TIBETAN RE IN ITS WIDER CONTEXT

By Walter Simon

In a previous article 1 I had dealt with Tibetan re in ḫa-re 2 and re-skan.3 In attempting to study re in its wider context I wish to exclude from consideration re in re-ba 'to hope' and re in re-zig (re-ṣig) 'little while, moment'.4 re in re-ba does not seem to call for any special comment. As far as re in re-ṣig is concerned, it may suffice here to stress the identity of re in re-ṣig with re in ga-re 'where?' on the one hand, and re in re-re 'each?' on the other. All three cases pre-suppose the basic meaning of 'part, member, item, etc.' . The specialization in time of re-ṣig (part = moment) has its spatial counterpart in ga-re (what part, which part(s)? = where?), ga being identical with ga in ga-na 'where?' or in ga-la introducing a rhetorical question (where [in all the world]?). In re-re the distributive function is due to repetition 5 (item by item, member [of a group] by member), obviously extended from there also to single re in the meaning of 'each'.

I

re in na-re

As is well known, na-re introduces direct speech.6 Jäschke, in the entry na-re of his Dictionary 7 has already warned us against regarding it as a verb: 'by form and position an adv[erb], like ḫdi-skad-du'. Its non-verbal nature has also been stressed by J. Bacot: 'Expression non verbale signifiant 'il dit'' .8 Bacot has refrained, however, from giving any further explanation.

There are indeed a number of grammatical observations which speak against defining na-re as a verb.

(1) At the end of the direct speech, which is marked by ces (ses, ḫes), corresponding to Skt. iti, we witness smras(-so), zer(-ro), or a similar verb of saying (or asking [dris-so]). The introduction of the direct speech by a verb of saying would be tautological. Though examples of such tautological usage (smras-pa

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2 The occurrence of skye-ḥa-re in a passage of the Tibetan translation of the Avadānakataka which is practically identical with example 3 of the previous article (see p. 120) [N, mDo, ḫa, 205A7] enables us to omit the asterisking of ḫa-re.
3 See below, p. 560.
4 Note also re-c'u-a-na occurring in the same meaning in the bTsun-mo-bkahi t'as-yig (see B. Laufer, Der Roman einer tibetischen Königin, Leipzig, 1912, p. 223, n. 3). Cf. also M. Hofinger, Le Congrès du Loc Anavatapta, Louvain, 1954, p. 182, n. 4.
5 cf. the distributive function due to repetition in the case of numerals (see, e.g., H. A. Jäschke, Tibetan grammar [with 'Addenda' by A. H. Franccke, assisted by W. Simon], Berlin, 1929, § 21, p. 33), or in so-so 'singly, individually' (literally 'place by place').
6 The identification of na-re with Skt. nanu (see J. Nobel, Udrāyaña, König von Roruka. ii. Wörterbuch, Wiesbaden, 1955, 43 [included also in Professor Lokesh Chandra's Tibetan--Sanskrit dictionary, vii, New Delhi, 1960, 1333]) is untenable.
7 London, 1881 (or later reprints), 300.
... *zes smras-so* are not infrequent, introducing direct speech by a non-verb would seem to constitute at least a convenient alternative.

(2) Though we observe the instrumentative if the word naming or describing the speaker is connected with words like *smras-pa*, this case-suffix does not occur if the utterance is introduced by *na-re*.

(3) The person to whom the utterance is addressed is never found after *na-re*. If the ‘addressee’ is mentioned at all, his name or description will be placed before that of the speaker.⁹

(4) In a similar way, no adverb describing the manner or time of the utterance will ever be observed between the name of the speaker and *na-re*. In fact, *na-re* always follows *immediately* after his name.

