below: བཙན་
Persevering to totally perfect these aspects (of assimilation and meditation), the fourth level is attained. Since one is unable to apply the special equipoise that is the essential means for attaining enlightenment, even after one actually realises that the analysis of the (four noble) truths, liberation from suffering and the cycle of rebirth cannot be considered as one, persevering to perfect that incomplete (application), the fifth level is attained. If one realises the conditions of existence and experience just as they are, and that they are fraught with sorrow, persevering so that pre-conceptions do not remain in the mind for a long time, the sixth level is attained. Persevering because one cannot remain mentally focused continually free of pre-conceptions and without interruptions, the seventh level is attained. Maintaining the state of being free from pre-conceptions in special equipoise (is the eighth level) and persevering further because mastery over pre-conceptions is imperceptible, the ninth level is attained. Because it is not possible to see all that is knowable free from attachment and hindrance, persevering to thoroughly perfect this aspect (of knowing) and attaining the state of supreme omniscience is the tenth level. If the tenth level is attained through practice and following each step, how could you followers of the instantaneous path, who cannot learn even about any worldly matter without teaching and learning, possibly gain mastery

of the five sciences of omniscient wisdom and mastery of all that is knowable? Moreover,” he said, “if you do nothing, and having done nothing, you won’t obtain even your own food and you will be hungry, so how could you possibly obtain the state of supreme Buddha-hood? If you do not help yourself, how is it possible to look after (the welfare of) others?

Since by definition a bodhisatva, after first generating bodhicitta, through dedicated service to sentient beings and their benefit, accumulates merit and, through reliance on the three-fold wisdom (of learning, reflection and meditation), accumulates wisdom, he does not exploit his purging of negative emotional afflictions and obstructions to knowledge to abandon (those caught up in) the cycle of existence. Thanks to wisdom he remains untainted by negative emotional afflictions and, even after enlightenment, until the very end of the cycle of worldly existence, continues to perform inconceivable Buddha acts for the welfare of sentient beings, liberating them from the cycle of re-birth until they attain the state of omniscience. Consequently, when an ignoramus, untutored and untrained, acts neither for the sake of himself or others and is as unfeeling as an egg, how could he ever achieve Buddha-hood? Without analysis, without observation, proceeding in a prosaic way, he becomes perplexed. Hence it is proven that those aspiring for Buddha-hood should assiduously practise the steps of meditative tranquillity (śamatha) and penetrative insight (vipaśyanā) because those who don’t practise these two will not comprehend even the limits of ordinary phenomena and (their) minds will not experience enlightenment. When the mind becomes very clear about reality as it is,
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7 སྨྲོབ་ཙུང་དགེ་བ་ལ་གཟུད་པོའི་དོན་དུ་ཀྲི་ཡི་གསུངས་པོ་དང་། བསྐོས་རྗེས་ནང་དབང་པོོ་ཟུང་དུ་འབྲིེལ་པོའི་ལམ་དུ་འགྲུབ་པོ་ལགས་ཏོེ། [264]
8 ཆོས་རྒྱ་ཆོེར་བསྒགས་[256]ནས་ཐུགས་ངན་མཛད་ཡིོད་ལོགས་ན་ཡིོད་མཁའ་ལས་མཆོོད་པོ་དག་ཀྱིང་བྱུང་། [257]
9 སེཾས་འཆོོས་བསུ་ཞེིང་ཆོོས་ནུབ་པོར་འགྱུར་བས་ལྟ་བ་ནི་ནཱ་གཱ་རྫུ་ནའི་ལྟ་བ་ལ་ལྟོས་ཤིིག། [258]
10 ཡིོས་དབང་པོོའི་མཆོིད་ནས་ལྷ་ཅེིག་གི་ཕམ་ཕབས་འདི་དི་ཞེིམ་པོོ་དང༴། བསྒྱུར་གྲྭ་བཙུགས་ཀྱིི་། [259]
11 དི་ཞེིམ་པོོ་དང༴། བསྐོས་བཀག་ན་སཾས་བྱིིང་ཞེིང་ཆོོས་ནུབ་པོར་འགྱུར་བས་ལྟ་བ་ཡིིན་པོ་དག་གིས་བསུ་ཞེིང༴། [260]

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7 གོ་ཚུལ་ཞེང་ངོ་(262)སྐད་ལ་ཀྱིི་མདོ་སྡོེ་ལུང་ཿ་འཅུག་པར་འི་ཡོངས་(263)ལོ། (264)བར་ཆོས་དཔོོན་པ་ྲུ་དང་དེ་དེ་ཆེན་པོ་མི་ཞེང་གི་མོ་འོ་ཆོས་[264]
8 སྐད་ཡིིད་ཀྱིི་ཆོས་དབང་པོ་བཙ྘ངས་བཀག་པོ་ཡིིན་པོ་དི་ཞེིམ་པོོ་དང༴། བསྐོས་བཀག་ན་སཾས་བྱིིང་ཞེིང་ཆོོས་ནུབ་པོར་འགྱུར་བས་ལྟ་བ་[256]
9 བསྐོས་དཔྱོད་ཆོས་དབང་པོ་ཏིང་སྐད་ལ་ཀྱིི་མདོ་སྡོེ་དང་། བསྐོས་བཀག་ན་སཾས་བྱིིང་ཞེིང་ཆོོས་ནུབ་པོར་འགྱུར་བས་ལྟ་བ་[257]
10 བསྐོས་དཔྱོད་ཆོས་དབང་པོ་ཏིང་སྐད་ལ་ཀྱིི་མདོ་སྡོེ་དང་། བསྐོས་བཀག་ན་སཾས་བྱིིང་ཞེིང་ཆོོས་ནུབ་པོར་འགྱུར་བས་ལྟ་བ་[258]
11 བསྐོས་དཔྱོད་ཆོས་དབང་པོ་ཏིང་སྐད་ལ་ཀྱིི་མདོ་སྡོེ་[259]

254 Insertion below: ཉ
255 Insertion to the right: ཉཞ ཁྱི་བརྙན་པོའི་དོན་དུ་ཀྲི་ཡི་གསུངས་པོ་དང་། བསྐོས
256 Insertion below: དེ་ཞེང་ངོ་
257 Insertion: ཉཞ
258 Text is corrected to: ཉཞ
259 Insertion on top of page: རྩེ་ཐི་མོ་ཆོས་པའི་དོན་དུ་ཀྲི་ཡི་གསུངས་པོ་དང་། བསྐོས
260 Insertion on top of page: ཉཞ ཁྱི་བརྙན་པོའི་དོན་དུ་ཀྲི་ཡི་གསུངས་པོ་དང་། བསྐོས
261 Insertion bottom of page: ཉཞ ཁྱི་བརྙན་པོའི་དོན་དུ་ཀྲི་ཡི་གསུངས་པོ་དང་། བསྐོས
262 Insertion below: ཉཞ
263 Insertion below: ཉཞ
264 Insertion below: ཉཞ
265 Insertion at the top of page: ཉཞ ཁྱི་བརྙན་པོའི་དོན་དུ་ཀྲི་ཡི་གསུངས་པོ་དང་། བསྐོས
266 Insertion below in dbu can: ཉཞ
267 Insertion above: ཉཞ ཁྱི་བརྙན་པོའི་དོན་དུ་ཀྲི་ཡི་གསུངས་པོ་དང་། བསྐོས
268 Insertion below: ཉཞ
269 Insertion below in dbu can: ཉཞ
then inherently one is on the path that combines both meditative tranquillity and penetrative insight. If one chooses to meditate, this is good.”

