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THE PRAYER, THE PRIEST AND THE TSENPO:  
AN EARLY BUDDHIST NARRATIVE FROM DUNHUANG

SAM VAN SCHAİK AND LEWIS DONEY

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Historical writing in Tibet has been, by and large, a religious tradition. Tibetan histories have focused on the transmission of religious practices ever since the anonymous ‘treasure’ histories began to circulate in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>2</sup> These wove together Buddhist cosmology, the history of Buddhism in India, and semi-legendary accounts of Tibet’s imperial past, creating a grand narrative that established Tibet at the centre of Buddhist history. The major works of Tibetan religious historians from the twelfth century onwards, while perhaps more recognisable as histories, were also religious accounts of the ‘arising of the dharma’ (*chos ’byung*).<sup>3</sup> The authors of these works tended to begin their histories

<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to thank Brandon Dotson, Kazushi Iwao, Birgit Kellner and Helmut Krasser for their comments on aspects of this article, and the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK).

<sup>2</sup> These *gter ma* or treasure histories, the *Bka’ chems ka khol ma* and the *Ma ni bka’ ’bum*, claim to have been written and buried in the seventh century by the dharma-king Srong brtsan Sgam po; on these texts see Dan Martin’s major bibliography (1997), entries no. 4 and 16 respectively.

<sup>3</sup> As Leonard van der Kuijp (1996: 46) points out, the first *chos ’byung* still extant today was the *Chos la ’jugs pa’i sgo*, completed in 1167/8 by Bsod nams rtse mo. This narrative history, which charts the rise of dharma from the time of the Buddha to the twelfth century, lingers the longest over the religion’s founder. Later that century, Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer wrote the very different *Chos ’byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi’i bcud*. It is much longer than the *Chos la ’jugs pa’i sgo*, and devotes more time to the Tibetan imperial

with what they knew of Buddhism in India, followed by the narrative of Tibet's conversion to Buddhism during its imperial period of the seventh to ninth centuries. These narratives end with a brief account of the dark period, or 'time of fragmentation' (*sil bu'i dus*), which lasted from the mid ninth to late tenth century, and an account of the Buddhist renaissance, the so-called 'later diffusion' (*phyi dar*), that followed.

In constructing their narratives, Tibet's religious historians had to rely on a variety of sources, but they tended not to make these explicit. Thus the sources of Tibet's religious narratives are not at all clear to us. On the one hand, we have the *Dbā' bzhed*, an account of the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet during the reign of the eighth-century imperial king, or tsenpo (*btsan po*), Khri Srong lde brtsan. Quite how old this source may be is a matter of debate, but it certainly contains parts that go back to the ninth or tenth centuries, as a recent discovery of related Dunhuang fragments has shown.<sup>4</sup> However, since the *Dbā' bzhed* focuses on the reign of Khri Srong lde brtsan, it can only have been one source among many.

period than any other. Nyang ral's *chos 'byung* contains a short transmission history, apparently based on a *chos 'byung* by the eleventh-century Rnying ma pa Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po (see Germano 2002). Rong zom's history is no longer extant, but apparently only describes "the transmission of 'old tantras' into Tibet in imperial and early post-imperial times" (Martin 1997: 25). Other twelfth-century *chos 'byung* include She'u Lo tsa ba's transmission history for the Lam 'bras teachings of the Sa skya pas, as well as those written by the Bka' gdams pa master Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge and his disciple Gtsang nag pa Brtson 'grus seng ge (Martin 1997: 29). From then on *chos 'byung* proliferated in Tibet, continuing the different trajectories begun by these twelfth-century exemplars.

<sup>4</sup> The two Dunhuang fragments contain the story of the abbot Śāntarakṣita's arrival at the court of Khri Srong lde brtsan, displaying a clear textual relationship to the *Dbā' bzhed* version of the story (see van Schaik and Iwano 2008). The dating of the *Dbā' bzhed* and the other versions of the same narrative, such as the *Sba bzhed*, is discussed in Pasang and Diemberger 2000: xiv-xv, 11–14.

On the other hand we have the many manuscripts drawn from the so-called ‘library cave’ in Dunhuang. These manuscripts date from the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang (in the late eighth century) through to the closing of the cave at the beginning of the eleventh century. Foremost among this group are the year-by-year royal records known as the *Old Tibetan Annals* and the poetic account of imperial Tibet known as the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.<sup>5</sup> While these texts, or others like them, were clearly important for the narrative of the imperial period in the later *chos ’byung* genre they are not primarily Buddhist works. We must assume, then, that a variety of sources used by the early Buddhist historians are no longer available to us.

The manuscript presented in this article, PT 149, contains a brief historical narrative that illustrates the change from imperial to religious history in Tibet. As we shall see in the next section, the text probably dates from sometime between the late ninth and late tenth centuries, within Tibet’s ‘time of fragmentation.’ This period is often depicted in traditional and modern scholarship as a ‘dark age;’ indeed, owing to the paucity of historical literature from the period, it has been difficult to identify the sources for the early *chos ’byung* accounts. Thus the narrative in PT 149 might be helpful in this regard; though it cannot be identified as a direct source for any of the extant Buddhist histories, it may be considered the kind of source that historians of the eleventh century onward would have utilized. PT 149 is actually the narrative setting for a single Buddhist text, a prayer known as the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> On the Tibetan historical sources from Dunhuang, see Uray 1979. *The Old Tibetan Annals* are found in the following manuscripts: PT 1288, IOL Tib J 750 and Or.8212/187. *The Old Tibetan Chronicle* is found in PT 1287, with associated fragments in PT 1144 and IOL Tib J 1375, and a related genealogy in PT 1286. Images of most of these manuscripts can be found on the IDP website (<http://idp.bl.uk>) and transcriptions are available from the OTDO website (<http://otdo.aa.tufts.ac.jp>).

<sup>6</sup> This translates roughly as ‘the aspirational prayer of the practice of [Sa-manta]bhadra,’ to which is sometimes appended *rāja*, so as to read: ‘the king

This narrative, like the later Tibetan Buddhist histories, begins in India, and continues through to the imperial period in Tibet, specifically the period of the reign of Tsenpo Khri Srong lde brtsan (r. c.754–797?). Also in line with most of the later histories, but unlike the *Old Tibetan Annals* or *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, PT 149’s narrative focuses on religious lineage rather than royal succession.

The manuscript contains the story of Sudhana’s<sup>7</sup> quest for the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*, which leads him to the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. Obtaining the prayer from the latter, he is able to reach the spiritual level (*bhūmi*) of ‘utter joy.’ The scene of the narrative then shifts to Tibet, where the prayer is translated into Tibetan as part of the great translation project undertaken during the reign of Tsenpo Khri Srong lde brtsan. The tsenpo’s priest, Dba’ Dpal byams, has a dream, which the Indian abbot Bodhisattva (known in other historical sources as Śāntarakṣita) interprets. The dream indicates that Dba’ Dpal byams must recite the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* for three days and nights. Dba’ Dpal byams fails to uphold this commitment, and so asks Khri Srong lde brtsan if he can go to a more spiritually conducive place. With the tsenpo’s blessing he travels towards the caves of ’Ching pu, where he meets two Tibetan monks who have experienced omens indicating that they should meet up with Dba’ Dpal byams. The three travel together and, reciting the prayer, ascend to the pure land of Sukhāvati.

of aspirational prayers, that of the practice of [Samanta]bhadra’ In PT 149 the prayer is first referred to as “the king of aspirational prayers” (recto l. 1), but then three times as “the aspirational prayer” (recto ll. 1, 5 and 8). We have chosen the latter title for use here, since it is shorter and more often attested in our text. The text is found in the Derge and Peking editions of the *Bka’ ’gyur* (P 716, 1038 and D 1095). An English translation by Jesse Fenton (2002) based on the Tibetan is available.

<sup>7</sup> Not to be confused with the hero of the romantic Sudhana (Manoharā) Jātaka (Jaini 1966), which also proved popular in Tibet (see Stein 1972: 276–278).

## 2. The Manuscript

PT 149 is a single folio in the pecha format, measuring 47 cm width by 8.6 cm height.<sup>8</sup> The page has red margins, and no pagination, suggesting that it was originally a singular item as we have it, rather than part of a manuscript text collection. The scribe has written rather densely, fitting eight lines on the recto side and six on the verso. This little manuscript is in good condition and gives a pleasing general impression, as Marcelle Lalou noted in her catalogue: “Beau papier et jolie écriture.”<sup>9</sup>

### *The scribe*

The scribe who wrote PT 149 has characteristic handwriting that can be identified in a number of other manuscripts. This identification is based on a method of forensic handwriting analysis adapted to the conventions of Tibetan manuscripts, which has been discussed elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> In brief, the method involves breaking down the handwritings into units of individual graphs (the written letters that appear on the page) and identifying sufficient similarities at the graph level to produce a convincing identification. The identification of such similarities is experience-based, in that the examiner must know which graphic forms are likely to be idiographic, and which allographic. While allographic forms are learnt variations in writing styles, idiographic forms are those that are specific to a given writer, and not under his or her conscious control. A series of

<sup>8</sup> The pecha (*dpe cha*) format is originally derived from the Indian palm leaf folio, which is much longer than high. This format, which was associated with sacred Buddhist scriptures, was transferred to paper manuscripts in Central Asian states like Khotan, with little change except that larger pages could be made using paper instead of palm leaves. This Central Asian style was then adopted in Tibet during the imperial period. The form is often known by the Hindi word *pothi*, derived from Sanskrit *pustaka*.

<sup>9</sup> Lalou 1939: 49.