    Though each of these four observations speaks more or less strongly against the verbal nature of *na-re*, none of them would seem to provide us with a key to its real nature. From a close examination of the usage of *na-re* in various texts of the Tibetan Canon¹⁰ it would appear that the function of *na-re* does not merely consist in introducing an utterance. An analysis of passages where more than one utterance is involved is bound to show that *na-re* also stresses the name or the general description of the speakers whose utterances are reported. The speakers may be contrasted in a general way as *k’a-cig*¹¹ [or *la-la*]¹² ‘some’ *na-re* . . . , *k’a-cig* [*la-la*] *na-re*, or specified as *gañ ma dad-pa de-dag* ‘non-believers’ *na-re* . . . *gañ dad-pa-dañ-idan-pa-dag* ‘believers’ *na-re*,¹³ or simply referred to as *g’zan-dag* ‘others’.¹⁴ In a conversation between two girls reported as being overheard, the utterance of the second girl is introduced as *cig sós* ‘the other one’ *na-re*.¹⁵

    Some confirmation of the suggested emphasis on the name or description of the speaker by *na-re* may be derived from a passage in the third chapter of the *Lalitavistara*¹⁶ where the Sanskrit original, after an initial *kecid āhu* . . . ‘some said’, shows a string of sentences beginning with *apare* ‘others’ *tvāḥu* (= *tu āhu*), the contrast being stressed by the particle *tu* ‘but’. The corresponding Tibetan text has throughout *la-la na-re*.¹⁷

    It may be less easily conceded that *na-re* emphasizes the name or the description of the speaker if only a single speaker and a single utterance are involved. There seem to be, however, clear cases of the latter kind. If parents

⁹ cf. the two examples on p. 558 where the person to whom a message is conveyed has been mentioned.

¹⁰ *na-re* is found there far more frequently than Jäschke’s remark (*Dict.*, 300) ‘It hardly occurs in old classical literature’ would lead us to expect. For the Tun-huang language see, e.g., pp. 103.27, 104.36, and 116.9 of J. Bacot, F. W. Thomas, and Ch. Toussaint (ed.), *Documents de Tun-Houang*, Paris, 1940–6.

¹¹ See, e.g., *Karmaštaka*, N(arthang), *mDo*, *Śa*, 476B¹, and *Sa*, 61B⁷.


¹³ *Karmaštaka*, N, *mDo*, *Śa*, 91B³ and 175A².

¹⁴ See, e.g., Jäschke’s quotation from the *Waidurya Šhon-po* (*Dict.*, 300a) *gal-te g’zan-dag na-re*.


¹⁷ N, *mDo*, *Kha*, 21B²–22B.
worried about the inability of their son to rise from his chair consult a doctor
and his diagnosis of ‘sheer laziness’ 18 is given in direct speech, it may be
assumed that the emphasis is on the doctor as well as on the diagnosis.

Direct speech, introduced by na-re, is also used when soothsayers (litas-
mk’an) give their verdict,19 or prophesy the future of a child,19 or when the
relatives 20 suggest its name at the birthday festival. In fact the impression
resulting from a scrutiny of the texts is that in the course of a story direct
speech is frequently reserved for an utterance of persons in authority, or
otherwise of particular interest, and that introducing their utterance by na-re
further enhances that interest.

The contention, then, is that na-re fulfils a dual function, emphasis on the
speaker on the one hand and introduction of direct speech on the other. The
realization of such a function allows us, I believe, to split into two parts what
has hitherto been considered a disyllabic word and treated as such in our
dictionaries. The first constituent may then be identified with the case-suffix
-na, affixed to the name or description of the speaker in the meaning of ‘in the
case of’ (= ‘as far as . . . is concerned’), in which it occurs also after the
pronoun ho ‘that’ (ho-na = ‘in that case, then’). Understanding -na as a
case-suffix would account for the absence of an instrumentative,21 mentioned
above under (2) and explain also why na-re always follows immediately after
the name of the speaker (see above under (4)).

As far as the second constituent is concerned, it is suggested that we are
dealing here with an adverb re in the meaning of ‘thus’, pointing forward to
the direct speech which it introduces, and taken up as such by źes (ces, sës).
As opposed to Skt. evam it would only refer to what follows and not also to
what precedes.22

The passage from the Lalitavistara quoted above may be quoted again.
The string of sentences starting with apare tvāhu shows over and above such
variants as apare 'pyāhu 23 and apare evam āhu, on one occasion also apare
tvevam āhu.