When Dpal dbyangs spoke thus the followers of the instantaneous path were unable to refute the gradualists. Offering their flowers, they accepted defeat. Then the devaputra declared: “I understand that in following the instantaneous path advocated by the Ton mun (followers), the criteria of the ten religious practices are undermined and therefore that (path) shall not be followed. If the door (to religious study) is blocked for oneself and others, mental laxity will emerge and the dharma will decline. So as far as the doctrine is concerned, study the doctrine of Nāgārjuna! As far as contemplation is concerned, you must contemplate on meditative tranquillity and penetrative insight based on the three-fold wisdoms!”

(The king) deciding to allow the implementation of the previous recommendations of Ye shes dbang po and Bodhisatva, a translation school was established. The Śūtra-s and Abhidharma teachings of the Mahāyāna (tradition) were translated in full. From the Tantra corpus, Mahāyoga, taught without differentiating between pure and impure and meant for guiding non-Buddhists to virtue, was not translated, suspecting that an erroneous understanding would arise from an improper comprehension of the basic elements of the dharma (dharmadhātu). Additionally, it was not translated for lack of a competent person in Tibet to serve (in the use of) the mantra-s. The teaching of the Kriyā (Tantra), meant to lead the priestly class to virtue, and the Ubhaya (Tantra), being deemed appropriate for Tibet, were translated. Of the Śrāvakas, the Lung ring po śūtra (Dirghāgama) and a small part of the Gang po rtogs pa were translated. The Abhidharmakośa of the Śrāvakas was translated. Everywhere, in the centre and at the borders, all the subjects engaged in studying the holy dharma

and Ācāryas were (individually) appointed in each and every place so they would not give up practising virtue. The ministers and all the queens too, each carrying a book between boards, were encouraged to study the dharma. Whereas the dharma could not be established during the reign of the five previous kings, the devaputra Khri Srong lde btsan, Ācārya Bodhisatva, Dba’ Ye shes dbang po, and ’Ba’ Sang shi—those four—established seats for the triple gem (and) the noble holy dharma was propagated widely in the region of Tibet.

Ye shes dbang po, nearing his death, was welcomed by non-human spirits and a fine fragrance, as well as offerings, streamed down from the sky. As Ye shes dbang po was waiving (about whether to depart this life) before (an image of) Ārya (Avalokiteśvara), the devaputra approached, offering rice porridge. Ye shes dbang po accepted it saying: “After receiving this prasāda from a lord, henceforth I shall give up morsels of food, switching from food to meditative absorption (samādhi). And I will revert from the aggregates (that constitute mortal existence) to natural elements.” So saying he passed away. His majesty proclaimed: “When I consider the demise of the Ācārya, then my life too cannot last for long.” After that, the ordained monks disregarded the words of the instantaneous path; studying the dharma they were, however, not able to fetch the (original) texts. When they managed to fetch and translate only a smattering of the dharma of India (the king said): “Whereas the scriptures of India at Śrī Nālandā are incomplete due to the fire, in China the whole canon of the dharma is complete since the scriptures had reached there one thousand two hundred years ago. I regret that the scriptures of China
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7 མཁྱེན་པོོའི་ཆོོས་པོོ་མང་པོོ་དང༴མཆོིམས་བཙན་བཞེེར་ལེགས་ལྷ་ཁང་དུ་གཤིེགས་ནས་སྲོས་ཁྲིི་ལྡེེ་སྲོོང་བཙན་གྱིི་རིང་ལ་ཁྲིི་སྲོོང་ལྡེེ་བཙན་ནི་འདས༴སྲོས་མུ་ནེ་བཙན་པོོས་ཞེང་བློོན་ཆོེན་པོོའི་མདུན་སར་སྲིིང་བ༴ཕྱིག་ན་རོེ་རདདང༴ལྷ་སྣང་དང༴སྲོས་ཁྲིི་ལྡེེ་སྲོོང་བཙན་གྱིི་རིང་ལ་ཨཙརྱ་འབའ་རད་ནས་སྐུ་ཆུངས༴ཆོོས་སྤྱོད་པོ་ལ་དགའ་བའང་ཉུང་སེ༴ལྷ་སྲོས་ཡིབ་ཀྱིི་འདད་བགྱིི་བར་བཅེད་པོ་ན༴མཆོིམས་བཙན་བཞེེར་ལེགས་ལྷ་ཁང་གི་ལྷ་ཡིིད་བཞེིན་འཁོར་ལོ་ལ་མཆོི་མ་བྱུང༴མྱི་མ་ཡིིན་བ་རྒྱུ་བའི་སྒ་བྱུང་སེ༴བོན་པོོ་ཡིང་འཕན་ཡུལ་གྱིི་ཨ་གཤིེན་དང༴བྱིི་སྤུ་དང༴མཚེ་སྲོས་མུ་ནེ་བཙན་པོོས་ཞེང་བློོན་ཆོེན་པོོའི་མདུན་སར་སྲིིང་བ༴ཕྱིག་ན་རོེ་རདདང༴ལྷ་སྣང་དང༴སྲོས་ཁྲིི་ལྡེེ་སྲོོང་བཙན་རྣ ཾས་ཐོབས་གཅེ ིག་ཏུ་ངའི་མདང་གི་རྨང་ལཾ་ན་འོག་མིན་གྱིི་ཟིེར་ཇིོ་མོ་དེ་ནས་བཙན་མ་སྤྱན་སྲོང་པའི་བཟིོ་འདྲུབས་པོས་གཞེ ོནུ་ཡིབ་ཁྲིི་སྲོོང་ལྡེེ་བཙན་རྣ ཾས་ཐོབས་གཅེ ིག་ཏུ་འདི་ལས་དེ་ནས་འབའ་སང་ཤིི་