<sup>10</sup> See Dalton, Davis and van Schaik 2007.

benchmarks may then be established as a basis for comparing one example of handwriting with another.

The handwriting of PT 149's scribe can be recognised by certain general features, the letter-forms being (i) compact, (ii) rounded, (iii) somewhat 'clotted' with ink at the points where the pen has come down or changed direction. More specific benchmarks include: (i) a very small, almost vestigial *ra btags*, (ii) a *tha* with a tiny, circular lower half, (iii) a *cha* which has lost not only the head but also the vertical line connecting the lower part to the head. Such features, while none of them unique, when found together are persuasive evidence of the same hand.

In addition, there are a number of other features that may not be specific to this scribe, but are found in most manuscripts with this handwriting and therefore are part of the 'family resemblance' within this manuscript group. These include (i) the use of double circles and *shad* to fill space left by incomplete lines of text at the end of a manuscript, (ii) an opening curl (*mgo yig*) followed by a *shad*, two dots and another *shad*, (iii) a recognisable *mise en page* comprising red margins, no obvious guidelines, and an unusually dense 7–8 lines per page.

With these criteria in mind, we can identify a group of manuscripts written in the same handwriting as PT 149, which includes:

- PT 89: two texts from the *Ratnakūṭa*, mainly dealing with Buddhist cosmology.
- PT 322: a prayer to the 'magical net' tantras in general, and the *Guhyagarbhatantra* in particular, that emphasises the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*).
- PT 808: a Chan treatise on the three jewels.
- PT 958: an extract attributed to the *Abhidharmasūtra*, again on Buddhist cosmology.
- IOL Tib J 597: a history of the Central Asian state of Khotan known as *The Prophecy of the Khotanese Arhat(s)* (*li yul gyi dgra bcom pas lung bstan pa*). This text seems to have been

quite popular around Dunhuang. IOL Tib J 597 is actually a copy from another manuscript version of the same text (IOL Tib J 598), which may well date back to the mid ninth century.<sup>11</sup>

PT 322 and 808 belong to a wider group of manuscripts on Chan, tantric Buddhism, and a combination of the two, which have been discussed by Sam van Schaik and Jacob Dalton.<sup>12</sup> The other three manuscripts are thematically more closely related to our PT 149. The emphasis in PT 89 and 958 on Mahāyānasūtras bears comparison with the role of PT 149 as a narrative setting (*gleng gzhi*) for the *Āryabhadracaryāprañidhāna* from the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*.

*The Prophecy of the Khotanese Arhat(s)* in IOL Tib J 547, though framed as the speech of the Buddha with its contemporary subject-matter presented as prophecy, touches on Tibetan history in its account of how the monks of Khotan were given refuge by the Tibetan king. There is common ground here with the religio-historical narrative contained in PT 149, which extends from the journey of Sudhana in India (the narrative framework of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*) to the activities of the Tibetan tsenpo and his preceptor.

<sup>11</sup> This text, one of five related prophetic scriptures concerning Khotan, also exists in another manuscript version, IOL Tib J 601, which is closer to the versions preserved in four different editions of the Tibetan *Bka' 'gyur* (Personal communication from Tsuguhito Takeuchi). Furthermore, Pelliot chinois 2139 contains a Chinese translation of the text by the Dunhuang-based translator 'Go Chos grub; this may have been based on IOL Tib J 598. Géza Uray gives the dates of Chos grub as 770–c.858, and states that the text cannot date to later than 858 (Uray 1979: 289). There is a translation of this text in Thomas 1935: 3–87 (where he confusingly refers to it as “The Prophecy of the Li Country,” which is actually the title of another of the Khotanese prophecies). See also Emmerick 1967.

<sup>12</sup> See van Schaik and Dalton 2004.

*Dating the manuscript*

The handwriting in the manuscript does not correspond to any of the styles known to have been used in the period of the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang, which ended in the middle of the ninth century. Instead, its general stylistic features correspond to cursive writing found in many of the tenth-century Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>13</sup> So we can tentatively date the manuscript to the tenth century. This still leaves the question of the date of the text itself.

One of the other manuscripts in this handwriting group contains *The Prophecy of the Khotanese Arhat(s)*. As we mentioned above, this is a copy of an earlier manuscript, which we also have in the Dunhuang collections. The earlier manuscript probably dates from the mid ninth century, and *The Prophecy of the Khotanese Arhat(s)* is therefore at least that old, and possibly older. Unfortunately the text found in PT 149 exists only in this single manuscript version. However, there are some indications that it may be a copy of an earlier text. These are archaic features in the text itself.

In terms of orthography, the ‘strong *da*’ (*da drag*) and ‘supporting *a*’ (*a rten*) appear frequently. These features are traditionally held to have been removed from the official script in the second revision of Tibetan orthography, which was probably enforced in 812.<sup>14</sup> Though they are found in manuscripts and inscriptions after

<sup>13</sup> Many Dunhuang manuscripts that can be proved to post-date the Tibetan occupation are discussed in Takeuchi 1990 and 2004. For a preliminary study of the differences between imperial and post-imperial writing styles in Dunhuang, see van Schaik forthcoming.

<sup>14</sup> See *Li shi'i gur khang*, pp. 2–3. Note that the author also considers the *ya* superscribed to *ma* to have been removed at this time, a feature that is nevertheless consistently present throughout the Dunhuang manuscripts. The standardization of 812 is traditionally said to be the second of three revisions of the Tibetan written language, and the one that resulted in a detailed royal edict, the *Sgra byor bam po gnyis pa*, which has been preserved intact. There is some disagreement between the traditional histories on whether this second standardization occurred in the reign of Khri Lde srong brtsan (r.799–

this date, they are less common, and are usually absent in tenth-century manuscripts that are not copies of earlier texts. In terms of language, the text contains a number of formulations that are characteristic of the documents originating in the Tibetan imperial period, such as *btsan po'i snyan du gsol* for a petition to the tsenpo. The phrase *snyan du gsol* is found in several Old Tibetan texts, and the specific phrase *btsan po'i snyan du gsol* appears in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.<sup>15</sup>

The orthography of the title tsenpo (*btsan po*) and the name Khri Srong lde brtsan in PT 149 follow the conventions of documents from the imperial period. These conventions, strictly adhered to at the time, necessitate that the name element is spelled *brtsan*, and the role *btsan p(h)o*. The spelling *brtsan po* is only seen in imperial-period sources in the specific phrase *dbu rmog brtsan po* or variants based thereon.<sup>16</sup> The orthography *btsan p(h)o*, on the other hand, is seen repeated hundreds of times in these sources. Conversely, we find the name element spelled *brtsan* in the vast

815) or Khri Gtsug lde brtsan (r.815–841). Most of the later sources place it in the latter's reign; however, the earliest source to give a date, Bsod nam rtse mo's *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo* (p. 343-2-6), places it in the reign of the earlier tsenpo, and *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* of Dpa' bo Gtsug lag 'phreng ba places it more specifically in a dragon year in the reign of Khri Lde srong brtsan (also known as Sad na legs), which can only be 812 (see Sørensen 1994: 412 n. 1431). This date accords nicely with the orthographic differences between the two inscriptions at the Zhwa'i lha khang, dated to 805/6 and 812. Recent scholarship dates the compilation of the full *Sgra byor bam po gnyis pa* to 814, a few years after this reform, though earlier versions are found in the Tabo manuscripts (see the excellent survey in Scherrer-Schaub 2002). On the orthographic features of early Tibetan manuscripts in general, see Scherrer-Schaub and Bonani 2002.

<sup>15</sup> PT 1287: l. 323 and IOL Tib J 1375: r.2.

<sup>16</sup> PT 1287: ll. 332, 387 (*dbu rmog brtsan po*); IOL Tib J 751: 38r.2–3 (*dbu bang rmog brtsan po, dmag mang po'i mthu brtsan po*); 'Phyong rgyas bridge inscription, ll. 3, 12 and 19 (*dbu rmong brtsan po*) and the east face of the Lhasa Treaty Pillar, ll. 16 and 49 (*dbu rmog brtsan po, dmag brtsan po*).

majority of cases in manuscripts and inscriptions from the imperial period.

Of course, in PT 149 these could all be conscious archaisms adopted to give the text an authentic flavour, and we cannot use them to definitively place the text in the imperial period. Yet there is no doubt that it belongs to the earliest stratum of Tibetan religious history, when the events of the imperial period, especially those from Khri Srong lde brtsan's reign, were being reformulated as a specifically Buddhist narrative.

*The king of aspirational prayers*

The title of the text is *The Narrative Setting of the First Teaching of this Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhānarāja*. The designation of the prayer as “this” suggests that the narrative setting was originally included as an introduction to the prayer. Importantly though, our manuscript seems to stand alone. It is a single folio with no pagination, and though the text does not fill the verso folio, leaving some blank lines, the prayer does not follow it. Therefore it is possible that our scribe copied the narrative from a manuscript in which it preceded the prayer itself.