With due allowance made for the somewhat loose correspondence between
Tibetan -na and Skt. tu, it would appear that la-la-na can be equated with
apare tu, evam with re, the źes before zer-ro with iti, and the final verb zer-ro of
the Tibetan text with āhu at the beginning of the Sanskrit sentence.

Though re in the meaning of ‘thus’ does not seem to occur in any other
context, further support can be derived from its frequent function in the

18 Karmakātaka, N, mDo, Ša, 56A3-4.
19 Avadānaśataka, N, mDo, Ha, 120B7; Karmakātaka, N, mDo, Ša, 140B5, 297A6-297B1,
and 419A6-7.
20 Avadānaśataka, N, mDo, Ha, 249A5.
21 In one single case only have I found the instrumentative suffix combined with -na, the
combination recalling de-bas-na (cf. also HJAS, v, 3-4, 1941, 389, etc.): Karmakātaka, N, mDo,
Ša, 291A1, mt’oh-nas kyak p’u-ma-la smras-pa/ yab-yum k’yed-kyis-na re . . .
23 Ed. Lefmann, 22.2.
meaning of 'how'. 'Thus' and 'how' being correlative adverbs, there can be little doubt as to the etymological identity of re in these two functions. However, before dealing with re in the meaning of 'how', I wish to adduce two passages in which -na re introduces in direct speech a message from the Buddha. They are both taken from the Avadānasātaka: In the first Buddha sends an urgent summons to King Kapphina.

(a) 24 Tato Bhagavatā lekhāṁ lekhajīvā sa dūto 'bhihitah/ Kapphino mad vacanāt vaktavyo [vaktavyaḥ] . . . iti.

In the second passage Buddha calls upon Ananda to go to Supriyā and to request her to provide on his behalf for the four kinds of society, during a period of three months, clothing, food . . . and medical supplies.

(a) 26 Tatra Bhagavān āyuṣmāntam Ānandam āmantrayate sma/ gacchĀnanda mad vacanāt Supriyāṁ vada catsarsthe paṣradas traināsyaṁ cīvārapindapāta . . . bhaisajyaparīśkarīṁ pratipādayitaṁ iti.
(b) 27 De-nas der bCom-ldan-hdas-kyis ts'e-dan-lan-pa Kun-dgaḥo-la bka stsal-pa/ Kun-dgaḥo k'yod soň-la Rab-sduq-ma-la ŋa-na re ḍk'or-bzi-po-rnams-la k'yod-kyis zla-ba gsum-gyi bar-du (2) gos dañ/ žas dañ . . . sman-zoň-rnams p'ul-ciq ces gyis-sīg.

The correspondences
(1) ŋa-na = mad vacanāt
(2) žes (ces) = iti
(3) gyis-sīg = vaktavyaḥ (vaca)
have been indicated by roman fount. As far as the correspondence re = evam is concerned, the example from the Lalitavistara adduced above is the only one observed so far.

II

Exclamatory re before adjectives and verbs

The following passages taken from the fourth chapter of the Tibetan version of the Mahākāranīka-puṇḍarīka-sūtra 28 illustrate well the usage of exclamatory re in its meaning of 'how!'. Each of the three examples is introduced by kye-ma-ḥo 'alas!'.

kye-ma-ḥo Dzam-bu-gliṅ de nyams re dga [ex. 1].
kye-ma-ḥo hts'e'-[125B] bāhi ḍhig-ṛten de re bzañ [ex. 2].
kye-ma-ḥo mīr ḍhugur-ba ḍhī ṛnyed-pa re dka [ex. 3].