270 insertion above: མཁྱེན་པོོ
271 Insertion below in dbu can: ཙ
272 Insertion below in dbu can: ཙ
273 Insertion below in dbu med: ཙ
274 Insertion: རིང་པོ་མ་
275 Insertion below: བོད་ཡུལ་དུ་ཐོོག་མར་བསྒྱུར་བའི་ཚེ་སརྒྱས་ཀྱིི་ཞེིང་དག་པོ་ཅེན་དུ་བསྒྱུརོ་རལ་པོ་ཅེན་
276 The words བོད་ཡུལ་དུ་ཐོོག་མར་བསྒྱུར་བའི་ཚེ་སརྒྱས་ཀྱིི་ཞེིང་དག་པོ་ཅེན་དུ་བསྒྱུརོ་རལ་པོ་ཅེན་
are also placed in brackets and highlighted, with insertion of a correction bottom of page in a different hand: བོད་ཡུལ་དུ་ཐོོག་མར་བསྒྱུར་བའི་ཚེ་སརྒྱས་ཀྱིི་ཞེིང་དག་པོ་ཅེན་དུ་བསྒྱུརོ་རལ་པོ་ཅེན་
277 Insertion below: ཙ
278 Insertion below: ཙ
were not translated.” This is the end.

In the reign of devaputra Khri Gtsug lde btsan, many scholars from India were invited and three—Ka, Cog and Rnam—translated dharma-texts not previously translated. Moreover, (previously) translated texts were also revised according to the new standardised language. A set of one hundred and eight temples were raised up. The knot of the silk cord of Vinaya rules was also tightened and the holy dharma was codified. So ends the Dba’ bzha, the account from the Dba’ perspective, the text of the noble narrative of how the dharma of the Buddha came to the region of Tibet. Edited.

After Ācārya Ye shes dbang po has passed away, Ye shes dbang po’s daughter, Dba’ za Spyan ras gzigs asked Jo mo byub to establish dharma-study centres for the merit of the king and his subjects. While Spyan ras gzigs erected a set of one hundred and eight stūpa-s at Brag dmar ma ma gong, the nāga-s produced a spring and fertile earth. Tablets with Indian writing appeared.

Then, after his majesty also went to heaven, his son Khri Lde srong btsan had, during his rule, a dream in which ‘Ba’ Rad na prophesied that Ācārya ‘Ba’ Rad na would translate the dharma-text Shes rab ‘bum for the first time in Tibet and Tibet would be transformed into a pure land of the Buddha. When preceptor Dba’ Mañju offered the teachings of the ‘bum to the devaputra, he said: “It is most illuminating!” and touching his head to the scripture he granted large presents. Jo mo

(folio 26r)

Iha rgyal was heard to have said: “What does such an expert in expounding the noble dharma eat?”

Later, when ‘Ba’ Sang shi was passing away, the white Tārā in the temple of ‘Gran bzangs shed tears and there was a sound of non-human spirits moving about. Thus it was that the dharma was first founded.

During the first month of spring in the Horse Year, his majesty Khri Srong lde btsan died, (his) son Mu ne btsan po was young and, what is more, those who delighted in the practice of the dharma were few in number, so when it was decided to hold the funeral feast of (his) father the devaputra, evil ministers, such as Mchims Btsan bzher legs gzigs, Sna nam Rgyal tsha lha snang and Ngan lam Stag ra klu gong, in order to cause the erosion of the dharma and encourage respect for Bon, pitched a huge tent in the Mtsho mo valley in Brag dmar and filled it with big horses from Chibs, speedy riders, corrals for the amenities of the Chibs and the master tent-makers required for the funeral tent. (They) also gathered the expert Bon po-s from the ’Phan country—the A gshen, Byi sbu, Mtshe, Cog and Ya ngal—to total of a hundred and twenty-seven.

When they decided to conduct the funeral feast, the (king’s) son Mu ne btsan po sent (this) communique to the great ministers:

“In my dream last night, I dreamt that lord Śrī Vairocana, in a palace called Adakavati in the Akaniṣṭha realm, was residing together with Vajrapāṇi, Mañjuśrīkumāra and my father Khri Srong lde btsan and they were speaking extensively about the authentic transmission of the sūtra-s and accounts of the šāstra-s. When this prophetic dream is connected with the funeral feast of my father the devaputra, I find that it is unsuitable for it to be done in accord with Bon because it must be done in accord with the white dharma (of Buddhism). Know, therefore, that the Bhagavat, the scholars of translation, and the great ministers participating in the larger and smaller councils must gather and hold a detailed discussion in order to arrive at a common agreement (in accord with my wish).” Thus he sent the command.
Folio 26v