In later Tibetan Buddhism the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* is one of the most widely known and most frequently recited prayers, whether in monastic or lay contexts.<sup>17</sup> It was already one of the more popular Buddhist texts in Tibetan by the ninth century, when several works related to it were included in the catalogue of the li-

<sup>17</sup> Stephan Beyer stressed the importance of the prayer in Tibetan culture and wrote that a copy of the prayer “has adorned the house altar of every family in the Tibetan-speaking world.” (1973: 188). Matthew Kapstein is also of the opinion that it is “perhaps the most widely known prayer in Tibet.” (Kapstein 2000: 97). David Gellner and Mark Tatz have mentioned the use of the prayer in funerary contexts in Newar and Tibetan Buddhism (see Gellner 1992: 107 and Tatz 1977: 156). There is also a version of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* in the Bon po canon named *G.yung drung bzang por* (sic) *spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po* (see Karmay and Nagano 2001: no. 285.7).

brary of Lhan kar monastery.<sup>18</sup> Among the Dunhuang manuscripts there are over forty copies of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* in Tibetan: either on their own or in collections of several texts.<sup>19</sup> It is likely that these collections were assembled for group recitation and ritual practice. These collections strongly suggest a ritual function for the prayer, as they often contain ritual *dhāraṇī* texts like the *Pūjāmeghadhāraṇī*. There are also Tibetan translations of Indic commentaries on the prayer, including one by Bhadrapaṇa that was translated by Jñānagarbha and Dpal brtsegs.<sup>20</sup> The latter translator is also mentioned in our manuscript.

An indication of the importance of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* for the cult of the tsenpos is found in PT 134, a prayer on the accession to the throne of U'i dum brtan (better known as Glang dar ma). This prayer is based on the seven-branch structure that derives

<sup>18</sup> The prayer is listed as *Bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam kyi rgyal po* in the “various aspirational prayers” section of the *Lhan kar ma*, where it is no. 470. The commentaries listed in this catalogue are a *Bzang po spyod pa'i rgya cher 'grel pa*, attributed to the ācārya Śākya gshes gnyen (no. 559), a *Bzang po spyod pa'i 'grel pa*, attributed to the ācārya Yon tan 'od (no. 560), a *Bzang po spyod pa'i 'grel pa*, attributed to the ācārya Phyogs kyi glang po (no. 561), a *Bzang po spyod pa'i 'grel pa*, attributed to the ācārya Rgyan bzang po (no. 562), and a mnemonic (*brjed byang*) on the *Bzang po spyod pa'i 'grel pa* drawn from four different commentaries by Ye shes sde (no. 563). See Lalou 1953 for a brief record, and Herrmann-Pfandt 2008 for full details and references to the canonical versions. For a discussion of the name of the monastery, see Herrmann-Pfandt 2008: xvi, n. 28. Here we have opted for the version of the name found in PT 1085: Lhan kar.

<sup>19</sup> There are also several copies in Chinese. The first complete Chinese translations of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* were made by Amoghavajra (Bu kong jin gang 不空金剛) and Prajñā (Ban ruo 般若) in the eighth century. See Dessein 2003 for a survey of the literary history of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* in China. Given the importance of Chinese culture in Dunhuang, we should not ignore the possibility of a Chinese influence on the popularity of the Tibetan version.

<sup>20</sup> IOL Tib J 146. This commentary is also found in the *Bstan 'gyur* (P 5515), where the text is attributed to the same author and translators.

from the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*, which is also mentioned here by name.<sup>21</sup> Another early example of the use of the prayer is the bell at Yer pa, just outside Lhasa, dating to the first half of the ninth century.<sup>22</sup> In addition, certain early histories, including the *Bka' chems ka khol ma*, mention an inscription of part of the prayer that was made at Ldan ma brag, along with an image of Maitreya, when the Chinese princess was being escorted to Lhasa to marry Srong brtsan Sgam po (618–649).<sup>23</sup> However, Per Sørensen is of the opinion that the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* would not have been known to the Tibetans during the reign of Srong brtsan Sgam po. Another early history, the *Me tog snying po* of Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer, states that the prayer was translated a century later, to increase the lifespan of Tsenpo Khri Srong lde brtsan (742–c.800).<sup>24</sup> This latter testimony resonates with the use of the prayer in PT 134 as part of the cult of the tsenpos.

<sup>21</sup> PT 134: l. 19. See the study of this manuscript in Scherrer-Schaub 2000. The prayer is also discussed in Yamaguchi 1996.

<sup>22</sup> Richardson 1985: 144–145.

<sup>23</sup> *Bka' chems ka khol ma*: 185.18–186.1: *khams su ldan ma'i brag sngon rtsi dkar can la rgyas pa'i dbu dum dang / bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam 'bur du btod pa brkos nas bris /*

The same account appears in other early histories; see Sørensen 1994: 240–241 for a discussion. A rock carving and inscription at Ldan ma brag were discovered in 1983, and are discussed in Heller 1985. As Heller and Sørensen point out, these are not to be identified with the ones mentioned in the histories, as the carved deity is Vairocana, not Maitreya, and the inscription is not the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*. Moreover the rediscovered carving and inscription probably date to the reign of Khri Srong lde brtsan.

<sup>24</sup> *Chos 'byung me tog snying po*: 336.17. Later the *Chos 'byung me tog snying po* identifies a version of the prayer, written in gold, held in the Dge (rgyas) bye ma gling temple built in the reign of Khri Srong lde brtsan (417.14).

### 3. The story

Though PT 149 is not to be regarded as a credible source for the life or times of Khri Srong lde brtsan, it is an invaluable example of how his image began to be used in post-imperial times. It is also the sole known extant version of a unique historical contextualisation of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*.<sup>25</sup> Unlike PT 134, this narrative does not emphasise the power of the prayer to give long life to its royal patron. Instead it stresses the thematic unity between the Indian and Tibetan stages of the prayer's transmission. Both parts of the transmission reference the social hierarchy of spiritual friends, in India and Tibet respectively. This was perhaps in order to raise the status of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* in a post-imperial Tibet, where Buddhism had survived the fall of its dynastic patrons.

#### *The Indian narrative*

The first third of the text is a condensed version of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* narrative, describing how 102 spiritual friends (*dge ba'i bshes gnyen*) aid Sudhana (*nor bzangs*) on his search for the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*. None of the available Sanskrit, Chinese or Tibetan versions describe this many spiritual friends, the traditional number being 53.<sup>26</sup> The *Sba bzhed* mentions a wall frieze of the Sudhana story, including 102 spiritual friends, in the great courtyard (*'khor sa chen mo*) at the Bsam yas monastery built by Khri

<sup>25</sup> We have so far only found *gleng gzhi* in a minority of later commentaries on the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*: for example the eighteenth-century *nam shes* of Ye shes bstan pa'i sgron me (Chandra 1963) or the twentieth-century *bzang spyod 'bru 'grel* of A 'dzom rgyal sras rig 'dzin gyur med rdo rje. These *gleng gzhi* only give the Indian narrative, and their descriptions differ from our narrative in following the traditional list of 53, not 102, spiritual friends (*dge ba'i bshes gnyen*).

<sup>26</sup> See Osto 2004: 29–33 for reference to the Chinese, Tibetan and Indian versions, and his Appendices for lists of the 53 spiritual friends in Sanskrit and Tibetan. Fontein (1967: 1 and *passim*) also lists 53 spiritual friends in iconographical representations around Buddhist Asia.

Srong lde brtsan.<sup>27</sup> We have, as yet, been unable to verify whether such a frieze existed or still exists in some form; but it seems that what we have in PT 149 is a version of that variant of the popular Sudhana story.

Other variants exist, including an early Tibetan versified retelling from Dunhuang called *The History of the Cycle of Birth and Death* (*Skye shi 'khor lo'i lo rgyus*). The *Cycle of Birth and Death* describes 27 spiritual friends, who differ in name and order from Indian tradition. The *Cycle of Birth and Death* is apparently based on older textual sources, which suggests that this narrative was already widely known in post-imperial Tibet.<sup>28</sup> The popularity of the Sudhana narrative was not confined to the Dunhuang area either; the narrative is well-represented in both textual and visual culture from the imperial and post-imperial periods. As we saw, there may at one time have been frescos at Bsam yas depicting Sudhana's visits to 102 spiritual friends. Still surviving today are a series of wooden panels at the Jo khang temple, carved in the Nepalese Licchavi style and possibly dating to as early as the seventh century. These panels, though incomplete, appear to depict Sudhana's audi-

<sup>27</sup> *Sba bzhed* 45–46: *de nas 'khor sa chen mo bskor te rnam par snang mdzad ngan song sbyong ba'i dkyil 'khor du bzhengs so / [46] mda' yab kyi ngos gsum na rnam par snang mdzad la sogs pa rigs lnga'i lder tsho zhal phyir lta ba / nang du mdo sdong po brgyan pa'i rgyud ris dang / tshong dpon gyi bu bzang pos dge ba'i bshes gnyen brgya rtsa gnyis bsten pa bris so /*

<sup>28</sup> The nine Dunhuang fragments, discovered and pieced together by Yoshiro Imaeda, are: PT 218; 219; 220; 366; 367; IOL Tib J 99; 345; and vol. 69 fol. 17 (=IOL Tib J 1302) (Imaeda 2007: 114). Steinkellner concludes, following de Jong's discovery of sources for some of the quotes found in these fragments, that a "merely oral knowledge of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* can be ruled out because [the *Cycle of Birth and Death*] copies words and phrases of a clearly textual kind" (Steinkellner 1995: 18–19). The list of spiritual friends (Steinkellner 1995: 128) includes neither Mañjuśrī nor Samantabhadra, but does include a final scene set in Magadha, and the lauding of a text (the *Uṣṇīṣavijayādhāraṇī*) that is missing from the end of the narrative (Imaeda 2007: 132–33) – two features also present in PT 149.

ences with several teachers, among other subjects.<sup>29</sup> From the post-imperial period, the Tibetan Tabo inscriptions present a version of the story which seems to have the traditional 53 spiritual friends, despite a gap in the extant panels from the 34<sup>th</sup> to the 39<sup>th</sup> spiritual friend (inclusive).<sup>30</sup> It is likely that PT 149 represents a similar Tibetan reformulation of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* narrative. We must also consider that it may have been influenced by popular Chinese narratives of Sudhana (Ch. Shancai 善財) or other Central Asian sources.<sup>31</sup> Bearing in mind that the scribe of our manuscript also copied *The Prophecy of the Khotanese Arhat(s)* we should also consider the possibility of influence from a lost Khotanese version of the story.

