EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE
IN THE PRE-MODERN BUDDHIST WORLD

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A GTER MA OF NEGATIVES

H.E. Richardson's Photographic Negatives of Manuscript Copies of Tibetan Imperial Inscriptions Possibly Collected by Rig 'dzin Tshedrub norbu in the 18th Century CE, Recently Found in the Bodleian Library, Oxford

CHARLES MANSON & NATHAN W. HILL

Every scholar who has studied early Tibetan inscriptions will know of the journal articles that H.E. Richardson wrote on inscriptions, from the first published in 1949 to the last in 1995. In 1985, Richardson also published a book entitled A Corpus of Early Tibetan Inscriptions. The 1949 first article (on inscriptions at Skar cung, Bsam yas and Mtshur phu) was published while Richardson was in Tibet; all subsequent articles were published after he had left in 1950. Thus, without access to the actual stones at the time of the later articles, apart from other authors' publications on the subject he must have relied on his collection of notes, photographs, copying of inscriptions, and rubbings. He also re-

1 A full listing of Richardson's articles on inscriptions can be found in the bibliography of Iwao et al. 2009: xxviii. Therein 15 articles and two monographs on inscriptions by Richardson are listed.
2 Sir Charles Bell (1870–1945) left some stelae rubbings (made in 1921) to Richardson, which apparently first awakened the latter's interest in inscriptions. Bell's and Richardson's rubbings are preserved in the British Library, London, in a box of 'Richardson rubbings', containing envelopes marked MS35 to MS41. The six envelopes contain rubbings (in whole or fragment) for the inscriptions of the Lhasa Treaty pillar (all four faces), the Kun bde ling monastery pillar (Lha sa), and the Lchang bu pillar (Mtshur phu). Kazushi Iwao has created a preliminary handlist
lied on a copy made for him of the inscription at Rkong po, because he never did visit that site. In addition, it must be obvious to any reader of Richardson’s articles that from 1959 onward he referred often to a series of photographs of a manuscript text. The photographs and negatives had been given to him by Rai Bahadur T.D. Densapa (also known as Burmiok Athing, 1902-1988), of Gangtok.

Densapa had informed Richardson, in a letter sent from Gangtok to St Andrews (Scotland), that several of the notes on the original manuscript appeared (“certain degree of resemblance”) to be in the handwriting of Kah thog Rig ’dzin Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755). The manuscript apparently records the inscriptions of five stelae in the Central Tibet region, and from internal evidence the text may be an original record made in the 15th century, with possibly 18th-century additions and notes. Several times Richardson expressed in articles the intention to publish the photographs of the manuscript, but he never did so. Indeed, the photographs in St Andrews seemed to have disappeared, and the original manuscript in Gangtok has not surfaced.

In 2007 one of the authors of this paper – Charles Manson, currently (2012) Tibetan Subject consultant librarian at the Bodleian Library – was then a student at Harvard. Required to write an essay on a Tibetan

of the contents of the envelopes, and digital reproductions of the rubbings are in the process of being created by the British Library (2012).

3 Bodleian Library Special Collections, Oxford, holds the original copy made of the Rkong po inscription (in the Richardson Papers collection, MS. Or. Richardson 38, folio 16) as reproduced in Richardson 1954: 157-173. The making of the copy was arranged by Bdud ’joms Rin po che (’Jigs bral Ye shes rdo rje, 1904-1987) for Richardson, in 1950. The Rkong po copy was sent to Richardson in Scotland by Pemba Tsering from Lhasa in March 1951 (as described by the latter in a letter, Bodleian MS. Or. Richardson 32; folios 15, 16).

4 The first published reference to the photographs appeared in Richardson 1959: 79. Richardson’s first publication based on research using the photographs did not appear until his article on the ’Phyong rgyas bridge-head inscription (Richardson, 1964: 1-13).

5 The letter, undated, is in Bodleian’s Richardson Papers (MS. Or. Richardson 32, folios 8, 9, 10).
inscription, he chose the 'Phyong rgyas bridge-head inscription as his subject. The essay necessarily had to be based on information on the inscription in Richardson’s 1964 article and 1985 book.\(^6\) The stela was reported by Richardson to be ten feet high by two feet wide.\(^7\) Very few words of the original inscription in situ remain legible, and Richardson’s ‘record’ of the inscription relied almost entirely on the Densapa manuscript photographic record. With the essay completed, later that year Manson happened to be in the Bodleian and spent a pleasant summer’s afternoon searching through the Richardson Papers for any negatives or photographs of the manuscript, but to no avail. Likewise, enquiries and letters to the Pitt Rivers Museum (repository of Richardson’s photographs), the British Museum, British Library and Richardson’s will-executors in St Andrews also drew a blank: no evidence of the negatives.

In 2009 Manson had the good fortune to be appointed as the librarian for the Tibetan collection at the Bodleian. In late 2010, he started the process of attempting to clear up several boxes of books in a back room at the top of New Bodleian Library. Some of Richardson’s books which had yet to be catalogued were in the boxes. Amongst the books Manson came across a folder of negatives with the Das Studio (Darjeeling) logo printed on it, along with several positive prints of a manuscript text, marked with pagination and notes in Richardson’s handwriting. Manson immediately felt that this find might be the ‘missing’ negatives. It was indeed.