Though the Chinese version 29 has 'so pleasant!', 'so wonderful!', and

24 Ed. Speyer, II, St. Petersburg, 1906 (or reprint in 'Indo-Iranian Reprints', III, 1958), 104.5-6.
25 N, mDo, Ha, 355B6-7.
26 Ed. Speyer, II, 8.9-11.
27 N, mDo, Ha, 285B9-10.
28 N, mDo, Cha, 125A7–125B1.
29 T(aish6) T(ripūtaka), xII, 957b14.
'so difficult to obtain!'30 corresponding to nyams re dga', re bzan, and rnyed-pa re dka, the usual Skt. equivalent is apparently katham 'how!'. The latter correspondence is indicated by a punctuated line in Ts'e-riṅ dbaṅ-rgyal's Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary 31: re bde [ex. 4] 'how fortunate!' is given as the translation of katham gatan, with bde shown by another punctuated line as corresponding 'roughly' (rtsub-pohi don) to gatan.32

The correspondence re = katham can be further confirmed by a passage from the Karaṇḍavyūha-sūtra recently discussed from another point of view by Professor C. Régamey.33 The Skt. Āryaputra katham te ṣaśrīrāṁ śītālāṁ is rendered as ṣp'ags-paḥi sras lus re graṅ-ba-ziṅ [ex. 5] 'how cold your body is, sir!'.34

It would be wrong, however, to expect katham in the Skt. original whenever we find re in the Tibetan version. A comparison 35 of the Tibetan and Skt. texts of the Avadānaśataka and the Lalitavistara has yielded two other kinds of exclamation. ky'e-ma re skyid36 [ex. 6] 'Oh, what luck!' corresponds to aho bata sauukhyam37 in the 89th story of the former text, and the latter 38 (ch. xviii) twice uses the cliché re-stes39 [ex. 7] 'how excellent!' to translate sōghanam syāt.40

Quite a number of examples of the exclamatory usage of re can be gleaned from the bTsun-mo-bkahi ṭaṅ-yig.41 I confine myself here to indicating briefly the passages concerned.42 The position of re between two closely connected words has already been observed by Jäschke 43 (see nos. 4–6 [= exx. 11–13]) in the list below:

(1) re-skyid [ex. 8, cf. ex. 6] (46.13/138) bygro-dar p'yiṅ-no re-dga re-sk'yid-na 'while it is so pleasant and so lucky to have arrived at our destination!'

(2) re-dga [ex. 9, cf. ex. 1]. Cf. also the refrain ending in re-dga 'how I rejoice in...!' of Laufer's fifth song (39–41/126–30); and furthermore 57.6/154.

30 如是可樂, 如是希有, 如是難得.
32 I feel unable to comment on gatan.
34 N, mDo, Ja, 352A.
35 The comparative rarity of this usage of re may be gathered from the fact that I did not succeed in locating more than one cliché each in these two extensive texts.
36 N, mDo, Ha, 363A2.
37 Ed. Speyer, II, 115.7.
38 N, mDo, Kh, 196A4 and 196B4.
39 The gloss stes-pa ni legs-pa has been preserved in Sumatiratna’s Tibetan–Tibetan–Mongolian dictionary (Corpus Scriptorum Mongolorum, VI–VII), Ulan Bator, 1959.
40 Ed. Lefmann, 265.18 and 266.13.
41 See above, p. 555, n. 4. In his translation Laufer often equates re with ‘how!’ (wie!), but fails to do so consistently, as a comparison of the translation of the various examples would show (cf., e.g., his translation of the refrain of his ‘Fifth song’ which occurs with and without re). Nor is the exclamatory usage of re mentioned in his ‘Index’.
42 References to the text itself are given by quoting both page and line in Laufer’s edition; for his translation reference to the page has been considered sufficient.
43 See also below, p. 569 and n. 49. Note that the same principle of word order is observed in the case of the negation.
(3) re-c'uṅ [ex. 10] (37.3, etc. [refrain] / 123–4) don re-c'uṅ ‘ [of] how little use!’.
(4) nyam-re-t'ag [ex. 11] (93.20/208) ‘ how sincere [?]!’.
bras-bu sms ldi nyam-re-t'ag ‘ how sincere our realization of the maturing [of our sins] is!’.
(5) nyon-re-moṅs [ex. 12] (95.6/210) sms can nyon-moṅs nyon-re-moṅs ‘ how sinful the sinful creatures are!’.
 Cf. also 93.20/208.
(6) snyin-re-rje [ex. 13] (108.10/228) nyes-med sms can maṅ-po snyin-re-rje ‘ how pitiful the many innocent beings are!’.
 Cf. also 33.12/118 and 93.19/208.