7 དེ་ནས་འཁོན་ཀླུ་འི་དབང་པོའི་དང་མཁས་པོ་རང་ཆོས་ཀྱིི་རྒྱལ་ཁཾས་ནས་པོ་གོར་བུ་རོ་ཙ་ན་དང་།
8 བྲལ་ཤིིས་ཆེོག་དྱིིང་ལེགས་པོ་འད་།
9 མཐོ་བཞེི་ཉི་འོག་དང་བར་མཇིལ་ཏོེ་གསང་སྒོ་ཕྱེ་རྨོག་རྨུ་ལུགས་རྨུ་ཁྲིབ་ཞེོལ་མོ།
10 བརྡུང་རྨུ་མདུང་ཟིང་ཡིག་རལ་གི་གཤིིན་གྱིི་བློ་མཚོ་དམུ་ཕུབ་གོང་ཁྲི་ལསོ་པོ་མང་པོ་ནི་མངའ།
11 སྲོིད་མཐོ་བ་ནི་གཙུག་ལག་དང་ལྡན་བས་བྱུང་སེ།
12 ཞེང་ཞུང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཉའ་ཞུར་ལག་ལསོ་པོ་རྒྱལ་རིགས་ཕ་མོ་མངའ་རིས་སུ་འདུས་པོ་ལགས།
13 མངའ་ཐོང་ཆོེ་བ་དང་ཆོབ་སྲོིད་མཐོ་བ་ནི་གཙུག་ལག་དང་ལྡན་བས་བྱུང་སེ།
14 ཞེང་ཞུང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཉའ་ཞུར་ལག་ལསོ་པོ་རྒྱལ་རིགས་ཕ་མོ་མངའ་རིས་སུ་འདུས་པོ་ལགས།
15 ཞེང་ཞུང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཉའ་ཞུར་ལག་ལསོ་པོ་རྒྱལ་རིགས་ཕ་མོ་མངའ་རིས་སུ་འདུས་པོ་ལགས།
16 ཞེང་ཞུང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཉའ་ཞུར་ལག་ལསོ་པོ་རྒྱལ་རིགས་ཕ་མོ་མངའ་རིས་སུ་འདུས་པོ་ལགས།
17 ཞེང་ཞུང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཉའ་ཞུར་ལག་ལསོ་པོ་རྒྱལ་རིགས་ཕ་མོ་མངའ་རིས་སུ་འདུས་པོ་ལགས།
18 མཐོ་བཞེི་ཉི་འོག་དང་བར་མཇིལ་ཏོེ་གསང་སྒོ་ཕྱེ་རྨོག་རྨུ་ལུགས་རྨུ་ཁྲིབ་ཞེོལ་མོ།
19 བརྡུང་རྨུ་མདུང་ཟིང་ཡིག་རལ་གི་གཤིིན་གྱིི་བློ་མཚོ་དམུ་ཕུབ་གོང་ཁྲི་ལསོ་པོ་མང་པོ་ནི་མངའ།
20 སྐུ་འཁར་ནི་བཙན་ཐོང་སྒོ་བཞེི་བརྩིིགས་པོས་བཀྲ་ཤིིས་ཞེིང་ཞེལ་གོ་བ་ལགས།
21 ཐོང་དུ་བཏོབ་སེ་།
22 ཞེང་ཞུང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཉའ་ཞུར་ལག་ལསོ་པོ་རྒྱལ་རིགས་ཕ་མོ་མངའ་རིས་སུ་འདུས་པོ་ལགས།
23 མངའ་ཐོང་ཆོེ་བ་དང་ཆོབ་སྲོིད་མཐོ་བ་ནི་གཙུག་ལག་དང་ལྡན་བས་བྱུང་སེ།
24 ཞེང་ཞུང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཉའ་ཞུར་ལག་ལསོ་པོ་རྒྱལ་རིགས་ཕ་མོ་མངའ་རིས་སུ་འདུས་པོ་ལགས།
25 ཞེང་ཞུང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཉའ་ཞུར་ལག་ལསོ་པོ་རྒྱལ་རིགས་ཕ་མོ་མངའ་རིས་སུ་འདུས་པོ་ལགས།
26 ཞེང་ཞུང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཉའ་ཞུར་ལག་ལསོ་པོ་རྒྱལ་རིགས་ཕ་མོ་མངའ་རིས་སུ་འདུས་པོ་ལགས།

279 Insertion below in dbu can: 
280 insertion below: བོད་
281 Insertion below in dbu can: བོད་
282 The བོད་ appears to have been corrected.
Then 'Kon Klu'i dbang po and Mkhas pa Rna cha can, having run day and night to the kingdom of Tsha ba tsha shog, invited Pa gor Vairocana and Rgyal mo G.yu sgra snying po. Buddhist monks, Lha lung Lhun gyi dpal, the translator Mchims Shag kya, Ācārya Pa gor Vairocana, Sna nam Ye shes sde, and others went to the discussion, whereupon the Bon po-s occupied the right hand row and the ministers the left hand row with the king’s son seated in the centre. Because no row was given over to the monks, they took umbrage. When there was no row commensurate to the dharma, master Vairocana, wearing a big bamboo hat, carrying a long crooked cane and wearing a great golden cloak, offered his deep respects to the king’s son and stood in the first row to the right, leaning on his stick, below the ruler’s throne behind Mchims Btsan bzher legs gzigs. Feeling a little uneasy, Btsan bzher legs gzigs looked back. On seeing wrathful emanations teeming like mustard seeds visibly flitting about in Vairocana’s whiskers, he was quite terrified and got up abruptly.

In his place Vairocana sat down and thus the right-hand row was lost to the monks. In that way, they were seated and arrayed in the first row.

As the copper-plate communique of the king’s son was about to be read, Btsan bzher legs gzigs said these words: “Sirs! Great monks of the doctrine and Ācāryas! Broadly speaking, even though we do not have clear knowledge, even though we opened the secret doors (of knowledge), having encountered and communicated with the wider world, for us subjects in the country of Tibet when Spu rgyal Gnya’ khri btsan po came to be the lord of the upright black-headed Tibetan people, both laity and ecclesiastics, among the collection of wondrous things, there were the big and little white conch shells, the peacock blazon of the Gnyan (clan of) the G.yu region, the helmet in the style of the Rmu (clan), the skirt of Rmu chain mail, the self-made bow, the fabulous penetrating Rmu lance, the sword (named) the ‘spirit lake of Gshen,’ the circular coloured shield of Rmu and much more. At that time, the subjects, courtiers and the Sku gshen (priests)—the Tshe and Chog—assembled together (with the king), and the trees appeared to bow and round boulders bounced. It was a time of magical and wondrous things.

In those days, even when a man died, there was neither a custom of burial underground nor building a tomb. Then, after (that king’s) son could command the bridle, (and his) father passed to heaven, funeral services were ever since conducted, so when Lha tho tho ri snyan shal and Gung sman of Grang lung were united in marriage, funeral services were conducted by her also. It being performed for the lord, it was also known as ‘divine burial.’ The custom of the funeral feast offering for the king and burial for subjects came into being from that time. Following the funeral rites, because of the construction of the Btsan thang sgo bzhi as the royal dwelling, good fortune and prosperity ensued. The tutelary deity propitiated (by the king) was Yar la sham po (and) tombs for the dead were built at Ra ba thang. Yar la sham po is awesome and possessed of magical power; the (location of) Phyi lags ra ba thang is auspicious. Whereas at that time, the kingdom was just a small area of lower G.yo ru, petty kingdoms such as Zi po’i rje khri ’phang gsum and Gnya’ zhur lag, king of Zhang zhung, and others were subdued. (His kingdom) came to be powerful and his statecraft exalted due to high culture and knowledge. In addition, the ideology and actions of the Sku gshen (priests)—the Tshe and Cog—appeared to have been commendable. The funeral rites of the two Sku gshen (priests) for transfer of dead souls
The Sanskrit names have been corrected orthographically.

Erased text, which appears to consist of words from the preceding text that were mistakenly repeated.

The Sanskrit names have been corrected orthographically.
were effective and beneficial. Now if this is reversed, and the funeral performed by monks then if disaster should strike, after it is done in accord with Indian religious system or practice, the political understanding between king and subjects is certain to decline. Therefore, it is certainly advisable that the Great Principal of the monks and the ministers come to an accord and conduct the funeral according to Bon custom.