Since then, the negatives have been expertly processed and digitized by Bodleian Libraries staff,\(^8\) and are now presented online as positives on the Luna website, specifically at:

http://bodley30.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet/view/search?g=Class=Tibetan%20LIMIT:ODLodl=23-23&sort=Shelfmark,sort_order

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\(^6\) Richardson 1964: 1-13; Richardson 1985: 36-41.
\(^7\) Richardson 1964: 4.
\(^8\) With thanks to James Allan and Nick Cistone (Bodleian Imaging Services) and Alex Franklin (Bodleian Centre for the Study of the Book) for their expertise and advice.
They can also be found easily by inputting the terms “bodley luna tibetan richardson” into an Internet search engine such as Google. From such a search, initially 15 photos of the manuscript are presented, but each can be viewed individually and enlarged for easier reading. Information on each page of the manuscript is presented in the left-side panel of its website page.

The negatives are two regular 35mm strips: strip A with six exposed frames and strip B with only two frames, so a total of eight exposed frames, each containing exposures of the manuscript. In toto there are 28 pages of text contained in the eight frames, some frames having four pages within (Strip A, frames 1 and 2; Strip B, frames 7 and 8), others having three pages per frame (Strip A, frames 3, 4, 5, 6). As shall be seen below, the original text consisted of seven folios, hence 14 page sides. With 28 pages on the negatives, it would at first seem that there are probably duplicate photographs of each side of the seven folios. This is so, and will be clarified below.

Before presenting the layout of the pages contained within the negatives, it would be useful to give an overview of the contents: the text pages appear to contain copies of the inscriptions at

- ’Phyong rgyas bridge-head pillar,
- ’Phyong rgyas valley pillar (near Khri Lde srong brtsan tomb),
- Rkong po (Bde mo sa) rock,
- Skar cung pillar,
- Lha sa treaty pillar (East and West faces),

thus six inscriptions from five stelae.10

9 The original folder and contents are in Bodleian, MS. Or. Richardson 47. Strip A is folio 316, strip B is folio 317. A CD of the negatives, digitized, is also available for consultation at the Bodleian Library.

10 Richardson presents an outline of the contents of the manuscript and an initial overall assessment in Richardson 1964: 1-4. The order of the list of inscriptions given here is in the chronological order in which Richardson wrote about the inscriptions, once he had the negatives (he had written articles on some of these inscriptions before he received the negatives). The sequence of the inscriptions in the text pages is given below, after the tables of the negatives.
The correspondence of the pages of the text in the negatives and the inscriptions themselves is shown in the diagrams below, after the key.

Key:

Each diagram below represents a negative frame, with the text pages diagrammed within the frame, either four or three pages per frame. The information within each page is presented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strip. frame. page</th>
<th>[inscr. name]</th>
<th>[Old Tibetan Inscriptions (OTI) lines of inscr.]</th>
<th>[Left margin page marking, recto/verso]</th>
<th>[lines per page]</th>
<th>[first words]</th>
<th>[last words]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The ‘+’ after the no. of lines per page (e.g., ‘8 +’) indicates the presence of interlinear corrections, remarks or notes on the page. Details of the interlinear additions are in the transliteration notes, below.

**Eight photo negatives of Tibetan text, the Densapa manuscript**

**Strip A: (Bodleian) MS. Or. Richardson 47 folio 316:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: cha - gsum (recto).</td>
<td>8 lines +.</td>
<td>First: pa yin na / ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strip A. frame 1. page b:</th>
<th>Phyong rgyas bridge pillar.</th>
<th>OTI: lines 16-34.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: cha - gnyis (recto).</td>
<td>6 lines +.</td>
<td>First: btsan po ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strip A. frame 1. page c:</th>
<th>Khri Lde srong brtsan tomb pillar.</th>
<th>OTI: lines 1-25.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: cha - gcig (recto).</td>
<td>8 lines +.</td>
<td>First: btsan po lha sras / ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strip A. frame 1. page d:</th>
<th>Rkong po rock.</th>
<th>OTI: lines 1-10.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: [no markings] (recto).</td>
<td>7 lines.</td>
<td>First: lha btsan po ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strip A. frame 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: [page gsun] (verso). 8 lines.</td>
<td>First: *gnyis rabs khri / *...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last: <em>'phral</em></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: [page gnyis] (verso). 8 lines.</td>
<td>First: <em>chu bo chen</em> ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last: <em>nye zhi ng gnyen</em></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: [page gcig] (verso). 6 lines.</td>
<td>First: <em>bod kyi dmog</em> ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last: <em>'phyul gyi lha</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: [no markings] (verso). 7 lines.</td>
<td>First: <em>pa na/ nam da'am</em> ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last: <em>gnang ngo</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: <em>bzhi</em> (recto). 8 lines.</td>
<td>First: <em>yun gnyis</em> ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last: <em>gza’ skar</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: <em>gcig</em> (recto). 7 lines.</td>
<td>First: <em>'phyul gyi lde</em> ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last: <em>blun kun gyi</em></td>
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</table>

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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: <em>gnyis so</em> (recto). 3 lines.</td>
<td>First: <em>pa dag mi bya</em> ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last: <em>pa yin no</em> / (end)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: [page <em>bzhi</em>] (verso). 4 lines.</td>
<td>First: <em>la yang</em> ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last: <em>dga ’gro’o</em> / (end)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: [page <em>gcig</em>] (verso). 8 lines.</td>
<td>First: <em>dbu snyung</em> ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last: <em>phud</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strip A, frame 4, page c: Skar cung pillar.</th>
<th>OTI: no lines.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.: [page <em>gnyis</em>] (verso). [blank]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A *GTER MA OF NEGATIVES*  89

L.: [page bzhi] (verso). 4 lines. First: *la yang*... Last: *dgu 'gro'ol* (end)

L.: [page geig] (verso). 8 lines +. First: *dgu snyung*... Last: *phuel*

Strip A. frame 5, page c: Skar cung pillar.
L.: [page bgyis] (verso). [blank]