Where it does go into detail, the PT 149 narrative displays a mix of elements from the traditional story and the *Cycle of Birth and Death* reworking, with its own unique take on the spiritual friends' speeches. Traditionally, Sudhana is searching for Samantabhadra's code of conduct (*samantabhadracarī*). He visits many teachers, each of whom bestows a valuable teaching. His search ends after he is taken home to Dhanyākara by Mañjuśrī, questions Samantabhadra and gains enlightenment. In the *Cycle of Birth and Death*, the protagonist, here named Rin chen, tries to gain peace and happiness (*bde zhing skyid pa*) for his dead father. All of the teachers he visits are unable to help him, until the last, Rgya mtsho rgyal mtshan, instructs him to travel to Magadha, where Śākyamuni praises the *Uṣṇīṣavijayādhāraṇī* as the path to enlightenment.

<sup>29</sup> See Heller 2004.

<sup>30</sup> The Tabo inscriptions, studied by Ernst Steinkellner, may well be “the earliest example extant of a ‘local’ Kanjur text” (Steinkellner 1995: 7), differing from extant *Bka’ ’gyur* versions. Steinkellner believes the inscriptions are nevertheless based on an older text, retaining Old Tibetan orthographic features (Steinkellner 1995: 14–17 and Appendix 1, 108–111).

<sup>31</sup> On the history of the translation and circulation of the prayer in China, see Dessein 2003.

PT 149 follows the traditional *Gaṇḍavyūha* narrative in naming its protagonist Sudhana (*nor bzangs*), but his quest is specifically the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*, rather than the more abstract concept of the conduct of Samantabhadra. Unlike the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, but similarly to the *Cycle of Birth and Death*, none of the teachers he visits is able to help him, except for the very last. Our text is also similar to the *Cycle of Birth and Death* in that the last scene is in Magadha, and ends with an exhortation to the recitation of a text (the *praṇidhāna*) that is then (surprisingly) not included after the narrative.

Lastly, PT 149 contains certain elements not, to our knowledge, seen anywhere else. For example, we have not found the phrase “I don’t know [the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*], and since I don’t, you cannot be destined to be my student” used in any other versions of the spiritual friends’ speeches. The mixture of elements in this part of PT 149 suggests that this narrative is either a précis of a no longer extant early Tibetan version of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, or is influenced by popular versions of the Sudhana narrative circulation in the ninth to tenth century – not only in the Tibetan language, but also in Chinese and perhaps Khotanese as well.

### *Dbā’ Dpal byams*

The remaining two thirds of PT 149 tell the story of how Dbā’ Dpal byams, the commitment holder (*thugs dam pa*) to Tsenpo Khri Srong lde brtsan, received and passed on the transmission of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* in Tibet. This is evidently the same figure as the Dbā’ Dpal dbyangs to whom the *Dbā’ bzhed* accords an eminent role in the establishment of monastic Buddhism in Tibet. There, Dbā’ Dpal dbyangs is the first Tibetan to be ordained as a monk (his previous, non-Buddhist name is given as Dbā’ Lha btsan), is given high office (*ring lugs*) by the tsenpo, and plays a

central role as an exponent of the gradual path in the Bsam yas debate.<sup>32</sup>

The official title of Dba' Dpal byams in our manuscript, 'commitment holder' (*thugs dam pa*), is not found in other sources. It may be related to the particular focus in our manuscript on the religious commitment (*thugs dam*) to the recitation of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*. It is this commitment that is passed on from Śāntarakṣita to Dba' Dpal byams and from Dba' Dpal byams to his two Tibetan disciples. The transmission of the dharma in early Tibet is described elsewhere in the Dunhuang manuscripts in terms of commitments; for example, in *The Dharma that Fell from Heaven*, the kings Srong brtsan Sgam po and Khri Srong lde brtsan are said to have "taken up the commitments" (*thugs dam bzhes*) and spread them among the people of Tibet (see the full quotation below). Further examples from the same period of the use of *thugs dam* to signify 'religious commitment' are found in a collection of letters of passage, which make a request to Buddhist priests of local monasteries to look after a Chinese pilgrim monk. The phrase "please consider your commitments" (*thugs dam la dgongs par gsol*) there appears in three separate letters.<sup>33</sup>

The name of Dba' Dpal dbyangs is also found in the lineage of 'spiritual friends' (*dge ba'i bshes gnyen*) teaching at the Bsam yas and 'Phrul snang temples, as listed in the manuscript IOL Tib J 689/2.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, there is also an overlap between other figures in the lineage of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* in PT 149, and

<sup>32</sup> See Pasang and Diemberger 2000. The relevant pages of the text are 14b, 18b, 20a and 22b respectively. There is another example of the correspondence of the name elements *byams* and *dbyangs* in IOL Tib J 470, a version of the *Rdo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan*, in which the author's name, which is given as Gnyan Dpal dbyangs in other sources, appears in the colophon as Slob dpon Dpal byams.

<sup>33</sup> IOL Tib J 754, letters 1, 3 and 5.

<sup>34</sup> IOL Tib J 689/2 fol. 16b. See Karmay 1988:78–80 for a translation and transliteration, and see Uebach 1990 for further discussion.

the list of spiritual friends in IOL Tib J 689/2, as illustrated in the following table:

<b>Abbatial succession in IOL Tib J 689/2</b>	<b>Lineage in PT 149</b>
Mkhan po Bo de sva dva	Mkhan po Bo de sva dva
Dba' btsun pa Yes she ( <i>sic</i> ) dbang po	
Dba' Dpal dbyangs	Dba' Dpal byams
Ngan lam Rgyal ba mchog dbyangs <sup>35</sup>	Ngan lam Rgyal mchog skyong

As with the abbatial succession, the narrative subtext of PT 149 gives the Indian abbot the most authority, both in the interpretation of dreams and the recommendation to recite the *Ārya-bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*. The narrative suggests the place of Dba' Dpal byams in the middle of this succession, since his practice, at the abbot Bodhisattva's behest, is of benefit to Ngan lam Rgyal mchog, who seems to be unaware of the prayer beforehand. Unlike the Indian abbot (and the tsenpo), Dba' Dpal byams is presented as a fallible figure in PT 149. He is unable to interpret the significance of his own dream, and fails at first to uphold the commitments that the dream entails. Yet Dba' Dpal byams is also the central figure who holds the narrative together, and the way the text relates the dreams, spiritual welfare and journey of Dba' Dpal byams may be seen as a forerunner of the conventions of later biographical literature in Tibet.<sup>36</sup>

Structurally, the text makes Dba' Dpal byams equivalent to Sudhana himself. By placing the Indian and Tibetan narratives next

<sup>35</sup> The final syllable differs between the two manuscripts: *dbyangs* in IOL Tib J 689/2 and *skyong* in PT 149.

<sup>36</sup> Though there is at this time no general study of the role of biography or hagiography in Tibetan culture, see Robinson 1996 and the essays in Penny 2002. On the conventions of autobiography in Tibet, see Gyatso 1998.

to each other in chronological order, PT 149 becomes a history of the transmission of *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* from India to Tibet. However, the story does not establish an unbroken lineage between India and Tibet, which is one of the functions of many later lineage histories. It seems rather to legitimise the Tibetan lineage by a kind of mimesis with the more well-known Indian story of the prayer's transmission to Sudhana. This is most explicit in the phrase "a half-day's journey for a horseman, a whole day's journey on foot," which is applied to the journeys of Sudhana and Dba' Dpal byams.<sup>37</sup> As well as having a journey as the principle narrative structure, the two stories are also characterized by the appearance of prophecies (*lung bstan*), and signs (*ltas*) and the reception of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* as a commitment (*thugs dam*). Finally, where the journey of Sudhana ends with his seeing the first *bhūmi*, 'utter joy' (*rab tu dga' ba*), Dba' Dpal byams' journey ends with his ascension to the realm of bliss (*bde ba can*).

### *Khri Srong lde brtsan*

If we are to read PT 149 as a validation of the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*, we should also consider how the text associates the prayer with imperial patronage. Dba' Dpal byams is bound by his religious commitments (*thugs dam*) to Tsenpo Khri Srong lde brtsan, seeks his interpretation of dreams and begs him for leave to go on retreat. After the fall of the Tibetan Empire in the mid ninth century, the period of Khri Srong lde brtsan's reign became a seductive source of narrative for Tibetan histories. Already in the Dunhuang manuscripts we see Tsenpo Khri Srong lde brtsan becoming a semi-mythological Buddhist king.