Then Vairocana replied saying: “Since your words don’t hold water, those (of us sitting on) the right shall postpone the reading of the text of the Klupo! King of great compassion—who belongs to the lineage of the bodhisattva, an emanation of the three protectors (Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi)—(you are) the precious descendent of the sublime forefathers and the lord of men who presides over our affairs like the proverbial golden yoke. I will not submit much of the widely varying views of the subjects under your rule. Rather I shall highlight some salient aspects which I humbly submit to your majesty’s attention. Due to my karmic destiny, akin to that of an emaciated animal, I learned the language of Lho bal and came to wander through all kinds of kingdoms under the sun and was cast into pits infested with lice and pits with poison snakes. As a result, I became thin and my senses

became numb. Though being a small vessel as well, drawing upon my learning from many avenues, I shall, if permitted, submit a few general points. If it is asked: ‘In the physical universe, how does existence function in this wide world called Jambudvīpa?’ Let me give an example: just as space does not change should an indestructible boulder roll ever on from place to place, likewise, if a person faces east and crosses a pass, forges a river and crosses a plain, till the end of his days, there will be no end of people and places. Although Zhang Btsan bzher says: ‘Auspiciousness arises from the the royal dwelling at Btsan thang go bzhi, propitiating Yar la sham po as the tutelary deity, and building tombs for the deceased at Ra ba thang,’ this is exaggerated. Far more auspicious is the temple of Śrī Nālandā in India. Through blessings from steadfast faith and adherence to the noble dharma and to the path of virtue, Thu re dza ha ti, son of king Da na ta lo, and his daughter Pa la ni and others, plus twenty-five pandits, lived from 1300 to 1500 years. Further, the Indian king

Dharmarāja and the king of Oḍḍiyāna, Indrabhūti and their paternal clans were not interrupted to fourteen generations, and they had offspring and grandchildren without a break, and there also existed a special Buddha field where all virtues ripened instantaneously. What is more, on the summit of Sumeru in the Trayastriṃśā world of the Tuṣita heaven, the abode of the gods, there is a storied palace of the Jina. In the middle resides Indra, lord of the gods. In four great corners, four yakṣa-s reside. On thirty-two balconies, reside the thirty-two ministers of Indra, enjoying delight. And in the vast celestial mansion, they are arrayed on cushions that sink when they sit and spring back when they get up. Such indeed is the wondrously auspicious state in the Dharmadhātu palace of Akaniṣṭha and the pure Buddha realm known as Sukhāvatī or Padmāvatī, where there is neither life nor death and neither union nor separation. The assertion that Yar lha sham po is awesome is an exaggeration because compared to him more awesome and greater in magical power are the four great kings, or the three protectors, namely Vajrapāṇi, the embodiment of magical power, and the others,
Folio 29v

The word གོ་ has been superimposed as an amendment.

The text is marked to be annotated below, but the words of the annotation are erased.

A letter has been scrubbed out here.

The word གོ་ has been rewritten.

Insertion below in dbu cam: ་

Insertion below in dbu cam: ་

Insertion below: ་ and the word གོ་ marked to indicate it should be omitted.

Insertion below in dbu cam: ་

Folio 30r

Folio 30v
or Lord Vairocana, skilled in means as well as great compassion, whose form signifies emptiness and who controls all conditioned existence. Such are those who are awesome and great in magical power. The assertion that the views, practices and sacred sciences of Bon are good is an exaggeration because the king of Zing po, Khri ’phang gsum, propitiated the merciless god Thang lha yar lha, (and) the two noble Ag Gshen (priests) from the ’Pan country killed many animals, such as cattle, sheep, horses and so forth, frequently undertaking the performance of the Bon Lcags (rites) and the performance of burnt offerings to demons, such the ’Drid ‘grin, Gco mi, etc. Thanks to this misguided religion, (the king) piled new sins on old with the result that his three subjects, Nyang, Sbas and Gnon, with Tshe spongs ’phrin as the fourth, together with the castle of Khung lung rgyab bu snang, were subsumed in the dominion of Spu rgyal Bod.

In view of this, would your majesty find that (Bon system) appetising and mouth-watering? The king of Zhang zhung, Gnya’ zhur lag mig, propitiated the merciless gods Gye god and Mu thur, (and) offered Bon funeral rites in accord the religious system of Zhang zhung, as a consequence of which the dominion of Zhang zhung was surely lost (and) the castles of Rtse mtho and Rgod lting and others

fell under the dominion of Spu rgyal. A nephew (of the Yar lung kings), the king of ’A zha, propitiated the merciless god Srib dri dkar po (and) offered dark Bon funeral rites in his own tradition, that of the lords of ’A zha, as a consequence of which the dominion of ’A zha was surely lost and fell under the dominion of Spu rgyal. As a consequence of the dark Bon funeral rites offered by the king of Mchims dgas po, the dominion of Mchims was surely lost and today Zhang Btsan bzher and others have been reduced to genuine subjects. Srib po, lord of Snubs, propitiated the merciless god Snubs lha mthon drug (and) offering dark Bon funeral rites which are improper to practise, the dominion of Snubs together with the castle of Skya mo was surely lost and fell under the dominion of Tibet. Given such severe consequences, it would seem improper to conduct the funeral rites in accord with Bon tradition. The holy dharma, being imbued with inherent logic and scriptural authority, states: ‘Virtuous acts lead to higher rebirth; unwholesome acts, such as killing, cause descent into lower realms.’ Someone like our lord Khri Srong lde btsan, even though he assumed a human form temporarily, spiritually being in an enlightened state, he accrued merit by making one hundred and eight image-manḍala-s,

and one hundred and eight sets of the Prajñāpāramitāsūtra, and so I exhort you to do what is consistent with that. If one is duped by mistaken bad behaviour, it would be like, for example, putting a black blanket on a white horse. This is bound to usher in the obscurations and obstacles of the past. I urge that the funeral feast offering of the devaputra be performed in accord with the (Buddhist) religious system.”