Strip A. frame 5

L.: *bzhi* (recto). 8 lines +. First: *yun guyis*... Last: *gza’ skar*

L.: *geig* (recto). 7 lines +. First: *'phrul gyi lde*... Last: *bhum kun gya*

Strip A. frame 6, page c: Skar cung pillar. OTI lines 53-56.
L.: *guyis so* (recto). 3 lines. First: *pa dag mi bya*... Last: *pa yin no / (end)*

Strip A. frame

Strip B: (Bodleian) MS. Or. Richardson 47 folio 317:

L.: [no markings] (verso). 7 lines +. First: *na / nam du’ang*... Last: *gnang*

L.: [page geig] (verso). 6 lines +. First: *bod kyi dngag*... Last: *'phrul gyi lha*

L.: [page guyis] (verso). 8 lines +. First: *chu bo chen*... Last: *nye zhang guyen*

L.: [page gsum] (verso). 8 lines. First: *guyis rabs khvir*... Last: *'phral*

Strip B. frame 7
One can see from the above that each of the 14 photographed page sides appears twice on the negatives. Strip A’s frame 1 has an obscuring mark crossing pages b and c – perhaps strip B’s frames 7 and 8 (which duplicate strip A’s frames 1 and 2, but in different sequence of pages) were created later as ‘retakes’ in order to provide good copies. The Luna website’s 15 reproductions of the negatives as positives gives the two complete strips plus 13 individual pages of the seven folios (omitting one blank verso page), ensuring no duplications on the website presentation.

The negatives being black and white, there is no immediate evidence of variations in ink colour. However, in the one-sided Richardson-Densapa correspondence preserved in the Bodleian (the library only has Densapa’s letters), Densapa makes it clear in his discussion of the Rkong po inscription that the ink of the corrections and interlinear notes added to the manuscript record of that inscription is red. Subsequently Densapa had a handwritten copy made for Richardson, in dbu can, with the ink colours copied. This copy also is in the Bodleian, so at least

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11 MS. Or. Richardson 32, folio 7.
there is for one section an indication of which parts of the Densapa manuscript were red.\textsuperscript{12}

The page numberings, or lack of them, in the left-side margins of recto pages indicate that the original folios were three parts:
- a one-folio copy of the Rkong po inscription,
- a two-folios copy of the Skar cung inscription.
- four folios of copies of (in corresponding order):
  - Khri Lde srong brtsan tomb pillar.
  - 'Phyong rgyas bridge pillar,
  - Lhasa Treaty pillar, East.
  - Lhasa Treaty pillar, West.\textsuperscript{13}

Richardson remarks that the text of the transcriptions is written in three different hands, but he does not elaborate his reasoning for this view (Richardson 1964: 2). An examination of the manner in which the syllable \textit{khri} is written in the various texts serves to confirm Richardson’s claim. The angle at which the \textit{ra btags} descends to the right differs between the Rkong po transcription and the Skar cung transcription. The left tail of the \textit{kh} intercepts the \textit{ra btags} in the transcriptions of the Lhasa Treaty inscription, the inscription at the tomb of Khri Lde srong brtsan, and 'Phyong rgyas bridge inscription, but the left tail of the \textit{kh} does not intercept the \textit{ra btags} in the transcriptions of the Rkong po or Skar cung inscriptions (v. Table 1).

\textsuperscript{12} The \textit{dbu can} copy is MS. Or. Richardson 38, folio 11. Richardson briefly mentions the red ink markings in Richardson 1972: 30. A photograph of the \textit{dbu can} modern transcription with red ink markings can be consulted on the Bod Blog website (“An occasional update from the Tibetan subject librarian at the Bodleian Library, Oxford”) at http://yeshiuk.blogspot.co.uk/.

\textsuperscript{13} Richardson also made this division into three, and labelled his prints of the photographs texts X (Rkong po), Y (Skar cung) and Z (remaining group of four). The prints are in the MS. Or. Richardson 47 box. The X, Y, Z formula is kept to in this article, see shortly below.
Thus, on the basis of pagination and penmanship it is possible to divide the transcriptions into three original texts (X, Y, and Z) written by three different scribes (A, B, and C). Scribe A penned text X which contains the Rkong po inscription; scribe B wrote text Y which contains the Skar cung inscription; and scribe C is responsible for text Z which contains the inscription at the tomb of Khri Lde srong brtsan, the 'Phyong rgyas bridge inscription and the Lhasa Treaty East and West inscriptions.

Regarding dating of the manuscript, Richardson (1964: 2 and 1978: 137) mentions that the Densapa manuscript transcription of the Lhasa Treaty West inscription has a colophon that reads:

\[
\text{de ltar na rdo rings chu yos la btsugs nas da Ita'i chu stagi bar lnga brgya dang dgu beu rtsa dgu 'gro'o /}^{14}
\]

"Thus since the erection of the stela in the water-hare year [823] until now, the water-tiger year, 599 years have passed".

The colophon of text Z thus puts the year in which the transcription was made as 1422. It must be stressed that this date applies only to the transcription of the Lhasa Treaty inscription, it cannot be assumed that the other inscriptions were copied at the same time. However, it may be plausible to surmise that the two 'Phyong rgyas inscriptions (tomb and bridge-head) were transcribed at the same period, because they are in the same hand and are included with the treaty pillar inscriptions all in one text (text Z).