The most important of the Dunhuang texts that reference Khri Srong lde brtsan are the *Old Tibetan Annals* and *Old Tibetan Chronicle*. The former is a yearly account of the Yar (k)lung Dynasty; the latter a verse and prose narrative of the imperial pe-

<sup>37</sup> r.2: *rta pa'i gdugs lam rkang thang gi zhag lam tsam*, repeated on v.2.

riod. In the first of these, which may date to the imperial period, Prince Srong lde brtsan is said to have been born at Brag mar in the horse year, 742 C.E.,<sup>38</sup> and given the title Khri, marking his enthronement, in the Ape year 756 C.E.<sup>39</sup> The dates of his rule and death are still uncertain, since the extant *Old Tibetan Annals* do not continue past the first few years of his reign, but it is possible that he ruled Tibet twice in his lifetime.<sup>40</sup> Under his leadership Tibet reached the heights of its military strength, capturing the Chinese capital Chang'an briefly in 763 and threatening the Caliph Harun Al-Rashid in the west.<sup>41</sup> In the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, the tsenpo is described as the just ruler of an expanding empire.<sup>42</sup> The *Chronicle* first mentions Buddhism (*sangs rgyas kyi chos*) while describing his reign. It focuses especially on the monasteries he built around Tibet, as well as the compassion and freedom from birth and death that the Dharma brought to all his people.<sup>43</sup> It then goes on to list the tsenpo's military victories.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> PT 252, § 93; transliterated and translated in Bacot *et al.* 1940: 26 and 51 respectively.

<sup>39</sup> Or. 8212.187, l. 17.

<sup>40</sup> The eleventh-century *Dbā' bzhed* puts his death at 802 C.E. (Pasang and Diemberger 2000: 92). However Brandon Dotson believes it to be mistaken here (Dotson 2006: 13 n. 48). Based on early ninth-century inscriptional evidence, Dotson argues that Khri Srong lde brtsan *probably* died in 800 C.E, at the age of 59, after taking up the reigns of office a second time (Dotson 2006: 14–15).

<sup>41</sup> See Stein 1972: 66–67; Beckwith 1987: 146–152.

<sup>42</sup> PT 1287, ll. 366–397; translated into French by Bacot *et. al.* (1940: 114–117).

<sup>43</sup> PT 1287: ll. 374–376: *sangs rgyas kyI chos bla na myed pa brnyeste mdzad nas // dbus mtha' kun du gtsug lag khang brtsigs te | chos btsugs nas | thams shad (sic) kyang snying rje la bzhugs shlng dran bas skye shi las bsgral to |*

<sup>44</sup> PT 1287: ll. 376–397. Line 98 begins an interpolated section from the reign of Srong brtsan Sgam po, caused by a misplaced folio (see Uray 1968).

Other Dunhuang documents tend to portray Khri Srong lde brtsan primarily as a religious king, and emphasise his religious works over his military achievements. There are three other significant descriptions of this tsenpo in the Dunhuang manuscripts and we will look at each of them briefly here:<sup>45</sup>

(i) IOL Tib J 466/3 is a prayer paying homage to Khri Srong lde brtsan along with teachers and deities of India and Tibet.<sup>46</sup> It has not previously been studied and is an interesting addition to the evidence for the portrayal of this tsenpo as a Buddhist king soon after the imperial period. The invocation of the tsenpo occurs in the middle of a long prayer of offering to all the deities, monks and patrons of the dharma. Some of the language here is archaic, and it may be that the prayer is the earliest of our three descriptions here, perhaps just post-dating the Tibetan empire itself.

I make offerings to the spiritual teachers of our own Tibet, the great dharma kings such as the great king Khri Srong lde brtsan. I respectfully make the offering of homage to all those teachers who have gone to *nirvāṇa* [after] propagating the teachings – the magically emanated lord Khri Srong lde brtsan, who has mastered the royal methods of fortune (*phywa*) and [rules] the kingdom with the sword of the sky-gods, and Dharma-Aśoka, Kaniṣkā, (Harṣa) Śīlāditya and so on.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> In addition to the examples below, we may add IOL Tib J 709/9 and IOL Tib J 667, which together make up a treatise on Chan said to have been authorised under the seal of Khri Srong lde brtsan. Although this is not a depiction of Khri Srong lde brtsan as such, it does allude to his activity as patron of the dharma – interestingly in this case, from China rather than India.

<sup>46</sup> This prayer is among a series of texts written on a scroll. Unlike the two previous scrolls, this is not a re-used Chinese *sūtra*, but a scroll dedicated to these Tibetan texts alone. Another difference is that the Tibetan texts are written with the scroll in the horizontal, rather than vertical orientation, in two columns per panel. This is the same method found in the *Aparimitāyurnāmasūtra* scrolls, which are also written on the same paper as these texts. The other texts are a number of prayers and *dhāraṇī*, apparently gathered together here for the purpose of recitation.

<sup>47</sup> IOL Tib J 466/3: 5r.9–12: *bdag cag bod khams kyI dge ba'I bshes gnyen //*

The prayer is written on the same paper, and in the same handwriting style, as the many copies of the *Aparamitāyurnāmasūtra* that were written in the 840s, during or soon after the last years of the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang. The awareness of a tradition relating to the Indian kings who patronized Buddhism, Aśoka, Kaniṣka and Harṣa is unusual in a prayer like this. The prayer also contains several interesting elements in its description of the tsenpo. We have the difficult concept of *phywa* – in other early sources a class of gods or an ancient clan.<sup>48</sup> We also find the tsenpo described as holding the sword of the gods of the sky (*gnam gyI lde*), a reference to the legends of the tsenpos' ancestral lineage of divine beings.

(ii) IOL Tib J 370/6 is an account of the flourishing of Buddhism in Tibet, attributed to the will of the tsenpos Srong brtsan Sgam po and Khri Srong lde brtsan.<sup>49</sup> This text, titled *The Dharma that Fell from Heaven*, is a brief celebration of the early transmission of Buddhism to Tibet. Like the text above, it begins with an account of how the kings introduced the dharma to the Tibetan people:

The protectors of men, divine sons, supreme kings,  
The magically manifested king Srong brtsan

*rgyal po chen po khri srong lde brtsan lastsogs pa // chos kyI rgyal po chen  
po rnams la mchod pa // phywa'i rgyal thabs mnga' brnyes shing // chab srId  
gnam gyI lde mtshon can // 'phrul rje khrI srong lde brtsan dang // dar ma  
sho ka / ka ni skā / shI la a tI da nya lastsogs // ston pa mya ngan 'das phyIn //  
bstan pa rgyas mdzad thams cad la // phyag 'tshal bsnyen bkur mchod pa  
dbul //*

<sup>48</sup> See Stein 1961: 60–64 and Karmay 1998: 285–6.

<sup>49</sup> See Richardson 1998: 75–76. Richardson counted this as the fifth text on the scroll. However, in this numbering he ignored the first, fragmentary text on the scroll. The number here corresponds with Dalton and van Schaik 2006. As with PT 840, this is a re-used Chinese *sūtra* scroll. In this case, it is a *Vajracchedikasūtra*. All of the Tibetan texts are written on the verso of this scroll; they include a short treatise, some brief *sūtras* and a prayer to Mañjuśrī. Several handwritings are represented, and the text in question here is in a hand not seen elsewhere on the scroll. This hand in particular contains characteristic features of late ninth- and tenth-century writing styles.

And the tsenpo Khri Srong lde brtsan  
 Learned the teaching of Gautama Śākya  
 Which brought benefit to all beings  
 In Jambudvīpa, the world of men, Tibet ...  
 In accord with it, they took up the commitments  
 And spread them far and wide among beings.  
 As a record to maintain this, on a stone pillar  
 It was written as an edict of the lord and his subjects.<sup>50</sup>

Here the main focus of the prayer is less on the special features of the tsenpos, and very much on their activities of spreading the dharma.

(iii) PT 840/3 celebrates Khri Srong lde brtsan's invitation of Buddhist masters from India.<sup>51</sup>

There is a king called Tsa,  
 Born into a divine family in the lineage of the bodhisattvas:  
 The divine son Khri Srong lde brtsan.  
 He [introduced] the sublime dharma and invited masters from India.  
 Like a lamp held aloft in the midst of darkness  
 He allowed [the dharma] to be practised throughout the kingdom,  
 Placing [the kingdom] on the path of supreme enlightenment.

<sup>50</sup> IOL Tib J 370/6, ll. 1–7: / *gnam babs kyi dar ma bam po gcig go // // myi mgon lha sras rgyal mchog ste // 'phrul gyi rgyal po srong brtsan dang / btsan po khri srong lde brtsan gnyis // 'dzam gling myi yul bod kham su // 'gro ba kun la phan mdzad pa'i // u dum 'ba' ra 'i men tog ltar // shin tu bzang dkon sman gi mchog // dus bde gshegs yul gyur pa // shes rab pha rol phyin pa'i chos // de bzhin nyid la mnyam ba ste // yod dang myed pa'i phyogs 'jig pa'i // bla myed theg chen rab sgrags pa // 'ge'u tam shag kya'i bstan pa bslabs // dang du blangs nas thugs dam bzhes // 'gro ba kun +la+ rgyas par spel // britan ba'i gzungs su rdo rings la // rje 'bangs rnams kyi gtsigs su bris //*

<sup>51</sup> See Karmay 1998: 76–93. The text is written on a re-used Chinese *sūtra* scroll, containing part of the *Avatamsakasūtra*. A long Mahāyoga *sādhana* (PT 840/1) is written on the verso where also, in another hand, two Tibetan texts are written in between the Chinese characters. The first (PT 840/2) is on the “view of yoga” and the second (PT 840/3) is the text described here. The handwriting style of these texts is a form not seen in the Tibetan imperial period, and probably dates to the tenth century.

How great was the divine kindness of this divine son!<sup>52</sup>

Here the text equates the tsenpo with the legendary King Tsa (or Dza in other sources), associated with tantric Buddhism.<sup>53</sup> As with text (ii), there is only minimal reference to the tsenpo's divine attributes, and the emphasis is firmly on his Buddhist activities.