Having so spoken, Mchims Btsan bzher legs gzigs said: “You monks! The source of your argument is derived from empty sky! Your time orientation is the next life, and you want the devaputra to support your position. If things are not going to happen according to our benevolent advice, let (the king) judge what is best! Let the palace council also be run by the monks! Let the service of the lord also be done by the monks! Let the border post also be guarded by the monks!” So saying, when he shook and stamped (his feet), no one dared utter a word. Ācārya Vairocana responded: “We monks ourselves will do it!” When he said that, the devaputra was much pleased.
Folio 31r

7 རྣམ་པོ་ལ་གཤིེགས་སོ། ། སྣཱིས་པ་སྒྲུབ་པོ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་བལྟ་འདུག་པ་ཟིན་ཏེ། ། དེ་ནི་ཁྲོ་བོ་ཉི་མའི་དཀར་འཁོར་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་ཤིིད་བྱིས། ། དེའི་གཏོད་ཡིར་དང་གི་མང་པོ་གཏོར་དུ་སྦེད་པོ་ཡིོད་སྐད། ། རྫོགས་ཚོོ༔༔༔༔༔༔༔_popup regeneration

8 ལྷོན་ཐོད་ཆོོས་ལུགས་སུ་བྱེད་པོ་བྱུང་སེ། ། དེ་ཡིང་བོན་ལུགས་གླིེན་པོ་དག་ནོར་

Folio 31v

7 བཟོས་པོ་ལ་གཤིེགས་སོ། ། སྣཱིས་པ་སྒྲུབ་པོ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་བལྟ་འདུག་པ་ཟིན་ཏེ། ། དེ་ནི་ཁྲོ་བོ་ཉི་མའི་དཀར་འཁོར་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་ཤིིད་བྱིས། ། དེའི་གཏོད་ཡིར་དང་གི་མང་པོ་གཏོར་དུ་སྦེད་པོ་ཡིོད་སྐད། ། རྫོགས་ཚོོ༔༔༔༔༔༔༔༔_popup regeneration

8 ལྷོན་ཐོད་ཆོོས་ལུགས་སུ་བྱེད་པོ་བྱུང་སེ། ། དེ་ཡིང་བོན་ལུགས་གླིེན་པོ་དག་ནོར་

299 Insertion above: ཕོ་བོ་རྒྱ་སྐད་ལས་བོད་སྐད་དུ་བསྒྱུར།
300 Insertion below in dbu can: ས་
301 Insertion below: མ་རྫོང་
302 The word ས་ is written in dbu can on a small square slip of paper, pasted onto the page.
Then the monks performed the funeral in the white system (of Buddhist) dharma in accord with the Devaputravimalasūtra. At that time, a maṇḍala of Vajradhātu was set up, the funeral feast of the devaputra Khri Srong was offered. Vairocana acted as master of the mantra-s, G. yu sgra snying po performed the ritual, Ngan lam Rgyal mchog dbyangs, and 'Khon Klu’i dbang po, and Snums Nam mkha’ snying po and others read the full and abbreviated versions of the Prajñāpāramitā at length and the funeral feast of the devaputra was offered in an elaborate manner. Then lord Mu ne btsan po, Vairocana and G.yu sgra snying po from Rgyal mo (rong)—the three of them at Lhan dkar ta mo ra—translated the definitive words and instructions (of the Buddha) from the language of India into Tibetan. The putra Mu ne btsan po entrusted, to those who were worthy, the definitive words and instructions (of the Buddha). Some (texts) remained in the Dbu rtse zangs khang, hidden away in a protective black box. Then G.yu sgra departed for the Tsha ba country.

Vairocana departed to meditate for a time in the cave of Ma ga dha, in the country of Gyad, in the west. Others hold the view that after taking Li za Tshul khrims mtsho, the daughter of the Buddhist lord of Khotan resident in the white crystal castle of Khotan in the east, he went on to revive the Lha khang gi sgo can temple in the north. Thereafter, funerals were performed in accord with the tantra for rebirth in lower realms and in accord with the maṇḍala-s of the nine uṣṇīṣa (Buddhas) and the all-knowing (Vairocana). In the case of those who died by the sword, funerals were performed in accord with the wrathful Sūrya maṇḍala. As a preventative to that, the knife-taming ritual and so forth, sourced from the sūtra-s, was performed. From that time onward, all funerals came to be performed according the dharma system. Moreover, foolish practitioners of Bon are supposedly said to have concealed much wealth (of the deceased) as hidden treasure. In view of that, realising such a practice was very deleterious and of little benefit, the masters of the dharma system instituted the ritual of food offering.

The account of the food offering ritual is finished.
Tibetan-Language Sources

Testimony of Ba

**BL fragment**
Or.8210/S. 9498(A–D) and Or.8210/S. 13683(C). Online on the IDP. http://idp.bl.uk/

**DBA’ 2000**

**RBA 2011.1**

**RBA 2011.2**

**SBA 1961.1–2**

**SBA 1962**

**SBA 1968**

**SBA 1980**

**SBA 1982.1–3**

**SBA 2009.1**

**SBA 2009.2**

Dunhuang Documents

The texts marked “IOL Tib J n” or “Or. n” in this volume come from the Dunhuang cave complex in Mogao, China, as do texts marked “Pelliot tibétain n.” The former two types are now housed in the British Library, the latter in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Images of most of these manuscripts can be found on the International Dunhuang Project website (http://idp.bl.uk), Gallica (https://gallica.bnf.fr/) or Artstor (http://www.artstor.org/index.shtml).