Richardson discusses the possible rough dating of the 'Phyong rgyas tomb transcription (Richardson 1969: 30) with respect to a notation in

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14 See strip A, frame 5, page a, line 4.
the transcription as to how many lines were legible (29 lines) and how many further lines were illegible and above ground (14 lines). At the time of Richardson’s visit in 1949 he found 22 lines above ground. At that time he did some cautious digging with the help of Kazi Sonam Topgye of Sikkim (1925-2009) and an ‘orderly’ known as ‘Brug skad in order to note any subterranean lines, and published in 1969 that the full inscription was 47 lines (Richardson 1969: 35; but Richardson 1985: 90 has 46). As we now know, the full inscription is 59 lines (Iwao et al. 2009: 27).

This is not the place for a fresh systematic study of these inscriptions in light of this newly found manuscript historical evidence. Instead our goal is merely to bring these materials to the attention of the scholarly community and to provide such introductory remarks and background as will facilitate the consultation of these transcriptions. Nonetheless, a few pertinent observations on the text of the transcriptions in relation to the original stones may prove to be of interest.

It is hardly surprising that in numerous cases the orthographic and lexical peculiarities of Old Tibetan have in some way been modernized in transcription. Thus, the Rkong po inscription itself reads kar po mang po rje dang / (line 3; Iwao et al. 2009: 15), but the manuscript transcription renders kar po as dkar po (strip B. frame, 8 page a, line 1; i.e., photo 8a.1), a reformulation of the name to look less unusual, perhaps. However, above the line someone – possibly Rig ’dzin Tshe dbang nor bu – has corrected dkar to kar (photo 8a.1). This clearly suggests that the manuscript was corrected against the inscription in situ. The dbu can transcription of the Rkong po inscription sent by Densapa to Richardson makes clear that this correction, and indeed all the others made in this particular Rkong po transcription, are in red ink. It is notable that the other inscriptions presented in the Densapa manuscript have very few corrections or additions.

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16 See below for a correlation of our transcription of the manuscript with the inscriptions as presented in Iwao et al. 2009.
Another instance of such an interaction among the texts is the line in the Rkong po inscription nya grī btsan po myi yul gyī rjer // (line 4; Iwao et al. 2009: 15), which appears as gnya' khrī btsan po myi yul gyī rjer // (photo 8a.2) in the Densapa manuscript transcription. The notes in red ink place a nya above the gnya' and a gi gu inverse directly atop the gi gu of gyī; this notation suggests the reading nya khrī btsan po myi yul gyī rjer, closer to the original but still missing out the gi gu inverse and the g rather than kh of the syllable grī. An instance that particularly illuminates the practice of the red-ink editor is the phrase bdagi sl'Og bab pa (line 7; Iwao et al. 2009: 15), which is transcribed bdag gi srog la bab pa (photo 8a.5); the word bab is then amended to 'bab in red. The sporadic use of ' after grammatical morphemes is characteristic of Old Tibetan (Hill 2005: 115-117) but is quite unknown in Classical Tibetan. Consequently, when his eyes presented him with the sequence of letters l, ', b, b, the editor with the red pen read them as la 'bab rather than the correct la' bab.

While the textual history of these transcriptions and of the concomitant editorial practices of the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries is no doubt interesting in its own right, the student of early Tibetan history will hope to find places in which these transcriptions help us to arrive at a better analysis of the original text. Of course, the most clear-cut case of these transcriptions providing information which we would otherwise lack is the inclusion of the 'Phyong rgyas bridge-head pillar inscription. The utility of the transcriptions in other cases is limited, but there are occasional lacunae in the original stones for which the transcriptions offer useful or interesting readings. Thus, the West face of the Lhasa Treaty inscription has nyes ci yang === thugs rje chen (line 17; Iwao et al. 2009: 33) transcribed as nyes ci yang mkhyen thugs rje chen (photo 6a.1), providing the word mkhyen where previously the reading was unknown. However, there is no way to know whether the word mkhyen

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17 The syllable yang in the edition of Iwao et al. is provided on the basis of "previous study(ies), but not reconfirmed by the editors" (cf. the "Signes critiques" in Iwao et al. 2009: xix).
was actually visible in the stone at the time the transcription was done, or whether it is a conjectural emendation on the part of the transcriber.

In another case the transcriber seems likely to have relied on conjecture. On the East face of the Lhasa Treaty inscription the phrase [dbon zhang gnyis kyi tshul ci 'dra ba dang // (line 3; Iwao et al. 2009: 35) is transcribed bod rgya gnyis kyi tshul ci 'dra ba dang // (photo 8c.5). Reading the text bod rgya is contextually appropriate, but the conjecture [dbon zhang g]nyis of Iwao et al. has the advantage of matching the parallel phraseology on the West face – dbon zhang gnyis (line 4; Iwao et al. 2009: 33) and in our judgment better satisfies the principle of lectio difficilior potior since by dbon zhang the text means bod rgya. The testimony of these transcriptions must be taken with a proverbial pinch of salt.

One might hope that in the future the entire corpus of Tibetan inscriptions will be scientifically documented with a full array of squeezes and advanced photographic techniques; such an undertaking would probably help resolve at least some of the uncertain readings. Until such a result is eventually realized, these photographs of the earlier transcriptions, now available for the first time to all scholars, contribute another puzzle piece both in the study of Tibet’s imperial civilization and in our understanding of the knowledge and appreciation of this civilization by later generations of Tibetans.