In a similar vein, PT 149 depicts Khri Srong lde brtsan in terms drawn almost entirely from the Buddhist tradition. More than any of the above manuscripts, this text also helps us to sketch in more detail the post-imperial view of the people and places under his rule. The depiction of the tsenpo here references the three principal achievements that characterize his reign in the later historical tradition: overseeing the translation of Buddhist texts, building the Bsam yas temple, and patronising monastic Buddhism.

First, the tsenpo's extensive translation project, which encompassed works like the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*,<sup>54</sup> is alluded to in PT 149 with the names of three translators working during his reign: Ska ba' Dpal rtsags, Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan and Rma Rad na ya kra. The first two translators are well known, and their numerous works well attested in the Tibetan canons. The last translator does not play a prominent role in traditional histories, and has tended to be conflated with Dpal dbyangs from the *Sba bzhed* onwards.<sup>55</sup> The earlier, eleventh-century *Dbā' bzhed* depicts him as a distinct person: Dbā' Rad na, the first Tibetan monk and the son of Dbā' Rma

<sup>52</sup> PT 840/3, ll. 2–3: *rgyal <ka> po tsa zhes bya ba de // lha'i rigs la byang chub sems dpa'i rgyu // lha sras khri srong lde brtsan gyis/dam chos slob dpon rgya gar yul nas spyen drangs te // mun nag dkyil du sgron bzhin // rgyal khams phyogs kyang stsod par gnang // byang cub mchog gi lam la bkod // lha sras lha'i drin re che //*

<sup>53</sup> Karmay discusses King Tsa / Dza and his relationship to the tantric king Indrabhūti in his study of this text (Karmay 1988).

<sup>54</sup> Steinkellner 1995: 15–17.

<sup>55</sup> See Pasang and Diemberger 2000: n. 263 and n. 30.

gzigs.<sup>56</sup> In PT 149 the translator appears with the clan name of Rma rather than Dba'.<sup>57</sup> Coupling this fact with the Tibetan translation of *ratna*, *rin chen*, we could tentatively identify Rma Rad na (ya kra) with Rma rin chen (mchog).<sup>58</sup>

This would, of course, be only a literary identification, not an historical one, since neither person is found in imperial sources. The *Dba' bzhed* makes no mention of Rma rin chen mchog, but he plays a more important role in later histories. Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, for instance, makes him part of the very same trio (with Ska ba' Dpal rtsegs and Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan), this time travelling to India to invite Vimalamitra to Tibet.<sup>59</sup> The same tradition, placing these three translators together, may be behind both PT 149 and this part of Nyang ral's history. In any case, PT 149 adds extra weight to the *Dba' bzhed*'s depiction of Dba' Rad na and Dba' Dpal dbyangs as different people, strongly suggesting that the earliest Tibetan literary tradition distinguished these two Buddhists.

Khri Srong lde brtsan's second great religious achievement was the building of the great Bsam yas monastery, mentioned in our manuscript as the site of relations between the tsenpo and Dba' Dpal byams.<sup>60</sup> The longer Bsam yas edict, contained in Dpa' bo Gtsug lag 'phreng ba's *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* (but probably dating to the eighth century), mentions that the minister Stag sgra klu gong was among those who swore that the practice of the

<sup>56</sup> Pasang and Diemberger 2000: 70, 79.

<sup>57</sup> It is possible that the first part of the name Dba' Rma gzigs was added by the redactors of the *Dba' bzhed*.

<sup>58</sup> The translators of the *Dba' bzhed* also suggest that Dba' Rad na's name had other synonyms, giving Dba' rin po che (another word for *ratna*, jewel) as one of his aliases (Pasang and Diemberger 2000: 73).

<sup>59</sup> *Zangs gling ma*: 47b6ff.; *Chos 'byung me tog snying po*: 338.19ff.

<sup>60</sup> For a translation of Khri Srong lde brtsan's Bsam yas edicts, see Richardson 1985: 26–31 and 1998: 91–98.

Buddha's religious law would never be abandoned or destroyed.<sup>61</sup> PT 149 mentions Ngan lam Stag sgra klu gong only as the elder brother of Ngan lam Rgyal mchog skyong, who plays a part in the narrative.

The high status of Ngan lam Stag sgra klu gong is confirmed by the inscription on the north side of the Zhol pillar in Lhasa, which records an oath taken by Khri Srong lde brtsan to confirm the ennoblement (*dku rgyal*) of Stag sgra klu khong and his descendents in the Ngan lam clan.<sup>62</sup> In contrast to the Bsam yas edict, later Buddhist and Bon historical traditions identify Stag sgra klu gong as a Bon po.<sup>63</sup> Our text makes no specific reference to his religious persuasion, but it seems unlikely that the text would mention this figure in an introduction to a great spiritual practice if he was considered an enemy of Buddhism at the time when it was written. In any case, PT 149 appears to be the only source to provide a specific familial relationship between Stag sgra klu gong and Rgyal mchog skyong/dbyangs, two important early figures from the Ngan lam clan.

Thirdly, in PT 149, the tsenpo is shown to privilege his monks' spiritual practices over their court duties, allowing Dba' Dpal byams to go into retreat at, or near, 'Ching pu. It is evident that even at this stage the 'Ching pu caves were becoming important Buddhist sites in Tibetan literature. The earliest important reference to this site is the early ninth-century Skar cung inscription, which states that a temple was built at Mching phu during the reign of Khri Lde

<sup>61</sup> Richardson 1985: 92–93.

<sup>62</sup> Richardson 1985: 16–25.

<sup>63</sup> For early indications of this traditional Tibetan depiction, see Pasang and Diemberger 2000: 61 and n. 194; *Grags pa gling grags* 36a3. Christopher Beckwith has discussed the role of Klu khong in the turmoil preceding Khri Srong lde brtsan's enthronement in Beckwith 1983: 1–2.

gtsug brtsan (704–?754).<sup>64</sup> The *Dbā' bzhed* seems to agree with this in its statement about a temple built, and a bell buried, at 'Ching phu during the middle of the eighth century.<sup>65</sup> The specific cave known in PT 149 as 'Ching pu brag rgye'u, has been linked with Padmasambhava's religious practices ever since Nyang ral's hagiography had him going into retreat there.<sup>66</sup>

Although the temporal power of the tsenpo is not emphasized in PT 149, his spiritual authority over *Dbā' Dpal byams* is made quite clear. *Dbā' Dpal byams* petitions the tsenpo to interpret his dream, and it is the tsenpo who approaches the Indian abbot Bodhisattva to enquire about the dream. In conversation with the Indian abbot, the tsenpo calls *Dbā' Dpal byams* "my student, a monk."<sup>67</sup> However, the text also describes a respectful and even intimate relationship between the tsenpo and his priest. The tsenpo accompanies *Dbā' Dpal byams* on the first day of his journey, a gesture of great respect. Finally, before they part, *Khri Srong lde brtsan* and *Dbā' Dpal byams* stand facing each other, each with a hand on the other's heart, reciting the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*. This striking image carries the implication that outside of the imperial court, and in the purely religious context of prayer, the two figures are equal.

<sup>64</sup> The reference appears on l. 11 of the inscription. See Richardson 1985: 74–75.

<sup>65</sup> Pasang and Diemberger 2000: 34 and 37, spelled 'Ching bu both times. Two other early religious histories mention a temple at 'Ching phu/bu in the list of temples established during the reign of *Khri Gtsug lde brtsan*. See Uebach 1990: 396–397. These sources strongly suggest that 'Ching pu/phu/bu is an older spelling than 'Chims phu.

<sup>66</sup> See Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's *Zangs gling ma*: 58b2–4; though it now reads 'chims phu bre gu dge'u (*Zangs gling ma*: 58b4), this is probably a result of the *rnam thar*'s long recensional history. The site, now known as *brag dmar ke'u tshang* (the red rock treasury), is described in Dowman 1998: 230.

<sup>67</sup> *bdag gi slob ma dge sbyong zhig* (PT 149 r.8).

*Other elements in the story*

The last master mentioned in PT 149, Sgro snya Ye shes byang chub, is unknown to us. He is obviously outside the tradition of abbatial succession represented by IOL Tib J 689/2. He may have been an important figure in the original author's lineage, but to our knowledge he is not listed anywhere besides PT 149.<sup>68</sup> He is said to have lived in Sho ma la, which is probably the Sho ma ra of Skyi mentioned in the *Old Tibetan Annals* as the site of three winter councils, held in 729, 731 and 744 C.E.<sup>69</sup> Sho ma ra was also the administrative seat of the minister Mgar Stong brtsan and the site of the first writing-down of the Tibetan law codes in 655. As Sørensen has noted, Sho ma ra seems to have been a key site for administration during the whole of the Tibetan imperial period.<sup>70</sup> Later accounts show that a "Great Dharma College of the Glorious Sho ma ra" (Dpal sho ma ra'i chos grva chen po) was an important centre for the Bka' gdams pa school from the eleventh century. In the twelfth century Sho ma ra was the site of the ordination of Stag lung Thang pa.<sup>71</sup>

Certain geographical elements of the narrative in PT 149 remain problematic. The tsenpo travels with Dba' Dpal byams for the first day of his journey, parting at a place called Spa dro. This name is

<sup>68</sup> Note that a Mngan lang Gro snya brtsan khong lod appears in the *Old Tibetan Annals* (IOL Tib J 750: ll. 227–228).

<sup>69</sup> See IOL Tib J 750: ll. 254, 260 and 298; Bacot *et al.* 1940: 48, 49 and 52.

<sup>70</sup> Sørensen 1994: 184.