**IOL Tib J 321**
The Phags pa thabs kyi zhags pa pad ma ’phreng gi don bsdus pa Mahāyoga text and commentary.

**IOL Tib J 370/6**
The Single Volume of Scriptures that Fell from Heaven account of (Khri) Srong brtsan and Khri Srong lde brtsan establishing the dharma in Tibet.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IOL Tib J 466/3</td>
<td>A <em>Tridāṇḍaka</em> prayer paying homage to Buddhas, <em>bodhisatva</em>-s, Indian teachers and kings supporting the dharma, including Khri Srong Iде brtsan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOL Tib J 480</td>
<td>Regulations for local Buddhist communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOL Tib J 597</td>
<td>Copy of <em>The Prophecy of the Khotanese Arhat</em> found in IOL Tib J 598.</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOL Tib J 598</td>
<td><em>The Prophecy of the Khotanese Arhat</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOL Tib J 689/2</td>
<td>A list of the succession of Spiritual Friends (<em>dge ba’i bshes gnyen</em>) of Bsam yas and 'Phrul snang temples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOL Tib J 723</td>
<td>An Old Tibetan poetic or ritual text.</td>
</tr>
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<td>IOL Tib J 731</td>
<td>The <em>Tale of the Separation of the Horse and the Wild Ass</em> narrative oriented towards funerary rites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOL Tib J 739</td>
<td>A text on dice divination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOL Tib J 750</td>
<td>Version I of the <em>Old Tibetan Annals</em> (+PT 1288), containing the years 672–747.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOL Tib J 1375</td>
<td>A fragment of the <em>Old Tibetan Chronicle</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or.8210/S. 9323</td>
<td>Fragments of Tibetan and Chinese text used as patches.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Or.8210/S. 9497</td>
<td>Paper fragment of a Chinese drawing of a deity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or.8210/S. 9498(A–D)</td>
<td>The larger fragments of the BL Fragment (see above under: <em>Testimony of Ba</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or.8210/S. 13683(C)</td>
<td>The smaller fragments of the BL Fragment (see above under: <em>Testimony of Ba</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or.8212/187</td>
<td>Version II of the <em>Old Tibetan Annals</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Or.15000/332</td>
<td>The <em>So sor thar pa’i mdo</em> (Prātimokṣa Sūtra) fragment from Miran Fort.</td>
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<td>Pelliot tibétain 44</td>
<td>An account of Padmasambhava’s introduction of Phur pa teachings in Tibet and description of a Phur pa ritual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelliot tibétain 149</td>
<td>The tale of the diffusion of the <em>Ārya-bhadracaryā-praṇidhāna</em> teachings from India to Tibet.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Pelliot tibétain 443</td>
<td>Invocation to Mahābala including spells.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pelliot tibétain 840/3</td>
<td>A work recounting Khri Srong Iде brtsan’s introduction of <em>tantra</em> in Tibet and its subsequent gradual decline.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pelliot tibétain 996</td>
<td>Nam ka’i snying po’s lineage of Buddhist Chan masters, followed by the <em>Mdo sde bgyad bcu khungs</em> Tibetan Chan treatise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pelliot tibétain 1051</td>
<td>A text on dice divination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelliot tibétain 1060</td>
<td>A ritual text related to horses that includes a catalogue of Tibetan principalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelliot tibétain 1064</td>
<td>A manuscript containing a text on veterinary science and a text concerning domestic rules of the saṅgha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelliot tibétain 1089</td>
<td>A petition concerning the hierarchy of administrators’ ranks around Dunhuang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelliot tibétain 1096</td>
<td>A judicial document concerning the loss or theft of a horse at a way-station.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pelliot tibétain 1105</td>
<td>Fragment of a text written on the verso of a scroll containing the <em>Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra</em> in eight thousand verses (小品般若波羅蜜經).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelliot tibétain 1109/2</td>
<td>Damaged document containing the names of different goods.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Pelliot tibétain 1122  Painting representing the Great King Vaiśravaṇa standing between two goddesses.
Pelliot tibétain 1128/2  A document related to taxation around Dunhuang.
Pelliot tibétain 1134/2  A narrative on the antecedent to certain funerary rites.
Pelliot tibétain 1136/1  The tale of securing a psychopomp horse, oriented towards funerary rites.
Pelliot tibétain 1144  A *pathi* manuscript containing a narrative connected to the *Old Tibetan Chronicles*.
Pelliot tibétain 1285  The account of a contest between Gshen and Bon priests.
Pelliot tibétain 1286  A genealogy related to the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.
Pelliot tibétain 1287  The *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.
Pelliot tibétain 1288  Version I of the *Old Tibetan Annals* (+IOL Tib J 750).
Pelliot tibétain 1290  A fragmentary text containing information on the coronation of Khri Gtsug lde brtsan, principalities and way-stations.
Other Tibetan-Language Works


*Bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim g.yu yi phreng ba:* see under Chandrababu.

*Bod kyi lo rgyus ram mar thay phyogs bsgrigs:* see under Dpal brtsogs bod yig dpe mnying zhib ’jug khang, ed.

*Bod kyi snga rabs dam pa rams kyi gsungs chos phyag bris ma rin chen gser phreng:* see under ‘Brug thar and Karma bde legs, eds.

*Bri gung skyabs mgon Che tshang. Tun hong bod kyi yig mnying las byung ba / bod btsan po’i rgyal rabs.‘* Dehradun: Songtsen Library, 2010.

*‘Brug thar and Karma bde legs, eds. Bod kyi snga rabs dam pa rams kyi gsungs chos phyag bris ma rin chen gser phreng.‘* Lanzhou: Kan su’u rig gnas dpe skrun khang, 2015.

*Bsam yas rtsom pa:* see under Span pa rdo rje.

*Bsam yas dkar chag:* see under Tshe bran don grub.


Chos ‘byung me tog mnying po:* see under MTN.

Chos ‘byung mkhas pa’i dga’ ston: see under Mtkhas pa’i dga’ ston.

Chos kyi ‘byung gnas gsung rab rin po che’i gter mdzod: see under Bu ston chos ‘byung.

De bzhin gshegs pa’i qgson ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa bstan pa’i mdo. In *Bka’* ‘gyur (Sde dge) vol. 39. Sde dge: Sde dge par khang khang mo, 1733.

*Db'a’* bzhab (as 2010 publication): see under Longs khang Phun tshogs rdo rje.

Dbyangs can mthso. “‘Sba bzhab’ kyi rtsom pa po dang de’i lo rgyus rig pa’i rin thang la dpoyad pa.” Kun增多’ go’i bod kyi shes rig/ China Tibetology 4 (1996): 79–86.

*Dpa’* bo Gtshug lag phreng ba: see under Mtkhas pa’i dga’ ston.


*Lho brag chos* ‘byung:* see under Mtkhas pa’i dga’ ston.


*Mdo sde dzong pa* nges ‘grel (Arya-samdhii-nirmocana-sutra). In *Bka’* ‘gyur (Sde dge), vol. 49. Sde dge: Sde dge par khang khang mo, 1733.

*Mi rjes lhas mzdad byang chub sems dpa’ sems dpa’ chen po chos rgyal mes dkon nnam gsum gyi nnam par thar pa rin po che’i phreng ba:* see under MNBTH.


*Rba bzhab* phyogs bsgrigs: see under Bde skyid.


’Sba bzhab kyi dpar gzhis’i skor dang des bod kyi lo rgyus rig ghzhun la thebs pa’i shuks rgyen skor las ’phros pa’i gtam: see under Rinum Yul la tha.

’Sba bzhab’ kyi rtsom pa po dang de’i lo rgyus rig pa’i rin thang la dpoyad pa: see under Dbyangs can mthso.

’Sba bzhab’ las ‘byung ba’i don chen ‘ga’i dogs dpoyad: see under Bsd mdo Rdo rje rin chen.


Ton hong gter yig las sba’i bod kyi shug hrul yi ge’i skor: see under Duojie, Dongzhi.

Ton hong bod kyi yig mnying las byung ba / bod btsan po’i rgyal rabs: see under ’Bri gung skyabs mgon Che tshang.

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Tong, Jinhua and Bufan Huang. *Bo xie.* Chengdu: Sichuan min zu chu ban she, 1990.