Transliteration of the Densapa manuscript

The transliteration of the six inscription transcriptions in the Densapa manuscript is presented below line by line. Supralinear and sublinear additions are indicated in footnotes. In the manuscript transcription of the Rkong po inscription, text X, all the supralinear and sublinear additions and corrections were in red ink (see above). It is notable that the Densapa copyist (cf. n. 12, above) has also added some red corrections which are not featured in the original manuscript (e.g., btsan to brtsan, ri to ri' for lines 1 and 2 of the Rkong po inscription transcription). It is not known whether the additions for texts Y and Z were in red ink.
In keeping with the Vienna tradition, the following signs and conventions are used:

- {1}, {2}, etc. Beginning of a line in the manuscript
- * dbu
- / shad
- : double tshad (frequently used instead of a shad or double shad)
- ũ gi gu inversé
- ŋ bindu (frequently used instead of a ma rjes 'jug; e.g., nam [for nam])
- d d inversé (occasionally used instead of -gs; e.g., bzhud [for bzhugs])

In Iwao et al. 2009, the square brackets containing three numbers refer to the line reference of the relevant inscription, e.g., [002] for line 2, [027] for line 27. These references are inserted in the manuscript transcription.

Our thanks are due to Dr Lewis Doney for checking the transcription and for his useful comments.

The Rkong po Bde mo sa inscription
(Text X; page 1, recto l. 1 - verso l. 7)

Strip B, frame 8, page a

{1} [001] // lha btsan\(^{18}\) po khri\(^{19}\) srong lde brtsan\(^{20}\) dang/ lde srong yab sras kyi ring la'/ [002] rkong dkar\(^{21}\) po la gtsigs gnang ba'\(^{22}\) [003] / dkar\(^{23}\) po mang po rje dang: blon po lha'i zung gis gsold pa'//\(^{24}\) x\(^{25}\) thog mar

\(^{18}\) Red ra mgo added by Densapa’s copyist, although not present in original manuscript. The copyist may have deemed it necessary as four words further on another red ra mgo is given. The manuscript photo has btsan and brtsan.

\(^{19}\) gi gu correction added to indicate khri.

\(^{20}\) ra mgo added in red by Densapa copyist.


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21 d in red.
22 ṭ in red.
23 Supralinear addition: kar (red).
24 The first shad seems to impinge on the ṭ.
25 'x' indicates a mark, somewhat like a '2' in red; perhaps it is the scribes indication of the start of the quoted petition.
26 Supralinear addition: nña (red).
27 Densapa copyist has ya biags in red.
28 gi gu correction added: gyi (red).
29 gi gu correction added: ri (red).
30 Supralinear bum (red).
31 Triangle of dots (red) above s.
32 Supralinear correction: kyi (red).
33 gi gu correction added: drī (red).
34 Supralinear bṣum (red).
35 Densapa copyist has 'hook' of ts in red (unnecessarily?).
36 Supralinear kḥri (red).
37 Supralinear tha (red).
38 Supralinear tha (red).
39 Densapa copyist has 'hook' ts in red (unnecessarily?).
40 Supralinear kḥri (red).
41 Densapa copyist has 'hook' of ts in red (unnecessarily?).
42 Supralinear dkar (red).
43 gi gu correction: ni (red).
44 Triangle of dots (red) above r.
45 Supralinear bkyid (red).
46 Triangle of dots (red) above s.


Strip B, frame 7, page a


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⁴⁷ Supralinear ’bab (red).
⁴⁸ Triangle of dots (red) above s.
⁴⁹ Triangle of dots (red) above ‘.
⁵⁰ Supralinear dgyis (red).
⁵¹ Supralinear bkol (red).
⁵² Supralinear ba’ang (tautologically?) and triangle of dots above ng in the running text. Both are red in Densapa copyist version.
⁵³ gi gu correction: ci (red).
⁵⁴ Densapa copyist has no na ro, instead has a horizontal red line above pa, perhaps indicating a na ro in dbu med, although all copyist’s writing is in dbu can.
⁵⁵ Densapa copyist has ya btags in red.
⁵⁶ Densapa copyist has ya btags in red.
⁵⁷ Triangle of dots (red) above ba.
⁵⁸ Short horizontal line (red) above g.
⁵⁹ Supralinear snang (red).
⁶⁰ Supralinear kyi (red).
⁶¹ Short horizontal line (red) added above s.
⁶² Short horizontal line (red) added above d.
⁶³ Densapa copyist has added red d after gsol, and repeats (for clarification?) with sublinear gsold nas; in the photographed Densapa manuscript the clarifying gsold nas is supralinear.
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{2} pa67/ [012] * / btsan po lha sras khri srong lde btsan gyi ring la: dkar68 po' i gtsigs69 gnang ba la:70 [013] lha sras lde srong gi sku ring la: gtsigs71 snga ma bas bskyed par bkas72

{3} gnang ba:73 [014] na'm zhar kyang74: rkong dkar75 po'i rgyal por76 gzhann myi77 gzhug78 par: dkar79 po mang po rje' i80 bu tsha81 'phel rgyud las stsal bac82 gnango/ [015] dkar83 po mang por84 rje' i rgyud rab85

{4} chad na: gchen rgyal po: dkar po' i ming mi rlag par: rgyal por yang: dkar po rgyal btsan gyi rgyud las [016] bsko'O: rgyal btsan gyi rgyud kyang rab chad na: nye 'tsha'ns las:

64 Supralinear gtsig khra or rtsig khra (not clear). Densapa copyist has rtsig khra (red), sublinear.
65 Short horizontal line (red) added above r.
66 Supralinear stsal d ba'i (Densapa copyist has the same, sublinear, in red).
67 Supralinear pa'/ (red).
68 Short horizontal line (red) added above d.
69 Triangle of dots (red) above s.
70 Supralinear las (red).
71 Triangle of dots (red) above s.
72 Supralinear bka' (red).
73 Supralinear bar (red).
74 Supralinear zhard kyang (red).
75 Triangle of dots (red) above d.
76 Triangle of dots (red) above r.
77 Densapa copyist has ya btags in red.
78 Supralinear bzhug (red).
79 Triangle of dots (red) above d.
80 Supralinear 'di yi (red).
81 Sublinear tsal (red).
82 Supralinear stsal par (red).
83 Triangle of dots (red) above d.
84 Densapa copyist has sublinear r addition (red).
85 A note added in margin: 'di yan rdo ring dngos las bshus shubham/. Densapa copyist has 'di yan rdo ring dngos las bshus, supralinear (red). Note that no further additions or corrections in Densapa manuscript (or by copyist) are evident in text X.
The Skar cung inscription
(Text Y; page 1, recto l. 1 - page 2, recto l. 3)