The above 13 examples enable us to list here, with an attempt at translation, the 8 collocations assembled by Jäschke in his Dictionary, though no contextual help is given. His first two examples are taken from his copy of the rGyal-rabs, viz. nyams re dga [ex. 14, cf. exx. 1 and 9] ‘ how pleasant!’ and blo re bde [ex. 15, cf. ex. 4] ‘ how happy [?]!’. (The former has been adduced by J. Nobel in support of the verse yid-bon sms-can mt'oṅ re dga 47 ‘ how pleasant to see the delightful being!’, a free translation of sattvadānānaprikamanāpa, though in fact we do not witness there a case of re ‘ put between two closely connected words’, which is the common feature of Jäschke’s examples.)

Jäschke’s last two collocations, don-re-c'uṅ [ex. 16] and snyin-re-rje [ex. 17] have been explained above as they occur in the bTsun-mo bka'hi t'aṅ-yiṅ [exx. 10 and 13].


Finally, from Sumatiratna’s dictionary, which also includes the gloss re-stes [ex. 22, cf. ex. 7] = ci ma-ruṅ ‘ would that! ’, two further collocations can be added: skal-ba re bzaṅ [ex. 23, cf. ex. 2] ‘ how fortunate! ’, translated as e ya'iqam-sig sain gubi, and re glen [ex. 24] ‘ how stupid! ’, translated as ari teneg bainam, teneg aju-yu.

III

Three further usages of re
(a) re in re-skán and re-sès

re in re-skán has been dealt with shortly in my previous paper. In the light of the numerous examples of re in the meaning of ‘ how ’, I feel that the meaning of ‘ may you not say ’ suggested there must be given up. I also failed

44 See Jäschke, Dict., 228, where t'ag is identified with dag.
45 p. 533, sub 6.
47 ibid., 1. Die tibetischen Übersetzungen, 109.22.
49 It seems that the attention paid by Jäschke to this special type of example has prevented this eminent lexicographer from recognizing the actual meaning of exclamatory re, though he mentions that it is ‘ only used in emphatic speech ’.
50 See above. Two examples of snyin-re-rje are given in Jäschke’s dictionary, on pp. 294a s.v. sdbug-pa (bod-[b]aṅs sdbug-ge snyin-re-rje ‘ the good, poor Tibetans’) and 607a s.v. 'e-ma (‘e-ma sms-can snyin-re-rje ‘ alas, the poor people!’), the former quoted from a prayer, the latter from the rGyal-rabs.
51 See above, p. 559, n. 39.
52 art. cit., 126.
to consider the similar usage of *re* in *re-ses*, which has been adduced by Bacot 53 side by side with *re-skan*. The translation ‘jamais’ has been offered in either case. 54 I should like to suggest as an alternative a rhetorical question introduced by *re* ‘how’. *re* in *re-skan* would in this function correspond exactly to Chinese 55 課, 55

The further suggestion made there to regard *skan* as a cognate of *skad* ‘speech’ and to interpret it as a verb meaning ‘to say’ can be supported by the occurrence, in the biography of Naropa, of a verb *skan* which A. Grünewedel translated as ‘to speak with a full mouth, to mumble’. 56 Accordingly the literal meaning of *re-skan* and *re-ses* 57 would appear to be ‘How can you (he, etc.) [possibly] say (or speak of) . . . ’ and ‘How can I (you, he, etc.) [possibly] be able to . . . ’.