<sup>71</sup> According to Sørensen and Hazod (2005: 47 n. 37 and 237 n. 44), Sho ma ra is located in the Dbu ru lung district, on the upper course of the Skyid chu. The location of Sho ma ra and its occurrence in the early literature is explored more fully in Hazod forthcoming. He points out that while the *Blue Annals* appears to speak of a Sho ma ra in Stod lungs (Roerich 1988: 728–729), this should be read as two separate toponyms. He accepts a location for Sho ma ra in the lower Skyid chu region, "downwards from Klung shod or northern Mal gro."

close to Spa gro, the valley of that name in western Bhutan that was part of the territory granted to 'Gos Khri bzang by the tsenpo Khri Gtsug lde brtsan in the ninth century, and was thereafter known as 'Gos yul.<sup>72</sup> In the eleventh century Spa gro came under the control of the Nyos clan, thanks to the activities of Nyos Lo tsa ba (born c.973) and Lha nang pa (1164–1224).<sup>73</sup> Another early source mentions the same place in the context of Gayādhara's first trip to Tibet in the mid eleventh century.<sup>74</sup> Obviously Spa gro in Bhutan does not match the location of PT 149's, between Lha sa/Bsam yas and 'Ching pu. There is a distant possibility that Spa dro may be a misspelling of Ma(r) dro, where Srong brtsan Sgam po was born (according to some traditions) and founded a temple.<sup>75</sup> This is a more fitting place for a tsenpo and his commitment-holder to say their farewells, yet it is still not *en route* between Lha sa/Bsam yas and 'Ching pu.

#### 4. Conclusion

PT 149 is a remarkable example of the kinds of materials that must have been available to the early Buddhist historians. Later writers gathered together such sources to form a coherent Buddhist narrative of the imperial period. Indeed, such a collation may have already been taking place at Dunhuang. As mentioned earlier, the other manuscripts in the same hand as PT 149 include another Buddhist narrative connected with the imperial period in Tibet, *The*

<sup>72</sup> See Sørensen and Hazod 2005, II.382–383, n. 35.

<sup>73</sup> See Sørensen and Hazod 2005, II.441–443.

<sup>74</sup> See Stearns 2001: 91 and 214 n. 40.

<sup>75</sup> In PT 149 the *spa* and *ma* share a similar orthography. In the earliest source for this toponym, the *Old Tibetan Annals* (Or. 8212.187) we find two spellings, *mal tro* (l. 42) and *mar dro* (l. 70), referring to the same place (Bacot *et al.* 1940: 53, 58 and 65). On the birthplace of Srong brtsan Sgam po, see Sørensen and Hazod 2000: 36–37 n. 92. On the founding of the temple and other religious activities at this site, see Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 50–51 n. 49, *passim*.

*Prophecy of the Khotanese Arhat(s)*, as well as two Buddhist cosmological texts. There is an intriguing suggestion here of a tenth-century inhabitant of Dunhuang collecting materials for a narrative placing Tibet in the Buddhist cosmological and historical tradition. It is just such a narrative, combining cosmology and Tibetan imperial history, that we find from the eleventh century onward, both in the early historical ‘treasure’ literature of the *Bka’ chems ka khol ma* and the *Ma ni bka’ ’bum* and in the first historical accounts of the ‘arising of the dharma’ (*chos ’byung*).

We hope to have showed the importance of PT 149 for the ‘missing period’ of Tibetan historiography in Tibet’s time of fragmentation. This manuscript suggests a steady movement, not a sudden jump, from royal to religious history in Tibet. The *Old Tibetan Annals* and eighth-century edicts may be a firmer base from which to investigate contemporary imperial hierarchy. However, in this text we see the emphasis on spiritual lineage and hierarchy gradually taking shape out of the ashes of the empire – as Buddhism’s embers continued to smoulder.

## Appendix:

### Translation and annotated transcription

#### *Translation*

The narrative of the first teaching of this *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇīdhānarāja*:

There was the son of a *śreṣṭhin* called Sudhana. Because his intellect became supremely sharp, he learned by heart an inconceivable amount of the concise and extensive [teachings of] the sublime dharma. After that, his faith became supremely great. Since he had not yet received the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇīdhāna*, he went to see

101 spiritual friends. All of them said, “I don’t know [it], and since I don’t, you are not destined to be my disciple.” The distance between [each of] these spiritual friends was a half-day’s journey for a horseman, a whole day’s journey on foot.

[Sudhana] met 100 teachers, and [then] saw the face of Mañjuśrī. He requested [the prayer] from Mañjuśrī, who said: “I don’t know [it], and since I don’t, you are not destined to be my disciple. In India, in Mahābodhidvīpa, lives Samantabhadra. Make a request to Ārya Samantabhadra.” This was his prophecy.

Then the son of a *śreṣṭhin* called Sudhana [went and] made the request to Ārya Samantabhadra in Mahabodhidvīpa. Ārya Samantabhadra said: “It is contained in the *Ārya Gaṇḍavyūha*, also known as the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*, the *Mang po ’dus pa*, the *Rdza plags pa*, the *Snyan gi gong rgyan* and the *Rma ga chad*.” And he taught it. Afterwards the son of a *śreṣṭhin* called Sudhana received [the prayer] as a commitment and practised it ardently. As a result he saw the first *bhūmi*, ‘utter joy.’ In the same way, others in India took the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* as a commitment and consequently achieved the *siddhi* of Samantabhadra.

Subsequent to that, [the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*] was translated by Ska ba’ Dpal rtsags, Cog ro Klu’i rgyal mtshan and Rma Rad na ya kra, among others. In the lifetime of tsenpo Khri Srong lde brtsan, the tsenpo’s commitment-holder, a certain Dba’ Dpal byams, received [the *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*] as a commitment, and afterwards, one night in a dream, saw crowds of people in a series of seven golden courtyards. When [Dba’ Dpal byams] petitioned the tsenpo, the tsenpo could not interpret [the dream]. Not far away there was an Indian abbot called Bodhisattva, and the tsenpo asked him, “If someone dreams a dream like this, what does it mean?”

The Indian abbot asked the tsenpo, “Who was it [that had the dream]?”

“He is a student of mine, a monk.” replied [the tsenpo].

[The abbot] then commanded “He should recite *Āryabhadra-caryāpranidhāna* and thereby gain the *siddhi* of Ārya Samantabhadra.” Then the tsenpo repeated this to Master Dpal byams, and the abbot explained extensively that [Dba’ Dpal byams] should chant for more than three days and three nights.

Not long afterwards, [Dba’ Dpal byams] made a request to the tsenpo: “Since I am emaciated and my aggregates have deteriorated, I have not been properly upholding my commitment to the tsenpo. Therefore may I have permission to travel to a holy place?” Straight away [the tsenpo and Dba’ Dpal byams] left Lha sa [and] Bsam yas [respectively] and travelled a half-day’s journey for a horseman, a whole day’s journey on foot. At Spa dro temple [Dba’ Dpal byams] was encouraged by the tsenpo again. They each placed a hand on the other’s heart and recited the prayer. Then [the tsenpo] left.

Not much later, at a nearby place called ’Ching pu brag rgye’u, lived Ngan lam Rgyal mchog, the younger brother of Ngan lam Stag sgra klu gong. At Sho ma la lived the Master Sgro snya ye shes byang chub. [One day] these two had certain omens that they couldn’t understand, such as a rainbows appearing in the sky. Then they heard the words “Go and meet Master Dpal byams!” So they left.

When these two met [Dba’ Dpal byams] on the path, they paid their respects and exchanged news, and then they asked each other “Where are you going?” [Dba’ Dpal byams] said, “Three nights ago, I had a dream prophecy like this...” Since this was concordant with the omens [experienced by] the two masters, they went as escorts. Master Dpal byams recited his commitments.

*When the time of my death comes*

When he recited this, [they all] spoke in one voice.

*Then by purifying all my defilements*

As they recited this, they ascended [into the sky].

*When I directly perceive Amitābha*

As they recited this, accomplishments such as rainbows arose, just like the signs that had [previously] arisen for the two masters, and they cast off the shackles of the body.

*May I go to the land of Sukhāvati*

Having arrived there, they recited these prayers and departed.<sup>76</sup>  
The above is the narrative setting.

*Annotated transcription*

[recto, l. 1] 'phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po  
'di dang por bshad pa'i gleng gzhi ni / tshong dpon gi bu nor bzangs  
zhes bya bas / shes rab rno ba'i mchog du phyin pa 's ni dam pa'i  
chos mdo dang rgyas pa' bsam gis myi khyab pa zhig thugs su chud  
nas / dad pa che ba'i mchog du phyin pas ni / 'phags pa bzang po  
spyod pa'i smon [l. 2] lam 'di ma gsan pa'i slad bzhin du / dge ba'i  
bshes gnyen brgya rtsa gcig zhal mthong ba' las / kun gi zhal nas  
ngas myi shes pa ni ma yin na / nga 'i 'dul skal du khyod ma gyur  
ro // gsungs pas ma gsan nas / dge ba'i bshes gnyen de rnam kyi  
bar thag ni rta pa'i gdugs tsam / rkang thang gi zhag lam tsam zhig  
mchis so<sup>77</sup> // [l. 3] dge ba'i bshes gnyen brgya tham ba' la thug pa  
dang / 'phags pa 'jam dpal gi zhal mthong nas / 'phags pa' 'jam  
dpal la zhus pa las / ngas myi shes pa ni ma yin na nga'i 'dul skal  
du ma bab pas / rgya gar gi yul byang chub chen po ma ha bo de'i  
gling na 'phags pa' kun tu bzang po bzhugs pas / 'phags pa kun tu  
[l. 4] bzang po la zhu zhig par lung bstan to // de nas tshong dpon  
gi bu nor bzangs gyis ma ha bo de byang chub chen po'i gling<sup>78</sup>  
du 'phags pa kun tu bzang po la zhus pas / 'phags pa kun tu bzang  
pos / 'phags pa stug po bkod pa zhes kyang bya / sangs rgyas phal

<sup>76</sup> The lines in italics are equivalent to verse 57, towards the end of the prayer.