Strip A, frame 3, page b

{1} [001] *śRṣ86 'phrul gyi lha btsan po khri lde srong brtsan gyi ring87: [002] dam pa'i chos yun du bhrta pa'i gtsig [003] bsun pa/ [004] * / 'phrul gyi lha btsan po mes khri srong btsan gyi [005] ring la: sangyas kyi chos mdzad de: ra sa'i gtsug


86 Supralinear title addition: skar cung rdo rings kyi yi ge:
87 Sublinear insertion: la.
88 Supralinear yang.


Strip A, frame 4, page b


(3) de ltar mi mdzad do: btsan [034] po dbon sras sku chung ngur bzhud pa yan chad: chab srid kyi [035] mnga’ bdag mdzad pa man chad kyang: dge slong las dge ba’i [036] bshes gnyen bskos te:

(4) chos thugs cu chud chud slob cing: bod [037] yongs kyi chos bslob cing spyad pa’i sgo mi bcad/ nam pu yang: bod ya [038] rab man chad/ bod ’bangs las thar par gzud pa’i sgo mi dgag [039] par:

(5) dad pa rma’ las thar par btsgs de: de’i nang na [040] nus pa las: bcomdas kyi ring lu’d rtag tu ’do’ms [041] shing: bcomdas kyi: ring lu’d byed pa’i gtam: chos ’khor [042] nas bya ’o cogi bka’ la yang brta’d te

(6) chos khor93 gyi las dang [043] dbang byed cing: dge ba’i bshes gnyen94 pa bsko ’o: rab tu byung ba [044] rma’ms: nged yab sras kyis

69 Supralinear du, with dots indicating it should be inserted here (but probably intended to be before the mdzad).

90 Long horizontal line is above gcas, not readable as a ’greng bu (but also is not scribe’s usual na ro vowel sign), so may be a mark by an editor noting a possibly misspelt gcas. The likely correct term is gces spras.

91 Sublinear insertion la.

92 Sublinear insertion la.

93 Sublinear insertion ’.

94 Supralinear pyed pa [sic].
Inscription at the tomb of Khri Lde srong brtsan
(also known as 'Phyong rgyas tomb inscription)
(Text Z; page 1, recto l. 1 - verso l. 3)
sras khri lde srong brtsan/ mi’i rje [007] mdzad pa/ lha’i lugs dang ‘thun par
{3} ni mnga’ thang che/ [008] gnam gyi chos dang mtshungs par ni bka’ brtsan te [009] thugs sgam po’i rlabs dang / bka’ lung bzang po’i [010] lugs kyis/ phyi nang gnyis su legs shing / chab srid che [011] ba’i
{4} tshul/ nam du yang mi yongs kyis shes par/ mdo [012] tsam zhig rdo rings la bris pa’o / [vacat] [013] * / btsan po lha sras/ khri lde srong brtsan/ lha ’phrul
{5} gyi [014] zha snga nas/ thugs sgam/ khong yangs/ bka’ brtan/ zung thub/ [015] thugs stobs che’o/ rang nyid de lta bas na/ ’greng gi [016] rje mdzad na yang/ myi dgos pa’i las kyi mu bskyangs pas [017] nang
{6} du ’khrug pa dang myi bde ba med cing / bod yongs kyis [018] khongs la yul phyug ste/ ’bangs skyid do / nam zhar/ dbon [019] sras rgyud kyi chab srid brtan zhing / ’bangs skyid par bya ba’i [020] gdams ngag dang /
{7} phyi’i dgra ’dul ba’i byin gyi dgra thabs [021] sngon med pa’i bzang po bka’ lung du bzhag ste/ yun gyi legs pa [022] yang rgya cher dgongs so / lha ’phrul gyi zha snga nas mtha’ bzhi [023] phyogs brgyad
{8} du bka’ brtsan chab srid che ste/ shar phyogs/ [024] * / rgyal po chen po rgya ’dug pa dang / bar du bka’97 khon byung nas [025] dgrar bsdo ba las/ dang po chab srid phyag du bzhes ma thag du

Strip B, frame 7, page b
{1} bod kyi [026] dmag gis rgya’i yul thog phyogs su drangs pas spa ba’o / [027] de tshun chad kyis chab srid kyi mnga’ bdag mdzad ma thog la bar du [028] lan ’ga’ rgyas chab srid la ma bsdo ste/ rtag du ’jal
{2} [029] dum gsol lo / lho phyogs kyi rgyal po chen por rgya gar ’dug pa yang / [additional note] ’dir bris pa yan la yige phreng nyi m tsa dgu: mi gsal ba man la yig phreng bcu bzhi/ de nas sa ’og tshud pa la ji tsam yod

97 Probably bka’ intended. to form bka’ khon.
[3] [additional note continues] ma bris so / rdo rings 'di'i srid du sa
las mthon pa yan la mtho nyishu rtsa cig/ zheng che ngos la mtho bzhi/
chung ngos la mtho do yod/[1

Inscription at the 'Phyong rgyas bridge
(Text Z: page 1, verso l. 4 - page 2, recto l. 4)

[As the actual inscription is now almost completely illegible, Richardson’s transliterations of the Densapa manuscript are the source for this inscription in Iwao et al. 2009: 13-14. Richardson gave details of adjustments he made to a literal transliteration (1964: 7, 1985: 36), however also at line 17 he read zha for zhal and at line 27 he omitted kyi after chub.