(b) *re* in *ha-re*

As in the case of *re-skan* (and *re-ses*) the definition of *re* as a negative (prohibitive) particle, corresponding to Skt. *mā*, must be abandoned. With the preceding pronominal *ha* resuming what precedes it and transforming it into a hypothetical clause, *re* constitutes a rhetorical question which serves as its apodosis. In example 21 of the previous article 58 we witness in fact *gal-te* ‘if’ to introduce the hypothetical clause. To illustrate further by means of the first example there, 58 the admonition to keep away from the house of ill fame is followed by the question: *tsul ma yin-pas sslug-bsnal-bar gyur-ta-re*. This, then, might be translated literally as: ‘If through improper behaviour you get into misfortune that then (*ha*) how? (*re*) = ‘What would it be like if through improper behaviour you were to get into misfortune?’ Though, no doubt in accordance with the Sanskrit original, a paraphrase by means of *mi . . . p'yi-r-du* may in one instance be observed, 59 the usage of *ha-re* to translate the Skt. ‘negative purpose clause’ constitutes therefore a free translation into Tibetan, which brings it closer to the Mongol translation by the suffix *gul'ai/gi'lez* ‘what if’. 60

54 In the case of *re-skan* Bacot adds the alternative rendering ‘en aucune maniè`re’.
55 cf. the Chinese rendering of *re-skan*, p. 126, N. 52 of the previous article, and Tibetan *lta ci smos* quoted there.
57 The passage *skan-sgra-da scas gos-nas* (p. 103) was translated by H. V. Guenther (The life and teaching of Nāropa, Oxford, 1963, 50) as ‘eating noisily’.
58 The example offered by Bacot (from the *Nansal*) reads Da *ka svo' ti-em-pa ḏi la gom-pa rgyal re-ses*, which he translates, equating *re-ses* with *jamais*, as ‘Jamais je ne pourrai franchir le seuil de cette porte’. It can easily be seen that *pourrai* translates in fact *ses*. (See his *Trois mystères tibétains*, Paris, 1921, 246 [= p. 219 of the English translation by H. I. Woolf, London, [1924]].)
60 The warning not to touch the stop string of a (magic) lute appears first (N, ḧDul, Da, 320B, cf. also Schiefner–Ralston, *Tibetan tales*, repr., London, [1926], 229–30) as *rgyud yah t'o-g-ma la ma rie-sū nyes-pa' ch'i dmyigsu gyur-ta-re*. A few lines later the text is varied to: *nyes-pa' ch'i dmyigsu mi hgyur-ba' p'yi rgyud lla-g-ma la ma rie-sū.*
61 See p. 125 of the previous article.
Final exclamatory re occurs frequently in the oaths preserved in the Tun-huang ‘Annals’, a fact to which, after the publication of my previous article, attention has kindly been drawn by Professor F. K. Li, Mr. H. E. Richardson, and Professor G. Uray. It was translated by Bacot as ‘jamais’ and equated with re-skan. The latter equation would seem untenable as it completely ignores the presence and meaning of skan, discussed above. On the other hand, the translation of final exclamatory re by ‘never’ or ‘not by any means’ (to add the alternative rendering of re-skan proposed by Bacot in his grammar) appears to fit the context well in quite a number of these sentences. Mr. H. E. Richardson has moreover referred me to a passage in dPa-bo gTsug-lag hP'eiñ-ba's C'os-byuñ (sixteenth century) where the book version of the ‘Kar-chung Inscription’ shows final re instead of the negation mi (myi) of the inscription, and quite recently Dr. D. L. Snellgrove used the translation ‘not on your life!’, while noting ‘the use of the final particle re, emphatic and exclamatory’.

These examples, while significant for the semantic development of re, can, I believe, all be reconciled with the basic function of re ‘how’ in a rhetorical question (as it were ‘How can there possibly be any mention or question of that?’).

re, then, is not a negative particle but an adverb whose meanings are ‘so’ (in the case of -na re) and ‘how’ (in exclamatory sentences or rhetorical questions).

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61 See Documents de Touen-Huang (as quoted above, n. 10), 105.10 ff., 110.9 ff., 110.23 ff.
62 Documents de Touen-Huang, p. 137, n. 1 (and n. 3).
63 See above, p. 561, n. 54.
64 Inscription (cf. G. Tucci, The tombs of the Tibetan kings, Rome, 1950, 106): ... myi gzi-g-o myi spañ-no ‘[Buddha's doctrine] will not perish, will not be abandoned’. C’o-s-byuñ: dkon-d-cog gsum (the Triratna) gzi-g re spañ re.