Index to the Dba’ bzhed Manuscript

A note on the sigla used in this index: Tibetan characters provided within round brackets represent further information on the identity of the person or place, e.g. "ཁྲིི་བཙུན་ཁྲིི་གཙུག་ལྡེེ་བཙན་" as that information is found in the Dba’bzhed. Tibetan characters provided within square brackets represent alternative orthographies for a name, e.g. "བུམ་སངས་དགེ་རྒྱས་" alternatives that are found in the Dba’ bzhed itself. Tibetan provided within curly brackets represent additional parts of a given name, e.g. “བོད་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཁྲིི་སྲོོང་བཙན་པོ་" which are inserted into the Dba’ bzhed by means of annotations.
Index to the Dba’ bzhied Manuscript

Index to the Dba’ bzhied Manuscript

(translator) [annotation at the bottom of 17v referring to 17v:2]

(translation) [2v:4. See also ཨི་ཤེ་ཨ་ནུ་ཁུན་པོ་ལ་] [annotation at the top of 17v referring to 17v:2]

(place) [4r:3; 26r:1]

(Seventeenth century) [29v:7]

(Student of Hwa shang Mahāyāna) [18v:7; 20r:5]

(India) [5r:1; 5r:2; 5v:3; 7r:1; 13v:4; 13v:6]

referred to as ོིམ་[interlinear note at the top of 1v:3; 1v:5; 1v:6; 1v:7; 2v:3; 5v:5; 7r:1; 8r:6; 11v:7; 12r:1; 12r:2; 15v:5; annotation at the top of 17v:2; 22v:4; 25r:6; 25r:7; 25v:1; 25v:5; 28r:1; 28v:7]

referred to as ོ་བྷ[5v:2; 28v:5]

(Emperor of China during the reign of Khri Lde gtsug btsan) [2v:3; 2v:5; 2v:6; 2v:7; 3r:1; 3r:2]

(Emperor of China during the reign of Khri Lde gtsug btsan) [9r:4; 9v:3; 10r:5; 10r:6; 10v:3]

(China) [3r:3; 4r:6; 4v:1; 4v:2; 6v:3; 8v:6; 9r:5; 10v:7; 11v:7; 12r:2; 18v:6; 25r:7]

referred to as ལྷ[2r:2; 4r:3; 4v:1; 4v:2; annotation at the bottom of 17v referring to 17v:2]

(Deity) [4r:6; 5r:1; 6v:3; 6v:5; 6v:6; 7r:1]

referred to as ལྷ[3r:3; 4r:4; annotation at the bottom left of 4r referring to 4r:6; 5r:1; 6v:3; 8v:4; 15r:1]

[place] [2r:7]

(a Tibetan Buddhist) [26v:2; 31r:4. 5. See also སྣ་སྟོོང་བཙན་བཞེེར་] [deity] [16r:5; 16r:6]

(deity) [29r:3]

(Deity) [29r:3]

(a Tibetan Buddhist) [31r:2.3]

(a Bon po/minister) [annotation at the bottom of 16v referring to 16v:7; 26v:4]

(place) [13r:2; 13v:1]

(place) [25v:1]

(a Tibetan Buddhist) [9v:6; he could be identified with རུ་[annotation at the top of 16v referring to 16v:7]

(Translation) [3r:3; 3r:4. See also ལྷ][3r:2. See also ལྷ]

(minister) [annotation at the bottom of 16v referring to 16v:7]

(person) [9v:6; he could be identified with རུ[annotation at the top of 16v referring to 16v:7]

(person) [9v:6; he could be identified with རུ[annotation at the top of 16v referring to 16v:7]

(person) [9v:6; he could be identified with རུ[annotation at the top of 16v referring to 16v:7]

(person) [17r:6]

(person) [17v:3]

(place) [4v:3.4]

(place) [4v:3.4]

(Emperor of China during the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan) [9r:4; 9v:3; 10r:5; 10r:6; 10v:3]

(Student of Hwa shang Mahāyāna) [18v:7; 20v:5]

(Student of Hwa shang Mahāyāna) [18v:7]

(clan) [27r:5]

(clan) [27r:4]

(king) [27r:4]

(king of Zhang zhung) [27v:6]

referred to as གནས་ཀྱི་བདག་པོ་ཕྱག་ན་རྡོ་རྗེ[29v:6]

(Prince) [29v:6]

(Place) [12r:2]

(Place) [11r:2]

(Place) [11r:5; 11v:1]

(Bridge) [18v:4]

(bon po) [14v:2]

(minister) [3r:1. See also བྱུང་བསྡེ་བཟུན་པོ་] referred to as བྱུང་བསྡེ་བཟུན་པོ[annotation below 3r:2; annotation above 3r:2]

(Deity) [16r:7]

(Deity) [29v:3]

(king) [28v:6.7]

(Prince) [28v:6.7]

(bodhisattva) [29r:7. See also རུ་[28v:6]

(china) [13v:3]

(king) [29r:1]

(buddhist realm) [29r:5]
referred to as རྒྱལ་པོ་ [1v:3]
referred to as བཙན་པོ་ [annotation at the bottom left of 1v referring to 1v:4]

[Translator] (17v:1–2, an annotation above 17v:1 adds བཙན་པོ་)

(Translator) [annotation at the top left of 17v, referring to 17v:2]

[Monk] [26v:2]

[City] [3r:3; 4r:4; 4r:6; 8r:6; 11v:4]

[Place] [7v:6. See also ཝ་མི་ད་བ་]

[Person] [7v:5]

[Text] [31r:1]

[Deity] [29r:3]

[Place] [7v:2; 7v:3; 7v:6; 28r:6]

[Place] [18v:4]

| རྒྱལ་པོ་ | (a Kashmiri) [7v:5; 7v:6; 8r:5] |
| སྦྱེ་ལཱྱེ | (deity) [16r:2; annotation at the top of 16r referring to 16r:2] |
| སྨུན་པེ་ཧར་ | (deity) [3r:4; 15v:3; 16r:3; 16r:6–7] |
| ངྱ་བུ་དི་མ་མེད་པའི་མདོ་ | (mythical king) [29r:1] |
| ངུ་རྒྱན་ | (Oḍḍiyāna) [12r:4; 29r:1. See also སྦུ་བུ་] |
| གཞུང་ | (place) [9r:1, eg chu’re 9r:2; 9r:6; 10v:4] |
| ཇུད་ལུང་རྨུ་ཕྱིར། | (person) [9r:6–7] |
| དེ་ནུ་ | (king) [11v:7] |
| ངུ་པ་ཡི་ | (Queen Mūṃg Shang Ong co) [annotation below 2v:3; 3r:3. See also དེ་ནུ་] |
| དུས་པ | (class of texts) [annotation at the top of 17v referring to 17v:2; 24v:6] |
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