Richardson (1964: 4-5) stated that he based his arrangement by lines on his “fragmentary notes” of the “sporadic fragments” legibly extant on the stone in 1949. He was able to make notes on the fragments down to line 26.]

Strip B, frame 7, page b

{4} [001] */88 lha btsan po yab mes lha dang mi’i [002] rjer gshegs
te chos gtsug lag ni [003] lugs kyis bzang / dbu rmog brtsan po ni [004]
byin du che’o// [005] */ lha btsan po khri srong lde brtsan gyi zha [006]
snga nas

{5} kyang yab myes kyi lugs bzhin [007] lha’i gtsug lag ni ma nyams
gnam [008] sa’i chos dang ni ’thun par mdzad sku [009] yon tan yongs
kyis brjod pa’i yi ge [010] nam zhig rdo rings la bris so// [011] chos

{6} rgyal chen pos phrin las su ci [012] mdzad pa dang: dbu rmog
btsan po byin [013] gchyab srid skyes pa la stogs pa’i [014] gtam gyi
yi ge zhib mo gcig ni gud [015] na yod do// [016] */ ’phrul gyi lha

88 Supralinear title addition: ’phyong rgyas stag rtse zam sna’i rdo rings la/
Strip B, frame 8, page c


The Sino-Tibetan treaty inscription of 821-822 (East face)
( Text Z; page 2, recto l. 5 - page 3, verso l. 6)

Strip B, frame 8, page c


99 Richardson’s 1964 version has du; in the 1985 version his scribe (Ngawang Thondup Narkyid) corrected it to tu.
100 There could be a possible reading of a shad here, rather than a tsheg. However, “gyurd/ pas nang nas” would not make sense. The beginning of line 3 might be read as “sas nang nas” which also does not make sense. So the mark after gyurd is read as a ‘long’ tsheg.
101 Supralinear title addition: ra sa ’phrl sng gi rdo rings la/
102 Sublinear note: ral pa can.
Strip B, frame 7, page c

[1] chu bo chen po 'i ni mgo/ yul mtho: sa gtsangs : [008] zhes: gnam gyi lha las mi'i rgyal por gshegs te/ gtsug lag [009] chen pos ni yun gyi srid btsud/ chos khrims bzang pos ni [010] mi'i lugs bsrang / byams pa'i bka'


[3] de'i phyir/ lho phyogs [014] kyi rgya gar dang: nub phyogs kyi ta zhig dang: byang phyogs kyi gru gu no [015] smel la sogs pa/ g.yas g.yo'i rgyal po sde chen por bya ba kun kyang: [016] 'phrul gyi lha bstan po'i dbu rmog btsan po dang:


103 Sublinear note: gnyeg khris btsan po.
104 Supralinear phyi'i [in dbu can].
105 Sublinear note: phyi'i rgya.
106 Supralinear li [in dbu can].
107 Swastika mark indicating note written below line 8 which supplies (in dbu can) scribe's omission: de'i tang gi srid la brtsa gsum lon rgyal rabs gcig 'og tu (tu placed below 'og).
108 Sublinear note: srong btsan sga'i po.


Strip A, frame 1, page a


\(^{110}\) Sublinear note: *thong bün* [obscure].

\(^{111}\) Sublinear note: *mes ag tshongs*.

\(^{112}\) Sublinear note: possibly a *bsdus yig* for *brtson 'grus*. Richardson saw it as *brtson 'grus* (1978: 144); v. sublinear addition *brtson* below the word *brtul* at strip A, frame 1, page a, line 6.

\(^{113}\) Possible orthographic error for *btsan*.

\(^{114}\) Sublinear note: *sad na led*. 

{5} ’grul na/ mjal dum gyi mdo chen po btsid pa [046] bca ba lta bu yang ma grub/ dbon zhang mol ba’i rjes kyang tshar ma phyin par [047] thugs nongs kyis stsal te/ bar gyi gcuñ rnying pa phran tshegs kyi


{7} nye zhing gnyen la/ [051] ’phrul gyi lha btsigs po khri btsug lde\(^{117}\) btsig gyi zhal snga nas/ mkhyen pa ni [052] ’phrul gyi tshul chags/ mdzad pa ni lha’i lugs dang ’thun te/ bka’ [053] drin chen pos phyi

{8} nang gnyisu snyoms shing: dbu rmog btsigs/ bka’ [054] lung gnyan te/ rgya rje bün bu he’u tig hwang de dang dbon zhang gnyis/ [055] ’phrul gyi dgonz pa ni ’thun/ legs pa’i chab srid ni gcig ste/ [056] bod rgyang

Strip A, frame 2, page a

{1} gnyis rabs khrir/ bde zhing skyid pa’i mjal dums chen po mdzad nas/ [057] rgya yul du ni keng shi’i nub phyogs/ sang shi’i drung du/ bod chen [058] po’i lo’i ming: skyid rtag lo bdun: rgya chen po’i lo’i

{2} ming: [059] cang keng lo dang po/ lcags mo glang gi lo’i dgun zla ra ba’i tshes bcu la/ [060] dkyior la ’dzegs te rgyas btsigs bzung ngo/ bod [061] yul du ni: pho brang lha sa’i shar phyod: sbra stod tshal du bod

{3} chen po’i [062] lo’i ming/ skyid rtag lo brgyad: rgya chen po’i lo’i ming/ cang keng lo [063] gnyis: chu pho stagi lo’i dbyar zla ’bring

\(^{115}\) Sublinear shol with dots leading to sa yang ’jug of lcigs.