<sup>77</sup> This phrase is repeated below with a minor variation at v.2.

<sup>78</sup> Here the name of the Mahābodhi temple appears in both transliterated and translated forms.

po che zhes kyang bya / mang po 'dus pa zhes kyang bya / rdza  
 plags pa zhes kyang bya / [l. 5] snyan gi gong rgyan zhes kyang  
 bya / rma ga chad zhes kyang bya ba de'i nang nas bsus te bshad  
 nas / tshong dpon gi bu nor bzangs kyi thugs dam du bzhes pas /  
 mos par spyod pa las sa dang po rab du dga' ba'i bden ba' mthong /  
 de dang mtshungs par rgya gar gi yul du yang 'phags pa bzang  
 po spyod pa'i smon lam thugs dam du bzhes pas / [l. 6] mang pos  
 'phags pa kun tu bzang po 'i dngos grub brnyes so // de'i 'og tu ska  
 ba' dpal rtsags dang cog ro klu'i rgyal mtshan dang / rma rad na ya  
 kra las bsogs pas bsgyur nas / btsan po khri srong lde brtsan gi sku  
 ring la / btsan po thugs dam ba' dba' dpal byams zhes bya ba zhig  
 gis thugs dam du bzhes nas / nub gcig gi [l. 7] myi lam na / gser gi  
 sko ra bdun dbu la breng 'dug par rmangs pa las / btsan po 'i snyan  
 du gsol<sup>79</sup> nas / btsan pos dpyod ma mkhyen nas / khad myi ring ba'  
 zhig na rgya gar gi mkhan po bo de sat tva zhes bya ba bzhugs pa  
 de la btsan pos g.yar lam<sup>80</sup> 'di lta bu zhig rmyis na / 'di ci lags zhes  
 zhus pa dang / rgya gar gi mkhan pos de su lags [l. 8] zhes btsan  
 po la zhus pa dang / bdag gi slob ma dge sbyong zhig lags so zhes  
 gsol pa dang / 'di ni 'phags pa' bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam 'don  
 pas / 'phags pa kun tu bzang po 'i dngos grub thob pa zhig ces bka'  
 rtsal pa dang / btsan pos slob dpon dpal byams la bzlas pa dang /  
 mkhan pos lhag par yang spro ba bskyed nas /

[verso, l. 1] nyin lan gsum mtshan lan gsum bas kyang lhag par  
 zhal [s]ton du mdzad do // de nas ring ma lon ba dang / btsan po la  
 zhus pa' / bdag ni rad pa<sup>81</sup> phung po yang dgud<sup>82</sup> pas / btsan po 'i

<sup>79</sup> The phrase *snyan du gsol* is found in several Old Tibetan texts, and the specific phrase *btsan po'i snyan du gsol* appears in part of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (IOL Tib J 1375: r.2) See also Thomas 1951: 53–55.

<sup>80</sup> *g.yar lam* is an alternative, more archaic word for 'dream,' but can also mean 'in the presence of.' In view of the syntax of this sentence, it seems that the former meaning is intended here.

<sup>81</sup> Read *rid pa* for *rad pa*.

<sup>82</sup> Read *gud* for *dgud*.

thugs dam dngo<sup>83</sup> myi thog pas / bdag ni dgon gnas gcig du mchi bar ci gnang zhes zhus pa dang / de tsam na ni lha sa bsam yas<sup>84</sup> na bzhugs pa' [l. 2] las / de nas rta pa'i gdugs lam rkang thang gi zhag lam tsam na / spa dro dgon pa na zhes bya ba der btsan pos kyang bskul nas / gcig gi thugs kar gcig gi phyag bzhag nas / sa sar<sup>85</sup> smon lam btab nas gshegs so // de nas ring zhig ma lon ba tsam na / khad kyis myi ring ba zhig na / 'ching pu brag rgye'u zhes bya ba de na / [l. 3] ngan lam stag sgra klu gong gi gcung po / ngan lam rgyal mchog skyong bzhugs / sho ma la la ni slob dpon sgro snya ye shes byang chub bzhugs pa las / gnyis gi sku ltas<sup>86</sup> sam rtogs pa la nam ka' las gzha' tshon las bsogs pa byung nas / slob dpon dpal byams bsur 'gro 'o zhes thos pa las / gnyis ka slob dpon la zlor [l. 4] gshegs pa las lam du gnyis ka mjal nas / zhe sa bgyis nas bka' mchid<sup>87</sup> bgyis nas / gar gshegs so sor zhus pa dang / mdang gsum g.yar ltas<sup>88</sup> 'di lta bu zhig byung ngo zhes gsol ba las / slob dpon gnyis ka sku ltas mthun nas / zlor gshegs pa dang / slob dpon dpal byams thugs dam 'don pa las / bdag ni chi ba'i [l.

<sup>83</sup> Read *dngos* for *dngo*.

<sup>84</sup> This seems more likely to refer to Lha sa and Bsam yas as two separate places than to one confused location in the mind of the original author.

<sup>85</sup> Read *so sor* for *sa sar*.

<sup>86</sup> We have not found the phrase *sku ltas* elsewhere. To judge from the context, it indicates a kind of sign or omen.

<sup>87</sup> *bka' mchid* is used in a different context here to either the 'authoritative account' in Khri Srong lde brtsan's eighth-century edict (Richardson 1998: 92–93) or the *Dbā' bzhed*'s 'formal discourse by a king' (Pasang and Diemberger 2000: 9 and 23 n. 1). However, unlike PT 149, the edict and *Dbā' bzhed* use *'bka' mchid* in a nearly identical phrase: *sangs rgyas kyī chos bod yul du / snga phyir [Dbā' bzhed: bod khams su] ji ltar byung ba'i bka' mchid kyī yi ge*. It is seems that, outside of this rare but apparently stock phrase, the honorific term *bka' mchid* (*bgyis*) might have carried the more general meaning of "(to give one's) news."

<sup>88</sup> We have not found the term *g.yar ltas* elsewhere. It seems to be an archaic term for an omen received in a dream, to be distinguished from *sku ltas*, an omen received while awake.

5] ba'i dus byed gyur pa na /<sup>89</sup> gsung tsam na gsung lan gcig chad /  
 de nas sgrib pa thams cad ni phyir bsal te /<sup>90</sup> gsung tsam na / gcung  
 tsam yang 'phags / mngon gsum snang ba' mtha' yas de mthong na  
 gsung tsam na /<sup>91</sup> slob dpon gnyis kyi sku ltas la byung ba bzhin du  
 gzha' tshon la bsogs pa' dngos grub byung nas / lus gdos pa' can [l.  
 6] bor nas / bde ba can gyi zhing der rab du 'gro /<sup>92</sup> der song nas ni  
 smon lam 'di dag kyang / zhes zlos shing gshegs so / de yan cad ni  
 son gi gleng gzhi 'o // ∴ //

### General Abbreviations

- D Text in the Derge *Bka' 'gyur*, quoted according to Ui Hakuju et al., *Chibetto Daizōkyō Sōmokuoku / A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Canons (Bkaḥ-ḥgyur and Bstan-ḥgyur)*. Sendai: Tohoku Teikoku Daigaku Hobun Gakubu 1934.
- IOL India Office Library collection (now British Library)
- Or. Oriental collections of the British Library
- P Text in the Peking *Bka' 'gyur*, quoted according to Suzuki, Daisetz T. (ed.), *The Tibetan Tripitaka: Peking edition*. Reprinted under the supervision of the Otani University, Kyoto. Tokyo; Kyoto: Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute 1955–1961.
- PT Pelliot tibétain (Bibliothèque nationale de France)

### Bibliography

#### *Dunhuang manuscripts*

Many of these manuscripts are now available in transcription on the Old Tibetan Documents Online website (<http://otdo.aa.tufs.ac.jp>), and images

<sup>89</sup> Received version: *bdag ni chi ba'i dus byed gyur pa na /*

<sup>90</sup> Received version: *sgrib pa thams cad dag ni phyir bsal te /*

<sup>91</sup> Received version: *mngon sum snang ba mtha' yas de mthong nas /*

<sup>92</sup> Received version: *bde ba can gyi zhing der rab tu 'gro/*

can be found at the International Dunhuang Project website (<http://idp.bl.uk>).

IOL Tib J 370/6: *The Dharma that Fell from Heaven*: an account of the flourishing of Buddhism in Tibet.

IOL Tib J 466/3: A prayer paying homage to Khri Srong lde brtsan.

IOL Tib J 689/2: A list of spiritual friends and the Bsam yas and Lha sa 'Phrul snang temples.

PT 149: The narrative of the first teaching of the *Āryabhadracaryāpranīdhānarāja*.

PT 840/3: On the flourishing and decline of Buddhism in Tibet.

### Old Tibetan Annals

Version 1: PT 1288 (lines 1–53), IOL Tib J 750 (lines 54–307)

Version 2: Or.8212/187

### Old Tibetan Chronicle

PT 1287, with related manuscripts PT 1286, PT 1144, IOL Tib J 1375 (vol. 70, f. 15)

### Tibetan texts

*Bka' chems ka khol ma* = Smon lam Rgya mtsho. *Bka' chems ka khol ma*. Lanzhou: Kan su'i mi rigs dpe skrun khang 1989.

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