\(^{116}\) Sublinear brtson; strip B, frame 7, page c, line 7, has a sublinear note below brtul, which may be brtson ’grus.

\(^{117}\) Sublinear note: ral pa can.
po'i tshes drug la/ dkyior [064] la 'dzeđ te: bod kyis rtsid gzung ngo // rtsid kyi [065]

{4} rdo rings la bris pa 'di yang: bod chen po'i lo'i ming: skyid rtag [066] lo dgu/ rgya chen po'i lo'i ming: cang keng lo gsum: chu mo yos [067] lo'i dpyid zla 'bring po'i tshes bceu bzhi la/ rdo rings la yi ger

{5} bris so / [068] rdo rings 'di bri: 118 ba'i spyan yang: rgya'i pho nya thabs cung [069] shing yod pa do tse'e dang: thabs tsan shan de bû yod pa/ [007] li kri'u la sogs pas byas so / rtsid kyi rdo rings 'di [071] dra cig/ rgya'i

{6} yul keng shir yang btsud so// [Introductory note to West face inscrip tion follows]

The Sino-Tibetan treaty inscription of 821-822 (West face)
(Text Z; page 3, verso l. 6 - page 4, verso l. 4)

Strip A, frame 2, page a

{6} [Introductory note] 'di yan shar ldod kyi yige/ mub ldod la/ [vacat]


118 Supralinear insertion of ' to give 'bri:. The double tseg after 'bri is possibly a scribal error.
119 No chen po. Sublinear 'phrul gyi [in dbu can].
120 Sublinear ral pa can.
Strip A, frame 6, page a

{1} **// yun gnyis kyi leg [017] nyes ci yang mkhyen/ thugs rje chen [018] pos ni bka’ drin gyis dgab pa [019] la phyi nang med pas/ mang po kun bde zhung [020] skyid par bya ba la ni dgongs pa gcig/ [021] yun ring por


{8} so cog tu [058] khyab ste/ bod bod yul na skyid : [059] rgya rgya yul na skyid pa’i srid chen po [060] sbyar nas: rtsigs bcas pa ’di/ [061]

\(^{121}\) Sublinear _brdzangs._
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nam zhar mi 'gyur bar: * dkoog [062] gsum dang: 'pha偶尔 pa rnam་ dang: [063] nyi zla dang: gza’ skar

Strip A, frame 5, page a


{4} [ms. additional note] lho logs la rgya’i blon po’i ming ‘dugol/ byang logs la bod kyi blon po’i ming ‘dug go/ de ltar na rdo rings chu yos la bsugs nas da lta’i chu stagi bar lnga brgya dang dgu beu rtsa dgu ‘gro’ol/

Addendum: Recent research on early Tibetan inscriptions

In addition to these transcriptions uncovered at the Bodleian in 2010, a number of publications on Old Tibetan inscriptions have either appeared subsequent to or were overlooked in Iwao et al. 2009. Since that volume otherwise serves as a comprehensive guide to the bibliography of Old Tibetan inscriptions it may prove useful to the reader to have an inventory of these omissions and potential additions, supplied here in 2013 by one of the co-authors (N.W. Hill) of Iwao et al. 2009.

Regarding omissions, two inscriptions and three publications went unnoticed there. First, an inscribed bell, badly damaged, probably dating to the imperial era was published by Aris (1979: xxvii and page 35.

As for additions, an impressive number of new discoveries and new publications have appeared subsequent to Iwao et al. 2009:

Hazod (2009: 181-184; 2010) demonstrates that the Zhol inscription was originally erected in Sri, and moved to Zhol at the end of the seventeenth century by Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho.

Denwood (2009: 258) draws attention to three short Tibetan inscriptions discovered in Pakistan.

In 2010 a Tibetan bell was discovered in Dpa’ris and has been published by Lha mchog rgyal (2011). The same bell is treated by Pa sangs dbang ’dus (2011).

Alexander & van Schaik (2011) present a stone carving of Maitreya in Ladakh with accompanying inscription.


Although the rock inscriptions of Alchi are not newly discovered, Takeuchi (2012) provides documentation of them exceeding in depth and scope what has been known heretofore.

An eight-folio manuscript on Tibetan stone inscriptions was reproduced by the Dpal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib ’jug khang (2011).

Papers treating previously known inscriptions, especially with an eye to establishing their date and authenticity, include Walter & Beckwith 2010, Uebach 2010, and Imaeda 2012. Studies treating the background or interpretation of known inscriptions include Hill 2013 and Iwao 2012.

Both Pa sangs dbang ’dus (2011) and Chab ’gag rta mgrin (2012) have published an edition of the entire corpus of Old Tibetan inscriptions, including a number of inscriptions not treated in Iwao et al. 2009.
Chab 'gag rta mgrin (2012) also includes Tibetan inscriptions from later historical periods.

Finally, Tashi Tsering (2012) published a collection of inscription transcriptions in facsimile as a celebration of Amnye Machen Institute’s 20th anniversary. It includes monochrome reproductions of Densapa’s original manuscript, with the Rkong po inscription transcription reproduced in colour to show the red ink additions. Also the publication includes an introductory essay by Tashi Tsering (pp. 51-72).

References


(Pa tshab) Pa sangs dbang ’dus 2011. Spu rgyal bod kyi rdDo brchos yi ge phyogs bsgrigs kyi ma yig dag bshes dang de’i tshig ’grel dwangs sang gangs chu. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang.


